THE PERCEIVED CREDIBILITY OF PROFESSIONAL PHOTOJOURNALISM COMPARED TO USER-GENERATED CONTENT AMONG AMERICAN NEWS MEDIA AUDIENCES

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the perceived credibility of professional photojournalism in context to the usage of User-Generated Content (UGC) when compared across digital news and social media platforms, by individual news consumers in the United States employing a Q methodology experiment. The literature review studies source credibility as the theoretical framework through which to begin; however, using an inductive design, the data may indicate additional patterns and themes. Credibility as a news concept has been studied in terms of print media, broadcast and cable television, social media, and inline news, both individually and between genres. Very few studies involve audience perceptions of credibility, and even fewer are concerned with visual images.

Using online Q methodology software, this experiment was given to 100 random participants who sorted a total of 40 images labeled with photographer and platform information. The data revealed that audiences do discern the source of the image, in both the platform and the photographer, but also take into consideration the category of news image in their perception of the credibility of an image. The conclusions in this study reveal UGC is an important aspect of our media ecosystem, photographs are deemed more credible when the photographer and the platform are identified as professional. Future research examining source credibility from the audience’s perception utilizing a variety of research methods provides additional opportunities to understand the UGC/Professional phenomenon.
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by

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I have been blessed and guided by my parents, my elders, and my ancestors. Thank you for the courage to dream and the strength to survive.

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for T&T~

Everything ~ Always ~ Forever
TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS................................................................................................. x
LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES ............................................................................ xii
CHAPTER ONE ............................................................................................................ 1
  1.0 Introduction ........................................................................................................ 1
    1.1 The Power of Images ....................................................................................... 1
    1.2 The Sociology of Images ............................................................................... 4
    1.3 The Technological Disruption, Manipulation, and Ethics of Images ............... 10
    1.4 Statement of The Problem ............................................................................ 14
CHAPTER TWO ........................................................................................................... 16
  2.0 Literature Review ............................................................................................ 16
    2.1 Introduction ................................................................................................... 16
      2.1.1 The Press .............................................................................................. 16
      2.1.2 News, Journalism, and Media ............................................................... 18
    2.2 Photojournalism: Photographs, Photography, and Photographers ............... 22
      2.2.1 Visual and Photographic Research ....................................................... 27
    2.3 Credibility ..................................................................................................... 29
      2.3.1 Objectivity, Believability, Trust ............................................................ 30
      2.3.2 The Definition of Credibility and Evolution of Research ...................... 33
    2.4 User-Generated Content (UGC) .................................................................. 42
      2.4.1 How UGC Is Used .............................................................................. 46
CHAPTER 3 .................................................................................................................. 51
  3.0 Methods And Research Questions .................................................................. 51
    3.1 Introduction ................................................................................................... 51
    3.2 Q Methodology Research ............................................................................ 51
    3.3 Research Design ........................................................................................... 53
      3.3.1 Image Selection .................................................................................... 55
      3.3.2 Data Collection .................................................................................... 56
      3.3.3 Data Analysis ...................................................................................... 58
CHAPTER 4 ................................................................................................................ 60
  4.0 Research Findings ............................................................................................. 60
LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 4.1: Participant Demographics...........................................................................60
Table 4.2: Factor Arrays.................................................................................................63
Table 4.3: Factor Matrix.................................................................................................64
Table 4.4: Factor A-Coding.........................................................................................69
Table 4.5: Factor B-Coding.........................................................................................72
Table 4.6: Factor C-Coding.........................................................................................74
Table 4.7: Correlation Between Factors.......................................................................75
Figure 1: Q sort Distribution.........................................................................................62
CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Power of Images

Long before technology allowed almost anyone access to some form of a camera, only a few people were able to bring photography to the public. As the child of a newspaper photographer who later became a photojournalist, I understood the practice and the repetition of making a great visual moment. I was an eyewitness to the world through the viewfinder.

Growing up around photography with a professional darkroom in our basement, I was in the darkroom before I was in school. I could align the needle in the viewfinder of an old Nikon film camera to get the correct exposure and press the shutter before I could read. There was something magical yet assuring about watching that instant you saw through the viewfinder materialize in the chemicals as if history had repeated itself; it was present, and now it could also be shared with those who had not been there. I always wanted to put my hands in the chemicals just like my dad, no tongs, or gloves for me. Photography was literally a part of our soul, likely in our blood, and certainly encompassed our life. For me, going on assignments with my father, capturing moments in time around the city either for his work at the Cleveland Plain Dealer or for his freelance business, was commonplace. The delight our family experienced each time a photograph of his made it into our hometown paper or was published elsewhere, was as if it were his first. He and numerous other news photographers were bringing information to their communities and the world as it happened through their viewfinders, and to my knowledge, there was little concern about the credibility of the photograph, the photographer, or the publication. I knew this was what I had to do and felt it would be my honor and my privilege to be a journalist.
By the time I entered the field professionally, digital technology was beginning to be used in news production. The first digital cameras were heavy in weight, size, and cost; therefore, news organizations were some of the few early adopters, and even then, not every photographer was outfitted with digital equipment. As technology advanced, more professionals turned to the digital camera to aid them in their reporting. This provided additional opportunities for photojournalists to deliver printed news faster than it had ever been delivered before. The profession watched and participated as technology provided greater access to the developing internet. This was the digital space where storytelling flourished not just for the news organizations and the professional photographers, but for the public as well. As a photojournalist, it was then and is now thrilling to have so much attention starting to be paid to the visual aspect in journalism. For decades, visual colleagues and I have understood the importance of the photograph in journalism even though photojournalism has been relegated to second place to words in many industry newsrooms. The digital landscape of new media technologies now offers professional photojournalists more outlets to showcase our work as there was limited space in the printed vehicle for photographs.

Throughout history, there have been images made by professional photographers that showed the world, the world. Photojournalism came to be trusted as “seeing is believing,” different from just the printed word or sketches that came before the photograph (Kobre, 2008). A Google search of the most iconic photographs in history will include many of the same images, in differing rank order, across the lists. (Iconic Photos in History - Google Search, 2019; Images That Changed the World - Google Search, 2019) (Google search, 10-14-2019). The images range in time from 1826, almost the beginning of the photographic process, with View From the Window at Le Gras by Joseph Niépce, (Ten Photographs That Changed the World -
Telegraph, 2009; TIME’s 100 Most Influential Images of All Time, 2019) to those taken with
digital technology. With names such as Burning Monk, The Falling Man, Napalm Girl, Tank
Man, Afghan Girl, Migrant Mother, American Gothic, Black Power Salute, Kent State Shootings,
The Falling Soldier, The Power of One, Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima, Mushroom Cloud Over
Nagasaki, A Man on the Moon, Situation Room, and The Vulture and the Little Girl (50 Famous
Photos That Changed The World Forever, 2014; The 10 Most Impressive Press Photos That
Changed the World, 2019; Alyson, 2012), those images garnered the photographers prestigious
awards nationally and internationally including the prestigious Pulitzer Prize where credibility
was not questioned.

Images have changed careers such as that of the late Pulitzer Prize winner Eddie Adams
with the image titled Saigon Execution (“Pulitzer Prize Winning Photojournalist,” 2019; The
Pulitzer Prizes, 2019). He became an even more in-demand photographer going on to establish
the Eddie Adams Workshop at his farm in Upstate New York, still run by his family and
photojournalism community volunteers, (Workshop, 2019) as a way of paying it forward to
emerging photographers. (Estrin, 2017). Odessa American photographer Scott Shaw had his
career advanced to a larger newspaper market after his image of “Baby Jessica” being recovered
from a Midland, Texas well won the 1988 Pulitzer (“Pulitzer Prize Winning Photojournalist,”
2019; The Pulitzer Prizes, 2019) Iconic images have also taken their toll on the professionals
who made them. Kevin Carter won the Pulitzer Prize for his 1993 image of a starving girl in the
Sudan trying to make it to a feeding station with a vulture in the background as if it were lying in
wait for the young child. (The Pulitzer Prizes, 2019). Carter made the photo, chased the vulture
away, and the child was able to continue on to the feeding station, however, he was so consumed
by having experienced the event, the backlash from the photo, and the horror of other atrocities
he had witnessed as a war photographer, that he committed suicide months after winning the Pulitzer in 1994 (Keller, 1994). There have also been student award winners who became well known enough to turn professional, (74th College Photographer of the Year | Winning Images, 2019) and amateur award winners (The Pulitzer Prizes, 2019), such as the “accidental Pulitzer Prize photographer” (Feinstein, 2016) Charles Porter IV, who left his job at a bank near the bombing of Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City in 1995 to capture the moment when firefighter Chris Fields emerged from the rubble with infant Baylee Almon in his arms (Pawloowski, 2017). Porter understood he had something important in those moments, having once learned to always keep a roll of film in his camera from former Chicago Sun-Times and Pulitzer Prize-winning photographer John H. White (Feinstein, 2016). Now a physical therapist, it was never Porter’s intention to be a photojournalist even after going on to win the 1996 Pulitzer for Breaking News and winning other awards for the photograph (Feinstein, 2016).

1.2 The Sociology of Images

Although almost anyone with a camera can take a picture, as an industry professional, academic, and researcher, I have debates between and amongst professionals and amateurs concerning who is considered a photographer. Media scholars have studied the usage of user-generated content and the work of citizen journalists in relation to how it affects photojournalism as well as media as a whole (Allan, 2015; Barnes, 2012; Greenwood & Thomas, 2015). One fundamental element that must be taken into consideration is will the person with the camera be ready, willing, and able to get the shot day after day, repeatedly, on-demand, sometimes waiting hours for the right elements to align in order to create what Henri Cartier Bresson coined the “decisive moment”? Bresson understood the burden of being a photographer, stating in an interview, “that’s why I develops a great anxiety with this profession because you’re always
waiting. What’s going to happen, what?” (Bill Friedman Videos, 2016). Author, scholar, and filmmaker Susan Sontag wrote about the photograph among other art forms and had this to say about who takes photographs:

Photography is the only major art in which professional training and years of experience do not confer an insuperable advantage over the untrained and inexperienced—this for many reasons, among them the large role that chance (or luck) plays in the taking of pictures, and the bias toward the spontaneous, the rough, the imperfect. (There is no comparable level playing field in literature, where virtually nothing owes to chance or luck and where refinement of language usually incurs no penalty; or in the performing arts, where genuine achievement is unattainable without exhaustive training and daily practice; or in filmmaking, which is not guided to any significant degree by the anti-art prejudices of much of contemporary art photography.) (Sontag, 2003, p. 26)

To recognize but somewhat disagree with Sontag, it is my position that not everyone with a camera is a photographer, and not every photograph is iconic, nor should it be. Technology is what allows the masses access to photography; however, access to technology does not warrant the masses to be documentarians, journalists, or storytellers of some of the most mundane to unimaginable occurrences in our time. Anyone with a digital camera device should not be considered in the same realm as a professional photographer just as anyone with a writing instrument is not considered a professional writer or reporter. The point is that more often than not, experience supersedes luck in capturing a moment that only a photograph can convey, that of the reality of what is happening. It is the professional photographer who can get the moment time after time because of their training and experience in the field. It is also the professional photographer who willingly puts themselves in dangerous or even boring situations in order to
visually record what happens in the world, society, cultures, and communities. Luck and being in the right place at the right time will only go so far. Whereas training, experience, patience, and storytelling skills that professionals have outweigh the latest technology that is available to the masses.

Do we ever stop to think how many images are processed by the mind in a single day? With digital technology, an estimated 1.2 trillion images, conservatively, are being taken annually around the world (Alyson, 2012; Cakebread, 2017; Heyman, 2018; Holst, 2019; Perret, 2017). In 2012 “more pictures (were) taken every two minutes than were taken throughout the 1800s” (Hobbs, 2012). Documenting “selfies,” “food porn,” a tourist’s adventure, the world’s nature, along with disaster and despair becomes commonplace because of the abundance of cameras. In the US, 80% of Americans in 2017 had quick, affordable and easy access to smartphones that create images (Holst, 2019; How Many People Have Smartphones?, 2018; Sun, 2018). In 2018 on Facebook and Instagram alone, 445 million moments were shared (Sun, 2018). Professional Photographer Chase Jarvis created a movement and a smartphone app around the old photographic understanding that “the best camera is the one that’s with you” (Holst, 2019; Richter, 2017). With so many instruments to take photos, Civil Rights photographer and Magnum Agency member Eugene Richards said this:

Huge over-saturation of images puts much more pressure on professional photographers to stand out. Not only are there more pictures to compete with, but there are online platforms to broadly disseminate amateur photos and filters to lend them a patina of polish. ‘I think photographers still emerge,’ but they have to think more carefully about what they’re doing. (Heyman, 2018)
Historically words were given priority over images in the news media due to the limited amount of print space. Yet, in the digital realm, images have become more prominent with studies indicating that viewers look at the images online before the text (Boomgaarden et al., 2016; Enoch, 2016; Gillett et al., 2014; Quinn-1, 2015) and that information in image form is remembered at a higher rate than in textual form (Defeyter et al., 2009; Franklin, 2015; Moses, 2002). Eddie Adams, whose iconic image of a Viet Cong soldier being executed on a public street won a Pulitzer Prize, reiterates this point, stating that, “Still photographs are the most powerful weapons in the world. Words and pictures have a continuing struggle for primacy. In my mind, a person can write the best story in the world, but a photograph is absolute” (Photoquotations.Com/Eddie Adams, 2019) The photographic image then becomes a “visual quote,” a “visual document,” a “visual gift,” a “visual embrace,” or a “visual encounter” (Newton, 2001a). As it goes with writing, where some can write eloquently while others put words on paper (Bill Friedman Videos, 2016). Professionals and hobbyists alike debate whether the abundance of images, taken by multitudes of people who are not trained as photographers or photojournalists, just become pictures. In contrast, images made by professional photojournalists tell the story.

In the days when film came with one exposure on a frame, increasing up to 36 exposures with 35 mm camera film, a photographer had to be choosy about how they were going to tell the story, in order to not waste expensive film. Current digital storage devices holding gigabytes and even terabytes of image data make it easy for any person to simply keep pressing the shutter without thinking. Though professional photographers also have more storage space, they are trained to make the determinations of when to press the shutter. In the middle part of the 20th century, when Bresson was using limited film exposures, he constantly was thinking of when to
press the shutter. “It is all the time. Say, yes, yes, maybe yes but you shouldn’t over shoot; it’s like overeating, over drinking, you have to eat, you have to drink but over is too much because by the time you press when you arm the shutter once more and maybe the picture was in between. It’s a fraction of a second, it’s an instant in photography” (Bill Friedman Videos, 2016).

Making the decision of when to press the shutter takes a discerning eye in addition to strong editing skills to determine which instant would tell the story best. Today with so many platforms, cameras and images, audiences are getting every single shutter press, creating over-saturation. Photographer, artist, and writer Chris Wiley believes that “ironically, the moment of greatest photographic plentitude has pushed photography to the point of exhaustion.” (O’Hagan, 2018). Intent now becomes a concept to consider (Vega, 2011). Professional photojournalists can attest that storytelling and documenting are two of the intentions for what they do. When there is an “abundance of images” flooding the landscape, the question arises, does this then lead to the “trivialization of photography?” (Vega, 2011). In looking at his own images and User-Generated Content (UGC), Vega (2011) celebrates the democratic access to creating images just as much as he presents the problem of the “trivialization of photography.” Vega’s argument is that, with so many images being taken and shared, it could numb the audience to the message and the story the photograph was intended to tell, leaving professionals to ask, understand, and answer “why do we take photographs?” (Vega, 2011). The question and answer enables news media professionals to not only understand their intent, but it can also be useful in assessing the intent and usage of UGC. Professional photojournalists, editors, and media managers may need to revisit intent, the art of editing, and the decisive moment when considering the place for UGC in news media. Vega (2011) also states that to find the way out of this “crisis” of the “trivialization
of photography” it is important for professional photographers to not only understand their intent, but to be present with the people they are with and to remember the camera is a tool to connect with others and tell stories.

The magic of the photograph is perhaps simpler than we thought. It requires no powerful equipment or secret alchemy. It is a language, like others, to talk about what it is to be human. It is a way to recognize one another, to remember the importance of seeing with kindness and poetry. (Vega, 2011, p. 80)

This is a way in which professional photographers will emerge, as Eugene Richards stated (Heyman, 2018), because not everyone with access to a camera has that intent, that training or even that commitment to do that kind of work continually, regardless of the exposure or “clicks” on social media. As technology will only advance and increase, the profession must understand and decide how to exist in harmony with UGC.

