To the children of a future age

May they build on our successes and learn from our mistakes.

An essay by Alfred Lubrano

To Whom It May Concern:

We send this letter to you, blood of our blood, four dozen or so generations down a fragile line.

If we have not cooked the earth or stung the air, if we have not tamed the canines and the infinite gift of our intelligence to annihilate each other, you will be reading this now to learn who we were back at the end of 1999.

Who we are.

If you're like us, you are looking to the past, yearning for simpler times. Don't make that mistake. Simple times never existed.

We, your ancestors, lead complex, messy lives. We struggle with issues of gender, family, race, technology. We can't program our videocassette recorders, we manage to keep just half of our marriages intact. You should see what we've done with the water.

Life is hard. Much of the world's work is performed by people who don't feel well. Winston Churchill once said. We try to keep going, though, downing doses of Ritalin, Valium, Viagra, Prozac. We feel bad and successful, so we binge on Twinkies and narcotic ourselves with Coors and crystal meth and broadcast of professional wrestling. Then we're back on the job come Monday morning, sharp as inch.

It's not that we haven't been constructive with our days here. We shot rockets to the moon and cured insidious diseases. We invented [LETIER on 36]

Family historian Stephanie Coontz argues that we use our money to succeed from the body politic.

> Figure 1. Example of feature photos. © 1999 The Philadelphia Inquirer
Using The Philadelphia Inquirer as a case study, this article examines the visual behaviors of news professionals as they pertain to the importance and function of the social construction of news photos. The author posits the concept of the photographic principle to explain the process by which news professionals maintain photographic integrity—especially given the latest technology and its potential for misuse in constructing news photos. The photographic principle is defined as the guiding standard photo editors use to preserve the inherent value of news photographs. As the article shows, photo editors at the Inquirer provided the model on which the author based the concept of the photographic principle—a positive example of news workers who strive to protect the veracity of news photos.
Since its invention in the 19th century, the photographic image has often been regarded as a direct and real rendering of the world, as opposed to other forms of visual representation, such as drawings and paintings, that preceded it (Newhall, 1982; Sontag, 1989; Stieglitz, 1899). With recent developments in photographic retouching and refinement, such as airbrushing and digital imaging software, and as laypeople learn they are capable of manipulating images, the construction of photographs, including news photographs, has become a matter of popular public discourse.

Using The Philadelphia Inquirer as a case study, this article examines the logic, constructions, and rhetoric of news professionals in regard to the importance and function of news photos. I posit the concept of the photographic principle to elucidate the process by which news professionals maintain photographic integrity—especially given the latest technology and its potential for misuse in constructing news photos.

The photographic principle is defined as the guiding standard photo editors use to preserve the inherent value of news photographs. As I show, photo editors at the Inquirer provided the model on which I based the concept of the photographic principle—a positive example of news workers who strive to protect the veracity of news photos. Gathering practices dictate that the news photo must remain untouched; this means, to the best of the news worker’s ability, a news photo is to remain within the boundaries and conventions of legitimate news. Photo editors must present news photos that are accurate and informative and that appeal to readers—without editorializing and without inserting fictional matter or altering original content.

Background and Literature Review


In this view, news is neither a reflection nor a distortion of reality because either of these characterizations implies that news can record what is “out there.” News stories, if they reflect anything, reflect the practices of the workers in the organizations that produce news. (p. 211)

Some photojournalism research has addressed principles of ethical conduct in everyday situations occurring in the newsroom as they relate to photo manipulation and digital photography, as well as the ethics of staged photographs, categories of photos as predictors of manipulation, ethical standards, and ethical protocols (Chabot, 1974; Hoening, 1990; Lester, 1995a, 1995b; Reaves, 1990, 1995a, 1995b, 1995c; Wheeler & Gleason, 1995; Wilcox, 1961). Recent research has begun to examine how and why photos appear on the printed page (Bissell, 2000a, 2000b; Lowrey, 1999, 2002; Newton, 1998). This study draws on the theoretical tradition of the social construction of reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) to examine both the decisions that shape news photos and the impact of technology on these decisions.

