

CREDIBILITY OF PHOTOJOURNALISM
IN CHANGING TIMES

by

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ABSTRACT

With the constant growth of the internet and the explosion of hand-held devices, the news industry is in a continuous state of evolution. Although citizens desire news feeds of what is happening now, there is also a fundamental need for content that is accurate, unbiased, and in the public's best interest. The demand for immediate news, however, raises several critical questions: How credible is the information, who is reporting it, and is there a relationship between credibility of information and the reporter? Credibility has been one of the cornerstones of the news industry, and the area of interest for this study messenger credibility (Roberts, 2010).

The central focus of this study was to identify how the credibility of news photographs is influenced by the source's organization (who published the photo) and the source photographer (the affiliation of the photographer to the source). A news credibility scale was used as the dependent variable. The independent measures of "Media Source Organization" — which contained 3 types, and "Photographer Affiliation" — which contained 2 types, were then compared to the dependent variable. Specifically, the independent variable of source organized had three factors — "Mainstream" (*New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Washington Post*); "Online-focused" (*BuzzFeed*, *Huffington Post*, *Elite Daily*); and "Fictitious" (*Daily Post*, *Citizen Times*, *Peoples' Constitution*). The two factors for the independent variable of "Photographer affiliation with the source organization" were: "Staff" and "Contributor."

A univariate ANOVA determined that respondents rated photographs from mainstream sources as more credible than photographs from online or fictitious sources. Additionally, a staff photographer from fictitious media was rated significantly more credible than contributor photographer from fictitious media. Survey respondents rated media from mainstream sources significantly more credible than online or fictitious sources. These findings indicate it does make a difference who provides the content and photograph when “credibility” is essential to the content. These findings are significant to the evolving field of visual journalism and messenger credibility in that photos, which are entry points to news coverage, differ in their credibility to readers based upon who is the “messenger” or provider of the photo.

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INTRODUCTION

A photograph is worth a thousand words, but sometimes a thousand words is still woefully inadequate for capturing the visual and emotional effect an image has on its viewer. Photographs can instantly transport the viewer to a new location or moment in time — from the joy of World War II’s end captured in Alfred Eisenstaedt’s “Time Square Kiss,” (see Appendix A, Figure 1) to the strife of famine in Sudan captured by Kevin Carter (see Appendix A, Figure 2). These iconic photos are permanently etched into the memories of billions of people around the world, far more than the written accounts that accompanied them. The photograph brings with it a wide range of human emotion and is conveyed more directly and authentically through a photograph than through text (Brantner, Lobinger, & Wetzstein, 2011).

Photographs provide a strong medium that has empowered civil rights movements, raised awareness of human injustice, and shined light into the darkness of the human condition. With the constant growth of the internet and the explosion of hand-held devices that feed constant interaction, the news industry is still evolving to the new demands of its audience (Meikle, 2016). Although citizens desire news feeds of what is happening now, there is also a fundamental need for content that is accurate, unbiased, and in the public’s best interest:

News is where decisions about how we organize ourselves and each other are proposed, discussed and held up for endorsement or rejection. News is where we hear stories about ourselves and each other, and where we work out how we feel about the decisions and

controversies and events of the day. News also confers a particular status on those media organizations that produce it. (Meikle, 2016, p. 69)

The time has long past when newspapers were the sole distributor of news. The once-massive newsprint industry has steadily trimmed away at its newsrooms and shifted personnel to meet the surge in online content. Photojournalists and visual journalists have been greatly affected by the downturn of the news industry (García, 2015). In 2007, there were 68,160 jobs in newspaper newsrooms. However, as seen in data compiled by Barthel in 2016, the number of jobs had decreased nearly 61% to only 41,400 newspaper jobs nationwide by the year 2015 (journalism.org). The growth of social media, combined with the innovations of mobile technology, have paved the way for citizen photojournalism, in this case amateur photographers, to document news. As photographs fill our news feeds and capture our attention, a question arises: Does a professional need to be taking the picture?

As the news industry changes by placing a greater demand for immediate news, this now raises the question: How credible is the information, and who is reporting it, and is there a relationship between credibility of information and the reporter? Credibility has been one of the cornerstones of the news industry, and this area of interest is known as messenger credibility (Roberts, 2010). “For messenger credibility, the research suggests that messengers that are more likely to be believed are more likely to be perceived as experts (Hallahan, 1999), trustworthy (Infante, 1980), and dynamic (Johnson, B. T. & Eagly, 1989; Roberts, 2010, p.45).

According to the Pew Research Center, the circulation of daily newspapers has been declining since 2003, and newsroom employment has been shrinking yearly since 2006. This has caused publications to turn to alternative ways to capture news. Armed with mobile devices able

to shoot, connect, and share, the public is able to engage with the news process more so than ever (Mortensen & Keshelashvili, 2013).

Few studies have concentrated on credibility and the visual side of journalism. Most research has been focused on the market place of the newspaper industry and the emergence of “citizen photojournalism.” This study examines the issue of credibility in regard to photography, asking the question: If the photograph was taken by newsroom *staff*, is it therefore more credible compared to a *contributor* photographer? The contributor has an unknown relationship to the publication, whereas a staff member is known to have a stronger affiliation because he or she is a part of the publication (Mortensen & Keshelashvili, 2013). Is the affiliation of the photographer, i.e., staff photographer at the *New York Times*, a strong enough news cue to affect perceived credibility by the reader? Credibility is defined as the believability, trust, or perceived reliability of a certain message (Self, 2008). Photographs are a key part of reporting a story, but with the advent of instant news, this study addresses the question, does it matter who is reporting the story and who took the accompanying photo?

This study measured the credibility of an image and how that perceived credibility of the image is affected by its affiliation with a particular publishing organization (who published the photo) and the affiliation of the photographer (who took it and what are their credentials). Credibility is measured by a seven-item scale that has been validated in previous studies (Greer & Gosen 2002). This study also examined whether other factors — such as age, gender, education, income, or level of news consumption — affect the perceived credibility of news images.

CHAPTER I

LITERATURE REVIEW

The news industry has changed tremendously during the past 20 years. It has gone from print to digital, and news reporting now includes citizens and bystanders with smart devices that can record and then transmit the event. But as is often the case, what is provided with speed may be sacrificed in quality, and in judgment and ethics. This section discusses the dramatic change to news delivery during recent years. It has been shown in recent studies that the proliferation of citizen journalism does indeed increase coverage and speed of reporting (Mortensen & Keshelashvili, 2013). However, when amateurs replace professionals, such as professional journalists and photojournalists, there is a documented void in the areas of standards, ethics, and credibility (Mortensen & Keshelashvili, 2013). Photography is more than a photo; it tells a story or stories that often evoke emotions and action. But advances in technology also allow for manipulation of photos for ulterior motives other than telling the truth or reporting the news (Mortensen & Keshelashvili, 2013). News consumers may want to know if the photo is real, accurate, and tells the story.

This study evaluates the credibility of photographs that are provided by different types of news sources and different relationships of photographers to the news sources in order to determine if the relationship of the photographer creates a change in perceived credibility. Issues such

as *reinventing the news industry*, *citizen journalism*, *professionalism and photojournalism*, *ethics*, and *credibility* are reviewed to assist in determining how the credentials of a “news source” or photographer’s affiliation with a news source may guide the perceived credibility of a photo and its related story.

Reinventing the News Industry

The news industry today has been in a constant state of change since the start of the digital age. “As technologies merge, it is inevitable that the still photographer will simultaneously capture video and vice versa. The growing need for a multi-media journalist is obvious at a time when newspapers, magazines, and broadcast outlets are vying for success in the online world” (Alabiso, 1998, p. 6). In order to reduce newsroom costs, news media journalists must now have multiple skills at his or her disposal to be a well-rounded candidate for employment, such as writing, photography, and editing (Saltzis & Dickinson, 2008). “These responses to uncertainty — traversing boundaries, increasing monitoring, and knowledge sharing — are predicted by rational-choice economic approaches” (Lowrey & Woo, 2010, p. 41). The American Society of News Editors stated photojournalists, and other visual journalists, are the most affected by the cuts in the media ecosystem (García, 2015). Photojournalism’s “glory days are long gone, days when *Life*, *Look*, *Picture Post*, and others employed teams of dazzling talented photographers and when *Fortune* regularly printed the work of icons of photography like Walker Evans” (Howe, 2001, p. 25).