User-Generated Content first became viable in mainstream media in the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami where the breaking news could be reported by the public that was experiencing it firsthand (Allan, 2015; B. Brennen & Brennen, 2015; Grayson, 2015). Very few if any professional photographers were on the scene at the time of the tsunami with the damage and destruction making it difficult for professional journalists to gain access therefore, the images supplied by those citizens of and visitors to the area provided the only visual reportage of the disaster initially. Subsequent disasters and moments of breaking news were captured by private citizens and submitted as UGC when professional photojournalists were not yet on scene. Since then mainstream media has come to rely on UGC in breaking news to aid in telling the story (Allan, 2015; B. Brennen & Brennen, 2015; Grayson, 2015). When this happened media management also recognized an opportunity that would benefit the industry financially given that
they pay little to nothing for the UGC coverage. It was a perfect storm of technology and economics disrupting photography and the news media as a whole. The financial crisis that followed in 2008 sent shock waves to industries, advertisers, and consumers may have contributed to the inability of a majority of the news industry to pivot to a new business model. UGC could have been a powerful tool to be used alongside professional journalism, had media management been given the time to figure out a new business model to work with instead of being forced into financial decisions in order to stay afloat (Barnes, 2012).

1.3 The Technological Disruption, Manipulation, and Ethics of Images

The perception of the photograph as truth earned photojournalism credibility in the late 1800s and early 20th century (J. D. Kelly, 2002; Lester, 2019; Wheeler, 2002). Be that as it may, photographic manipulation has been feasible since the invention of the study of light on paper (J. D. Kelly, 2002; Marsh, 2009). There are digital imaging techniques and effects that mimic what used to be done in the darkroom. Sandwiching two images together, cutting, pasting, or cropping objects in and out of frames can be observed in early historical photographs. Digital imaging only made the process faster with easier access to the tools.

It can be difficult to pinpoint the exact time when photojournalism’s credibility came under extreme scrutiny for manipulation, but evolving technology and the digital age have heightened that perception. In the late 1980s, scholars and professionals began to identify issues that would be affected with an increase in digital technology and how technology would manifest in terms of ethical decisions. There have been a number of high-profile cases of professionals in the field of journalism, particularly photojournalism, who have performed outside of the parameters of what is deemed as acceptable for the industry. Images created by photographers from local newspapers to world-renown contributors to *National Geographic* have been found to
be altered, thereby compromising the photographers’ reputations along with the credibility of photojournalism as an industry.

When former *Los Angeles Times* photojournalist Brian Walski was sent to Iraq in 2003, he likely had no intention of committing an unethical act that would immediately end his employment and his journalistic career. Documenting the first few weeks of the Iraq war, it is assumed that there were many pressures on Walski (Carlson, 2009). War journalism is indescribably difficult, which is why very few photographers do it. Digital transmission of images was beginning to be the norm instead of the trial and error it was in the late 1990s. Walski sent an image from Basra that not only ran on the front page of *The Los Angeles Times* but was given to other newspapers under the same ownership (Carlson, 2009). Looking closely at the image, a photo editor at a different newspaper could see that the image had been altered, with certain aspects of the image being duplicated in different parts of the frame (Carlson, 2009). Walski’s editor questioned him about the image, and he admitted that the resulting image “had been cobbled together from two separate photographs, taken seconds apart to produce a ‘better’ image (Carlson, 2009, p. 125). The “better” image that Walski wanted to achieve did not exist, although looking at the two individual images, either would have sufficed and told the story. Neither needed to be “better” or perfect. The repercussions came quickly, with Walski being fired on the spot while still in Iraq (Carlson, 2009; Wilson, 2016). Speaking on behalf of the *Los Angeles Times*, a photo editor at the time denounced Walski’s actions (Carlson, 2009). Professionals from photography and journalism, in addition to media scholars, spoke out on the situation to not only condemn what Walski had done but also to reiterate the principles by which the profession of photojournalism should work. Walski, employed by the *Los Angeles Times* since 1998, was not new, nor was he a freelancer who may not have “known better” (Carlson,
What Walski, who now works as a wedding photographer, did admit was that in a moment of intense pressure, he had a lapse in judgment that would spark a discourse about the credibility, trust, and honesty of photographs in the digital technology era (Carlson, 2009).

Brian Walski was not the first person to manipulate an image, nor will he be the last; however, he is the exemplar for our time. Steve McCurry, whose iconic 1995 portrait of a young Afghan refugee girl that became one of the most memorable National Geographic covers in the magazine’s history, has been caught up in modern-day digital manipulation accusations (Cade, 2016; Laurent, 2016). Another photographer viewing McCurry’s images of Cuba noticed a digital manipulation error in an image. A pole was duplicated over a man’s leg in a ghost like manner, in what is called cloning in the digital editing software Photoshop (Cade, 2016). After Paolo Vigilione blogged about the discovery, others began to look into McCurry’s other works only to discover objects, and people had been cloned in additional McCurry images (Cade, 2016). To his defense, McCurry stated that he did not do his own post-production work and that an employee was responsible for that (Laurent, 2016). McCurry also went on to maintain that over his 40-plus-year career, he has worked on a multitude of assignments varying from photojournalism, commercial, editorial, travel, to even personal work (Laurent, 2016). In order to clarify his current position and to perhaps justify the usage of such heavy digital manipulation, McCurry identifies now as a “Visual Storyteller” (Laurent, 2016).

In 2007 The Toledo Blade newspaper in Ohio discovered that one of its best photographers had “doctored” an image of a local event by removing the feet of a TV journalist from behind a fence. Upon further investigation, the newspaper discovered that Allan Dietrich had manipulated over 80 images, some of which had been submitted to national photography contests (Roland Shearer, 2009; Winslow, 2007a, 2007b). In one instance that was used as an
example of digital manipulation taken too far, Dietrich had added a basketball to an image where one had not been in order to make the image “better” as Walski had done. Dietrich resigned (Roland Shearer, 2009; Winslow, 2007a), and once again, the photojournalism community had to work to repair the reputation of not only its professionals but of the entire concept of digital photojournalism.

Across the globe, Souvid Datta would admit to manipulating his images by cloning or inserting, the work of others. Datta chose a highly respected and recognized photographer’s work to use, that of Mary Ellen Mark. In an interview, Datta expressed his regret and pointed to the pressure of being a freelancer to get a “better” image after having won numerous grants and awards for his non-governmental organizations (NGO) work (Laurent, 2017). Although Datta accepted all responsibility for his actions, he said that he understood that it will be a slow process of regaining respect from his clients in order to keep working (Laurent, 2017). The types of flagrant misuse of technology by Walski, McCurry, Deitrich, and Datta did not happen at once, they occurred gradually with each advance in technology.

The tool that made the work of photojournalists and photo editors easier was also getting in the way of what the audiences believed (Domonoske, 2016; J. E. Kelly & Nace, 1994; Wineburg, 2016). The audience could not know if an image had been “doctored” in order to draw more attention to it, which would be outside the bounds of professional photojournalism (Mathison, 2012; Wilson, 2016). The World Press Photo Foundation commissioned the report “The Integrity of the Image” in 2014 (Alexander, 2014; Campbell, 2014) one year before numerous images were disqualified, and even a winning prize was revoked during the 2015 competition (Times, 2015a, 2015b). The National Press Photographers Association (NPPA) has had its Code of Ethics since its inception, changing it to incorporate digital technology and
imaging in 1997 (Roland Shearer, 2009). Other organizations, including but not limited to, the Associated Press, the photo agency VII, and even the Department of Defense have specific codes for visual ethics while the Society for Professional Journalists, The Center for Journalism Ethics & Policy have policies on digital media ethics entirely. With the multitude of organizations having a variation of the same code, standard for what is acceptable in digital manipulation would need to be established across the profession, accepted universally (Alexander, 2014).

David Campbell, a former secretary for the World Press Photo Contest stated that “every digital photo ever made has been processed, even if its creator never even glanced sideways at a cloning tool” (Times, 2015a). Michele McNally, Director of Photography at The New York Times and former director of the World Press Photo competition (WPP) agrees with Campbell and others that digital photography is different than working with film because with film there was an etching embedded in the negative that was only manipulated, if at all, in the printing process (Times, 2015a, 2015b). However, data has something that film never had: a digital footprint. There is software being used and developed that can identify if a photograph has been manipulated and to what extent it was (pmelcher, 2018). Various industries besides photojournalism, such as insurance, online sales, and online dating, could benefit from being able to detect if a photograph was “real,” overly processed, or fake.

1.4 Statement of The Problem

With an abundance of images being created by professionals and amateurs, with digital technology allowing the viewer to be taken too far away and yet very intimate places in life, it is difficult to tell how these images are perceived. The research problem that this paper seeks to understand is, does the source of the image, whether it appears to come from a professional or an amateur photographer, affect the its credibility among American news media audiences The
usage of UGC carries a value in news reporting because journalists have never been able to be everywhere, especially when breaking news happens. However, when the audience sees an image there must be a perception that the information being portrayed in the image is credible. If the photographer and the platform are not deemed as credible then how can the image be credible? The research questions are as follows:

RQ1: Does a photographer’s title affect the perceived credibility of the image to the audience?

RQ2: Does the platform the image appears on affect the perceived credibility of the image?

RQ3: Does the category of the image affect the perceived credibility of the image?
CHAPTER TWO

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

To date, the majority of the literature on news credibility has focused on legacy news media comparing print and TV broadcast news with more recent research undertaking the internet, online and digital media realms. Even with the advent of technology that has provided diverse iterations of news media, credibility continues to be studied traditionally. This is an area of opportunity for an approach such as this study, being concerned with a specific aspect of the news credibility: photographic images.

One of the newest phenomena with photojournalism is the use of User-Generated Content (UGC) where even less research concentrates on the credibility of images from the audience’s perspective (Greer & Gosen, 2002; Harper, 2002; J. E. Kelly & Nace, 1994; Mendelson, 2004). In addition to the concepts of credibility, photojournalism, and UGC, this literature review will explicate the importance of media platforms and news types such as general news, breaking news including natural disasters, and crime photographs.

2.1.1 The Press

The “press” did not start out to be the enemy of the people, nor did it start out to be for the people as the formal press, from its inception, was concerned with business and advertising. Throughout time there have always been ways of disseminating communication, either through word of mouth, town criers, or advertising papers. Eventually the advertising papers saw a market in other types of information for the larger community and therein began the era of the “Penny Press” (Schudson, 1978; Stephens, 1988). The “Penny Press” allowed for the average citizen to have access to the “news,” through pricing and availability that had previously been
reserved for businessmen, who could afford the higher cost (usually 4-6 cents) and had the ability to go to the specific places where the papers were sold as opposed to the “Penny Press” being available on corners and newsstands (Schudson, 1978; Stephens, 1988). In addition to the “Penny Press,” “Yellow Journalism” was becoming popular (Schudson, 1978; Stephens, 1988). As publishers saw the interest in the news among the average person, they began to use storytelling. “Yellow Journalism” was a particular method of storytelling that embellished information in order to attract more audiences in the late 1890s and early twentieth century.

What is interesting about the era is how much money was made for the publishers as entire news conglomerates were built with the “Penny Press.” The New York Times grew and flourished in this era by lowering its prices and competing with the other papers (Schudson, 1978; Stephens, 1988). The Hearst publishing empire was famous for its “Yellow Journalism” but also for being able to grow and expand during that time, and the Pulitzer empire grew using those methods as well (Schudson, 1978; Stephens, 1988). Each of these newspapers engaged in differing ways of delivering the news of the time (Schudson, 1978; Stephens, 1988).

As years and the business progressed, news became somewhat of a “sport” instead of a profession. There was competition for attention, and even the writers and reporters became “stars” of their time in the “age of the reporter” (Schudson, 1978, p. 65). Had news become a profession first and news people become professional journalists (regardless of schooling or education) that could have been a foundation for credibility to be built on for the industry. Schudson began to research “objectivity” in a few professions in order to understand it through multiple lenses, however, in his 1978 book, Discovering the News, he decided to look at journalism exclusively because he felt that as a sociologist “there were important questions, not only unanswered but unasked, about the relationship of journalism to the development of
American society as a whole” (Schudson, 1978, p. 5). But journalism was not in the same category as the other professions Schudson started out to study. Journalism was not science, law, medicine, or any one of those other professions (Schudson, 1978) that required licensing and testing in order to practice. And although Schudson mentions that, what he did not acknowledge well is that this industry had never been universally defined (theoretically or professionally) as other professions had (Schudson, 1978) which would have allowed for a clear delineation between who could practice journalism, a professional, and citizens capturing news which would become known as user-generated content or UGC.

2.1.2 News, Journalism, and Media

“News,” “journalism,” and “media” can sometimes be used as interchangeable terms when describing the industry; however, scholars understand that each one is a different aspect and needs to be separately defined and identified. “News” is the content and the information that is disseminated to the audience (Gans, 1979a; Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014; Schudson, 1978; Stephens, 1988). As the industry has evolved and moved away from “Yellow Journalism” it has been guided by the concepts of “truth,” “facts,” “objectivity,” “trustworthiness,” all in order to be deemed credible (Gans, 1979a; Schudson, 1978; Stephens, 1988). “Fake News” is defined as “news referring to viral posts based on fictitious accounts made to look like news reports” (Tandoc et al., 2018) and “news articles that are intentionally and verifiably false, and could mislead readers” (Allcott and Gentzkow, 2017, p.213 as quoted in Tandoc et al., 2018). The term is often used today not only to refer to a lie or misinformation, but as information someone doesn’t want to be told because it is in fact true but interested parties need it to be disbelieved for their political or power gain (Tandoc et al., 2018). It has been shown through a cogitative neuroscientific study by Tali Sharot that people want to hear information as long as it aligns with
their own comforting beliefs (When It Comes To Politics and “Fake News,” Facts Aren’t Enough, 2017), which is further supported with studies confirming the priming effect of “Fake News” on audiences and the third-person effect in order to disseminate misinformation (Baek et al., 2019; Van Duyn & Collier, 2019). However, a recent Reuters study indicated that audiences try to discern what content and which sources will not spread misinformation (Newman et al., 2019).

“Journalism” is the storytelling, the mode of reporting, the information that audiences need to be informed for the public good. One of the leading councils on journalism, the American Press Institute (API), characterizes journalism in this manner:

Journalism is the activity of gathering, assessing, creating, and presenting news and information. It is also the product of these activities. Journalism can be distinguished from other activities and products by certain identifiable characteristics and practices. These elements not only separate journalism from other forms of communication, they are what make it indispensable to democratic societies. History reveals that the more democratic a society, the more news, and information it tends to have. (API, 2019a)

Differentiating journalism from other forms of communication or just communicating in general means that a large proportion of emails, opinion pieces, blog posts, Tweets, other social media posts, pop-up, and native advertising, and images shared across the Internet communicate some sort of message but are not journalism (API, 2019c). Nonetheless, the Edward R. Murrow quote of his era resonates still in saying “just because your voice reaches halfway around the world doesn’t mean you are wiser than when it reached only to the end of the bar” (RTNDA, 2019). Looking at user-generated content, discussed and defined in a later section, with this quote helps one to understand that just because you can take a photo or write does not mean you
should be considered the professional. Access to the technology that lets one disseminate information does not make one a journalist.

The purpose of journalism, write Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel in *The Elements of Journalism*, is not defined by technology, nor by journalists or the techniques they employ. Rather, the principles and purpose of journalism are defined by something more basic: the function news plays in the lives of people…. The purpose of journalism is thus to provide citizens with the information they need to make the best possible decisions about their lives, their communities, their societies, and their governments” (API, 2019b).

Those functions include trust, truth, objectivity, verification, independence, and thoroughness while also taking into consideration that we now live in an era where audiences contribute to news in ways that have not been possible before (API, 2019a). With a press of a button, audiences now become producers, editors, and gatekeepers of information yet:

Two things, however, separate this journalistic-like process from an end product that is ‘journalism.’ The first is motive and intent. The purpose of journalism is to give people the information they need to make better decisions about their lives and society. The second difference is that journalism involves the conscious, systematic application of a discipline of verification to produce a “functional truth,” as opposed to something that is merely interesting or informative. Yet while the process is critical, it’s the end product – the “story” – by which journalism is ultimately judged (API, 2019a; Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014).

But all of this can be expensive today when it is much easier to get information cheaply from someone who happens to be in close proximity to a news event.
The evolution of journalism from straight political and business news to include storytelling that the public related to and could believe in because they identified and saw themselves in the paper (Schudson, 1978; Stephens, 1988), became even more popular after WWI when there was a great deal of distrust of the news industry because there was a distrust of business, distrust of financial markets, and social and cultural distrust from the propaganda that was being generated during the war (Schudson, 1978). As the news and storytelling became more about the average person, different kinds of communities began wanting to see themselves in the storytelling, which in turn meant wider audience reach, thereby making more money for newspaper owners (Schudson, 1978; Stephens, 1988). This aided in garnering credibility for journalism because if the communities could see themselves in the storytelling, then it felt real. There was a slow rise in trust and credibility by being immersed in community or local storytelling (Schudson, 1978; Stephens, 1988). However, when the industry started to divest from community storytelling, and the audience could no longer see itself in the news, distrust began to rise, and credibility began to fall (Schudson, 1978; Stephens, 1988).