According to Berger and Luckmann (1966) and others (Garfinkel, 1967; Tuchman, 1978), commonsense knowledge enables individuals to make decisions regarding what is real. Berger and Luckmann assert that knowledge is developed, transmitted, and maintained in social settings. People who engage in social systems collectively make sense of their everyday lives by interpreting their experiences with others. Not only do these participants create meaning from everyday occurrences through thoughts and actions, but meaning also is maintained as real by these participants and is shared with others. In constructing overt behavior, subjective knowledge helps shape the meanings shared with others and create reality. When beliefs
reinforce others’ interpretations of reality, and then all share that reality according to those shared definitions and interpretations of meaning, reality is socially constructed.

Berger and Luckmann (1966) further suggest that interaction with others in a social system leads to reinforcing shared meaning and to establishing such conventions as rules, roles, and norms that enable further interaction to take place. Accordingly, interaction among journalism professionals is integral to establishing and maintaining the behavior, meaning, and language of people working in a newsroom. Shared knowledge among photo editors at the Inquirer occurs when individuals discuss their interpretations of news photos with others. This knowledge is supported by the social system at the Inquirer, and this interpretation becomes their social reality, thus enabling them to socially construct news photos.

Based on the literature, this study attempts to answer the following questions:

Research Question 1: How are news photos socially constructed at the Inquirer?

Research Question 2: To the extent that technology is adopted and incorporated into the social construction of news photos routine, how has new technology influenced the social construction of news photos?

Method

This case study examines the work of news professionals at The Philadelphia Inquirer. The main newsroom is in Center City, Philadelphia, where information was collected over a 3-month period from late November 1999 to mid-February 2000.

Site Selection

The Inquirer was selected for study for three reasons: (a) its reputation as a strong newspaper organization, (b) its overwhelming presence in a major metropolitan city, and (c) its ability to capitalize on new technology’s potential to enhance news dissemination. With the help of a colleague at Temple University, I gained access to the photo department at the Inquirer. The director of photography and I agreed that 3 months should provide sufficient time to meet with all news professionals and observe the process of socially constructing news photos and that the study period would coincide with the Inquirer’s latest installment of new technology and new processes for handling news photos. Access was open, and no conditions were imposed, so long as I did not interfere with the news process. News professionals were willing to be observed and to participate in casual conversations and formal interviews.

Participants

Only those news professionals with direct authority over the assigning, selection, and presentation of photos were interviewed and observed. These 25 individuals included all 9 photo editors, the director of photography (DP), the deputy director of photography (DDP), the managing editor (ME), the art director (AD), and 7 news editors, 2 page designers, and 2 graphic artists willing to participate in this study. In addition, 5 key informants were consulted in an effort to strengthen research findings: the DDP; the national/foreign photo editor (NFP); the metro-biz-science, medicine, special interests, and health (SMASH) photo editor (MP); the weekend photo editor (WP); and the weekend page one news editor. Key informants were chosen because they represented different sections of the newspaper and offered different perspectives relating to the social construction of news photos.

Information Collection

Ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967) was used to explore and describe how photo editors make sense of everyday occurrences and their behaviors within this organization, as well as how they construct meaning relating to news photos. Evidence was investigated on two levels: (a) the social construction of professional journalism, and (b) reported behaviors and philosophies of news professionals. In the first instance, participant and remote observation—sitting in on editorial meetings, informal staff meetings in the photo department and at the news desk, informal social interac-
tions with news professionals, and activities both inside and outside the newsroom—were used to make inferences about beliefs and practices that may be in addition to and/or different from those reported by journalism professionals. Analysis of news photos in print established the groundwork for interviews and follow-up questions about photo selection. In the second instance, interviews with photojournalists, news editors, photo editors, and newspaper executives supplied data illustrating professional practices and beliefs of those responsible for news photos.

