An informed community's perception of the impact of digital technology on the credibility of news photography.

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

of

RHODES UNIVERSITY

by

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March 1999

Abstract

South African photojournalists' perception of digital technology's impact on the credibility of news photographs is investigated in this study. Digital technology has the capabilities to produce "manipulated" photographs that appear realistic and credible. Credibility is dependent on a variety of factors including codes of realism and codes of production, which fit conventional codes of photographic representation. Manipulation is the act of deviating from accepted codes of photographic representation that may jeopardise the credibility of news photography.

This thesis proposes a new theoretical framework that encompasses existing theories of semiotics, ideology, naturalism, realism and credibility. These theories underpin the definitions and discussion on manipulation and credibility.

A descriptive survey is used which attempts to discover photojournalists' views towards credibility. This research draws on qualitative research methods using a largely qualitative questionnaire, which generates both qualitative and quantitative data. The questions are formulated around two case studies of digitally manipulated photographs. The trends and responses in the research data are connected and discussed.

The findings of this study are discussed in terms of credibility, awareness of the digital changes, the reason for the changes, the role of a caption, deletion techniques and

background changes. The empirical situation is analysed in relation to the theoretical

discussions and this study's theorisation of photographic representation.

This thesis is dedicated to my father who has patiently watched and supported me throughout my studies. To my mother who has been my strength and encouragement and to my sister who motivates me to always take things just that extra step further. I am forever thankful and grateful for the strength and power of the Prime Creator, All That Is.

> *Dedicu aquet estudi al meu pare. Aquesta oportunitat a sigut el millor temps de la meva vida. Lo que he apres y la experiència que he acumulat es un regal primordial. Moltes gràcies per la seva ajuda. Te estima molt.*

Angie

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Acknowledgements

To my supervisor, Professor Guy Berger — I have enjoyed working with you and feel privileged to have had you assisting and supporting me through it all. I will miss our "thinking" meetings.

To my friends: Jenean van Muylwijk, Justine and Mike Weeks, Jacques de Kock, Georgina Jones, Audrey Davidow, Leander and Hildegard Gaum, Kameshnee Naidoo, David Greybe, Neil van Niekerk, Jane Thompson, Nicole Motteaux, Theresa Kluivers, Zenobia Africa, Michael Border, Bishy Mmusi, Henri Els, Taryn Cass, Sylvia Hlangana, Michael Ngqina, Sonwabo Niwa — you have all contributed in enhancing and sharing my life in Grahamstown, for which I thank you.

To Ina Marx and Belinda Haggard for showing me many truths about myself and to Henry Pitman, Rameses and Lucile for all your guidance and help.

A special thanks to Brian Garman for finding a little niche for me to work from.

To all inhabitants of 7 Hope Street from 1996 to 1998 — you have all been an unforgettable part of my life.

I also want to thank all the photojournalists that took the time to assist me — without your contribution this research would not be possible.

Introduction

The issue at heart of analysing how digital technology may affect the credibility of news photography and exactly what constitutes credibility are the kernel of this thesis.

News photographs are an important component in the news gathering process. At least one major study shows that of the elements that make up a newspaper, the photograph is the first element that the eye sees (refer to chapter one). The news photograph provides a visual picture of the event, which adds a sense of veracity to the story. The photograph also contributes to the meaning of the text with its own form of making meaning. Thus, the photograph's credibility is a major contributor to the news story and ultimately to the perception of a newspaper's credibility (cf. chapters four and six).

Since its invention, photography has been used as a means of recording history. It transforms the world into representations, the meanings of which are dependent on shared conventions and the acceptance of certain codes of photography. Photography has provided a visual means with which to communicate events around the world. Yet the reliance on photography for knowledge, information and evidence of conditions in remote areas, has been problematic. Various methods (from darkroom techniques to setting-up photographs and using camera angles, lenses and filters) are used to make photographs in ways that manufacture meanings that have a bearing on credibility.

Manual photographic techniques have been in evidence since the origin of photography, and in recent years have been supplemented (and surpassed) by digital technology.

Controversy exists around what deployment of these techniques constitutes "manipulation". In this thesis, manipulation is not solely dependent on techniques but on deviations from the codes of realism and codes of production. Manipulations that occur during the second stage of the production process (cf. chapter three) are facilitated by digital software, which is faster, easier and virtually undetectable as compared to the manual methods employed pre-digital technology.

Like manually manipulated photographs, digital photographs can still fit the conventional codes of photographic representation. Thus, the public often has no way of knowing whether a photograph (digital or film based) is an "accurate" representation of "reality" since it complies with codes of realism. It is when knowledge of codes of production is present that a judgement can sometimes be made which undercuts the realism, and hence the credibility. This thesis assesses how the new processes impact on the credibility of the product, i.e. a printed photo in a news publication.

The first four chapters of this study are dedicated to the literature survey, which covers and evaluates relevant texts on digital technology, communication theories such as semiotics, and philosophies on credibility, ideology, naturalism and realism. The literature survey is based on existing theories of representation, theories of semiotics, ideology, realism and credibility, which are moulded, used and in some cases redefined.

To understand how photographs become representations and how they are made to signify is the domain of the first chapter. This chapter looks at photography as a meaningful language of communication. Photography as a communication tool is traced via the concept of the sign as a system of signification. Photography as a sign requires

translation and interpretation, which is necessary for a photograph to be meaningful. Meaning exists within the social context and conventions of both producers and consumers, and is transmitted through socially approved and accepted codes of representation. Codes make signification possible. Visual communication involves a process of encoding and decoding.

The codes of connotation and denotation in varying degrees are imbued with ideological processes. Codes may be naturalised and invisible and thus produce "natural" recognitions within the visual medium of photography. Limitations are placed on how photographs may be interpreted mainly by the psychological, social and cultural histories of the consumers. The interpretive quality of photographs and how they hold preferred meanings is discussed in chapter two.

Photographs are interpreted within the codes of ideology. Ideology is seen as largely unintended and unnoticed. The "natural" and "neutral" appearance of a photograph operates within Althusser's "familiar recognitions". Ideology operates by constituting the subjectivity of individuals. Ideology gives subjectification the appearance of unity by producing the readers' familiar recognitions (Cohen *et al*, 1978: 180). It forms our common sense interpretations of the world. Several interpretations coexist as potentials in any one photograph, which can be actualised differently. But despite the potential for differences, in order for there to be coherence, the meanings are subject to and embedded within ideological phenomena. The subjectivity of the ideological code in news photography is realist subjectivity, which signals naturalness in its code, which in turn equates to naturalism. This explains the news photograph's claim on "the real", and underpins the notions of "accuracy", "believability" and "credibility" (cf. chapter two).

The third theoretical chapter introduces "manipulation". The definitions and boundaries of manipulation are analysed. This chapter also introduces digital cameras, the advantages and disadvantages of digital imaging technology, Adobe Photoshop, and the capabilities of the digital technology. Digital manipulation has changed how the producers of photographs and design/ layout staff handle photographs. The use of the new technology has raised questions about the ethics of manipulation and the possible implications for the credibility of news photographs. This study does not focus on the former, but rather looks at the latter with reference to the codes of photographic representation.

Credibility can be seen as a complex code or set of ideas that is shared by the producers and consumers of the message. Chapter four formulates a definition of credibility and how it differs from believability. Codes of credibility are underpinned by realism codes and production codes, which are closely linked to values, conventions, intertextuality and source authority. The credibility in part must also include proof, believability and validity. In order to retain credibility the media must ensure that what is published operates within codes and customs of what constitutes an "accurate" representation of events. Codes of photographic representation signify in a "natural" and "neutral" way (cf. chapters two and three), thus buttressing the signification of "accuracy" and "credibility". The codes that impact on the signification of credibility can be identified as: the kind of publication; the source; different types of media; types of newspaper; the photographer; and the referent itself.

Fig. 1 below is a model of this study's theoretical formulation. It is a graphic representation of credibility within the codes of photographic representation. The model

shows credibility within ideology as underpinned by, and linked in part with, various

elements.
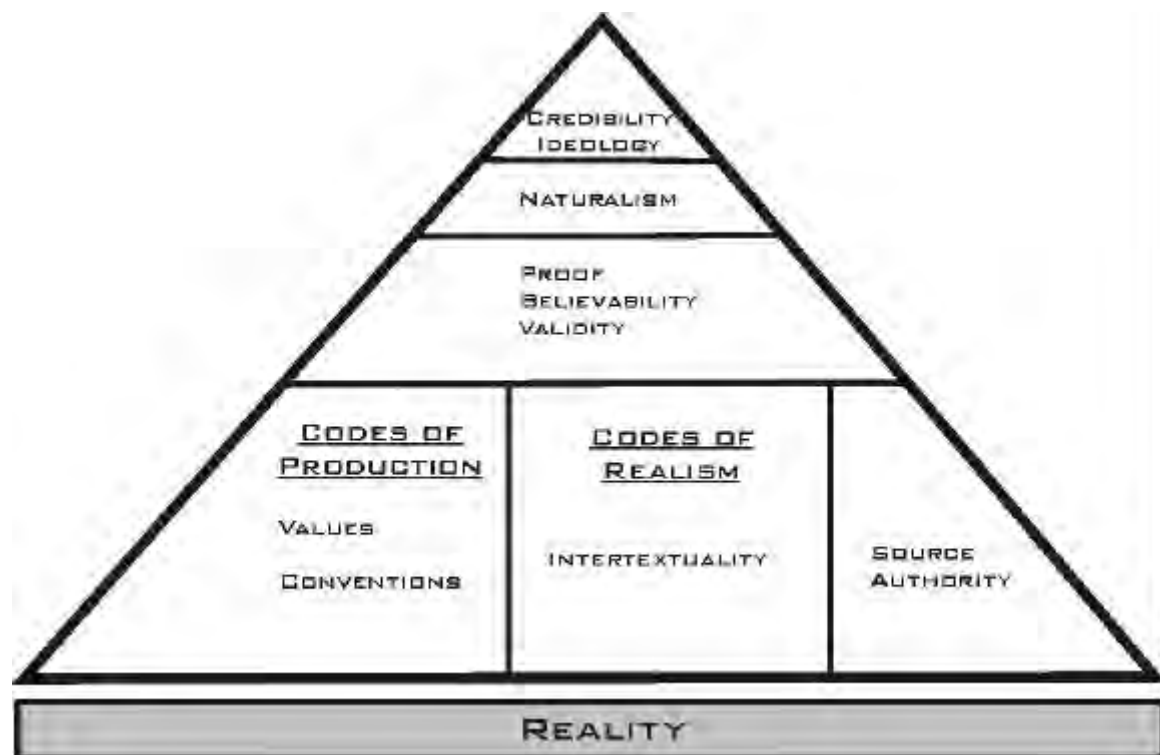
Fig. 1 This is a model of credibility within the codes of photographic representation as formulated in this thesis. This model shows the various components that contribute to the credibility of news photographs and how they operate separate from reality. The photographic representation (in the triangle) is distinguished from the reality it represents (in the rectangle below the triangle).

The concepts of this model are, briefly, as follows. **Credibility** exists within the realm of

ideology. **Ideology** is seen as a system of coding which is present in all codes of

signification of which **naturalism** represents the naturalness (proof, believability,

validity) of the code. This in turn depends on "normal" **codes of production** in

representation, and the **codes of realism** of fidelity between the referent and photographic

representation.

Codes of production include journalistic **values** and **conventions**, which incorporate

balance, fairness and wholeness; accuracy/ authenticity; accessibility; leadership and

behavioural factors. The codes of realism depend on news photography's adherence to the

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accepted codes of representing reality which links with the credibility codes of **intertextuality** operating between elements that contribute to proof and validity. Another component that adds to the complexity of credibility is **source authority**, which includes the character of the publication, the photographer, the event covered, the content and the institution. The theoretical chapters explain the various areas in greater detail in this thesis.

The next three chapters of this study pursue the arguments made earlier through a discussion of empirical research into the issues within the South African photojournalist community. Thus, this part of the thesis pertains to the methodology, the research findings and the discussion of the findings.

The research study centres on photojournalists, picture editors and chief photographers (i.e. a community that is informed about the process behind the publication of news photographs and henceforth is referred to as 'the informed community'). It records and analyses their perceptions of the digital technology's possible effect on news photography's credibility. The study targeted the informed community working at daily newspapers in South Africa.

The research was conducted with the aid of a qualitative questionnaire. The qualitative research survey uses open and close-ended questions, which generate qualitative and quantitative data. This is a descriptive survey that attempts to document and discover photojournalists' current knowledge, understanding, attitudes, perceptions and behaviour towards the credibility of digital photographs.

The questionnaire employed two case studies that covered areas such as: whether a photograph is credible without prior knowledge that it has been manipulated; if the awareness of the changes on a particular photograph has any impact on its credibility; whether the informed community believes that an institution's credibility changes for the public if the public is aware of the institution's readiness to manipulate photographs; whether the informed community perceives the credibility of news photographs in general as changing for the public due to digital procedures; whether the informed community accepts the reason for manipulation of a photograph as justifying the manipulation; whether a caption explaining the changes affects how the public views the credibility of the news photograph in question and whether there is a difference if the manipulation is done on a person, object or background of the news photograph.

The study aims to establish whether the informed community perceives the digital technology as a tool that can affect the credibility of news photographs due to the technology's ability to conform with realistic codes of photographic representation.

Photographic manipulation became evident to the American public when a "mug shot" of OJ Simpson[1] was darkened, for the cover of *Time* magazine. The same photograph was used without the changes on the cover of *Newsweek*. Both publications hit the news stands at the same time. The result was a flurry of debate around the ethics and credibility of manipulated photographs. The OJ Simpson example is used in this study as part of the case study section of the questionnaire. A local example is also used. The "lowering of the dove"[2] photograph shows a different approach to manipulation of an object as opposed to a person and utilises different production techniques as compared to the OJ Simpson example (refer to chapter five). The two case studies are contrasted in terms of

their applicability to this study. The results generated from the case studies and the general sections of the questionnaire are outlined in chapter six. Chapter seven provides a critical analysis of the research findings. Connections between the various trends and responses in the research data are also discussed.

The study found that a photograph is not a manipulation if the codes of photographic representation are adhered to. The "OJ Simpson" and the "lowering of the dove" photographs "appear" to fit the codes of realism. However, conventional or unconventional processes may produce a realist effect, but still get called manipulation by an informed community that knows that the processes clash with the production codes. Thus, manipulation occurs when a news photograph deviates from either or both the codes of realism and the codes of production. The "lowering of the dove" photograph embodies unacceptable production codes despite appearing realistic and is therefore "manipulation". The "OJ Simpson" photograph in *Time* magazine uses more conventional production codes, but once discovered, it clashes with realism codes as displayed in *Newsweek* and is therefore "manipulation". A news photograph that is considered a manipulation is open to questions of credibility. The majority of respondents, 92% (lowering of the dove) and 69% (OJ Simpson), perceived that manipulation would jeopardise the credibility of news photographs in general. Manipulating news photographs is also seen to jeopardise the credibility of the publication for the same percentage of respondents, 92% (*Die Burger*) and 68% (*Time*). On the basis of the earlier argument that credibility is made up of a set of codes and conclusions shared by encoders and decoders, the view is that if the encoders change the codes then the decoders will come to question the codes of credibility. The difference between the two scores reflects the greater importance the informed community places on conventional techniques rather than the

realism apparent in the product. In these examples, the OJ production code is far more accepted than the technique of moving of an element in a photograph. The difference may also reflect the fact that less stringent codes of realism are applied to a magazine cover (*Time*) than a newspaper front page (*Die Burger*).

Manipulation is seen by most respondents as independent from the rationale or intention of the producer of the manipulated photograph even if this remains within journalistic value codes. Instead, it is seen as operating within unconventional codes of photographic representation. The respondents' main concern was that the photograph was manipulated and the motive was therefore a secondary factor. On one aspect of intertextuality and credibility, the informed community is unclear whether a caption explaining the manipulation is a contributing factor to credibility loss. The intertextuality codes pertaining to the caption and news photograph may either be seen as reinforcing the trust between the readers and the newspaper or the opposite may occur. The respondents see explaining the changes in a caption as either admitting to "unnatural" behaviour in the form of deviating from the codes or as reinforcing the ideological codes of the newspaper as an objective natural reflection of reality.

It appears overall that the ways of coding reality may shift the ideology of credibility. The individual's position of ideological coherence and common sense interpretations may shift as a result of the changing codes.

The concluding chapter to this thesis summarises the major components of credibility within news photography. Links and connections are made from the level of theory to the

level of empirical data. The limitations of the theory and the implications for future

research are also outlined.

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[1] View Appendix A for OJ Simpson's photograph as it was used on the covers of *Time* and *Newsweek*.
[2] View Appendix A for a copy of *Die Burger*'s photograph of President Nelson Mandela releasing the dove.

Chapter One

Photography as a meaningful language of communication

1.1   Introduction

This first chapter examines how messages are constructed to make meaning and how the producers of the photographic message and the consumers of those meanings deal with photographic messages. Taking into account that vision is fraught with subjective interpretations, it still remains a valuable link between the observable and the knowable[1]. These subjective interpretations are also discussed within the domain of naturalism in chapter two.

Although much has been written about language, theories on pictures are limited with no coherent theory on photographs, specifically news photographs. To analyse photographs in an attempt to understand the knowledge that they entail, is an ambitious undertaking. This work does not claim to cover all facets of this field of investigation.

A discussion on the nature of representation evaluates the competent parts as they are transformed into a system of meaning which can be understood and used as a communication tool. The process of photography in communication is examined in terms of code and sign-components of meaning within semiotics. These codes are related to the conditions of perception, interpretation, dialogue and action. These concepts provide for a

better understanding of photographs as represented knowledge experiences. Thus, the means of production of meaning are explained largely within semiology. Semiological systems are used in the making and reading of photographs. Nevertheless, "the sum total of these systems cannot exhaust, does not begin to cover, all that can be read in appearances" (Berger and Mohr, 1982: 112). Thus the "language" of appearances cannot be resolved simply by reference to semiological systems. A critique of the connotation and denotation of photographs illustrates that social constructs may yield many significations.

The chapter then discusses Berger's framework (Berger and Mohr, 1982: 120) that illustrates how a photograph generates meaning by cutting across time and disclosing a cross-section of the interconnectedness and related coexistence of events. This is the process by which the coherence of meaning of appearances is increased.

The socio-semiotic approach is discussed in the final section of this chapter. It demonstrates how the interpretation of objects and events is dependent on social practices and that, therefore, these objects and events rely on social interaction in order to possess meaning.

1.2   Photography as communication

Since before the invention of photography, man desired to share ideas, communicate and record important events. Photography took this desire further and used it as a witness and a reflection of the past. Thirty years after Fox Talbot's photographic camera in 1839, photography was being used for "police filing, war reporting, military reconnaissance, pornography, encyclopaedic documentation, family albums, postcards, anthropological records, sentimental moralising, inquisitive probing, aesthetic effects, news reporting and

formal portraiture" (Berger, 1980: 48). Initially photography offered a more accurate means of recording than other media.

"The communicative value of the photograph has helped man to talk visually with man, serving as a catalyst in our understanding of one another and earning photography the literal label as a universal language" (Junas, 1972: 4). However, photography is open to a variety of interpretations and, although it is viewed by Junas as a universal language, it can only be universal if there is a common social and cultural background. This concept of a visual language is discussed later in this chapter. This common social and cultural background suggests a common body of perceptions that may lead to consensus of experience and, thus, a common world in which mediated percepts and direct percepts are congruent. This, in turn, may lead to the transmission of knowledge (Gibson, 1966: 95).

Documentary photographers, such as Margaret Bourke-White, Dorothea Lange, and W. Eugene Smith, have brought many people's attention to living conditions elsewhere. Their photographs epitomise the grimness of drought, depression, and war and thus communicate and comment on the social, racial and moral conditions of such societies. These pictures can be considered as messages and thus represented information.

Evans (1997) argues that, as with written journalism, to read pictures requires intelligence, knowledge, sensitivity and skepticism. He adds that photojournalism requires more critical analysis, more awareness when consuming photographs, than when reading text. Evans identifies that news photographs satisfy the need midway between intellect and emotion: "An ache for visual confirmation" (1997: 5). The public's appetite for news is fuelled by news photographs that can give the public the sensation of being there. The photograph also provides "an image that the mind can hold" (Evans, 1997: 4).

When looking at a document that contains pictures, the eye — in western cultures at least — moves to the visual elements first, such as photographs or graphic illustrations. Garcia and Stark, in the Poynter "Eye-Trac" research, establish that "photos and artwork are the primary points of entry, whether they are in colour or black and white" (1991: 25). The eye's general gravitation to photographs automatically establishes a perception or impression before reading the headline, caption or text. As Barthes (1972) says:

> Pictures are more imperative than writing, they impose meaning at one stroke, without analysing or diluting it... . Pictures become a writing as soon as they are meaningful: like writing, they call for a lexis (cited by Hall in Cohen *et al*, 1978: 176).

The concept that photographs require that they be read through a language in order to be meaningful is discussed in the following section.

A study conducted by Smith (1989) showed that both reporters and photographers consider pictures as a means of communication with its own grammar and syntax independent of words. Smith affirms that this is compatible with a number of studies that suggest "pictures are not facts, but symbols in the same sense that words are symbols" (1989: 181-188).

To understand how photographs are considered as a means of communication, a discussion on language and its sign components with relation to visual signs is essential.

1.3   Language

Language, in contemporary studies, is seen as a crucial phenomenon for the understanding of consciousness and social life. In this study language is used as a system to further understand meanings of messages, particularly in the photographic medium. Larrain (1979: 130) identifies the general connection: "If language is a system of signs, then not only sounds or written texts, but also all meaningful social practices and cultural phenomena may constitute particular kinds of languages". This section investigates the possibility of photographic photographs as having their own language for interpretation and understanding. The role of ideology in the way we perceive photographs is explored in the next chapter.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary states that language is "any method of expression". However, in this study language is understood as a system not just a method.

Barthes takes language, discourse, speech, *et cetera*, to mean any "significant unit or synthesis, whether verbal or visual: a photograph will be a kind of speech for us in the same way as a newspaper article; even objects will become speech, if they mean something" (1972: 111). Hence, photographs in this study are viewed as a language if they have meaning.

Worth (1981: 182) says that: "Pictures operate both within the framework of language knowledge within us, and outside the framework of language in itself." The photographic mode does not have a rigorous set of language rules, or the ability to translate, within its formal devices. It provides for the "articulation of the existential rather than veridical events" (Worth, 1981: 184).

The language of visual representation within its own order can be further understood

within semiotics. Language is a "system which knows only its own order, a system where all parts can and must be considered in the synchronic solidarity" (Saussure, 1949 in Larrain, 1979: 131). The next section explores semiotics as a useful insight into understanding the nature and structure of visual language.

1.3.1 Semiotics

Semiotics is the study of the nature of representation. More specifically it is a mode of knowledge; of understanding the world as a system of relations whose basic unit is "the sign" (Gottdiener, 1995: 4). On the other hand semantics concerns itself with the conveyance of meaning by grammatical and lexical devices of a language (Steiner in Bailey *et al*, 1978: 107).

Semiotics is a form of structuralism, in that it emphasises systems of signification, which are structural forces and are relatively independent of human action (Gottdiener, 1995: 69). Similarly, Barthes sees semiology as "a science of forms, since it studies significations apart from their content" (1972: 111). More clearly, semiology is the *means of production* of meaning (MacCannell and MacCannell, 1982: 9). Semiotic analysis insists on uncovering all the sign-components of meaning: "subject/ object/ interpretant; signifier/ signified/ language community; sender/ referent/ receiver; writer/ text/ reader; *et cetera*." It provides a source of insight into the nature, structure and development of language. It also goes beyond the final cause of meaningful existence, by the "continuous and always subversive intrusion of the question of the sign, in which subject, object, and interpretation are fused" (MacCannell and MacCannell, 1982: 16).

Thus semiotics deals with the problem of meaning by using taxonomy as its basic tool. But

taxonomies of signs that lack either the semantic or syntactic component, according to MacCannell and MacCannell (1982: 57), are restricted to discrete meanings. Also, semiotic systems are not "synonymous", they are systems with different bases, such as music and spoken words which do not say the same thing (Beneviste in Innis, 1985: 235). The value of a sign is defined within the system it incorporates. Consequently, an examination of the sign and sign components within signification and interpretation follows.

1.3.2   The sign

This section deals with the different sign formulations, from Eco's (1979) Saussurian sign to Peirce's referents. They use different terms, but essentially accord with the sign's process into meaning through translation and interpretation.

Pelc (Pelc *et al*, 1984: 319) states that: "A sign denotes something, a sign expresses something, as metaphorical and elliptical, standing in place of something to denote something else, or uses something in order to learn (acquire knowledge about) something else." Similarly, Peirce (Buchler, 1955) views the sign as "something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity" (Brus, 1978: 86). However, the sign lacks a semantic component, thus restricting it to the situation in which it occurs. This is particularly important when looking at elements within a photograph and the context in which they appear. The context frames the elements and reduces the number of interpretations of the photograph to plausible events within that genre.

Many signs are iconic. For Morris (1946) a sign is iconic to the extent that it has properties

of or is similar to what it denotes. The photograph may have many of the properties the object has, but it does not have them all (Gibson, 1966: 96). A given object could be matched with its photograph without having to learn a vocabulary of photographs. Thus, pictures typically give closer approximations to direct perception than do words and symbols.

The relation between a word and its object is not the same as that between a photograph and its referent. Words may identify objects, with adjectives and verbs that specify their properties, but photographs cannot identify objects and specify properties or state logical propositions (Gibson, 1966: 97). Words as symbols add certain properties to objects and events (signals). Cassirer (1944) clarifies the terms symbol and signal: "...a signal is a part of the physical world of being: a symbol is a part of the human world of meaning. Signals are 'operators'; symbols are 'designators' " (George in Bailey, 1978: 133).

Similarly, for Hook a symbol that designates something "as a rule, is not the essential objective totality of the thing symbolised, but only what it can mean, or can be made to mean..." (1979: 19).

More specifically a sign is a symbol and Thom (Innis, 1985: 275) takes Peirce's classification of signs and outlines the distinction between the different types of signs:

> Firstly, images[2] or icons, which are graphic representations, more or less faithful to the object; secondly, indices: these are beings or objects linked to the symbolised object necessary to its existence, for example, smoke is an index to fire; and thirdly, symbols: these concern an arbitrary form, the relation to the signified object of which, arises from a social convention of limited validity in space and time.

This provides a useful expanded insight into signs. A photograph is a sign whose relation with its referent is linked to the symbolised object. A photograph adds properties to the

object or event symbolised.

For signs to be meaningful, interpretation of the sign is necessary. The sign is "a specific quality of phenomenal experience, through which we come to know reality, and on which we may be prepared to act". Thus signs are conditions of "perception, interpretation, dialogue, and action" (Jensen, 1995: 17). A short discussion on the interpretive nature of signs follows.

The conditions which produce the "new sign-function" for interpretation, are reliant on two independent elements. Eco's formulation (1979) of the Saussurian sign establishes that it is not signs, but rather sign-functions, that are realised when two "functives (expression and content) enter into a mutual correlation, thus becoming a different functive and therefore giving rise to a new sign-function" (MacCannell and MacCannell, 1982: 102).

Similarly, Barthes also derives his formulation from the Saussurian sign. He replaces the two functives (expression and content) with terms such as signifier and signified (1972: 112). In the interaction the signified[3] generates the signifier, but the signifier regenerates the signified each time that we interpret the sign (Thom in Innis, 1985: 278).

