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A Theory and Partial Test of Women's Double-tracking Role Transitions and Quality of Role Enactment

Charlene Joy Ellis

PICTURE SELECTION: EDITORIAL REACTIONS TO

TEN VIOLENT NEWS PHOTOGRAPHS

BY

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TEN VIOLENT NEWS PHOTOGRAPHS

This thesis is approved as a creditable and
independent investigation by a candidate for the degree,
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JALE

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study examines how editors respond to a selection of news photographs that show human suffering and misfortune.

This study is based on a study done in 1965 by the editors of Columbia Journalism Review. That study was an informal one in which six journalists were given ten photographs that had been published in magazines and newspapers, and asked whether they would use the photographs, and what the rationale was for their choices. This study uses the same 10 photographs used by the Columbia Journalism Review study but with 64 daily newspaper editors in the Upper Midwest.

The earlier study was chosen as a basis for this one because the photographs had been used in a judging situation and it was possible to reproduce and present them in a similar way to the editors selected for this study. It would be possible to compare the selections of the two groups to discover if violent photographs have become more acceptable to editors in the past 15 years.

The earlier study did not seek background information about its six editors. This study does look for a relationships that might exist between editors' photo selec-

tions and their ages, education, and types and lengths of journalistic experience. City and circulation size are also analyzed. If there is a correlation between editors' backgrounds and the choices they make, then it may be possible to predict how an editor will make photo selection decisions on pictures with violent content. This study asks: 1) If these background factors do help predict editors' choices in violent photographs, how significant are these factors in the choice? 2) What factors do editors believe to be significant in determining their choices? 3) How do editors use violent photographs? and 4) When do they choose not to use them?

Two of the photographs used in this study show accidents causing death. This study suggests that the use of what editors call body pictures has decreased in the past two decades. A comparison of the frequencies of use of these photographs can show the direction of change in the usage of this type of violent-content photograph.

Another question in this study concerns how readers are perceived by editors. Do editors believe that their readers see the world as increasingly violent? Do editors see themselves and their newspapers as opinion setters, thus contributing in part to their readers' views on violence? Are editors consciously trying to change public perceptions about violence?

Before answering these questions it is useful to view violence in man's history as reported in the media. The first chapter reviews violence, which is not a phenomenon specific to or even particularly remarkable in this country or in this century. Since their invention, the media have always portrayed violence. Explicit violence in newspapers is also not a recent development.

Chapter 1 provides a background for this study. It gives a brief history of violence in society and discusses the violence reflected in photographs selected by the media, especially newspapers. The use of violent-content photographs in newspapers is not a phenomenon of this century. The chapter concludes with the problem statement and hypotheses for this study.

A number of social historians and psychologists, citing the rise and fall of ancient and modern societies, believe violence to be a natural human behavior. Konrad Lorenz won the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1973 for his pioneering work in the science of ethology, the study of animals' behavior in their natural environments. He found that many of the theories of ethology also apply to human behavior. Lorenz wrote that violence is "necessary in fulfilling evolutionary needs of the group."[1] Man, according to Lorenz, has a natural agressive drive, and modern man has been deprived of sufficient outlets for this drive.

"There can be little doubt that topics of violence are of intense interest to the public and attract large audiences,"[2] J. B. Haskins, a media researcher and educator, wrote in "The Effects of Violence in the Printed Media" which is quoted in a U. S. Government Printing Office publication. Haskins adds that "The interest seems to extend across all media....Among children it seems to in-crease somewhat with age."[3]

Gerald Priestland also sees violence as enter-tainment. "While we profess to dread it [violence] and denounce it, each of us also entertains and enjoys it in some form,"[4] he said.

In spite of the popularity of violence, little is known about its affect on human behavior. Priestland wrote, "Our convictions about violence are uncomplicated by much first-hand knowledge of it. Compared with our ancestors of A.D. 1250 or 1350 or 1450, we are soft and innocent."[5]

The History of Violence

Long before there was any written language, there existed images of violence. Cave paintings show hunting scenes that often include death.

In the ancient world, empires were built or dis-solved because of their citizens' warrior abilities. Ancient Egypt was powerful and wealthy enough to build monuments because the Egyptians were "more subtle in

warfare than the Greeks and Romans . . . (and) the Assyrians, the Prussians of the ancient world as Montgomery called them, terrorized the Middle East for more than 500 years, thanks to a social order wholly focused upon war . . . which was almost fatal to the Greeks."[6]

In the Middle Ages the world was carved into small, heavily armed and defended principalities. The code of government for these small feudal states was expressed in Machiavelli's Prince. He wrote, "A prince should therefore have no aim, thought or object of study but war, its organization and discipline . . . It is much safer to be feared than loved."[7]

In 1260 Roger Bacon wrote the formula for gunpowder in his notebooks in code, because he feared it would fall into violent hands.[8] And Leonardo DaVinci's notebooks are "full of deadly military inventions, among them a tank and a submarine , but he held them back, arguing 'This I do not disclose, because of the evil nature of men who would practice murder upon the bed of the sea.'"[9]

In the Middle Ages, and up until the current century, public flogging and hangings were a common sight. There were very few periods of the past that were totally without wars, the plague, widespread poverty and destruction, and their versions of Richard Speck, Charles Manson and Lee Harvey Oswald. In the fifteenth century Marshal Gilles

de Rals "debauched and then massacred perhaps 140 young
children.[10] John George Haigh "drank his victim's blood."[11]
History holds many violent acts as gruesome as the Charles
Manson killings of eight people, Richard Speck's assault
upon and killing of eight student nurses in Chicago, sniper
Charles J. Whitman's murder of 13 people (he wounded an
additional 44) from the tower of the University of Texas,
and the Ted Bundy rape-murders. However, it was not until
almost the current century that the technology to make
photographs of these events existed. It is only recently
that the media have been able to show as well as describe
tragedy and violence.

Violence and Editorial Response

Almost every major power, including America, was
born in strife. Paul Revere, most famous as a patriot, was
also a silversmith and engraver. One of his works showed
British Redcoats shooting into a Boston crowd in 1770. The
editors of Time-Life Books have written that the engraving
of this scene

> would have made a dandy news picture--if
> it only had been printed in a newspaper.
> But Revere did not give it to the Boston
> Gazette. Instead he sold individual copies
> of it for eight pence apiece, and gave the
> Gazette a small, dull picture of five coffins,
> symbolically memoralizing the citizens
> killed in the massacre. [12]

The first credited news picture to appear in a
newspaper was published in 1842 in The Illustrated London
News. "Prophetically, in view of the nature of so many
of the news pictures that have followed, it showed an act
of violence, an assassination attempt on Queen Victoria."[13]
Early news pictures were not photographs, but wood engravings
made from line drawings. Photography was thriving in the
mid-1800 s. The first successful photograph was made in
1826 by Joseph Nicephore Niepce, and by 1839 photography

> a practical reality (with) . . . the
> development of the daguerreotype, a
> silver-coated copper plate that,
> exposed to sunlight, could record
> a sharp image in as little as half
> an hour. The age of photography
> had arrived. [14]

Mathew Brady could not take action shots of the
Civil War because of long exposure times, but he and the
teams of photographers he sent into the battlefield did
make pictures of casualties. These did not appear in
newspapers, which were still at that time using illustra-
tions from sketch artists. However, the "illustrated
papers of the era did show violent scenes."[15] Notable
among them were Harper's Weekly and Leslie's Illustrated
Newspaper.

Brady's work did affect public opinion, even though
it did not appear in newspapers. His pictures "were
helpful in building and maintaining fighting morale in

the North,"[16] thus becoming propaganda. Brady's Anderson-
ville pictures were distributed by hand and were "widely
seen."[17]

Brady was America's first was photographer, but he
was not the first photographer to take pictures showing
violence. In the 1840s daguerreotypes of the Hamburg fire
were made, and in the 1950s Roger Fenton photographed the
Crimian War.[18] Brady's work was done in the 1860s and late
in that decade unknown photographers captured the French
Civil War on film. These pictures were published at
exhibitions but were not published in newspapers. It was
not until the close of the nineteenth century that the
technology existed to print photographs in newspapers.[19]

Journalism of the nineteenth century was seldom
"timely" by twentieth century standards. Stories often
appeared weeks after the occurrence. There were illustra-
tions, but those weren't considered part of the "news."
They were mainly decorative. Even without photographs, the
newspapers of the times were not without reference to
violence. Long and often graphic descriptions of tragic
events were often included in the newspapers of the mid-1800s.
One of these newspapers was Joseph Pulitzer's New York
World, known for its use of sensational "blood and gore"
illustrations.

The violence in the newspaper words extended to
the artists' engravings. In the 1880s, for example, many
papers used large--and in many cases dramatic--drawings
of an assassination attempt on Queen Victoria.[21] By the
late 1890s advances in technology finally made newspaper
photography a possibility--but it was not considered a
success at first. Flash powder, roll film (which re-
placed glass plates), faster shutter speeds, and printers'
use of rules screens paved the way for the birth of
photojournalism, but newspapermen were initially skeptical.
"Publishers thought that their readers would consider the
halftone (made from a photograph) a cheap substitute for
hand art."[22] And so, until World War I, there was limited
use of photography in newspapers.

One of the earliest newspaper photographs to receive
'big play' was also a picture of tragedy--the sinking of
the Titanic.

World War I was given extensive word play in news-
papers--but few pictures of the war were used, and these
were more like the majority of passive pictures of Brady
et al, than like the war photography of World War II,
Korea and Vietnam. One reason was technology--cameras were
still large, heavy and rather slow, and transmission of
stories before the invention of the wire services (the first
pictures were transmitted by wire in the mid 1930s) often

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took weeks from the battlefields to home.

So war pictures were scarce (by current standards) and few could be explicit or show action because of technical restrictions. Another type of violent-content picture appeared just after the turn of the century. Since before the Civil War there had been racial unrest, particularly in the South. Lynching was common, but few pictures of riots and lynchings were printed. Until the twenties, "conservatism was typical of editors through a century of brutal torture and murder."[23]

In the case of lynching pictures, non-use was based not on such considerations as good taste or invasion of privacy, but on the editor-perceived social and political prejudices of readers and on the desires of management.

Following World War I there was an increase in the number and types of photographs used, a trend that continued through this century.

The first widely published photograph to show a person dying appeared in the Twenties. It shows the electrocution of Ruth Snyder. The photograph was taken secretly with the camera rigged to the photographer's ankle. The New York Daily News ran the picture full front page. Use of the picture "earned The New York Daily News national condemnation."[24] Even fifty years later, one editor found use of that picture--taken at the moment of death--a "breach of faith"[25] and "a stark horror."[26]

Daily News Editor Frank Howard defended his choice

saying:

> It was our duty, we thought, not to dis-
> appoint our readers, who like to be taken
> to big events . . . . The best factual
> account of any event obtainable is a news
> photograph.[27]

He added that not to have used the first published execu-

tion picture would have been "censorship."[28]

Many editors, then and later, strongly disagreed.

Silas Bent, a well-known critic of the press in the

Twenties, wrote, "The Press has developed . . . a new

technique of salesmanship and showmanship . . . The in-

flation of matter appealing to unconscious passions and

hungers continues. The news which startles, thrills and

entertains is blown up as vigorously as a toy balloon."[29]

This early example typifies both sides of the issue of

violent picture usage that have been argued for the past 60

years.

In the Thirties the Des Moines Register editorial-

ized:

> Newspapers are but the mirror of life . . .
> human nature will have to change before
> crime, horror, scandal and lust can be
> eliminated from the pages of the honest
> newspaper.[30]

This defense implies that newspaper editors are not the

leaders of opinion--but the followers; not helping to set

public opinion but responding to it.

Ernest L. Meyer defended his use of a lynching

picture in the Madison (Wisconsin) Capital Times, saying:

> There has been a good bit of criticism
> of the Capital Times for printing on
> page one of last Tuesday's edition
> actual photographs of the two victims
> of the San Jose lynching bee. The
> pictures of the men dangling from the
> tree were described as 'shocking' and
> 'unnecessary.' So was the crime. The
> grim butchery deserved a grim record.
> And these photographs were more eloquent
> than any word-picture of the event. They
> were calculated to cool any sympathy for
> the San Jose mob.[31]

MacDougall contrasts "the reticence of the journal-

istic media as regards such pictures . . . with the frank-

ness of details often included in written accounts of such

incidents,"[32] and he goes on to quote some of these:

New York Times, Oct. 19, 1933

> Princess Anne, Md., Oct. 18--Then the mob
> cut down the body, dragged it through the
> main thoroughfares for more than half a
> mile and tossed it onto a burning pyre . . .
> The mob members seemed crazed . . . Despite
> the presence of women and children, his
> clothes were torn from his body and he was
> hanged nude. One boy, about 18 years old,
> slashed off the Negro's ear with a knife.

Birmingham News, March 8, 1960

> A band of masked white youths hung a Negro
> by his heels last night and carved two
> series of KKK's into his chest and stomach
> in reprisal for recent sit-in demonstrations
> by Negro students at Texas Southern University.