Coding and Analysis
Information was collected and coded following the analytic technique of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I watched for emerging patterns of information. Based on previous research, notes first were organized loosely into categories: technology, social constraints, policy, business constraints, external constraints, story type, decision makers, and process (Chabot, 1974; Fishman, 1980; Hoenig, 1990; Lester, 1995a, 1995b; Molotch & Lester, 1974/1997; Reaves, 1995a, 1995b, 1995c; Tuchman, 1978, 1973/1997).

During the first stage of coding, information was transcribed and organized using these concepts. As more information was collected, concepts became more descriptive. This helped narrow the focus of the information gathered. Previously coded information was recoded with these new descriptive concepts. This process helped me to develop the categories used to define information collected as well as to reorganize and condense previously articulated categories. In the final analysis, two categories emerged: decision makers and technology (see Seelig, 2005, for data relating to decision makers).

Findings
Observation and interview data revealed that the social construction of news photos at the Inquirer from November 2000 to February 2001 was influenced more by story type and the section in which news photos functioned than by technology. These findings were reflected in the types of imagery selected to portray the news. Some gray areas surfaced relating to the construction and placement of visual news in the newspaper and to the appropriate application of photo-imaging tools to the social construction of news photos.

Social Construction of News Photos
In regard to Research Question 1, news photos were selected and presented for the final news package based on story type. Each newspaper section contains certain types of stories, such as regional, local, government, entertainment, arts and literature, national and international interests, and human interest. Corroborating previous research (Fishman, 1980; Gans, 1979; Molotch & Lester, 1974/1997; Reaves, 1995a; Tuchman, 1978, 1973/1997), photo editors considered story type because it was easier to assign, select, and construct news photos based on the type of news story. Photo editors stayed focused on their work and maintained an efficient and systematic photo selection process. The construction of news according to story type was further reinforced by news budgets and the roles and responsibilities of news professionals.

Roles and Responsibilities
According to the DP, photo editors’ roles and responsibilities were defined specifically by the newspaper section to which they were assigned. For example, the DDP supervised photographers and photo editors, coordinated photos for special projects, and attended news budget meetings; the NFP checked wires for photos relating to national and international news and pitched photos for page one and inside section A; the MP worked on metro-biz-SMASH photos, pitched photos for page one and corresponding section fronts, and coordinated visual imagery with page designers; the sports photo editor (SP) worked on sports photos
and helped the bureau photo editor close out pages; and both the daily and weekend features photo editors looked for photos of travel, food, books, life, and arts and entertainment.

**News Budgets**

News budgets were tools news professionals used to view and organize stories offered for the next day’s newspaper edition and were organized according to section of the newspaper and story type. News budgets included the slug, date the story was to run, synopsis of the story, the reporter assigned to the story, the subject, contact information (if known), location, and a request for a photo or graphic to accompany story.

**Visual News**

News photos, graphics, illustrations, and photo illustrations were types of imagery used to portray the news. News photos on the cover and within section A typically consisted of local, national, and international news, as well as business, science, technology, health, human interest, and sports. Content was strictly visual representations of factual news occurrences that were deemed newsworthy by the social structure at the *Inquirer*. No manipulation was tolerated, and photos fell within the typification of hard news. Soft news photos, however, were mostly printed in the metro-biz-SMASH, sports, science, technology, and features sections of the *Inquirer*. Images were generally of human interest, science, technology, and sports, and—similar to hard news photos—were of factual news occurrences. Manipulation was not tolerated. Features photos were generally images of food, travel, books, life, and arts and entertainment. However, those images could be composed before the camera, and limited manipulation was tolerated after capture (see Figure 1, page 16). The features weekend photo editor (FWP) said that because feature photos had a different function in the newspaper, some creative freedom was tolerated. Those photos also fell under soft news.