“Media” is the institution. It is the sociological, philosophical, and ideological being of the industry (Fishman, 1980; Gans, 1979a; Schudson, 2012a). “Media” is the umbrella or bubble around everything else, and it can also be about individual organizations because within the whole of “media” are the organizations that make it up. Because of the digital media disruption that upended the legacy media of print and broadcast “media” is the technology we use and where we place the “news” content. “Media” also stands for the business of news because it is indeed a business.
2.2 Photojournalism: Photographs, Photography, and Photographers

Photojournalism is telling the news story in visual form. Definitions by professional photojournalists over the years include:

- “The visual reporting of newsworthy events” (Caple, 2013a, p. 3).
- “Is telling a story with picture(s), reporting with a camera, recording a moment in time, the fleeting instant when an image sums up a story” (Newton, 2001a, p. 14).
- “Is the process of intentionally capturing a moment in time with a camera where the images offer a glimpse, but in the same time, comprehensive understanding of the assignment and move the viewer to want to know more” (G. B. Tait, personal communication, February 22, 2019).
- “A journalist tells stories. A photographer takes pictures of nouns (people, places, and things). A photojournalist takes the best of both and locks it into the most powerful medium available – frozen images” (Newton, 2009).
- “Photojournalists capture ‘verbs’” (Mark Hancock as quoted in Newton, 2009, p. 236).
- “Is defined generally as a descriptive term for reporting visual information via various media” (Newton, 2001a).

News images and photojournalism are understood as two distinct entities. Whereas news images refer to the content that is telling a story or providing information, photojournalism is the practice of storytelling, which has intent, purpose and a social responsibility to document, inform and educate about what is going on in front of the camera for those who would not otherwise be able to witness it (Chapnick, 1994).
The study of photographic images in news can be traced to photojournalism becoming an actual profession (Caple, 2013a; Lester, 2019). In order to understand the history and study of photojournalism, one must have a solid understanding of the history and study of photography and news as they were historically studied separately.

Early on, photography had been primarily commissioned for portraiture and landscapes, later moving into politics, culture, science, and storytelling (Brennen & Hardt, 1999; Emerling, 2012). Photography was not considered an art in comparison to painting, drawing, and other non-technical art forms, and a discourse began about the use of photographs in the realm of culture and society (Kobre, 2008). Whereas those with more social and financial capital had their portraits painted, photography allowed people from different classes, access to having a portrait as well. Similarly, photographs were not considered by many to be good enough for the newspaper. Joseph Pulitzer tried to limit the use of visuals of any kind in his papers only to see circulation fall, meaning the readers liked images (Schudson, 1978; Stephens, 1988).

Photography may not have been for high society, but it was good for circulation. Newspapers used woodcut drawings from the images newspaper photographers were getting at events and on the scene of breaking news (Fishman, 1980; Kobre, 2008; Schudson, 1978). The equipment was bulky, and the quality was poor due to the slow film speeds of the time, however it was indeed a photographic image. There was some opposition to having the woodcut drawings in the paper, however when publisher William Hearst cut back on the use of them, he saw a decline in circulation (Fishman, 1980; Schudson, 1978). Thus when newspapers began using photographs, a similar opposition from management and ownership continued until they noticed that circulation, and thus profits, increased as well (Fishman, 1980; Schudson, 1978). Many
publishers began to ride the wave, calling photographs in newspapers a “fad” but also being smart enough to cash in on the trend (Fishman, 1980; Schudson, 1978).

The “fad” continued and became commonplace in newspapers and then magazines. As the equipment became smaller, lighter, and more technologically advanced, there was a need and a demand to “see” more; more photographs, more perspectives, and more “life.” “Magazines in both the United States and Europe already had run extensive picture packages from the late 1880s on” (Kobre, 2008, p. 436), although photojournalism, the visual storytelling, had not begun as the photo placement was random (Kobre, 2008). By the late 1920s, Germany was being recognized for its visual storytelling when magazine editor Stefan Lorant “developed the notion that there could be a photographic equivalent of the literary essay” (Kobre, 2008, p. 436).

American magazines were slow to catch up, but Henry Luce, founder of *Time, Fortune*, and *Life* magazines, was using them (Kobre, 2008; Schudson, 1978; Stephens, 1988). Luce also hired full-time photographers at his magazines and because photography was becoming the universal language in a land of immigrants, there was overwhelming interest in seeing photos of life going on (Kobre, 2008). Social responsibility photographers, as they became known, Jacob Riis and Lewis Hine, photographed the lives in the slums of New York and child labor conditions, respectively (Kobre, 2008). This allowed for people to see the truth about life in ways that parts of society had not seen, particularly the dominant class. It shattered ideals of the way America was supposed to be (Kobre, 2008).

Until the mid 1900s photojournalists were labeled as “artists” or “roughnecks”, or secondary citizens in the newsroom, but not journalists or professionals in the news business (Caple, 2013a; Kobre, 2008; Lester, 2019). In 1943 Clifton Edom created the first photojournalism program at the University of Missouri and established the Photograph of the
Year contest, ushering photojournalism into a profession (Kobre, 2008; Lester, 2019). It was around this same time that the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Farm Security Administration (FSA) were employing photographers to record life across America. Gordon Parks, Margaret Bourke-White, and Dorothea Lange created some of the most iconic images of the country and its people during this time (Kobre, 2008). Arthur Fellig, famously known as “Weegee”, became the father of crime photos and Erich Salomon became known as the “father of the candid photography” (Kobre, 2008, p. 434). Both could do this with the evolution of photographic equipment, smaller cameras, flash powder and bulb, and the ability to get in and out of situations sometimes unnoticed (Kobre, 2008). William Randolph Hearst even hired Mr. Salomon to demonstrate his technique and then ordered the same camera for all of his staff photographers (Kobre, 2008). Again, this was no “fad” and scholars and social scientists recognized this as well. Photography, photojournalism, and the image were here to stay and to be studied.

This new phenomenon of photography had people wanting to understand it, label it, or justify its purpose and existence. Sociologists began to look at photography or the “image” in terms of something other than art or history (Geiger, 2003). Walter Benjamin, Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Stuart Hall, Susan Sontag, and others studied the image for what it meant in terms of society and culture and the impact those meanings and messages had on the culture (Geiger, 2003). Their studies delved into what the photograph was meant to do, to be, as well as what it was not (Barthes, 1981, 1993; Cultural Reader, 2011; Geiger, 2003; Hall, 1997, 2009). If we look historically, the photograph was first viewed with awe and excitement because it was new. As with many things, the newness is what drew the scholars to it and also, as with many things, the newness faded from it. The photograph became the subject of what was wrong with
the world as if to blame the photograph and in particular the photojournalistic image for those wrongs, not acknowledging that the photojournalist and photographers were only recording events and not creating them (Bossen, 1985; Mathison, 2012; Susan Sontag Quotes (Author of On Photography) (Page 2 of 17), 2019).

However, this is where the scholarship gets interesting because scholars also began to study photography using news theories. Agenda-setting, priming, framing, confirmation bias, political economy along with encoding/decoding were the theoretical lenses through which Hall, Sontag and others examined the photographic image (Bate, 2007; Caple, 2013b; Cultural Reader, 2011; Geiger, 2003). Research has asked questions around what does photography mean (Caple, 2013b; Kelsey & Stimson, 2008; la Grange, 2013; Lester, 2019; Newton, 2001b)? What does photography do (Elkins, 2007, 2011; Kelsey & Stimson, 2008; Kriebel, 2007; McCauley, 2007), and even asks the powerful question of what do pictures want (Mitchell, 2005) only to have the author met with more questions on the theories of desire, the notions of genre and application, and even where to begin answering the question (Mitchell, 2005). Jae Emerling (2012) almost answers that question in the essay The thing itself: a gloss on Walter Benjamin, “Little History of Photography” (1931) by suggesting that we as scholars look at the image itself without peripheral information being applied to it such as art, politics, culture, and even theory (Emerling, 2012), which may work for other photographic domains but not necessarily with photojournalism as the image is in context to the story and the moment. The visual image in journalism is in context to the story and the moment which happens as a result of culture, society, and politics, therefore a different way to address these questions and others as a photojournalism scholar is to discontinue studying the photographic image in isolation. Looking at how audiences perceive those images is one way to do that.
2.2.1 Visual and Photographic Research

The research on images and in particular photojournalism studies largely consists of textual and content analysis of images. For example, a study of UGC used by regional Missouri news organization after the Mike Brown murder and protests in Ferguson (Greenwood & Thomas, 2015) found that UGC images were not used as much as professional photojournalism by three regional newspapers covering the events from Ferguson, Missouri after the killing of Michael Brown. The usage of UGC before and after photographic staff layoffs at the Middletown, NY, Times Herald-Record finding that professional photojournalism images were given more display area when used, however, overall the use of visuals for the new organization was down (Mortensen & Gade, 2018). Greenwood and Smith (2009) identified themes among Photographer of the Year competition winning images, finding that certain themes such as children, animals and, big events were the top winners over a span of seven decades in five year increments (Greenwood & Smith, 2009).

What the current body of research does not address to the same degree is the role of the image creator and platform on which the image appears when considering audiences’ perceptions of credibility. A select number of studies pursue the research from the standpoint of creator and/or platform concluding that while UGC is useful in breaking news situations, it is the image that is most important with professional photojournalists doing the work, sometimes without the support of their news organization, financially and otherwise but also recognizing that the audience attributes credibility to UGC images in certain circumstances. (Lazaro, 2012; Matheson, 2015; Mortensen & Keshelashvili, 2013; Wahl-Jorgensen, et al., 2010) One study created original photographs for an experiment where they were labeled as either being unaltered or altered and asked photojournalism professionals their opinion of the images and their work
practices in comparison to UGC (Mäenpää, 2014). Mäenpää found that that the professionals understood the limits of alteration and expectations of their work however overall didn’t see the need for more oversight. The author’s conclusion that new outlooks and innovative collaborating of the profession, especially in regard to the work environment for professional photojournalists was needed (Mäenpää, 2014). Even fewer take into consideration the audience (Huang, 2001; Kelly & Nace, 1994; Mendelson, 2004; Mullen, 1998). Those that do concentrate on image credibility have been primarily directed at understanding credibility from the professional photojournalist’s viewpoint (Becker, 1991; Dupagne & Garrison, 2006; Greenwood & Reinardy, 2011; Thomson & Greenwood, 2017). An even smaller series of research probes audiences for their perceptions of images (Huang, 2001; Müller et al., 2012; Puustinen & Seppänen, 2011). In each of these studies either credibility was found to be important in photojournalism among participants other than the audience consuming the news or UGC was shown to be used in terms of where and how much but no insight into how the audience perceived UGC in those instances.

In terms of manipulation, studies have explore whether newspaper readers believed a photo depending on the source in which it was printed (Bossen, 1985; Kelly & Nace, 1994; Terry, 1989). What the study showed was that overall photographs were believable; however, the photograph was more believable when shown printed in The New York Times versus the National Enquirer. (JKelly & Nace, 1994). Wheeler & Gleason (1995) proposed that the term “photofiction” be used to label “any photo where manipulation of the photographic image, digital or otherwise, changes readers’ perceptions of its meaning” (Wheeler & Gleason, 1995, p. 8). The authors formulated a series of tests: the viewfinder test, the technical credibility test, the process test, and even the “pregnant Bruce Willis Test” (Wheeler & Gleason, 1995, p. 10) to determine whether the photograph should be categorized as photofiction. Wheeler (2002) followed the
journal article up with an entire book dedicated to the concept of phototruth and photofiction and how to handle the ethical and credibility challenges of digital technology on photojournalism (Wheeler, 2002).

These studies are indeed important in terms of research. Nonetheless one way to close research gaps is to ask questions of the audience about their perceptions of credibility, particularly now that audiences have greater access to media platforms and distribution channels. This study will seek to understand if audiences perceive professional photojournalists, content, and platforms as more or less credible than UGC on professional or social media platforms. If UGC is perceived as more credible, this study will allow an understanding of why. Or could it be that audiences prefer their own contributions? It has been established that there has not been much research that focuses on audiences and thus asks those types of questions. Again, addressing this research from the audience’s perspective is vital because the end product is delivered to the audience.

2.3 Credibility

Source credibility ranks as the most widely studied phenomenon in mass communications because it can encompass more variables than message or medium (Saleh, 2016). The concept relates to the person or individual giving the information (Hou & Oyedeji, 2011; Kiousis, 2001) and in some cases can include an organization or organizations (Golan, 2010). In the broadest terms, one could incorporate the individual, the medium, and/or the organization into source credibility. Source credibility emerged as a concept from Aristotle in relation to having speakers and presenters seen as trustworthy in order to get their point across to the audience or listener (Rapp, 2010). The Ethos in the Ethos, Pathos, Logos trilogy of persuasion and rhetoric has been used by numerous industries such as advertising, marketing, sales, public relations, as well as
media with Ethos meaning credibility or ethics, Pathos equaling emotion, and Logos being logic (Home - Ethos, Pathos, and Logos, the Modes of Persuasion – Explanation and Examples, 2015; Rapp, 2010). The core of source credibility is about the trust and belief the receiver has in the source disseminating the information (Ohanian, 1990). In terms of this study and images, credibility means does the viewer have that trust and belief in the creator of the image and then in the distributor or platform of that image. This section will begin with an overview of news credibility moving forward to examine the credibility of images. In order to clearly explicate credibility as a concept, one has to do as Chaffee advises: strip away all of the other factors surrounding the concept in order to accurately understand and define it (Chaffee, 1991). This means differentiating credibility from bias, trust, ethics, believability, and objectivity. Although the terms are related to each other, each one needs to be interpreted singularly while understanding that each of them plays a part in the foundation of credibility as a whole.

2.3.1 Objectivity, Believability, Trust

Objectivity was an archetype that the news industry, in an effort to establish its credibility, has long strived to achieve. Certain scholars argue that it should not have been a perceived requirement (Maras, 2013; Shoemaker & Reese, 2014; Tandoc & Thomas, 2017) because of concerns about its attainability and definition. Understanding that bias is an innate characteristic each person has, whether it deals with innocuous choices or blatantly dangerous ideologies, biases prevent a person from attaining unequivocal objectivity. To that end “the call for objectivity was an appeal for journalists to develop a consistent method of testing information -a transparent approach to evidence-precisely so that personal and cultural biases would not undermine the accuracy of their work” (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014, p. 101). Consequently, the notion of objectivity itself proved to be problematic in terms of credibility, for had it not been
seen as a requirement, it would not have been as damaging when unattainable (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014; Tandoc & Thomas, 2017). According to Tandoc and Thomas, “scholars have long debated whether objectivity facilitates or hinders journalistic excellence” (Tandoc & Thomas, 2017, p. 43). It is important to note that while objectivity has been widely studied by scholars, the majority of the research uses news organizations, journalists and media management as participants in order to measure the concept (Gans, 1979a; Maras, 2013; Schudson, 1978).

Robinson and Kohut (1988) asked the question, “what if credibility is defined specifically as believability?” (Robinson & Kohut, 1988, p. 174). The researchers asked that question in relation to previous studies where “the ASNE definition of credibility was very broadly gauged” (Robinson & Kohut, 1988, p. 174) but did not offer a clear definition of believability, only surmising that news media did not have a believability crisis. Defined generally speaking as “to have confidence in the truth, the existence, or the reliability of something, although without absolute proof that one is right in doing so” by dictionary.com, believability happens when the news or the source cultivates that confidence with its receiver, the news media audience, over time and with the work it produces. The Pew Research Center tracked the “believability of various news media” (Believability of Newspapers | Pew Research Center, 2007) from 1985 to 2005 and found a steady, sometimes dramatic decline of source credibility (Believability of Newspapers | Pew Research Center, 2007) as well as a decline in newspapers overall and then explicitly surveyed by the Wall Street Journal, USA Today, The New York Times, and the Associated Press from 1998 to 2006 (Believability of Newspapers/Pew Research Center, 2007). In a following study that determined there was no crisis of the news media in terms of credibility, the Pew Research Center used the term believability in conducting research of newspapers, local
TV, and national broadcast news outlets in assessing which rates higher among audiences by being the most believable found that CNN and local TV news were at the top respectively (Believability of Newspapers/Pew Research Center, 2007; Pew Research Center, 2007b).