An example of the downturn in print media is *Knight Ridder* and *Time Inc.* At the turn of the twenty-first century, *Knight Ridder* was one of the largest newspaper chains in the United

States; *Time Inc.* had more than 140 publications and accrued around 300 million readers nationwide. But by 2007, hundreds of journalists from these two media giants had lost their jobs (Beam, 2009). While the collapse of the newspaper can be intertwined with the rise of digital age, the main culprit was a steady decline of circulation followed by a steep drop of ad revenue (Shaker, 2014). The challenges facing the news industry, pointed out by Ekdale, Tully, Harmsen, and Singer (2015) in “Newsworld Within a Culture of Job Insecurity,” was a significant decline in newspapers readership. The major daily circulations declined above 5% in 2009, 2010, 2011, and 2015 (Pew Research Center 2016). Changes in audience expectations and behavior, competition from amateur and startup news sources, loss of probable revenue streams such as classified ads, inability to compensate for declining print revenue with online advertisements and paywalls, and the global economic downturn were other contributing factors to this decline (Mortensen & Keshelashvili, 2013, p. 384). The daily U.S. newspaper circulation has plummeted to circa 49 million in 2008, down 21% from 63 million in 1993 (Lowrey & Woo, 2010). Advertising also decreased by 17.7% from 2007 to 2008. (Lowrey & Woo, 2010). This aided in leading to 5,900 full-time jobs being cut in U.S. newspaper newsrooms in 2008 and 2009 (Becker & Vlad, 2015). From 2007 to 2010 there were 34,666 lost jobs registered in the newspaper industry. This does not account for other media outlets such as social media, magazines, or broadcast television. (Becker & Vlad, 2015). This has caused more news companies to call upon the masses, armed with mobile technology and able to capture anything with a flip of a phone (Mortensen & Keshelashvili, 2013). The news industry called on the readers to become engaged in the news-making cycle and make freelance and citizen journalism part of its structure. Mortensen & Keshelashvili (2013) state,

Citizen journalism sites soliciting amateur photography abound on the Internet. A few examples include Huffington Post, GroundReport, AllVoices, Blottr, and Demotix. Demotix, which has more than 4,500 active photo and video journalists, receives hundreds of thousands of viewers each month and sells users' photographs to other outlets, such as the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and the *Guardian*. (p.147)

Although amateurs are making significant contributions to news outlets, there has been little indication of pushback by the viewing public because of the lack of professional skills and talent. Välikangas and Jett (2006) define amateurism as “meaning, it indicates limited skill, amateurishness, is the opposite of being a professional. Yet its older meaning comes (via French) from the word love... doing something for the love of it, as a pastime perhaps, but with dedication” (Välikangas & Jett 2006, p.42). Inside the news world, people (citizens) want to feel a part of their community. The market for contributors is almost limitless in the world of people wanting to share with the world via social media (Mortensen & Keshelashvili, 2013).

In 2001, Lowrey and Becker provided a forecast of the new journalism as the technological advance began to make an impact on the job market. Journalists are now required to be a jack-of-all-trades, other than just proficient at one trade, such as writing or photography. Photojournalism would now begin to include videography with still photography (Mäenpää, 2014). “Presumably, the managers were thinking primarily of cost efficiency for their organization, and for them multi-skilling seemed a more inviting option than seeking out trained specialists” (Mäenpää, p.97). Real-time reporting and the drive to feed the continuous news cycle has caused the creation of new practices; these new practices include using user-generated content, or what has come to be known as citizen journalism.

Citizen Journalism

Journalism is known as the watchdog of the government. Journalists are concerned about the growing threats to the sovereignty of the professional culture and the journalism's declining role they play in reporting to the people. The media continues to provide information essential to a self-governing nation. Being the watchdogs can only be accomplished by transmitting news images that are honest and ethical in order to sustain the belief that the field as a whole is credible and professional (Beam, 2009).

One of the solutions to cut costs and connect with the audience was "citizen photojournalism" and freelance journalists. Citizen photojournalism has been defined as people without professional journalism training utilizing modern technology (such as cell phones) and the Internet to create, augment, or fact-check media on their own or in collaboration with others (Mediashift.org), essentially crowd sourcing the news. They are also known as "accidental photojournalists" or "citizen camera-witness" (García, 2015). Freelance photojournalists are hired per job, and most of the time paid by the hour or per photograph, so they are independent from the publication. They do not have long-term contracts or commitment to any one employer and are tied closely to and media organization (Gynnild, 2017). Both freelance and citizen photographers face a similar grouping when it comes down to the credibility because through the publication they are known as a *contributor*.

In 2011, CNN fired 50 workers, including 12 photojournalists, "citing the availability of affordable digital cameras and citizen journalists — 'people playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting analyzing and disseminating news and information'" (Mortensen & Keshelashvili, 2013, p. 144). As an example of the changes facing photojournalists and visual

journalism, in 2013, 45% of adult internet users in the United States were online image creators, meaning that they had uploaded onto the internet original photographs or videos that they had created (García, 2015). Witnesses of events have become a competitor in the market of producing and distributing content (García, 2015), and utilizing the masses to report on stories feeds the 24-hour news services.

The movement to online publishing has led to an increased use of citizen journalism. The camera quality of compact digital cameras has risen and with easier use — many people now use these cameras almost daily. For iPhone users in 2012, the iPhone 5 camera was an 8-megapixel sensor and saw features such as dynamic low lighting to improve night photography (Apple Keynote, 2012). Now, the most recent iPhone 7 contains a 12-megapixel sensor, and possesses the ability to take RAW DNG files for “more complex editing,” and also possesses the ability to shoot 4k high definition video (Apple Keynote, 2016). This allows for professional-quality images to be captured by the general public, not just those who possess professional equipment. As professional photojournalists have been laid off, they are forced to fight with amateurs for the same jobs. “This is in part to the de-skilling of journalists, meaning ordinary citizens can perform some of the basic tasks” (Mortensen & Keshelashvili, 2013, p. 147). Mortensen & Keshelashvili (2013) also state, “amateur photographers, too, hold a general understanding of what constitutes a ‘good’ photograph, and this, historically, has tended to revolve around the home and family.... People take photos to make permanent the good things in their lives” (p.146).

Some citizen journalists will not identify their actions as performing an act of journalism; rather, they see themselves as a citizen with a camera creating a “random act of journalism” (Mortensen & Keshelashvili, 2013). As mobile technology has grown, so too has the ability for

anyone to press “record” and do a “random act of journalism” (Mortensen & Keshelashvili, 2013, p.144). These random acts can prove useful in times of crisis. For example, after the April 2013 Boston Marathon bombing, citizens filming the chaos helped the police find the suspects. One photo of the attack first surfaced on Reddit.com from a cell phone picture taken by a bystander after the initial explosion; the photo posted on Reddit made it to the Boston Police Department within a matter of minutes. Other closed-circuit camera images of the same suspects were subsequently uploaded via Reddit to help the investigation. CBS News reported the FBI followed the web traffic and launched a tip site for people to write in (theatlantic.com, 2013).

The environment in which photojournalists find themselves today is one in which their professional photographs are published next to amateur shots. The ability of citizens to publish images online, the interest from news organizations to publish these images, and the appearance of professional and amateur photographs on an equal plane all contribute to a threatened sense of professionalism of professional photojournalists (Mortensen & Keshelashvili, 2013, p.144).

Professionalism and Photojournalism

Journalism scholars have debated whether journalism is a profession or a craft, because there is no “barrier of entry” that screens and limits entry to its professional schools and requires licensure examination to ensure competency in “more traditional professions such as law and medicine” (Mäenpää, 2014, p. 92). Mäenpää (2014) also states, “[M]any media scholars have considered journalism a semi-profession, mostly because it is impossible to exclude amateurs from the field” (p. 93). Journalism, nevertheless, has many professional characteristics, such as commitment to public service and professional ethics. These two unique components have

caused some to view journalism as more of an ideology than a traditional profession. Because journalism has been viewed as the watchdog of the government, this means keeping track of what the government passes into laws and keeping public officials honest. What constitutes a journalist and photojournalist are the ethical codes they adhere to through their publication (Mäenpää 2014). The National Press Photographers Association code of ethics (2016), along with the *Associated Press's Guide to Good Photography* (1990), gives a higher calling to photographers. Both of these work in concert to create the guidelines for professional photojournalists. These guidelines give a focus to the composition of a photo that captures the decisive moment of action. James Dooley, director of photography at the *New York Times*, said,

It's time to call a time-out and take a hard look at the issue of traditional markets. Photojournalism is being done every day in today's newspapers. But, because it's being done locally and used locally, you might get the impression it's not happening. Newspapers photographers are doing the work, and you see it in hard-hitting, provocative and tender photojournalism (Alabiso, 1998, p. 6).

Dooley later states that photojournalism can and should be achieved on the community level (Alabiso, 1998). Newspapers provide vital input to the community around them. "More than any other medium, newspapers have been our eyes on the state, our check on private abuses, our civic alarms... But whether they continue to perform them at all is now in doubt" (Shaker, 2014, p. 131).

The citizen journalist is not the only one to commit unethical or dishonest actions. In 2013, Associated Press photographer Narciso Contreras edited out another photographer from

one of his photos in Syria (see Appendix A, Figure 3). Although he was a contract-based photographer working with a professional company, he broke ethical codes set up to maintain a quality of accuracy and trustworthiness in news reporting; further adding insult to his actions, Contreras had won a Pulitzer Prize in the past for his work (dailymail.co.uk, 2014). Ultimately, the Associated Press fired him (Estrin, 2014). Like the Associated Press, the *New York Times* and other publications have written codes of ethics and conduct their employees must answer to (*New York Times*, 2004). While employees that are working for these publications have to adhere to these standards, there is a debate on whether a citizen journalist must always follow the same guidelines, particularly since they are not being paid outright to provide content and are often simply in the right place at the right time. The citizen journalist may not always be unethical or aim to mislead the public, however, lack of formal training may lead to complications that ultimately cause more harm than good.