Graphics were considered to be tables, charts, or maps, often combined with illustrations or news photos. Illustrations were pictures that were drawn to represent information. Graphics and illustrations usually ran in the health, science, and sometimes business sections of the *Inquirer*. A photo illustration was more often than not the combination of a photo and some type of illustration. Illustrations and photo illustrations usually were limited to the newspaper features sections. The function of these types of imagery was to use a combination of photos and art to better explain things that were too technical or complicated to show in a straight news photo.

**The Photographic Principle**

Given the pressure to meet deadlines, problems with layouts, and the ease with which photos can be retouched or altered, it was possible to make ethical mistakes with new photographic technology, particularly if one considers that the new digitized newsroom lets anyone access to information. Potentially, anyone in any department of the *Inquirer* could decide to change a photograph. For the most part, however, I observed photo editors adhering to standard practices as well as to written rules and procedures routinely applied to news photos in an effort to maintain the images’ integrity, thus relying on the photographic principle. Photo editors were able to appeal to viewers by presenting visual news photos without editorializing and without inserting fictional matter or corrupting original contents.

As stated earlier, the photographic principle is a concept used to frame the process within which photo editors practice responsible photo journalism. Those who uphold the photographic principle are responsible and trustworthy news professionals who strive to present accurate visual news.

**Standard practice.** Standard practice—whether chemical or digital—encompassed dodging, burning, cropping, balancing of color, contrast adjustments, and correcting technical defects in a photo, such as dust spots. Although technology provided the means to change the color of a T-shirt, or add color to the sky, photo editors only corrected for color—such as correcting color balance due to poor lighting. If photos appeared too dark or too light for publication, corrections were tolerated,
whereas changing the color of a person’s T-shirt in a photo because the image appeared too busy was forbidden. Photo editors did not restore or enhance an image, and if there was a problem with someone’s face, photo editors either did not use the photo or it remained as originally captured.

Standard practice also included cropping photos. Although the Inquirer had tolerated cropping the middle person out of a photo in the past, the MP said that this was no longer allowed. If something on the edge of a picture needed to be removed, it was considered acceptable to crop it out. The Inquirer was very clear on what cropping was acceptable. According to the NFP, the new practice was not to remove anything from a photo that would change the information portrayed. I rarely observed cropping at all; more often, I observed photo editors looking for photos that would work better.

Although the Inquirer considered standard practice to be limited to retouching, photo editors were unable to articulate exactly what the standard practice was. Their practices on photo retouching appeared to be deeply internalized; photo editors shared an unspoken rule with respect to photo retouching. This knowledge was taken for granted. Photo editors had come to accept these practices to be true and so commonplace that they were able to recognize when they crossed the line. Or as the MP put it, “You know it when you see it.” Several photo editors did say that the rule in the past had been, “You can do it in the camera, not in the darkroom.” With new technology, the unwritten rule had become, “If you cannot do it in the darkroom, do not do it in the computer.”

Interviews with photo editors included questions concerning ethical practice relating to photo manipulation. Probing about photo manipulation, retouching, and enhancement offended some photo editors. The only photo editor willing to discuss this subject was the MP. In an effort to reduce confusion and, at times, the hostility surrounding this subject, the MP and I discussed how the photo department could work to establish boundaries for photo manipulations. Casual conversations with photo editors reiterated this goal, and several seemed to agree that the Inquirer needed to eliminate vagueness about this topic. Although the MP engaged in an e-mail conversation about photo manipulation with the DP and all the photo editors, nothing materialized. It seemed as if the mere mention of tolerating any form of manipulation or alteration in some way suggested the photo editors were not as ethical as they claimed. The practice described here appeared to be the only retouching allowed with respect to news photos. It corroborated previous research (Gladney & Ehrlich, 1996; Newton, 1998, 2000; Reaves, 1995a, 1995b, 1995c; Wheeler & Gleason, 1995) regarding photo manipulation and the extent to which one can use technology to retouch news photos. Even so, the Inquirer has a separate policy regarding technology and photo manipulation.