However, in a more recent 2018 poll, the Pew Research Center used bias and trust to understand how American news consumers perceive media finding it not as credible as in previous studies (Bedard, 2018). Robinson and Kohut (1988) used believability as the identifier for their credibility research of news organizations and news people. Their study also debunked that political affiliation and technology type were not correlated to a respondent’s perception of the believability of the news in line with a similar Pew Research Center Study (Pew Research Center, 2019; Robinson & Kohut, 1988). Believability also occurs in news media when the audience sees themselves in the content being provided or is capable of being empathetic to situations being portrayed (Bedard, 2018, 2019; Ingram, 2018; Knight Foundation & Gallup, 2018; Pew Research Center, 2007b, 2007a).

Prior research shows that the way people define trustworthy news generally yields vague definitions that cannot be put into practice. However, people can readily identify the specific factors that lead them to rely or not rely on a particular news source. Some of these factors relate to trust (e.g., getting the facts right), and others likely do not (e.g., its content is entertaining) (API, 2019a, 2019c, 2019b). In 2019 the Center for Media Engagement at The University of Texas at Austin’s Moody College of Communication undertook a study with exploration into how news organizations can build trust by being transparent with the ways that they develop their news and stories (Masullo Chen et al., 2019). Other studies indicate that although trust was lost, it can be regained with attention to bias and accuracy (Fischer, 2018; Jones, 2018; Jones & Ritter, 2018; Knight Foundation & Gallup, 2018) and increasing transparency in reporting and
funding while encouraging journalists to “fight back against a disproportionate number of attacks on their profession” (Fischer, 2018). These conclusions are ripe for additional research as much has changed in both the political and technological realms.

Each of these concepts—believability, trust, and objectivity—flow into credibility, whereby the damage to each affects credibility, overall. Overall, the question of credibility of the news media has always been present regardless of the point at which the industry stood. The recent propagation of “fake news” has highlighted that question and shined a spotlight on believability, absence of bias (objectivity) (Muñoz-Torres, 2012), and trust affecting news, journalism, and media directly and individually.

This current study seeks to understand what aspects affect and relate to source credibility of news images. Whether the current situation with news media credibility is viewed as either a crisis or an incident, it is most certainly not the first time, and will not be the last time that the credibility of the news media and photojournalism has been questioned (Chapnick, 1994; Fishman, 1988; Gans, 1979b; Lester, 2015; Newton, 2001b; Schudson, 1978, 2012b).

2.3.2 The Definition of Credibility and Evolution of Research

When conceptualizing source credibility for the purpose of this study, I am referring to the credibility of the source providing the information to the audience; the photographer and the platform. However, it is appropriate to begin with the broad overall definition of credibility as “the quality of being believed or accepted as true, real, or honest” according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary. Applying that definition to journalism does not change the meaning, but it does alter the way in which it needs to be applied (Appelman & Sundar, 2016). In the past, media scholars have studied the concept as independent dimensions (Rieh & Danielson, 2007) focusing on a specific aspect of credibility of news media, primarily applying the definition to
source credibility, message credibility, and medium credibility (Borah, 2014; Kiousis, 2001; Saleh, 2016; Srinivasan & Barclay, 2017), in addition to focusing on organizational credibility, the individual entity, and institutional credibility (the industry as a whole). This has proved to be difficult as each one stands a function of the others (Appelman & Sundar, 2016). Therefore, when researching one dimension it is imperative to acknowledge the others while steadfastly maintaining focus on the prominent dimension. Well cited scholars over decades have defined certain aspects of credibility (Gaziano & McGrath, 1986; Hovland et al., 1953; Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Lee, 1978; Meyer, 1988), producing key terms that encapsulated the definition using “trustworthiness,” “expertise,” “accuracy,” “fairness,” and “completeness”. To be inclusive of online environments and the internet Metzger (2007) assembled the following five measures: accuracy, authority, objectivity, currency, and coverage (Metzger, 2007). These five categories are less burdensome than the 16 factors used to generate credibility scores in the research that Gaziano and McGrath (1986) did to study newspaper and television credibility building upon the work that Mitchell V. Charnley, ASNE, and the Roper Center had previously done (Gaziano & McGrath, 1986). Through their research, Gaziano and McGrath (1986) built “credibility” out of 12 of the 16 factors they started with and this allowed them to differentiate between high, medium and low or credible and non-credible ratings for newspapers and television (Gaziano & McGrath, 1986). Their research found that newspapers and television were almost similar in credibility with newspapers having a slightly higher rating (Gaziano & McGrath, 1986). The research that Meyer (1988) pointed out that an agreed-upon, cohesive definition had not been found. Using the definition of “reasonable grounds for being believed” from Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary, the author’s research focused on believability and community affiliation as the two dimensions of credibility that were to be studied (Meyer, 1988), although a resolute
definition was not provided either. The author’s statement that “a newspaper can be believed but still be alienated if it advocates positions strongly opposed by a majority in its community or undertakes investigations or editorial positions that run counter to the perceived economic or social interests of the community” (Meyer, 1988, p. 567) is in line with the findings about the effect that local news, specific topics and coverage areas have on credibility from the Gaziano and McGrath (1986) study. In his conclusion, Meyer sets the stage for future research by stating that more areas need to be examined to see if they could withstand certain conditions, including but not limited to new technology and digital trends (Meyer, 1988). A possible obstacle to more research at the time was the notion that management may not agree to have their credibility constantly checked. A fear of influencing the decisions of editors who may then play to the audience or might be reluctant to push the envelope in case they scare away more readers as this study was done around the relationship between credibility declining and loss of readership (Meyer, 1988). He goes on to surmise from Lipset and Schneider’s (1987) findings that “confidence in institutions tends to follow the general economic and political health of the country more than judgments of any institution’s specific performance” (Meyer, 1988, p. 574). In 1988, Meyer was concerned about this phenomenon and wanted to know if specific events, such as the Firestone and Goodyear tire investigations in Akron, Ohio by the Akron Beacon Journal during the time of his study, would have a longer effect on credibility or if the decline in credibility, or as he measured believability, was situational.

In Rimmer and Weaver’s (1987) journal article appropriately titled “Different Questions, Different Answers? Media Use and Media Credibility,” the authors conducted a secondary analysis of the ASNE’s 1985 media credibility study on the correlation between media use and media credibility and adding a new component to it. The authors wanted to see if media type had
any effect on the results and used mail surveys from 1,002 respondents (Rimmer & Weaver, 1987). The previous study found that higher credibility does not increase readership, or usage but rather the reverse was true; media use was correlated to credibility, whereby the more media the audience used, the higher the perception of credibility. Conversely their study found that media type or choice had a weak correlation to credibility. These findings led the authors to conclude that measuring behavior (usage) rather than attitudes may be a better measurement of perceived credibility for future research (Rimmer & Weaver, 1987). This is a particularly important study as groundwork for researching perceived credibility in the digital age indicating that using multiple measures is better than a single measurement method.

Credibility has had structures applied to it in order to be conceptualized and defined in ways that would hold up against confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and discriminant analysis. (Yale et al., 2015) CFA and discriminant analysis are used to assess whether factors of credibility, which these authors used as honesty, currency and balance based on the previous research of (Abdulla et al., 2004; Gaziano & McGrath, 1986), were valid and adequately assigned by separating groups using one, two and three factor models discrimately. What was found was “that although the factor structure of the measure is replicable, the measure exhibits significant concerns related to discriminant validity” thusly rendering it unable to produce a universal measure and definition of news credibility (Yale et al., 2015). However, the research did bear out that because news consumption is an idiosyncratic endeavor to audiences and there is a noted distance between “the sender and receiver” of the news, different methods of evaluation would serve credibility research well (Yale et al., 2015).

Research historically looked at the medium in source credibility with studies asking audiences about their opinion of one newspaper or broadcast station over the other or why one
organization or distributor of the news was perceived to be more credible (Giffin, 1967; Kiousis, 2001; Lee, 1978; Meyer, 2004). There have been studies that looked at news personalities, particularly in broadcast with those studies examining the appearance of the personality as much as the information the personality was providing in terms of source credibility (Joseph, 1982). In legacy media, the source was primarily print or broadcast with each medium having its share of credible members. Digital media consequently provided seemingly countless opportunities for distribution and created new contributors to those platforms of distribution. Not only were there more opportunities and platforms, the audience could now produce, contribute, and pass on their information in a manner similar to professional mass media. UGC and digital platforms have all been studied in terms of source credibility finding that the majority of the time audiences aligned with professional sources, the content creators and distributors over UGC and digital (Hou & Oyedeji, 2011). An experiment that asked college students to rate UGC in a local newspaper for credibility found that perceived credibility was similar to professional journalism in low-involvement news, such as features but rated professional journalism more credible in high-involvement news such as education, finances (Hou & Oyedeji, 2011). This study however did not pertain to images

Message credibility is about what the content is supposed to convey (Metzger, et al. 2003 as cited by Borah, 2014; Hou & Oyedeji, 2011). A proper definition of message credibility that “message credibility is an individual’s judgment of the veracity of the content of communication” (Appelman & Sundar, 2016, p. 63) was derived after addressing all of the ways in which the audience can construe the message. The authors research the concept both horizontally and vertically where it is on the same plane as other concepts related to it, or it is in rank order compared to the other concepts (Appelman & Sundar, 2016).
For example, a textual analysis of reports regarding Wikileaks whistleblower, Edward Snowden’s disappearance for 11 days in 2016, showed the reporting from the *Wall Street Journal, Yahoo News, Business Insider,* and *Slate* in 2017 to be inaccurate (Greenwald, 2017). The platform sources were regarded in terms of credibility by the audience, however, it was now the message they were distributing as “fake news” (Greenwald, 2017), because it was the message that was being examined in view of multiple sources were reporting the same content. An experiment about story structure suggested that when the story contains a more balanced message then it is deemed more credible. Moreover, when the message was deemed less credible it therein affected the credibility of the source (Edwards et al., 2013; Ohanian, 1990; “Source Credibility,” 2019). Meyer (2004) used the influence model to establish that the content, or rather the message, had a profound effect on credibility, which in turn affects circulation, both of which were seen to be declining at the time of the study (Meyer, 2004).

The exploration of medium credibility comes from the assessment of the platform on which the message is delivered (Hou & Oyedeji, 2011; Kiousis, 2001) by examining the medium of print or broadcast or online. Medium credibility studies historically used newspaper and broadcast to gauge credibility of local, national, and international media. One research article that is noteworthy regarding medium credibility looks at accountability as a concept to be understood and measured in terms of medium credibility (Plaisance, 2000). Currently with the addition of new media and the ever-present claim of “fake news” the concept of accountability is one to be regarded. The author makes detailed points about aligning accountability with responsibility and credibility while establishing that accountability has to be thought of in terms of the process and operation of the press (Plaisance, 2000). A definitive conclusion was not reached on who and what to be accountable to or for, nor should it have been. For the author
states that while the discourse on media accountability wanted a clean relationship and identification of the what and the who, “journalistic autonomy and the need for a free press” (Plaisance, 2000, p. 266) but that “the nature of media accountability depends precisely on this conflict, which is not a dilemma to be solved but a healthy tension to be managed” (Plaisance, 2000, p. 266).

Multi-dimensional credibility studies are designed to not only get into credibility individually but to also delve into each aspect such as, trust, persuasion, authority, and quality in order to look at the ways in which the concept should be used to explore the effects each has on information quality (Rieh & Danielson, 2007) while still being aware of the source, medium, and message. Furthermore, the multidimensionality of Rieh and Danielson’s (2007) study did not only pertain to journalism but extended further to other information quality disciplines that should be cognizant of the perception of credibility. The study evaluates the health sciences, library sciences, management information systems, website design and websites, and consumer behaviors all for the purpose of providing a way for the producers of such information to understand how to create greater credibility among its audiences (Rieh & Danielson, 2007). Because their study dealt with information seekers across multiple environments, the multi-dimensional approach did not limit their findings to an individual facet, citing that

People make credibility assessments both at work and in everyday life when they engage in seeking information…This is an important aspect of credibility research because people carry over both their perceptions and the judgement processes that they have acquired from one domain to another (Rieh & Danielson, 2007, p. 349).

Saleh (2016) started with the baseline constructs of source, message, and medium, identified as determinants, and broke those down further into four variables of “source variable,”
“message variable,” “channel variable,” and “user variable” in order to compare the historical credibility scales of legacy media to scales that would better suit new media (Saleh, 2016). The study constructed 16 new variables with data being useful in applying findings to research in each component, however with so much information conflated into one study, it fails to provide a new, multidimensional definition of credibility and the finding for the 16 new variables are numerous and outside the scope of this research project. The strength of this study is that it implores future research while providing restructured scales aligned with the new media being produced and consumed in our current news media.

In the study Media credibility: A triangulation test (Srinivasan & Barclay, 2017) using source, medium, and message, the authors found that “message credibility was positively associated with both source and media credibility. However, there was no correlation between media credibility and source credibility, indicating that news sources did not affect the overall perception about trustworthiness of newspaper” (Srinivasan & Barclay, 2017, p. 43).

Defining source credibility incorporates looking at the definitions used in association with source, medium and message credibility (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Lee, 1978; Metzger, 2007; Meyer, 1988) with the order in which they are listed bearing no ranking of importance:

- “trustworthiness”
- “accuracy”
- “expertise”
- “authority”
- “objectivity”
- “fairness”
- “completeness”
• “coverage”
• “currency”

Each of these terms must then be specifically applied to news images in a way that is distinctive from credibility in general. Therefore, we look at trustworthiness dealing with whether the audience trusts the source. Accuracy relates to how accurate the audience deems the source is overall, not just on specific content or messages. Expertise means does the source appear to be an expert among other sources, or is it perceived as not having as much expertise overall? Authority is similar to expertise but applied here to the individual sources within or associated with an organization, an individual, or having community affiliation (Bennett, 2016; Meyer, 1988). Objectivity is mentioned as a segue to “fairness” which does not just pertain to the message but to the organization as well, such as is it deemed fair overall with regard to how the organization operates? Objectivity, as discussed previously, has been debated for its relevance in journalism as an ideal that may or may not be realistic to attain (Bennett, 2016; Meyer, 1988) with the Society of Professional Journalists replacing objectivity with words such as “truth,” “accuracy” and “comprehensiveness in their code of ethics” (Bennett, 2016, p. 157). Coverage and currency deal more with the image than the platform in terms of where the image is taken, who covered the situation and how it was covered while additionally delving into what within the frame as well as what may have been left out (Barthes, 1993) and the power of the image, platform and the producer (Meyer, 1988). Lastly, completeness is more aligned with the message than the source (Bennett, 2016; Meyer, 1988). Although previous and important credibility research has not been able to provide an agreed-upon and cohesive definition for credibility, for the purposes of this study the elements that will be the most suitable indicators for source credibility of news images, measured through audience perception, are determined to be, in no particular rank order:
• “trustworthiness”
• “accuracy”
• “expertise”
• “authority”
• “coverage”
• “currency”

In conclusion, the literature indicates that credibility has long been studied by media scholars, whether in print or in digital, with more research concentrating on the news content in general rather than specifically researching images. When image credibility was heavily researched, it was in the context of digital manipulation at first, then advancing into professional images in contrast to user-generated content (Gorin, 2015; Greenwood & Thomas, 2015; M. Mortensen, 2015; Sjøvaag, 2011). The majority of previous studies sought to understand credibility from the professional’s viewpoint, that of photographers, editors and news media management (Andén-Papadopoulos & Pantti, 2011; Mäenpää, 2014; T. B. Mortensen & Keshelashvili, 2013; Wahl-Jorgensen et al., 2010). While the data from those studies is valuable, it does not present the entire story in that the audience is the receiver of the content and therefore, should be taken into consideration. Continually only a limited number of the studies research image credibility from the perspective of the audience (Harper, 2002; J. D. Kelly, 1996; Mendelson, 2004; Norris, 2017; Puustinen & Seppänen, 2011).

2.4 User-Generated Content (UGC)

A new source became available and gained more footing during the technological and digital disruption of the news media: User-generated content (UGC). UGC can be viewed as an umbrella term that envelopes any or all of the other terms that describe
journalistic work created, produced, and distributed by those persons not having professional journalism experience. Non-professionally trained people have been contributing to newsgathering since the 1800s “in the form of independent community papers and newsletters” (Gillmor, as cited in Barnes, 2012, p. 17). With increasing access to the Internet in the 1990s, more people began contributing to news through personal blogs, websites, and online newsletters (Barnes, 2012). “The term ‘citizen journalism’ quickly gained currency” (Allan, 2015, p. 455) in December of 2004 when news organizations had no choice but to rely on the accounts of those citizens who were victims and eyewitnesses to the devastation of the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami (Allan, 2015). An interesting observation is that “traditional journalism is the outside looking in. Citizen Journalism is the inside looking out, In order to get the complete story, it helps to have both points of view.” (Dooley, as cited by Barnes, 2012, p. 17).