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<center>Chicago Defender, Feb. 17, 1923</center>

> Milledgeville, Ga. Feb. 16--Fingers and
> ears of two Negroes who were lynched
> near this city last week are on display
> in a large bottle filled with alcohol
> on the counter of the town drug store.
> An inscription near the bottle says:
> "What's left of the niggers who shot
> a white man.[33]

Other newsmen, including Harold Evans, editor of
the Sunday Times, London, agreed with Meyer. According to
Evans, "It would have been better if decades of American
editors had not suppressed gruesome photographs of Southern
lynchings; this was more a protection of the lynchers than
public morals."[34]

Politics may have influenced editors' choices of
what is newsworthy, and so have other factors, such as the
possibility of winning prizes and prestige. In 1942,
Columbia University used a part of Joseph Pulitzer's endow-
ment to award the first Pulitzer prizes in Journalism. It
is significant that the first winner and a majority of all
winners since in photography show scenes of violence and
tragedy. According to Lil Junas, of the 38 Pulitzer winners
(1942 to 1978), 24 were tragedy/violence.[35] That is 63 per-
cent.

The Junas study included only winners in the news
photo category. There was no award in photography for 1946;
one photo essay, "A War Like No Other" received the award

for 1965-1966, and in 1968 the contest was split into two
categories--news and feature. Subsequent comments reflect
both categories and all winners in photographs.

Sheryle and John Leechley wrote in the introduction
to <u>Moments: The Pulitzer Prize Photographs</u>, that the
Pulitzer prized represent "the pinnacle of achievement in
the field of Journalism."[36] The winners, they explain, are
chosed by "a jury of eminent journalists."[37] Before becoming
a winner a picture must have been published in a newspaper
(implying a pre-selection process by photographers, editors
and publishers). Most of the winners were picked up by
Associated Press (AP) or United Press International (UPI)
and widely circulated (implying further selection by wire
editors and city editors). Finally, these are submitted at
the end of the year to the contest committee, announcing
their choice every April for the preceding year. Every
winner has therefore been siften through several selection
situations before becoming a Pulitzer Prize winner.

An unnamed editor of <u>Popular Photography</u> believes
that editors may use pictures to reflect the tastes of
content judges rather than the tastes of their own reader.
He commented:

> Consider that Pulitzer Prize judges can
> select only from what they see. Are
> picture editors selecting with an eye
> to newsstand sales, photographers in turn
> giving editors the most sensational images
> they can, and the juries, to make the
> circle complete and self-nourishing,
> choosing willy-nilly among the most sen-
> sational (rather than photographically the
> best) photographs of the year?[38]

The logical inference is that editors and publishers who

submit these pictures see violent-content photographs not

only as newsworthy, but also as worthy of major national

recognition. The Leekleys ask whether editors create a

public hunger for violent pictures, or do they merely

cater to it? In the introduction to the book, Leekley

wrote:

> Perhaps more than any other single factor,
> we see a great deal of violence in these
> photographs, reflecting the violence in the
> lives around us . . . the drama of life and
> death . . .[39]

However, the Pulitzer and other photojournalism

prize committees have been criticized for not recognizing

work of excellent technique, but merely awarding work on

the basis of the event shown. One editor in an unsigned

article in Popular Photography criticized the Pulitzer

Prize winners, writing:

> One feels at times that the jury has given
> the prize on the basis of the news value
> of the event rather than the picture.
> Often, the ones with the proper tinge of
> horror--enough to induce shock but perferably
> not so much as to cause revulsion--end up as
> a Pulitzer prize winner.[40]

One photo subject that was increasingly used by newspaper editors throughout the 1950s and 1960s, and has been seen less often in the last two decades, is the accident picture. In the 1950s there were frequent uses of car crash pictures. It was argued by some editors at the time (such as Mr. Gates, cited in Chapter 2) that printing these would convince readers to become more careful drivers. These pictures did gain wide reader interest. According to Hurley and McDougall this interest is explained as psychologically related to security. Readers were, they wrote, "secretly relieved it didn't happen to us."[41]

However, some editors justified using violent-content pictures because tragedy on a large scale could be curbed through the publicity of news journalism, particularly picture usage. For example, it is widely believed that the Vietnam war came to a swifter conclusion because of newspaper and television images of that war.

W. Eugene Smith wrote, referring to his Minamata pictures, "If my photographs could cause compassionate horror within the viewer, they might also prod the conscience of that viewer into taking action."[42]

At the time of the Vietnam war, one journalism educator defended his newspaper's use of violent war photographs:

> Do we print the gruesome picture of the
> Buddhist monk who has set himself afire?
> Yes, of course. And do we print the
> horrifying picture of the South Vietnamese
> military officer firing his pistol point-
> blank into the brain of the captive?
>
> Startling, yes. Should they have been
> printed? Yes. Life is often startling
> and horrible. Only by knowing can readers
> seek a better existence for all.[43]

Another editorial defense of pictorial coverage of Vietnam: "The mass media could hardly help showing the public just how unworthy and unwinable it was. If nothing else, Vietnam was the first total-coverage, instant-news war,"[44] said Malcolm F. Mallette, director of the American Press Institute, a non-profit center providing journalism seminars for newspaper workers.

Not all editors agreed. Of the Buddhist monk self-immolation picture, John G. Morris, picture editor of the New York Times, has written that his newspaper's editors "thought it 'unfit for the breakfast table,' and a great many other newspapers would not run it."[45]

However, some pictures from that war were rejected by editors:

> In 1974 a picture appeared in which Cambodian
> soldiers carry heads cut from Kyper Rouge
> soldiers after fighting near Phenom Penh.
> This was one of the widely used pictures in
> the foreign press. At UPI, Ted Majeski
> debated whether it was too gruesome to move
> in the United States. Since American forces
> were not involved, he decided to move it on the
> national network. The decision, says Majeski,
> was apparently wrong. He saw no reports of its
> use in American newspapers.[46]

Junas found in her study of Pulitzers and Pictures of the Year that not only are a majority tragedy/violence (of 60 Pictures of the Year awards, 29 were violent,[47] but "trends in the selection of tragedy/violence photographs as prize winners show an increase in later years. For example, since 1963, every news winner in the Pulitzer Prize competition was of tragedy/violence with the exception of 1975, which was of firemen recuperating on a curb (tragedy-related), with the charred remains of a building in the background."[48]

The Public and Media

The media literally surround us. It is very nearly impossible to completely avoid them--cable TV, network TV, local TV, PBS, CB radio, AM radio, FM radio, general interest magazines, special interest magazines, trade magazines, movies, local newspapers, Sunday newspapers, weekly newspapers, semi-weekly newspapers, direct mail, shoppers, billboards. In Violence and Social Change Henry Brenan writes:

> Only with the greatest difficulty can anyone in the United States avoid the mass media. Indeed, the average American is exposed to the messages of these media to a far greater extent than to formal education, organized religion, or political parties. [49]

A study by Ruth Clark, commissioned by the American Society of Newspaper Editors, concluded that the American

public today is "drowning in a deluge of information without the ability to absorb, organize or integrate it."[50]

Let us consider newspaper consumption alone. In 1974, Martin H. Selden found that "Each weekday morning America's 67 million households purchase nearly 26 million newspapers. In the evening they purchase another 37 million newspapers."[51]

This large audience can see not only fictional violence (i.e. police and detective shows on TV) and fake violence (cartoons) but real violence (Jack Ruby killing Lee Harvey Oswald). According to the editors of the Columbia Journalism Review:

> Although violence and physical hurt have been the lot of every age, only our age has had the capacity to transmit instant representations of such events. Moreover, the capacity to make the representations yet more graphic has advanced with camera techniques.[52]

These readers and viewers, therefore, can become manipulated and desensitized. Violence becomes a part of everyone's everyday experience. Experts have found that "there is no satisfactory evidence that mass media violence causes violence in society."[53] However, exposure to media violence can trigger violent individuals to action "through a nexus of mediating factors and influences."[54]

Television violence has especially been criticized in the past decade. "Nobody has proved that watching

violence on television causes children and others to become violent themselves, but there seems to be evidence that the steady diet does harden all kinds of listeners and watchers to render them somewhat shock proof when the fiction ends and the facts begin."[55]

Television is not the only manipulator of its audience. Harold Evans wrote, "The ordinary reader . . . will become aware that he is the subject of manipulation."[56] Also, readers may distort what they see. "The reader imposes on the photographers' work a matrix of memory, appetite, prejudice and sophistication; and when his emotions are strong he can see the opposite of what was intended,"[57] Evans said.

Photographs are powerful communicators, having "greater impact" than words. And people "look for, and find, meaning in photographs with which they can identify."[58] That meaning may be violent, since violence is a part of many people's lives.

Ellen Berscheid, professor of psychology at the University of Minnesota, wrote, "Americans have a greater chance of encountering violence in their own families than in dark streets and dangerour neighborhoods."[59]

Before looking at the editors' selection process, let us first review some of the editors' 'tools' in dealing with photographs. Pictures can mislead. They can be

cropped. This could, for example, reduce three conversing people to an intimate couple. Photographs can be sized, retouched, headlined and sequenced so that the meaning is changed. News pictures can be staged--as was the 1972 Pulitzer prize winner, "Death in Dacca."

> "At the conclusion of the Bangladesh war, photographers in Dacca were invited to a 'photo opportunity' in a polo field. It turned out to be the bayoneting of Biharis who were alleged to have collaborated with the Pakistan army . . . People were to be murdered for the camera; and some photographers and a television camera crew departed without taking a picture in the hope that in the absence of the cameramen the acts might not be committed. Others felt that the mob was beyond the appeal to mercy. They stayed and won Pulitzer prizes."[60]

Captions can change meaning. "The photograph of a couple locked in embrace may be captioned Love or it may be captioned Rape,"[61] Harold Evans, editor of the London Sunday Times pointed out. And which frame an editor chooses may change the meaning. Photographer Mark Godfrey:

> I would send my film in from Vietnam and a picture editor in Saigon would pick the frame he felt dramatic enough to transmit. Often I was horrified. The photographs (selected) made high drama out of field situations that were boring and tedious.[62]

The editor makes the assignment and he or she can decide what is photographed. Evans wrote:

> "He can select, suppress, distort. He can juxtapose images to provoke decision. He can blow up a single frame in a hundred and crop it to give a tiny detail the

greatest significance. The yawn in a
crowded political meeting rather than
the candidate in the center of a warming
crowd. He can, by selection from the
picture library, manufacture stereotypes
of heroes and villians--Castro is, depend-
ing on the editor's whim, a scowling,
belligerent or the idol of his people."[63]

How, exactly, editors select among violent photos

is something few have explained in print. However, here

are comments from several editors including those who

participated in a 1965 study (cited in Chapter 2) upon

which this study is based. Curtis D. MacDougall

that a picture is rejected for "one of these reasons:

1. It is shocking, gruesome, horrible--
   offensive to public taste.

2. It is indecent, obscene, repulsive--
   offensive to public morals.

3. It unnecessarily invades the privacy of
   an individual.

4. It encourages crime.

5. It may hurt our nation's image abroad."[64]

Vincent S. Jones, at the time he was quoted (1965)

executive editor for Gannett Newspapers, said:

"Excessive gore almost never is acceptable.
Private grief should be respected. Dis-
tance--both in the picture itself and in
the scene depicted--often affects my
decision. Each picture must be judged
individually.[65]

Wendell C. Phillippi, managing editor of The

Indianapolis News (quoted in 1965) based his selection of

possibly offensive photographs on:

1. How newsworthy are the picture and the story?

2. Is it really offensive? We're not against making the reader mad at us for running an earthy pic.

3. Have we had a whole series of gory pics recently?

Thomas Orr, picture editor of Newsweek (in 1965)

Years ago, newspapers had many restrictions on the use of pictures. Some editors did not like to print pictures of snakes. Too much blood in a picture was reason to kill it. The case comes to mind of a gangster who was shot in a restaurant in New Jersey. Some New York papers cleaned up all the blood; others part of it. Now, with the advent of the magazine photo essay, there is realistic presentation . . . believe that you should present events pictorially as they happened--not to shock the reader but to depict an event as if the reader were a witness.[67]

Harold Evans, editor, The Sunday Times, London:

There has to be some fitness of purpose; and a constant awareness of the capacity of a photograph to excite deep emotion. With the offensive photograph, two questions help: Is the event it portrays of such social or historic significance that the shock is justified? Is the objectionable detail necessary for a proper understanding of the event? [68]

In editing pictures of any type, Evans concluded, "What comes first . . . is satisfying the public's appetite for news--for the sensation of being there and for an image the mind can hold."[69]

One editor defended the use of violent photographs
that may be offensive to some readers in an unsigned
editorial in the Akron Beacon Journal, July 18, 1959:

> Recently a reader inquired: 'Why is it
> necessary for the Beacon Journal to take
> and publish photographs of automobile
> accidents, drownings, etc? The publica-
> tion of these photographs is shocking to
> the surviving members of the victim's
> family and increases their grief. I
> don't see why you do it.'
>
> The Beacon Journal publishes such pictures
> because they are pictures with a purpose.
>
> First, they are news . . . stark realism
> . . . The suddenness and finality of
> death, the tremendous force of impact
> are vividly depicted in crushed, twisted
> bodies and smashed vehicles . . . a
> safety lesson . . . the shock value of
> such a picture can help save lives . . . [70]

Priestland defends editors' selections:

> The mass media in a free society are part
> of the public bloodstream, the general
> circulation of ideas from which we all
> draw and to which we all contribute . . .
> People blame mass media as if they had
> created these changes (in society) in-
> stead of merely reporting them . . . Media
> act as a public warning system, and often
> the warnings are brutal. [71]

Clair C. Steblins of the Columbus (Ohio) Dispatch
is concerned with invasion of privacy:

> Despite the increasing trend toward stark
> realism in newspaper art, there are still
> many editors who agree that the bereaved
> do have a right of privacy, and that the
> pictures of the scene of a drowning or
> disaster should be of a general nature
> and reflect an element of good taste. [72]

Curtis D. MacDougall:

    I believe a democracy's citizens must have
    as much information and knowledge as possible
    if they are to govern themselves wisely.
    Thus, I would use any picture calculated
    to increase the public's understanding of
    any issue about which the public is able to
    act in its own best interest.