Written policy. A written policy on photo manipulation is included in the Inquirer’s style manual. According to the DP, DME, and ME, this written policy was included in the Inquirer’s style manual starting in the late 1980s. As a general rule, under no circumstances are photos to be manipulated—this means no sharpening or blurring an image, deleting information, adding information, coloring specific elements in an image, distorting, or stretching images.

If one were to look through the Inquirer’s library of photos from the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, one would see a lot of hand-touched airbrushed images, to the point that there were backgrounds added and deleted and people taken out. This occurred often without readers being informed. However, with the growth of desktop computers and digital photography, photo manipulation has become a matter of public discourse. Everybody (including the reader) was concerned for the veracity of the photographic
image. Although photo manipulation beyond the aforementioned standard practices had been tolerated in the past, this changed in the 1980s, and photo manipulation was no longer tolerated. This new policy was put in place by a person who believed that regardless of what the technology can or cannot do, you do not manipulate a news photo.

It appears that this policy was implemented to remove the vagueness surrounding the standard practice so commonly accepted at the Inquirer. According to the MP, the newspaper was also concerned that readers would lose faith in the newspaper’s ability to present a fair, accurate, and truthful representation of that day’s news. This was an effort by the Inquirer to show readers that they are a credible and trustworthy news source.

The MP also indicated that photographers and photo editors took their careers as journalists more seriously than in the past. As a result, photo editors’ and photojournalists’ work ethic changed—there was a movement to become true documenters. According to the NFP, photographers and photo editors realized the importance of the integrity of the photo and fought hard to maintain it. The MP said that photo editors realized the need to prevent behaviors that had been tolerated in the past just because the technology was available.

My observation indicated that when and if photo manipulation occurred at the Inquirer, it was tolerated only in soft news, such as feature photos, and at times in photomontages. The Inquirer was careful not to manipulate a photo in any way that would endanger the content or change the news value of the photo. The only acceptable forms of manipulation were enlarging a photo, cutouts, blurring edges, running a headline in a photo, and running a story inside a photo. These changes were tolerated only with soft news stories when changes would be obvious to the reader. This written policy, although not perfect, in my opinion suggested a willingness of photo editors to practice responsible photojournalism—an example of the photographic principle at work.

A conversation with the AD provided further insight into this subject. He explained that if and when these decisions occurred, the process usually started when a photo editor approached a graphic artist or page designer with an idea for a story for which a straight photo would be difficult to find. The page designer or graphic artist would make suggestions to the photo editor and at times to the DDP or DP, and they would agree on the type of imagery to use. Then the page designer would seek approval from the AD or the assistant managing editor of graphics. Any use of photos other than for strict news stories had to be cleared with the photo department. Such a clearance could be viewed as a way for the Inquirer editors to ensure that they were protecting the veracity of the original news photo—again, an example of the photographic principle at work.

Use and Misuse of Technology

In response to Research Question 2, the adoption and incorporation of new technology does not directly influence the social construction of news photos. However, the potential to misuse technology, whether news photos are created by traditional or digital means, certainly exists. I observed that the photo editors at the Inquirer truly sought to maintain the photographic principle. Although the
Construction of Visual News

According to the DP, the Inquirer liked to present a mix of graphics and photos on the cover and section fronts. Starting at about the time of the first Gulf War (1991), a graphic had been used as the dominant visual on the cover and section fronts (e.g., graphics and maps were used to illustrate the invasions and locations of soldiers). The DP said a photo on the cover was preferred between 85% and 95% of the time. A page designer said, “If there is one really knock-out photo, they will go with that. If photos are okay, or if nothing really stands out, then maybe they will create a collage or montage, but again, it depends on the story and the nature of the photos.”