These customary monikers can suggest the same and/or different meanings:

- User-generated content (UGC)
- Citizen journalism (CJ)
- Participatory journalism
- Citizen media
- Collaborative citizen journalism (CCJ)
- Public journalism
- Democratic journalism
- Grassroots media
- Bottom-up journalism
- Guerilla journalism
• Street journalism

• Eyewitness journalism/images

• Citizen (photo)journalism. (“Citizen Journalism,” 2019; What Is Citizen Journalism?, 2012)

All of which are “based upon public citizens ‘playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing, and disseminating news and information.’” (Bowman & Willis, 2003, p. 9) or “journalism that is conducted by people who are not professional journalists but who disseminate information using Web sites, blogs and social media” (Albarado, 2020). An extended definition of CJ takes it further away from and makes it more encompassing than just UGC:

As an alternative and activist form of news gathering and reporting that functions outside mainstream media institutions, often as a response to shortcomings in the professional journalistic field, that uses similar journalistic practices but is driven by different objectives and ideals and relies on alternative sources of legitimacy than traditional or mainstream journalism (Radsch, 2013).

In 2003 when the label “participatory journalism” was being studied as a new form of journalism, researchers brought up numerous questions about what it meant (Lasica, 2003; Wall, 2017). “Participatory journalism is a slippery slope. Everyone knows what audience participation means, but when does that translate into journalism?” (Lasica, 2003). What types of participation were to be put into the journalism category? Blogs, discussion forums, comment sections, letters, and articles written by readers to traditional media (Lasica, 2003; Thurman & Hermida, 2010). What happens when the audience and the journalists collaborate? According to Barnes (2012), it could be
satisfactory for both entities where media gets access to breaking news and the UGC can be vetted by professional journalists. Is it still participatory or citizen journalism or another name? Journalism scholars and professionals were on both sides of the argument of wanting to clearly define the terms or wanting to let it define itself as it evolved (Albarado, 2020; Rosen, 1999).

A 2008 study of British media chronicles the history of the terms citizen journalism and participatory journalism (Thurman & Hermida, 2010) defined as interchangeable terms meaning the “act of a citizen, or group of citizens playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing and disseminating news and information (Bowman and Willis, 2003, as cited by Thurman & Hermida, 2010, p. 3). while cautioning distinction between the journalistic intentions of professionals to those opportunities of UGC to contribute to traditional media (Thurman & Hermida, 2010). Media scholar Jay Rosen explains citizen journalism as “when the people formerly known as the audience employ the press tools they have in their possession to inform one another, that’s citizen journalism” (Rosen, 2006, p. na). In my experience as a journalist and in conversations with other journalists, it can be acknowledged that CJ has a journalistic intent to it. UGC does not command any other intent than sharing what is being witnessed before the users' eyes and from their perspective. This is the eyewitness account from the inside looking out.

The purpose of this literature review is not to debate the usage or legitimacy of one term over the other as there is an abundance of scholarly work in that realm (Allan & Thorsen, 2009; Andén-Papadopoulos & Pantti, 2011; Carpentier & De Cleen, 2008; Participation and Media Production : Critical Reflections on Content Creation, 2008;
Rosen, 1999). Rather it is to clearly identify that little research pertaining to citizen journalists or UGC has focused on images taken by public citizens merely being an eyewitness to events.

2.4.1 How UGC Is Used

User generated content under any other name that is popular to use should be considered with the guidelines set forth by professional organizations (Barnes, 2012). As mentioned previously in this section, various types of citizen or public forms of news delivery have been in place even before the digital age, from newsletters to community bulletins, advancing to the digital era with blogs, online newspapers, user comments, social media, aggregation of published work, podcasts, opinion pieces and information sites which may or may not be vetted or verified (Barnes, 2012). And what has unmistakably shifted journalism in this new direction is that now more people have access to the products that only professional journalists had access to in order to produce and distribute information. The digital age allows more individuals to commit acts of journalism (Kus et al., 2017; Norris, 2017).

Furthermore, traditional media and scholarly research has taken into account the usefulness of UGC, from using UGC as the primary source of information such as CNN’s iReport to collaborations between UGC and traditional media where research has customarily concentrated (Barnes, 2012; Kus et al., 2017; Wall, 2015, 2017) using comparative perspectives in the coverage that analyzed the effectiveness of the information with and/or without the UGC (Barnes, 2012; Singer, 2010). In their study of looking at the type of education and training, creators of UGC have, Kus et.al. (2017) devised a three-tiered model depicting 1). Participatory journalism as the recognized collaboration between non-professionals, committing acts of journalism within the “institutionalized media field” (Kus et al., 2017, p. 358). “Platform-based
citizen journalism” (Kus et al., 2017, p. 358) that is not in conjunction with a particular media organization but includes content created and produced by professional journalists either currently working in the field as a staff member, as independent contractors or freelances, or former journalists (Kus et al., 2017), “individual or small-team citizen journalists” (Kus et al., 2017, p. 358) which have no ties to any established or traditional media outlet and operated by non-professionals for the purpose of hyperlocal, community and interest-based news and information (Kus et al., 2017; Wall, 2015, 2017).

Regardless of the form that the UGC takes or is presented in, traditional journalism has had to make the space for it to exist and to bring forth new guidelines and so will visual journalism. Those new guidelines need to connote the ethics, trust, and truthfulness of what is used, because “citizen journalism is now an essential part of news gathering and delivery around the world” (Wall, 2015, p. 797). Poynter Institute, Radio, Television, Digital, News Association (RTDNA), the Huffington Post, along with other media organizations, have established their own set of rules for citizen journalism. The basic standards of journalism such as getting the facts, avoiding opinion and hearsay, identifying sources and yourself, as well as spelling, grammar and fact-checking events and sources (Citizen Journalism Publishing Standards | HuffPost, 2009; Gahran, 2009; Outing, 2005; RTNDA, 2019) are detailed while including such elements as motive, newsworthiness, responsibility, technical quality, staging, alteration, context and fairness (RTNDA, 2019) that CJ’s may not be aware of if not properly trained (UNESCO, 2018). The Associated Press (AP) and digital and social media fact-checking services including Storyful, AP Social newswire, and SAM, an AP owned social media platform manager (Wang, 2017), use social media platform management systems to verify content acquired from social media sites (Wang, 2017). The REVEAL Project in Norway is finding ways to automate news verification
that comes from social media sources (SINTEF, 2020). There are both scholarly and journalistic articles detailing how to spot fake news and the impact the situation has on audiences, companies and consumers (“Brands Are Resilient against ‘fake News’ on Social Media,” 2019; Chen & Cheng, 2019; Heekeren, 2019; Hutchinson, 2018), while governments, social media and digital media sites, some themselves accused of supporting and/or spreading untrue or “fake news” propaganda, have issued statements about efforts to put procedures in place (Fagan, 2018; Mahoney, 2012a; Poynter, 2019; Robertson, 2019; Yale Law School, 2017). These efforts are meant to ensure source credibility in that the platform has done the work of vetting the information being used. During Hurricane Sandy misinformation was spread by those submitting UGC that could have led to more dangerous situations than were already occurring (Mahoney, 2012a). It is not known if the misinformation was intended or just a rumor mill, nonetheless in that aftermath one writer details the importance of social media while acknowledging its limits and abuses (Mahoney, 2012b). The writer calls for an authentication system that Twitter, Instagram, and other social media outlets use to vet information distributed on their platforms along with contributor guidelines made available before submission (Mahoney, 2012b). The Citizens Campaign, which describes itself as:

A community of problem solvers – government law and policy experts, businesspeople, citizen journalists, civic leaders, students, teachers, parents, artists, entrepreneurs and more – dedicated to empowering citizens through civic leadership training in innovative problem solving to meet today’s challenges and provide an alternative to dysfunctional politics (The Citizens Campaign, 2020).

has guidelines that encourage creators of UGC to get training, do the research, “be a responsible journalist” (The Citizens Campaign, 2020), find their “beat” or topic, and
stick with it to get it published (The Citizens Campaign, 2020). The International Media Support organization prepared a report in 2018 to provide guidelines for citizen journalists on how to report on the election in Zimbabwe with the intention being:

A key idea behind citizen journalism is that people without professional journalism training can use the tools of modern technology and the global distribution of the internet to create, augment or fact-check media on their own or in collaboration with others (Citizen Journalism Guideline on Electoral Reporting in Zimbabwe, 2018, p. 5).

The National Press Photographers Association (NPPA) worked in conjunction with the Digital Media Law Project at Harvard University’s Berkman Center for Internet and Society, Investigative News Network, Free Press, the Neiman Journalism Lab, and the Journalist’s Resource to create a report titled “Who Gets a Press Pass? Media Credentialing Practices in the United States” (NPPA, 2013, 2014). This report only chronicled the practices that media entities used to grant credentials but did not establish overall guidelines to be adapted.

Originally UGC primarily referred to the written word because access to the internet in the form of varying blog types was more popular than user-supplied images. As has been documented and discussed in academic and professional circles, the advent of digital camera technology made the content being provided since primarily image based. As this mode of information dissemination has increased, so have the labels to describe it. The Radio Television Digital News Association (RTDNA) classifies UGC as “images, audio, and video recorded by non-journalists” (RTNDA, 2019).

However, since the infiltration of digital cameras, smartphones with cameras, and digital wireless technology there has been an insinuation that anyone with access to these instruments
has the skills to be a photojournalist, hence the designation “citizen (photo)journalist.” As this study progresses into the visual image and we assess the meaning and ways in which images are utilized the terms user-generated content (UGC), user-generated images (UGI), citizen photojournalism (CPJ) and professional photojournalism (PPJ) will be designations used.
3.0 Methods And Research Questions

3.1 Introduction

This research project examined the perceived credibility of images by professional photojournalists versus UGC and when presented by a traditional news platform versus when found on social media. This Q method study was conducted by administering a visual Q methodology sort followed by open-ended survey questions to better understand the choices from the participants using their own words, ideas, and opinions to answer the why questions that quantitative methodology cannot answer. The research questions are:

RQ1: Does a photographer’s title affect the audience’s perceived credibility of the image?

RQ2: Does the platform the image appears on affect the perceived credibility of the image?

RQ3: Does the category of the image affect the perceived credibility of the image?

3.2 Q Methodology Research

Q methodology allows for a richer data gathering experience than only surveys. Q methodology is a bridge between both the quantitative and the qualitative aspects of research (Brown, 1993, 1996; McKeown & Thomas, 1988; Stephenson, 1993) with a qualitative aspect (Kinsey, personal communication, January 6, 2020; Stephenson, 1993) allowing researchers to ask questions that tell the story behind the statistical data that quantitative research produces and “capture the subjective perceptions of the participants” (Brown, 1993, 1996; McKeown & Thomas, 1988; Stephenson, 1993). Qualitative research uses empirical methods of observation based on researcher involvement with participants to better understand their reasoning by asking descriptive and investigative questions regarding the why, the whom, and the how (Babbie, 2015;
Matheson, 2015). Journalists are taught the five W’s of who, what, where, when and why along with how and therefore it seems fitting that a journalism scholar would employ qualitative means to research by observing, and thus recording, the reactions participants have while responding to photojournalistic images (Vogt & Johnson, 2011).

Q methodology is an approach in which subjectivity is studied scientifically (Brown, 1996; McKeown & Thomas, 1988; Stephenson, 1993; Vogt & Johnson, 2011), for research in which more in-depth analysis is needed in order to answer the “why” that quantitative cannot and to ascertain beliefs about a concept to be statistically calculated and evaluated (McKeown & Thomas, 1988). In Q methodology, the participants are able to sort their opinions on a subject matter in rank order using specific instructions and the PQMethod program analyzes the data (Brown, 1996; McKeown & Thomas, 1988; Stephenson, 1993; Vogt & Johnson, 2011). This is the advantage of Q because it allows for a deeper understanding of the participant’s viewpoint while giving the majority viewpoint but also taking into account the outlier viewpoints that quantitative research may discount (McKeown & Thomas, 1988). The data are produced as factors groupings of participant responses having common perspectives by ranking a statement similarly. The factor statement scores are manually sorted and then analyzed or interpreted as arrays of perspectives (Brown, 1996; McKeown & Thomas, 1988; Stephenson, 1993; Vogt & Johnson, 2011).

Although some regard qualitative research to be not as precise as quantitative research, it must be noted that qualitative research collects real world sets of data that can explain the culture and societal mores by identifying themes and patterns within and in reaction to mass communication (Brennen, 2012). Visual artifacts, such as photojournalism, are better understood
when a more descriptive reaction to them are provided which can be used in addition to the *how many* of quantitative research (Brennen, 2012; Creswell, 2015).

### 3.3 Research Design

Designed as an inductive study to allow for the identification of patterns and themes from the data with source credibility as the theoretical lens of where to begin, this Q methodology study used a 2 X 2 X 2 structured, naturalistic design with three conditions being tested: source (professional photographer v. UGC), news category (hard v. soft news), and platform (news organization v. social media).

The news categories of photographs sorted by the participants fell under the umbrella of hard news which is urgent, immediate, and breaking whereas soft news is more lifestyle oriented, commentary, and entertainment focused (Boukes & Boomgaard, 2015; Distinctions between *Hard and Soft News*, 2016; King, 2008; Lehman-Wilzig & Seletzky, 2010; Reinemann et al., 2012). With that in mind, in terms of photojournalism I categorized news images in the following manner according to hard and soft news following the guidelines of World Press Photo Foundation, the National Press Photographers Association professional photojournalism organizations, and photojournalism author and professor Ken Kobre:

- **Hard News:**
  - Spot news
  - Breaking news
  - Crime
  - Riots
  - Protests
  - Violence
• Tragedy
• Disasters
• Weather related disasters

• Soft News:
  o General news
  o Feature photography
  o Government news
  o Community news
  o Cultural affairs


Photojournalistic specific categories of general news/features, spot news, and natural disasters are further represented by noting that spot news are events that are not planned, such as breaking news in the government, community, or the entire world. Spot news is also crimes, riots, protests, violence, and tragedy (Kobre, 2008). A majority of the time these are not planned; however, protests can be planned and then have spot news occur during the protest. Natural disasters are never planned even though they can be prepared for as in weather related instances where storms, floods, hurricanes, tornados, as opposed to instances in which the earth shifts to cause earthquakes, tsunamis, volcano eruptions, sinkholes, and others. Feature photography is the antithesis of spot news that gives the audience a “slice of life” (Kobre, 2008, p. 64) about events happening out in the world and that were not planned to be covered by news media.
Features are usually candid, while general news can be both candid and official. Proceedings encompassing the government, community, cultural affairs, and those offered through public relations professionals are examples of general news events that are more often than not scheduled and deal with a specific topic (Kobre, 2008). Images of floods, crime, protests, tragedy, and disasters representing hard news along with feature images representing soft news, were researched on both platforms.

3.3.1 Image Selection

The Q concourse consisted of 40 images, 20 by professional photojournalists, and 20 that were UGC resulting in N=40 (see Appendix C). The professional images were acquired from the Associated Press, an international news wire service with a wide array of clients that contribute to and use their images worldwide. The Syracuse University Library has permission to access and use images from the AP Newsroom and AP Images Collection databases. The UGC images were taken from Flickr, the social media site pertaining to photography. The images were carefully selected from more recent events and those that did not appear to be dated and from 2007 on, particularly in terms of UGC because that is when the smartphone first became popular.

The credibility parameter for images stated in the previous chapter of trustworthiness, expertise, accuracy, currency, authority, and coverage were applied for image selection. Between the Associated Press and Flickr, selection criteria was based upon locating two images of a similar subject within a category containing similar aspects within images, so that the two did not differ too much from each other. For example, two images of flooding in Houston, Texas, after Hurricane Harvey are similar in content and lighting for time of day but have differing angles and compositions at which they are photographed. Each image was identified with one of the following captions:
To ensure that the images can be identified in this manner, the photographer had to be vetted on both sites. For the AP, those identified as professional were either a staff member of the Associated Press or freelancers hired by the Associated Press, however, not those identified as a contributor or UGC in the caption information. Conversely, the image maker on FLICKR could not have the title or information as journalist, professional photographer, or be identified as working for a professional news organization. The final images were ones that had the permission to download from FLICKR and could not have any identifying information that could identify the creator or where it may have been published, such as watermarks or text on the image, although that information exists in the metadata and is provided on a separate legend (see Appendix F). Each image was also given an ID using a generic one to two words that described the category of the image and a numbering system.