Jakobson (1954) adds further insight to Barthes's and Eco's formulation on the interpretive level. He accords with Peirce that there are two referents which serve to interpret the sign — "one is the code, and the other the context, whether coded or free, and in each of these ways the sign is related to another set of linguistic signs" (Steiner in Bailey, 1978: 109). Further, Peirce adds a third part to the sign, namely, the act of interpretation or reading (MacCannell and MacCannell, 1982: 134). Peirce (Buchler, 1955)

argues that without signification and interpretation there is no true sign, no semiotics. Signs must participate in a circle of exchange and substitution, for there to be meaning, translation and representation (Brus in Bailey *et al*, 1978: 87).

The emphasis in semiotics is on the objective systems of signification and the intersubjective basis of meaning, such as Saussure's concept that the production of meaning only takes place by virtue of social relation. "Semiotics is the socially sustained system of signification, including its material objects and their interdependencies, that produces and sustains meaning through socio-structural interaction" (Gottdiener, 1995: 171). This added element of "social relation" within sign interpretation takes avenues that are the main focus of the research question in this study. This next section deals with the communicative event with relevance to the sign functions discussed.

1.3.3   Communication

Worth and Gross (Worth, 1981: 26) define communication as "a social process, within a context, in which signs are produced and transmitted, perceived and treated as messages from which meaning can be inferred".

Communication is dependent on the production of messages that require interpretation. "The message form is the necessary form of appearance of the event in its passage from the source to receiver" (Hall *et al*, 1987: 129). The consumption or reception of the message by the receiver is the "moment" of the production process. The production is formed by the social relations of the communicative process whose relations must pass under the discursive rules of language for its product to be realised (Hall *et al*, 1987: 131).

The message is a set of meanings which "have an effect, influence, entertain, instruct or

persuade, with very complex perceptual, cognitive, emotional, ideological or behavioural consequences" (Hall *et al*, 1987: 130). But Hall also stipulates that meaning has to be taken for there to be consumption and effect. The determinate moments are those moments of "encoding" and "decoding" which are "relatively autonomous" in relation to the communicative process (Hall *et al*, 1987: 129). More specifically, visual communication is assumed to involve complex processes of encoding and decoding. Jensen (1995: 179) says that visual studies have not produced "a comprehensive typology of the codes specific to different historical contexts, audience groups, and genres of communication". However, visual communication arguably crosses cultural boundaries with more ease due to the quality and accessibility of its generic language. Pictures and speech are different. Pictures do not have a grammar in the strict linguistic sense, but they have form, structure, convention and rules.

Hall (Hall *et al*, 1987: 128) suggests that the communication process can be thought of as a structure produced and sustained by production, circulation, distribution/ consumption, reproduction — each with its own modality, forms and conditions of existence. The social relationships of production, distribution and reproduction are areas where the symbolic transformations of meaning, their function and use in social interaction, occur.

Worth (1981: 181) argues that meaning is limited by individual psychological, social and cultural histories, which interact with socio-cultural limitations placed within specific contexts. Added to this list are the different functions of communication that have to be adequately formed in order for messages to be exchanged. Jakobson (1980) includes the referential, poetic, emotive, phatic, metalingual and conative functions (Gottdiener, 1995: 60-1).

Thus, communication occurs when intentionality, like-mindedness, social context and various functions of the sender-message-receiver model are performed adequately (Gottdiener, 1995: 62).

In the next section the way pictures are seen to create meaning is discussed through "natural" and "symbolic" categories.

1.3.4 The sign-event

Worth argues that pictures are structured intentionally for the purpose of implying meaning (Worth, 1981: 32). The intention and purpose of photographs are discussed later; the structuring is relevant here. An explanation of the way a photograph or picture renders meaning is attempted in Worth and Gross's (1974) model. This model attaches meaning to the "sign-event" which is divided into "natural" and "symbolic[4]" groups. "Natural" pictures, such as news documentary photographs or hidden cameras, are perceived as informative, and "symbolic" pictures are interpreted as communicating meaning with codes from the culture.

However, these divisions are problematic since no photographs are purely denotative (see section 1.3.5 Codes). "Natural" photographs may seem less coded than cinematic creations, but no photographs can be considered as code free. The "natural" events only appear to have no sense of attribution i.e. authorial intent. The symbolic sign event is read as carrying an intended message by its author and is termed *inference* by Worth (qtd. by

Gross in Worth, 1981: 26). However, both natural and symbolic sign events may be interpreted and thus become meaningful.

Meaning is not inherent within the sign, but exists in the "social context, conventions, and rules within, and by which, articulatory and interpretive strategies are invoked by producers and interpreters of symbolic forms" (Worth, 1981: 166).

Berger describes the process of meaning occurring through the interconnectedness and related coexistence of events. He argues that an event's development through time, and its duration, allow for meaning to be experienced. However, meaning can still be ambiguous when taken over time. Berger says that "the event moves towards or through meaning" (Berger and Mohr, 1982: 120).

He describes a photograph as arresting the movement of an event, or a process, which makes the meaning ambiguous. The frozen images are seen to move through a past into a future. The photograph must be seen as a cross-section of an event. However, the amount of information to be found in the object's or event's instantaneous appearance, varies according to the spectator's personal relation to the photographed event. He argues that complex photographs implicate other events; these simultaneous connections and cross-references provide a "long quotation" and another kind of meaning is made possible (Berger and Mohr, 1982: 120-122). This increases the coherence of the appearances even when the subject is totally unknown to the spectator.

The mode of symbolic interchange is a determinate moment, which has to be integrated into the social relations of the communicative processes with those of the photojournalistic process. In practical terms, the institutional structures of broadcasting and print, the organised relations and technical infrastructures, are required to produce a programme or a news article. Production in this case constructs the message which is framed by meanings

and ideas: "knowledge-in-use concerning the routines of production, historically defined technical skills, professional ideologies, institutional knowledge, definitions and assumptions, assumptions about the audience... frame the production structure" (Gottdiener, 1995: 129). The production structure is not a closed system. It draws from discursive formations within the wider socio-cultural and political structure (Gottdiener, 1995: 129).

Jussim states that we communicate meanings by transmitting them "through culturally approved and acceptable codes, whether these are of speech or of vision" (1983: 307). This next section considers the codes of denotation and connotation with reference to the many significations they yield. A critique on semiology's and Barthes's position on these codes elucidates the meaning of connotation and denotation through contextual and cultural codes.

1.3.5   Codes

Codes make signification possible. It is the codes of connotation that are the configurations of meaning which permit a sign to signify in addition to its denotative reference (Hall in Cohen *et al*, 1978: 176). Codes of denotation are precise, literal and unambiguous, and codes of connotation are more open-ended. Thus, the literal image is denoted and the symbolic image connoted. Hall states that "the photo signifies within the lexicon of expressive features distributed throughout the culture of which the reader is a member" (Cohen *et al*, 1978: 177). This formulation is reassessed later in this section.

The literal message is what is left in the photograph when the signs of connotation are mentally deleted, thus the message is relational in its denotation, but not substantial

(Barthes, 1977 in Innis, 1985: 199). However, Barthes adds that "we never encounter a literal image in a pure state". He says that the character of denotation seems to constitute a message without a code. He adds that:

> only the photograph is able to transmit the (literal) information without forming it by means of the discontinuous signs and rules of transformation. The photograph, message without a code, must thus be opposed to a drawing which even when denoted, is a coded message (Barthes, 1977 in Innis, 1985: 199).

A photograph for Barthes — although the photographer can select an object, plus its angle and point of view — does not intervene with the object, unlike drawing which requires a style. Thus, the denotation of a drawing is less pure than that of a photograph (Barthes, 1977 in Innis, 1985: 200). However, Barthes does not consider that there are photographic styles. Photography is shaped by the photographer's own social and cultural biases. Also, each photographer has a particular "style" of shooting or approaching assignments which contributes to the selective quality of photography.

Barthes (1977) argues that the literal coding prepares and facilitates connotation. The photograph is captured mechanically and the framing, distance, lighting, focus, speed are seen to belong to the plane of connotation (Innis, 1985: 201). Photography is thus embedded in connotation.

Connotative meanings are defined by lexicons or sub-codes, which are used within specific groups, or with reference to a more delimited domain (Heck in Hall *et al*, 1987: 125). Reading variations by different personae co-exist in a single individual: "The one lexia mobilises different lexicons" (Barthes, 1977 in Innis, 1985: 202). Signs from lexicon codes constitute the connotation of a photograph. This lexicon is not restricted to photography, or indeed to the domain of visual representation.

Codes, however, are also relevant to denoted meaning. Hall says that photographs represent a "truncated version" of a cultural code. A photograph may be "read" connotatively or denotatively (Cohen *et al*, 1978: 177). Taking this view of denotation further, Heck (Hall *et al*, 1987: 126) identifies denotation as a level that cannot be identified with a "neutral state of language" because denotation must be produced by the operation of a code. Thus we cannot subscribe to the idea that there is a level of denoted meaning which is free of any ideological operation (cf. chapter two). The destruction by semiologists of the connotation/ denotation in its traditional linguistic sense is made through the ideological meanings present in both processes. Hence, Barthes's understanding of denotation differs from this position and needs to be amended accordingly.

This is not to say there is no value in the denotation/ connotation distinction, just because both are coded meanings. The first order imputation of meaning (denotation) is the meaning according to its immediate function, the second-order imputation of meaning (connotation) signifies the social context (Gottdiener, 1995: 174). "Traditional news photography has been valued by newspaper editors for its denotative meaning, the news value behind an image" (Reaves, 1995b: 707). For example, the denotative level of meaning of a police photograph of OJ Simpson is that the police camera captured an eyewitness, indifferent portrait of the referent Simpson - the murder suspect and lead story for the June issue of *Time* and *Newsweek*[5] (Reaves,1995b: 707). At this denotative level the OJ Simpson photograph carries a cultural code. For example, a particular skin colour registers as significant in western culture. However, on the connotative level, Reaves states that the meaning is viewed as rich in cultural symbolism. The connotations that the manipulated photograph implies are outlined in the case study section of chapter five.

The connotation can be encoded or decoded so as to yield many different significations. It is at this level that Hall argues that situational ideologies alter and transform signification (Hall *et al*, 1987: 133). "The level of connotation of the visual sign, of its contextual reference and positioning in different discursive fields of meaning and association, is the point where already coded signs intersect with the deep semantic codes of a culture and take on additional, more active ideological dimensions" (Hall *et al*, 1987: 133).

Photography is a cultural representation that manifests knowledge. The next chapter assesses the extent to which ideology can be seen as a filter into the various codes of meaning.

A semiotic of pictures in its many codes provides a structure that allows pictures to present a dialogue to the world. Both the connotation and denotation in the varying degrees are partial to ideological processes (cf. chapter two). The three stages of semiosis, within socio-semiotics (see below), assist in identifying the values embedded in signs. Further, the social context of signs is dependent on the social process of messages for meaning to be established.

1.4   Socio-semiotics

This section illustrates how socio-semiotics considers ways that objects (photographs), that are produced by industry (the media), have their connotative meanings transformed by social processes.

According to the socio-semiotic approach, sources of codes can derive from only three modes of social interaction. Gottdiener's (1995: 179) modes make the control of meaning

problematic because of the three separate fields of social interaction, namely, producer/ object/ user (which are discussed shortly). The modes include: "The ascription of social status that is in part a historical process; use value transformed to sign value, through the variety of separate cultural activities; and exchange value transformed to sign value, especially under capitalist relations of production" (Gottdiener, 1995: 179). Hence these modes bring the social status, cultural codes, exchange value of the sign as part of, and embedded within, interpretation.

The socio-semiotic approach rejects the individual's common form of critical review such as interpretations of objects and events. This approach requires, instead, a reading of "social practices of cultural use, exchange and communication production." This involves division of the "creative cycle into its production, distribution, and subcultural consumption or usage components which correspond to the three stages of semiosis" (Gottdiener, 1995: 186). These modes add another dimension to the understanding of the many facets that contribute to and influence the way meaning is created and interpreted in photographs. The three stages of semiosis identify areas where Gottdiener's modes occur.

The separate social locations are visualised in three separate stages by Gottdiener. The *Producer/ User* is the first stage of semiosis. This stage reflects the capitalist commodity manufacturer's production of objects for their exchange value. The purchasers desire the objects for their use value (Gottdiener, 1995:180). This is true for newspapers where they are purchased for their news value. Gottdiener argues that this "use value is embedded in a cultural life whose meaning systems pre-exist the first stage of semiosis associated with mass culture...". He adds: "The intention of the producer, therefore, draws on a different social practice from that of the user" (Gottdiener, 1995: 180). Not all objects are produced for their exchange value, but news photography is seen to have exchange value. For

example, a photographer may sell his photographs to a media institution and in turn they are used in publications to attract readers, i.e. purchasers.

At the second stage of semiosis, *User/ Object*, Gottdiener views objects involved in the everyday life of social groups as used because of their practical function (1995: 181). The use values can be transformed by users into sign vehicles that signify a second-order function. Users produce meaning by modifying "objects of mass consumption in order to express certain socially meaningful cultural symbols, or in connection with specific group practices, or for use in subcultural activities." One aspect of meaning of production can be illustrated whereby objects of mass consumption are modified to express socially meaningful cultural symbols.

This stage also applies to the media. Photographs are sign vehicles that become meaningful cultural symbols. In addition to that, their sign vehicle status gets transformed, thus assuming a use value.

Finally the *Producer/ Object* stage is the creation of meanings by the producers themselves. This stage is the main focus for the process of hegemonic control associated with the study of ideology (Gottdiener, 1995: 183). The nature of photography allows for various selective processes — camera angle, point of focus et cetera (cf. chapter three) — which are already framed by the photographer's vision. It is at this stage of semiosis that photographs can be made to create "other" meanings, either in the process of capturing the photograph, or by digital manipulation. However, it does not necessarily follow that all photographs are used in terms of hegemonic control. The different types of sign values highlight the processes of meaning within the sphere of interpretation.

"The process of linking or connecting expression and content is social and depends upon the perspective of the observer" (Eco, 1979 in Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 466). For Eco a sign is incomplete without an interpretant or context; the social act of linking the expression and content is brought to the signifying event. Therefore, when the interpretant changes, the sign changes meaning. Eco's approach creates ways in which to think about social groups assigning meaning to objects. Socio-semiotics considers the meaning of material objects as a product of social context, thus the object itself does not possess meaning until it enters social interaction.

"A socio-semiotics of mass culture, then, must trace the ways in which objects produced by industry have their connotative meanings transformed by social processes" (Gottdiener, 1995: 175). This can take place through the actions of consumers and producers; therefore it characterises the producer/ object/ user relation.

1.5   Conclusion

This chapter traces photography from its initial communicative functions. Historically the media has reflected values and initiated social change with the aid of photographs. In addition, news photographs have also shaped knowledge in particular ways (cf. chapters two and three). The language of photographs requires a common social and cultural background for signification and interpretation to take place. The route to signification and interpretation originates via the semiotic concept of the sign. The sign does not function purely on its own, but is reliant on independent elements such as expression and content. Visual communication involves the process of encoding and decoding such elements. Photographs can be interpreted in a variety of ways. Psychological, social and cultural histories place limitations on the range of interpretations of specific contexts. This sign

event exhibits both the denotative and connotative properties, which are influenced by the operational code. Connotations can be powerful constructs of social convention. It is at both the denotative and connotative levels where questions of credibility arise within the construction and the producer's *inference* of a photograph. The next chapter moves away from how meaning is made and concentrates on the interpretive quality of photographs and how they hold preferred meanings.

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[1] Chapter two elucidates the notion that visual representations add to our knowledge about the world.
[2] "Image" is used interchangeably with "photograph" in this study.
[3] Signified is not the same as the object.
[4] The term "symbolic" is redefined when used in photography and is thus different from the way Peirce classifies signs in section 1.3.2 The sign.
[5] These examples are analysed further in the case study section of this thesis.

Chapter Two

Negotiated images

2.1   Introduction

This chapter considers Sontag's premise (1977: 153 in Lister, 1995: 4) that a chief activity of the world has been the production and consumption of photographic images. Photographs are substituted for first hand experiences that have become indispensable to the economy and politics and within the individual's private domain. Lister (1995) suggests that changes in how the world is imaged change how the world is seen. These changes relate to both the producers and consumers of photographs. These changes are ideological in the sense described in this chapter. The concept of ideology is picked up throughout the various discussions on meaning and news media. Ideology is a level of meaning which is present in all kinds of discourses, not only spoken or written texts but also all meaningful cultural and social practices. Ideology and credibility[1] rest on the codes of naturalism. Naturalism within news photography does not merely refer to realistic codes but incorporates accepted "natural" and "normal" codes. Naturalism is discussed in terms of Slater's formulation and Jenks' concept of subjective interpretation which is seen as being embedded in ideological phenomena (Jenks, 1995). Ideology within the context of language and meaning is discussed in this chapter.

2.2   Ideology

Ideology, according to Ellul (1969: 116), is any set of ideas accepted by individuals or peoples, without attention to their origin or value. But he says that one must add to this set of accepted ideas, firstly, an element of valuation (cherished ideas), secondly, an element of actuality (ideas relating to the present), and thirdly, an element of belief (believed, rather than proved, ideas). These elements of ideology add to the credibility of news stories for the public because these stories are part of the world of the reader, and they are current, believable, and cherished ideas about news as a neutral window on the world. The aforementioned ideological elements form part of the conditions that a news photograph depends on to potentially signify. These conditions will be discussed later in this chapter.

Ideology, in the Althusserian sense, operates by constituting the subjectivity of individuals. Larrain (1979: 167) argues that humans are able to act because each individual is put in positions of ideological coherence and responsibility for his or her own actions. In this perspective the practice of representation and the practice to produce certain meanings necessitate subjects as their supports (Coward and Ellis, 1977 in Larrain, 1979: 167). Althusser's ideology, like Ellul's, is largely unintended and unnoticed. Ideology forms our common sense interpretations of the world. Photographs are representations of our lived realities, therefore they too are ideological.

Thus, by closing off all contradictions "ideology gives to the subject the appearance of unity" (Larrain, 1979: 167). However this perceived unity is mutable and constantly redefined.

The changes in photographic production are reflected in the ideological changes of how

the world is seen. For Lister (1995: 4), these ideological changes in turn are thought to relate to shifts in "how the world is known and to the identities of those who do the seeing and knowing". The inference here is that changes in photography (digital technology) can impact on how people see the status of photojournalism as a credible form of representation. The ideology of credibility can change. The shifts in ideology, for Vernon (1971), are formed in structures and not "images" nor "concepts". Ideology is a system of coding reality and not a determined set of coded messages. He concludes that, at this level of analysis, an "ideology can be defined as a system of semantic rules to generate messages" (Heck in Hall *et al*, 1987: 123).

The following discussion assesses the extent to which ideology can be seen to filter into the various codes of meaning, including that of photographs.

2.2.1   Meaning

Saussurian linguistics considers the message as having an internal and an independent structure and as impersonal and inter-changeable (Larrain, 1979: 141). To get to the core of the message the semantic rules must go through a process of disentanglement from signification to content. Hall argues that the signification in a message is established by means of a code that permits the message to be organised (Hall *et al,* 1987: 124).

The messages are on many levels of organisation. Ideology — as a property of signification — can be present in any message or discourse. Vernon (1971) observes that "ideology is a level of signification which operates by connotation" (Heck in Hall *et al*, 1987: 126). However, connotation is not the only level of signification where ideology takes place. Heck indicates that the denotative level cannot be identified with a neutral state of language since denotations are produced by the operation of a code (Hall *et al,*

1987: 126). "The operation of naturalised codes reveals not the transparency and naturalness of language but the depth, the habituation and the near-universality of the codes in use... . These conditions of perception are, however, a result of a highly coded, even if virtually unconscious, set of operations — decodings" (Hall *et al*, 1987: 132). Ideology, then, involves the "whole universe of the sign" including its connotative and denotative codes within the message.

The process of encoding and decoding a message affects the initial intended and unintended meaning. According to Hall (Hall *et al,* 1987: 131), "the codes of encoding and decoding may not be perfectly symmetrical." The degrees of symmetry — that is, the degrees of "understanding" and "misunderstanding" in the communicative exchange — depend on the degrees of symmetry/ asymmetry (relations of equivalence) established between the positions of the "personifications", encoder-producer and decoder-receiver. But this, in turn, depends on the degrees of identity/ non-identity between the codes which perfectly or imperfectly transmit, interrupt or systematically distort what has been transmitted (Hall *et al*, 1987: 131). And that, in turn, depends to a large extent on a common ideology or set of ideologies.

The structural differences — of relation and position between media institutions and audiences — indicate a lack of equivalence between the two sides in the communicative exchange. This lack of equivalence may contribute to the lack of fit between codes as well as the asymmetry between codes of "source" and "receiver" at the moment of transformation into and out of the discursive form (distortions/ misunderstandings).

Several interpretations coexist as potentials in any one text, and may be actualised differently by different audiences, depending on their interpretive conventions and cultural

backgrounds. Jensen (1995: 75) refers to the interpretive scope of media texts as the polysemy of media discourses.

Despite the potential for differences, the "preferred" meanings are embedded in a set of ideological phenomena, practices and beliefs such as "the everyday knowledge of social structures, of how things work for all practical purposes in this culture, the rank order of power and interest and the structure of legitimations, limits and sanctions" (Hall *et al*, 1987: 134).

The producers of meanings bring to these "preferred" meanings their own subjective components that become part of the embeddedness of phenomena which is discussed in the following section.

2.2.2   News Media

It is argued that journalists bring with them their own political biases and leanings to the news gathering and production process. A reporter's political affiliation, religion, education, social class, gender and a host of personal biases all play a role in the angle and presentation of news stories (Sontag, 1977: 88). The photojournalist also falls prey to the way these factors work with ideology to define the subjectivity of the individual. The "impersonal, objective image" is not an objective record of the world but shows instead what an individual sees (Sontag, 1977: 88).

However, the photograph is one that appears "natural" and "neutral" on the operational level of news production. To signify the world, newspapers must infer what is already

known, as a present or absent structure. Hall adds that "what is already known" is not a set of neutral facts. "It is a set of common-sense constructions and ideological interpretations about the world, which holds the society together at the level of everyday beliefs" (Cohen *et al*, 1978: 183). This is what enables Althusser's "familiar recognitions" to operate. Hall quotes Althusser as saying: "It is precisely by operating with the category of the subject, and by producing in the reader's familiar recognitions, that a discourse becomes ideological" (Cohen *et al*, 1978: 180). There are invariant features, or methods, of the natural attitude that are used to make sense of the world.

Tuchman (1978: 188-191) sees these features as reflexivity and indexicality. "Reflexivity specifies that accounts are embedded in the very reality that they characterise, record or structure." For example, a photograph has a specific context, a time and place within a certain reality. Indexicality describes the additive qualities separate from the context of production and which are attributed to social actors. This implies the photographers' framing, perception and selection (among other phenomena) are the additive qualities. These additive qualities should not be seen as separate from, but as part of, the ideological "familiar recognitions" of how a message is presented. These recognitions are present in the following three conditions upon which a news photograph is dependent to potentially signify:

Firstly, the story or photograph must link with a happening or an occurrence (as was discussed earlier in this chapter). Secondly, the happening or occurrence must have taken place recently, and thirdly it must be ranked as newsworthy (Hall in Cohen *et al*, 1978: 182).

Further, Hall distinguishes two aspects to the signification of news pictures. "The first is

the *news value* of the photographic sign. The second is the *ideological level* of the

photographic sign" (Cohen *et al*, 1978: 179). This can be misleading in that news values

are not without ideology: they define the construction of the story in terms of the

professional ideology of news. Nonetheless, Hall does draw attention to how ideology can

also elaborate the story, which involves the "whole universe of the sign" in terms of its

denoted/ connoted themes and interpretations. He adds that the ideological themes are

inflected in different ways according to a particular construction that each newspaper

selects. Thus, it appears that the news photograph must lend itself to exploitation at the

"formal news" (ideological) level and that it can signify an ideological theme (Hall in

Cohen *et al*. 1978: 180). In this study ideology is seen to be present in all codes of

signification in as much as they imply a preferred subjectivity for their meaning and

coherence.

2.3   Naturalism

The subjectivity at the centre of news as an ideological code is a realist subjectivity which signals naturalness in its code, which equates to naturalism. There are, however, different thoughts and perspectives on naturalism, and these merit some discussion. This study distinguishes between "naturalism" and "realism". Naturalism is not merely realistic but incorporates the "natural" and "normal" concepts within its definition. Naturalism within news photography depends on realist codes of fidelity between the referent and photographic representation, and "normal' codes of production in this representation.

The first digital photographs appeared in the late 1980's. Since then developments have changed how photographs can be produced, circulated and consumed. These developments have been blamed for the surge of "you cannot believe what you see" warnings. Media journals continue to discuss the concerns surrounding the future of newspaper photography (cf. chapter three).

According to Lister (1995: 2) the new technology will interact with the established uses, values and meanings of photographic images. The beliefs historically invested in the photographic image could change. Changes in "the domestic world, the forms of public media, the surveilling of the body and social groups, the spaces of leisure and entertainment" are areas which the new technology will have to negotiate (Lister, 1995: 2).

Lister (1995: 2) says that the new technology's "negotiation" in these established areas will eventually come to create, or be given, new meanings. This is especially the case with regard to naturalism.

In line with discussions of the changing perceptions relating to the new technology, there is the view that the world is a collection of multiple realities which are experienced as many sub-universes. This differs from the idea that actors in the social world accept phenomena as a single given. The concept of "seeing is believing", particularly in photography, has been such an accepted phenomenon. Thus, a news story is accepted as having occurred as an objective given, even though the veracity or slant of the news story may be challenged (Tuchman, 1978: 185-6).

Slater (Jenks, 1995) observes that the modern injunction to believe only what one sees coexists with technical powers that produce convincing spectacles. This technical accomplishment of realism will henceforth be referred to as "naturalism". According to Slater, realism (naturalism in the terms of this thesis) "is the basis not of knowledge of the world but of the production of simulated worlds" (Jenks, 1995: 232). Slater builds his theory from the following three components, namely, representational realism, ontological or existential realism and mechanical realism. These merit further analysis:

Firstly, representational realism (this corresponds to the codes of realism as the concept is used in this study, refer to chapter three): photography from its conception was received as realistic "in its success in measuring up to codes of realistic representation current to other media, above all western painting", such as in portrait or landscape conventions. Representational realism depends on trivial realism: "even the most extravagant fantasy or science fiction depends upon building the conviction of its reality on elements such as objects, appearances, movements which can be treated as perceptually accurate" (Slater in

Jenks, 1995: 232).

Secondly, ontological or existential realism: a photograph depends on the existence of the object photographed, or on an event — reflexivity in Tuchman's sense (see above). "It is this feature that sets photography off on its dialectic of presence and absence... . It is also the feature which compels belief through the presumption of a unique and privileged relation between sign and referent" (Slater in Jenks, 1995: 222).

Thirdly, mechanical realism: "photography brings modernity to a culminating point in that the means of representing the world, the means of knowing it and the means of producing or transforming it are brought together within a single, conceptually unified technology of vision" (Slater in Jenks, 1995: 222).

Jenks suggests that ontological and mechanical realism "add to mere representational fidelity a privileged relation to the world of objects" (Jenks, 1995: 223). He views photography as modern vision in every sense and as such "reducing the world to objectively described surfaces with no inherent meaning: to facts" (Jenks, 1995: 223). He argues that modernity seems to restrict "believing" to "seeing" (Jenks, 1995: 223).