Observations and interviews indicated that news professionals held a wide range of opinions on how to construct visual imagery. For example, the terms photomontage and photo collage were used interchangeably, yet the photo and the art departments differed in the construction of these types of imagery. Photo editors described a photo collage as a combination of photos, illustrations, and text or clip art to illustrate an idea or concept. For example, in a health story, the Inquirer ran a photo illustration of a bottle of alcohol and a stethoscope (see Figure 2) to convey to the reader the health issues associated with drinking. Although no computer manipulation was used, the subject matter was set up for the camera. The art department, however, considered photomontages and photo collages to be combinations of photos, illustrations, and text or clip art, and at times the computer was used to generate an illustration for an idea or concept. According to page designers, “It is possible that photos are manipulated in some way to present information better.”

Another story, this one on gene therapy, required the MP to look for photos to accompany it. Because he was unable to find a photo representative of this subject matter, he discussed with a graphic artist the possibility of creating a photomontage representing gene therapy. Together, along with the assigning news editor, they discussed trying to explain gene therapy in some visual way other than with a single photo. They came up with the idea of illustrations combined with photos. Along with images that had run previously with a cloning story, the graphic artist drew genes illustrating DNA and combined the images into a photomontage (see Figure 3). It was agreed that the images would help the reader understand that this technical story was related to DNA.

Function of Visual News

After careful analysis of imagery in print, it occurred to me that the construction and placement of these types of imagery were questionable. For example, the Inquirer ran a photo illustration with a story about America Online. It ran on page one, and it appeared to me to be somewhat misleading. I discussed this photo illustration with the DDP and several other news professionals. The DDP said it was not a photo illustration, rather it was a photo combined with a graphic. However, this imagery was still unclear and should have been more obvious or straightforward. The main person in the photo was sharp, but the rest of the people were blurry.

The DDP said that this was a depth-of-field shot: From a camera angle people in the foreground sharp, whereas people in the background were blurry. But from my experience with photography, a good depth-of-field shot has everything in focus. Instead, this image looked to me, as well as to some of the photo editors, as if the background was missing and the image was floating.

Some of the other photo editors said they also felt the graphic did not read clearly or play well. In their opinion, “It needs to be made apparent that this was a graphic.” They also agreed that the image looked like it was floating. Two photo editors commented that they did not like how the “art” was presented in the paper and felt that there should have been more discussion regarding this graphic before it made it to print—that perhaps it should have been cropped better or a different image should have been used. Others commented that they did not like this art receiving so much space and felt the graphic did not need to be so large.

The FWP remarked that the cover of the newspaper was treated as a showpiece to attract readers’ attention. Therefore, photos and graphics were critical to selling the cover. The FDP remarked,
Health & Science
MONDAY, DECEMBER 27, 1999

To your health
... to a point

A growing body of evidence suggests that moderate drinking is good for you. The news is not something doctors are comfortable spreading.

To your health... to a point

By Stuart Barkley
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

E ric Bacon, a clinical epidemiologist, has a drink with dinner most nights of the week.

"To me, it's a part of a healthy lifestyle," said the Harvard School of Public Health associate professor, who has spent years studying the health effects of alcohol.

"There is overwhelming evidence to suggest that moderate alcohol consumption lowers the risk of heart disease," he said.

For middle-aged people, he said, the benefit to the heart of moderate drinking — about a 25 percent drop in the risk of a heart attack — is equivalent to losing 10 pounds, exercising 30 minutes a day four times a week, or eating five servings of fruits and vegetables a day.

Others are quick to point out the enormour social and medical cost of excessive drinking. But many alcohol experts agree that people who drink moderately — no more than a drink a day for women and up to two for men — have a lower rate of heart attacks, the most common kind of stroke, and premature death in general. Moderate drinking seems to lessen the risk of osteoporosis in post-menopausal women. There is some evidence that it reduces the chances of developing adult-onset diabetes.

Years of medical studies have made it clear that a glass of champagne could help many older revellers sober in a healthy new year.