3.3.2 Data Collection

This research project received exempt review approval from Syracuse University’s Institutional Review Board. A pre-test was done using 14 participants from a convenience sample. Of the 14, only three participants were able to complete the pre-test; however, the feedback from those three participants allowed for corrections to mistakes in the design that did not occur when the study went live. Study participants were recruited using the crowdsourcing
service Amazon Mechanical Turk, one of the largest crowdsourcing services (Amazon Mechanical Turk, 2020), in order to recruit a wide array of participants in terms of age, gender identification, educational level, race/ethnicity, political identification, and media usage. The call for participants detailed the requirements for the study and compensation of $5.00 per participant. An electronic, informed consent form was supplied; therefore, by continuing with the Q sort, it constituted their consent and led them to the study (see Appendix B). One hundred participants completed the study though the range of participants in a Q method study is 30-50 (Brown, 1993; McKeown & Thomas, 1988). Additionally, it has been noted by Q method researches that at a certain point in each study there will be a point where the number of participants does not change the factor analysis outcomes (Brown, 1996; McKeown & Thomas, 1988; Stephenson, 1993).

The Q sort instrument and exit survey were created with an online program called Q Method Software that allows images to be used in addition to word statements (Q-Methodology Software | Q-Sort Analysis for Q Methodology, 2020) (see Appendix E). The online administration provided better and wider access to participants than the previously planned focus groups, which had to be changed due to Covid-19 restrictions, however it did not allow for observation of the participants as they completed the Q sort, interaction and questions, or a follow-up discussion by the researcher.

This Q sort used a rank order scale of +4 most characteristic of what you perceive to be a credible news photograph to -4 most uncharacteristic of what you perceive to be a credible news image with a specific set of instructions given to execute the Q sort (see Appendix I). Participants were instructed to place the images under the rank by starting with the outermost sections from +4 and -4 working towards the middle of the Q sort questionnaire, going back and
forth from one extreme to the other until they have filled up each placement with an image. Once
the images were placed on the Q sort questionnaire, participants answered additional questions
that include their thoughts on items categorized under areas +4 and +3 as well as -4 and -3.
Additionally, the questionnaire asked for demographic information as detailed previously and
pull-down menus to indicate their media sources and media usage. The exit survey asked if the
participant would like to participate in a follow-up in-depth interview at a later date. Although 45
participants responded yes, only one contacted me for the follow-up interview but did not
complete the interview.

3.3.3 Data Analysis

The data analysis began by determining the Q significant loading in order to understand
which images and participants displayed significance according to a standard error (SE) of 2.58,
which will be calculated in the findings section. The next step was to configure the Q sort results
in the Q method software program. The results were run as a three-factor analysis using Varimax
rotation with Pearson’s correlation coefficient. The software produces nine reports allowing for,
but not limited to, the analysis of the image statements as well as how the participants sorted
each statement and how participants are alike and different within in the three factors and across
the three factors. The nine reports are as follows:

- Rank Statement Totals
- Normalized Scores for Factors
- Descending Array of Differences for Factors
- Statement Factor Scores
- Factor Characteristics
- Standard Error of Differences
- Correlation Between Factor Z-scores
- Distinguishing Statements
- Consensus Statements

Answers to the open-ended questions were coded applying in vivo, values, and versus coding procedures in the first coding cycle to identify perspectives and attitudes the participants have in their own words (Saldaña, 2015). Pattern coding was used in the second cycle as this technique supports further identification of overarching codes that the initial patterns, beliefs, and perspectives can be attributed to.
CHAPTER 4

4.0 Research Findings

4.1 Demographics and Statistics

The QMethod Software program generated raw data and statistical reports from the Q sort, demographics, and the answers to the two open-ended questions for a total of 95 out of 100 participants completing the Q sorts through the exit survey. Participant demographics show the majority of participants were between the ages of 25-40, although each age group from 18 to 55+ is represented in the study. Males doubled females while no one identified as non-binary, and liberal political affiliation slightly outweighed conservative with no independents or others represented. The majority of participants had college degrees or some college education while advanced degrees and people with no college experience both equaled 11 participants each. As for media sources and consumption, most received their news from social media followed closely by news websites. Only 10 participants cited Cable TV as their primary source of news. Thirty-one participants consume news each day while the majority consume news between one to four days. Although each race and ethnicity, besides other, was represented more than half responded as being Caucasian. The demographic data and news choices are outlined in table 4.1 below.
Table 4.1 Participant Demographics and News Choices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Information</th>
<th>n</th>
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<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-40</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-55</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Binary</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moderate Conservative</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latinx</td>
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<tr>
<td>Middle Eastern</td>
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<td>Multiple</td>
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<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
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<td>High School</td>
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<td>Trade School</td>
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<td>Some College</td>
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</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Advanced Degree</td>
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</table>
Primary News Source

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<tr>
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<th>Count</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network TV</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
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<td>Social Media</td>
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<td>Podcasts</td>
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<td>None</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
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</table>

News Consumption

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<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. \( N=95 \) (\( n= \) for each condition)
*For 100 Q sorts, only 95 participants completed the demographics.

The Q sort distribution in Figure 1 states how many images were to be placed into each column for sorting to equal the 40 images with a range of -4 being Most Uncharacteristic of a Credible Image to +4 as Most Characteristic of a Credible Image.

Figure 1. Q sort Distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>-4</th>
<th>-3</th>
<th>-2</th>
<th>-1</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>+1</th>
<th>+2</th>
<th>+3</th>
<th>+4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Factor analysis from QMethod Software (Q-Methodology Software |Q-Sort Analysis for Q Methodology, 2020) used Pearson product moment correlation, centroid factor analysis, and varimax rotation for evaluation in terms of factors, factor arrays, the factor matrix, and the correlation between factors (Ramlo, 2016; Watts & Stenner, 2012). Factors are the groupings among Q sorts that are most alike, meaning people who completed the Q sort tend to think alike.
in terms of the image and load on a particular factor. It can also be helpful to think of factors as “Q sorts which are highly correlated with one another may be considered to have a family resemblance, those belonging to one family being highly correlated with one another but uncorrelated with members of other families” (Brown, 1993, p. 111). This factor analysis produced factors arrays, A, B, and C. Factor arrays are scores given to each image statement that “constitutes a composite Q sort and hence is a generalization of a subjective viewpoint” (McKeown & Thomas, 1988, p. 6) of the participants. For example, in Table 4.2, the -1 score under Factor A for image statement 1 takes all of the q sorts that loaded on Factor A and assigned the score that most represented the sentiments about that image statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.2 Factor Arrays:</th>
<th>Factor Scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Image = Platform/Photographer</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Storm 2 = SM/AP</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Weather 1 AP/UGC</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Storm 4 = AP/AP</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Occupy 4 = AP/AP</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Little League 4 = AP/AP</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Grief 4 = AP/AP</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Fireworks 4 = AP/AP</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Flood 4 = AP/AP</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Coronavirus Shopping 4 = AP/AP</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Crime 4 = AP/AP</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Occupy 2 = SM/AP</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Little League 2 = SM/AP</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Green River 2 = SM/AP</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Grief 2 = SM/AP</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Fireworks 2 = SM/AP</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Flood 2 = SM/AP</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Coronavirus Shopping 2 = SM/AP</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Green River 4 = AP/AP</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Grief 1 = AP/UGC</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note: * indicates a slight consensus across the three factors.

The factor matrix identifies how each q sort participant loads on a factor. Q methodology uses the significance value of p<.01 as the default, and for this study, significance was found at 0.41 (see table 4.3). For Factor A, 18 q sorts significantly loaded, with 12 significantly loading on Factor B, and ten significantly loading on Factor C.

Table 4.3 Factor Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Poll. Affil.</th>
<th>Ed. Compl.</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Usage</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15442</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
<td>25-40</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>Social Media</td>
<td>1-2 Days per week</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>TN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15452</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>41-55</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Moderate Conservative</td>
<td>College Graduate</td>
<td>Social Media</td>
<td>1-2 Days per week</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>TX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15453</td>
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<td>-0.17</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>15456</td>
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<td>-0.15</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>25-40</td>
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<td>Moderate Conservative</td>
<td>College Graduate</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
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<td>LA</td>
</tr>
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<td>Conservative</td>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>Network TV</td>
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<td>KY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ID</td>
<td>Income</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Race/Ethnicity</td>
<td>Political Ideology</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Media Consumption</td>
<td>Gender</td>
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<td>D. L.</td>
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<td>FL</td>
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<td>College Graduate</td>
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<td>College Graduate</td>
<td>Newspapers</td>
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<td>-0.38</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.48</td>
<td>25-40</td>
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<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Moderate Conservative</td>
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<td>Advanced Degree</td>
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<td>0.08</td>
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<td>0.57</td>
<td>25-40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
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<td>College Graduate</td>
<td>Newspapers</td>
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<tr>
<td>5-6 Days per week</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>No Demographic Information</td>
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<tr>
<td>n=</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>SQ(n)=</td>
<td>6.3245553</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>SE=</td>
<td>0.1581139</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.58(SE)=</td>
<td>0.4079338</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**4.2 Factor A: Category of Soft over Hard News**
What is first distinctive about Factor A is that only images from the soft news category were perceived to be most characteristic of a credible image with images depicting Little League baseball, the Chicago River being turned green for St. Patrick’s Day, fireworks celebrations, and weather photographs. Hard news images were perceived either as neutral or most uncharacteristic of a credible image. Those included images of crime scenes, coronavirus shopping aisles, Houston, TX flooding in neighborhoods, grief, and Occupy Wall Street protests. Next, it is also distinctive that the title of the platform or the photographer was even for most characteristic and neutral, with a slightly higher incidence of UGC being most uncharacteristic. Otherwise, the participants did not take the platform or photographer into as much consideration as they did the category of soft news. It is to be noted that despite not being labeled as soft or hard news, the participants’ perceptions of credibility were based on the content of the image.

The answers to the exit survey questions were coded first in reference to those participants that significantly loaded on the factors. Then, I went back to see additional answers that coded similarly for most uncharacteristic and most characteristic. The codes were identified by themes and then classified into dimensions. For instance, in terms of Factor A, the comments regarding the images scored as +4 and +3 two dimensions were interpreted as (1) enjoyment and pleasure and (2) informative and technical with words such as fun, happy, nice to look at, and then provable, truthful and image quality used to explain why images were selected. In vivo coding presented quotes such as “little reason for photos to be staged or doctored, ordinary daily images” by participant 15489, a 41-55 Caucasian, liberal male with some college completed and primarily getting his news from cable tv 5-6 days per week. Participant 15492 was the only participant who significantly loaded on Factor A to mention the platform or the photographer stating:
I placed the photos that were from journalists in these columns because I think that photos from journalists are more likely to be legitimate. I also placed photos of less controversial subject matters in these columns, such as young children playing baseball because there is no reason for people to deceive with these photos.

Images scored at -4 and -3 fell under three dimensions; opinion, technical, and difficult to view with themes of did not like, image description, weird, too fake, staged, low quality, and then enticing fear, angry images or too crude. The quote that sums up the coding for this group of participants is again from participant 15489 and states, “suspiciously looks staged, working too hard to evoke a specific emotion/reaction.” Participant 15492 again was the only one to mention platform or photographer by saying, “I placed the photos taken by privates citizens and related to controversial or politically charged topics in these columns. I think that photos that meet these qualifications are more likely to be doctored.” Overall, participants loaded on Factor A based their perceptions on emotions, preferring to feel good about an image and what was going on in the image rather than being uncomfortable with what an image represented. The breakdown of themes and dimensions for Factor A can be seen in Table 4.4 (Creswell, 2015; Saldaña, 2015).

Table 4.4 Factor A-Coding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Characteristic +4 and +3</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dimensions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Enjoyment and Pleasure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Happy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Like picture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nice to look at</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Celebrating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive images</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Image Type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Informative and Technical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truthful</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helpful</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image quality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caption/style/quality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less likely to be influenced</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Most Uncharacteristic -4 and -3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Opinion</td>
<td>Did not like it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gut (feeling)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bad situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bias in some way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Image description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overly exaggerated/overly dramatic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unable to be proven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weird</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Too random</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Technical</td>
<td>Fake or unrealistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Colors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Edited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Staged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Difficult to view</td>
<td>Angry images/Loss of Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enticing Fear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Too crude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Polarizing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Negative impact or image</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**4.3 Factor B: The Photographer and The Platform**
Factor B dichotomously ranked hard news entirely as +4 or -4 with the three images at +4 all being taken by an AP staff photographer and appearing on the AP website while the three under the -4 column were all UGC on social media websites. Overall, more hard news images were perceived as most uncharacteristic. In contrast, hard news and soft news were equally neutral on Factor B.

However, Factor B is where participants concentrated on the platform and the title of the photographer, indicating that they perceived the source as determining credibility. UGC ranked double the perceptions of most uncharacteristic of a credible image in comparison to that of the most characteristic of a credible image and was perceived more than three times less credible than an image taken by an AP photographer. Participants gave reasons that fell into two dimensions of source and validity. The themes under source were private citizens, public citizens, and social media sites. Direct quotes were “The pictures looked fake and unrealistic, and they were taken by private citizens and mostly posted on social media” (participant 15470), “several of the images the pictures were taken were from private citizens and posted to social media which I took as to be not as credible” (participant 15512).

The second dimension for Factor B under the most uncharacteristic of a credible image is validity. Participants did not feel confident in the quality or reality of the image, which resulted in themes such as fake, unrealistic, questionable, not enough quality, manipulated. Two direct quotes size up both dimensions for Factor B; “they were taken by public citizens and even if picked up by the AP did not seem to have the integrity behind them as if done by an AP reporter” (participant 15564) and Participant 15544’s:

The source of those images was just a random citizen, and the images themselves were taken from social media for the most part. There is no easy way to trace these images
beyond that. Anyone could have taken those pictures, even though the photos themselves were high quality.

Under most characteristic, the source was again a dimension with many participants presenting themes such as how reputable/credible the source was, using the words official, professional, AP photographer/website, vetted, sources of interest with participant 15470 stating “I thought if it was taken by an AP photographer and on the AP website, it was more credible” which encapsulates the remarks of others who loaded on Factor B and found the source contributing to their perception of credibility. The second dimension from the most characteristic perceptions is again validity, with themes that concentrated on professionalism and quality such as looking real, official, professional, relevance, high quality, creativity, style, vetting, content, and purpose. The themes presented in this category were summed up by participant 15526:

I placed images in the +4 and +3 column that were from the associated press website AND were from an associated press photographer. There were most likely to be vetted and most likely to be credible and following certain publishing rules to verify their validity.

Participants loaded on Factor B deemed the source, in this instance, the platform and the photographer, to contribute to their perception of credibility of the images they sorted. The dimensions and themes of Factor B are listed in Table 4.5 (Creswell, 2015; Saldaña, 2015).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.5 Factor B-Coding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most Characteristic +4 and +3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimensions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official Reputation of source Publishing rules Photographer Website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Validity

| Professional Quality Publishing rules Relevant Realistic High quality Creativity/Style Content Purpose |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|

Most Uncharacteristic -4 and -3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1. Source

| Social media Private citizens Public citizens Citizens or AP on social media site |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|

2. Validity

| Looked fake Unrealistic Questionable Gut (feeling) Manipulation Cannot vet/verify Stock mages Quality |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|

73
4.4 Factor C: Sources and Emotions

Factor C represented the least significance of the three factors with photographer, platform, and category overall, having only a slight difference in perceived credibility. However, the professional photographer was ranked higher than UGC amongst the most characteristic and most uncharacteristic perceptions of credibility, and the social media platform was almost equal in terms of most characteristic, most uncharacteristic, and neutral sorting. All four Green River images ranked at -4 and -3 while statement images titled Grief 2, Grief 3, and Grief 4 were entirely sorted on +4 and three more hard news images, and one soft news image was sorted on +3. In terms of codes, the resounding dimensions from Factor C were the source, quality, and emotion. Two participants strikingly mentioned going with their gut. Participant 15513 stated, “I just went with my gut. They were tragic and seemed the most credible,” explaining their reasoning for placing images into the +4 and +3 columns and then stated for -4 and -3 “I went with my gut. They were mostly just colorful stock images.” Participant 15532 said that for +4 and +3, “I just went with my gut. They were emotional and thus not something that can be easily faked” and again going with their emotions on the -4 and -3 answer, explaining, “I went with my gut. They were mainly stock photos.” In addition to gut feelings, themes of good images, composition, professional, and news source with two participants mentioning both opinion, and quality also emerged. Table 4.6 illustrates the breakdown of the dimensions and themes, whereas participant 15466’s quote is indicative of the themes for all of Factor C:

I looked at the image and tried to see if there was emotion involved or if the image looked fake. If an image looked real, resembling, and event that is possible, then I would palace it in these columns (+4 and +3).
Table 4.6 Factor C-Coding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Source and Quality</td>
<td>Quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Composition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>News Source/Source of photo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good Images</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If looked fake or real</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not easily faked/edited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stock photos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Edited</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 2. Emotion               | Go with Gut                              |
|                          | Opinion/What I thought                   |
|                          | Tragic                                   |

(Creswell, 2015; Saldaña, 2015).