However, in a photograph the objects represented are reduced to signs [representational realism] which are dependent on interpretation, which is subjective, in order to create meaning. Jenks (1995: 14) adds that while our concepts have a metaphoric relation with the "real" continuous world, the relationship is never "direct". They stand for a state of affairs, they do not assume the states of literal descriptions - they are meta (above) and phoric (in the place of).

Jenks takes Slater's theory further with the concept of subjective interpretation. This reminds us that although the preferred meanings are embedded as set of ideological phenomena, not all people will accept the code, or accept it in the preferred way. Naturalism, then, can be at stake.

2.4   The observable and the knowable

The subjectivity preferred by news naturalism accords well with positivism, which is best understood as an attitude towards knowledge. The psychological, historical or political grounds of knowledge are assumed in terms of "pure perception", which is a fundamental canon of empiricism. Comte stated that "what can be seen can be believed" (Jenks, 1995: 6). "Vision" is the positivists' criterion for evaluating the validity of depictions of reality and statements about the world.

Jenks (1995: 1) argues that cognition has become conflated with visual ability. He says that "vision is lionised among the senses and treated as wholly autonomous, free and pure." He adds that the visual experience of the real is often indirect, pointing to TV, film, video, photography and advertising as providing most of the access to other frozen, stored, contrived and re-presented photographs (Jenks, 1995: 10).

It can be hypothesised that knowledge comes through experience whether that experience is direct or indirect experience. Understanding the meaning of phenomena or things, thus the way humans classify and make sense of the world, was developed by phenomenologists. For Schutz, common-sense knowledge is shared and learnt. However, this knowledge is constantly modified in the course of human interaction (Haralambos and Holborn, 1990: 808).

The objective existence of social phenomena, for Schutz (1962), stems from the cognitive styles of individuals when dealing with social reality. Thus, the everyday world is constituted in its taken-for-grantedness. Tuchman (1978) identifies two strains of Schutz's list of cognitive style characteristics. Firstly, social actors are active in the world through which they apprehend and create meanings. But secondly, there are the basic elements of social life that are taken-for-granted, such as time and intersubjectivity. This notion of "taken-for-grantedness" is seen as a "natural attitude" which demands a sense of a collectively shared social order.

Further, common sense knowledge may be said to be the relation between knower and known. Smith (1972: 2 in Tuchman, 1978: 178) clarifies this:

> The knower cannot therefore be collapsed into the known. To know is always to know on some terms and the paradox of knowing is that we discover in its object the lineaments of what we already know. There is no other way to know that humanly and therefore the knower is situated historically and culturally. This is the fundamental human condition of knowing. The very concept of knowledge itself ... is historically and culturally given. If to be situated as such entails ideology (indeed, if to be human entails ideology), then knowledge is fundamentally ideological.

Knowledge is obtained through experiences that are actively interpreted in terms of given codes (some of which may be contradictory). What is experienced through our vision, in particular through photographs, is of importance for the research question of this study.

Social and cultural theories and perspectives are forms of understanding that reflect society's network of action and institutional processes. Thus, "the visions of social theory are realised through the practices of selection, abstraction and transformation" (Jenks, 1995: 8). The created level, the (re)presentation, provides the potential arena for the manipulation and control of photographs (cf. chapter three).

Photographs may be distorted and may thus reduce their fidelity to an unmediated reading or decoding of an object. Whether photographs will be read as intended, is dependent on the establishment of convention. A general rule when fidelity to the conventions and naturalism is sacrificed, is that the observer's perception of the intended message may be vague. It is the case that if the distortion is such that its intention is enhanced, the picture can evoke "not only a mediated perception of something concrete, but also an apprehension of its general, abstract or universal features" (Gibson, 1966: 98). Naturalism, however, deals in the "concrete" rather than the general, and it is this which is relevant to this thesis.

Photography is seen as privileging a sense of vision as the route to knowledge. Thus, the world is reduced to appearance. What is represented, how and why, are all of concern when photographs are seen as sources of knowledge.

2.5   Conclusion

In this chapter ideology is defined as a system of coding which is present in all codes of signification. The world is signified in a "natural" and "neutral" way. These qualities are referred to as "familiar recognitions" in Althusser's ideology. The "familiar recognitions" take place in the connotative and denotative codes within a message.

The objectiveness, or taken-for-grantedness, of the everyday world becomes a subjective filter by photographers and the consumers. This taken-for-grantedness requires the premise that there be a sense of a shared social order. The naturalist view signals the naturalness of the ideological code.

Meanings are negotiated and a message is never guaranteed to succeed in its intended meaning, whether the message appears in text, speech or visual form. Meaning is not inherent within the sign, but exists in the social context within which it appears. Naturalised codes of photography that seem universal are subject to degrees of understanding and misunderstanding in the communicative process. From the first step of recording an image on photographic film or microchip, the photographer makes certain decisions that will affect the final product. At this first stage of message production, the perspective of the photographer (the latter as a subject who is subjected to various codes), is laden within a specific consciousness, intention and the ability to translate the event into a realistic interpretive photograph. This in turn forms the subjective recording of the

photograph. The message taken/ read depends on the visual literacy and other social factors of the reader. Thus the ideological transformation operates implicitly, often beneath intention.

The process of photographic production within the digital realm not only changes the way photographs are produced, but how they are distributed, changed and consumed. The following chapter outlines some aspects of digital technology, the ways it is used and some debates surrounding it with relevance to news photography. A definition of manipulation is formulated with reference to accepted codes of photographic representation.

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[1] Credibility is discussed in chapter four.

Chapter Three

The implications of digital technology

3.1 Introduction

Since the early 1980's the photographic industry has increasingly relied on digital imaging technology, which entails the electronic coding of photographs for purposes of storage, transmission, or computer assisted alteration.

Technological innovations change the boundaries, the definitions and the quality of the photojournalist's work. "Innovations vary in the degree and nature of their perceived impact" (Becker, 1991: 382). This study focuses on the digitalisation of the photographic image with the emphasis on the occupational group most affected by the technology, namely photojournalists, newspaper picture editors and chief photographers (i.e. the informed community).

Some factors considered in this chapter are: the differences between the electronic and the film-based photograph; the debates arising from the digitalisation of photographs; codes of realism; and the problems associated with an adequate definition of the term "manipulation".

Photography is undergoing a metamorphosis from a century and a half of traditional chemical processes. The new technology dramatically accelerates information transfer and has been readily used over the last few years by many newspapers and in varying degrees. The aim is to trace this metamorphosis in relation to how the technology affects the way

that photographs are taken, used and perceived by the informed community. This metamorphosis requires that existing terms and theories be redefined to assist in the adequate theorising and discussion of news photography within the digital realm.

3.2 Digital technology

Technological innovation is continuous in photojournalism, which may affect pre-existing photojournalistic procedures. This section outlines some aspects of digital technology and the ways in which it is used. Digital cameras, software, differences between digital photographs and digital images, and digital imaging debates are some of the main points analysed. Section 3.3 formulates a definition of the term "manipulation" in the way that it is used in this study.

3.2.1 Digital cameras

The first photograph to be scanned and transmitted over telephone wires and printed was in 1921. This was analog, but still electronic or 'electrical' (PIR, 1996: 1). However, the first digital camera was the non-film still camera (the Sony "Mavica"), which was first presented in 1982 at an engineering conference. From this point onwards research and development of improved versions began. At the summer Olympics in 1984, Canon tested its prototype electronic still camera (Foss, 1988: 17). In 1986 the Photokina trade fair in Cologne displayed versions of the still video camera. The still video camera is designed like the 35mm camera. It uses a charge-coupled device (CCD) as the imaging sensor, and records onto a disk, which holds 25 to 50 images, depending on whether the camera is operating in "frame" or "field" mode. A frame image takes up two fields, providing better resolution. Becker (1991: 387) argues that "the appeal of the new medium lies in its immediacy; the image is projected and edited directly onto a video screen, eliminating all

the time-consuming chemistry of the darkroom." The still video camera is very useful to news gathering institutions for quick and effective image transmission.

Image transmission is not reserved for digital camera photographs. Photographs taken with a conventional film camera can also be transmitted. The need to produce prints is eliminated by scanning the negatives and transmitting the images over telephone lines. Negatives are captioned, formatted and transmitted to computers or output printers. The electronic picture desk stores and edits the images.

With the introduction of digital cameras the process of scanning negatives has been eliminated. Tartar (1997a: 1) states that in 1995 the first digital camera aimed at photojournalists was introduced. Didlick, photo editor at *The Vancouver Sun* says, "This generation of digital cameras is a good marriage of technology between a hard drive, a camera and a charge-coupled device (CCD)" (cited in Tartar, 1997a: 1).

At the time of writing (1999), there are three digital capture systems on the market. First there is the one shot or instant capture system that writes its images on disk. Depending on the file size it may take a second or two to write and thus it cannot take pictures at the same speed as a motordrive. Secondly, there is the linear array camera, which was initially used for static images in studio photography. It is essentially the camera back that scans the image, which allows data to be captured. And thirdly, there is the three shot colour camera which makes three separate exposures that make up a large file capable of printing larger formats than A3 (Black, n.d.).

Digital cameras have tiny light-sensitive computer chips that convert light rays into a digital file that a computer can recreate. As in the traditional camera, light enters through a

lens, but instead of hitting light-sensitive chemicals on film, it reaches electronic sensors that turn the rays into electric currents. These sensors are really an array of charge-coupled devices or CCD's and much like film, the larger the sensor, the more data or detail it can capture. Image sensors have special filtrations coated over the front and each CCD has to work accurately and in harmony with the thousands of millions of other CCD's grouped with it (Black, n.d., Hamilton, 1996: 36). A second chip changes these currents into a stream of digits. Finally, the chips compress the digital information. This data is then transmitted to a hard disk inside the camera. When the camera's internal storage fills up, the images can be transferred to the computer, using a cable and software.

The electronic back is fixed to a compatible camera body. The camera accepts all F-mount lenses compatible with the camera. It has standard single lens reflex camera (SLR) features such as automatic exposure, flash and self-timing. A feature also available is the built-in microphone to record "sound notes" for each image. Most of the professional digital cameras support removable media compatibles with its PCMCIA-ATA drive. This allows the photojournalist to carry as much storage space as needed, and plug in a variety of compatible hard disk card and flash memory cards. The camera serves as a card reader that can be connected to a computer via a standard small computer system interface (SCSI) cable (Lansdown, 1996: 2).

The images can be transmitted from a scene instantly, regardless of how far the photographer is from the office. "A photographer in the field is now able to capture an image on a light-sensitive semiconductor chip and send it to the newsroom via a telephone line, microwave or even satellite" (Lasica, 1989: 24).

Since the late 1990s the first Hybrid Digital Video Camcorder from Canon has been

introduced. The Optura is more advanced than previous digital cameras or SLR cameras. It can capture high-speed objects undetectable to the human eye. In addition to capturing still images it also records full motion video and audio digitally. The high resolution still images can be recorded at a rate of 30 frames per second, which is three times faster than the motordrive capabilities of a professional SLR camera. It also uses a CCD image sensor. This unique Progressive Scan CCD has two propriety integrated circuits, contrasted to the Interlace Scan system (common to digital video and analog camcorders) which creates a frame image using two opposing fields that causes image flicker, making printing impractical. The camera has three recording modes, namely, photomode, normal movie mode and the progressive scan movie mode. These modes can all be combined on to one Mini-DV cassette (Optura Canon, 1997).

In 1998 the first "clip-on" digital back system for 35mm SLR cameras was introduced.[1] This digital back system requires that the existing back be removed and digital back be clipped on. It translates the camera from analog recorder to a digital recorder.

3.2.2   Advantages and disadvantages

The changes in technology bring new ways of handling photographs. The advantages and disadvantages of the digital technology and those of the conventional silver halide method are outlined by Black (n.d.).

3.2.2.1   Digital Imaging Technology

Advantages:

There is no waiting for processing, deliveries, labs work on prints etc.
Images can be examined immediately and adjusted whilst on the shoot.
Film has three colour layers that are chemically combined. One correction in light exposure affects all colours. Digital layers are separate. To correct a bride's dress can be done independently of all the other colours, i.e. white dress, perfect skin tones and normal surround. With film, the cyan/blue correction to the dress would cause the skin and all other components of the picture to be over-corrected.
Images can be collaged quickly and accurately. Text and other elements can be incorporated into the

image (composition).

Virtually unlimited special effects and controls can be applied. These effects are very restricted and awkward in silver halide technology.

World-wide image transmission is possible.

Facilitates organised image storage and retrieval.

Digital means permanent archiving without the shortcomings of film deterioration.

Disadvantages:

Problems with extremely fine patterns in highlights or bright areas called artifacts are evident. The patterns or details may be lost in these areas. This is repairable on the computer but can take time to fix.

High cost of implementing the whole system and training.

Filled-up drives with pictures require the photojournalist to download the images in order to use the drive again. This would require a computer and cables.

If storage space is limited adequate archival of digital photographs can be problem.

3.2.2.2   Silver Halide

Advantages:

You do not need a computer to proof images. You do not have to learn computer systems or terminology. However, for PC literate photographers computer work is easier than darkroom work.

Certain cameras do not require batteries and can shoot in remote locations endlessly.

Film and cameras cost less.

Current digital instant capture systems cannot produce murals or very large prints. There are scan cameras that can do this but they are not instant capture systems.

There are a larger variety of camera systems and capabilities.

Disadvantages:

Silver halide production process is slow. Imaging-on-demand is competitive and can lose a silver halide photographer's once permanent customers because of not keeping pace with today's modern deadlines.

Very prone to errors, whether human or chemical, a great deal can go wrong with the silver halide image. However, computer glitches also do happen.

Poorly exposed negatives are difficult to print from. The silver halide system does not have the capabilities to add logos, text and effects. However, this can be done once the image is scanned.

Computer photographs are attractive for numerous reasons as discussed above. "Digital retouching is usually much faster than reshooting a studio illustration (or other image), although the computer's time to produce the image can add several hours. Related technology has made it possible to feed the retouched image directly into production or transmitters for wire service distribution" (Becker, 1991: 385). Both methods have drawbacks, but digital-imaging technology appears to be more attractive to photojournalism because it makes it easier to cope with immediacy pressures.

According to Rasmussen (1991: B09), news professionals have endorsed the new technology for the positive advantages it brings to daily newsgathering: speed and quality. Likewise Lambert (1991: 55) says, "Faster transmitting times coupled with better quality means a newspaper or magazine can offer more to its readers."

3.2.3 Adobe Photoshop

Adobe Photoshop is a software program that has facilitated and expanded visual illustrators' creative potential. It has the capability to handle photographs, graphics or video. As an image-editing program it assists photographers and visual communicators to edit, retouch proofs, create original or composite artwork, produce pre-press colour separations and it can also synthesise textures, patterns, and special effects (Dayton *et al*, 1995: 1).

Software programs change and restructure photographs, thus a theory of visual representation must also be restructured to encompass the new codes of representation. Lister (1995: 16) interprets Mitchell (1992) as suggesting that a software program — such as Adobe Photoshop — can operate like a practical demonstration of photographic semiotics. The program is open to post-capture "manipulations"[2] of photographs. The exploration of this software assists in the understanding of photographic representation within digital constructs.

3.2.4 Digital changes

The term "image" is used in this study to refer to any visual representation including computer images (digital image), illustrations and photographs. It is essential to distinguish between the terms "digital image" and "digital photograph". Digital information in the

form of digital images belongs to a world of computers. A digital image or computer image is best described by Irby (1998: 2) as a "pure digital illustration, created on a computer to achieve a particular effect, which either uses photographs as its base material, or is so photorealistic that it may be perceived as being real." However, a digital photograph is defined as a photograph that has been "captured electronically on a hard drive (storage device) or converted from film to digital format through an electronic scanning process" (Irby, 1997 and 1998). Strictly speaking, the data is distinct from the photograph as such: it needs to be read as a photographic image through a software program.

A photograph does not have to be captured digitally to be translated into digital data. With the aid of laser technology, tone photographs can be scanned for colour reproduction and wire service transmissions. The scanned photograph is made of digital data that is displayed on a gridded screen that divides the picture into minute picture elements or "pixels". The term pixel originates from the words picture and element (Negroponte, 1995: 108). Pixels are mobile, numerical data that consist of two symbols, the digits 0 and 1 and are referred to as the binary code. The over all sequence of this code is called a byte (Feldman, 1997: 1).

"The real power of the pixel comes from its molecular nature, in that a pixel can be part of anything, from text to lines to photographs" (Feldman, 1997: 1). With digital software a picture can be altered at will: matching tones and colours and blending edges. The "real" world is thus translated into the "digital" world, which is infinitely changeable on computer. The digital information can be changed at all stages, "from the moment it is created or captured in digital form to the moment it is delivered to its user and beyond" (Feldman, 1997: 4).

Digital changes are termed electronic retouching, computer imaging, and electronic colour imaging or ECI (Reaves, 1987b: 24). With a digitised photograph and software like Adobe Photoshop it is easy to remove, clone, delete or combine objects from a scene or add something without detection (Reaves, 1987b: 24, Quittner, 1991: 57). Shadows can be under or over emphasised, sizes can be matched to scale, colours and objects can be cloned to match perfectly. Pre-digital techniques in the making of a photograph were often easier to detect because the techniques were done manually which is less precise.

A photograph captured in digital form can be altered without detection. There is no way of knowing if the digital data has been changed unless the original data are kept intact and only copies are worked upon. Green expresses concern over this issue. "The fear is going to come with electronic cameras. Now we have an acetate base — we have the original to judge from. When you put digital images into a modem it will cut down on safeguards. No one knows what the original looks like" (Green cited in Reaves, 1987a: 47). Sawyer (1994: a03) agrees that, "With the advent of cameras that take electronic photographs, many images now begin in digital form. There is no permanent original." However the "original" photograph is a construction made of choices ranging from composing the scene to the film used. Here the term original refers to the constructed photograph as a product, the way it was made before it is scanned or translated digitally and viewed on a screen. This implies that there is no physical original (like a negative) if the photograph is captured digitally, only electronic data made of mutable bytes rather than fixed atoms.

3.2.5 Decision-makers

Since the media industry's introduction to digital software there have been many examples of published "manipulated" news photographs. Photojournalism ethics panels and

conferences have been dominated by the controversial use of this image technology. Debates that have raised concern include: issues around the ethics of changing photographs, code of ethics, media credibility[3] and the perceived loss of photographic control by the photojournalists. The latter point has a strong relevance to this study considering that most photojournalists have very little control over their photographs with regards to how they will be used, cropped or retouched.

"Photographers fear that, with the added power electronic technology brings to the picture desk, photojournalism is increasingly shaped by people who are visually illiterate (or have little or no prior experience in photojournalism — AL)" (Becker, 1991: 390). Becker suggests that within the news organisation the new technology may eventually lead to designers making photographic editing decisions. This implies that it is easier for the design and layout department to make decisions with regards to photographic selection and editing, which in the past has been done by photo editors and photographers. In chapter six the results of the research survey relating to this question of photographic editing control show that South African photojournalists (65%) are seldom consulted about photograph usage.

Tartar accords with Becker that digital cameras change the way photographers do their job, but he perceives the change as empowering, rather than disempowering, the photographer. He says, "Instead of relying on someone else to handle the image, digital photography allows photographers more control over their own image" (Tartar, 1997c: 1). Tartar sees digital technology as enabling the photographers to crop, burn or dodge their photographs. "With training, the control is given back to the photographer" (Didlick cited in Tartar, 1997b: 2). This may be true for some newspapers in the US, but South African

photojournalists do not readily handle their photographs on computer[4].

A photojournalist transmitting photographs from a remote location has no control over which photograph is selected, deleted, modified and possibly "manipulated". This may also be true if the photographer is not remote. A photographer may also be trained and capable of using the new software, but this does not guarantee that the photographer will be consulted or present at the newsdesk when the photographs are altered. During deadline conditions decisions are made with little discussion particularly if the change seems minor. Yet some changes may seem minor to a design and layout person, but may in fact be a crucial element of the news story.

With no original and with more control in the hands of designers, it is evident that many people in newspaper departments could decide on photographic changes by simply having access to the computer system (Reaves, 1987a: 47). Becker sees the digital transmission system's characteristic of increasing speed as shifting responsibilities of selecting and editing photographs away from the photographer (1991: 390). An example of such a scenario occurred at the *Orange County Register* when a designer, without consulting the photojournalist, colour corrected a photograph of a swimming pool. The designer was unaware that the story was about vandals who had dyed the pool red (NP 1987 cited in Becker, 1991: 386). Digital technology's continued development is thus seen by many photojournalists as contributing to their loss of photographic control[5]. The fact that photographs can be and are being changed, regardless of who does the change, raises questions about photography as a medium for conveying "the real".

3.3   Realism

Photography can be regarded as a sign vehicle of meanings and messages. Photographic messages appear as representative of a reality. For Berger (Berger and Mohr, 1982: 96) the photograph is seen as a quote of an event. Similarly, Sontag (1977: 4) argues that photographs are not statements of the world, but pieces of it. These pieces are captured moments, a slice of the whole event, which can be used to deceive and misinform if used as fact in an explicit or implicit argument (Berger and Mohr, 1982: 97). Evans states: "The camera cannot lie but can be an accessory to untruth"[6] (1997: 9). However, it may be argued that photographs can show what does not exist, such as giving someone two heads, thus contradicting the accepted codes of realism.

Historically, painting styles underwent changes from medieval imagery to the perspective realism of the Renaissance era. As with the changes in painting and art, photography is currently undergoing a transformation, which is more than just the technological changes — it also affects how photographs are seen. The (re)presentation metaphor shifts within the realm of digital images, from one of "correspondence" to one of transformation. The latter appears to embody intention, but ideological transformation operates implicitly, beneath intention. Even subjectivity is not exclusively intentional. "Transformation is not a gathering of the world through vision, it is a re-ordering of the world within a vision" (Jenks, 1995: 13).

This kind of transformation was evident even at the birth of photography. There were many attempts at creating other realities with photography — either by setting up events or with the aid of darkroom techniques. Photography in the Victorian era involved the coexistence, and overlapping, of both spiritualism and simple trick photography. Photographic images of spirits or ectoplasm, according to Briggs (1988), could be sold as

either "amusing technical tricks, serious images of the other world, or as a basis for pure deception" (Slater in Jenks, 1995: 232).

Daguerre, the most publicised forerunner of photography, developed lighting and tricks with backdrops to simulate events on theatre stages. He developed the diorama that dissolved one scene into the next. Slater (Jenks, 1995: 219) describes this illusionism with photography as "a demonstration of technical power to transform the material of the world into representation."

The credibility of this transformation of the world into representation is dependent on the accepted codes of photography, which add to the veracity of the medium. We behave with photographic messages as if they were the original, notwithstanding that the forms and textures are a different size on the paper to those of the original message, i.e. differences in scale transmission, depth of field *et cetera* (Jussim, 1983: 299). Yet photography is not the same as what it portrays, and not only because of these differences. It also translates three-dimensionality into a two-dimensional reality. These differences in dimensionality have not altered a photograph's potential to transmit knowledge or diminish its code of realism. The codes are still accepted as credible.

The photograph thus survives as a claim on "the real". This is so even though a photograph can never fill the entire field of view of its observer. Due to its surface with a boundary, it does not include the surroundings. An effort to overcome this limitation can be made by increasing the scope of a picture, but only a full-scale model of a situation can achieve the entire field of view (Gibson, 1966: 101). Realism can also be added to a still picture by a number of techniques, namely, semipanoramic picture, circular panoramic picture, combining these effects in semipanoramic motion picture and adding sound (Gibson, 1966:105). These techniques are impractical in the realm of newspaper

photography, therefore they do not constitute an option in the mainstream media. The interesting thing for this thesis is that even without these techniques, photographs in the press have still — over time — come to embody the kernel of news realism.

This realism can survive, it appears, despite the varying readings of relationships to reality. News photography is one representation or one view of the news event, nonetheless it signifies the real. It generally accords with accepted codes of realism and normative codes of production, and in this way provides a credibility when seen against an ideology of naturalism about the way newspapers convey meaning.

3.4   Context

3.4.1   Origins of manipulation

Photographic meaning is constructed during all stages of the photographic process. "Since the beginnings of photography, photographers and editors have directed subjects, produced elaborate negative and print composites, used artistic enhancement, and bleached away content" (Beckman, 1992: 8). What Beckman is signalling here is that techniques are always employed to create, enhance and/ or change visual meaning even without using digital technology.

It is worth taking this observation and analysing it in terms of two stages of the photographic process. The first stage includes the choices that are made before and whilst a photograph is taken. This is what Irby (1998: 2) calls "in-camera manipulation" which refers to the effects produced with the aid of filters, lenses, multiple exposures and camera angle choices (cf. Tuchman, 1978). Meanings are also made at this stage through film selection and camera settings, not to mention framing and lighting. This all corresponds to the concept of indexicality present in the taking of the shot (see chapter two). The second stage in the process, which also allows meaning to be made or changed in photographs, occurs during the production stage of the photograph. Film can be over or underexposed, which ultimately can affect the quality or "essence" of the overall photograph (i.e. the contrast and graininess of the photograph). At this stage a photograph can also be lightened or darkened to compensate for inherent differences between what the film can capture on silver halide crystals and what the human eye can see.

Cutting and pasting has been widely used in the production stage. It used to be commonplace for totalitarian regimes to remove "nonpersons" from official photographs.

This practice dates back to the 1840's. Scissors and glue have revised the 'histories' of entire nations, like Stalin's Soviet Union, often with laughable crudeness. Composites could be detected on careful examination. In a 1920's photograph of Lenin, Leon Trotsky was eliminated from the photograph following his exile and murder under Stalin, and in the 1950's, allies of Senator Joseph McCarthy doctored a photo to make it seem as if Senator Millard Tydings was talking to a communist (Alter, 1990: 44; Messaris, 1994: 189; Foss, 1988: 7).

These techniques do not necessarily conflict with codes of realism. However W. Eugene Smith, a documentary photographer, produced special effects through burning, dodging, bleaching, negative sandwiching and double-printing. His aim was to produce graphic images that vividly portrayed the human condition (Evans, 1989: 26). Smith portrayed his subjective view of the referent onto his final photographic composite. His negatives were optical shorthand notes to be changed and perfected at a later time.

The potential for photography to make various meanings has thus been in evidence long before digital technology became available. Some photographic techniques that have been regarded as "standard" by the photojournalistic industry include: cropping into the image; dodging and lightening portions of the print; burning-in and darkening portions of a print (Reaves, 1987b: 24; Parker, 1988: 54). Parker adds to this list of techniques. He says that photographs have also been "airbrushed, masked, superimposed, reversed and opaqued, and coloured using duotone processes" (Parker, 1988: 51). Brushes and inks have long been used to retouch, improve colour and so on. These techniques may be standard ways of making meanings, however their use is not always accepted. Techniques like cut and

paste or digital deletions are generally less accepted than cropping and dodging, and may even be rejected. But using them for the correction of technical defects[7] in a photograph, whether done by manual technology or digital software, is argued as acceptable (Harris, 1991).

It is precisely what defines acceptability which simultaneously defines what is unacceptable, that raises the accusation of "manipulation" of meaning as opposed to the "unmanipulated" making of meaning.