    So, if it were in the public interest to
    offend good taste, I would offend good taste.
    If obscenity or indecency were in the public
    interest, I would be obscene or indecent. I
    would invade the privacy of another to the
    extent necessary to serve the public good.[73]

Mark Godfrey: "Let's be sure that we are serving
a higher purpose than sensationalism or morbid curiosity."[74]

Harry Reasoner: "Judging photographs is a lot like
judging what is news; there are no absolutes, and the
determination is always subjective."[75]

Gerald D. Hurley and Angus McDougall: "The picture
handler's best guides are his own good taste and judgment."[76]

Robert Wahls: "The whole business of judgment is
so ephemeral and so personal that it's not easy to define...
judgment is a very personal thing."[77]

Would You Use This Picture?

When is use of a picture pandering to morbid
curiosity, and when is it legitimate news? When is it an
invasion of privacy to take a picture? What are the limits
of the public's right to know? Does showing the misfor-
tunes of others really 'reform' the rest of us? Or does it

merely titillate and possibly incite to violence? These
are the questions that editors must ask every time they
make a selection decision involving a violent picture.
It is an important decision--pictures sell newspapers, and
a large circulation attracts advertisers. "A good news
Picture, even on an inside page, may be seen by 80 percent
of the paper's readership."[78]

The intent of this study is to explore the editors'
selection process regarding violent pictures. Specifically,
what choices will the editors of Midwestern daily newspapers
make when presented with a selection of violent-content news
photographs? What will they say to justify their choice of
whether or not to run the picture?

The problem statement for this thesis is:

How do daily newspaper editors in the Upper Midwest
react to and determine use of violent-content photographs?

The predictions are:

1. The choices of the editors will reflect the
conservative values they perceive in their readership.

2. Editors will believe that their readers believe
that the world is becoming more violent.

3. Editors will see the newspaper's role as opinion
leader in the community.

4. Editors will foresee slightly increased liberal-
ism (i.e. tendency to run) in the use of questionable pic-
tures in the 1980s.

5. Editors' choices will be subjective. Such factors as education, age and experience will not determine their choices.

6. However, editors in larger (primarily urban) circulation areas will be more likely to risk reader censure (use possibly questionable pictures) than editors of smaller (or community) newspaper.

7. Accident pictures will be undesirable.

Violence has always been a part of the human experience. It has been present in every society and every age. Although violence may appear to be more pervasive today, it is certainly not more intense or more perverted. In fact, the nature of violence has hardly changed. It is not new, and neither is communication of violence.

The media, including newspapers, have portrayed violence since their invention. Improved technology and the rapidly swelling number of media in combination with the growing population may contribute to the general impression that violence is escalating and that reports and photographs of violent happenings dominate the media. Is this a true impression when considering newspapers and the violent photographs they carry, in the editors' opinions? Are newspaper editors more likely to use violent-content photographs than they were in the past? Or are they more reluctant to use such pictures? When editors do run

violent-content pictures, what are the considerations in-
volved? Do the factors of an editor's background influence
his choices? If he edits a larger circulation newspaper,
will he be more likely to use possibly offensive photo-
graphs?

The next chapter looks at the studies that have
been done in editor selection and reader selection of news
and news photographs.

Footnotes

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[3]Ibid.

[4]Priestland, The Future of Violence, p. 30.

[5]Ibid., p. 1.

[6]Ibid., p. 91.

[7]Machiavelli, cited by Priestland, The Future of Violence, p. 82.

[8]Priestland, The Future of Violence, p. 88.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Ibid., p. 35.

[11]Ibid.

[12]Editors of Time-Life Books, Photojournalism, (New York: Life Library of Photography, Time-Life Books, 1971), p. 12.

[13]Ibid.

[14]Dorothy Meserve Kunhardt and Phillip B. Kunhardt, Jr., Mathew Brady and His World, (Alexandria, Virginia: Time-Life Books, 1977), p. 38.

[15]Clifton C. Edom, Photojournalism Principles and Practices, (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Co., 1980), p. 37.

[16]Ibid., p. 38.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Harold Evans, Pictures On A Page, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978), p. 1.

[19]Editors of Time-Life Books, Photojournalism, p. 13.

[20]Ibid., p. 14.

[21]Ibid., p. 127.

[22]Ibid., p. 16.

[23]Curtis D. MacDougall, Decision-Making in Photojournalism: News Pictures Fit to Print...Or Are They? (Stillwater, Oklahoma: Journalistic Services, Inc., 1971), p. 1.

[24]Evans, Pictures On A Page, p. 285.

[25]MacDougall, Decision-Making in Photojournalism, p. 98.

[26]Ibid.

[27]Ibid., p. 100.

[28]Ibid.

[29]"The New Ballyhoo: The '20s Roar Back!" Columbia Journalism Review 15 (September-October, 1976): pp. 39ff.

[30]Cited by MacDougall, Decision-Making in Photojournalism, p. 102.

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[32]MacDougall, Decision-Making in Photojournalism, p. 3.

[33]Ibid.

[34]Evans, Pictures On A Page, p. 286.

[35]Lillian M. Junas, "Tragedy, Violence Photos Dominate in News Prizes," Editor & Publisher, (February 23, 1980), p. 17.

[36]Sheryle and John Leekley, Moments: The Pulitzer Prize Photographs, (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1978), p. 6.

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[38]Kenneth Poli, "The Pulitzers--Prize or Product?" Popular Photography 83 (September, 1978):142.

[39]Leekley, Moments, Introduction.

[40]"The Pulitzers," p. 142.

[41]Gerald D. Hurley and Angus McDougall, Visual Impact in Print (Chicago: Visual Impact, Inc., 1971), p. 24.

[42]W. Eugene Smith, cited by Hurley and McDougall, Visual Impact in Print, p. 25.

[43]Malcolm F. Mallette, "Should These News Pictures Have Been Printed?", Popular Photography 78 (March, 1976): 74.

[44]Priestland, The Future of Violence, p. 105.

[45]Evans, Pictures On A Page, Introduction.

[46]Alvin Toffler, Future Shock, (New York: Bantam Books, 1971), p. 119.

[47]Junas, "Tragedy, Violence Photos Dominate in News Pages," p. 17.

[48]Ibid.

[49]Henry Brenen, Violence and Social Change (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 4.

[50]Ruth Clark, "Changing Needs of Changing Readers," cited by "Readers Suggest Ways to Improve Newspaper," Editor & Publisher (July 7, 1979):12.

[51]Martin H. Seiden, Who Controls The Mass Media: Popular Myths and Economic Realities, (New York: Basic Books, 1974), p. 3.

[52]"The Cruel Camera," Columbia Journalism Review, (Spring, 1965):5.

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[53]Dennis Howitt and Guy Cumberbatch, <u>Mass Media Violence and Society</u>, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1975) p. 17.

[54]Joseph Klapper, <u>The Effects of Mass Communication</u>, (Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1960) p. 8.

[55]MacDougall, <u>Decision-Making in Photojournalism</u>, p. 77.

[56]Evans, <u>Pictures On A Page</u>, Preface.

[57]Ibid.

[58]Edom, <u>Photojournalism</u>, p. 170.

[59]Ellen Berscheid, cited by Bill Farmer, "There's No Paddle Bawl in Sweden," <u>Parade</u>, (March 16, 1980):23.

[60]Evans, <u>Pictures On A Page</u>, Introduction.

[61]Ibid.

[62]Mark Godfrey, cited ibid.

[63]Evans, <u>Pictures On A Page</u>, Introduction.

[64]MacDougall, <u>Decision-Making in Photojournalism</u>, p. vii.

[65]Vincent S. Jones, cited by "The Cruel Camera," p. 5.

[66]Wendall C. Phillippi, cited Ibid.

[67]Thomas Orr, cited Ibid.

[68]Evans, <u>Pictures On A Page</u>, p. 286.

[69]Ibid., p. 4.

[70]MacDougall, <u>Decision-Making in Photojournalism</u>, p. 10.

[71]Priestland, <u>The Future of Violence</u>, p. 145.

[72]Clair C. Stebbins, cited by MacDougall, <u>Decision-Making in Photojournalism</u>, p. 13.

[73]Mallette, "Should These News Pictures Have Been Printed?", p. 120.

[74]Mark Godfrey, "Ethics, Responsibility and Integrity," News Photographer, (December, 1974):10.

[75]Harry Reasoner, cited by Evans, Pictures On A Page, Introduction.

76. Hurley and McDougall, Visual Impact in Print, Introduction.

[77]Robert Wahls, cited by "Handling Pictures for Impact," The A.P.M.E. Red Book, (New York: Associated Press, 1976) p. 94.

[78]Evans, Pictures On A Page, p. 1.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

It helps in understanding editors' photograph selection process to first look at how they choose copy. The seminal study in the general editorial selection process is David Manning White's "Gatekeeper." This chapter uses White's study and related studies by Snider, MacLean and Kao, Ward and Jordan to establish a basis for study of the editorial decision process. A search revealed that a near vacuum exists in research on the selection of news pictures, but the following related studies address many of the issues of editorial selection central to this study.

David Manning White[1] took social researcher Kurt Lewin's concept of "gatekeeper," or person who chooses information to be communicated, and applied it to the journalist's selection process when dealing with news. For his study, White chose one editor (age mid-40s, 25 years journalism experience, wire editor for a morning newspaper with 30,000 circulation in a Midwestern city of 100,000) and monitored his copy selection for the week of February 6 through 13, 1949. The editor, whom White called Mr. Gates, dealt with 12,400 column inches of copy in that week, of which he rejected 11,103 column inches, or 90 percent. Reasons given by Mr. Gates for rejecting this copy were: "would use if space," "not interesting," "dull writing,"

"too vague," "B.S.," "trivial," and "don't care for suicide
stories." Mr. Gates also rejected copy because it was too
regional or not regional enough, in poor taste or because
he had not seen it.

White concluded:

> It is only when we study the reasons given by Mr.
> Gates for rejecting almost nine-tenths of the wire
> copy as he searched for the one-tenth for which he
> has space that we begin to understand how highly
> based on the "gatekeepers" own set of experiences,
> attitudes and expectations the communication of
> "news" really is.[2]

When White asked Mr. Gates about how he choses what
to use, Gates replied:

> The category of news definitely enters into my
> choice of stories. A crime story will carry a
> warning as well as an accident story....I have
> few prejudices.[3]

White concluded in his study of this gatekeeper that
individual psychological makeup was a strong factor in the
stories that were selected. He wrote:

> It is a well known fact in individual psychology
> that people tend to perceive as true only those
> happenings which fit into their own beliefs concern-
> ing what is likely to happen. It begins to appear
> (if Mr. Gates is a fair representative of his class)
> that in his position as "gatekeeper" the newspaper
> editor sees to it (even though he may never be
> consciously aware of it) that the community shall
> hear as a fact only those events which the newsman,
> as the representative of his culture, believes to
> be true.[4]

White found no factors that he could link directly
to Mr. Gates' choices and he concluded that factors influ-
encing choice may be largely subjective and subconscious.

The same editor may make different choices at different points in his career. To test what difference time would make, Paul B. Snider[5] repeated White's study in 1966, 17 years after the initial study. Snider used the same editor as White used, Mr. Gates. Snider's purpose was to discover whether Mr. Gates' selection processes and reasoning had changes reflecting the times and perhaps the additional maturity of the editor.

During the intervening 17 years the newspaper's circulation and the area's population had grown. Mr. Gates now had a smaller news hole to fill, and a part of that space went to war news. In 1966, Mr. Gates now worked five days a week, rather than six. Despite these and other changes, Snider tried to replicate White's study in definitions and methodology.

During a five-day period, Snider observed, Mr. Gates selected from 1,971 column inches of which he used 32 percent. Snider found that a preponderant reason for not using stories was again "no space." Snider concluded that many of the reasons Mr. Gates had given for rejecting copy in the White study were absent, and the reasons that White had labeled subjective were "missing"[6] in the 1966 study.

Using White's categories, Snider found that Mr. Gates used, in order of frequency: crime, war, economic and human interest (tied) and disaster news. That compared in White's study to: human interest, national politics and

international politics. In frequency of use, Snider found
that crime and disaster news were numbers 13 and 11 in 1949
and received a total of 7 percent of Mr. Gates' available
space. Seventeen years later, in 1966, crime and disaster
were numbers two and five, receiving 27 percent of space.
In space allotted, human interest stories led in 1949 (23
percent) and war stories led in 1966 (18 percent). The
world probably appeared more violent to Mr. Gates' readers
in 1966--since the United States was at war in 1966, and
was not at war during the earlier study--and he was increas-
ingly mirroring that violence in his pages.

There are few similar studies using news photographs
rather than copy; however, one such study was done in 1965
by the editors of Columbia Journalism Review[7], and this
study draws upon that 1965 study.

In that study, six journalists, two of whom were
newspaper editors at the time of the study, were given ten
photographs depicting violence and asked whether or not they,
as editors, would use the pictures. The six respondents of
the Review study were:

1. Joseph Costa, executive editor, National Press
   Photographer
2. Vincent S. Jones, executive editor, The Gannett
   Newspapers
3. Thomas Orr, picture editor, Newsweek Magazine
4. Bruce Palmer, news director, KWTV, Oklahoma City,
   Oklahoma
5. Walter J. Pfister, Jr., senior producer-news,
   American Broadcasting Company
6. Wendell C. Phillippi, managing editor, The
   Indianapolis News, Indianapolis, IN

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Table 1 shows how these six editors responded to the ten photographs also used for this study. For only one photograph was there an unanimous decision. Photo 8, showing the bodies of airliner crash victims still strapped into their seats, was rejected by all six respondents. The picture of Dr. Paul Carlson, an American murdered abroad, was acceptable to all but one editor.