Ethical Choices

Throughout this section, many comparisons have been made between photojournalists, citizen journalists, and traditional print-focused writers. Photojournalism, however, is not the same as citizen journalism or journalism: The essential nature of professionals provides them with the autonomy to define and control their values and practices and allows them to build barriers regarding who may enter the field (Becker & Vlad, 2011; Freidson, 1984). Journalists and photojournalists possess some characteristics of professionals and are considered “semi-professionals” (Beam, 2003, p. 371). They do have a professional culture, share professional values, and, most importantly, profess to abide by codes of ethics (Deuze, 2005; Örnebring, 2013; Mortensen, 2015, p. 20)

Photojournalists and other types of journalists may face different issues of personal risk and ethical conflict. When covering a crisis, print-focused journalists can drop what they are doing and create mental notes. If the photojournalist drops the camera, he or she stops working and cannot recover capturing the image. An important point of distinction between the citizen journalist and the photojournalist is the dedication and commitment to the story regardless of the danger and personal risk. In times of crisis, it is hard to look to amateurs to capture stories that hold a high risk, such as those in war zones. A news organization would not want citizens in harm's way or possibly interfering with first responders.

“The National Press Photographers Association’s Code of Ethics 2010, is the primary guide for photojournalists and picture editors. It requires members to ‘give special consideration to vulnerable subjects and compassion to victims of crime or tragedy.’... Most journalistic codes of conduct indicate the objectivity/impartiality practiced by a detached observer is a primary goal” (Kim & Kelly, 2010, p. 24). These journalism ethics codes help separate an amateur from a professional. As citizen journalism increases, these citizens will eventually be faced with making instantaneous ethical choices. As most citizen journalists are not thinking they are performing acts of journalism, ethics are not in their thoughts (Roberts & Steiner, 2016). This can be same for the freelancer in that they do not have long-term commitment to the publication (Ladendorf, 2012). The field of journalism has worked hard to maintain its standards, while most research indicates that there is essentially no standard or ethical guidance for the citizen journalist (Roberts & Steiner, 2016).

Any sense of journalism is likely to be far from their mind when they take and share their citizen journalism. They are not bound by educational guidelines, social organizations,

newsroom pressure, or codes of ethics. Some blogging codes of ethics have been proposed (e.g., Blood, 2002; Dube, 2003; Kuhn, 2007; O'Reilly RadarPer, 2007), and a few bloggers claim to subscribe to codes of ethics and embrace accuracy, credibility, and etiquette (Mortensen, 2015, p. 21).

Additionally, ethics have served the field of photojournalism well from discrediting photo manipulation to acting as the “good Samaritan” in the field. Ethical choices are also necessary in the newsroom before photos are reviewed and undergoing the “Cheerios test.” The Cheerios test is designed to determine the appropriateness of a photo for placement in the newspaper. The premise is: Would the average consumer desire to view a photo while eating breakfast cereal i.e., Cheerios, in the morning? If the photograph were too objectionable (gruesome, disturbing, graphic), then it would not be used regardless of its visual sharpness and accuracy. This same test provides the connotation that photographs can have a greater impact than words, which also implies that they must be used with a greater responsibility. “In the digital era, truthfulness has become one of the toughest ethical standards to maintain” (Kim & Kelly, 2010, p. 24).

There are several key components to the field of journalism, and ethics is one of them. When ethics is removed from the profession, it no longer is a profession. A firm stance will always be required for individuals and organizations to make ethical choices in order to sustain credibility for people reporting, producing, and consuming the news.

Credibility

Self (2008) defines credibility as “believability, trust, perceived reliability, and dozens of others concepts and combinations of them” (p. 435). For newsrooms, credibility is known as the

life-blood of the industry. The concept of credibility dates back to Plato, who states that credibility is generated by the knowledge of truth. The group of characteristics Plato referred to as the ethos of the communicator. There are three characteristics behind source credibility: the first is that the audience perceives it as “rightness;” the second characteristic is how the source is presented; and the third characteristic of source credibility is the perceived believability of the messenger (Self, 2008, p. 437).

The position of the photographer can be looked upon as a credibility cue, or in some publications a “news cue.” “The credibility of a source reflects both the source’s expertise on the topic and the trustworthiness of the communicator” (Callaghan & Schnell, 2009, p. 14). These cues provide important factors for an audience to believe the message. These cues can vary from quality of the sources (who was interviewed) to the name and quality of the publications (Callaghan & Schnell, 2009). If the message comes from a highly credible source such as the *New York Times*, the reader should be more likely to stop looking for other cues and believe what they are reading or viewing. If the source is lower in credibility, or the reader does not know about the publication (as in the case of the fictitious publications created for this study), the reader should look to other cues (Callaghan & Schnell, 2009). For this study, the cues were controlled. These secondary cues are limited by having the same images, cutlines, and image quality. The only variation is to the name of the source publications and the relationship of the photographer to the source publication.

Message credibility impact is related to source credibility and the credibility cues given by these publications. Message credibility is defined as the believability of the message beginning told to the audience (Self, 2009), and it is most important when the source credibility is low.

If the news source is brought in to question, then the other cues will be looked more critically. Photographs present in a news story can be looked upon as the message. If the person providing the photograph to the publication — staff, contributor, or freelance — does not have strong ties to the media source, the believability and credibility of the photo may suffer.

Messenger credibility theory is the concept that lays the foundation for the research hypothesis in this study. According to this theory, the attribution of the photograph (staff, contributor) will not make much of a difference as long as it comes from a trusted news source, i.e. the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, or the *Los Angeles Times*. The newspaper industry is built on the credibility of its publications. When a reader looks at a news source, the mind begins looking for cues on whether the article is to be trusted or not. These cues vary from load time of an online page, to spelling, to the sources interviewed. If the cues check out, then the reader may be more likely to trust that source. If the reader questions the cues, then the article will be questioned and might be dismissed completely (Xu, 2013). “Similar to beauty, credibility lies in the eyes of the beholder” (Callaghan & Schnell, 2009 p. 14).

Photographs are an important part of the news because they are rapidly evaluated visually and trigger an emotional response that draws the reader into the photograph and story. This physiological response essentially determines how the reader perceives the message (Brantner, Lobinger, & Wetzstein, 2011). The importance of knowing what causes a photograph to be credible is important to the news industry. As stated earlier, as the newsrooms are shrinking, and the news industry has turned to the citizen journalist or freelancer (contributors), the questions now be-

come: Is there a difference in perspective from the viewer from someone who is staff or contributor? Does the relationship of the photographer with the publication change the photograph's perceived believability?

Credibility is life-blood of journalism, and “without it, news organizations cannot fulfill the democratic duty of properly disseminating the truth to the public” (Saleh, 2016, p. 1328).

Summary

“The photojournalist's tool, the camera, represents incorruptible objectivity, whereas the photojournalist as a human being may want to distort the ‘facts’ using his or her photographs. Professional ethics are therefore essential to photojournalistic professionalism, and photojournalists build their professional identity on their integrity” (Mäenpää, 2014, p. 101). Due to the changing newsroom, the creation of online content and interactive newsrooms, combined with the insurgence of citizen journalism, the role of photos in journalism has changed dramatically in a relatively short period of time. With photographs being the first message viewers see, does the relationship of the photographer to publication affect the believability of the photograph? The importance of knowing what causes a photograph to be credible is important to the news industry. If the photographs credibility is brought into question, the entry point of the publication will be in question.

CHAPTER II
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1: How is the credibility of a news photograph influenced by the source organization (who published the photo)?

RQ2: How is the credibility of a news photograph influenced by the affiliation of the photographer to the publication?

RQ3: If either RQ1 or RQ2 shows significant change, does it positively or negatively affect the credibility of the news photograph?

RQ4: What relationships, if any, exist between credibility perceptions of photography and information related to socioeconomic information, social media use, and other credibility measures?

CHAPTER III

METHOD

The study explored how reader credibility of a news photograph is influenced by the source organization (who published the photo), how the reader credibility of a news photograph is influenced by affiliation of the photographer to the publication, and if either RQ1 or RQ2 produce a significant change in credibility, does it positively or negatively affect the news photograph.

Study design

This research study used an online survey to identify how the credibility of news photographs is influenced by the source organization (who published the photo) or the source photographer (the affiliation of the photographer to the source); and if so, whether positively or negatively.

There were three levels for the independent variable of “source organization”: “Mainstream” (*New York Times, Los Angeles Times, Washington Post*); “Online-focused” (*BuzzFeed, Huffington Post, Elite Daily*); and “Fictitious” (*Daily Post, Citizen Times, Peoples’ Constitution*). There are two levels for the independent variable of “Photographer affiliation with the source organization”: “Staff” and “Contributor.”

The study’s dependent variable is perceived credibility, which was calculated from a seven-item credibility scale (described later in this chapter) used to measure the credibility of a

photograph and served as the dependent variable (see Appendix A, Figure 4). There were five photographs used as sources of hard news (Appendix A, Figure 5) and viewed by all survey respondents. An example of the full survey can be found in Appendix B.