3.4.2   Manipulation defined

An adequate definition of the term "manipulation" is sought to establish its meaning for this study. The different stages of the photographic process involve degrees of meaning making, and the term "manipulation" is often used to refer to unacceptable meaning making. Meaning is made at both the first stage and at the second stage of the photographic production process. Therefore "manipulation" can occur during both stages. "Manipulation" does not refer exclusively to the types of digital or darkroom techniques used. The same techniques, depending on their effect on the photograph, how they are used and to what degree they are employed, can be seen as acceptable or unacceptable. In this study "manipulation" is defined in relation to the codes of realism and codes of production. Generally, the latter —as will be argued — are accepted in as much as they contribute to the former, the codes of realism. However, it is also the case that accepted codes of realism can be undercut by knowledge of unacceptable codes of production, thus also leading to accusations of manipulation.

The "original" photograph, whether captured on film or as computer data, may exhibit accepted codes of photographic representation in the process of making meaning. From the outset or during the first stage a photograph deviating from the accepted codes of photographic representation with particular reference to the codes of realism and codes of production is considered as manipulation. Manipulation can also occur at the second stage of the photographic process. If the referent is somehow transformed within a photograph, which contradicts the accepted codes implicitly or explicitly, then this is also regarded as manipulation. (The referent may already have been staged or set up — i.e. manipulated — and accusations of further manipulation can thus occur in the second stage.)

Accepted codes of production may be used to produce a photograph that does not comply with codes of realism — for example, one that lacks conventional depth of field. However, manipulated photographs can also exhibit accepted codes of realism. Thus, photographs that exhibit realistic codes may be produced with "unacceptable" processes that deviate from the codes of production. However, defining what are "acceptable" and "unacceptable" codes of production is problematic. Some "acceptable" photographic processes may be used "excessively" and thus be regarded as an "unacceptable" practice, in turn deviating from the codes of production even if the end product looks realistic.

Photographs like this that appear to fit the codes of realism are sometimes seen as acts of "deviousness", thus implying intention. With digital technology the public generally has no way of knowing whether the photograph is an "accurate" representation in terms of conventional codes of realism. A photograph may appear realistic, but once the consumer of the photograph discovers that it has been transformed, it gets called manipulation because it contradicts the accepted production codes of photographic representation. The

intention or rationale of the producer of the photograph is not an added criterion to this definition of manipulation because photographs may be transformed so as to contradict the codes of realism and credibility, even without the producer intending to do so. What counts in these cases is whether people outside the "informed community" become aware of exactly how meanings are made.

The debates with regards to manipulation of news photographs are at the heart of credibility, (the concept of which is defined in the next chapter). Use of computer software such as Adobe Photoshop and Picture Publisher has contributed to these debates because such programs make image editing quick, easy, and virtually undetectable. The traditional and accepted photographic effects of cropping, dodging, burning and even composing are part of the tools, but have been supplemented by colourisation, object or colour cloning, the "reverse crop" (a form of cloning used to extend the original image), and the addition or removal of objects (Ireland, 1995: 6). The traditional photographic methods such as "contrast adjustments, colour correcting, dodging and burning" are termed by Irby (1998: 2) as "computer enhancement" which is used to prepare the image or photograph for reproduction. Yet these traditional photographic methods may not always be accepted, and indeed they may be criticised as manipulation where they deviate from the accepted codes of photographic realism.

One can take, for example, the photograph of OJ Simpson as used on the cover of *Time* magazine, which was "burned" and "colour adjusted". These are acceptable photographic process but deviate from the codes of credibility (refer to the methodology chapter's description of the case studies). The OJ Simpson photograph is argued by some photojournalists, in this study, as adhering to the codes of realism. The OJ Simpson photograph uses conventional production codes for a purported real effect. However, it is

called manipulation (once discovered) because it clashes with the overriding realist codes. Similarly, it can also be argued that the photograph takes traditional photographic processes to a level that contradicts the codes of production. The "lowering of the dove" photograph (refer to the methodology chapter's description of the case studies) uses unconventional codes of production for purported real effect, and is called manipulation because it clashes (once discovered) with production codes. Therefore, a news photograph is regarded as a manipulation if it contravenes codes of photographic representation, i.e. either realistic or production codes, or both.

Evans (1989: 27) operates a different definition of manipulation. He identifies five definitions relating to digital imaging processes, and uses rationale and codes of realism to describe the terms. These varying definitions reproduced below illustrate the importance of a consistent definition of manipulation. Some of the terms are critiqued in terms of this study's argument about the codes that define manipulation.

According to Evans (1989):

Image enhancement is a process in which some or all of the elements of the image are emphasised or de-emphasised for the sake of clarity and/or aesthetics.

(This type of change is identified in terms of rationale.)

Image alteration is a process involving the removal of a journalistically irrelevant element in an image.

(This type of change again relates to rationale.)

Image manipulation is a process designed to deceive the viewer, involving some or all of the following: removal of an image element, addition of a new image element, movement of image element(s) within an image.

(Once more, the point of departure and category of change is rationale. However, in this study, "manipulation" refers to making meaning that contradicts accepted codes, and not to the intention behind the action, irrespective of whether the rationale is aesthetic, journalistic, or deception.)

Evans (1989) includes the following category as "a useful concept, although quite artificial."

A truthful image is one that is a 100 percent depiction of reality, although a truthful image is in fact an impossible ideal.

(The 100 percent depiction of human perception and reality is not feasible, as discussed in chapter two, for various reasons — not the least of which is the fact that we can never equate reality with a depiction. The camera frames in defined and fixed, frozen boundaries, is two-dimensional, *et cetera*. In addition, as even Evans (1989) states, no camera or film can begin to match the spectral or physiological response of a human being.)

An accurate image is defined by inference as one that does justice to the original scene. A "reasonable person" — another artificial concept — on bringing an accurate photograph of a scene back to the original scene and comparing perceived reality with its accurate photographic depiction, would say that the accurate image had done justice to the scene. Under this definition, accurate images need not be truthful.

(However there should be recognition by individuals that the codes correspond with those of their unmediated perception of the referent. Interestingly, this category does not *per se* rule out manipulation. An image can be manipulated to appear more accurate.) Below Evans (1989) adds to the "accurate image" definition the element of aesthetics that the professional photographer brings to the photograph (this is not a digital imaging process unlike the previous definitions).

Emphatically accurate image does justice to the original scene but is aesthetically improved by the use of certain techniques including vantage point, focal length etc.

(These techniques belong to the first stage of the photographic process, which could also be termed manipulation depending on whether the photograph conforms to the accepted codes.)

Evans views "image enhancement" and "image alteration" as "ethically neutral" processes and what he calls "image manipulation" as an "unethical" process. This, however, is problematic as he does not define whose ethics are used and their universal application. Arguably any change to an "original" negative or digital photograph can constitute deceit.

Evans's categories illustrate the complexity of establishing adequate definitions and boundaries for the myriad of manipulation possibilities. What is also problematic is that there is a mix of rationales/ criteria underpinning his distinctions. Some are based on motive of the act, others on conformity to realism codes.

The rationale behind photographic manipulations adds the element of deviousness or the intention to deceive. In the light of the critical remarks on this (see above), it would be better to stay clear of manipulation definitions that rely on rationale, which are subjective in nature.

3.4.3   What is a natural state?

"Manipulation can mean to control or manage, but it sometimes also creates a sense of devious control, tampering, or falsifying" (Martin, 1991: 157). As discussed above, the issue of deviousness (which relates to rationale or motive for the change) is not part of this study's conceptualisation that all meaning making involves controlling and managing. Tampering implies a primordial state and falsifying implies something similar.

Martin correctly points out that the conventional notion of photographic manipulation carries the presumption that there is some natural state (Martin, 1991: 157). This point is partly echoed by Becker. She argues that because the photograph both imitates and reconstructs the world it is treated simultaneously as "natural" and "cultural" (Becker, 1991: 382, cf. chapter two). It is, however, never purely or wholly natural, due to the medium of the "message form" which signifies the meaning.

The photographic message is dependent on the photographic medium (such as film and processing practices among others). There are many different photographic media that respond differently to different light sources. Varied results are produced using different types of film, and between differently manufactured films. These are all choices and there is no objective standard from which to deviate. The notion that one material, appropriately processed, delivers results most closely reflective of the world is fraught with difficulty. "It is difficult to imagine how one might go about deciding whether the world really is Agfacolor rather than Kodachrome. Accuracy and truthfulness are connected to interpretations of the records rather than the records themselves" (Martin, 1991: 158).

Ranges of photographic processing practices, according to Martin, may result from accidents, historical development of industry and tastes of influential people. There are

expected, accepted and established ways of making photographs which define a standard (Martin, 1991: 258). The primordial image captured by the camera, then, is not to be equated with truth, although it may be taken as realist reproduction if it and its subsequent alteration/ production are within conventional codes.

A standard photograph of an event or object is determined by the expectations or accepted codes of realism of what best resembles the referent in order for the photograph to appear "natural". The photograph's "natural" and "neutral" appearance operates within naturalism ideology conventions (cf. chapter two). "Manipulation" therefore is not a matter of tampering or falsifying something, but of breaking conventions and codes.

3.5   Conclusion

Evidently the new generation of cameras and digital enhancement equipment is part of a continuous evolution in photography. The advantages of digital technology are numerous. Among those relevant to photojournalists are: the increased speed of photographic production; transmission of photographs; and the ease of exposure and colour adjustments.

The informed community is faced with the challenge of staying abreast of technology and retaining the newspaper's credibility. However, one does not necessarily compromise the other. The potential for news photography's credibility to be compromised lies in the area of photographic manipulation. Manipulation is dependent on acceptable or unacceptable photographic representation — i.e. when the photograph deviates from either codes of production and/ or codes of realism, which may affect the credibility.

Codes of credibility within the debates surrounding manipulation are analysed in the next chapter and areas that contribute to a photograph's credibility within the news product are also discussed.

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[1] The "clip-on" digital back system was introduced at the Second World Congress of Professional Photographers in Austria.

[2] A definition of manipulation follows in the "Context" section of this chapter.

[3] A discussion on the credibility issues follows in the next chapter.

[4] However, the *Cape Times* photographers scan and colour correct their images on computer. Other publications tend to do this far less.

[5] This issue was raised during the Photojournalism '96 conference in Grahamstown, South Africa.

[6] See chapter three, 3.3.1 Origins of Manipulation.

[7] For instance repairing line hits in a photo or erasing line noise (both of these are errors occurring during electronic transmission resulting in scratches on the output prints).

Chapter Four

Credibility

4.1 Introduction

Credibility is often equated with believability. In this chapter the two terms are distinguished and explained. Credibility is elaborated in terms of the production codes which include journalistic values and conventions; codes of realism with reference to intertextuality, and source authority. Source authority includes factors such as the character of the publication, the content, the source and the producer of the news photograph, all of which collectively contribute to credibility (refer to fig.1 on page five).

Credibility of photographs can be questioned due to digital technology processes (this is discussed in chapter three). Policies and codes of ethics are ways in which American editors hope to maintain the credibility of news photographs. Similarly, explicitly categorising photographs is argued as a way to potentially avoid misunderstandings about what constitutes an illustration and what is a news photograph.

4.2   Credibility

This study operates with abstract conceptual distinctions between credibility and believability and the inter-relationship amongst them. This is to make sense of the inconsistent use of these terms that exists at the empirical level within the informed community.

This section begins with a general definition of the term "credible", followed by a more specific discussion on the term "credibility" within the news media. Credibility can be seen as a code that is shared by encoders and decoders of the message. Newman and Newman (1969) take the term "*credible*" from "historiography, rhetoric and journalism, which tend to use credibility and acceptability synonymously." Acceptability can be equated with this study's definition of believability, but in this study the terms believability and credibility are not interchangeable.

A photograph may be viewed as believable but it does not necessarily mean that it is credible. An example would be the "Mandela wedding" illustration[1]. In this photograph, published prior to the actual wedding that eventually took place, the heads of President Nelson Mandela and Graca Machel were inserted onto an existing photograph of a bridal couple. The illustration was believable because the photograph fitted within the reader's accepted codes of photographic representation. However, it is not credible because there was no validity or proof of the occurrence. Credibility has an element of proved validity stemming from the codes of ideological realism. Believability is based upon a statement, opinion or image that is accepted as true without any need for proof or facts and thus it accepts phenomena without question. Believability can exist without credibility.

However, a photograph is credible, it is likely to be believable. This does not mean that any specific audience or reader will in fact believe it (Dansker, 1978: 8). However, in this study, for credibility there must be an element of believability.

Becker states that photojournalists' credibility depends on "the public's ability to trust in their photographs as unconstructed 'pictures of reality'" (Becker, 1991: 394). Becker's definition of credibility assumes that the "unconstructed pictures of reality" fit within the naturalness of the code of realism. The public's reliance on news photographs as a vital component in newspaper reporting, is central to the question of credibility.

Martinez (1990: 4), the 1990 NPPA President, outlines the central debate of photojournalistic credibility:

> Credibility is the most valuable commodity journalists have. If the public begins to doubt the accuracy of some of our photographs, they will likely start to question the accuracy of all of our photographs. The erosion of the public trust will have a devastating effect not just on our profession, but on the entire newspaper industry, as readers will gradually drift away to other more reliable media (Martinez, 1990: 4).

Martinez speaks of "doubt" which would result in a photograph not being believed. He also refers to the public's "trust". Trust in this thesis requires proof, which would result in credibility. Therefore, within this study's definitions, Martinez's formulation suggests that the news media is reliant on both its believability and credibility. Both credibility and believability may share codes of realism, but credibility of a news photograph must include values and conventions, intertextuality and source authority codes.

It is in the area of credibility that digital manipulations are questioned since the codes of credibility and naturalism rely not only on the codes of realism for validity, but also on the codes of production.

4.2.1   Values and conventions

The American Society of Newspaper Editors' (ASNE) "Journalism Credibility Project" report looked at potential factors that affect credibility. The journalistic values that in part constitute the codes of credibility are: "balance, fairness and wholeness; accuracy/ authenticity; accessibility; leadership – and behavioural factors such as business practices and journalists' attitudes and behaviour" (ASNE, 1998: 2). Their survey data indicates that people are critical of newspapers in areas of balance, accuracy and journalists' attitudes and behaviour. The ASNE primarily looks at journalism credibility, while in this study the main concern is news photography's credibility. These value codes, within this study's credibility model of photographic representation, pertain to codes of production (refer to fig.1). The following section adds to the mix bringing other areas into the credibility equation.

4.2.2   Source authority and credibility

Credibility is difficult to assess since it is not quantifiable and is dependent on the continuous remoulding of social and cultural strata. The codes of production and codes of realism all constitute the codes of credibility. Source authority factors such as: the kind of publication (magazines versus newspapers); the message content and source; the different types of news media (newspapers versus television); types of newspaper; the information messenger; and major events are areas that also contribute to the codes of credibility. Media credibility cannot be looked at singularly, all the components of this study's credibility formulation must be included, as well as source authority within various areas as noted:

Firstly, the kind of publication in which news photographs appear is an added component to photographic credibility. The publication acts as the context for the photograph. A study conducted by Terry and McBride (cited in Kenny, 1993: 27) indicates that news photographs are more credible than magazine cover photos or advertising photos. But the content of the photograph has a greater effect on readers' perceptions of the photograph's credibility than the context, i.e. where the photographs appear.

Secondly, the message's content and source impact on credibility. Austin and Dong's (1994: 974) study examines whether message content contributes independently or in combination with, institutional level source of specific news stories (Austin and Dong, 1994: 974). They hypothesise that when source reputation and content judgements are researched separately they exhibit higher levels of reliability (Austin and Dong, 1994: 975).

Source credibility according to Austin and Dong (1994: 973) also focuses on the information messenger. This can either be an institution or a news personality, and not the information itself, "even though studies have increasingly focused on source credibility as a 'response to specific content' instead of a more generalised dispositional trait."

However, the findings of their study showed that the public makes little distinction between sources, and "any newspaper is simply a newspaper, and the story stands largely on its own merits". This raises the issue that some publics may be analysing messages without much thought to the reputation of the specific journalistic or publication source. These findings are not conclusive and Austin and Dong (1994) suggest that further study of people with different backgrounds and levels of sophistication should be conducted to

overcome the shortcomings of their research. However, the study did confirm that a highly reputable source could produce an unbelievable story (Austin and Dong, 1994: 979). Believability of a news story or news photograph is not dependent on the source but stands on its own. For a source to be credible it must in part conform to codes of production. Alternatively, the message can be credible independent of the source if it matches other contributing determinants of credibility.

Thirdly, different types of medium seem to have different credibility levels. In a Roper poll[2] it was found that television ranked higher than newspapers because some viewers feel that they 'see' news develop on TV. "Could a camera lie?" (Fink, 1988: 260). Similarly, West (1994: 150) found in various studies of media credibility that "seeing is believing"; television was found to be more credible to respondents than newspapers. However, television (sound and video) and newspapers (text and photographs) are different mediums with different functions. It is not surprising, therefore that Newhagen and Nass (1989: 284) found that there are different criteria by which the credibility of newspapers and television are judged. Respondents in this study based their perception of credibility in a newspaper on its performance as an institution. The focus is on newspapers and, although they are not necessarily seen as being as credible as television, the public still arguably regards newspapers as credible.

Fourthly, the public identifying with a newspaper is another factor that is seen to affect credibility. A newspaper that does not identify with a reader's accepted codes of ideological realism might not be seen as credible. More specifically, the public's accepted ideas are dependent on elements of valuation, actuality and belief (rather than proved ideas) within a newspaper (cf. chapter two). For example, a newspaper that is seen to

support a particular political party may be accepted by individuals with similar accepted ideologies.

Fifthly, the information messenger (e.g. photographer) may also play a part in the message's credibility factor. Hovland *et al* (1953) propose that a distinction can be made between "the extent to which a communicator is perceived to be a source of valid assertions and the degree of confidence in the communicator's intent to communicate the assertions he considers most valid" (Dansker, 1979: 9). Thus, Hovland *et al* regard these to be factors that determine the credibility of the communicator (Dansker, 1979: 9). Bettinghaus (1968) adds that the credibility of an individual (or photojournalist) is a matter of who he is, what the topic is and what the situation is (Dansker, 1979: 17). Also the kind of assertions and intentions of the communicator may contribute or jeopardise his or her credibility. Thus, the photographer's credibility as established over time is also a factor, but the credibility is also determined by the photograph's ability to conform to other accepted codes as well.

Finally, another possible factor is major events. A US study showed that credibility of news sources fluctuates depending on major events.[3] By examining the events as factors impacting on media credibility, "researchers can determine if changes in credibility levels signal growing disenchantment or support for the media or whether they indicate short-term reactions to certain events the media cover" (Johnson, 1993: 97). Such fluctuations are also subject to ideological changes. A source taken as authoritative would be seen to deal in news of relevant events. If the same source missed a major event, it would lose credibility — as much as coverage of the event will reinforce its credibility.

All these factors are interrelated. These six areas of source authority add to the complexity of credibility coupled with the ASNE's journalistic values, photographic conventions and intertextuality. This section does not aim to cover all factors affecting credibility but rather to illustrate its complex nature. These six areas are relevant to the credibility of news photographs with regards to where they appear, their content, source, type of newspaper, the photographer and the event photographed. They contribute, in part, to establishing codes of credibility.

4.3   Credibility and the photograph

This section brings the credibility discussion down to the issue of digital imaging and locates it within the concerns of the informed community.

Chapter two shows that what is seen through the viewfinder is a part of an event or object. This framing relates to transient social conventions with limited validity in space and time. Digital technology takes this representation further and adds further processes, which change the traditional perspective of photography. There are no adequate theories that encompass the dynamics of digital representation and photography. This is a new area and existing theories are not wholly adequate when discussing digital technology's impact on news photography.

Photography is an interpretative enterprise, but media consumers have perceived editorial photography as a strong link between the referent and the image visible through the viewfinder (Wheeler and Gleason, 1995: S8). However, when a photograph is radically changed, "our frame of reference is altered as well: the reality of all the objects and the

facts contained in the images is thrown into doubt (or should be)" (Ireland, 1995: 6).

Thus, a photograph of a hostage holding a dated newspaper could be questioned because there is no way of knowing if it refers to the real or if it is a composite picture made up of separate elements (Katz, 1990: 94).

News photographs' credibility can potentially be questioned due to the technological advancements in digital imaging (cf. chapter three). O'Connor, a freelance photographer, speculates that "once the public sees enough seemingly manipulated photographs, and discovers that the photographs have been manipulated, it may question the veracity of all photographs" (cited in Parker, 1988: 51). Parker suggests that digital manipulation may compromise photography's role of documenting "reality" (1988: 51). Photography as a "documentation" of "reality" has not been without manipulation in pre-digital imaging technology. Although photography is a construction and dependent on various photographic processes, it is a manipulation when the photograph deviates from accepted codes of realism and/ or from codes of production.

In the past photojournalism has been seen as the "pictorial documenting of people's lives and events, dependent entirely on its credibility" (Rasmussen, 1991: B09). Messaris (1994: 189) similarly analyses the reaction to the manipulation of photographs. There is a widespread assumption that the public has hitherto viewed photographs as "direct, unimpeachable records of reality". The growing public awareness of digital imaging practices, he suggests, will lead to a collapse of faith in the entire medium (Messaris, 1994: 189).

Faith in photography as a record of reality is also subject to the notion of photographic

objectivity. Hodges describes photographic objectivity as one of our most cherished myths, i.e. the view that a picture is an unadorned and "objective" slice of reality (Hodges, 1991: 8). Therefore, if the public is aware of the encoded character of all photography, they will be less likely to lose faith in photography as a medium. There are two ideas expressed here; firstly, that the public awareness of digital imaging will affect the credibility of news photographs and secondly, that the awareness of the constructions of photography may contribute to retaining its credibility. The respondents in this thesis saw validity in both sides of the argument. For some, explaining the manipulation would harness trust, while for others it would be an admission of attempting to "deceive" the public (cf. chapter five).

4.4   Manipulation policies

Credibility is regarded as a vital component in the news gathering process. News operates within accepted codes of credibility, thus deviating from these codes the news would become fictional. In order to control the handling of news photographs some news institutions in America have compiled codes of ethics and policies.

> Some publications have formal, involved policies addressed to news coverage in written, spoken, and pictorial form; many designs to ensure credibility. Yet credibility is largely a question of the publication's meeting the expectations of its audience, and policies are helpless in ensuring credibility unless the expectations are known to the policy makers (Martin, 1991: 161).

The "expectations" of the public are geared by accepted ideological codes. The process of negotiation of these codes may result in contradictions either intended or unintended. Formal policies of news coverage include policies of photograph usage. In an attempt to secure some kind of control over digital manipulation of photographs, the Associated Press has re-emphasised their policy statement on the alteration of photographs. The

statement issued on electronics and photo ethics says that: "The content of a photograph will never be changed or manipulated in any way" (Rasmussen, 1991: B09, Alabiso, 1990: 15, Matthews, 1993: 13). This statement fails to explain whether changes in colour, tone *et cetera* constitute content changes or manipulation, or whether photographic processes such as lenses, camera angle choice, over or under exposure *et cetera* constitute manipulation. The question therefore must arise as to how useful this particular code actually is.

Another case that raised policy issues around manipulation was raised by Professor Rich Beckman at the Photojourn '96 conference[4]. He described an incident where a community newspaper called *The State* in South Carolina required a photograph of Gen. Tromwell who was named the Air National Guards first black female general in Washington DC, in February 1994. A freelancer was commissioned to take the portrait. After the photo shoot the General informed the newspaper that she had forgotten to take off her earrings and it was against military policy to wear any jewellery. The picture editor had three choices. Firstly, to run the picture as it was; secondly, to digitally remove the earrings; or thirdly to reshoot the portrait. The photo editor said, "Our credibility is all we have and it is worth rehiring that freelancer at another $175. We consider portraits to be documentary photographs and our integrity is worth more that $175." This example highlights the informed community's concern relating to news photography's credibility.

The uses and concerns relating to digital technology have not only been handled through policies, but the implications have also been raised within legal procedures. The Lanham Act in the US provides for action to be filed against anyone who manipulates an original work or photograph without securing full contractual usage rights (Harris, 1992: 32).

South African daily newspapers do not currently have written policies relating to news photograph manipulation. As will be discussed below, different photographic categories seem to be a determining factor when assessing whether a photograph should be allowed to be manipulated.

4.5   Photographic categories and intertextuality

Photography is the visual component in a newspaper that readers look at as evidence of, or to concretise, an event. The text adds to the credibility of the photograph and the photograph adds credibility to the text. The credibility codes of intertextuality operate between elements that contribute to proof and trust. News photographs are thus an added element, which contributes towards the credibility of newspapers. Photographs allow ideological recognition, which lends itself to an ideology of visual evidence, which is the basis for photographic credibility.

Intertextuality also operates implicitly and explicitly in the way that photographs are used differently in news and illustration categories. A study conducted by Reaves showed that editors allowed digital manipulation of photographs that were perceived as illustrations, but very seldom manipulated news photographs (Reaves, 1995b: 707). Illustrations are not subject to the codes of credibility as are news photographs. Illustrations are thus not manipulations as they do not break the codes of credibility and therefore belong in a different category.

Kenny (1993: 27) also divides newspaper photographs into categories[5]. He argues that just as a newspaper distinguishes between news articles, feature and editorials,

photojournalists should distinguish between types of photographs, with some being more candid/ spontaneous, others being more interpretative/ manipulated.

Dividing photographs into categories is not a justification for manipulation. In a survey of editors, art directors and picture editors at major American newspapers, no one supported tampering with the "integrity" of a documentary news photograph with digital technology. However, there was far greater acceptance of using it to create conceptual or illustrative photos (Lasica, 1989: 24). News, feature and documentary photographs rely on the acceptance of codes of realism. If these photographs are manipulated, i.e. deviate from the accepted codes, questions of credibility may arise.

The division of photographs into categories can provide a signal to both the public and the informed community. For the informed community, or designers, it will signal when it is acceptable to manipulate a photograph and when it is not, and for the public it will assist in avoiding mistaking an illustration for a news photograph.

Most photo editors agree that composite or manipulated photographs must be clearly identified as either an illustration or a news photograph (Rasmussen, 1991: B09).

Photographic categories may not always be clearly identified or obvious. Thus it can be argued that content manipulation on news photographs should be explained to the reader in an obvious place such as within the caption. However, photographs of a battered Nicole Simpson, on the front cover of the *Enquirer*, shocked one observer to such an extent that he had missed the words "computer recreation" and missed the fact that the picture was doctored (Kobre, 1995: 1). A caption explaining digitally manipulated

changes may be seen as a way of justifying such changes, but it does not alter the effect the manipulated photograph has if the text is not read.

These debates suggest that only illustrations should be manipulated and identified as such. However, the caption identifying it as an illustration may not necessarily be seen or read thus creating a new "reality" which may be believable but ultimately not credible. The caption and the photograph can be read and interpreted in terms of intertextuality. The caption may well explain the changes done in a news photograph and be perceived as reinforcing the trust between the newspaper and the reader. But some of the respondents in this study were concerned that the caption explaining the changes would contribute to their loss of credibility as photojournalists.

4.6   Conclusion

The credibility of news photographs is seen to be directly linked with the various codes of this study's photographic representation model (fig.1). The values, conventions, intertextuality and source authority factors such as where the news photographs appear, their content, the photographer and the event photographed, all appear in one code or another, with one kind of ideological subjectivity or another.

Digital manipulation has been changing the nature of how photographs have been viewed by the producers and consumers of photographs in primarily two areas: first, the fact that photographs are not objective and second, that ethical implications of manipulation have to be considered. That policies have been implemented show evidence of the concern generated amongst the informed community.

Policies and ethical codes have been extensively debated. Many of these concerns have been raised in the United States and Britain. Although they do not have established or written ethical codes, South African news organisations are not unfamiliar with the technology or the debates concerning the possible effects on the credibility of newspaper photography.