The editors explained their choices with a wide spectrum of opinion. Costa said he believes that the picture used must accurately show all sides of an important story. He said, "The yardstick on which to base a determination is the importance and the social, economic, cultural or educational significance of a story, and whether the picture helps to bring all the facts in their correct perspective."[8]

Table 1: Six Editors' Reactions to Ten Violent-Content News
Photographs

Photo Number and Subject	"YES"	"MAYBE"	"NO"
1. Man face down	2 (both N) 1 (M) 1 (P)	1 (TV)	1 (TV)
Total	4	1	1
2. Body of Dr. Paul Carlson	1 (N) 2 (TV) 1 (M) 1 (P)	0	1 (N)
Total	5		1
3. Man enveloped in flames	2 (N) 1 (TV) 1 (P)	0	1 (TV) 1 (M)
Total	4		2
4. Young woman with face injuries	2 (N)	1 (TV)	1 (TV) 1 (M) 1 (P)
Total			3
5. Man on stretcher (Malcom X)	1 (N) 1 (M) 1 (P)	1 (N) 2 (TV)	0
Total	3	3	
6. Injured man (Malcom X)	1 (M) 1 (P)	2 (TV)	2 (N)
Total	2	2	2
7. Three people weeping	1 (N)	0	1 (N) 2 (TV) 1 (M) 1 (P)
Total	1		5
8. Air crash victims	0	0	2 (N) 2 (TV) 1 (M) 1 (P)
Total			6

(table continued)

Continuation of Table 1

Photo Number and Subject	"YES"	"MAYBE"	"NO"
9. Car crash	1 (N)	1 (TV)	1 (N)
	1 (TV)		
	1 (M)		
	1 (P)		
Total	4	1	1
10. Child holding baby	1 (N)	0	1 (N)
	1 (TV)		1 (TV)
	1 (P)		1 (M)
Total	3		3
TOTALS	28 (47%)	21 (35%)	11 (18%)

N = newspaper
M = magazine
TV = television
P = picture editor for magazine

Table compiled by author from findings of Columbia Study, 1965.

Jones believes that there is no universal code of selection. "Each picture must be judged individually,"[9] he said. "We're not against making the reader mad at us...Have we had a whole series of gory pictures or tragedies recently?"[10] Phillippi said in defense of his choices.

The editors of Columbia Journalism Review presented the responses and the opinions of the six without comment, interpretation, or conclusions. However, many of the justification for use given by these six editors were

repeated by the 64 editors who answered this study. A comparison of attitudes voiced by these six editors in 1965 and the editor of the current study, are in Chapter V.

How readers grade news photographs for publication was the subject of a study by Malcolm S. MacLean, Jr., and Anne Li-an Kao. In the introduction to their study, they wrote that often editors do not really know how readers would select among photographs if given the opportunity. They wrote:

> Despite the thousands of readership and other studies, editors and photographers still have to pretty much fly by the seat of their pants in their decisions on pictorial communication.[11]

To find how readers respond to the photographs editors have already published, MacLean and Kao devised what they called an "editorial game." Readers were given 60 pictures taken from Life and Look magazines, mounted, without captions, "chosen to represent a large variety of subject matter."[12] Thirty-two respondents were asked to sort the pictures into piles of those liked, disliked or reacted indifferently to. Two editors were then asked to rank the pictures exactly as the average reader ranked them.

The researchers called this a "prediction" game for the editors, and then devised variations on their game to study what they called "the intensity effect" which they defined as "how strong a feeling the picture arouses."[13]

They found that their editors, attempting to predict the like-dislike pattern of the average reader, "did no better than chance."[14] Readers, they found, did not care for violent pictures that had been used by the magazine editors and were found acceptable by the two study editors. Among the reader respondents, the most liked picture was of a mother and baby. The least liked were, in descending order, a picture of the bodies of Mussolini and his mistress, hung by their feet; dead American soldiers on a beach; a dead man on a railroad track and bodies in a jungle. MacLean and Kao conclude, "It seems pretty clear that the people we studied did not like death, particularly death caused by man."[15] Their study suggests that editors may be out of touch with their readers' preferences and tastes, and that reader desires is probably a lesser consideration in editor selection.

Another study that concluded that editors find stories about violence desirable was done in 1967 by Walter J. Ward. Ward, for his doctoral dissertation at the University of Iowa, under the direction of Malcolm S. MacLean, Jr., asked ten city editors to judge 54 news stories for three hypothetical newspapers; one "bad," one "ideal" and one "like your own." The editors were asked to Q-sort the stories along a continuum from "most probable use" to "least probable use." Ward found that editors "valued conflict stories most highly"[16] in the "own" and "ideal" situations.

Editors, he wrote, walk a constant tightrope "trying to hold to their own news values, and, at the same time, trying to play the editorial game of conforming to management policy."[17] His work suggests that management pressures may be a major factor in editors' selections.

Some editors believe that it is the wire services who are supplying a majority of the violent photographs that are published, and that if they do not have wire service, they do not have to make daily decisions about the use of violent photographs. A study by Gary B. Jordan looked at the number of violence and conflict pictures carried by the wire services and picked up by newspapers. He found that there is a far higher percentage of violent content photographs available on the wire than are taken by newspaper staff photographers. He saw "significant correlation between the growth of the conflict-violence photograph and the growth of the wire services."[18]

Although there have been no studies specifically on the selection process of violent photographs by newspaper editors, many of the considerations editors use in selecting other material for use in their pages such as news copy have been tested and the findings reported in this chapter. Several of the reasons why editors rejected photographs in this study were also reasons the editors used to reject copy in the White and Snider studies.

In the final chapter, the choices of the <u>Columbia</u>
<u>Journalism</u> <u>Review</u> editors are compared with the choices of
the 64 editors of this study to find changes in attitude
over the intervening years. Editor perceptions of readers'
tastes regarding the use of violent photographs in their
newspapers are examined, and, as in the MacLean and Kao
study, editors believe they are giving readers what they
want. How the editors explain the selection of these
photographs is discussed in Chapters IV and V.

FOOTNOTES

[1] David Manning White, "The 'Gatekeeper': A Cast Study In the Selection of News," Journalism Quarterly (Fall, 1950):383.

[2] Ibid., p. 386.

[3] Ibid., p. 390.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Paul B. Snider, "'Mr. Gates' Revisited" A 1966 Version of the 1949 Cast Study", Journalism Quarterly (Autumn, 1967):422.

[6] Ibid., p. 225.

[7] Editors of Columbia Journalism Review, "The Cruel Camera", Columbia Journalism Review (Spring, 1965):5.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Malcolm S. MacLean, Jr., and Anne Li-an Kao, "Picture Selection: An Editorial Game", Journalism Quarterly, (Spring, 1963):230.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid., p. 231.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid., p. 232.

[16] Walter J. Ward, "News Values, News Situations, and News Selection: An Intensive Study of Ten City Editors", (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Iowa, 1967). Cited by Journalism Abstracts, Vol, 5, 1967.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Gary B. Jordan, "The Relationship of the Conflict-Violence Photograph and the Wire Services" (M.S. thesis, University of Georgia, 1977). Cited by Journalism Abstracts, Vol. 15, 1977.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This study explores editors' decisions regarding
use of photographs. The photographs used for the study were
published in newspapers and magazines about fifteen years
ago. All of the photographs are violent in content--that is,
all of them show human misfortune. Specific questions this
study asks are: 1) When presented with a violent and a
less violent photograph of the same news event, which will
the editor find more suitable for publication? 2) Are
violent scenes far from home more acceptable to editors than
tragic scenes that happen in the community? 3) Do editors
believe that their readers perceive the world today as more
violent than it was in 1965? 4) Are editors' choices factor
related, or do their picture-use choices, as reflected by
this study, appear to be entirely subjective?

The 108 daily newspapers in the upper Midwestern
states of North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Nebraska
and Iowa were included in the survey. An editor from each
daily newspaper in these five states was asked to respond
to the mailed questionnaire (Appendix A).

The Questionnaire

There were three parts to the questionnaire. Part
one requested background information including editor's name
and function, age, education and length of newspaper
experience.

In Part two, ten photographs taken from a Columbia
Journalism Review study (cited in Chapter II) that appeared
in the Spring, 1965, issue, were enclosed. Editors were
asked if they would use or not use each of the ten pictures.
They were also offered the choice of "maybe" using each
photo. The ten photographs were selected by Columbia
Journalism Review editors, using as sources newspapers and
magazines published in the early 1960s. The photographs
show people who have died because of airplane and car
crashes and assassination; a woman bruised and scratched by
a leopard; a political fanatic burning himself to death; a
grieving family; an East Indian child dying of malnutrition.
These pictures were offered without captions or explanations
--no information about accompanying copy was given. The
photographs are identified for the editor with a number and
with a police blotter type word identification designed to
have no impact on interpretation (i.e. "car accident" and
"man on stretcher (Malcolm X)").

Part three consisted of four open ended questions
asking about the editor's own attitudes on violence and the

role newspapers play in influencing public opinion. Specifically, these questions explored the picture selection process as it is practiced by each responding editor, and the editor's perceptions about the public response to the news pictures he or she chooses to present to the public. Editors are asked to discuss changes in their use of violent pictures since 1965 (or over the period that they have been journalists, if it is less than 15 years) and changes they foresee for the future. Another area covered by the open ended questions concerned reader perceptions about the level of violence in society, as judged by the editor and reflected in his or her editorial decisions. The degree of leadership newspapers exert in forming public opinion, as perceived by the editors, was the topic of the final question.

The first question asked the editor if his attitudes towards pictures selection, especially about pictures that some may think questionable, changed over the years he or she has been in the newspaper business. Answers to this question address the prediction that editors are becoming more liberal in their use of violent content photographs. In other words, is the editor more likely to use a violent picture today than he would have in the past? When given a choice between a more violent and a less violent picture of the same news event, are editors increasingly more likely to choose the more violent version?

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The second question asked editors what changes in picture selection they foresee for the future. The answers to this question, in combination with the answers given for the first question, should reflect trends in use of violent pictures, and prove or disprove the prediction that the editors are using more pictures that are violent, and more explicitly violent scenes of the event, than they would have used in the past.

Question three inquired "Do you think your readers perceive the world as more violent today than it was fifteen years ago?" Editors who say they believe readers see a more violent world today may be actually creating that belief in their readers. The answer given for question three is allied to question four, "Do you think your newspaper helps create public opinion, or do you see the newspaper's function as mirroring reader's beliefs?" Editors who see themselves and their use of violent photographs may, in fact, be creating within their readership a desire for violent photographs combined with a perception that the world is an increasingly violent place.

The final question was "Do you run violent pictures in your newspaper?" A photograph's newsworthiness, in the editor's judgment, may override its violence and therefore be published. Also, this question may reflect the opinions of editors who dislike violent photographs, but nevertheless do use them, possibly in the belief that their readers

demand such pictures.

The cover letter (Appendix B) also asked the responding editor to summarize his or her newspaper's policy and his or her own standards for handling violent photographs.

Selection of the Sample

The population selected for the mail survey included every daily newspaper in North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa and Nebraska. The questionnaire was sent to the editor of dailies listed in the 1979 Editor and Published International Yearbook.[1] The questionnaire was directed to the editor by name, and he or she was asked to answer it or to give it to the person who regularly made photo decisions. Each editor received with the question- naire a printed copy of the ten photographs to be judged. A cover letter accompanied the questionnaire and photographs as did a stamped return envelope. A follow-up letter (Appendix C) was sent to fifty-eight non-respondents three weeks after the initial mailing. There was 46 percent response rate to the initial mailing and an additional 13 percent response to the second mailing. A total of sixty- four, or 59 percent of the editors, responded. In addition, three editors (3%) wrote to say that they could not respond to the questionnaire. Reasons given for non-response were: too busy with "election work;" editor had changed jobs and "didn't leave any work in pics;" and absence on a business

trip. Another three editors wrote after the second mailing to say that they had never received the first mailing. They were immediately sent another set of questionnaire and photographs, but none of these three responded. Therefore, the total of unusable responses was six, or nearly six percent.

A mailed questionnaire was chosen because the pictures needed to be viewed by the editor and it was the least expensive method of gathering information from a large geographic area. Questions were designed to be coded for computer analysis.

Fred N. Kerlinger, author of Foundations of Behavioral Research, wrote that the main problem of mailed questionnaire use if the "possible lack of response and the inability to check the responses given....Returns of 40 or 50 percent are common."[2]

Population and Circulation Areas

One of the questions of this study is the possible relationship between newspaper size and use of violent pictures. Do editors of city newspapers tend to be more liberal in using violent pictures than their small town counterparts? Do larger circulation newspapers use violent photographs more readily than smaller circulation papers?

The 108 newspapers in the five North Central states represent a wide spectrum of city population and newspaper

circulation sizes. The newspapers with the smallest circulation and city population are both in South Dakota, although they are not the same newspaper. The smallest city population represented in this study is Belle Fourche, South Dakota, with a population of 4,395 (but a comparatively high circulation of 3,335). The Lead-Deadwood Call/Pioneer Times has the smallest circulation. It reaches 2,658 homes. The combined population of Lead and Deadwood is 6,862. The largest in both city population (331,526) and circulation (226,899 and 226,828) are the two Minneapolis papers, the Star and the Tribune. Forty of the newspapers are in Iowa, twenty-eight in Minnesota, eighteen in Nebraska, twelve in South Dakota and ten in North Dakota.