4.5 Summary of Findings

Table 4.7 shows the correlation between factors which indicate here that there is very little to no correlation between Factor A and B, between Factor A and C, or between Factor B and C Factor statistically, the in vivo coding did present correlation amongst the Factors.

Table 4.7 Correlation Between Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Pearson’s correlation

When an item is perceived the same across each factor that indicates consensus among factors. Only three images showed consensus across all factors, and each one was a hard news image. Storm 1 (AP/UGC) and Storm 2 (SM/AP) both had negative consensus across all three factors, while Flood 1(AP/UGC) had a neutral consensus across all three factors.
Factor A had the most significant loadings of all of the factors, with 18 participants loading on this factor. The identification of the photographer and the platform had the most influence on the perception of credibility than the category of soft news, ranking it most characteristic of a credible image more than hard news. The participants loaded on this factor stated they did not like to see suffering or tragedy enjoying images of fun and happiness, such as the fireworks and Little League Baseball. Factor A is most aligned with Factor C in terms of emotions, opinion, and gut feelings. There were demographic differences between the factors with Factor A having the most social media usage, Factor B having more females than the other two factors with a large number of male participants, and Factor C was the least conservative, had less education and was the most diverse in terms of race and ethnicity in a study that had a high number of Caucasian participants.

Factor B, having 12 significant loadings, is the factor that represented the platform and the photographer for being perceived as most characteristic when considering a credible image less concentration on hard over soft news. Participants stated numerous times that the caption of the photographer as AP Staffer and appearing on the AP Website was what deemed the image most characteristic of a credible image. In contrast, UGC and social media platforms were considered to be most uncharacteristic. Factor B is most aligned with Factor C on the themes of quality, emotion. Professionalism, and source and Factor A in terms of quality, truthfulness, creativity, and style. Factor C had the least significant loadings with a total of ten, and those participants were more concerned with source, quality, validity, and emotions as dimensions.

These findings allow for a greater understanding of audience perception of source credibility and divulge opportunities for future research.
CHAPTER 5
Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

The beauty of research is that although you have a research question or hypothesis to begin with, the research takes you where it is going to go. For this study, I sought to understand how audience members who consume news images perceived professional photojournalism in regard to UGC by providing the title of the photographer and the type of platform the image appeared on. Choosing both hard and soft news categories so as not to overburden the participants with too much hard news causing fatigue or frustration, the data established that the category of news image played an essential part in perceived credibility among some audiences in this study. The research also took this project where I initially wanted it to go, to gain an understanding of how the title of photographer and platform impact perceived credibility. In this chapter, I will review those findings by research question, disclose the limitations of the research, and propose future research opportunities.

5.2 RQ 1: Does a Photographer’s Title Affect the Audience’s Perceived Credibility of the Image?

When it comes to audiences applying credibility to news images, this study did find that participants perceive the professional photographer’s title as more credible than UGC. The participants used language in their exit survey answers illustrating trust and believability, concepts that were addressed in the literature review, to be important tenants of news credibility. Those concepts are also key to source credibility, that of the one who produces and distributes the content and not the one who provides the information. Factor B, relating to RQ1 concerning the platform and photographer, and Factor C, relating to RQ1 and emotions, both showed that
participants aligned credibility with the photographer being identified as an “Associated Press Staff Photographer”. Even when an image was labeled to have been on social media, the photographer’s title as a professional had a higher perception of credibility than UGC on social media. This finding is in line with other visual studies such as Norris (2017), where the author found a significant difference between photographer affiliations, which in the case of this study was staff or contributor (Norris, 2017, p. 34). Norris (2017) goes on to state that “because a contributing photographer has unknown ties to the publication, this detaches the photographer’s association and credibility from the source” (Norris, 2017, p. 36) leading into source credibility of the platform which is discussed in the following section. Participants in my study wanted to know that the image maker was reputable and legitimate, whereby the professionalism of the photographer gave way to the professionalism of the image.

Conversely, there are studies that conclude the usage of UGC is recommended in order to minimize the control media management has as the gatekeeper (B. Brennen & Brennen, 2015; Gorin, 2015). Brennen and Brennen (2015) found very little UGC during their textual analysis of newspapers and TV news programs during a one-week period. The authors seemed to think that because UGC is useful in breaking news and unfortunate natural disasters, where a professional photojournalist may not be on the scene right away, that this garners acceptance into the realm of photojournalism (B. Brennen & Brennen, 2015). The difference is that those providing the UGC are not trained to get the moment every time and are probably not willing to go into dangerous areas on demand instead of being in an area by coincidence when an event happens. Gorin (2015) did a visual analysis of UGC on Time Magazine’s Lightbox blog to find no UGC being used. The author made a strong case for the use of such UGC supported by previous research and
because UGC available almost insinuating that UGC had a “right” to be represented on the Lightbox blog (Gorin, 2015).

Academic studies and professional articles have looked at differences when professional photojournalism and UGC are used, or sometimes not even having an accompanying image at all. Mortensen and Gade (2018) found that there was a decline in visual representation, quality, and professional photojournalism when every staff photographer at the Middletown (NY) Times Herald-Record was essentially fired. Their findings were in line with what happened at the Chicago Sun-Times and the New York Daily News with similar photography department closures, less quality, less quantity, less information, and less storytelling (T. M. Mortensen & Gade, 2018; Schiller, 2013; Zhang, 2018).

Nevertheless, the audiences in this study wanted to know that the source, the photographer, had been vetted and could be trusted to supply credible visual information regardless of the platform or the category. That is the essence of professional photojournalism versus UGC. The professional photojournalist has been trained to tell a story, whether in one image or in a series of images. These professionals adhere to a code of ethics for their profession and their organizations and have a professional intent in visual storytelling, as Vega (2011) points out. This is an indication that although there are multitudes of people with camera opportunities, audiences want to know that the news images they are viewing have been created credibly by professionals.

5.3 RQ 2: Does the Platform the Image Appears on Affect the Perceived Credibility of the Image?

The platform, in terms of source credibility, was perceived to be more credible when an image was captioned as “On Associate Press Website” rather than when it was captioned as “On
Social Media.” As the source where the news image was published and distributed, the platform was important to the audience as they felt that they could trust that the image had been vetted by professionals before allowing it to run on such a credible news site. For as much as the media has been under attack with claims of “fake news,” the participants in this study still assigned more credibility to a known news platform over what was presented on social media. This is important because although a survey or poll can tell us overall how the credibility of news has been statistically rated, the why and how are not considered. In the multiple Pew studies cited earlier in this paper, the research only indicates that credibility, believability, or trust had gone down or was suffering with no indication of why. (Bedard, 2018; Gottfried et al., 2019; Pew Research Center, 2007a, 2007b, 2019). Participants in this study directly stated that they felt the Associated Press website was more credible to them than social media.

Participant answers about their choices for most uncharacteristic of a credible image explicitly indicated that social media was less credible as the source than the professional platform. When the participants from Factor B are considered as the audience, it is clear that there is still more perceived credibility in the news source of platform. Scholars can take this as an opportunity to do more qualitative research where in-depth questions can be asked about professional platforms and social media platforms as visual imagery sources. However, this is a beginning for the profession to understand that the audience does recognize the worth of the professional platform.

5.4 RQ 3: Does the Category of the Image Affect the Perceived Credibility of the Image?

The category of the image being the factor with the largest number of significant loadings was a surprise. Factor A participants clearly did not want to experience hard news images, those images of grief, destruction, devastation, or crime. What those respondents related to for
credibility was how the image made them feel, which is aligned with the emotional themes of Factors C as well. These participants perceived that the everyday slices of life were more credible because of how they felt when viewing them. This is understandable because audiences want to see themselves and be able to relate to the news going on around them. This brings up an interesting theoretical and practical position of examining audience perceptions of credibility taking into account the emotional component that has been established in this study. The practical position indicates there is an opportunity to explore and return to local journalism that reflects how the community wishes to see themselves in everyday life. Recent studies have indicated that during the current Covid-19 Pandemic there has been a rise in local news consumption, particularly local TV news (Friedman, 2020), with the Pew Research Center finding that the majority of American news consumers believe that the local news is giving them the most trustworthy information to use (Shearer, 2020). In terms of audience credibility, this is the setting for a substantial opportunity to return to local and community journalism in order to gain or regain credibility and perhaps, readership, trust, circulation, and profits. What Factors A and C also indicate is that credibility is not only theoretical or informational but also emotional and therefore revisiting the sociologies of news is another area for future research that include how audiences cognitively process their perceptions of credibility. Regarding the hard news images, it is not that audiences don’t relate to or have empathy for the grief and devastation, but those images make them uncomfortable and can be exceptionally painful if too close to their own experiences.

In photo elicitation, an ethnographic research method, the participants look at images of themselves from different life events or from images inclusive to the study (Harper, 2002). The method is used to elicit responses and emotions from the participant as they recall the events in
the images. Their responses allow for a deeper understanding of the way the image makes them feel, rendering a deeper understanding of the moment and the image. In Sight Beyond My Sight (SBMS), participants create the images of their lives as a way of understanding their surroundings and thus, are able to share that knowledge and, in particular, that feeling to those outside of the community (Tait, 2013). Both methods allow for the perceived credibility to come from the emotions and responses the viewer and/or creator of the image evokes, which is important when considering audience perceptions in that it gives insight into how a viewer receives the image. Both of these studies make the argument for more audience focused research.

Cannon (2001) studied the iconicity of professional, still, photojournalistic images and determined that visual efficacy was what led to the iconicity of 10 historical news images (Cannon, 2001). Among the qualities involved in Cannon’s iconicity, visual impact, immediate communication, and important meaning are the ones that align with the emotions evoked by participants in Factors A and C of this study (Cannon, 2001).

While there was a marked difference in perceived credibility between hard and soft news, the platform and the photographer were secondary and close to equal in terms of perception for most characteristic and most uncharacteristic of a credible image. Participant 15492, significantly loaded on Factor A for higher credibility perceptions related to soft news, mentioned that while they did choose soft news images, they also paid attention to the fact that the images selected were from journalists and more likely to be legitimate.

This Q methodology study was administered online during the 2020 Covid-19 Pandemic, where everyday life had been upended for two months at that point. Perhaps the participants wanted to get back to the kinds of lives that they had before Covid-19, being able to publicly experience the soft news images included in the study such as fireworks, or go to sporting events
such as little league baseball games or see the Chicago River turned green for St. Patrick’s Day celebrations that had to be canceled. What the participants said in the exit survey was that these perceived credible images were easy and fun to look at and experience while having to witness negative situations or political ones were perceived as less credible. Having the opportunity to understand what was behind these statements is something that I will look forward to in future research should this outcome occur again.

5.6 Limitations and Future Research

Q methodology is preferably done in a setting where the researcher can observe the participants as they complete the Q sort and have an opportunity to answer any questions that may come up while engaging with them to a certain level as they sort. Upon completion, there can be an opportunity to ask follow up questions while the participant is still engaged, and the Q sort is still in front of them. Due to pandemic restrictions, this study was moved online and therefore, the in-person aspect of the study was unable to happen. Although I acquired more respondents than I would have done had it been an in-person study with follow-up focus groups, I missed the opportunity to ask questions that could have provided more abundant information. As mentioned before, the time period, during a world health crisis, an election year, and political unrest, may have had an impact on the participants in Factor A perceiving only soft news to be more credible than hard news. I have no doubt that had the study been administered a month later with the rise in the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement and protests that the results would have been quite different, although it is not for me to say how. Given these limitations, this study provided great information for present use and future research.

An area for future research is to replicate this study using only soft news images and then again with only hard news images to understand the participants’ choices of why and to see how
the platform and the photographer’s title rank within each category. A future Q methodology study using only text statements indicating the platform, the photographer’s title, and a detailed description of an event would be useful to compare to how participants rank text statements versus images.

Looking at this data by focusing on the demographics of the participants is an area for immediate analysis because what I have learned just from the three factors in this study is that audiences are different and want different elements in their visual news consumption. By understanding this, it could mean a way to bolster credibility by letting the audiences know the news producers; their news sources are listening to them.

For me as a researcher, academic and photojournalist the opportunity for future research will be to continue to collect data that can be shared with my colleagues in academia and in the profession so that advancement, development, and innovation can occur in journalism the way it does in technology since technology is such an essential part of journalism.

5.7 Conclusion

I began my doctoral studies on a mission to save professional photojournalism. I wanted it to matter and be taken seriously, not to be upended or replaced by cost-saving business decisions or just anyone with a camera. There were numerous ideas about how to go about such a study, but this research has shown that the audience is key to that. The audience is looking and listening, but perhaps we, journalists, educators, scholars, have not been paying as much attention to them as we can. Visual credibility has been studied from the viewpoint of the creators, media management, in textual, visual, and content analyses, and so now is the time to develop more studies with the audience’s perceptions in mind. Although this study is not a broad survey of hundreds of respondents, the study goes into the thoughts of the participants to give a
more profound acuity of their perception of credibility in their own words. This provides an insight into where the profession can and possibly should go; in the direction of keeping and utilizing professional photojournalists who know how to tell the story regardless of what platform the images will appear on or what category of news the image falls under. This study lets us know that audiences still believe in the professionalism of the news organization and that all credibility is not gone. The industry can build on this by retaining professional photojournalists, hiring more professional photojournalists, and keeping or rebuilding their photo or visual departments that support the perceived credible work.

There is a place for UGC. The literature points out that UGC is needed in breaking news situations or even useful in quaint moments of life, but it is not to replace professional photojournalism. Barnes (2012) makes a compelling case for collaboration, citing instances when it has been both advantageous and detrimental to use UGC. The author points out to be mindful of the “costs” of using UGC, which can be seen as cost-cutting, a lower cost in production, or costs in credibility to the industry (Barnes, 2012). That does not have to be the case if collaboration can be established, and in the years since the Barnes (2012) article, nothing has been universally agreed upon in terms of journalism practices and UGC. But the industry and the photojournalists have to understand their worth and their work. A clear delineation should be made between professional work and UGC, not just for visual images but for the entire industry. There could be no more fears that professional photojournalism is dead or dying, as has been the thought with each new technology or change that has come about (Franklin, 2015; Hadland et al., 2016), and credibility perception may be retained or increased.

Researching professional and credible titles for professional photojournalism, such as the term Professional Photojournalism (PPJ), should be considered along with a standard for UGC
out of the many terms that have been used and studied. Studies suggesting new terminology for the photojournalism industry have been conducted (Palmer, 2017; Tait, 2017). One study looked at using a new definition of “Really Social Photojournalism” to bring about a more powerful way of looking at professional photojournalism in a social-first environment by having online media entities adopt specific elements (Palmer, 2017). The principles of adopting specific guidelines in the social-first era were found to be relevant to visual professionals, including students and educators, but not necessarily the name (Tait, 2017).

The future of photojournalism rests in the concept of credibility which is a compelling reason to be interested in research that uncovers the what, the why, the how, the when, the who and the “if” of credibility as it pertains to photojournalism in addition to journalism as a whole. This will require both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies while looking at theory revision and theory building. Identifying the problem and the concept entails looking at the causes and effects while applying a theoretical definition in addition to the operational definition that is needed. If there is a new theory that can be deduced it will be explored to see if it is falsifiable, then simplify it so that it can be understood not only for scholars but for the industry as well, all while testing to see if it is explainable, predictive and cumulative whereby it generates new interpretations of photojournalism and the concept of credibility.

To paraphrase the words of poet Audre Lorde, photojournalism must define itself for itself or risk the chance of being crunched into someone else’s definition of it and eaten alive if it is to be deemed credible going forward.
APPENDIX A

Call For Participants

My name is Gina Gayle and I am a Ph.D. Candidate at Syracuse University doing a research project on the credibility of images.

This is a call for participants to be involved in research that will include answering questions through an online Q methodology sort, which will be explained in detail so do not worry if you do not know what it is. 15 participants will be randomly selected for an in-depth telephone interview at a later date after completing an exit survey. I am looking for participants over the age of 18 who consume American news media on digital and social media platforms.

The Q sort should take approximately 20 minutes and the in-depth telephone interview will be no longer than 45 minutes. You will be compensated through the survey site and the 15 people selected for the telephone interviews will receive an electronic gift card.