Procedures

Participants were asked to complete an online survey developed using the survey service Qualtrics. All participants were assigned unique numbers by Qualtrics automatically for post-test verification. The survey was distributed to the subject pool through the SONA System. SONA System is a website managed by the Institute for Communication and Information Research that is used to coordinate the C&IS Participant Pool. This system automates many of the tasks required to track students' sign ups and research credits and makes coordination easier for instructors and researchers. Participants were given access to a link to participate in the study through the SONA Systems, and then were asked to complete the survey by a set date.

First, participants were greeted and asked to participate for credit in an online survey through the SONA System. Second, participants were informed that they would be completing a research project related to the role of media in our lives. Third, all participants were given informed consent statements to read and acknowledge the agreement by clicking continue electronically. The research presented no more than minimal risk or harm to subjects and involved no procedures for which written consent is normally required outside of the research context. Fourth, participants completed questions on the survey relating to the credibility of photojournalism. Finally, participants were thanked and debriefed.

All survey responses were recorded anonymously. Demographic information such as age, gender, ethnicity, household income, and highest level of education were collected. After answering demographic questions at the start of the survey, participants were provided definitions for terms used in the survey such as “Staff” and “Contributor.” This ensured that there was no misunderstanding or misinterpretation of photojournalist positions, and gave all participants consistent definitions.

Every question had forced responses, so participants were unable to skip questions. News preferences (printed newspaper, news website, social media, television, news app); social media preferences (type and frequency); and scales of trustworthiness and believability were used. These items were measured on sliders provided by the Qualtrics program.

The central focus of the survey was to identify how the credibility of news photographs is influenced by the source’s organization (who published the photo) or the source photographer (the affiliation of the photographer to the source). The news credibility scale was used as the dependent variable. The independent measures of “Media Source Organization,” which contained three types and “Photographer Affiliation,” which contained two types were then compared to the dependent variable. Specifically, the independent variable of source organized had three factors — “Mainstream” (*New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Washington Post*); “Online-focused” (*BuzzFeed*, *Huffington Post*, *Elite Daily*); and “Fictitious” (*Daily Post*, *Citizen Times*, *Peoples’ Constitution*). The two factors for the independent variable of “Photographer affiliation with the source organization” were: “Staff” and “Contributor.” This design produced six possible combinations, and the Qualtrics program placed respondents into one of the six groups. All respondents saw the same five identical photographs; however, the photograph cutline/caption

were manipulated into six variations previously described to determine whether the “source” and/or “photographer affiliation” affected the credibility of a photo.

Credibility Scale

This research study used an online survey to identify how the credibility of news photographs is influenced by the source’s organization (who published the photo) or the source photographer (the affiliation of the photographer to the source). A seven-item scale was used to calculate an overall credibility score, which was a mean value for the five-point Likert scale used for the seven items (Greer & Gosen 2002). The seven assessment items were: fair/unfair; biased/unbiased; tells the whole story/doesn’t tell the whole story; can be trusted/cannot be trusted; factual/opinionated; edited well/edited poorly. One of the seven credibility items, (biased/unbiased) was reverse-worded to match its readability for the survey. This item was reverse-coded prior to analysis. For the five photographs, the lower the score, the more credible the photograph was. The five photographs depict a tornado aftermath, a police protection line, a police confrontation, a soldier on militarized vehicle, and refugees on a raft (see Appendix A).

Questions addressing the quality of news photography and the ethics of citizen photojournalists were also used. These questions and scales were modified from Mortensen (2014) and address the attitudes people have towards photojournalists and their coverage of the news. The questions were on a five-point Likert scale: strongly agree, agree, neither agree or disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree. A second round of questions also used a five-point Likert scale: strongly agree, agree, neither agree or disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree. These questions were designed to determine what the audience looks for in news photographs.

Participants

Participants for this study were students in the undergraduate research pool at The University of Alabama, and also others outside the university who received the survey link. The participants from The University of Alabama pool were mostly be made up of the Millennial generation, as this generation has grown up with both newspapers and the Internet news sites. Participants were also recruited through a snowball sampling method, by an anonymous link distributed through social media. This provided a diverse group of participants ranging of 18 and up, with different education and economic backgrounds.

Measures: Independent Variables

The survey questionnaire was created with Qualtrics software to record responses as well as present the stimulus. The independent variables were “Source organization” and “Photographer affiliation with the source organization.” Five photos were used as the stimulus for study participants to judge the credibility of the photographs using the seven-item scale reported by Meyer (1988), and replicated in Greer, & Gosen, (2002). A five-point Likert scale was used, and Meyer reported a Cronbach Alpha of .84 for his scale (example figure located in Appendix A).

Measures: Dependent Variable

The credibility of the photograph was the dependent variable. This was measured by the mean score from the seven-items. Thus, the lower the score, the more believable the photograph was. The five photographs depict a tornado aftermath, a police protection line, a police confrontation, a soldier on militarized vehicle, and refugees on a raft (see Appendix A).

In a pilot study of 48 participants and five photographs, the scale had a Cronbach’s Alpha values for photos 1-5 were: .893, .815, .863, .802, and .880 respectively. Additionally, the mean

inter-item correlations for Figures 1-5 were: .552, .404, .487, .393, and .527 respectively, which all provide favorable indications for further research. The mean scores for each of the seven credibility items were averaged together to create an “Overall Credibility Score.” With a Likert scale of 1 = “Strongly Agree” and a score of 5 = “Strongly Disagree” anything greater than 3 was low credibility and anything lower than 3 was high credibility.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Descriptive Data

This chapter reports on the data collected for this study. First, a description of the individuals who participated in the study is reported in the demographic data section. Second, the data analysis process, specifically, a factor analysis, analysis of variance, and post-hoc tests are described to identify differences and levels of significance between the dependent and independent variables. Third, the chapter concludes with a restatement of the research questions evaluated in this study.

Demographic Data

For this study, 198 participants responded to the online questionnaire between February 15, and April 22, 2017. The majority of survey respondents were students at The University of Alabama; however, a hyperlink to the online survey was posted on social media accounts to increase the diversity of respondent demographics for the survey. The distribution of participant responses for the demographic variables has been placed in Tables 3-8 and can be found in Appendix C.

Gender and Age. Of the 198 participants, 50.5% (n=100) were female and 49.5% (n=98) were male. Participants reported their age in age-groupings, and the distribution of ages is shown in Table 3.

Education Level. Of the 198 participants, 60.1% (n=120) had less than a bachelors' degree, 28.3% (n=56) had completed a bachelor's degree, and 11.1% (n=22) had advanced degrees. The distribution of participant responses for the variable *Education Level* is shown in Table 4.

Frequency of reading the news. Of 198 participants 4.0% reported never reading the news, 10.1% only follow the news during breaking events, 14.1% read the news once a week, and 20.2% read the news 2-3 times a week. 8.1% read the news 4-5 times out of the week, 43.4% read the news every day, and 1% did not respond. The distribution of participant responses for the variable *Frequency of reading the new* is shown in Table 5.

Local news source. Of 198 participants, 10.1% (n=20) reported using print newspapers for local news, 23.7% (n=47) use newspaper websites, 39.9% (n=79) rely on social media, 14.6% (n=29) utilize television, 8.1% (n=16) use a news app, and 3.5% (n=7) use none of these methods. The distribution of participant responses for the variable *Local news source* is shown in Table 6.

National news source. Of 198 participants 0.5% (n=1) reported using print newspapers, 26.5% (n=53) use newspaper websites, 35.5% (n=71) utilize social media, 12.5% (n=25) rely on television, 18.5% (n=37) use a news app, 5.5% (n=11) use none of these methods, and 1% (n=2) individuals did not respond. The distribution of participant responses for the variable *National news source* is shown in Table 7.

International news source. Of 198 participants 0.5% (n=1) reported using printed newspapers, 26.8% (n=53) use newspaper websites, 32.9% (n=71) use social media, 12.6% (n=325) use television, 18.7% (n=37) use a news app, 5.6% (n=11) use none of these methods, and 1% (n=2) individuals did not respond. The distribution of participant responses for the variable *International news source* is shown in Table 8.

Data Analysis

In this study three types of media sources were compared making an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), the appropriate statistical technique. Due to the numerous survey scale items and large number of participants, a factor analysis was needed to reduce and refine the relationships between the numbers before an ANOVA could be performed. The factor analysis is a multi-stage process that verifies sample size, linearity, and factorability.

Factor Analysis

As the initial step in a factor analysis, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) values were examined for the credibility scores for photographs one through five, with the five KMO values being .877, .822, .859, .858, and .854 respectively; all five were significant at (p=.000) for Bartlett's Test of Sphericity indicating the appropriateness of the factor analysis. All Correlation Matrix values contained correlation coefficients greater than .3. The credibility scale demonstrated good internal consistency with a Cronbach alpha coefficient of .93. The ANOVA assumption of unidimensionality was confirmed for the credibility scale using a principal component analysis which also explained total variance in the factor analysis, "Initial Eigenvalues" and the number of components to extract. Verifying the consistency of the data the

Eigenvalues for photographs one through five were 3.781, 3.475, 3.704, 3.683, and 3.586, with only one component extracted for each of the five photographs.