Population figures used are the 1979 estimated populations as predicted by the U.S. Census, based on the Bureau's 1970 census, and published in Editor and Publisher's 1979 Yearbook. Circulation figures are those supplied by the newspapers to the Yearbook. Populations of the newspapers queried are:

Under 2,500	0
2,500 to 4,999	2
5,000 to 9,999	30
10,000 to 24,999	42
25,000 to 49,999	13
Over 50,000	21

All of these population centers are urban, by U.S. Census Bureau standards, since the Bureau considers any population center with more than 2,500 inhabitants urban.

Circulation sizes of the newspapers surveyed are:

Under 3,000	1
3,001 to 4,999	18
5,000 to 9,999	31
10,000 to 14,999	16
15,000 to 19,999	12
20,000 to 29,999	12
30,000 to 49,999	7
Over 50,000	11

Data Analysis

Responses to Parts one and two of the questionnaire will be quantified and coded for the IBM 370/148, using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program.

Statistical analysis and interpretation of the responses to the questions were designed to determine what factors affect the editors' selection or rejection of violent news photographs. The factors that are studies for a possible relationship with the use or non-use of the photographs are: age; highest level of education achieved and, if a college graduate, major area of study; total years of newspaper experience and areas of experience; length of experience as an editor; location and circulation sizes.

To discover the significance of these variables on editors' photograph choices, step-wise multiple regression using the computer was utilized. Kerlinger wrote that multiple regression can "successfully"[3] handle propositions explaining phenomena. He considered it useful as "a general method of analyzing much behavioral research data."[4]

The first prediction is that the editors will choose pictures to compliment the values they believe their readers to hold. This prediction will be supported or rejected by comparing each editor's responses to essay questions one and three. Editors whose answers to both one and three are consistent will be responding to perceived reader values, (and possibly creating those values) whereas those editors whose attitudes over the years when judging violent pictures have remained constant but who think their readers see the world as a more violent place will not be reflecting values but ignoring reader/or trying to change those reader values. Should an editor answer this way, it can be expected that his answer to question four, concerning the role of newspapers in creating rather than following public opinion, will be that, in his or her opinion, newspapers are opinion leaders. It is expected that the majority of editors will have become more liberal in their use of violent pictures, believe their readers see the world as a more violent place today than in 1965, and believe that they, as editors, are opinion leaders, thus supporting the first prediction.

The second prediction reads, "Editors will believe that their readers believe that the world is becoming a more violent place." Answers for this prediction will come directly from the editors' answers to essay question three, "Do you think your readers perceive the world as more violent today than fifteen years ago?"

Essay question four was designed to answer the third prediction. Both concern the newspaper's role as opinion leader in the community. It is predicted that a majority of editors will see the newspaper's role, and the role of the photographs used in that newspaper along with all editorial content, as helping to create reader opinion rather than following reader opinion.

The fourth prediction is that editors will see a continuing liberal trend in violent picture usage into the future. The answer for this prediction is based on the first prediction one, which draws its conclusions from the answers to essay questions one and three.

The fifth prediction is that "If a less disturbing (violent) picture of the same news event is available, editors will choose the potentially less upsetting picture (thus making the conservative choice)." Editors are given this opportunity with pictures five and six. Both show Malcolm X after he was shot. Picture five shows him on a stretcher, his wounds covered. Picture six is closer to the victim, and does not show the stretcher but does show bloody

wounds on the chest. It is predicted that editors will prefer picture five.

The sixth prediction concerns relationships between editors' backgrounds and picture use; it predicts that there will be no such relationships, and that in fact, editor picture choice is subjective. It is predicted that young editors will not choose to run violent pictures more often than older editors; that having or not having a college degree will not make a consistent difference in use of violent pictures, or editors with journalism degrees will not run more violent pictures than those with degrees in other areas. It is predicted that there will be no patterns dictated by editor age, length of experience, or degrees.

The seventh prediction is that editors in larger (primarily urban) circulation areas are more likely to risk reader censure (use possibly questionable pictures) than editors of smaller (or community) newspapers. This predicts that editors of smaller papers are consistently more conservative in using violent pictures. It is expected that circulation size/population size will be the only relevant factors in violent picture choice by editors.

The final prediction is that accident pictures have become undesirable. As discussed in Chapter I, accident pictures were widely used in the 1950s and became increasingly unpopular towards the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s. Pictures 8 and 9 are accident

pictures.   One shows the dead victims of an airline crash;
the other shows a dead woman at the wheel of a crashed car.

Limitations of This Study

The 1965 <u>Columbia Journalism Review</u> study, on which
the current study is based, was both limited and casual.
In the earlier study, six editors reacted to each of the ten
pictures, choosing to use it, not use it, or maybe use it.
The reasons for these choices were given and the results
were published as a round-up article.   No conclusions were
drawn in this initial study.   Therefore, there are many
comparisons that cannot be made.

A further limitation is the quality of reproduction
of the pictures.   The photographs sent to editors were
printed from prints made from the magazine article rather
than from the original negatives.   As a result of the
several generations of reproduction, the quality of the
printing of the ten photographs presented to the editors is
not the best.   The pictures lack the contrast and focus that
editors are used to judging.   Although they were asked to
make their decisions based entirely on content, some
respondents may have subconsciously also judged the picture
quality.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Robert V. Brown, ed., The Editor and Publisher Yearbook, New York: The Editor and Publisher Co., Inc., 1979. pp. 93-100, 139-144, 159-162, 201, 202, 258-260.

[2]Fred N. Kerlinger, Foundations of Behavioral Research, New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, Co., Inc., c. 1973. p. 414.

[3]Ibid., p. 360.

[4]Ibid., p. 631.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS

The analysis of the data from the questionnaires on violent photographs is presented in this chapter in four parts. The first part provides a demographic profile of the respondents that includes factors such as population and circulation of newspaper and title/function, age, education and journalistic experience. The second part presents frequency of selection for the ten violent photographs used in the study. The third part presents a regressional analysis of factors in the order of significance they relate to photograph selection. The fourth part summarizes answers to the open ended question selection of the questionnaire.

The Respondents

If one were to make a composite of the typical editor from the demographic information from this questionnaire, he would be male and in early middle age. He would have a bachelors degree--probably in journalism. His newspaper would be in a small city of about 11,000 people. He would have been a reporter for several years before he had been named editor, and he has held that position for about six years. He would have very little experience in other aspects of journalism such as photography, advertising or

management. He would use violent photographs when he feels their use is justified. He would tend to choose photographs on the basis of their news content and their ability to accompany the stories he uses. He would believe that it is a major function of his newspaper to help create the opinions of his readers. He would like to believe that he is becoming more sensitive in his use of photographs that possibly offend his readers, and that he is therefore using fewer violent pictures than he once did. Those violent photographs he does choose to use, he would believe, are used for a good reason, and with discretion.

Only one editor in this study edited a newspaper in a town of less than 5,000 people. The size of cities where the newspapers are located range from 4,395 to 388,787. The mean is 46,726. Most of the editors (63%) edited papers in cities of less than 25,000.

Circulation ranged from 3,224 to 226,899. The mean is 26,005. A majority (69%) of the newspapers in this study represented by responding editors have a circulation of less than 20,000.

Almost half of the editors who answered the survey were between 26 and 35 years of age. Fifteen editors (23%) were between 36 and 45 years of age. The same number were between 46 and 55 years of age. Five editors (8%) were over 55 years old. Two (3%) did not answer.

A majority of the editors are graduated from college. Forty-eight editors (75%) have a bachelor of science or bachelor of arts degree. Eight editors (13%) have earned a master of science or master of arts degree. Six editors completed school through grade 12; two did not respond. Of those editors who had a college degree, 43 (76%) majored in journalism.

The editors classified themselves by many titles but the majority had the title "editor" or "managing editor" or "news editor" (66%). Three had management titles ("publisher," "editor and publisher," or "editor and vice president). Three specialized in graphics or photography ("photo editor," "director of photography" or "graphics editor").

The editors had spent from two to 40 years in newspaper work. The majority had been journalists for six to 20 years (51%). Twenty-three (36%) spent over 20 years in newspaper work. Seven (11%) had been journalists for less than five years, and one editor did not answer.

The majority of responding editors did not have experience in advertising, photography or management. Two had come to editing from advertising, and one specified former experience in management. Thirty-seven (58%) had no photographic experience. Eleven editors (17%) had less than five years experience in photography, and 11 (17%)

said that they had photographic experience but did not specify length.

All of the editors, with the exception, possibly, of one who did not answer this question, were reporters before becoming editors. Ten (16%) were reporters for less than one year. Twenty-eight (43%) had one to 10 years as a reporter. Three (5%) had more than 10 years as a reporter, and 22 (34%) had been reporters for an unspecified number of years.

Most of the respondents (61%) had been editors for less than 10 years. Only two editors (3%) had less than one year of experience as editor. Eighteen (28%) had been editors from one to five years, and 21 (33%) had been editors for six to 10 years. Thirteen (17%) had been editors for 10 to 20 years, and seven editors (11%) had more than 21 years as editor. One editor did not answer, and two did not give the number of years they have been editor.

Editors' Choices and the Ten Violent Photographs

Respondents' choices on whether to use, maybe use or not use the 10 pictures are presented in Table 8. One editor refused to answer this section of the questionnaire and three chose not to answer on the basis of "too little information given" to make a choice. The editor who refused to complete Part Two of the questionnaire wrote in:

> Sorry, this is extremely unrealistic. I would never do this judging entirely on content professionally and feel I cannot do it even for a research project.

He also did not answer the essay questions in Part Three.

The three editors who replied that the pictures alone did not give them enough information on which to base their use or non-use choices said they could not make their choices without knowing how the pictures would be used. They commented: "The picture alone is not enough to determine news value" and "You don't just print a picture because it is or is not 'violent.' You print a picture if it tells the story you want to tell."

Four editors chose to "maybe" use all of the photographs. One summed up the reason all gave, saying:

> I have never judged pictures solely on their visual content, so I can hardly judge these. I have used pictures as graphic as these, and have rejected many. My decision was based in each instance on factors you ignore.

Editors found the accident pictures (Photographs 8 and 9) the least desirable. Only eight percent and 14 percent respectively would use these two photographs; the highest combined percentage (66% and 44%) would not use these two photographs. A majority would use Photographs 7 and 10, the two photographs showing children (59% and 55%).

Photograph 7, showing three people grieving, would be used by the greatest number of editors (59%). The least

popular photograph, which would be used by eight percent, is Photograph 2, showing the body of Dr. Paul Carlson. The photograph receiving the greatest number of maybe choices (39%) was Photograph 4, Young Woman with Face Injuries.

Total frequencies from all of the respondents for the ten photographs (shown in Table 2) are almost equally divided between "yes," "maybe" and "no" responses. Slightly over one-third (35%) of the total editor choices were "yes." There was a total of 174 (27%) "maybe" choices and 191 (30%) "no" choices.

Tables 2 through 12 show the cumulative frequencies of editor choices and then show breakdowns by factor and classification. The possible total for each table is 640 (64 editors each making ten choices). However, since every editor did not make every choice offered, and four editors made no choices, there is a "no answer" classification. Total percentages include the "no answer" figures. Percentages within the tables are raw percentages, and do not reflect "no answer" choices.

TABLE 2. TOTAL OF RESPONDENTS' CHOICE REACTION TO TEN VIOLENT-CONTENT NEWS
PHOTOGRAPHS IN 1980.

Photo Number and Subject	Would Use (%)	Maybe Would Use (%)	Would Not Use (%)	No Answer
1. Man Face Down on Ground	34 (54)	17 (27)	8 (13)	5 (8)
2. Body of Dr. Paul Carlson	5 (8)	14 (22)	39 (61)	6 (9)
3. Man Enveloped in Flames	21 (33)	23 (36)	15 (23)	5 (8)
4. Young Woman with Face Injuries	19 (30)	25 (39)	15 (23)	5 (8)
5. Man on Stretcher (Malcolm X)	22 (34)	22 (34)	15 (23)	5 (8)
6. Injured Man (Malcolm X)	25 (39)	19 (30)	15 (23)	5 (9)
7. Three People Weeping	38 (59)	16 (25)	5 (8)	5 (8)
8. Air Crash Victims	8 (13)	9 (14)	42 (66)	5 (13)
9. Car Crash	14 (22)	15 (23)	27 (42)	8 (13)
10. Child Holding Baby	35 (55)	14 (22)	10 (16)	5 (8)
TOTALS	221 (35%)	174 (27%)	191 (30%)	54 (8%)

Note: The four editors who either refused to answer all questions or who felt
there was too little information to answer represent 5% of the total,
and those four were included in figuring the above percentages.

TABLE 3.   EDITOR CHOICES BY POPULATION OF NEWSPAPER'S CIRCULATION AREA.