One outcome of these debates is the suggestion of a category system that identifies an illustration or news photograph, which would help prevent the public from reading illustrations as news photographs. There is, as yet, no evidence within South African newspapers of such a move, unlike some newspapers in the US, nevertheless it can be considered as an option.

The next chapter bridges the theory of credibility within photographic representation with the methodological techniques employed within the research component of this study. A qualitative questionnaire was used to look at the photojournalists' knowledge, perceptions and understanding of attitudes and behaviour towards credibility.

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[1] The "Mandela wedding" illustration is further described in chapter five.
[2] Gallup Report, August 1983.
[3] A *Times Mirror* survey conducted by Johnson (1993: 87).
[4] Tape recording of Professor Rich Beckman's talk entitled "Digital Ethics" at the Photojourn '96 Conference in Grahamstown, South Africa.
[5] Kenny (1993: 27) divides news photographs into categories. He includes categories such as documentaries, portraits, photo opportunities and illustrations.

Chapter Five

Research Methodology

5.1 Introduction

This chapter starts with a discussion on methodology and the lens through which this study is formulated. This is a qualitative survey inquiry generating qualitative and quantitative data which are analysed in chapter six. The exploratory and descriptive purpose of the design project is discussed with regard to the techniques employed.

The reasoning for the selection of the two case studies which are used as a basis for the information gathering process is explained. Further, the research inquiry is described in its various stages such as the purpose, data collection strategy and the associated problems, and sampling strategy.

5.2 Methodology

In this study the methodology, which is the general approach to studying a research topic, is seen from the perspective of the theoretical rationale of this research project. A loosely paradigmatic stance is taken which acknowledges the need for broad conceptual frames for purposes of understanding. It is argued that:

> Classifying research and researchers into neatly segregated paradigms or traditions does not reflect the untidy realities of real scholars... and may become an end in itself... . Traditions must be treated not as clearly defined, real entities but only as loose frameworks for dividing research (Atkinson *et al*, 1988: 243 in Lather, 1991: 11).

The theoretical component of this study undergirds the inquiry. The theory engages a discussion on semiotics, naturalism, realism, credibility and ideology. This integrates well with a qualitative research methodology.

In this study the theory is used to focus the inquiry and give it boundaries for comparison in facilitating the development of empirical outcomes. The theory does not prescribe the data collection and analysis as this would violate the inductive assumptions of qualitative research. The theory is also considered as a conceptual template with which to compare and contrast results, rather than to use as an *a priori* category within which to force the analysis.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994: 2), qualitative research has no theory, or paradigm, that is distinctly its own, nor does it have a distinct set of methods that are entirely its own. It draws and utilises approaches, methods and techniques of ethnomethodology, phenomenology, hermeneutics, feminism, rhizomatics, deconstructionism, ethnographies, interviews, psychoanalysis, cultural studies, survey research and participant observation among others (Nelson *et al*, 1992: 2 in Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 3). This study is mainly centred around a qualitative survey — generating both qualitative and quantitative data — drawing on phenomenology and cultural studies which are regarded as interpretive, qualitative perspectives (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 3).

As this study is concerned with the perception of photographic credibility, it is important

to understand how people make sense of the social construction of reality. For this reason the research is located within the body of phenomenology and cultural studies.

Phenomenology is concerned with the social construction of reality by conscious beings (Jensen, 1989: 48). The experienced reality for phenomenology draws from common-sense knowledge and taken-for-granted interpretations (Jensen, 1989: 48).

Cultural studies work facilitates connecting the study of meaning making — which is the social interaction within the communication process — and the communication industries "that produce and shape the meanings of everyday life" (Denzin, 1992 in Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 125). "Cultural studies of various types provide insight into the array of interpretive resources and categories available for use in constituting everyday realties" (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 267).

Both these qualitative perspectives frame the research and aim to understand reality within a particular context.

5.2.1   The Survey

A survey refers to a collection of standardised information from a specific sample population. A descriptive survey is used which attempts to document and discover photojournalists' current knowledge, understanding, attitudes, perceptions and behaviour towards credibility. The data generated may be used to explore aspects of the situation or to seek explanations concerning the outlined issues (Robson, 1993: 49).

Bryman (1988) discusses the benefits of the simultaneous collection of both qualitative and quantitative data within the survey inquiry. He maintains that on occasions quantitative and

qualitative data may provide unplanned outcomes (cf. chapter six). The quantitative data is used to establish the frequency of particular responses and the qualitative data adds detailed information.

The common thread for many qualitative researchers is that the qualitative inquiry takes the position that reality can only be known in a subjective and speculative way. Wimmer and Dominick (1994: 140) state that: "It [reality] is subjective and exists only in reference to the observer." The essence of qualitative research is that there is no one single reality, but rather that reality is holistic and cannot be subdivided.

The questionnaire employed qualitative open-ended questions that elucidate the meaning derived from the close-ended questions. It is relevant to note that qualitative methods are often termed as interpretative procedures, and both take the position that the truth consists of a complex of value-laden observations and interpretations (Burgess, 1984: 3 and in Marcinkowski, 1993: 43). For Wimmer and Dominick (1994: 140), qualitative research attempts to produce a unique in-depth explanation about a given situation or individual. For Berg (1998: 3), it refers to the "meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols and descriptions of things." The in-depth data is also presented in a quantitative manner to illustrate the frequency of similar answers.

During the research procedure other aspects that indicated the complexity of the photojournalists' reality became evident (this is discussed later in this chapter). Thus the research tool generated elements not intended, but useful, for further studies in this environment.

5.3.   Research project design

5.3.1   Design

The design[1] of the research enquiry deals with the aims, purposes, intentions and plans within the practical constraints of location, time and budget. The qualitative design is a flexible procedure, it does not employ the quantitative rigidity using known procedures. Thus it avoids the concretisation associated with *purity of design*. This section outlines the design procedure as used in the survey.

The survey research strategy was employed as the most appropriate for this study (the reasons for this appear in the "Sample" section of this chapter).

The purpose of the enquiry is mainly exploratory. This study's descriptive aims, as mentioned in section 5.2.1, are phenomena that are used to assess photojournalists' perspectives on the research question. The purpose is also descriptive. Both the exploratory and descriptive nature of the enquiry lean towards the qualitative method as discussed above. Thus the results can be presented in narrative and descriptive form which at the data analysis stage require a certain degree of interpretation.

The research instrument was pre-tested at various stages. In the initial stage of the questionnaire design, the questionnaire included four case studies around which the questions were centred. After the first pre-test the case studies were cut down to two with more in-depth questions relating to each (the reasons for this are explained later in this section). The pre-test required that six individuals complete the questionnaire. They were encouraged to question the validity of questions and identify misleading questions or unclear wording. A critical assessment of the pre-test replies provided an indication of problem areas of understanding and clarity of questions. The research questions were

refined and the questionnaire was pre-tested again using different people. The individuals

involved in the pre-test were academics, professional photographers, postgraduate

students and working professionals in a field other than photojournalism. I used a mix of

people who were familiar with digital technology and those who were not. The two pre-

tests assisted in the changing of problem areas, such as wording of questions, focusing of

questions and ordering of questions. They also helped in refining questions, reducing the

number of case studies discussed and adjusting the space provided for answers. The pre-

tests were a form of testing the validity and reliability of the measuring instrument.

The questionnaire construction procedures considered the respondents' daily dealings with

visual material. Thus the design of the questionnaire attempted to be aesthetically

attractive and interesting by using photographic images in the case studies and using a *sans

serif* type face which made the questionnaire appear less formal and more "friendly". Also,

considering the highly stressful and demanding nature of photojournalists' work, the

questionnaire was limited in the total number of questions. Five questions pertained to

general information and a further 16 questions centred around the case studies and related

issues. This way of breaking up the two sections and numbering them separately is a

technique to make the questionnaire appear shorter. Stamped and self-addressed envelopes

were included to facilitate questionnaire returns.

The questions were formulated around two case studies of digitally manipulated

photographs. A case study is defined by Yin (1989) as an empirical study that uses

multiple sources of evidence to investigate certain phenomena within its context (Wimmer

and Dominick, 1994: 154). The case studies selected were, firstly, a digitally manipulated

photograph of President Nelson Mandela releasing a dove and, secondly, a comparison of

Time and *Newsweek's* use of OJ Simpson's LAPD "mug shot". Case studies have certain

characteristics, namely, they focus on a particular situation; the result is a detailed description of the topic; new interpretations, perspectives and meanings may arise, and principles and generalisations emerge, from an examination of the data (Merriam, 1988 in Wimmer and Dominick 1994: 154).

The two case studies selected are examples of two different types of changes done with the aid of digital technology[2]. The types of changes that are possible with digital software are numerous. Mitchell (1992) provides a useful overview of the applications of digital imaging technology: insertions (adding objects); effacements and elisions (dropping out and eliminating backgrounds); and substitutions (cutting and pasting) (Messaris, 1994: 188). Another two categories can be added to the list: firstly, one of over- or under-emphasising of items that may change the essence of the photograph; secondly, flipping a photograph which switches the left side to the right side (Reaves, 1987a: 42).

Within the categories mentioned above, the first case study that was used was the "lowering of the dove" photograph which falls into the substitution category where cutting and pasting occurred. The second case study was the manipulated photograph of "OJ Simpson" which falls into the over-emphasising of items category which changed the essence of the original photograph as it was argued by some American commentators. (This is further discussed in the section detailing the circumstances surrounding the case studies.)

These two case studies have attracted attention and comment within the informed photojournalistic community. In the two case studies described, the resulting changes that were done created a greater awareness of the extent and effect that digital techniques can have on news photographs. The examples are ones that have caused controversy because

the manipulation techniques used are not obvious to the reader. These changes are substantial enough and have caused concern because the change is at the level of content, i.e. at the denotative level which may change both the original conventional/ preferred meaning of the news photograph and/ or change the connotations (a discussion on this appears in chapter one).

The case studies were selected in part because of the importance of the photographs to both the public and media with regard to the controversy they generated. Both examples are also seen as milestones that have raised awareness of the new technology's capabilities within the informed communities of photojournalists, and both cases are seen as important news events (see below). The one case study is a South African example and the other an American example, thus touching on the wider currency of the issues generated.

These case studies were also used because they were easily accessible to me. In addition the "OJ Simpson" example has been used in discussions at conferences that I have attended[3]. I was interested to see whether the South African photojournalistic community saw the "OJ Simpson" case in the same way as it has been presented at these conferences by John Long[4], an American photojournalist, and Professor Rich Beckman[5], an American academic. The "lowering of the dove" example was reported in the *Rhodes Journalism Review*[6] which informed the South African media industry of the possible contentious use of digital technology.

The reason for the manipulated changes of these case studies is an area of concern. The study attempts to determine whether the reason for the change affects the credibility of the case study in question. The changes done on the "lowering of the dove" photograph were essentially for aesthetic reasons. The "OJ Simpson" photograph was changed to produce a striking cover for commercial and aesthetic reasons. However, some participants in this

study view the reasons for the changes differently (refer to the next chapter).

The case studies selected also show different approaches when manipulating an object as opposed to a person, and the examples come from two different media, one from a daily newspaper and the other from a weekly news magazine. The "dove" photograph is regarded as a hard news photograph. Although the "OJ" photograph is seen as a hard news[7] photograph, the *Time* editors treated it differently, perhaps because it was for the cover (*Time* routinely manipulates their cover photographs). This demonstrates the difficulty of fixing photographs to certain categories of news. Tuchman (1978: 47-9) identifies five such categories: hard, soft, spot, developing and continuing. Classifications of this nature are difficult because they are routinised and taken-for-granted. The OJ photograph is considered as hard news, but the editors handled it as an illustration. The questionnaire indirectly tries to establish whether photographs are handled differently, or are seen as being classified differently, if they appear on a cover of a news magazine as opposed to appearing within the newspaper context.

Kenny (1993: 27) suggests that categories be identified and included in the caption to specify the "type" of photograph (cf. chapter four). The questionnaire also attempts to establish whether a caption explaining the changes would in fact affect the impact of manipulation on the credibility of the publication (cf. chapter four).

The initial design of the questionnaire contained four case studies. One case study that was not used in the final questionnaire was the "Kent State"[8] photograph. This photograph complies with Mitchell's (1992) "effacements and elisions" category. The pole behind the woman's head was removed. However, this change was done in the darkroom and not with the aid of the new digital technology. The focus of the research is on the new

technology, thus this case is not appropriate in this regard even though similar ethics arise and credibility may likewise be called into question. The second case study that was also omitted was the "Mandela wedding" illustration. This photograph[9] was generated with the aid of the new technology. A photograph of a bridal couple photograph was used and the heads of President Nelson Mandela and Graca Machel were inserted which replaced the heads of the couple in the original photograph. This illustration was not used because it is not a news photograph but an illustration[10]. The study aims to establish the impact on the perceived credibility in news photographs, thus this example was also not appropriate.

There are seven ways in which the study focuses understanding the essence of credibility within the context of digital manipulation of news photographs (cf. chapters three and four).

Firstly, the study attempts to establish if a photograph is seen as credible without the prior knowledge that it has been digitally manipulated (digital technology has the ability to change individual pixels of digital photographs which has made digital manipulation virtually undetectable). The final manipulated photograph can succeed in measuring up to the codes of realistic representation.

Secondly, the study tries to determine if the awareness of the digital changes on a particular photograph has any impact on that photograph's credibility within the informed practitioners' community. It assesses whether the perceived credibility loss is dependent on other factors such as type of publication, type of changes and whether the meaning of the original photograph somehow changes.

Thirdly, the study assesses whether the photojournalists believe that an institution's credibility changes for the public if the public is aware of that institution's readiness to digitally manipulate photographs.

And fourthly, the study attempts to establish if the photojournalists perceive the credibility of news photographs in general as changing for the public due to digital manipulation procedures.

Fifthly, the study also tries to understand whether photojournalists accept the reason for using digital procedures to manipulate a photograph as justifying the manipulation.

Sixthly, the study determines whether a caption explaining the changes done on the photograph affects how the public views the credibility of the photograph.

Lastly, the study assesses whether there is a difference if the manipulation is done on the person or background of a news photograph.

5.3.2   Case study background

5.3.2.1   The lowering of the dove photograph

The first case study is of President Nelson Mandela's first public appearance on the balcony of the Cape Town City Hall, after he was elected president. He released a white dove in front of a large crowd assembled on the grand parade. The photographers missed the moment when the dove was released when they turned their attention to the commotion generated by the angry crowd's attempt to break down the VIP enclosure which was hindering its view of the newly elected president. It appears that Henk Blom from *Die Burger* was the only photographer to capture the moment. However, the

batteries in his camera's motordrive were almost flat and thus only shot two frames. The first frame showed Mandela just as he released the dove. Blom suggested a horizontal cropping of this frame as the main photograph. The picture that was published by *Die Burger* on May 10, 1994 was an altered photograph. The newspaper had used the second frame but lowered the released dove to bring it closer to Mandela and thus within the bounds of the desired cropping and sizing of the photograph[11]. Blom feels that the altered picture has negatively influenced the impact of the original shot (Malan, 1996: 34).

Ebbe Dommisse, the *Die Burger* editor, said that at some point the dove had been near Mandela's face but in retrospect he thought the decision was not a good one. "The most important thing is credibility. We should tell readers if we tamper with images," he said (Malan, 1996: 34).

Blom and Dommisse agree that the unfamiliarity of the new technology and the lack of awareness of the power of this tool are mitigating factors when criticising the dove incident (Malan, 1996: 34).

5.3.2.2   The OJ Simpson photograph

The second case study is the LAPD "mug shot" of OJ Simpson that was used on the cover of *Time* [12]and on the cover of *Newsweek*. OJ Simpson was the murder suspect and the lead story for the June 1994 edition for both news magazines.

When one compares both covers, the *Time* cover was much darker. The edges of the photograph were also darkened and the masthead "Time" ran over OJ Simpson's forehead[13]. According to Beckman [14] *Time* purposefully kept their nameplate over OJ's head implying "doing time", "being in jail". The *Newsweek* cover used the original "mug

shot" which looked less sinister than the *Time* cover (Reaves, 1995b: 707).

The managing editor of *Time* said that "the harshness of the 'mug shot'— the merciless bright light, the stubble on Simpson's face, the cold specificity of the picture — had been subtly smoothed and shaped into an icon of tragedy." He added that, "The expression on his face was not merely blank; now it was bottomless" (Gaines, 1994: 4).

However, there was controversy about how the cover had been changed and critics charged *Time* with racism (Reaves, 1995a: 10; Reaves, 1995b: 707). Van Ginneken (1998: 174) argues that when OJ Simpson was arrested for the murder of his "white" wife, *Time* decided that the "mug shot" was "too-light". He says that: "This whole continued obsession with "skin colour" is far from innocent." Also, several major news organisations, civil rights groups and leading black journalists claimed that *Time* had deliberately attempted to make Simpson "more sinister and guilty" and to portray him as "some kind of animal". There were objections to the fact that the picture had been altered because "news photos should never be altered" (Gaines, 1994: 4; Creager, 1994).

Time explained that no racial implication, nor any imputation of guilt, was intended and that perhaps if the cover had looked more like a photo-illustration instead of an altered photograph it would have been lifted to the level of art, with no sacrifice to the truth (Gaines, 1994: 4).

5.3.3   Research questions

The survey employed two question structures, namely, open-ended and close-ended questions. The varying question structures affected the quality and depth of the data generated. The open-ended questions led to less uniformity of responses with a wide range of viewpoints that provided further insights on the level of understanding of the questions

and the topic.

The questionnaire was divided into two sections, namely, Section A and Section B.[15] Section A comprised general questions which established which newspaper the respondent worked at; how many years he/ she worked in newspaper photojournalism; what level of the photographers advised the layout staff/ designers on picture usage if at all; whether digital software was employed on news photographs and to what extent and whether they perceived photographic manipulation as jeopardising the credibility of newspapers. Section A of the questionnaire was motivated primarily to identify the photojournalists' position on the credibility of digital technology and to acquire information about their newspaper's digital software usage. The answers to these questions form the foundation from which links can be created with the case study data (Section B). Section A also attempts to clarify the photojournalist's position on the issue of credibility which is compared with the case studies in chapter seven. The question pertaining to the frequency in which photojournalists are consulted by layout staff on picture usage, stems from examples where layout staff have changed photographs which have resulted in changing the meaning of the original photograph. The brief history of digital manipulation in the realm of news photography presents many examples that display questionable changes, which may be perceived to jeopardise the photograph's credibility. Chapter three discusses issues of "visually illiterate" personnel (or designers with no photojournalism experience) who digitally change news photographs without consulting the photographer. There is a fear that photojournalism will be shaped by layout staff. However, for some people the opposite is true, they feel that the technology allows photographers more control over their own photograph. This study attempts to determine where South African photojournalists place themselves.

The main thread throughout the questionnaire is of credibility with regards to photograph manipulation, which is evident in the last question of Section A. The question is a general one on how photojournalists perceive the ease of digital attention affecting the credibility of newspapers. This question is later (in chapter seven) contrasted with the more specific case study questions in Section B. The term "manipulation" as used in the questionnaire does not refer to "manipulation" in the way that it is defined in this study. Instead it is used as a casual synonym for digital changes. The use of the word "changes" in the case study questions refers to the particular changes done to the respective photographs.

Section B, with the aid of the two case studies, sought to establish: whether the manipulated photograph was credible; whether knowing about the manipulation changed the credibility of the photograph; if the public knew about the manipulation whether it would change the credibility of that media institution in question; whether knowledge of the photograph's manipulation would affect the credibility of news photography in general; what the photojournalists thought was the reason for the manipulation for the given case study; and how much the reason was seen to impact on the credibility; whether a caption that explains the changes would somehow change how the public would view the credibility of the news photograph; if deleting a person from a photograph would affect the credibility; and whether changing the background of a photograph affected the credibility of the news photograph.

There are numerous areas in the first three theory chapters of this study that motivated these questions. A brief link between questions and theory follows, but a more in-depth assessment of the answers and their relation to the theory is analysed in chapter seven.

The first and ninth questions in Section B attempt to clarify if photographs still function

within the traditional established phrase of "seeing is believing". This notion is explained as a photographic message that appears as representative of a reality within the accepted codes of photography and is treated as "neutral" and "natural" (cf. chapter one and three). The knowledge that the photograph is changed stirs up discussions on the shift from correspondence to transformation in question two and question ten. Awareness relates to knowledge of production codes. This transformation of how photographs are seen suggests, according to Jenks (1995), a reordering of the world through vision. This reordering may affect the historical acceptance of plausible, questionable and veridical photographs, thus questioning the photograph's credibility. Credibility is a general complex of all codes. The credibility is not only subject to the article or photograph but, as some studies have shown (cf. chapter four), to source credibility and other factors such as topic, source attributes, institution (print, television or radio) and political affiliation. The third and eleventh questions attempt to establish whether there is any connection with the credibility of the photograph and the credibility of the newspaper/ magazine. This question prompted a broader look at the effects of credibility on photography in general in the fourth and twelfth questions. The fifth and thirteenth questions dealt with the reasons behind the changes which explain the intention and motivation of the manipulation. Photographs are reliant on the codes of denotation and connotation (cf. chapter one) but it is the connotative level that raises issues of intention and motivation, particularly if the meaning is viewed as rich in cultural symbolism. Some changes that have been considered as "ethical mistakes" are attributed to deadline pressures, layout problems and the ease of altering photographs (cf. chapter three). However, the public may perceive the intention behind the changes as having some other motivation. The reason can also be related to codes of realism (cf. chapter four).

Questions six and fourteen consider the reasons as possibly changing the credibility since

the media is seen as a primary source of information and knowledge is reliant on its credibility to be believed (refer chapter four). Knowledge as discussed in chapter two is constantly modified in the course of human interaction. This assumes that photographs do not have meaning in and of themselves but can elicit a preferred meaning despite being polysemic. Photographs are a means of communication with a language of codes and sign components which allows for signification and interpretation to take place (cf. chapter one). Thus the assumed or stated reason for manipulation may be considered a contributing factor to the credibility of the photograph.

Questions seven and fifteen explore the option of using a caption to explain the changes in the manipulated photograph. In the literature review some writers view the caption as contributing to the transparency and credibility. However, captions are often missed because they are typically small and inconspicuous. Some photographers (as discussed in chapter three) argue that the "damage" is already done before the caption is read. However, it is also argued that a heading, caption and/ or article can help favour a certain preferred reading (cf. chapter three). A caption is a code of intertextuality and possibly of credibility. The last question of each case study was different; the first dealt with deleting people from a photograph and the second with changing the background. These questions attempt to establish whether manipulating people is distinguished from manipulating a background or object. Deletion is a technique — a code of production that is generally seen as unacceptable, while changing the background relates to the code of realism. Further these last questions assess the degrees that the represented "reality" may push the boundaries of acceptability with the aid of creative manipulation. Creating different "realities" has been in evidence since the birth of photography. Chapter three discusses photography as a representation of reality which precariously balances with a theory of

multiple realities.

These areas were the focus of the study and formulated into relevant questions for both case studies.

5.3.4 Sample

It was decided to target all the photojournalists working at daily newspapers in South Africa. These individuals deal with photographic images on a daily basis and in deadline conditions.

The study targeted all 15 daily newspapers in South Africa. The newspapers were selected from the major centres, namely, Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, East London, Bloemfontein, Durban, Pietermartizburg, Johannesburg and Pretoria.

The papers selected were: *The Cape Argus, The Cape Times, Die Burger, Die Burger Oos-Kaap, Eastern Province Herald, The Daily Dispatch, Die Volksblad, The Daily News, The Mercury, The Natal Witness, Beeld* (Johannesburg and Pretoria office**),** *The Citizen, The Star, The Sowetan* and *The Pretoria News*.

The circulation figures for the various papers ranged from 18 998 to 225 986 (The Media List, 1998)[16]. *The Business Day* newspaper was omitted from the sample because it does not generate many photographs and falls out of the "general" daily newspaper category and into a specific niche market.

The SA Media List[17] was used to compile the mailing list. However, it did not contain the individual photojournalists' names at each paper. The purposive or selective sample, in this

case comprising the entire universe — 101 photojournalists was obtained by using all available resources: direct contacts at the newspapers through email and telephonically. The photojournalists were first mailed during the second half of July 1998. The last responses were received four and a half months later at the end of November. The questionnaire generated a response rate of 25.7%, or a total of 26 returns.

The mail survey provided the advantage of covering a wide geographic area of the universe sample in a short time and within the budget constraints. The respondents had unlimited time within their own environment to answer the questionnaire. This method allowed the respondent time to think about the issues without feeling obliged to have an opinion immediately or being pressured to reply to all the questions. Another advantage was that the questionnaire provided anonymity if the respondents required it. The mail survey also allowed for the universe sample to respond when they found time to do so, as many photojournalists were on assignment, ill or on leave during the initial mailing. This method was also beneficial when cross-checking data, for example answers from Section A with those of Section B, which assisted in establishing if there is a change of opinion between the general questions and the case studies.

The questionnaire was introduced with a cover letter that explained the purpose of the study. The cover letter also alerted the photojournalists to the fact that they could choose to remain anonymous if they did not wish to be quoted by name in the thesis or any other publication. They were also given the option to electronically receive an abridged version of the results of this study.

5.3.5 Follow-up procedures

By the end of August, a month after the initial mailing in July, 80% of the replies were

received. Three weeks after the first mailing, follow-up procedures were executed via email and telephonically. At the end of August further phone calls[18] were made. A fax to each newspaper encouraging the photographers to reply was also sent at this time. Further questionnaires were requested by six newspapers that had either not received the questionnaires or had misplaced them. Three weeks later further emails and telephone calls were made to the relevant newspapers. More questionnaires were sent to yet another paper that had not received the initial mailing. The second questionnaire mailings only generated one reply. Final follow-up telephone calls to the newspapers were made at the end of October, three months after the initial mailing. The last replies were received at the end of November, four months after the first questionnaire mailing.

5.3.6   Results and discussion

In this section I go into detail about my dealings with the photojournalists. I was not prepared for, or aware of, the difficulties and the complex nature of these individuals and their work. I began to modify the textbook procedures I had been following to accommodate the real situation. I felt that I had to think like a photojournalist and be compassionate about their everyday "reality" and identify with their lifestyle and problems associated with their work. Some photojournalists felt that they generally were not taken seriously and thus did not take the questionnaire or myself seriously. I responded to my personal interpretations of the attitudes and nuances I picked up and thus tried to tap into a more compassionate approach to urge them to take this opportunity to be heard.

When compiling the universe sample I encountered a reluctance by the photojournalists to furnish me with the names of their colleagues.[19] However, some photographers were very excited about the study and were keen to assist. The picture editor at *Die Volksblad* in his email said that the topic of this thesis was an "interesting subject".

Once I established a comprehensive list of the photojournalists, further problems arose. There seemed to be difficulties with the mail distribution within the institutions. Many photographers had also been away during the first mailing and somehow never received the questionnaire. A chief photographer said that she had heard of the questionnaire but had been away and had not received hers. She said that their mail distribution was faulty and she was lucky if she got her mail at all.

I sent two mailings to the *Die Burger Oos-Kaap*. When I established that they had received the questionnaire but still did not reply, I used the opportunity to send more copies to the senior photographer from their sister newspaper to hand deliver further questionnaires. However, this did not generate any replies either.

I met one of the photographers from *The Natal Witness* at a conference we both attended. I asked him to complete the questionnaire. He was initially reluctant but then agreed. The following day I had to convince him further to reply. He finally completed it.