Participation is purely voluntary, and you can choose to withdraw from the research at any time without penalty. No personal identifying information will be used in the final report however, I will ask you to provide information about your gender, age, education level, ethnicity, and political affiliation if you agree to provide those. Additional criteria must be met which includes:

1. Being 18 years or older
2. Agree to be audio taped during the telephone interview

If you have any questions about this research project, please contact me at ggayle@syr.edu.
APPENDIX B

Informed Consent

My name is Gina Gayle and I am a Ph.D. Candidate at Syracuse University doing a research project on the perceived credibility of images. I am asking you to agree to participate in research that will include answering questions through a Q methodology sort, which will be explained in detail so do not worry if you do not know what it is. 15 participants will be randomly selected for an in-depth telephone interview at a later date after completing an exit survey.

The Q sort should take approximately 20 minutes and the telephone interview will be no longer than 45 minutes. You will be compensated through Amazon MTurk when you sign up and the 15 people selected for the telephone interviews will receive an electronic gift card.

Participation is purely voluntary, and you can choose to withdraw at any time from the research without penalty.

No personal identifying information will be used except demographical information such as age, gender, political affiliation, education level, and ethnicity. However, whenever one works with email or the internet there is always the risk of compromising privacy, confidentiality and/or anonymity. Your confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology being used. It is important for you to understand that no guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the internet by third parties.

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this research project, please contact me at 646-245-1241 or my advisor, Dr. Anne Osborne at 315-443-9244.

By continuing I agree that I am 18 years or older, I agree to be audio taped during the telephone interview, and I agree to participate in this study.
APPENDIX C

Q Image Statement Order
APPENDIX D

Q Sort Sheet

Most Un-characteristic

Most Characteristic

-4  -3  -2  -1  0  +1  +2  +3  +4
APPENDIX E

Exit Survey Questions

Comments on items under +4 and +3: __________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Comments on items under -4 and -3: __________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Age:

18-24  25-40  41-55  55+

Gender identification:

Female  Male  Non-Binary

Political affiliation: (select only one)

Liberal  Moderate Liberal

Conservative  Moderate Conservative

Independent  Other

State:_____________________________________

93
Race/Ethnicity: (select only one)
- Asian, Pacific Islander or South Asian
- Black or African American
- Caucasian
- Middle Eastern
- Hispanic or Latinx
- Native American
- Multiple
- Other

Level of Education Completed: (select only one)
- Less Than Highschool
- High School
- Trade School
- Some College
- College Graduate
- Advanced Degree

What is Your Primary News Source?: (select only one)
- Cable TV
- Network TV
- Newspaper
- News Websites
- Radio
- Social Media
• Podcasts…………………………………☐
• None………………………………………☐

How Often Do You Consume News From Your News Source?: (select only one)

• Never………………………………………☐
• 1-2 Days per week…………………………☐
• 3-4 Days per week…………………………☐
• 5-6 Days per week…………………………☐
• Everyday……………………………………☐

Contact information for in-depth interview:
_______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Or email me at ggayle@syr.edu.

Thank you!
APPENDIX F

Image Byline Information and Legend

1’s = On Associated Press Website
    Courtesy of Public Citizen

2’s = On Social Media Site
    By Associated Press Staff Photographer

3’s = On Social Media Site
    Courtesy of Public Citizen

4’s = On Associated Press Website
    By Associated Press Staff Photographer

CRIME = CR
2. David Zalubowski, AP, Westminster, CO, USA 11/19/2009

CORONA VIRUS = CV
1. Michael Swan, FLICKR, Toronto, CA, 3/15/2020
2. Bob Christie, AP, Phoenix, AZ, USA, 3/20/2020
3. Mike Haupt, FLICKR, Orlando, FL, USA, 3/17/2020
4. Matt Rourke, AP, Warrington, PA, USA, 3/17/2020

FIREWORKS = FW
1. The Old Texan, FLICKR, Waco, TX, USA 11/30/2013
3. Randonee Noel FLICKR, 7/3/2018

FLOOD = FL
1. Will Willis, FLICKR, Spring, TX, USA 4/14/2016
2. Charlie Riedel, AP Houston, TX, USA 8/27/2017
3. Camera Well Traveled, FLICKR, Houston, TX, USA 9/1/2017
4. David J. Phillip, AP, Houston, TX, USA 9/4/2017

96
GREEN RIVER =GR
1. Justin Thomas, FLICKR, 3/15/2014
2. Jeff Roberson, AP, Chicago, IL, USA 3/10/2006
4. Paul Beaty, AP, Chicago, ILLINOIS, USA 3/12/2011

GRIEF = GR
2. Sergey Ponomarev, AP, Mezhdurechensk, RUS 5/10/2010
4. Delmer Martinez, AP, Tela, HND 12/20/2019

LITTLE LEAGUE = LL
1. Jeremy McKnight, FLICKR, 7/25/2008
3. Sammy Saludo, FLICKR, 7/15/2012
4. Brandon Wade, AP, Waco, Tx, USA 8/1/2019

OCCUPY WALL STREET = OC
1. Michael Fleshman, FLICKR, New York, NY, USA 3/15/2012
2. Seth Wenig, AP, New York, NY, USA 11/15/2011

STORM TRAGEDY = ST
2. Fernando Llano, AP, Marsh Harbor, NY, USA 9/8/2019
4. Fernando Llano, AP, Marsh Harbor, NY, USA 9/8/2019

WEATHER = WE
1. Petar Petrov, AP, Bulgaria, 3/08/2010
2. Hans Splinter, FLICKR, 2/03/2012
3. Rich Pedroncelli, AP, Lake Tahoe, CA, USA 3/5/2018
4. Nick Dallimore, FLICKR, Norway, 3/17/2018
APPENDIX G

Q Methodsoftware Online Instructions

Welcome to the Credibility of Images study and thank you for your participation. These instructions will guide you through the Q methodology ranking process. You can print out the instructions or refer back to them.

RANKING STEPS:
1. First look at all of the images before doing any ranking.
2. Make sure to read the caption under the photo stating where the image was published and who took the photo.
3. At the top of the page there are three (3) piles. Create your initial three (3) sections of images that match with these statements. This is called the Pre-Sort:
   a. Most **un-characteristic** of a credible image (grey area)
   b. Neutral (off white area)
   c. Most **characteristic** of a credible image (blue area)
4. You will then begin the Q Sort and you can **zoom in and out** of the Q sort with the (+) and (-) buttons on the left.
5. From these sections you will rank the images from – 4 (most **un-characteristic**) to +4 (most **characteristic**) in this manner using the thumbs down, (?), and thumbs up icons:
   a. Take one image at a time. Remember to read the caption information under the image.
   b. Start with the +4 column and place images there until each space is filled. The order with the column does not matter.
   c. Next you will go to the -4 side and fill that column with images.
   d. Keep working inward going from the (+) side to the (-) side until each space is filled and each image has a space on the grid.
   e. Be advised that you may switch any images during this process should you change your mind.
6. Once you have finished and are satisfied with your Q sort, hit **SUBMIT** and **YES** if you are ready or **NO** if you still want to work on it.
7. You will have successfully completed the Q sort when you land on the **Thank You** page with a short exit survey.
8. While completing the exit survey you can refer back to your Q sort with the “**View Q Sort**” button at the bottom in order to answer the first and second questions on the exit survey.
9. Please complete the exit survey for the chance to be randomly chosen to participate in an in-depth interview and $5.00 gift card.

10. Please print the Q sort if you plan to submit for the random interviews as there will be questions about your choices.

(Du Plessis, 2005)
APPENDIX H

Amazon Mechanical Turk Instructions

If you've been invited to participate in a Q-study using Q Method Software, then it's easy to complete the sorting tasks. Q Method Software is completely web-based, which means you don't have to download or install anything. All you need to participate is a computer, laptop, tablet, or Chromebook with an internet connection.

Follow these steps to complete a Q-sort:

1. Enter the online study on your web browser (If you received an invitation email, click on the link in the email)
   a. Option 1: Click on the link in the invitation email.
   b. Option 2: Copy and paste the study's URL on your web browser.

This brings you to the online Q-study.

2. Copy and paste your Participation Code into the box.
3. Click Submit.

4. If you clicked through from the invitation email, your Participation Code will be pre-filled on the page. All you have to do is click the Submit button.

5. Enter study without participation code.

   a. Some studies are configured to allow participation without a participation code. If the study is configured to allow participation without a participation code, you will see the following interface when navigating to the study URL:

6. If you have been provided with a participation code, select "YES" to be redirected to the participation code entry interface, otherwise select "NO" to be taken directly into the study without a participation code.

7. Read the Consent Form carefully

8. If you wish to give your consent, click I Agree.

9. Take note of the researcher's contact information so you know how to reach them if you have any questions or concerns.

10. You are free to withhold your consent or to withdraw it at any time, even after you've completed the study. If you click I Do Not Agree now, you will not proceed to the next part of the study.
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xMrRRnk3VxDn10YQbHQ0d4qFeMRJj4E0ErXHPKwVhVUuRYFAA1sVJaYaGScmJwD6OUaJporJYnlq0HdJyZam5snGkgwSuLyTZFDEkIKFY7yRqTGwXWMmhVu7NAMXZEcTNPQgw8CaBswaqbKIYAEAJiWljA


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VITA

GINA GAYLE
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EDUCATION:
S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY
Ph.D. Mass Communications, Anticipated: August 2020
Advisor: Dr. Anne Osborne
Dissertation: The Credibility of Photojournalism in American News Media Amidst a Changing
Business and Technological Environment

Columbia College Chicago, Chicago, IL.
Master of Arts Management
Arts, Entertainment & Media Management; Visual Arts concentration

University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, OH.
Bachelor of Science
Business Management; Marketing concentration

RESEARCH INTERESTS:
Credibility, innovation, new technologies, entrepreneurship, photojournalism.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE:
S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY
Research Assistant to Professor Sean Branagan, Director, Center for Digital Media Entrepreneurship – Fall 2019 to present
• Designing new ways to operationalize digital media entrepreneurship courses across
  majors and concentrations
• Developing curriculum specific to each concentration
• Preparing workshops and symposiums to bring media entrepreneurs to campus
• Researching funding opportunities for the Center

S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY
Research Assistant to Professor Tula Goenka, Fall 2017 – Fall 2019
• Systematized research workflow for multimedia research project
• Researched, assessed, and defined funding resources with the Humanities Center and
  Foundation Relations at Syracuse University
• Identified partnerships by strategizing with local, regional, and national organizations for
  the presentation and publication of the multimedia project, beginning October 2018

S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY
Research Assistant to Dr. Carol Liebler – Missing Teen Project, Spring and Summer 2017
• Conducted in-depth interviews with law enforcement and media managers in specific counties in the states of California and New York with the purpose of codifying data
• Compiled and organized law enforcement agencies and media managers in proximity to where missing teens were last seen
• Honed understanding of the conference paper submission process and expanded in-depth interviewing skills

S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY
Research Assistant to Professor Jennifer Grygiel, Summer 2017
• Edited and revised journal articles for submission
• Analyzed appropriate journals for specific research papers according to ranking, strengthening knowledge of the journal submission process

CONFERENCE PAPERS:

CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION:
• Discussant (August 2019). Opportunities for Diversity & Inclusion in the Visual Communications Classroom. Visual Communications Division and Minorities and Communication Division, Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC), Toronto, Canada.
• Fellow (August 2019) – Lillian Lodge Kopenhaver Center for the Advancement of Women in Communication, Women Faculty Moving Forward. Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC), Toronto, Canada.
• Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) Presidential Task Force (August 2017 to 2019). Bridging the Gap to Professions Committee, Graduate Student Member.
ARTICLES BEING PREPARED FOR PUBLICATION SUBMISSION:

- Gayle, G. (2017). The Perceived Credibility Crisis of American News Media in the Current Political Climate: Do We Have a Crisis or an Incident and Can the News Media Recover?
- Gayle, G. (2017). Political Influences on The Choice of Newspapers or Other Sources For News and Information

ACADEMIC AWARDS:

- Feinberg Dissertation Support Award, S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, May 2018
- Best Student Paper, Visual Communication Division, Research Award, Kappa Tau Alpha, National Honor Society in Journalism and Mass Communication, AEJMC Conference, August 2017
- First Place Student Paper, Visual Communication Division, AEJMC Conference, August 2017

TEACHING EXPERIENCE:

Emerging Visiting Diversity Scholar – The Park School of Communications, Ithaca College
February 24-28, 2020

- Public Presentation “Being The Diverse One”
- Held Office Hours for Students and Faculty
- Guest Lecturer in
  - Journalism Innovation
  - Journalism Ethics
  - Investigative Journalism
  - Documentary Industries

Guest Lecturer – S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, 2018-2019
Visual News Reporting – Visual Ethics

- New Ventures in Media – Business Structures
- Public Relations Research Methods – Ethnography
- Entrepreneurial Thinking for Media Professionals – Myths, Theories and Exercises in Entrepreneurship

Future Professoriate Program (FPP) and Certificate in University Training (CUT), 2018-2019
S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications and Syracuse University Graduate School
Adjunct Professor – S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, Summer Session, 2018

- Instructor of record for master’s level reading intensive Issues in Media Management class to incoming Media Management students facilitating conversations regarding economic, legal, and technical dealings in today’s media environment

Online Professor - West Virginia University

May 2011 to May 2015

Courses taught:
- Digital Storytelling
- Media Tools and Applications
- Facilitated online graduate level course in the art of digital storytelling in the Integrated Marketing Communications and Journalism departments via an online course
- Oversaw work of students from different places, with differing backgrounds and experiences at once using Blackboard technology
- Presented a creative point of view to advertising and public relations graduate students on how to get their messages across in story form

Professor of Practice, The University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, MS

August 2008 to May 2012

Courses taught:
- Intro to Photography
- Photojournalism
- Multimedia Storytelling
- Multimedia Producing
- Seminar in Journalism, Entrepreneurial Journalism and The Business of Freelancing
- International Multimedia Storytelling (Ghana 2011)
- Created and developed the multimedia curriculum for the department
- Created an entrepreneurial journalism & business of freelancing course and curriculum for the department
- Mentored and advised students for coursework and career choices.
- Collaborated with the photojournalism community to stay abreast of the latest events and changes in the industry
- Continued to work on photojournalism projects including students by orchestrating clearance for three journalism students to work with me in New Orleans on the Zulu project for Mardi Gras, which included press passes and parade access

Adjunct Professor, St. John’s University, Queens, NY

January 2006 to December 2006

- Taught Photojournalism, a course that introduced the principles and techniques of photojournalism
- Trained students to apply the principles of photography to various areas of journalism
- Facilitated students’ understanding and identification of the hallmarks of excellence in photojournalism
UNIVERSITY SERVICE:
- Teaching Standards Committee, Student Member, Newhouse School, Syracuse University, Spring 2018
- Academic Integrity Committee Panel, Student Member, Syracuse University, December 2016
- Fall 2010 - Faculty Advisor, National Press Photographer’s Association (NPPA) Student Chapter, University of Southern Mississippi
- Mass Communication and Journalism Faculty Search Committee Member, University of Southern Mississippi, Fall 2009

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:
*Photojournalist and Multimedia Producer, Gina Gayle Media, LLC*
October 2003 to August 2016
- Freelance photojournalist in the New York City area, New Orleans, Mississippi, and Greater Cleveland areas for major metropolitan daily newspapers as well as media organizations and agencies
- Created Gina Gayle Media in 2007 to expand work nationally with news organizations and magazines
- Covered a wide variety of assignments including news, entertainment, sports, and multimedia features

*Interim Staff Photojournalist, Philadelphia Daily News, Philadelphia, PA*
March 2007 to July 2007
- Replaced staff photographer while on sabbatical in order to provide assignment coverage for this major metropolitan daily newspaper conveying a different perspective on reporting
- Responsibilities included covering news, sports and features and producing multimedia pieces in the city of Philadelphia, PA.

*San Francisco Chronicle, San Francisco, CA*
September 2001 to October 2003
- Staff Photojournalist at this major daily newspaper with circulation over 500,000
- Responsible for news, features and sports assignments on deadline while creating and producing self-generated picture stories for publication
- Recipient of numerous photojournalism awards and recognitions

PROFESSIONAL AWARDS, PRESENTATIONS & AFFILIATIONS:
Recipient, NABJ Gulf Coast Fellowship, Photography, Dec. 2005
First Place, Feature Photography, Best of the West Contest, 2002
First Place, Feature Photography, Peninsula Press Club, 2002
Journalism Fellow, Hearst Newspaper Fellowship Program, Hearst Newspapers, 1999-2001