Analysis of Variance

A one-way ANOVA was used because there was one independent variable, media sources (the three media sources were: online, mainstream, fictitious). The ANOVA compares the variance between the three media sources with the variance within each of the three media sources. An F ratio was then calculated and represents the comparison between groups variance divided by the within groups variance. A significant F test indicated that the null hypothesis should be rejected and that the differences between the group mean scores was not due to chance. Finally, post-hoc tests were performed to indicate where the significant differences resided within the many comparisons made.

RQ1 asked: How is the credibility of a news photograph influenced by the source organization (who published the photo)? To measure RQ1, a One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) with Between Subjects Effects showed a significant difference in credibility between the three types of media sources ($F=4.657$, $DF=2$, $p<.01$). A post-hoc analysis of mean credibility differences among pairs of media types revealed significant differences between ‘Mainstream’ and ‘Online’ ($p<.047$) as well as between “Mainstream” and “Fictitious” ($p<.002$) media types, using a Bonferroni adjustment for multiple comparisons. As Table 8 shows, the media source organization of “Mainstream” (with a mean credibility score of 85.9) was not only significantly more credible than “Online” (mean = 93.72), but also significantly more credible than “Fictitious” (mean = 98.38). “Fictitious” and “Online” were not significantly different from each other.

RQ2 asked: How is the credibility of a news photograph influenced by the affiliation of the photographer to the publication? There were significant interactions between the three media sources and two photographer affiliations ($F=3.296$, $DF=2$, $p<.040$). A pairwise comparison of estimated marginal means for the interaction term revealed a difference in credibility between “Staff” and “Contributor” photographers, but only for the “Fictitious” (*Daily Post*, *Citizen Times*, *Peoples’ Constitution*) media type (mean=92.33). The mean difference was significant at the .05 level with a Bonferroni adjustment for multiple comparisons ($p<.046$). ANOVA interactions are reported in Table 1.

Table 1

ANOVA Between Variables:

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	6836.161 ^a	5	1367.232	3.395	.006
Intercept	1350756.151	1	1350756.151	3353.912	.000
Media Type	3751.489	2	1875.745	4.657	.011*
Photo Source	.363	1	.363	.001	.976
Media Type x Photo Source	2655.036	2	1327.518	3.296	.040**
Error	61216.548	152	402.740		
Total	1423828.000	158			
Corrected Total	68052.709	157			

a. R Squared = .100 (Adjusted R Squared = .071)

* = sig. effect of media type (p<.05)

** sig. interaction between media type & photo source (p<.05)

Table 2				
Dependent Variable: Credibility Score (lower = more credible)				
Media Type	Photo Source	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Mainstream	Staff	81.9286	21.89525	28
	Contributor	90.3600	15.90566	25
	Total	* 85.9057	19.58931	53
Fictitious	Staff	** 103.5714	23.63680	28
	Contributor	** 92.3333	18.48540	24
	Total	98.3846	21.95196	52
Online	Staff	92.4815	20.01801	27
	Contributor	95.0000	18.80213	26
	Total	93.7170	19.28568	53
Total	Staff	92.6627	23.42777	83
	Contributor	92.6000	17.64745	75
	Total	92.6329	20.81962	158
* Mainstream is sig. diff. from Fictitious and Online				
** Staff & Contributor are sig. diff. from each other only in Fictitious category				

RQ3 asked: If either RQ1 or RQ2 show significant changes, does it positively or negatively affect the credibility of the news photograph? The differences in credibility appear in Table 2, with the most credible mean score of 81.93 found in the combination of mainstream/staff source, and the least credible mean score of 103.57 found in the fictitious/staff source combination. Survey respondents could rate a photo on a scale of one to five, and since there were seven

factors that were used for five photos, scores could range from a most-credible 35 to a least-credible 175. The range of scores for “Mainstream” was 39 to 117; for “Fictitious” was 51 to 137; for “Online” was 52 to 123. The range of scores for “Mainstream” was numerically lower than the other two media source and indeed, it was found to be significantly lower (and more credible) than “Fictitious” and “Online.”

RQ4 asked: What relationships, if any, exist between credibility perceptions of photography and information related to socioeconomic information, social media use, and other credibility measures? To examine relationships between credibility and other socioeconomic and media types, a One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) with Between Subjects Effects was used and showed no statistically significant interactions. Specifically, there were no significant relationships (interactions) detected between the specific age groups, education levels, political parties, frequency of news reading, and news sources on the local, national and international levels and the dependent measures of media type examined in this study.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This chapter begins by summarizing the results that emerged from the data analysis. Next, the implications from the findings are discussed and are followed by limitations of the study. The chapter concludes with suggestions for further research.

Summary of findings

Photographs provide a strong medium that has empowered civil rights movements, raised awareness of human injustice, and shined light into the darkness of the human condition. With the constant growth of the internet and the explosion of hand-held devices that feed constant interaction, the news industry is still evolving to the new demands of its audience (Meikle, 2016) in the midst of lower revenue. Although citizens desire news feeds of what is happening now, there is also a fundamental need for content that is accurate, unbiased, and in the public's best interest.

This research study used an online survey to determine if the credibility of news photographs was influenced by the source organization (who published the photo) or the source photographer (the affiliation of the photographer to the source). There has been little research done on the relationship of cutlines/captions with a photograph, and how that relationship affects credibility. Previously, photojournalism studies have primarily focused on the editing or alteration of

the photographs and how that relates to ethics or credibility. This study used a “naturalistic” assessment process whereby no direct reference was made to the media source or photographer (similar to readers viewing a photo online or in print media), although all photos displayed these two items in the caption area. Then the survey respondents were asked seven constructed questions concerning the credibility of a photo with no reference to the caption. Respondents viewed five identical photos, but in randomized order, and with manipulation of the two main variables, media source and photographer affiliation. Although seemingly inconspicuous, does manipulation of the media source and/or photographer affiliation influence the credibility of a photograph? Results indicated that the familiarity of the media source significantly impacts the perceived credibility of the photograph. Each of the three media sources was found to be significantly different in perceived credibility from each other (RQ1). There also was a significant interaction between the media source and photographer affiliation, with a significant difference between staff and contributor photographers (RQ2) in the fictitious (or, perhaps better explained as “unfamiliar” to audiences) media source category. Familiar sources scored best (*New York Times, Los Angeles Times, Washington Post*).

In a closer review of the mean values for the three types of media source organizations as shown in Table 8, “Mainstream” scored as the most credible, followed by “Online” and “Fictitious.” These significant differences were detected even when no specific reference was made to the captions placed below each of the five photographs; the survey only asked questions evaluating the credibility of the photograph. The reader’s eye is naturally drawn to the photograph and its cues found in the caption. The media source and photographic affiliation provide cues as to the credibility of the image. These findings suggest that the mainstream organizations (*New York*

Times, Los Angeles Times, Washington Post) possess enough recognizability and credibility to be perceived as more trustworthy and reliable than online focused sources (*BuzzFeed, Huffington Post, Elite Daily*), and even more trustworthy and reliable than fictitious sources (*Daily Post, Citizen Times, Peoples' Constitution*).

These differences in credibility align with messenger credibility theory in that a news article will be more credible if it comes from a trusted news source. In this study, a hard news photograph was substituted for the news article, and different types of news sources were placed in the captions. The subjects in this study obviously detected the sources in the cutlines/captions as “news cues,” and thereby influenced their believability and credibility scores (Callaghan & Schnell, 2009). Message credibility is defined as the believability of the message beginning told to the audience (Self, 2009), and it is believed that the captions associated with a photograph can be looked upon as a cue and part of the message. It is likely the subjects searched for and detected cues in the caption that guided their assessments of photograph credibility. This study did not use a photo that was without a caption/cutline to measure its level of credibility in comparison to the other variables.

With recent insertions of instant news and using crowd sourcing of citizen journalist, the variable of photographer affiliations should not be overlooked as to its impact to overall message credibility. Subjects in this study detected a measurable difference in credibility between the two different photographic affiliations.

Table 2 provided some anticipated results and some surprising results. The anticipated results are that the mainstream media was rated as the most credible, and staff photographers

were rated more credible than contributors regardless of media type. This combination of mainstream + staff was the most credible combination for the study. Fictitious media (*Daily Post, Citizen Times, Peoples' Constitution*) not only produced the least credible score for the three media sources, but it also reversed the typical pattern and rated the contributing photographer more credible than the staff photographer. This gap in credibility was so marked that the contributor was significantly more credible ($p < .05$) than the staff photographer in the control group. One explanation is that although the source organization names were fictitious, they may have been perceived as genuine by the participants and thereby produced inaccurate ratings. Perception of the affiliates and publications is a key factor in this study, and another explanation for the variation in responses is that participants may have perceived the fictitious organizations as more or less credible than the researcher anticipated them to be. Although they are fictitious news sources, their names seem to be authentic and therefore carry a certain level of authenticity and credibility as perceived by the individual. A reading retention check was inserted in the survey instrument to monitor how well participants were reading the questions; however, it was answered by fewer than 20% of the participants.