Perhaps some of the photojournalists are not aware of, or are intimidated by, the new technology. One picture editor from one of the smaller newspapers told me that he was the only one trying to keep up with developments the last couple of years at his newspaper.

A photographer from *Die Burger* emailed me as soon as he got the questionnaire and said that he was "feeling a little bit persecuted". He was referring to the manipulated photograph in the case study which had been generated by his newspaper. He added that the example had been used in an article by my department's *Rhodes Journalism Review* and felt that: "It really makes us look like the bad guys in this business."

In general most photojournalists were elusive: they were either out on a shoot, in a meeting, did not work on specific days or were ill.

During my telephonic follow-up procedure I found that some photographers did not want to speak to me and put me through to other photographers. Another photographer shifted the focus onto his colleagues who had already answered the questionnaire. Many initially seemed rather suspicious of the questionnaire. One photojournalist from *The Daily News* said that he and his colleagues would not reply because I wanted too much personal information, but he took this opportunity to tell me how they used to manipulate photographs in the past with darkroom techniques. He questioned the anonymity of the questionnaires and expressed a fear of being misquoted. There seemed to be an underlying feeling of mistrust and he said that he would not like his newspaper to know how he felt. Paradoxically he also said that no one cared what the photographers thought anyway. He said his answer was simply "no to digital manipulation", and he felt that this is all I needed to know. He had quite an aggressive manner but, when I responded in kind, he subsequently became more accommodating and asked me to resend the questionnaires which he would ensure would be replied to. After two more telephone calls and sending an encouraging fax it was evident that no replies would be forthcoming.

My questionnaire was deemed to have created much discussion[20] at the *Beeld*'s Pretoria office but no returns were received from them. However, the *Beeld*'s Johannesburg office managed to return 66.6% or six of the nine questionnaires sent. This was due to the chief photographer, Jan Hamman, who assisted me in encouraging the photojournalists to reply. Four newspapers out of the fifteen that were targeted failed to reply. Two of these newspapers were not interested and the other two showed some interest and promised to make an effort, but failed to deliver.

A photographer felt that he could not reply to the questionnaire because he said that he did not know how the public felt or would feel about the issues outlined in the questionnaire. He intended leaving the photojournalistic industry at the end of the year and thus had no interest in replying anyway.

Every questionnaire that was returned was followed-up with an email thanking them for replying. I also used this opportunity to ask for assistance in obtaining replies from their colleagues. Thys Dullart, a photographer at *The Star* suggested that I send a fax to his newspaper to motivate them further. He said he would put it up on their noticeboard. I followed this suggestion and sent faxes to all the newspapers. Another photojournalist replied to my email and told me that he was "drunk" when he filled out the questionnaire and asked that I send him another copy. However, he failed to reply to the second questionnaire. His answers were mostly coherent, but where I could not make sense of some of the answers I have indicated this in my research data.

Email became a convenient tool with which to communicate. Unfortunately not all photojournalists are linked up or use email facilities. This method also allowed the respondents time to think about further questions and queries relating to their questionnaire replies. I also received other interesting information via email.[21]

During these telephone calls I realised that my initial professional approach did not seem to work. I took the more emotive route in my appeals and with the follow-up fax. This seemed to generate a more positive feeling toward the questionnaire and it was regarded with less suspicion. Three photojournalists tried to assist me by circulating further questionnaires amongst their colleagues. However, this attempt only generated one reply.

It became apparent that the photojournalists are very interested in the issues raised in the questionnaire but, due to the nature of their work, they are often away or extremely busy. Following a second mailing to *The Sowetan,* at the request of one of the photojournalists, I was later told that the newspaper was undergoing restructuring and was unable to focus on the questionnaire at that stage.

I realised that the photojournalists would prefer to chat about the issues rather than to write their feelings on an impersonal questionnaire. This is an issue that is seen as important for the majority of respondents but who perhaps feel that their opinion is of no importance: as one photographer told me — they are merely there to take pictures. Photographers in most newspapers are still seen as separate from the journalists[22].

Three respondents of a total of 26 chose to remain anonymous. Two respondents replied in Afrikaans even though the questionnaires were in English. Another photojournalist said: "English is my second language so please feel free to correct my language without changing what I want to say."

It became apparent that the photojournalists were more willing to speak to me telephonically rather than answering a questionnaire. Mail surveys seem to be a problem for a number of reasons: Firstly, the poor distribution systems within the newspaper; secondly, the intimidating nature of replying to a formal document; thirdly, there was concern about who was interested in the information and what it was going to be used for; and fourthly, perhaps they did not want to show their ignorance or lack of education or grammatical skills[23] which might become evident in written replies.

5.3.7 Organisation of data

The decoding process of the questionnaire looked at conflicting answers within the related closed and open-ended questions. It considered missing data and reply variations other than those required by the questionnaire instructions.

The open-ended explanations given by the respondents in the questionnaires were arranged into provisional categories and coded which provided a structure that facilitated the data analysis procedure. However, this proved to be less helpful when there was a broad range of different answers.

5.4   Conclusion

The qualitative questionnaire succeeded in the exploratory aims of the study. The study looked at the photojournalists' knowledge, understanding, attitudes, perceptions and behaviour towards credibility. In addition the research process generated useful information for further studies in this environment. There were many difficulties but, not withstanding this discovery, I still received a quantity of completed responses which have viable data. The research data are assessed in the following chapter and are further discussed in detail within the literature review in the final chapter.

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[1] Basic research survey design techniques were followed as outlined in Wimmer and Dominick (1994) and Robson (1993).

[2] An in-depth look at digital technology and the different types of manipulation are traced in chapter three.

[3] The World Council of Professional Photographers, Ireland, 1995; The First Photojournalism Conference, Grahamstown, 1996.

[4] John Long is a past president of the National Press Photographers Association (USA).

[5] Professor Rich Beckman is the past Visual Communications chair of the National Press Photographers Association (USA) and is an associate professor at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

[6] This publication is a specialised publication that is read by the broader media industry.

[7] Reaves (1995a) refers to the OJ Simpson photograph as "ostensibly a straight news artifact."

[8] This photograph shows a young woman kneeling in incomprehension and anguish over the body of a dead
student after he had been shot by the National Guard. Students at the Kent State University, Ohio were demonstrating against Nixon's decision to attack enemy installations in Cambodia (May 4, 1970).

[9] This is a computer generated photograph published in the *Sunday Times*, December, 1996.

[10] The OJ Simpson case study was similarly used as an illustration in the *Time* case, but the photograph is based on a news photograph.

[11] See Appendix A to view the original and altered photograph as used in the questionnaire.

[12] *Time* did not run this cover internationally (June 1994).

[13] See Appendix A to view the two photographs as they appeared on the covers of *Time* and *Newsweek*.

[14] Professor Rich Beckman's talk entitled "Digital Ethics" at the Photojourn '96 Conference in Grahamstown, South Africa.

[15] Refer to Appendix A for a copy of the questionnaire.

[16] The SA Media List contains the contact numbers of newspapers, magazines, radio and television stations
in South Africa. I used the February 1998 version. Copyright is held by The Media List, PO Box 33227 Jeppestown 2034.

[17] Ibid.

[18] A total of 41 follow-up telephone calls were made and 66 follow-up emails were sent.

[19] A chief photographer, at *The Pretoria News*, referred me to *The Star* newspaper for the names of their photographers (at this point I was not sure but assumed that perhaps somehow the two papers were linked). The picture editor at *The Star* was stunned to hear that she had to furnish the names of another newspaper which justifiably she did not know. Perhaps *The Pretoria News* chief photographer misunderstood me and thought I wanted just any photographers' names. On a follow-up telephone call to *The Pretoria News*, the chief photographer was again very dismissive and said that the picture editor would reply as he knew more about digital technology than she did. I can only surmise that she was perhaps intimidated because she is not familiar with the technology or that she was very busy and did not view the questionnaire as important.

[20] I received two telephone calls from the *Beeld*'s Pretoria and Johannesburg office confirming this. They also acknowledged the importance of the study and their hope to contribute to it. Leon Botha and Arthur-Henri Viljoen at the Pretoria office were determined to send me more literature and local examples on digital manipulation.

[21] A photographer from *The Star* shared an incident that had recently happened at his paper. He said a photograph that made its way onto the front page was in fact a composite. "A studio portrait of a man wielding a gun made into a photograph of a hijacker taken from the inside of a car – when in fact these were two loose elements, the final result looking like a real picture." Hannes Pieterse from *Die Volksblad* also shared some interesting information. He told me that one of the stipulations when applying for accreditation during the 1995 Rugby World Cup "was that we were not allowed to tamper electronically with our own photographs. I think it was to prevent us from removing advertising boards, etc. in the background".

[22] Initially, photographers needed plumbing to run the darkrooms. Thus the darkrooms were set up near the

toilets which were usually outside the back of the main building. As one photographer said: "We are still there."

[23] Of those that did reply, three respondents apologised for their spelling and use of grammar. One said that

that was why she was a photographer and not a reporter. The other said that he was dyslexic. This also indicated that the wording on the introductory letter may have been too "academic" or somehow intimidating.

Chapter Six

Research Data

6.1.   Introduction

This chapter sets out the research survey data following the order of the questionnaire layout. Section A comprises answers to the general questions, namely: the respondents' characteristics are broken down and listed; the total number of years' experience in newspaper journalism is tabulated into a rating scale; and the replies to the photojournalists' interaction with the design layout staff, the level of digital software used and the perceived credibility of newspapers in relation to manipulation are coded and the percentages calculated. These percentages are further subdivided into other sections depending on the different types of replies generated. Section B covers and answers the questions on the two case studies. Here the limited rating scale of answers appears as percentages, which are analysed in relation to the corresponding explanations and then further subdivided into percentage figures, where necessary. The significance of this data for the concerns of this thesis is analysed in the next chapter.

The research data generated from the survey shed some light on the issues relevant to this study. Other areas of interest or concern were raised by the respondents adding insight and possible areas for future study. It is apparent from the range of answers and opinions that there are opposing ideas and perceptions relating to digital technology amongst the photojournalists in this sample. There were also discrepancies and unrelated answers which are discussed in further detail in the next chapter.

6.2.   Research Data

Section A:

6.2.1   Sample breakdown

The target sample in this study is the total universe of photojournalists working at daily South African newspapers. The following list contains the total number of photojournalists working at each newspaper as at mid July 1998. The second column shows the number that actually replied from each newspaper.

Daily Newspaper:	Total number of Photojournalists:	Actual Responses:
Beeld (Johannesburg)	9	6
Beeld (Pretoria)	6	0
Pretoria News	6	0
The Citizen	5	3
The Sowetan	7	1
The Star	12	3
Daily Dispatch	4	0
Die Burger	12	2
Die Burger Oos-Kaap	3	0
Cape Argus	9	3
Cape Times	5	1
Eastern Province Herald	3	1
The Daily News	6	0
The Mercury	4	2
The Natal Witness	5	2
Volksblad	5	2
Total:	**101**	**26**

Four of the fifteen newspapers in the sample are Afrikaans medium newspapers which constitute 35% of the total sample and 65% are English medium newspapers. The response breakdown consists of 38% from Afrikaans newspapers and 62% from English newspapers. It is interesting to note that Afrikaans newspapers, although they are in the minority, had a higher return rate ratio with 29% compared to the English newspapers with 25%.

The respondents may be divided by the position they hold within the newspaper; each position holds different duties which are explained below:

picture editors (2)

assistant picture editors (1)

chief photographers (4)

senior photographers (1)

staff photographers (18)

Eight or 31% of the respondents held more senior positions but the majority, 18 or 69%, were staff photographers or junior photographers.

A picture editor is ultimately responsible for the photographs and liaises closely with the chief photographer, news and sub editors. He/ she is part of the editorial team. The assistant picture editor assists the picture editor with these duties when he/ she is in a meeting, unavailable or in the evenings when the paper is put together. The assistant picture editor does more of the delegation work and administrative tasks (Only *The Star* has an assistant picture editor). The chief photographer assigns the staff photographers work. The chief photographer is also part of the photographic team and is involved in

photographic work as well. The senior photographer operates like a journalist as he/ she can select assignments and often specialises in sport, conflict, news *et cetera*. This position is awarded to photographers who have won photographic awards and have a high track record within their institution. They assist the chief photographer with coordinating assignments and take on the duties of chief photographer on weekends.

6.2.2   Level of photojournalists' experience in newspapers:

The respondents had a total of 245.5 years of photojournalistic experience collectively. One respondent failed to answer this question, thus the average was worked out from those that did state the number of years working in newspaper photojournalism which was 9.82 years. The experience ranged from a maximum of 36 years to a minimum of 7 months. The figures are listed below in the form of a rating scale.

Years experience:	Number of respondents:
0 to 5	5
6 to 10	5
9 to 15	2
16 to 20	6
21 to 25	3
26 to 30	3
31 to 40	1

6.2.3.   Level of photojournalists' interaction with design and layout staff:

In your newspaper do photographers advise layout staff/ designers on picture usage?

yes = 35%   no = 65%

Of the 26 respondents, 35% said that they did and 65% said that they were not asked to advise design/ layout staff on picture usage. Of those that elaborated 12% said that they were sometimes asked to advise, but "not often". Of these one said it was only when doing features and picture stories. Another respondent said that he was asked very seldom and then only to decide if a picture should run in colour or black and white. One respondent pointed out "if they listen to us is a different question". Some photojournalists, as (8%) from different newspapers, said they were only asked to advise on size and cropping. One of these added that this happened mainly when he had a "good" picture, but said that his suggestions were subject to space availability. Another 8% of photojournalists said that the chief, or senior, photographer advised the chief sub daily. One said it was mainly about which pictures to use and a photojournalist from a different paper said it was mainly about where the pictures should go with regards to pagination, whether to use them in colour or black and white and to assess the main and the secondary pictures.

6.2.4 Level of digital software employed on news photographs:

Does your newspaper employ digital software on news images?

If yes to what extent is it used?

yes = 96%   **no = 4%**

The majority, 96%, said that their newspapers employed digital technology. Only 4% or one respondent said that their publication did not employ digital software on news images. This figure is incorrect since the respondent concerned is from a newspaper where two of her colleagues stated that they do employ such technology on photographs.

all the time = 84%   **occasionally = 12%**   **rarely = 4%**

On the level of frequency 84% said that their newspaper employed digital software on images "all the time", 12% said "occasionally" and 4% said "rarely". One respondent added that the technology was only used to burn and dodge[1].

6.2.5   Image manipulation on credibility of newspapers:

Does the ease of image manipulation jeopardise the credibility of newspapers?

yes = 54%   **no = 42%**   **no reply = 4%**

Just over half of the respondents, 54%, said that image manipulation would jeopardise the credibility of newspapers, 42% said that it would not and 4% did not reply or were undecided.

Various reasons were given as to why photojournalists feel that digital manipulation may or may not jeopardise the credibility of newspapers. This question creates discrepancies in that respondents may answer negatively or positively but give similar answers when elaborating. For example, "Yes, if it is used to alter the context/ feeling of the image" and "No, as long as the essence/ truth is not changed".

Similarly, two respondents said, "No, because when we manipulate we tell our readers that the picture has been manipulated" and one respondent said, "Yes. If you do any manipulation that changes the original you must inform your readers."

The "yes"/ "no" answers cannot be looked at independently of the explanations. For example, just under a half (45%) of those that said "no" actually meant "yes" (this is evident from the respondents' explanations). Thus, those that really felt that there would be a loss of credibility are 19 of the 26 respondents. The values are adjusted as follows:

yes = 73%   **no = 23%**   **no reply = 4%**

The answers were evidently framed by the respondents' experience within their newspapers. If their newspaper only uses auto-levels (to lighten or darken a photograph) it was surmised that that generally would not jeopardise the credibility of newspapers.

The majority, 18%, of the 23% that answered "no":

Of those who said there was no loss of credibility, 18% fell into this category either because their newspaper did not radically change photographs or because their newspaper had a policy of not altering photographs.

Half, 50%, of the 73% that answered "yes":

Of the respondents that said that credibility would be jeopardised, 50% said that people would not know what to believe and that it would seem that it was commonplace to manipulate photographs which would lead to losing the public's "loyalty" and "trust" in newspapers.

The majority of respondents agreed that the ease of photographic manipulation can jeopardise the credibility of newspapers.

Section B:

6.3   Case Study Data

1. *If you were unaware that the photograph was manipulated, would it be credible?*

(With reference to the "lowering of the dove" case study)

yes = 74%   no = 26%

The "lowering of the dove" photograph was seen by 74% of the respondents as credible, and 26% did not think it was credible.

Of the 74% that answered "yes":

It was credible to the majority (74%) because, "There is nothing to suggest it is not a photo". Similarly, "As ek nie weet nie, sal dit nie saak maak nie, maar dit kan 'n verleentheid word vir die koerant as dit uitlek."[2]

Three respondents that answered "yes" for different reasons. One said that the change was not a significant one, "The subject (content) is not life or death". Two said that only a photographer could pick up that it could be manipulated and another said it was credible because the event happened.

Of the 26% that answered "no":

Those that answered "no" said it with the knowledge that they knew it was manipulated, thus the question has been misinterpreted. The reason given why the picture would not be credible was because "it (the manipulated photograph) was not as seen by the camera at the time".

From the above it is evident that the manipulated photograph, without prior knowledge that it was changed, is broadly seen as credible.

2. If you were aware that the photograph had been changed, would it still be credible to you?

yes = 15%   **no = 85%**

Of the 85% that answered "no":

The majority or 85% said that the photograph would not be credible. As one respondent said: "It is a news photograph. I want to see the truth. In art photography you can do with photographs what you want." Of these that replied "no", 27% said that "truth/ reality" is expected from photographs. A further 18% focused on the kind of effect that changing an photograph may have. One respondent said: "Trust will be broken." Another respondent felt that the public would feel "cheated". Uncertainties with regards to what else could be changed, or what in fact was changed in the photograph, were expressed by another 18%. One respondent said: "Is it the right dove? Did he release it? Is it a file photograph of Mandela and a file photograph of the dove combined?" Another respondent said: "Who knows what else has been manipulated?" This concern was taken further with the statement: "If they lie with their photos, can I trust them with the story that they are writing?"

Of the 15% that answered "yes":

Those respondents that said that the photograph would remain credible even if they knew it had been manipulated, represented 15%, or 4, respondents. One said that it was feasible that at some point the bird would have been in that position. Another said: "I would be very fickle not to accept it." On a compassionate level, one photographer said that he understood the problem (referring to the need to recreate a missed moment). One respondent's answer shows evidence that he did not read the introductory remarks to the case study or is unaware of manipulation techniques as he continually referred to the photograph as if it had only been cropped.

3. If the public knew the photo had been changed, would it change the credibility of

Die Burger?

not at all = 8%   **somewhat = 46%**   **very much = 46%**

Of the 8% that answered "not at all":

As few as 8%, or 2 respondents (including a chief photographer), didn't see that knowing

that the photo had been changed would in fact diminish the newspaper's credibility.

However, the rest of the respondents were equally divided with 46%, or 12 respondents,

seeing the credibility change "somewhat", and the other 46% seeing it change "very

much".

Of the 46% that answered "somewhat":

A third of these respondents questioned "what else" has *Die Burger* changed and what

else will they change in the future. A quarter, or 25%, felt that the credibility changed

"somewhat" because the manipulated photograph is not what took place. And 16% said

that the position of trust that the paper had enjoyed in the past could be lost. "Readers

know what to expect. Magazines are glitzy, not newspapers." The type of manipulation of

this case study was of concern when judging the credibility of the newspaper by one

photographer who said: "Had the manipulation been greater - say another person was

added to the scene, it would have been far worse." Another photographer felt that: "Not

all people think about journalism like we do, but we as journalists should keep watch over

our work."

Of the 46% that answered "very much":

Three main concerns were evident amongst the 46% of the respondents that perceived that

the credibility of *Die Burger* would change "very much". Firstly, of these respondents 42%

were concerned with the "trust relationship" between newspapers and their readers. A

photographer elaborated further and said: "How would the public trust any picture? If *Die Burger* neglects to inform them which are made with a camera and which with a computer." Secondly, 25% said that the public want to know what is real and what is not. An assistant picture editor said: "I firmly believe that the public would not agree as it's not there to illustrate something - it's a time in history." Thirdly, a further 25% were concerned that if a newspaper can manipulate one picture, they can manipulate all of them and even unaltered photographs may be viewed with suspicion. One picture editor's answer was affected by the history of the newspaper in question. He said: "*Die Burger* has no credibility. They were a staunch supporter of the National Party when the going was good and then they kicked them in the teeth. Why should their pictures be different?"

Overall the majority of respondents (92%) agree that the credibility of *Die Burger* may be adversely affected to varying extents by the manipulation.

4. If the public knew the photo had been changed, would it change the credibility of news photography in general?

not at all = 8%   **somewhat = 54%**   **very much = 38%**

       Of the 8% that answered "not at all":

A small number of respondents, 2, or 8%, said that they saw no change in the credibility of newspapers in general. One of the respondents, a chief photographer, said: "It is not an unrealistic change. Radical manipulations should be acknowledged. For example: Photo Mark Wing (This photo has been digitally manipulated)." However, the second respondent said: "An image is a moment with context. A digital image is a flight of imagination". It is difficult to assess what is in fact meant by this statement.

       Of the 54% that answered "somewhat":

Fourteen, or 54%, of the respondents saw the change of newspapers' credibility in general only change "somewhat". The elaborations to the answers to this question are difficult to code. For some photojournalists the manipulation is seen as jeopardising the credibility and for others it is not. Generally the respondents here seem to see the "trust relationship" between the newspapers and the public as important, with one respondent expressing concern over how they would regain the credibility once lost. Two respondents said that the public is in fact "aware that anything can be done". For two other respondents it was seen as important to inform the public about any changes. Another two respondents were concerned about being labelled. One cited the Princess Diana "death-chase" incident: "See how we all became paparazzi." Two respondents were concerned that the public would see one paper making changes and say, "Who says another won't?" and "Mense sal dan begin wonder oor ander publikasies ook."[3] However, another said: "Just because one publication alters photographs does not mean that they all do. But it does raise the question." Another respondent said that people still believed photographs when they were set up, before digital manipulation. Hence, these new methods of changing a photograph will also be believed.

  Of the 38% that answered "very much":

Ten, or 38%, of the respondents thought that the credibility of news photography would be jeopardised in general. One felt that there is little "respect towards the newspaper industry, this would add to it". Similarly, another said that if the public mistrusted the newspaper industry, it would "not be easy to win back their confidence". Another said that the newspapers would not be believed in the long term. A further respondent said: "It would cast doubt on what photographers are telling the public." There was also concern with regards to which photographs to believe and which not to, and how this would affect the credibility of the text as well.

Evidently most of the respondents (92%) felt that the credibility of news photography in general would change if news photographs were manipulated.

5. For what reason do you think the photograph was changed?

The majority of the respondents, 77%, said that change was to improve the composition and increase the impact of the photograph. Similarly, 4% said it was changed for aesthetic reasons. Other reasons were to save space (8%) and a further 8% said the reason was because the shot was missed and they wanted to recreate it. The remaining 3% of answers were not related to the question.

6. Does this reason affect how much the change impacts on credibility to you?

yes = 42%   no = 19%   a little = 31%   no reply = 8%

For 42% of the respondents the reason for the change does affect the credibility. A total of 31% saw the reason affecting the credibility "a little", 19% didn't see the reason as affecting the credibility of the photograph and 8% chose not to respond to the question.

      Of the 42% that answered "yes":

The photojournalists who said that the reason affected the credibility evidently came from different points of departure, judging by the varied answers. One photojournalist said: "I capture reality and it must be used in that way, if the paper changes it for better layout, they affect my credibility." This view was common among 18% of the respondents answering "yes". For another 27%, the typical view was: "It is important that what is made by more than a camera should be made clear." One respondent said that modern equipment was making it easier to take difficult pictures. Another was concerned that: "The danger of digital manipulation takes the cream off the profession."

      Of the 19% that answered "no":

For 19% of the respondents the reason did not affect how much the change impacts on the credibility. Of these, 40% said that although *Die Burger* did not change the context[4] in this

photograph "what will keep them from doing it with all the photo's?" Another 20% said things like: "So long as there is honesty" the credibility would not be affected, and a further 20% said things like: "Don't manipulate photographs. Get it or miss it." The remainder (20%) were divided by the need to change photographs to fit into limited space and those that felt that cropping could improve the photograph.

Of the 31% that answered "a little":

Those that saw the reason impacting "a little" on the credibility perceived the changes as enhancing the impact of the photograph without changing the meaning/ context of the photograph. One said: "I was disappointed when I learned the reason why it was manipulated. Sitting back and thinking about it I realise it should have been avoided. Although it is not a capital offence."

The majority of replies show that the respondents' concern lies in the fact that the photograph was manipulated, they are less concerned with the reason why it was changed. The photojournalists were mainly concerned with what was changed, the context/ meaning and the regularity of future manipulations.

7. If the photo's caption explained the changes and why they were done, would this change how the public viewed the credibility of the news photograph?

not at all = 31%   somewhat = 46%   very much = 15%   no reply = 8%

A caption explaining the changes was seen by 31% as not changing the way the public viewed the credibility of the news photograph. The majority, 46%, said that it would change "somewhat" and 15% said that it would change "very much". Of those 8% that did not answer this question, one elaborated by saying: "I don't think an editor would go to all the trouble to explain his reasons."

Of the 31% that answered "not at all":

Those that said that a caption explaining the changes would not change how the public viewed the credibility of the news photograph, seem to be coming from different positions: those that think that the public do not think newspapers are credible, and those that see the public believing in newspapers. For example, one respondent said: "The public is not very trusting or too trusting and this rocks the boat." Similarly, another said: "I don't think newspapers should play with the trust relationships. One particular photographer at the *Cape Argus* often does this. I don't trust any of his pictures anymore. His trust relationship with me is damaged." For 25% of respondents a caption that explains the changes and is consistently used in these cases was perceived as not affecting the credibility of news photography. One respondent felt that the caption would be small or hidden and the public would feel cheated when they saw the caption. Yet for another respondent explaining things in a caption would make matters worse because then "questions would be asked of all photography".

Of the 46% that answered "somewhat":

The caption was seen as affecting the credibility "somewhat" for 46%. Of these, 25% were mainly concerned with the relationship between the newspaper and the public and expected the newspaper to be truthful. One photojournalist saw writing the caption as "admitting you are unethical and unprofessional". Yet another disagreed and said: "If you tell the public what was done they would accept it better than not telling them." Another added that it would be better to tell them but that they would "view further photographs, particularly good photographs, skeptically and doubt their credibility". It was suggested by one of the respondents that "what is needed is a symbol next to the photo indicating that it is a digital manipulation." A *Die Burger* photojournalist took this opportunity to explain and perhaps defend his newspaper. He said that there was no public outcry only

disappointment because they wanted to order the photograph. "The biggest outcry was from ourselves and like organisations." (Perhaps he meant that there should have been a caption explaining the change.)

Of the 15% that answered "very much":

Honesty was seen as a very important criterion for those that said that the caption would "very much" change how the public viewed the credibility of the news photograph. However, one photojournalist said that one can forgive/ understand manipulation but, in the long run, the public will begin to question the newspaper's credibility.

It appears that the photojournalists themselves are unclear whether a caption explaining the changes would change how the public viewed the credibility of the news photograph but a closer analysis of the qualitative replies show that the categories are misleading. The figure is adjusted as follows:

caption jeopardises the credibility = 37%

caption contributes to the credibility = 63%

This indicates that there is more of a leaning towards a positive answer basing it on the "trust" relationship between the media institutions and the readers.