Population	Yes (%)	Frequency of: Maybe (%)	No (%)	Total
Under 2,501	0	0	0	0
2,501 - 4,999	6 (75)	0	2 (25)	8
5,000 - 9,999	53 (36)	44 (30)	52 (35)	149
10,000 - 24,999	69 (35)	64 (32)	66 (33)	199
25,000 - 49,999	42 (38)	30 (27)	38 (35)	110
Over 50,000	51 (43)	36 (30)	33 (28)	120
(No Answer: 54) (8%)				
TOTAL	221 (35%)	174 (27%)	191 (30%)	586 (92%)

TABLE 4.   EDITOR CHOICES BY NEWSPAPER'S CIRCULATION

Circulation	Yes (%)	Frequency of: Maybe (%)	No (%)	Total
Less than 3,000	0	0	0	0
3,001 - 4,999	36 (31)	37 (31)	45 (38)	118
5,000 - 9,999	55 (40)	39 (28)	44 (32)	138
10,000 - 14,999	21 (42)	12 (24)	17 (34)	50
15,000 - 19,999	32 (36)	28 (31)	30 (33)	90
20,000 - 29,999	38 (42)	27 (30)	25 (28)	90
30,000 - 49,999	10 (33)	8 (27)	12 (40)	30
Over 50,000	29 (41)	23 (33)	18 (26)	70
(No Answer: 54) (8%)				
TOTAL	221 (35%)	174 (27%)	191 (30%)	586 (92%)

TABLE 5.   EDITOR CHOICES BY AGE OF EDITOR

Age	Yes (%)	Frequency of: Maybe (%)	No (%)	Total
Under 26	0	0	0	0
26 - 35	91 (35)	71 (28)	96 (37)	258
36 - 45	66 (47)	34 (24)	40 (29)	140
46 - 55	43 (33)	48 (37)	39 (30)	130
Over 55	16 (33)	18 (38)	14 (29)	48
(No Answer: 64)				
TOTAL	216 (34%)	171 (27%)	189 (30%)	576 (91%)

TABLE 6.   EDITOR CHOICES BY EDITOR'S EDUCATION.

Editor Graduated From:	Yes (%)	Frequency of: Maybe (%)	No (%)	Total
High School	25 (42)	12 (20)	23 (38)	60
College - BS or BA	164 (36)	152 (33)	14 (31)	457
- MS or MA	27 (45)	7 (12)	25 (42)	59
(No Answer: 64) (9%)				
TOTAL	216 (34%)	171 (27%)	189 (30%)	576 (91%)

TABLE 7.   EDITOR CHOICES BY DEGREE MAJORING IN JOURNALISM

Editor Has Degree in Journalism	Frequency of:			Total
	Yes (%)	Maybe (%)	No (%)	
Yes	154 (38)	113 (28)	139 (34)	406
No	33 (30)	46 (42)	31 (38)	110
No Degree	10 (50)	4 (20)	6 (30)	20
(No Answer: 104) (16%)				
TOTAL	197 (31%)	163 (25%)	176 (28%)	536 (84%)

TABLE 8.   EDITOR CHOICES BY EDITOR'S NUMBER OF YEARS IN NEWSPAPER WORK

Editor Experience (in Years)	Yes (%)	Frequency of: Maybe (%)	No (%)	Total
Up to 5	21 (36)	12 (20)	26 (44)	59
6 - 10	67 (37)	47 (26)	65 (36)	179
11 - 15	36 (40)	31 (34)	23 (26)	90
16 - 20	8 (20)	14 (35)	18 (45)	40
Over 21	89 (41)	70 (32)	59 (27)	218
(No Answer: 54) (8%)				
TOTAL	221 (35%)	174 (27%)	191 (30%)	586 (92%)

TABLE 9.   EDITOR CHOICES BY EDITOR'S NUMBER OF YEARS AS EDITOR

Editor Experience (in years)	Yes (%)	Frequency of: Maybe (%)	No (%)	Total
Less than 1	8 (40)	3 (15)	9 (45)	20
1 - 5	64 (38)	48 (29)	57 (34)	169
6 - 10	76 (40)	51 (27)	62 (33)	189
11 - 15	34 (43)	24 (30)	22 (28)	80
16 - 20	8 (20)	23 (56)	9 (23)	40
Over 21	25 (37)	18 (26)	25 (37)	68
(No Answer: 74) (11%)				
TOTAL	215 (34%)	167 (264%)	184 (29%)	566 (89%)

TABLE 10. EDITOR CHOICES BY EDITOR'S FORMER EXPERIENCE IN ADVERTISING

Editor Has Advertising Experience	Yes (%)	Frequency of: Maybe (%)	No (%)	Total
Yes	5 (50)	0 (0)	5 (50)	10
No	200 (37)	156 (24)	180 (28)	536
(No Answer: 94) (15%)				
TOTALS	205 (32%)	156 (24%)	185 (29%)	546 (85%)

TABLE 11.   EDITOR CHOICES BY EDITOR'S NUMBER OF YEARS AS REPORTER

Editor's Experience (in Years)	Yes (%)	Frequency of: Maybe (%)	No (%)	Total
Less than 1	32 (36)	19 (21)	39 (43)	90
1 - 5	67 (34)	78 (39)	54 (29)	199
6 - 10	23 (38)	23 (38)	14 (23)	60
11 - 15	0 (0)	3 (15)	17 (85)	20
16 - 20	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0
Over 21	5 (50)	4 (40)	1 (10)	10
(No Answer: 261) (40%)				
TOTAL	127 (20%)	127 (20%)	125 (20%)	379 (60%)

TABLE 12. EDITOR CHOICES BY EDITOR'S NUMBER OF YEARS AS PHOTOGRAPHER

Editor's Experience (in Years)	Yes (%)	Frequency of: Maybe (%)	No (%)	Total
None	120 (36)	99 (30)	110 (33)	329
1 - 5	35 (32)	31 (28)	44 (40)	110
6 - 10	0 (0)	10 (100)	0 (0)	10
11 - 15	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0
16 - 20	0 (0)	10 (100)	0 (0)	10
Over 20	11 (55)	4 (20)	5 (25)	20
(No Answer: 161) (25%)				
TOTAL	166 (26%)	154 (24)	159 (25%)	479 (75%)

Regression Analysis of Editor Choices

Ten of the eleven independent variables in this study were tested by stepwise multiple regression to help explain why the editor would or would not have used a picture. It was an attempt to determine if age, newspaper size and circulation area size, editor type and length of experience were the principal causes of similar selection patterns. The eleventh variable, whether the college degree received is in journalism or is in another field, was discarded.

The ten independent variables of this study (population, circulation, age education, years in newspapering, years as an editor, years in advertising, years as a reporter, years as a photographer and years in management) combined accounted for 23 percent of the variation in the way editors selected photographs (See Table 13). As a basis for the regression analysis, a scoring system for the editors was established. In it, editors received scores for their choices. Each decision not to use a photo received 3 points, each decision to maybe use a photograph 2 points and each decision to use a photograph as 1 point. Using this system, editors who decided to use none of the photographs would receive a score of 30 and those who used all of the photographs would receive a score of 10. When the demographic factors used in this study as independent

variables were compared to these editor scores, multiple regression determined that all of the factors would together predict 23% of those editor choices.

The most significant single factor in the regression test was number of years as a reporter, which accounted for about four percent of variance. When number of years as a reporter is added to number of years in management, cumulative explained variance is nine percent. Factors not measured by this study account for 77% of variance.

TABLE 13. RESULTS OF MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS ON TEN FACTORS PREDICTING USE OR NON-USE OF TEN SELECTED VIOLENT-CONTENT PHOTOGRAPHS SELECTED BY SIXTY-FOUR DAILY NEWSPAPER EDITORS IN THE NORTH MIDWESTERN STATES IN 1980

Independent Variable	R^2 Explained Variance	Cumulative Variance
Years as a Reporter	3.8%	3.8%
Years as a Manager	4.8%	8.6%
Insert-Years as a Photographer		
Delete-Years as a Reporter	1.2	9.8
Circulation	3.4	13.2
Years in Advertising	3.6	16.8
Years as a Reporter	1.6	18.4
Editor's Age	1.9	20.3
Editor's Education	1.2	21.5
Years in Newspapering	.6	22.1
Population	.4	22.5
Years as Editor	.1	22.6

Editors' Rationale For Photograph Choices

Sixty-three of the 64 editors answered the five essay questions in Part Three of the questionnaire. These answers were often extensive, and they suggested a number of factors affecting selection of photographs. The questions and analysis of the answers follow:

1. Have your attitudes towards picture selection, especially about pictures that some may think questionable, changed over the years that you've been in the newspaper business?

A majority of editors (57%) said that their attitudes had definitely changed, and an additional 8 percent thought that their attitudes had changed somewhat. Eight (13%) said that their attitudes had not changed at all, and an additional 13 (21%) felt that their attitudes had changed minimally. Of the 36 editors who had definitely changed their attitude, 14 (39%) felt that they have become less likely to use violent pictures, six (17%) are more likely than before to use violent pictures, one (3%) has changed because he believes his readers have become more conservative and 15 (42%) did not elaborate.

Editors whose attitudes have changed gave a number of reasons for that change. Three editors said they believed that readers are becoming more sensitive to possibly offensive photographs, while two editors wrote that it was their own increasing sensitivity that was leading them to more conservative picture usage. They wrote:

I used to think that almost any kind of
photo was acceptable until I had to cover
auto fatalities.

In the past years, I felt if the shots depict
the human drama of a traumatic and newsworthy
event it should be used. Not so anymore. We
must be sensitive more than in the past.

Fresh out of college, I was fired up to print
anything and everything, and let the chips
fall. Now, I feel more reluctant to run
certain pictures.

More readers feel 'tragedy' pictures <u>are</u>
<u>not</u> appropriate by and large and editors
should be cognizant of the readers' feelings,
and subordinate their own on occasion. Pics
like these are offensive to most.

Another reason for not using the pictures is the

possible invasion of privacy. Three editors discussed that

issue in their answers. One summed up for all three:

One tends to feel more sympathetic towards
families of victims, and would consider
avoiding invasion of privacy.

Several of the editors said they will, however, use

violent pictures when they feel that use is justified. In

explaining that justification, they wrote:

We do at times run what might be termed 'gory
pictures' if the news element dictates the
use of them.

The news itself sometimes dictates. Would use
the picture of a head of state gunned down in
the street, but probably not body of ordinary
citizen gunned down, for example.

News value is more important today (to me, at
least) than peoples' morals.

Tendency is to use more gruesome if story dictates.

I think if you do run a gross or possibly offensive picture, it had better be for a good reason. A truly big story, or something where the tragedy or horror of the news is complemented by the picture. The picture must contribute to understanding of the story.

Locality affects some of the editors' selections. Many editors now avoid such pictures of people who are in their coverage area because, as one editor said, "That's too insensitive."

Two editors said they believe in the teaching function of the photographs they use, seeing them as Possibly beneficial for their readers' social consciousness. They wrote:

I'm reluctant to print certain pictures unless I believe some good would come from it--i.e. funds for food after running picture of starving Cambodians.

Some offensive pictures are necessary if they are vital to a story that must be told, for example, No. 10 (showing two starving children).

However, that propagandizing function does not apply to teaching readers to be more careful drivers by using photographs of automobile accidents, and editors now find such photographs undesirable. One wrote:

I have always believed that pictures of accident victims do not serve any real purpose in telling the story other than to entertain those few who like to look at such pictures. The anguish that the publication of such pictures will cause those close to the victim usually will override any journalistic need.

One editor suggested that it is not personal taste or perceived reader taste, but rather the desire for professional recognition that may influence editors' choices. His opinion mirrors the conclusions of Junas (cited in Chapter One). He wrote:

> I gradually came to feeling uncomfortable
> about running pictures of....death....Now
> if we could just convince contest judges..."

Editors appeared to be more critical of their own choices, and more thoughtful in making those choices, than they were in the past. Although they use violent photographs, they believed that they do so only when they feel that the photograph gives details of the story. They said they tend not to print photographs showing violent misfortune or death or local people or non-celebrities. They said they tend to avoid sensational use of violent photographs.

2. What changes in picture selection do you foresee for the future?

Twenty-two percent of the editors foresaw more use of violent photographs, and 11 percent predicted decreasing usage. Twenty percent said they felt there will be no change. Fifteen (21%) had never thought about it, they said, and five did not answer. The remainder gave ambiguous answers such as "times change" and "more happy news."

Several editors believed that the definition of newsworthy has not changed in the past and will not change in

the future. One explained:

> The changes in American journalism in the
> last century, I think, have been in matters
> of style rather than substance. I don't
> think that basic judgment of what constitutes
> news has changed much in that time and I
> wouldn't expect it to change much in the
> future.

While agreeing with this, some editors did see a

change in the way photographs are used. They wrote:

> I think that more qualified visual people
> such as photo editors are improving photo
> selection.

> I see more visually sophisticated editors
> making better balanced picture judgments.

Several editors saw picture usage as cyclic, reflect-

ing the current mood of the country. They believed that

there is a trend towards the use of more happy news. As one

editor explained:

> Nothing startling--the outcry for bright,
> light, happy photos during times of travail.
> When things are going well, 'bad' or 'violent'
> photos don't seem to bother people.

Editors said they also reacted to reader demands.

One editor felt that reader demands are contradictory. He

wrote:

> Readers will continue to ask for happy photos
> but seek out the gore--then deny they have an
> interest.

Still, editors do respond to readers' wishes, they

said. One editor said he rejected photographs that might

cause his newspaper to be sued, and another wrote:

When faced with complaints the editor gener-
ally assumes we were wrong and suggests we
be more careful not to offend.

Editors who foresaw an increase in the use of

violent photographs explain that this will be the direct

result of a current trend towards increased realism. One

said:

I expect they will become more grim; I think
there is a trend toward less sensitivity
toward the reader under the guise of realism,
telling it like it is, etc.