Because a contributing photographer has unknown ties to the publication, this detaches the photographer's association and credibility from the source and is viewed as a separate news cue. Mainstream media has built a foundation that is hard to break when it comes to eroding away its credibility. Where the publication itself holds credibility, so does the affiliate. The ties are unknown because the reader is mostly not told how the photograph came to the publication from the contributor. In contrast, the staff photographer is recognized as representing the publi-

cation and is treated as one news cue by the viewer. A staff photographer has an obvious connection to the publication. However, in both cases the publication's name carried the majority of the credibility. For smaller offbeat publications, using a contributor could add to, or help gain reader credibility. Larger mainstream media should hesitate with the use of contributing photographers, as there appears to be a disassociation between the established credibility of the mainstream source and the unknown credibility of someone outside of the organization. The contributor is seen as a separate news cue and thereby has a separate credibility level. Even with this news cue the established media sources were hardly affect due to their previously standing credibility.

With continual changes in technology to share news come continual changes in receiving the news. Citizen input may become an even more standard practice in the future as handheld devices record audio and video content and are analyzed and transmitted in the desire for instant news. With instant news, however, comes the caution of fabricated or unverifiable news, which in actuality isn't news. These concerns will need to be addressed by future generations as technology becomes more advanced, which will likely place a greater emphasis on messenger credibility.

The final research question, RQ4 asked: What relationships, if any, exist between credibility perceptions of photography and information related to socioeconomic information, social media use, and other credibility measures? This question also produced results that were somewhat surprising in that there was no interaction effects detected (measurable impact) between media type and age, education level, political party, frequency of news reading, or news sources on the local, national and international levels shown in Tables 6, 7, and 8. A possible explanation is that credibility ratings are stable regardless of age, gender, education level and frequency of

new reading. Another explanation is that due to the high frequency of students (68.2% were under the age of 25), a more diverse sample would have produced different results. This is discussed further in the limitations section.

Theoretical Implications

This study further demonstrated that Messenger Credibility Theory is not limited to text, but also applies to visual media. Through a designed manipulation of the media source and the photographer's affiliation, the credibility of a photograph (as determined by its seven elements) can be positively and negatively impacted. Within the limitations of this study, it was also demonstrated that photograph creditability is not affected by race, age, biological sex, or education level of those viewing the photograph.

Industry Implications

As the news industry follows the trend of citizen journalists and contributing photographers, publishers should be cognizant of the impact photographic cutlines can have on the credibility of a photograph and by extension, the story. Citizen journalism is the equivalent of crowd sourcing the news. Having an increase of contributors would likely have minimal impact on a story's credibility but that would need to be evaluated in a future study. As online and instant news grows, so does the need for further research in this area. People want news quickly, and in situations of "hard" news, they want news that is credible. This study measured photograph credibility by using hard news photographs. Future research could examine the need or impact of photographer affiliation or source credibility for "soft" news photographs. Another future study could examine the reading choices made as influenced by its accompanying photograph with cutline.

The results from this study indicate it does make a difference who provides the content and photograph when “credibility” is essential to the content. This finding is significant to the evolving field of visual journalism and messenger credibility. For unfamiliar or new publications this spells good news — freelance photography is a competitive market and can lead to lower prices for content. As for the difference between using staff or contributing photographers for mainstream media, there was a slight drop in credibility with contributing photographers but not nearly as noteworthy as the credibility levels for photographs found in the online and fictitious media sources. This means high-price staff members are only as good as the content they are able to produce. The unknown from this study is if there is a noticeable drop in photo quality from contributing sources, then this source of photography would no longer be welcomed by media sources.

Limitations

Sampling used mostly The University of Alabama’s College of Communications and Information Sciences participant pool, which consists of undergraduate students, who might be more familiar with media effects surveys from their coursework therefore leading them to answer differently from a general population. These participants may also have had personal experience in this area or aspire to work for online-focused or mainstream media publications. There was no recording of class level or academic major, so students could be highly knowledgeable about news events and media outlets, or they could be unaware of the field of photojournalism. While steps were taken to ensure the participants did not have prior knowledge of the questions and the analysis plan for the responses, the participants may hold media brand credibility at different levels than the general public. In addition to the lack of academic major diversity, there

was a lack of racial diversity as well. The study sample consisted mostly of white students with very few minorities represented. This lack of diversity in the participant pool may limit generalizations to other segments of the population.

Future studies

Photographs are the entry points for media and provide the first thing the reader sees on a printed or online page. What they see in the graphic as well as the outline guides all subsequent decisions about reading the headline, reading the story or merely moving on to a different page. Future research in this new area of photograph credibility needs further exploration. Due to the limited diversity in participants, a future study would be to select participants on a nationwide level. This would allow for a more complete understanding of the applications in regards to readers. Another study on this topic would be to measure the impact of the photograph with a news article to determine if the credibility of a news article is reduced because the photograph is from a contributor versus staff. This could be done by placing the photograph in written news articles to determine if the article loses credibility because a contributor provided a photograph, rather than a staff member. This research study only had two items on the page: a photo and a caption. The future studies would add a headline and story to these two items to determine how the four items combine to determine overall credibility.

This study used five “hard news” photographs. Another study could examine how well does the importance of a mainstream source translate when the photographs are about “soft news.” This study used three types of media sources, with one being traditional (mainstream), a

second being contemporary (online), and the third providing a contrast as the unknown or fictitious. Unfortunately, the third source may have been interpreted in many different ways, which would need to be clarified or removed from future studies.

In summary, the objective of this study was to determine if the media source or photographer affiliation had any measurable impact on the credibility of a photograph. This study provides a strong indication it does. The findings from this study complement previous work in this area related to cues, message and messenger credibility. The implications for the media industry indicate that when images are used for hard news, the cutline/caption is scanned to assist the reader to determine credibility. This process may then impact returning to that website in the future if reader desires a credible photo. The biggest take away from the study is that readers do scan cutlines/captions to make a credibility determination, and the source organization and the photographer's affiliation play a role in that determination. Credibility is life-blood of journalism, and "without it, news organizations cannot fulfill the democratic duty of properly disseminating the truth to the public" (Saleh, 2016, p. 1328). One of the most powerful mediums of storytelling can be altered and influenced by the media source and photographer affiliation.

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APPENDIX A

Photographic References



Figure 1. Eisenstaedt, A. (1945). *V-J Day in Times Square* [digital image]. Retrieved from <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/science-debunks-wwii-kiss-photo-couples-claim-to-fame/>



Figure 2. Carter, K. (1993). *The vulture and the little girl* [digital image]. Retrieved from <https://iconicphotos.wordpress.com/2009/08/12/vulture-stalking-a-child>



Figure 3. Contreras, N. (2013). *Syrian opposition fighter* [digital image]. Retrieved from <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/media/pulitzer-prize-winning-photographer-narciso-contreras-sacked-for-altering-syria-picture-9079504.html>

Please analyze the photograph and the statement below. In the boxes mark each phrase that best represents how you feel. (3 is neutral)



Turkish tanks on Saturday driving from Karkamis, Turkey, across the border into Syria. Huffington Post, Contributor

The Photograph above is

	1	2	3	4	5	
Is fair	<input type="radio"/>	Is unfair				
Is biased	<input type="radio"/>	Is unbiased				
Tells the whole story	<input type="radio"/>	Doesn't tell the whole story				
Is accurate	<input type="radio"/>	Is inaccurate				
Is factual	<input type="radio"/>	Is opinionated				
Was well edited	<input type="radio"/>	Was edited poorly				
Can be trusted	<input type="radio"/>	Cannot be trusted				

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Figure 4. Example question from the study.



Figure 5. Bulent Kilic (2016). *Turkish soldiers head to Syria from the border city of Karkamis in Turkey's southern region of Gaziantep on Saturday* [digital image]. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/clashes-intensify-between-us-backed-groups-in-northern-syria/2016/08/28/77f46cea-6d32-11e6-993f73c693a89820_story.html?utm_term=.c1ca2b03800e

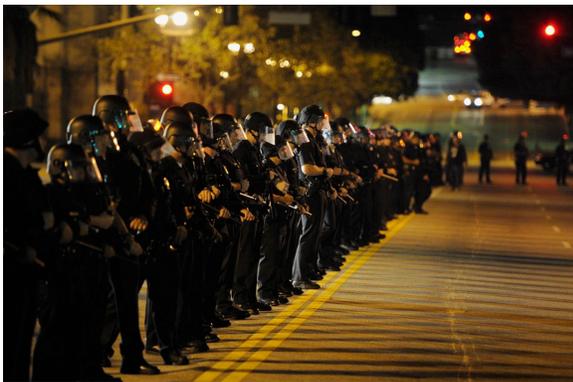


Figure 6. Getty Images (2011). *Prepared: Police in riot gear line the street to push the demonstrators back into the park during the protest* [digital image]. <http://www.dalymail.co.uk/news/article-2067040/Occupy-LA-Streets-open-protesters-hold-early-morning-demonstration.html#ixzz4hlRegQLi>



Figure 7. Goldman, D. (2014). *Police officers confront protesters after the announcement of the grand jury decision not to indict police officer Darren Wilson in the fatal shooting of Michael Brown on Nov. 24, 2014, in Ferguson, Mo.* [digital image]. <http://abcnews.go.com/US/photos/anticipation-reaction-ferguson-grand-jury-decision-27148186/image-27153358>



Figure 8. Ogrocki, S. (2013). *A woman carries her child through a field near the collapsed Plaza Towers Elementary School in Moore, Okla., on Monday.* [digital image]
<https://www.usatoday.com/story/weather/2013/05/20/tornadoes-severe-weather-plains-mid-west/2325875/>



Figure 9. PA Wire (2016). *Syrian migrants arrive at the coast on a dinghy after crossing from Turkey, at the island of Lesbos, Greece.* [digital media] <http://www.gazettelive.co.uk/news/tees-side-news/police-investigate-leaflet-claimed-syrians-12245971>

APPENDIX B

Thesis Survey

Q1 Welcome!