8. If Tutu and Chikane were deleted from of the photograph, and the public found out about it, would it affect the credibility of the news photograph?

not at all = 27%   **somewhat = 23%**   **very much = 50%**

Half, or 50%, said that removing people from the photograph would affect the credibility "very much". Over a quarter, or 27%, said that it would only affect credibility "somewhat" and the remaining 23% said that it would not affect the credibility at all.

Of the 50% that answered "very much":

Of these respondents, 46% that answered "very much" said that news photographs should not be changed at all. As one photojournalist said, "the building is important as well. Mandela is not in his garden pigeon farming". Trust was of concern for 23% of the respondents who said, "misinformation is mistrust and is dishonest." Another added, "wat mense sal vrae is wat is volgende?"[5] One respondent said if they were cropped it would be fine. Another respondent said that it was acceptable as long as the meaning didn't change (here this respondent was referring to cropping and not digitally removing the people in the photograph).

Of the 27% that answered "somewhat":

Some respondents equate deletion with cropping.[6] The majority (43%) of the respondents thought that deleting the people would affect the credibility "somewhat". One respondent said that Chikane and Tutu helped set the scene and added credibility. Another respondent didn't think the public would care, although photojournalists would know that it would be distorting the truth.

The category "Not at all" represents 23% of the respondents. This figure is further divided into two categories:

cropping 78%   deletion 22%

It is apparent that some of the respondents that answered "not at all" understood "deleting" as cropping, thus 78% said that cropping the photograph was an acceptable standard practice. However, one respondent added: "As Winnie se gesig ingesit word, sal vrae by die publiek ontstaan want sy het nooit daar gestaan nie, al was sy by die geleentheid."[7] One respondent said that Chikane and Tutu added another element of interest to the photograph.

The majority of the respondents believe that people should not be digitally removed from photographs. Only 22% of all the respondents believed that deleting Tutu and Chikane was

acceptable. Those that referred to deleting as cropping, saw cropping as an acceptable practice.

9. If you were unaware that _Time_ had manipulated the photograph, would the image be credible? *(With reference to the OJ Simpson case study)*

        yes = 73%   **no = 27%**

The *Time* photograph was credible for 73% of the respondents and for 27% it was not credible.

      Of the 73% that answered "yes":

Of those that said it was credible, 11% said that they expect magazines to use manipulative techniques. The majority, or 59%, said that it was a plausible photograph of OJ Simpson. Some of these said that it was a moody photograph or that he looked "dangerous" but that, ultimately, no facts had been changed. Some (11%) respondents said it was credible and that with basic darkroom techniques they could make similar changes. Another 11% said that they did not expect news photographs to be manipulated and didn't expect news publications to deliberately mislead the public.

      Of the 27% that answered "no":

Those who said the picture was not credible answered the question as if they were "aware" of the manipulation. The respondents gave detailed accounts of what was changed. One respondent said: "As a photojournalist you are documenting the world around as it happens - you are documenting history. You cannot change history no matter what." Another said: "It would appear credible but you'd still feel cheated when both came out." Judging by some of these explanations it seems plausible that the respondents misunderstood the question[8]. Some explained the changes and some spoke as if they were aware of the changes.

The majority agreed that the public would classify the OJ Simpson photograph as credible.

10. If you were aware that <u>Time</u> had manipulated the photograph, would it be credible?

yes = 38%   **no = 62%**

The majority or 62% said that it would not be credible, and 38% said that it would be credible if they knew that it had been manipulated.

      Of the 62% that answered "no":

Half of those that said the photograph was not credible perceived the change as somehow misleading which could lead to the public seeing *Time* as unethical or potentially losing their credibility. Others thought that it was not credible because of the obvious changes. One said that it was not credible because, "jou hele perspektief teen opsigte om die persoon is klaar gemaak, fotos is baie sterker as woorde."[9]

      Of the 38% that answered "yes":

The photograph was credible for 38% of respondents. Of these a total of 40% said that in magazines it is acceptable to make such changes. The change, for 30% of those that said it was credible, was done for effect to make the photograph look more sinister so that it would fit the story-line better. One respondent said it was credible because the changes were so subtle and another respondent said it would be credible if they showed the original photograph inside. The rest of the respondents did not elaborate on this question.

The respondents who perceived a change in the "essence" of the photograph found it unacceptable. Some photographers made a distinction between newspapers and magazines and felt that magazine manipulation is more "tolerable" and "expected".

11. If the public knew that the photograph had been changed, would it change the credibility of <u>Time</u> magazine?

> **yes = 69%**   **no = 31%**

The credibility of *Time* magazine would change for 69% of the respondents if they knew that the photograph had been changed, while 31% did not see *Time*'s credibility changing.

Of the 69% that answered "yes":

Those that said "yes" did so for various reasons. Firstly, for 33% of these respondents, the photograph was altered, which raised further concerns about the state of other photographs. Secondly, for 17%, the reason and intention to create a certain effect was the main criterion for the credibility change. Thirdly, for 22%, the relationship between the reader and the media would result in "broken trust" and the magazine would be seen as "deliberately misleading the public." One said that: "*Time* is a highly rated magazine, they should know better than to manipulate photographs." Another photojournalist suspected that the "press would go ape shit especially because it is *Time* magazine." And 11% did not elaborate on their "yes" answer.

Of the 31% that answered "no":

Of those that said that the credibility did not change, 38% said this was because the public expected such manipulation to occur on the cover of magazines. One, or 12%, remained undecided and the rest, which constituted 50% of these respondents, distinguished the fact that the cover was still a recognisable photograph of OJ although one said, "the picture makes him appear more sinister but they have not altered any facts."

One added the category "somewhat" to the question and said: "It depends what you want the public to see." The respondent felt that the public was given what they wanted.

The question was tackled in numerous ways. Some of the respondents referred to

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magazines in general, some specifically about *Time* magazine, yet for others the "kind" of manipulation was important here thus credibility, in this case, is dependent on the "level" of manipulation.

12. If the public knew that the photograph had been changed, would it change the credibility of news photography in general?

yes = 69%   **no = 31%**

The majority, or 69%, of respondents said that it would affect the credibility of news photography in general and 31% said it would not.

Of the 69% that answered "yes":

Of this majority that answered "yes", 44% said that the public would begin to question even unaltered photographs and other publications as well. "*Time* is a respected publication. If they are doing this, what about smaller, newer or any other publication?" For 17% the trust factor was important. Some felt that they would be labelled in some way and thus lose credibility. In this regard, one photojournalist said: "What one photojournalist does, has an effect on us all. The reader sees us as one group." Another 17% said that the public "would like to see things as they are, not someone else's perception". One respondent said that the readers were naive and did not think that the publications would deliberately mislead the public and he felt that the knowledge of any changes would affect the credibility of news photography in general. The remainder of respondents in this category did not elaborate.

Of the 31% that answered "no":

The respondents that did not see credibility of news photography changing said statements like: "Cover magazines have been manipulated by graphic artists for a while now, this doesn't relate to news photography." Thus, they did not see a loss of credibility with

regard to magazine photography.

For these respondents the picture of OJ Simpson was not categorised as a hard news picture. As one respondent said: "The public would not relate that photo to all news photos."

The majority of respondents showed concern with regard to their credibility and the credibility of news photography even when assessing magazine cover photography.

13. For what reason do you think the photograph was changed?

There were two differences to this question. A total of 42% of the respondents said that the change was done to make OJ Simpson look "sinister", "criminal", "evil", "guilty", "appear bad" and to "look mean". Another 42% said that it was more for the visual effect it created. The manipulation created more of an "impact", was more "dramatic", created a "mood". Of these respondents three said that it was directly related to increase sales. One did not think much was changed and another could not think why they would possibly want to change the photograph.

The majority of respondents (84%) saw the change as affecting the meaning and some coupled this with the need to be "dramatic" and produce a stronger cover to increase sales.

14. Does this reason affect the credibility for you?

yes = 58%   **no = 42%**   **a little = 0%**

The reason affected the credibility for 58% of the respondents and 42% said it did not.

Of the 58% that answered "yes":

Of those that answered "yes", 27% said that it affected the credibility because it was misleading. As one respondent said: "I feel cheated by a publication I trusted." For 13% of these respondents, the credibility was changed because OJ Simpson was made to look different. One, or 4%, said that the magazine was judging Simpson and another said that *Time* was being biased. One photojournalist said that he preferred the cover of *Newsweek*. Another photographer expressed his concern about the future of news media; he said that the public cannot "confide in us". A different standpoint was expressed by a photojournalist who said: "The main objective of the media is questionable, as it has always been. Now it is just on another level."

Of the 42% that answered "no":

The respondents who said that the reason did not change the credibility identified various levels. The majority (27%) said "printing enhancing techniques have been used from the time photography started". For 18% of the respondents the changes were "no big deal". A total of 9% said this was expected from a magazine. And 18% said it was done for effect to attract attention, as different publications do not want the same photographs appearing on their covers. One respondent said that the change made OJ Simpson look sinister, but didn't see this as affecting the credibility.

15. If the publication explained the changes and why they were done, would this change how the public viewed the credibility of the news photograph?

not at all = 32%   **somewhat = 32%**   **very much = 36%**

The answers were relatively equally distributed among the categories provided.

Of the 32% that answered "not at all":

Almost a third, or 32%, said that if the changes were explained it would not (not at all) change how the public viewed the credibility of the news photograph. However, the reasons differed. One photographer said that he did not believe that the public wanted to

know that the photograph had been changed. He added, "Die gewone mens gaan sien die foto is verander veral as altwee publikasies langs mekaar lê".[10] Another said, "Die skaade is klaar gedoen".[11] Two respondents did not think that it was a major issue since it was only a "mug shot" and OJ was just portrayed "a little differently"; as another respondent said: "It is just magazine photography." Two other photojournalists saw this differently and did not think that an explanation of the changes would change the damage that was already done. Thus one of these photojournalists felt that, "trust was abused". And another added that stating the changes would be publicly admitting that they had "suckered their audience". A chief photographer said: "Magazines don't need to. They are more about editorial comment and not hard factual reporting, so why worry about it?"

Of the 32% that answered "somewhat":

Almost another third, or 32%, said that the credibility of news photographs for the public would "somewhat" change if the changes were explained by the publication. One respondent said that the media "would be admitting to trying to change the public's perception of the original police picture". Further, another said that if the changes were done to a "well known public figure the public will lose faith in the publication", and similarly another respondent said that the public have a different outlook to someone working in the industry and "credibility needs to be preserved at some level". One respondent felt that it is their duty to report news as truth without any bias. For another it seemed that the credibility issue depended on how often photographs were altered and if the public was aware of it.

Of the 36% that answered "very much":

For 36% of the photojournalists the credibility would change "very much" if the publication explained the changes. Here, too, there were a variety of viewpoints. One photojournalist said that the changes were acceptable to a point and no further, although another said that they were not acceptable because they were "no longer what was given

to them by the police department". Two respondents agreed that news photographs should not be changed because it is "dishonest" which would result in losing their credibility. Bias seemed of concern to one photojournalist who said that the publication could not openly say that they "did not believe OJ" but, instead, got their opinion across by making him look guilty. On another level one respondent felt that the public would be interested to know how the changes were done.

The replies generated by this question are varied. Some respondents refer to the relevant case study when replying and others consider the issue more broadly.

16. If the change was only to the background, and the public found out, would this affect the credibility of news photographs?

not at all = 42%   somewhat = 31%   very much = 15%   no reply = 12%

The majority, or 42%, said that changing the background would not affect the credibility, for 31% of the respondents the credibility was seen to change "somewhat" and for 15% the credibility was affected "very much". There were 12% of respondents who did not answer this last question.

Of the 42% that answered "not at all":

Those that said it would not change the credibility, 64%, said it was because the "overall look", "context" and "newsworthiness" did not change. But one of these respondents added that there would be a loss of credibility if something was manipulated that was more obvious and which changed the subject. For two respondents these kinds of changes happened in magazines the "whole time" and was "expected". And for another photographer, the magazine covers were usually changed to fit the "style" of the magazine and increase sales.

Of the 31% that answered "somewhat":

A third, or 31%, of the respondents said that the credibility would change "somewhat". Most of these respondents argued that the amount of darkening had been a little "extreme" which changed the "feel" of the picture which was then not representative of the truth. One photojournalist referred to other background changes in general and said that background changes could place an event such as a necklacing in a different area from where it actually took place. Another photojournalist just felt uncomfortable with any kind of changes and said that he didn't like it although some would think it is "not the end of the world".

Of the 15% that answered "very much":

The few that saw the credibility change "very much" focused on the "dishonesty", "changing the meaning" and "truth" elements which would contribute to a loss of credibility.

One respondent (who did not reply to the scale options) said that: "What both publications do, is point OJ as guilty and although *Time* changes the photo, *Newsweek* is actually more damning because of the header."

In general it appears that background changes, at least in this case, are seen as not jeopardising the credibility of the news photograph. However, there is a thread of concern although it is seen as a "minor" change.

6.4   Conclusion

Many issues surfaced from the questionnaire, which added more context and highlighted other related concerns. Some confusion arose when the answers to the close and open-ended replies did not correlate. The replies showed that not all photojournalists think that newspapers are credible or that the public regards newspapers as credible, however I had geared the questions with the premise that newspapers are credible. It was also evident that some respondents replied from their experiences of the issues at their newspapers and others seem to take a more universal approach. More emphasis will be placed on the open-ended questions in the next chapter because they provide the base and operate as an indicator, which establishes more clearly what the respondents' perspectives are.

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[1] Burning and dodging is used to either lighten or darken areas in a photograph. This can be done whilst printing in the darkroom or with the aid of digital software.

[2] "If I don't know, it won't matter, but the newspaper could be embarrassed if it became known."

[3] "People will begin to question other publications too."

[4] In this case study Mandela has not been placed in a different environment or situation. Thus the "context" of the photograph was not changed.

[5] "People will ask: what is next."

[6] Deletion in this question refers to the removal of a person from a photograph with the aid of digital manipulation. It does not refer to cropping or cutting the photograph. Cropping may create a new focus of interest by excluding extraneous detail.

[7] "If Winnie's face was inserted the public would question the photograph because she never stood there, although she may have attended the function."

[8] This signifies that some photojournalists do not distinguish between themselves as professionals with inside knowledge i.e as an informed community and the unsuspecting public.

[9] "Your perspective concerning the person has already been defined, photographs are stronger than words."

[10] "The reader will see that the photograph has been changed when the two publications are side by side."

[11] "The damage is already done."

Chapter Seven

Discussion of research findings

7.1   Introduction

This chapter brings the results of the research survey together and connects the various trends and responses. The links between the informed community's knowledge, understanding, perception, attitudes and the behaviour of the photojournalists targeted in this study, are also assessed. Other issues not directly related to the answers generated by the responses are also discussed here.

The findings of this study are discussed in terms of credibility; the awareness of the change to a photograph; the reason for the change; the caption explaining the changes; deletion and background changes. In brief, these elements encompass the following:

• The theory discusses credibility as a general complex of all codes within photographic representation.

• The awareness of the change relates to knowledge of production codes, which may shift the way the photograph is decoded. If the photograph deviates from the accepted codes of realism and production it will be seen as manipulation.

• The reason for the change relates to codes of realism and is either for or against the code.

• The caption is a code of intertextuality and possibly of credibility.

• Some techniques are controversial. Deletion of meaning elements is a technique — a code of production that is generally seen as unacceptable even in the pre-digital era, even if the result accords with realism codes.

• And the background changes relate to the codes of realism.

A comparison between replies to the general question on credibility and the more specific case study credibility questions, provides an added insight into the complexity of the research problem. Comparisons between responses within specific questions and comparisons between case study responses, further elucidate the dynamics involved.

The way that a photograph's credibility is affected by the differences between a subject being aware of a digitally manipulated photograph and being unaware, is also evaluated. Other factors such as the type of publication, what publication, type of change, elements changed and if the meaning is changed in the manipulation, are also aspects impinging on the credibility of news photographs.

The breakdown of some of the data used in the tables has been restructured for this chapter. The "not at all", "somewhat", and "very much" options have been divided into "yes" and "no" categories to facilitate comparison between replies, but where this occurs the original breakdown is also given.

7.2   Photograph control

Earlier chapters show that photojournalists are concerned with the effects that the changing systems of photographic production may have on news photographs. All daily newspapers in the sample employ digital image software (including the three newspapers that failed to reply). The majority (84%) of respondents indicated that the software was used all the time. The frequency does not explain the extent or character of the changes made with the digital software, thus, whether or not the software use constitutes manipulation is not established. The fact that the technology is ubiquitous, however, underlines the relevance of the issue this thesis investigates.

The new technology has changed the way photographs are coded for storage, transmission or computer assisted alteration, thus giving more control over photographs to computer operators. In this study, designers and layout staff are seen to be increasingly making decisions pertaining to photographic usage without consulting the photojournalists. The "dove" case study example is an illustration of a news photograph that was digitally changed without the photographer's consent or knowledge. The data demonstrate that when photojournalists are asked to advise layout staff, it is usually about sizing, cropping and/ or with regards to picture stories. Examples such as the one described in chapter three ("correcting" the red swimming pool) show that designers have the capabilities to make uninformed changes. It appears, then, that the photographic editing responsibility has shifted away from the informed community to the layout and design departments that are equipped with the digital technology. The results show that the photojournalists are not always consulted when photographs are changed. However,

the *Cape Times* operates differently as they require that the photographers handle their photographs from scanning to colour correcting.

7.3   The ease of digital manipulation and credibility

Chapter three shows evidence of photographic changes with manual darkroom techniques. Manual technology techniques are very specialised and, depending on the kind of changes, can be very difficult to do seamlessly. By contrast, digital computer technology, with the aid of image software packages, greatly facilitates photograph editing. The alterations — whether extensive or not — are not obvious or easily detectable. The final photograph is said to be so "photorealistic that it may be perceived as being real" (Irby, 1998: 2).

Codes of photographic representation should meet the expectations of the codes of realism and codes of production of a photograph. These codes can be met or maintained by digitally retouching photographs.

Thus, the data establishes that news photographs are accepted as credible if they are produced within codes of realistic representation. The "lowering of the dove" photograph has no elements that contradict codes of realism which detract from the credibility of the photograph. The majority of respondents state that if they had no prior knowledge that the "lowering of the dove" photograph was manipulated (broke production codes in this case), it is a "credible", "plausible", "believable" photograph. The caption supplied the proof of the dove being released, which contributed to the intertextuality code of credibility. However, the study did not probe if the informed community makes any

distinction between credibility and believability. The respondents that said that the photograph was not credible replied with the knowledge that it was manipulated, i.e. that it deviated from the accepted codes of production. Many in the informed community seem unable to distinguish between themselves as professionals with inside knowledge and the unsuspecting public. Similarly, with *Time*'s "OJ Simpson" photograph, the majority said it was credible, although a third of the respondents who said it was not, replied as if they knew that it was manipulated (i.e. clashed with *Newsweek*'s reality codes). It appears that the informed community has a "blind spot" with regards to "insider knowledge".

7.4   Question on Credibility

Credibility is made up of a set of codes and conclusions shared by encoders and decoders (cf. chapters two and three). If the encoders change the codes and conclusions in some way and these become questionable, then the credibility can be affected for the decoders of the message. This argument is substantiated by the replies to the questions on newspaper credibility.

The table below shows the ease of image manipulation based on the digital changes of news photographs as adversely affecting the credibility of newspapers and news photographs respectively in the opinion of the informed community. Digital changes on news photographs do not imply manipulation *per se*; only if they contradict the accepted codes of realism and production (cf. chapter three). These contradictions impact on credibility more strongly when dealing with manipulation of news photographs in newspapers and less so with magazines. The case study questions refer to the "awareness"

of the manipulation concerned. In section 7.4.2 of this chapter "awareness" as a

contributing factor to a news photograph's credibility is discussed in more depth.

Credibility of newspapers

	Yes	No	No reply
Does the ease of image manipulation jeopardise the credibility of newspapers?	73%	23%	4%
If the public knew that the photograph had been changed, would it change the credibility of news photography in general? *(lowering of the dove)*	92%	8%	(the original breakdown for this question was: not at all: 8% somewhat: 54% very much: 38%)
If the public knew that the photograph had been changed, would it change the credibility of news photography in general? (*OJ Simpson*)	69%	31%	

A two-thirds majority said that the ease of photograph manipulation jeopardises the

credibility of newspapers. Those that said that digital manipulation does not jeopardise

the credibility of newspapers said this because their newspaper does not radically

manipulate news photographs. It appears that some photojournalists take a naïve view

that if their own newspaper does not radically manipulate photographs, then credibility

would not be jeopardised. However, they do not consider the extent to which other

newspapers may use the digital technology.

Contrasting this with the general finding "lowering of the dove" replies show that the

majority, 92%, felt that if the public knew that the photograph had been changed, it would

change the credibility of news photography in general. The respondents are concerned

with: the trust relationship between themselves and the public; how to regain credibility

once it is lost; the need to inform the public of changes; and the fear that other publications' credibility could be questioned.

The differences between these two sets of replies (the general and a particular) show that the "lowering of the dove" is seen by 19% more respondents to jeopardise its credibility than the replies to the general question on credibility. Perhaps the case study question frames the context, unlike the general question that may be subject to respondents' personal experiences of the digital technology.

The "OJ Simpson" case study was seen somewhat differently and it raises different issues around realistic representation. The majority (69%) said that if the public were informed of the changes, this would change the credibility of photographs in general. This figure is not as high as those for the "lowering of the dove" case study, because 31% respondents differentiate between the covers of magazines and hard news photographs. However, the majority is still concerned that even manipulation of magazine covers can affect news photography's credibility.

The areas highlighted by the answers to the "OJ Simpson" question are: the trust factor may be jeopardised; other publications' credibility may be questioned; manipulation affects all photography — "the reader sees us as one group"; and that readers did not think that publications would deliberately mislead them.

It appears that many photojournalists recognise different codes for different publications, but also that they believe there is enough in common for changes in one sector to spill over and threaten codes in another.

7.4.1 Publication Credibility

The publication as discussed in chapter four shows that this is one area that contributes to credibility. Publication credibility of a particular media publication is seen to contribute to the credibility of the information it carries, although credible publications can produce questionable material (cf. chapter four).

Publication Credibility

	Yes	No	
If the public knew the photo had been changed, would it change the credibility of *Die Burger*?	92%	8%	(the original breakdown for this question was: not at all: 8% somewhat: 46% very much: 46%)
If the public knew that the photograph had been changed, would it change the credibility of *Time* magazine?	69%	31%	

In the "lowering of the dove" case study, the publication's credibility is seen to be affected because of its perceived willingness to manipulate photographs. Only two respondents said that the credibility of the newspaper would not be jeopardised. The rest (92%) are equally divided between "somewhat" and "very much".

The reasons for the anticipated loss of the publication's credibility are: concern over what else has changed; the public would question future photographs as well; the photograph was a fabrication of what took place; and trust would be lost.

In the "OJ Simpson" case study, fewer (69%) respondents see *Time*'s willingness to manipulate photographs as affecting their credibility. Although this is the majority, in comparison to the "lowering of the dove" case study, 23% more respondents see the

"lowering of the dove" photograph as affecting the public's perception of *Die Burger*'s credibility. This difference once more emphasises the differences between news photographs in newspapers and "news" photographs in magazines.

The respondents' main concerns are: the fact that other photographs would be questioned; manipulation deliberately misleads the public; the reason and intention creates a certain effect that changes the meaning of the photograph which would result in "broken trust".

The respondents that did not see the credibility of *Time* changing said that the photograph is acceptable because: it is a recognisable photograph of OJ Simpson; the photograph is more sinister but the facts had not been altered (this reasoning is problematic since changing the photograph i.e. making OJ look "more sinister" implies a further meaning making has taken place that has changed how the photograph is read, therefore changing the perception and changing facts); the magazine is giving the public what they want; and that this level of manipulation is acceptable.

There seems to be a difference with regards to the degree of tolerance of manipulation that is accepted between magazines and newspapers, especially the magazine covers. *Time*'s credibility is presumably based, in part, on it giving what is seen as objective information about reality. With OJ Simpson, it draws attention to the construction of this information. If *Die Burger* had used the "OJ Simpson" manipulated photograph within the context of a newspaper as a news photograph it would not be seen in the same "objective" light but would be seen as subjective with connotative implications. The "lowering of the dove" photograph is seen as based on the fidelity of reality representations.

7.4.2   Awareness of manipulation

Chapter one discusses the process of visual communication. The codes of representation are culturally and socially transmitted. These codes facilitate the negotiation of meaning, but if the nature of the codes is tampered with, the process of interpretation needs adjusting. Thus what is seen as accepted could be questioned. If the accepted codes of credibility shift, the ideology of naturalism and credibility also shifts. What counts as an ideology of visual evidence changes and the decoder can no longer rely on the codes of photographic representation as a measure of credibility. Therefore a shift in codes of production and codes of realism give rise to the label of manipulation which, in turn, results in the questioning of credibility.

Awareness of manipulation affecting credibility

	No	**Yes**
If you were aware that the photograph had been changed, would it still be credible to you?(*lowering of the dove)*	85%	15%
If you were aware that *Time* had manipulated the photograph, would it be credible? (*OJ Simpson*)	62%	38%

The two questions are phrased a little differently. The terminology is not of significance in these questions (as previously stated in chapter five). In fact higher disapproval was scored for the "changed" question, as compared to the (more leading) "manipulation" question.

The awareness that the "lowering of the dove" photograph is changed is perceived to jeopardise the photograph's credibility by 85% of respondents. One of the main reasons is

because the photograph is categorised as a news photograph. The photograph fits the codes of realism and, without the awareness that it deviates from the codes of production, is thus regarded as credible.

Categorising photographs provides an indicator to identify photographs that fit the representational codes of hard news photographs and digital constructs (cf. chapter four).

News photographs are expected to be representative of an event and manipulating the photograph beyond the accepted codes of mechanical reflexivity and indexicality damages realism. The reasons given for why changing the "lowering of the dove" photograph constitutes manipulation that harms credibility are : it changes the meaning of the photograph; makes the public feel cheated; raises questions of what else has been manipulated (other images, text), therefore codes of intertextuality would be questioned; and questions the truth/ reality that is expected from news photographs.

With regards to the "OJ Simpson" case study, the majority, 62%, said that the photograph is not credible because: it is perceived as misleading, thus, *Time* is seen as unethical and could potentially lose its credibility; the photograph has already had an impact and shaped the viewer's perception. However, a third of the respondents expect magazine cover photographs to be manipulated. Some said that the "OJ Simpson" photograph was credible because the magazine has not altered the "facts" (refer to previous section). This statement can be questioned because, by changing the essence of a photograph such as the OJ Simpson photograph, the denotation/ connotation has been changed which can, in turn, be seen as changing the facts. It is also considered as a minor change by the respondents and therefore does not affect the credibility of the photograph for them.

The differences in the scores also reflect that even with awareness, there is some leeway given to news photographs categorised as covers rather than straight news photographs.

7.5   Reason for Manipulation

Chapters one and two discuss the codes that make signification possible. The codes of connotation are the configurations of meaning which permit a sign to signify in addition to its denotative reference. The questionnaire sought clarity on the possible implications of the connotative level of the photograph.

The speculated motives cited by the respondents for manipulating the "lowering of the dove" are: to improve composition; for aesthetic reasons; to save space; and to recreate a missed shot.

The "OJ Simpson" photograph is perceived to be manipulated in order to make the subject appear: sinister; criminal; evil; guilty; bad; to look mean. It is also seen to be done as a visual effect; increase the impact of the photograph; to make the photograph more dramatic; to create a mood; and increase sales. Only one respondent said that nothing much had changed.