Some of the editors who saw an increase directly

blame television; and one felt that television violence

had changed his own newspaper's selection criteria. He

wrote:

With movies and television becoming more
explicit, and if there is no great public
outcry against this, the major change pro-
bably will be in the area of sexually pro-
vocative photos. Probably more violent ones,
too. At the middle part of the Vietnam war,
we passed on several photos because they were
too violent. At the end of the war, we ran
some of those same photos in a special section
recapping the war.

The tastes of contest judges were also blamed for an

increase in the use of violent photographs:

When editors become selective and contest
judges quit awarding photo prizes for them,
many of these pictures will no longer be
seen.

Editors were nearly equally divided on the future of

violent photograph usage. Some saw an increase because other

media, notably television, are increasingly violent in content and because of a trend towards realism. Others, however, believed that they and their readers are becoming more sensitive, and that there is a decrease in the use of violent photographs, particularly those used in a sensationalistic way.

3. Do you think your readers perceive the world as more violent today than it was 15 years ago?

A majority of the editors (70%) believed that their readers see the world as more violent today than it was 15 years ago. Eleven (17%) wrote that they believe their readers see the world as less violent today, and 12 percent said they don't know or didn't answer.

Editors who believed that their readers see the world as more violent today than it was 15 years ago again blamed television for escalating violence and their readers' perceptions of violence. They wrote:

> TV in particular has been able to bring the
> violence home so graphically.

> I think TV images of dying and dead people,
> especially in Vietnam, have contributed to
> an attitude that the world is more violent.

> TV is giving them lots of violence via
> entertainment and news

> They see more violence today than in the
> past, primarily because of TV.

Two editors repeated that they believe that violence, and the reflection of violence in the media are cyclic. They wrote:

While they may be bombarded with violence
in print and on television, I would guess
the majority of them have a rather detached
attitude.

I think they perceive the world as more
violent today. I think they appreciate it
less in their newspaper and on TV. They
may know that there are more spiders and
rats under their front porch, but they don't
want to face them.

Editors said they believe that their readers do see

the world as more violent than it was in the past, and the

editors blamed the media, particularly television, for

creating this public opinion. Several of them thought

that both violence in society and in the media are cyclic,

although they disagreed about whether we are currently in

a more conservative or more liberal period.

4. Do you think your newspaper helps create public opinion,
    or do you see the newspaper's function as mirroring
    readers' beliefs?

A majority of editors (77%) believed that their news-

paper either created or both created and mirrored readers'

beliefs. Twenty-six (37%) answered that the newspaper

creates public opinion, while slightly more (40%) said it

does both. Seven (11%) thought that their newspaper pri-

marily mirrors public opinion, and two (3%) thought it

neither created nor mirrored public opinion. There were

two ambiguous answers ("We try to serve our readers" and

"It's a self fulfilling prophesy") and one editor did not

answer.

A key to the high number of editors who believed that their newspaper influences their readers is that many editors believe it is their prime function to educate their readers. Two wrote:

> I run informative pictures in my newspaper....
> I would fail in my objective if our news-
> paper did not in some minimal way shape public
> perception.

> We certainly hope our newspaper helps create
> public opinion, especially on issues that we
> perceive as being misrepresented to or by the
> public.

> We create public opinion by setting agenda
> for discussion.

However, some editors did not feel that the newspapers' influence on readers was entirely positive, and that it may, in fact, be communicating the personal biases of editors and photographers. They wrote:

> Unfortunately, I believe the newspaper helps
> create public opinion through the news pages.
> I don't believe it's intentional--there can
> be subtle differences in reporting and
> commenting.

> I think there is too much emphasis on writing
> as the reporter wished the reader to see the
> episodes rather than as the event actually
> happened, too much 'guiding.'

Editors who said they think that their newspaper mirrors public opinion in their area were mixed in their opinions, and some felt that mirroring rather than influencing reader opinions was, perhaps, a shortcoming of their newspapers. One wrote:

I think newspapers have allowed themselves
to wither away to mere mirrors of popular
public taste and opinion.

However, other editors said they think that a news-
paper should do both. "When we cease doing either, we
cease being responsible," he wrote. And some editors found
it impossible to separate the two functions. As one wrote:

We mirror the world and in the process
probably reinforce our readers' concepts
about that world--repetition tends to do
that.

The majority of editors said they believed that
their newspapers create or at least help to create public
opinion.

5. Do you run 'violent' pictures in your newspaper?

A majority (72%) said they did run violent photo-
graphs in their newspapers. Of these, 14 (22%) answered
with an unqualified "yes." Thirty-one (50%) added that they
run these photographs "occasionally," "rarely" or "seldom."
Ten (16%) said they do not use violent photographs. Three
(5%) did not believe that a photograph can be violent, and
four (6%) did not answer the question.

The editors who said they did use violence repeated
that they do so with a number of qualifications and reserva-
tions. The major reason for using a potentially offensive
photograph was that there was a "compelling reason." One
editor explained:

A hard and fast rule would be difficult to
formulate--gut reaction is more likely to
be a deciding factor.

Another answered:

It must be a tremendous news event to justify
such uses of pictures.

Several editors said they felt that use can be
justified, but they did not give concrete reasons for use.

Several editors said that they do not use violent
photographs and, in fact, rarely have to make a decision of
that nature because they do not have wire photo services.
Several editors said they believe that the majority of
violent photos originate with the wire service.

The editors who did not believe a photograph can be
violent, by definition, said that they do use photographs
that are in this study defined as violent. One wrote:

We use photos of tragedies, comedies,
violent events--the results of violent
happenings.

In their answers to question 5, editors suggested
that there are levels of violence, and that some violent
photographs are acceptable while others are not. Factors
were, again, locality, and degree of violence. They wrote:

We don't run dead bodies.

We show results of traffic fatalities, but
do not include bodies.

(We use) the violence of storms, accidents,
fires and such but not as reflected in human
injury and death close-up like your examples.

> We avoid the 'bloody body' type of art
> but use, of course, such 'violence' as
> natural disasters.

The majority of editors said they did run violent photographs in the pages of their newspapers, but they tended to select less violent photos to illustrate their stories, they believed. Many editors said they no longer use what they call body pictures, but preferred instead to show the news event with more discrete photographs.

Editors in every demographic and background category classification in this study were very nearly equally divided on whether to use or to maybe use or not use the ten photographs in this study. The background factors, used as independent variables for this study, accounted for about 23 percent of variance in predicting editor choices of the ten photographs.

In the essay question section of the questionnaire, editors answered that they had changed in their attitudes in the past 15 years towards picture selection for their news pages. A majority said they felt they used fewer violent photographs now than they did in the past. However, they said they still feel that there are times when use of violent photographs is justified. The main justification they identified was the need to illustrate what one editor called a "big story." The majority no longer used

photographs of accident victims who had been local citizens. Several editors suggested that management and reader response are strong factors in their photograph selection.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In this study, editors of daily newspapers in five states were questioned about their use of violent photographs on their news pages. Among the goals of the study was to discover if use of such photographs is becoming more acceptable to editors or if they are now finding such photographs less acceptable than they did in the past. This study also looked for a relationship between editors' backgrounds (age, education and experience) and their choice selection of violent photographs. The study sought to discover if background factors can be used to predict editor choices of such photographs.

The problem statement for this study was: "How do daily newspaper editors in the Upper Midwest react to and determine use of violent-content photographs?"

Design and Procedure of the Study

One hundred and eight editors of daily newspapers in the Upper Midwest states (Minnesota, Nebraska, Iowa, North Dakota and South Dakota) representing every daily newspaper in those five states were sent the questionnaire; 64 of these editors returned the questionnaire. It consisted of three parts. The first part requested background information such as age; job title/function; type

and length of journalistic experience and education. The second part presented ten violent-content news photographs used in a 1965 Columbia Journalism Review study. The third part questioned the respondents about their picture selection perceptions and practices.

The computer facilities at South Dakota State University were utilized for the frequency tables, chi square (x^2), and regression analysis.

Major Findings

Sixty-four editors responded to the questionnaire, and an additional four editors wrote to apologize, saying that they could not participate in the study. Their major reason for non-participation was lack of time. Of the 64 editors who did return the questionnaire, one refused to make choices, calling the study "extremely unrealistic." Three declined to make choices because, they wrote, their use of pictures is dictated by the accompanying words (story, caption and headline). None of the editors (as requested in the cover letter) returned a written policy of photograph usage for their newspaper.

Cumulative response from the editors for all of the photographs in this study showed that editors were very nearly equally divided between the three choices of using, "maybe" using or not using the photographs. The 64 editors in this study each judged the ten photographs, resulting in

640 choice decisions. Just over one-third (35%) of these choices were to use the photograph. When this is compared to the 1965 Columbia Journalism Review study using the same ten violent-content photographs, on which this study is based, it can be seen that the editors of this study were less likely (by 12%) to use the photographs than the respondents to the earlier study. Thirty-five percent of the choices in the 1965 study were not to use the ten photographs; that compares to 30 percent in the current study. The frequency of ambiguous choice has risen concerning the use of these photographs in comparison to the 1965 study results. In 1965, 18 percent of the responses were "maybe" would use; in 1980 that rose to 27 percent. This suggests, as editors wrote in the essay question section of this study, that although editors continue to use violent-content photographs, they may now more carefully consider their choices. In the third part of the questionnaire, editors wrote that considerations of "invasion of privacy," paper cost, space limitations, the importance of the accompanying story and whether or not the victim is a local citizen were factors in their choices in this study and when making up their news pages.

There are a number of differences in the frequencies of choice given by editors for individual photographs between the 1965 and the 1980 studies. In this study, editors found Photograph 7, Three people weeping, most acceptable,

and that photograph received the highest number of "yes" choices (59%) from the editors. Photograph 7 was followed, in order of decending total positive choice by Photograph 10, Child holding baby, and Photograph 1, Man face down on ground. These three pictures would each be used by over half of the editors.

The highest number of "no" choices were given Photograph 8, Air crash victims (66%), and followed by Photograph 2, Body of Dr. Paul Carlson (61%), and Photograph 9, Car crash (42%). The photograph that received the greatest number of "maybe" responses is Photograph 4, Young woman with face injuries (39%). In the Columbia Journalism Review study the highest number of "yes" choices were for Photograph 2, Body of Dr. Paul Carlson. The highest number of "no" choices were for Photograph 8, Air crash victims and highest number of "maybe" choices were for - a tie between Photograph 10, Child holding baby, and Photograph 5, Man on stretcher.

In the current study, the highest number of "yes" responses went to a photograph that depicted not the direct aftermath of violence (destruction and death) but the effect of violence on the living (a family grieving). In the earlier study, it was the direct result of violence (a corpse) which editors chose most often to use. In both studies accident pictures received the highest number of "no" choices. In the current study, the editors made the

highest number of ambiguous choices for a photograph showing possibly less intense selection of violent photographs.

Conclusions

One of the aims of this study was to discover if the demographic factors such as an editor's background, age, education and type and length of journalistic experience would predict what violent photographs he would choose to use on his news pages. It was found that background factors do not significantly contribute to editor choices. A regression study showed that the cumulative explained variance of these factors accounted for only 22.6 percent of variance in selection. Therefore, other factors not included in this study must account for the majority (77.4%) of variance.

From this study it appears that, if a pattern of picture selection does exist among editors, that pattern is not based on their age, education or experience. Editors of larger newspapers in larger (urban) cities were not more willing to use these pictures than their colleagues on smaller newspapers in smaller (rural) cities. There were no significant choice differences by age, education, or professional experience, except in a few isolated cells in the chi square (x^2) test discussed below.

This study opened with an overview of violence in the history of man and in the history of his communications. Violence is not a new phenomenon, and it does not appear that the world is not more violent or more intensely violent now than it was in any former age. Each communications medium, from cave paintings to newspapers, has reflected that violence. Newspapers not only described in words but showed violence in illustrations and then in photographs as soon as the reproduction of images was technically feasible. Violence has always been a part of our society and our communications, but the increase in population combined with the increase in both types and coverage of the media could contribute to public perception that violence is increasing.

When asked if they believe their readers see a rise in violence in our society over the past 15 years, a majority of the editors (70%) agreed. A nearly corresponding number (57%) said they had changed their attitudes towards photograph selection in the same period. However, rather than using more violent-content photographs, thus reflecting that perceived reader belief, the majority said that their choices had become more conservative; that they are less likely to use violent photographs than they were 15 years ago. A majority of the editors (76%) also believed they were instrumental in lessening rather than propagating images of violence. They saw their newspapers as opinion

leaders, and they believed that they are leading their readers towards a less violent view of the world. Some, such as the editor who wrote, "perhaps we are becoming more responsible," appeared to see this as a positive trend, while others called it a "form of pre-censorship" that provided a false blanket of protection for their readers.

Several editors wrote in the third section of the questionnaire that the use of violent photographs is cyclical, and that currently these photographs are being run less often in newspapers. They wrote that they see a current conservative trend, and they expect in the future to see, and perhaps will themselves use more violent photographs. They did not specify whether this meant a higher number of photographs that were increasingly graphic in depicting violence.

While some editors saw photograph usage as cyclical, like women's fashions, other editors believed that their decreasing use of violent photographs is a continuing trend. Some added that they now have a policy not to use some of the photographs that they would have found acceptable 15 years ago (or that their predecessors would have found acceptable). Editors mentioned specifically the type of violent-content photograph they call "body pictures"--photographs of corpses. Key to this, they said, is increased sensitivity on their own part combined with reaction to reader or management complaints.