Thank you for taking this survey. This survey is being used for my thesis research focusing on the credibility of photojournalism. The results from you and those from your peers will be used to better understand the perceived credibility assigned to news photographs in print and online formats.

Please know that you may skip any questions you want, and you do not have to complete the survey if you do not want to. All of your answers will be kept anonymous so please answer honestly.

Thank you,
Jonathan M. Norris
Graduate Student Candidate
University of Alabama

Q3 What is your biological sex?

- Male (1)
- Female (2)

Q4 Are you Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino or none of these?

- Yes (1)
- None of these (2)

Q5 Which of the following races do you consider yourself to be? (select all that apply)

- White or Caucasian (1)
- Black or African American (2)
- American Indian or Alaska Native (3)
- Asian (4)
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (5)
- Other (specify) (6) _____

Q6 What is your age?

- Under 18 (1)
- 18 - 24 (2)
- 25 - 34 (3)
- 35 - 44 (4)
- 45 - 54 (5)
- 55 - 64 (6)
- 65 - 74 (7)
- 75 - 84 (8)
- 85 or older (9)

Q7 What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

- Less than high school degree (1)
- High school graduate (high school diploma or equivalent including GED) (2)
- Some college but no degree (3)
- Associate degree in college (2-year) (4)
- Bachelor's degree in college (4-year) (5)
- Master's degree (6)
- Doctoral degree (7)
- Professional degree (JD, MD) (8)

Q149 Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or something else?

- Republican (1)
- Democrat (2)
- Independent (3)
- Other (4) _____
- No preference (5)

Q9 Part 2

Next we'd like to learn about your how much you view the news and use social media. Please tell us about your use of these types of media.

Q10 How often do you read the news?

- Never (1)
- Only during "breaking news" events (2)
- Once a week (3)
- 2-3 times a week (4)
- 4-5 times a week (5)
- Every day (6)

Q11 Please check one response for each of the following items

	Printed newspaper (1)	Newspaper website (2)	Social Media (3)	Television (4)	A news app (5)	None of these (6)
Which source do you go to most often for local news? (1)	<input type="radio"/>					
Which source do you go to most often for national news? (2)	<input type="radio"/>					
Which source do you go to most often for international news? (3)	<input type="radio"/>					

Q12 Do you have a smart phone?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q13 How many social media apps do you have on your phone?

- 0 (1)
- 1 (2)
- 2 (3)
- 3 (4)
- 4 (5)
- 5 or more (6)

Q14 Do you get alerts (push notification) OF NEWS on your smart phone?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q15 Approximately, how much time did you spend on Twitter yesterday either on your computer or on your smart phone?

- 0 minutes (1)
- 1-10 minutes (2)
- 11- 30 minutes (3)
- 30- 60 minutes (4)
- 60 minutes or more (5)

Q16 Please indicate how much you agree with the following statement:

Yesterday, I checked Twitter several times during the day for news and information.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- agree (4)
- strongly agree (5)

Q17 How long were you on Facebook YESTERDAY either on your phone or on a computer?

- 0 minutes (1)
- 1-10 minutes (2)
- 11- 30 minutes (3)
- 30- 60 minutes (4)
- 60 minutes or more (5)

Q18 How many times did you check Facebook YESTERDAY?

- None (1)
- Once (2)
- Twice (3)
- Three times (4)
- Four or more times (5)

Q19 How many times did you check Twitter YESTERDAY?

- None (1)
- Once (2)
- Twice (3)
- Three times (4)
- Four or more times (5)

Q146 Would you say that you click on news-related links from social media apps like Facebook or Twitter? For example, would you click on a news story about a plane crash if you saw the story posted on Facebook?

- Definitely yes (1)
- Probably yes (2)
- Might or might not (3)
- Probably not (4)
- Definitely not (5)

Q20 Approximately how many times did you click on news-related links from Facebook YESTERDAY?

- None (1)
- Once (2)
- Twice (3)
- Three times (4)
- Four or more times (5)

Q21 How many times did you click on news-related links from Twitter YESTERDAY?

- None (1)
- Once (2)
- Twice (3)
- Three times (4)
- Four or more times (5)

Q100 Please analyze the photograph and the statement below. In the boxes, mark each phrase that best represents how you feel.

Q101



Los Angeles Times, Staff

Police and protestors clash Thursday night in Ferguson, Missouri.

Q102 The Photograph above

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Is fair: Is unfair (1)					
Is biased: Is unbiased (2)					
Tells the whole story: Doesn't tell the whole story (3)					
Is accurate: Is inaccurate (4)					
Is factual: Is opinionated (5)					
Was well edited: Was edited poorly (6)					
Can be trusted: Cannot be trusted (7)					

Q149 Comprehension Check This is to ensure you are paying attention to the study.

Q104 Please indicate the name of any publications you have seen attributed in the outlines of this survey.

Q105 Please analyze the photograph and the statement below. In the boxes mark each phrase that best represents how you feel.

Q106



Washington Post, Staff

Police wait in riot gear during protests in Washington, D.C. on Thursday.

Q107 The Photograph above is

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Is fair: Is unfair (1)					
Is biased: Is unbiased (2)					
Tells the whole story: Doesn't tell the whole story (3)					
Is accurate: Is inaccurate (4)					
Is factual: Is opinionated (5)					
Was well edited: Was edited poorly (6)					
Can be trusted: Cannot be trusted (7)					

Q108 Please analyze the photograph and the statement below. In the boxes mark each phrase that best represents how you feel.

Q109



New York Times, Staff

Maria Gonzales carries her 7-year-old niece away from the rubble of their home in Joplin, Missouri, following an EF-5 tornado that destroyed most of the city.

Q110 The Photograph above is

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Is fair: Is unfair (1)					
Is biased: Is unbiased (2)					
Tells the whole story: Doesn't tell the whole story (3)					
Is accurate: Is inaccurate (4)					
Is factual: Is opinionated (5)					
Was well edited: Was edited poorly (6)					
Can be trusted: Cannot be trusted (7)					

Q111 Please analyze the photograph and the statement below. In the boxes mark each phrase that best represents how you feel.

Q112



Los Angeles Times, Staff

Turkish tanks driving from Karkamis, Turkey, cross the border into Syria on Saturday.

Q113 The Photograph above is

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Is fair: Is unfair (1)					
Is biased: Is unbiased (2)					
Tells the whole story: Doesn't tell the whole story (3)					
Is accurate: Is inaccurate (4)					
Is factual: Is opinionated (5)					
Was well edited: Was edited poorly (6)					
Can be trusted: Cannot be trusted (7)					

Q114 Please analyze the photograph and the statement below. In the boxes mark each phrase that best represents how you feel.

Q115



Washington Post, Staff

Syrian refugees make their way to the Greek island of Lesbos on Monday.

Q116 The Photograph above is

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Is fair: Is unfair (1)					
Is biased: Is unbiased (2)					
Tells the whole story: Doesn't tell the whole story (3)					
Is accurate: Is inaccurate (4)					
Is factual: Is opinionated (5)					
Was well edited: Was edited poorly (6)					
Can be trusted: Cannot be trusted (7)					

Q22 Now we would like to know how you feel about the credibility of news sources.

Q23 Please indicate how believable you feel each of the news sources listed below is: (0 not at all, 10 very believable)

- _____ Broadcast Television (1)
- _____ Printed Newspaper (2)
- _____ Social Media like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc. (3)
- _____ Newspaper website (NYT.com) (4)
- _____ TV station Website (CNN.com) (5)
- _____ New media sites (Buzzfeed) (6)

Q24 Please indicate how trustworthy you feel each news source is below. (0 not at all, 10 very trustworthy meaning how reliable you would find this source to be)

- _____ Los Angeles Times (1)
- _____ New York Times (2)
- _____ Washington Post (3)
- _____ Buzzfeed.com (4)
- _____ Elitedaily.com (5)
- _____ Huffingtonpost.com (6)
- _____ Peoples' Constitution (7)
- _____ Citizen Times (8)
- _____ Daily Post (9)

Q25 How often do you refer to other to news sources for confirmation of a news story you have read? For example, if you see a story on one website or on a social media post, how often would you verify the information from another source?