The connotative aspect of the "lowering of the dove" did not change. However, for the "OJ Simpson" photograph the implications of the connotation are evident.

7.5.1 Reasons and Credibility

No photographs are purely denotative. The naturalism in them only appears to have no sense of authorial intent, or preferred subjectivity, within taken-for-granted ideological codes. This study assesses whether — within this framework — the possible added intent does, in fact, jeopardise the credibility of news photographs.

The majority of respondents said the reason was a contributing factor when judging the extent to which the change affects the credibility. But the main concern is that the photograph was changed and the motive is seen as a secondary factor.

The minority of photojournalists (23%)[1] said that the "lowering of the dove" photograph is acceptable because the picture is enhanced without changing the meaning and/ or context. The view that "it is not a capital offence" is also evident in the replies. In their perspective, the code of realism remained intact and this was more important than production codes in establishing credibility. For most, however, it is not enough that codes of realism are upheld. The photojournalists argue that if the newspaper changes their photographs it would ultimately affect their credibility. One photojournalist said: "Don't manipulate photographs, get it or miss it." Another said that it is easier to take difficult pictures with modern equipment therefore there should be no reason to have to reconstruct photographs. One photojournalist said that mediocre photographs could be enhanced on a computer, which could ultimately undermine the value of a "great" unmanipulated photograph.

The "OJ Simpson" manipulation is seen as *Time* imposing its evaluation of OJ's guilt on the reader. The respondents view *Time* as judging or displaying bias towards him. Other

issues that refer to the decoder's sensitivities as seen by the respondents are: feeling cheated by a trusted publication; fear that the public would no longer confide in news publications; questioning the objectives of the media.

As many as 42% of the respondents did not think that the reason for the change affects the impact of the photograph's credibility. The reasons why they think that the credibility would not be affected are: printing and enhancing techniques have been used since photography started; the changes are no big deal; this is what is expected from a magazine; it was done for effect to attract attention; the sinister aspect did not affect the credibility. As explained earlier, the denotation/ connotation has been changed and changing the initial "facts" means changing the meaning. However, a large number of photojournalists seem to accept the changes because production codes were not broken and they underplay, or do not see, the impact on codes of realism.

7.6   Caption as justification

A caption explaining digitally manipulated changes may be seen as a way of justifying changes, but it does not alter the effect that the manipulated photograph has had before the text is read.

The assessment of the "lowering of the dove" replies as discussed below takes into account only answers that explicitly relate to the question since this question was misinterpreted by some respondents. The qualitative replies are looked at separately from the "not at all', "somewhat" and "very much" categories which are misleading. The breakdown shows that 37% said that a caption explaining the change would jeopardise

the credibility, but the majority, 63%, said that such a caption would contribute to the credibility thus reinforcing the "trust relationship".[2]

The minority view was that writing a caption would reveal that the newspapers are "unethical and unprofessional". However, those that did see the caption as affecting the credibility of news photographs said: the public is too trusting and that the media shouldn't play with trust relationships; if the changes are explained in the caption it would be small or hidden and the public would still feel cheated when they saw the caption and that it would make matters worse because all photography would be looked at sceptically and doubted.[3]

The "OJ Simpson" example generated somewhat different responses and the replies could not be divided as in the previous case study because the majority elaborated on related issues and not what was required by the question. Of those that responded to the issue (36% of the total), 33.3% (of the 36%) said that the caption would jeopardise the credibility, another 33.3% (of the 36%) said it would contribute to the credibility of the news photograph and a further 33.3% said a caption was irrelevant. The caption is seen as having no impact at all on the credibility of the photograph because: it is just magazine photography with more editorial comment and not hard/ factual; the damage has already been done, "an explanation would not change anything"; it would just be admitting they had "suckered the audience"; and "it was not as if the public wanted to know that the photograph had been changed."

Alternatively those that thought that the caption would in some way contribute to the credibility of the photograph said: the public views the credibility differently to someone

working in the media industry and credibility needs to be preserved at some level; it is the media's duty to report news as truth without bias; credibility depends on how often photographs are altered and if the public is aware of it.

Most of the respondents are unclear about the *Time* case study. The codes of credibility of news photographs do not apply to illustrations, thus if the "OJ Simpson" is categorised as an illustration the question on whether a caption explaining the changes actually changes the credibility of the photograph would be redundant.

The issue of proof and intertextuality was seen to contribute to the credibility of the "lowering of the dove" photograph for the majority of the respondents.

7.7   Deletion

The "lowering of the dove" case study raised the question of deleting a person from the photograph. The theme that prevailed throughout the responses to the questionnaire — which was re-emphasised here — was: photographs should not be changed at all; misinformation is mistrust and is dishonest; what is next?. Yet for some (22%) it was acceptable as long as it didn't change the meaning. This can be interpreted as conforming to the codes of realism. The unusual codes of production were acceptable insofar as they did not conflict with realism.

Some respondents misinterpreted the question. It was evident from the replies that "deleting" was sometimes taken to mean "cropping". Perhaps the phrasing of the question

was unclear or some of the respondents are not familiar with deletion practices with the aid of digital software.

7.8   Background manipulation

When viewing a photograph, all the elements within it frame the context. In a kind of "internal" intertextuality, the context reduces the number of interpretations of the photograph to plausible events within that genre. Changing elements may change the context and therefore provide a message the credibility of which may be questioned.

The photojournalists were asked whether changing the background as in the "OJ Simpson" case would affect the credibility of news photographs. For 42% of the respondents said that changing the background would not affect the credibility but for 46% said that it would (this total is generated from 31% of respondents that said "somewhat" and 15% who said "very much"). Those that said "not at all" felt that: the overall look, context, and newsworthiness did not change; only if something more obvious were manipulated it would have some effect; these changes happened in magazines all the time and were therefore expected; covers were changed to fit the style of the magazine; the changes were done to increase sales.

Those that said that changing the background would affect the credibility said this because they felt that: the darkening on the OJ photograph was extreme; the changes changed the feel, which is not representative of the truth; the background changes in general could change the place where the event took place. The view was also that the changes: were dishonest; changed the meaning; were not the truth.

One photojournalist said that both *Time* and *Newsweek* render OJ as guilty, although *Time* changes the photo. Newsweek is seen as "more damning" because of the header ["Trail of Blood"]. This comment highlights how photographs can contribute to, or counter, credibility, and even work against other signifiers like text.

There is the assumption the *Time*'s background changes are minor. Taking this further, it may be deduced that photojournalists might react more strongly with different background changes. In this instance, the background changes do not seem to affect the codes of realism. The photojournalists seem happy with production codes and not overly concerned with the changes' effect on realism.

7.9   Conclusion

A photograph's credibility is not reliant on one factor or part of the code. Most or all elements of realism and production codes need to be present. As discussed in chapter four, credibility is also part of an individual's subjective construct of the world. This is very evident in the diverse views of the respondents, although generally preferred or common positions do emerge.

The credibility of news photographs in general, with reference to the case studies and the credibility of the respective publication, changed for the same number of respondents. Thus comparing the 92% for the "lowering of the dove" and 69% for the "OJ Simpson" with the 92% for *Die Burger* and 69% for *Time* indicates that the informed community feels strongly that changes in news photographs affect the credibility of both the publication and photography in general.

The most common concerns throughout the questionnaire were focused on the "trust relationship" that exists between the public and the media. Without trust there is no credibility. Trust, as discussed in chapter four, is based on proof and the elements that go into the latter. The significance of distrust is that it is seen as having the potential to spill into other sectors of the media. Similarly, it is the photojournalists' view that the public sees the informed community as one group and the use of unaccepted codes of production or realism by one photojournalist is seen to affect them all. Other concerns voiced were how to regain and retain their credibility once it was lost.

The "lowering of the dove" case study illustrates that a caption explaining the changes contributes to the public's sense of trust in the media as seen by 63% of respondents. This is compared with only 12% that rated a caption explaining the changes of the magazine cover as contributing to the photograph's credibility perhaps because the majority of respondents did not perceive the "OJ Simpson" photograph as a news photograph. However, the caption was also seen as possibly contributing to the loss of news photography's credibility, since the "awareness" of the public of such changes (as seen in this study) jeopardises the credibility of the news photograph and publication in question. It was also suggested that if the public saw the media manipulating news photographs regularly, this would be seen as common practice and, therefore, the public would need to renegotiate the accepted codes of photographic representation.

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[1] This figure is derived from the analysis of the open ended replies which clarifies the "yes", "no" and "a little" categories.

[2] Other replies not taken into this figure are replies like: "I do not think an editor would go to all the trouble of explaining his actions", "seeing is believing" and "People don't realise how much space can be wasted in an uncropped picture". Clearly, these replies are difficult to quantify.

[3] In addition an alternative was suggested by a respondent that said a symbol should accompany the manipulated photograph instead of a caption. This would require an accepted symbol that both the encoders and decoders would recognise. This implies that the manipulation of news photographs would become a common occurrence and also that the symbol would replace the need to explain why the changes were done.

Conclusion

1.   Introduction

"Credibility is the key issue in discussions and perceptions of the media." This statement from the International Press Institute reinforces the main objective of this study (*IPI Report*, 1998: 4). Credibility is the core for news photography's existence. Without credibility news photographs may be constituted as illustrations which are not reliant on credibility codes.

News photography's credibility spills onto the stories and publications in which it appears. This study explores how the credibility of a particular news photograph is seen by photojournalists as affecting the credibility of the newspaper or publication and how ultimately it could affect other news photographs in other news publications. However, it may also be argued that the credibility of the newspaper may in part also be a determining factor of the news photograph's credibility. Credibility is underpinned by complex codes of which realism and production codes directly affect the credibility of the news photograph (refer to fig.1).

This chapter assesses the points made in this thesis in the light of this key point of reference — credibility.

2.   How manipulation impacts on credibility

The "lowering of the dove" photograph appears as credible in that it fits the accepted codes of realism. Naturalism within news photography incorporates "natural", "normal" concepts and realist codes of fidelity between the referent and photographic representation. Its fidelity to the codes of photographic representation applies up to the point when the reader discovers that the photograph deviates from the accepted codes of production. Therefore, as the respondents indicated, if the public is unaware of any changes, the photograph appears credible. However, some photojournalists did not distinguish between themselves as professionals and the uninformed public and replied with insider knowledge. The informed community appears to have a "blind spot" with regards to insider knowledge. This could be further investigated in future studies.

Awareness of the changes relates to the knowledge of production codes, thus if a photograph is recognised as deviating from the accepted codes of production its credibility may be questioned. Within this study's definition of manipulation, any departure from the codes of photographic representation, i.e. codes of realism and codes of production, is "manipulation". Manipulation can take place at any stage of the photographic process, i.e. during meaning making. The processes all add to the signification potential of a news photograph.

A photograph is a sign that denotes meaning. It stands in place of something in relation to something else. The photographic sign adds properties to the referent symbolised which adds connotation to the existing level of denotation — this is evident in all photographs by definition, but stands out most clearly in *Time*'s "OJ Simpson" photograph. The photograph deviates from accepted codes of production, which alters the connotative

meaning. OJ is made to look "sinister" and "darker" which has racial implications and implies his guilt. The assumed reasons or intention for the change were seen by the respondents as relevant, but not to the extent that the act of changing the photograph was. Production codes, in other words, were more important than realism codes in this case — and because these production codes used accepted techniques, some respondents saw the negative impact on realism as minor or even negligible.

The photograph is a meaningful message that can have an effect. It can influence, entertain, instruct, persuade or impart knowledge, which can be embedded within a specific purpose or intention. The message is encoded by the producer of the message and then decoded by the consumer of the message for communication to take place. The message contains codes of denotation and connotation that operate within ideological codes. The decodings within codes of ideology appear unintended and unnoticed because ideology operates by constituting the subjectivity of individuals producing "familiar recognitions". This sense of unity is mutable and constantly redefined, thus codes shift with shifts in perceptions of the world. *Time* magazine's picture editor, Michele Stephenson, indicated that the "OJ Simpson" photograph generated "a full range of reactions". Some publics thought it was a production error (Wilson, 1995). The negotiation of the photograph generated different meanings that best suited the individual's ideological subjectivity. However, knowledge of the changes shows a shift in credibility and the way the photograph is decoded and interpreted. A further shift occurs for future decodings of photographs if they are viewed with the assumption that photographs are not credible. In this way, the change in photographic technology could change accepted codes of photographic production. Existing codes of visual representation have to be negotiated to fit the new digital production procedures.

The communicative exchange depends on the shared or common set of ideologies. Thus, the interpretations may be actualised differently depending on the interpretive conventions of the audience. Preferred meanings are embedded in ideological phenomena, practices and beliefs. However, the encoding/ decoding affects the intended and unintended meaning. According to the managing editor of *Time*, the "OJ Simpson" photograph was not intended to make him more "sinister and guilty", but was to portray the man as an icon of tragedy. For many "decoders", the result was different to the claimed intended purpose, which highlights the multiple negotiated meanings available. But even here, the ideological decoding operates implicitly, often beneath the intention of the encoder and the decoder. It only became an issue when intertextuality (which is a key factor in trust, proof and credibility) brought it to light in the form of the contrasting *Newsweek*'s cover.

The "lowering of the dove" photograph fits the "familiar recognitions" of how news photographs are presented. To signify as a news photograph, a photograph is dependent on a happening, its recency and newsworthiness (cf. chapter two). These conditions in part contribute to the codes of credibility. The credibility codes are further underpinned by a set of shared ideas. Among these are the codes of production and realism, which are closely linked to intertextuality, source authority, values and conventions.

3. Underpinning credibility's codes of production and realism

3.1 Intertextuality

Without the *Newsweek*'s contrastive aspect, intertextuality adds to credibility by operating between elements that contribute to proof and trust. The connotations of the "OJ Simpson" photograph are further implied by running *Time*'s masthead over the

photograph. The title "An American Tragedy" also reinforces the imputation of guilt. Via these codes of intertextuality, the elements add to a credible signification.

The caption is also part of the intertextuality component of credibility. It may contribute or jeopardise the credibility of the photograph or alternatively the photograph may affect the corresponding text. The majority, 63%, of respondents regard a caption explaining the changes of the "lowering of the dove" case study as positively reinforcing the credibility of the relationship of the communication exchange. The "OJ Simpson" case study was not regarded as a hard news photograph and thus only 12% said that a caption would contribute to the credibility of news photographs.

3.2 Source authority

Source authority includes the character of the publication, the photographer, the event covered, the content and the institution. The particular construction that each publication selects accords with codes of source authority and production within accepted ideological themes. These themes signal naturalness in news, which operates as a realist subjectivity, thus photographic messages appear as representative of a reality. This representation is credible if it adheres to the accepted codes of photographic representation. This representation in turn is dependent on the established production conventions and codes of realism. However, different visual representations such as illustrations do not function on the same credibility codes. Magazines are widely known to manipulate their covers. For some respondents, the credibility of the "OJ Simpson" photograph was not an issue because the photograph was in effect seen as an illustration. For other respondents *Time*'s cover's credibility was questioned because the photograph was read as a news photograph instead of as an illustration. However, for yet a third group of respondents, the cover was

credible in that it was read as a news photograph that still cohered with the codes of realism not withstanding its contrast with *Newsweek*. The literature survey suggests that identifying categories can prevent this type of misunderstanding from occurring.

3.3   Values and conventions

The journalistic value codes pertain to all areas of the news production process from behaviour and attitude of the encoder to the balance, fairness and wholeness, accuracy/ authenticity and accessibility of the news event. However, the value codes may provide further areas of study on credibility. These codes contribute in part to the complex codes of credibility within the photographic processes.

4.   Production codes can undercut realism codes

As discussed, manipulation is not merely about the techniques or the technology used, but the way that technology use impinges and deviates from the codes of photographic representation. It is the act of deviating from the codes that impacts on credibility. Credibility is about adhering to certain codes. Thus the "lowering of the dove" photograph was seen by 92% of the respondents as not credible because it deviated from the codes of production.

Production codes pertain to all the stages of the photographic process. Certain photographic techniques are accepted and established as "standard" procedures. These result in photographs that adhere to the codes of realism. Techniques such as burning, dodging, colour enhancement *et cetera* have traditionally been accepted codes of production. Other techniques such as retouching, bleaching, producing print composites, and deleting or moving elements in a photograph have not been accepted as part of the

code since they are perceived as changing the denoted meaning and thus deviating from the accepted codes of production. Digital technology has taken the possibilities further and has extended the photographic process capabilities. As seen in the study, the nature of photographic retouching is more sophisticated in that it provides "realistic" representations that cohere with the codes of realism. But credibility is sacrificed at the level of production. The "lowering of the dove" photograph was seen as realistic, but it is not ultimately credible because it deviates from the accepted codes of production.

According to the production codes as described in this study, the "lowering of the dove" photograph employed techniques that deviate from accepted codes. The method of "cutting and pasting" was used, which traditionally is not a universally accepted production code. The "OJ Simpson" photograph used accepted burning techniques but is still regarded as manipulation since the result is viewed as changing the meaning and thereby impacting on realism codes (enabling it to be shown up when contrasted to *Newsweek*).

Digital imaging technology has the capabilities to produce images that adhere to the codes of realism. Both case studies, without prior knowledge of the changes, appear as credible news photographs. It is at this level of realism that the changes produce a sense of "deviousness" since there is no obvious way of knowing if acceptable production techniques have been used.

Manipulation as previously discussed can occur within the production codes and/ or within the codes of realism. Either can jeopardise the structure of credibility, although not necessarily. This study's model of photographic representation shows that credibility is

always constructed of various codes and therefore it is difficult to establish a fail proof blueprint for credibility.

5. Future research

Further work can build on this model, integrating at a theoretical level Slater's three components of realism (cf. chapter two). These are: firstly, representational realism which corresponds to the concept of codes of realism, secondly, ontological or existential realism which refers to the relation between the sign and the referents and thirdly, mechanical realism. These together refer to the means of representing the world, the means of knowing it and the means of producing it. The second and third component could be fruitfully explored in further research as regards the digital possibility of rendering a photorealistic image by digital creation independently of a defined referent. Digital technology allows the invention, rather than capturing, of photorealistic images — breaking Slater's mechanical and ontological components, which may in turn impact on the representational.

The limitations of this study in the research survey and methods include the questionnaire as the research tool, case studies and question wording. The self-administered questionnaire posed difficulties that were not anticipated. Firstly, the questionnaire was regarded with suspicion even though it was accompanied with a covering letter introducing the reasons for the study. Secondly, the unreliable mail distribution service within the institutions was a problem. Thirdly, respondents found it difficult to find the time to reply to a formal questionnaire. Fourthly, some felt that the study was a fruitless exercise because nobody is really interested in photojournalists' opinions and concerns.

Fifthly, the questionnaire limited the depth of the replies and other possible areas of interest that would arise from an interview situation.

The wording was a problem in the question pertaining to deletion of elements within a photograph. Some photojournalists took this to mean cropping. Another related issue was the study's assumption that "changing" the photograph meant "jeopardising" credibility, but for some respondents their replies indicated that "changing" the photograph referred to "contributing" to credibility. Future research would need to take into account these semantic issues.

The case studies were a beneficial frame for the broader questions. They provided a context and a situation. However, the questions that were hypothetical were largely misunderstood (the deletion and background questions).

Looking at this thesis from the vantage point of the case studies, (as opposed to the conceptual categories of theorising credibility *et cetera*), one can see the insights that they specifically generated. The two case studies illustrate the differences between a news photograph appearing in a newspaper and a news photograph appearing on the cover of a magazine. Newspaper photographs are more at risk of losing their credibility than a news photograph on the cover of a magazine. Both case studies for the majority of respondents appear to adhere to the codes of realism. It is at the level of production where credibility is put at stake. The shift in codes is also seen to put the credibility of the publication and news photography in general at risk. A hypothetical caption explaining the changes of the "lowering of the dove" was seen as being able to contribute to the credibility of the

photograph, but the "OJ Simpson" case study was seen differently, without much need for a caption, since it was regarded as more of an illustration than a news photograph.

The case study data suggests that the informed community in this study perceives the act of "manipulation" as placing the credibility of news photographs, the publication and their own credibility in jeopardy. The informed community, however, also appears uncertain as to whether a caption explaining the changes would contribute or jeopardise the credibility, preferring to avoid any "manipulation" of news photographs in the first instance. However, it has been suggested in this thesis that a category system identifying an illustration or news photograph would be beneficial to credibility (cf. chapter four), and further research could be done in this area.

The difficulty with case studies is the extent to which findings can be generalised. This study has attempted to extract general principles from the responses given to the two case studies. However, further research using different case studies would be needed to see if the same principles apply. Another area for further study is not the informed community of encoders, but the audiences who decode news photography. Although members of the informed community in this survey often made no distinction between how they responded and how they thought audiences would respond, this needs to be tested. Credibility, ultimately, refers to audience assessments rather than the views of the photojournalists, and this is a very rich area to research.

The study takes existing theories of semiotics, ideology, naturalism, realism and credibility as a basis for the study. These theories also underpin the definitions and discussion on manipulation and credibility. These formulations can be beneficial for

further research in similar areas where an understanding of the terms is required. The descriptive survey ascertained photojournalists' current knowledge, perception and understanding of, and behaviour and attitude towards, the credibility of news photographs within the limitations and boundaries of this study. The open-ended replies generated further insight, which contributes to the understanding of the informed community's attitudes.

6.   Conclusion

The study attempted to relate highly theoretical discussions to empirical attitudes and knowledge within a defined community. It found no ready-made theory at the first level, and discovered very divergent views and confused thinking on the ground. By devising a new theoretical framework and analysing the empirical situation accordingly, this thesis can contribute to further academic research and to photojournalists' knowledge, attitudes, understanding and behaviour.

News photography *per se* is dependent on its credibility to constitute as "news" in order to serve its function of imparting knowledge, informing, educating and elucidating news events. Photojournalists in this study are concerned that news photography's credibility is at risk. Theorists and practitioners are still wrestling with this challenge. Meanwhile technology continues to shift the dynamics of photographic production and representation.

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CREDIBILITY OF DIGITAL IMAGING

Please answer the following questions as detailed as possible. Please use the reverse side of the questionnaire if you run out of space.

SECTION A   - GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. What newspaper do you work for?..

2. How many years have you been working in newspaper photojournalism?...........................

3. In your newspaper do photographers advise layout staff/ designers on picture usage?

yes   no

If yes, please elaborate as to how often and to what degree.

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4. Does your newspaper employ digital software (e.g. Photoshop) on news images?

yes   no

If yes, to what extent is it used?

      all the time | occasionally   rarely

5. Does the ease of image manipulation jeopardise the credibility of newspapers?
Please elaborate.   yes   no

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SECTION B   - CASE STUDIES

Extreme left: The original photo of President Nelson Mandela's first public appearance on the balcony of the Cape Town City Hall, after he was elected President. He released a white dove in front of a large crowd. On his right are Desmond Tutu and Frank Chikane.

Right: The picture in which the newspaper moved the dove closer to Mandela as he stood with his arms outstretched.

Die Burger, Picture by Henk Blom©, May 10, 1994.

1. If you were unaware that the photograph was manipulated, would it be credible?
yes   no   Please elaborate.

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2. If you were aware that the photograph had been changed, would it still be credible to you?
yes   no   Please elaborate.

3. If the public knew the photo had been changed, would it change the credibility of Die Burger?

                not at all ☐   somewhat ☐   very much ☐

Please elaborate.

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4. If the public knew the photo had been changed, would it change the credibility of news photography in general?

                not at all ☐   somewhat ☐   very much ☐

Please elaborate.

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5. For what reason do you think the photograph was changed?

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6. Does this reason affect how much the change impacts on credibility to you?

                yes ☐   no ☐   a little ☐

Please elaborate.

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7. If the photo's caption explained the changes and why they were done, would this change how the public viewed the credibility of the news photograph?

                not at all ☐   somewhat ☐   very much ☐

Please elaborate.

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8. If Tutu and Chikane were deleted out of the photograph, and the public found out about it, would it affect the credibility of the news photograph?

                not at all ☐   somewhat ☐   very much ☐

Please elaborate.

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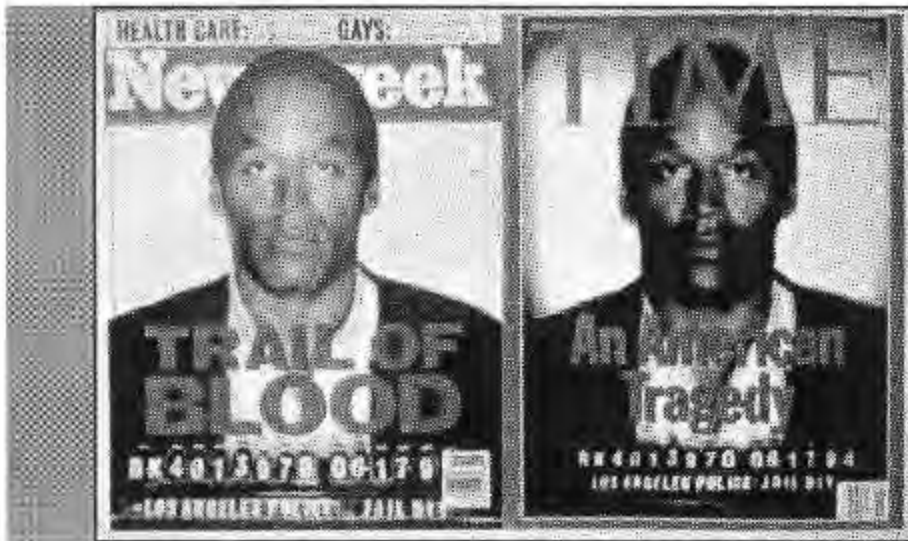
Time magazine used an altered LAPD mugshot of OJ Simpson for their cover. *Newsweek* used the unaltered mugshot on its cover.

Left: The original image as used by *Newsweek©*, June 27, 1994. *LAPD©image*, 1994.
Right: *Time*'s changed image©, 1994.

9. If you were **unaware** that *Time* had manipulated the photograph, would the image be credible?
yes ☐   no ☐

Please elaborate.

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10. If you were **aware** that *Time* had manipulated the photograph, would it be credible?
yes ☐   no ☐

Please elaborate.

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11. If the public knew that the photograph had been changed, would it change the credibility of *Time* magazine?
yes ☐   no ☐

Please elaborate.

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12. If the public knew that the photograph had been changed, would it change the credibility of news photography in general?
yes ☐   no ☐

Please elaborate.

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13. For what reason do you think the photograph was changed?

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14. Does this reason affect the credibility to you?

        yes ☐   **no** ☐   **a little** ☐

Please elaborate.

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15. If the publication explained the changes and why they were done, would this change how the public viewed the credibility of the news photograph?

        not at all ☐   **somewhat** ☐   **very much** ☐

Please elaborate.

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16. If the change was only to the background, and the public found out, would this affect the credibility of the news photograph?

        not at all ☐   **somewhat** ☐   **very much** ☐

Please elaborate.

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Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

May I contact you for further information, if necessary? **yes** ☐   **no** ☐

Please furnish me with your email/ fax.

        Name:..

  Email:...Fax:................................

Would you like to remain **anonymous** with regard to your views/ opinions expressed here?

yes ☐   **no** ☐

Would you like an electronic copy of the results of this questionnaire? **yes** ☐   **no** ☐

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me.
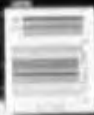Angie Lazaro, Journalism & Media Studies, Rhodes University, PO Box 94, Grahamstown, 6140