If the trend towards use of less violent photographs is reflected in choices made for this study, it could be predicted that, when given two photographs illustrating the same news event, the less violent version would receive a greater number of "yes" responses. Editors were given this choice opportunity with Photographs 5 and 6. Both showed the seriously wounded Malcolm X. In the first photograph he was bleeding; in the second he was covered and on a stretcher. In both he was receiving medical care. Editors found these two photographs almost equally acceptable in this study. Slightly more (39%) would use the more violent picture (showing the victim bleeding) than would use the more discrete version (34%). The choices to "maybe" use were also very close (34%, 30%) and the "no" choices were identical (each 23%). A few more editors would print the more violent photograph, despite their comments on other parts of the questionnaire that they are now less likely to use violent photographs.

Another type of violent photograph that has fallen into disfavor is the accident photograph, as was predicted. The two accident photographs in this study, showing a car and an air crash, received the highest and the third highest number of "no" choices from editors in this study. If the ten photographs were to be categorized by types of violence depicted, the accident photograph category, represented by these two photographs, would be the least acceptable to

editors. Mr. Gates, the gatekeeper in the David Manning
White and Paul Snider studies (cited in Chapter 3), believed
that using accident pictures could scare readers into
becoming more careful drivers. As predicted, editors have
largely given up this belief. However, editors still do
sometimes use photographs to educate their readers. One of
the photographs in this study, of a starving Indian child
holding a baby dying of malnutrition (Photograph 10) ran in
a national magazine in the early 1960s. One editor in this
study reported that it was a photograph of starvation in
Cambodia, and that he had recently run it because he believed
his readers should see such things.

In this study editors rejected accident pictures
and in the essay section of the questionnaire explained
that they no longer use accident photographs. They said
they believe that they now print fewer violent photographs
than they did in the past. They said they see their news-
paper as instrumental in influencing rather than merely
mirroring the readers' opinions. However, they are very
nearly as likely to use the ten photographs in this study
as their colleagues were 15 years ago.

The frequencies of photograph choices in this study
were compared to choices made by editors using the same
photographs in 1965. Two other statistical tests were
performed to discover if there is a relation between
editors' backgrounds and their photograph usage choices.

A chi square (x^2) test was performed to look for this
relationship. Findings in the x^2 test in all but a few
isolated situations were found to be insignificant. It is
concluded that the few significant statistical tests at
the .05 level were attributable to chance or to very low
sample numbers in some cells. A similar conclusion resulted
when the background factors were tested using regression
analysis. All of the editors' demographic factors taken
together accounted for only 22.6 percent of variance. It
is concluded that these factors are not very influencial in
editors' photograph selections. However, White's conclusion
that editor choices are subjective is questioned. In this
study, the editor suggested a number of factors that he
said were important considerations in his own selection
processes. It is expected that the following factors,
suggested by editors in this study, would prove to be more
important in predicting editor photograph choices: lack of
space (the most important factor for rejection of copy in
White's study, cited in Chapter II); reader, management and
publisher feedback and reaction to that feedback; desire for
professional recognition or awards (such as Pulitzer);
proximity of the occurrence (local victim), and whether or not
their newspaper subscribed to a wire service and thus was
presented violent photographs from which to select (see
discussion of Jordan, Chapter II). Editors also suggested
that their own definitions of "invasion of privacy" and

"poor taste" influenced their use decisions.

It is concluded in this study that demographic and personal background factors of editors are not the significant factors in editors' news photograph selections. This study has identified a number of other factors that might, in subsequent studies, prove to be highly significant in the gatekeeper process as it is applied to violent-content photographs. These are discussed in the following section.

A further conclusion of this study is that editors would choose to use violent-content photographs at nearly the same frequency that editors chose the same photographs 15 years ago. (However, this finding must be tempered by considering the relatively small number of respondents in the earlier study).

Recommendations for Future Study

This study concludes that factors of age, education, experience and size of city or size of newspaper are not significant in predicting what photographs editors will choose to print in their newspapers. However, in the essay section of this study's questionnaire, some editors did suggest a number of factors, some of which are given above, that may be significant predictors. Another study might reveal these factors are significant.

Jordan (cited in Chapter II) found that the growth in use of violent photographs appears to parallel the

growth of the wire services. One of the editors in this study wrote that he rarely had to make decisions regarding use or non-use of violent-content photographs because his newspaper does not subscribe to a wire service. That editor inferred that he did not send a photographer into situations where a violent photograph could be taken or his newspaper had a code regarding the taking of violent photographs. This suggests a future study of the frequencies of actual violent photograph usage, the photograph sources and editors' photographer-assignment practices.

Junas and Poli (Chapter I) wrote that the majority of Pulitzer Prize winning photographs were violent in content and they have suggested that perhaps, in pursuing a Pulitzer or other major prize, editors use violent photographs. Two of the editors in this study offered the same suggestion. They said they believe that the criteria used by contest judges combined with journalists' desires to win prizes and the attendant prestige in their field may influence what photographs are assigned, taken and used.

Other possible factors that could be investigated are editors' own definitions of "good taste" and "invasion of privacy" when applied to photographs. One could ask how these definitions vary among editors. Are they applied in photograph choice and use in the same way as an editor applies them to written copy?

A repetition of the method White and Snider used in their gatekeeper studies, gathering use and rejection rationale for photographs rather than copy, could also provide useful information on the gatekeeper function regarding news photographs.

Although this study used as independent variables circulation and population, differences in size of city or size of circulation and editor choice were not statistically significant. A larger sample, perhaps gathered from different areas of the country, may not agree.

There have been few gatekeeper studies done, and the area of photograph choice by editors is very nearly new territory for researchers. This study finds that factors which might appear to be significant in editors' choices, such as age, education and experience, are in fact not a major influence on those choices. It is hoped that the present study provides a springboard for further research in the gatekeeper function as it operates in photograph selection.

APPENDIX A

The Questionnaire

South Dakota State University Research Project
Questionnaire

This study explores how editors in the upper Midwest select news pictures for use in their newspapers. It is requested that the person who exercises final judgment over picture usage on your news pages will complete this questionnaire. There are three parts to this form: 1) basic information about the editor completing this form and about the newspaper 2) a sampling of news pictures for the editor to either 'run' or 'reject' and 3) questions about the selection process. Your answers are, of course, confidential.

PART ONE

Editor's name_____
Title and function_____
_____

Age under 25 ( )
    26-35 ( )
    36-45 ( )
    46-55 ( )
    over 55 ( )

Education: (highest attained) H.S._____ Bachelors_____ Masters_____
    Doctorate_____
    Is your degree in journalism?_____If not, what was your major?_____
Experience
    Total years in the newspaper business_____As an editor?_____
    In what positions previously? Advertising_____ (how long?)
                           Reporter_____
                           Photographer_____
                           Business management_____

PART TWO
Please refer to the attached photographs. Would you use them? Assume that they are technically acceptable and judge entirely on content. If "maybe", please explain).

Photo Number	Would Use	Would NOT Use	Maybe
1. man face down on ground			
2. man's body			
3. man enveloped in flames			
4. woman with injured face			
5. man on stretcher			
6. injured man			
7. three people weeping			
8. air crash victims			
9. car crash			
10. child holding baby			

PART THREE

1. Have your own attitudes towards picture selection, especially about pictures that some may think questionnable, changed over the years that you've been in the newspaper business?

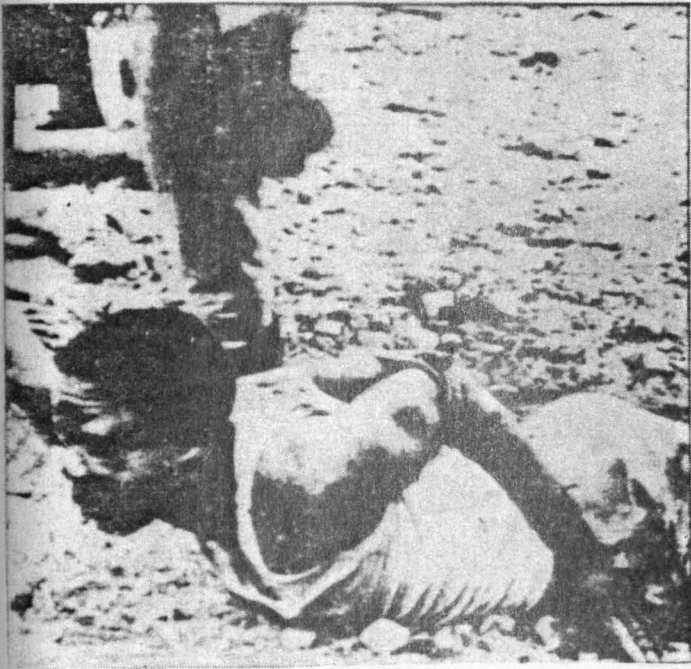2. What changes in picture selection do you foresee for the future?

3. Do you think your readers perceive the world as more violent today than it was 15 years ago?

4. Do you think your newspaper helps create public opinion, or do you see the newspaper's function as mirroring reader's beliefs?

5. Do you run 'violent' pictures in your newspaper?

Thank you very much for your assistance. If you would like a copy of my findings, check here _____

Jacquelyn Elnor
Department of Journalism and Mass Communications
South Dakota State University
Brookings, SD 57007

1

2
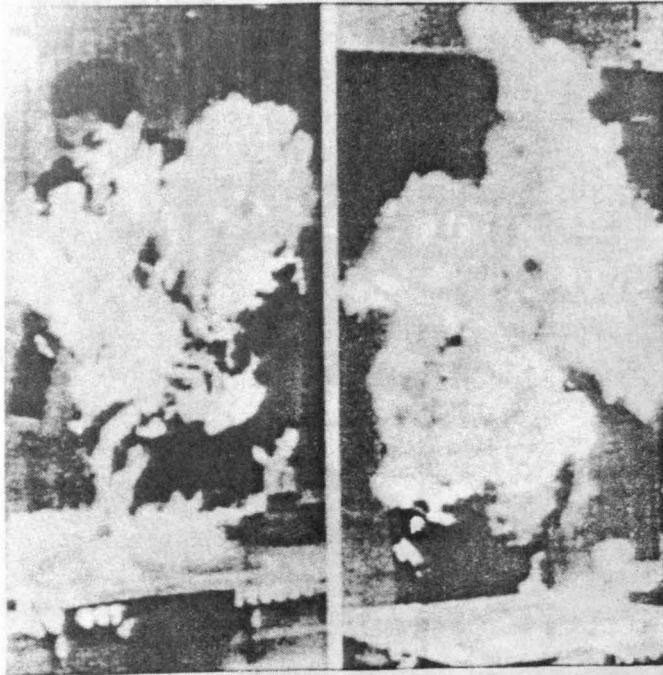
3

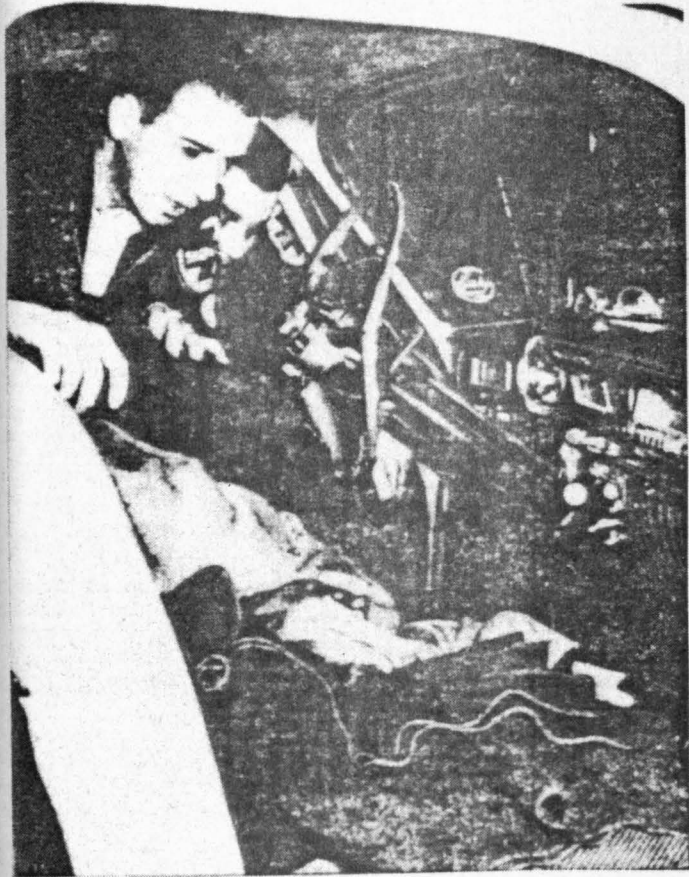4

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APPENDIX B

The Cover Letter

SOUTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY
Brookings, South Dakota 57007

Journalism and Mass Communication
South Dakota's Only Accredited
Journalism Program
605-688-4171

April 21, 1980

I'm asking you to take just ten minutes or so to tell me
how you decide to run, or not to run, news photographs. If
you do not routinely make decisions on which photographs
to use on your news pages, please pass this along to the
editor who does.

The enclosed questionnaire asks basic questions about you
and your newspaper, and then asks you to look over and
decide whether to print or not to print ten pictures.
You will notice that all of these pictures show human
misfortune. The goal of my project is to find how newspapers
in the upper Midwest make publishing decisions about this
type of picture.

Besides filling in the enclosed form, could you tell me
what your newspaper's policy is on 'tragic' photographs,
and what your own feelings are on the use of this type of
picture?

Thank you for your assistance and your time.

Sincerely,

Jacquelyn Elnor
Graduate Teaching Assistant

Enclosure

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