- Very Frequently (1)
- Frequently (2)
- Occasionally (3)
- Rarely (4)
- Very rarely (5)

Q150 Read the following and mark the answer that best expresses your feelings about photojournalism.

	Strongly agree (14)	Agree (15)	Neither agree nor disagree (16)	Disagree (17)	Strongly disa- gree (18)
News media should provide accurate portrayals of the diverse constituencies in society. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is OK for journalists to post information online before it can be verified as truthful. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Journalists should show compassion for inexperienced people who happen to find themselves in the news. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Professional news photography is often “staged” or posed to make images look better. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is ethical for a photojournalist to use computer software to rearrange elements in an image. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q151 Read the following statements and mark the answer that best expresses your feelings about news photography.

	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly disagree (5)
Blurriness and small imperfections can lend a sense of authenticity to a photograph. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Most photojournalists can anticipate the precise moment to shoot the best photograph. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
News photographs are usually best when they portray a human element. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
News photographs look most professional when they are perfectly centered. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Impact in news photography is enhanced by getting close to fill the frame. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Photojournalists should use their news images as a form of self-expression. (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

<p>Photos that capture happy moments in everyday life make good news images. (7)</p>	<input type="radio"/>				
<p>News photographers should try to take photographs of something out of the ordinary. (8)</p>	<input type="radio"/>				
<p>A mark of a professional news photograph is that it has a balanced composition. (9)</p>	<input type="radio"/>				
<p>A mark of a good news photographer is that they know how to use lighting effectively. (10)</p>	<input type="radio"/>				
<p>It is important that photojournalists capture an image that will grab the viewer's attention. (11)</p>	<input type="radio"/>				
<p>The most valuable news photographs tend to depict some kind of conflict. (12)</p>	<input type="radio"/>				

Q1000 Thanks for participating in this study. We thought you'd like to know a little bit about what we were interested in studying. We wanted to know the effects attributions have on a photograph's credibility.

We have collected responses to measure the credibility of the photographer. We have collected responses to measure the accuracy of the cutlines with the image.

We have collected responses to measure how the status of a publishing organization may impact the credibility of a photograph.

Please, share this survey with friends and family for more data collection.

If you would know the findings or have any questions please feel free to email me at jmnorris1@crimson.ua.edu

APPENDIX C

Tables 3 – 8

Table 3 Response by Age Group		
Age group	Frequency	Percent
Under 18	6	3.0
18-24	129	65.2
25-34	41	20.7
35-44	10	5.1
45-54	3	1.5
55-64	7	3.5
65-74	1	0.5
75-84	1	0.5
Total	198	100

Table 4 Response by Education Level		
Education Level	Frequency	Percent
Less than high school degree	4	2.0
High school graduate (high school diploma or equivalent including GED)	31	15.7
Some college but no degree	81	40.9
Associate degree in college (2-year)	4	2.0
Bachelor's degree in college (4-year)	56	28.3
Master's degree	19	9.6
Doctoral degree	1	0.5
Professional degree (JD, MD)	2	1.0
Total	198	100

Table 5		
How often do you read the news?		
Frequency of news reading	Frequency	Percent
Never	8	4.0
Only during "breaking news" events	20	10.1
Once a week	28	14.1
2-3 times a week	40	20.2
4-5 times a week	16	8.1
Every day	86	43.4
Total	198	100

Table 6

Which source do you go to most often for local news?

Source for local news	Frequency	Percent
Printed newspaper	20	10.1
Newspaper website	47	23.7
Social Media	79	39.9
Television	29	14.6
A news app	16	8.1
None of these	7	3.5
Total	198	100

Table 7		
Which source do you go to most often for national news?		
Source for national news	Frequency	Percent
Printed newspaper	1	0.5
Newspaper website	53	26.8
Social Media	71	35.9
Television	25	12.6
A news app	37	18.7
None of these	11	5.6
Total	198	100

Table 8

Which source do you go to most often for international news?

Source for international news	Frequency	Percent
Printed newspaper	2	1.0
Newspaper website	54	27.3
Social Media	65	32.8
Television	31	15.7
A news app	35	17.7
None of these	11	5.6
Total	198	100

APPENDIX D

IRB

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA[®] | Office of the Vice President for
Research & Economic Development
Office for Research Compliance

January 9, 2017

Jonathan Michael Norris
Dept. of Journalism
CCIS
Box 870172

Re: IRB#: 17-OR-012 "Credibility of Photojournalism in Changing Times"

Dear Mr. Norris:

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board has granted approval for your proposed research.

Your application has been given expedited approval according to 45 CFR part 46. You have also been granted the requested waiver of written documentation of informed consent. Approval has been given under expedited review category 7 as outlined below:

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies

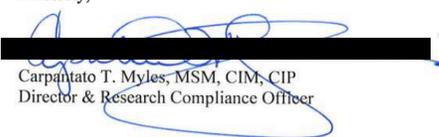
Your application will expire on January 8, 2018. If your research will continue beyond this date, complete the relevant portions of the IRB Renewal Application. If you wish to modify the application, complete the Modification of an Approved Protocol Form. Changes in this study cannot be initiated without IRB approval, except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants. When the study closes, complete the appropriate portions of the IRB Request for Study Closure Form.

Please use reproductions of the IRB approved stamped consent/assent forms to obtain consent from your participants.

Should you need to submit any further correspondence regarding this proposal, please include the above application number.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,


Carpentato T. Myles, MSM, CIM, CIP
Director & Research Compliance Officer

358 Rose Administration Building | Box 870127 | Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0127
205-348-8461 | Fax 205-348-7189 | Toll Free 1-877-820-3066

IRB Project #: 17-02-012

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS
REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

I. Identifying information

	Principal Investigator	Second Investigator	Third Investigator
Names:	Jonathan Michael Norris	Kimberly Bissell	
Department:	Journalism	Journalism	
College:	C&IS	C&IS	
University:	Alabama	Alabama	
Address:	601 11th Street #335 Cornerstone Apts Tuscaloosa Al 35401	490 Reese-Phifer Hall	
Telephone:	912 230 4456	205 348 8247	
FAX:	N/A	N/A	
E-mail:	jmnorris1@crimson.ua.edu	kbissell@ua.edu	

Title of Research Project: Credibility of Photojournalism in Changing Times

Date Submitted: 11.03.16

Funding Source: None

Type of Proposal	<input checked="" type="radio"/> New	Revision	Renewal Please attach a renewal application	Completed	Exempt
Please attach a continuing review of studies form					
Please enter the original IRB # at the top of the page					

UA faculty or staff member signature: _____

II. NOTIFICATION OF IRB ACTION (to be completed by IRB):

Type of Review: _____ Full board Expedited

IRB Action:

Rejected Date: _____

Tabled Pending Revisions Date: _____

Approved Pending Revisions Date: _____

Approved-this proposal complies with University and federal regulations for the protection of human subjects.

Approval is effective until the following date: 1/8/2018

Items approved: Research protocol (dated _____)

Informed consent (dated _____)

Recruitment materials (dated _____)

Other walves of written doc (dated _____)

Approval signature  Date 1/9/2017



INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT [Appendix A]

Credibility of Photojournalism in Changing Times

The purpose of this study is to measure attitudes about the credibility of a photograph as it relates to its story / subject, and the affiliation of the photographer who provided the photo. Your participation is requested based on your enrollment in a course in the College of Communication and Information Sciences, which requires research participation for class credit.

What the study is about: The questionnaire will help determine the credibility of the photographs by their attribution. Photographs are entry points for many stories

What we will ask you to do: If you consent to participate you will be questions about your participation in media, after being prompted with a published news photograph will be asked about the believability of the photograph. The survey will be online and take about 30 minutes to complete. For all the questions in the survey, **there are no right or wrong answers**. The questions are simply opportunities for you to provide your own personal views and opinions.

Risks and benefits: There is the risk that you may find some of the photographs sensitive or graphic.

Taking part is voluntary: Taking this survey is **completely voluntary**. By acknowledging the agreement statement below by clicking continue, you are indicating your consent to provide your opinions. If at any time you wish to stop filling out the survey, you may. You may stop at any time.

Your answers will be confidential: Your **identity will be kept completely confidential**. Any connection between your identity and your responses will immediately be eliminated. So feel free to be entirely honest and candid in your responses.

The researchers conducting this study are Jonathan Norris and Dr. Kim Bissell. If you have any questions at any time, please feel free to call Jonathan Norris at (912) 230-4456 or email at jmnorris1@crimson.ua.edu. If you have questions later today or at a later date, you may contact Jonathan Norris at (912) 230-4456 or email at jmnorris1@crimson.ua.edu. You can reach Dr. Bissell at kbissel@ua.edu.

Statement of Consent: I have read the above information, and have received answers to any questions I asked. By clicking "Continue", I voluntarily agree to participate in this survey.

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA IRB
CONSENT FORM APPROVED: 11/9/17
EXPIRATION DATE: 11/8/2018

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