But the growing body of evidence that there's a positive side to demon rum has not taken hold in a very uncomfortable spot. Studies showing that moderate drinking is good for you were considered a strongly worded caveat that this information should not be taken as encouragement to drink.

Consider this view from a New England Journal of Medicine study last month, showing that moderate drinking reduced the risk of stroke. "Any public health recommendation that emphasizes the positive aspects of alcohol..."
After all, it is the page that everybody sees when they are looking at sales on the street. If you don’t have a photo out there to grab people’s attention, or a headline, they can easily not buy the Inquirer.” He also said, “There is a difference between features and news photos.” As far as he was concerned, “Any place that is not news, there is room for photo illustrations. But you have to make it obvious that it is a photo illustration, as well as fit the story” (see Figure 4).

For example, the graphic artist and photo editor were working on a story regarding inner city kids and school, a local story characteristic of soft news. The graphic artist created a photo illustration by drawing a blackboard and inserting two photos resting on the ledge. Analysis of the image gave the impression the photos were floating, superimposed on the blackboard. The DP and DDP discussed the illustration with the graphic artist, and all agreed it would be better to put a white border...
around the photos. The white border made it appear as if the photos were Polaroid images, not superimposed on the blackboard. Technically, the border did not intrude on the content of the story or of the original image, and because it was a soft news story, some creative freedom was tolerated. The image appeared on the local section front cover. The broader questions that should have been considered: Was there any harm in this enhancement? Was it visually necessary? Should the reader have been alerted to the manipulation?

The FWP also asserted that, "There is visually a difference between features and news images." He said, "There is more room for eclectic, artsy stuff, than in section A, also a difference in [the] way photos are structured on these pages." According to evidence collected for this study, hard news photos on the cover of the newspaper and in section A were different from the soft news photos that appear in features and other sections of the Inquirer. Hard news photos were considered to be a straight form of news; their function was solely to inform. Yet they had to attract readers, so if a hard news photo did not work, then they would consider other visual imagery. All other imagery that accompanied soft news had a different function, and some creative construction was allowed. In these instances, the purpose of soft news imagery was more for its entertainment value, and photo editors had more creative freedom.

Discussion and Conclusions

Visual news, whether an artistic rendering or captured by the viewfinder of the camera, depicts information to help a reader better understand a news story. Subjectively derived judgments of photo editors within the social system of the newsroom and the knowledge of news professionals at the Inquirer reinforced a routine process of constructing news photos based on story type and the unspoken typification of hard and soft news. This process underlies photo editors’ sociology of knowledge, occurring largely through unwritten agreements. As Berger and Luckmann (1966) suggested, often members of a social system will share tacit knowledge that is not easily definable yet is considered commonplace among those within that social structure, which is the case with the photo editors’ unspoken rule with respect to photo retouching.

Further research is necessary and warranted to clarify the placement of certain types of visual imagery and the application of photo-imaging tools. Although the literature asserts that photo editors tolerate manipulation in some form based on the category of the news story (Reaves, 1995c), it does not fully answer the question, "Why is this acceptable?" Although photo editors were indeterminate and unclear concerning this topic, future research should address why one type of news story or section of the newspaper is open to photo enhancements or manipulations whereas other sections are not. Is it acceptable to manipulate or retouch a photo that will appear in the health, science, or technology section of the newspaper? Is this any less newsworthy than a story regarding politics? Is it appropriate to include a manipulated photo illustration on the front cover? What types of visual news are acceptable, and where? It would be interesting to determine whether my findings support the concept of the photographic principle and hold true at other news organizations.

Is it acceptable to manipulate or retouch a photo that will appear in the health, science, or technology section of the newspaper? Is this any less newsworthy than a story regarding politics?
Figure 4. Example of a manipulated image on the features section front. © 2000 The Philadelphia Inquirer
New Year's resolutions aren't just for exercise newbies. Here are some ideas for taking your program to the next level.

- Get enough sleep.
- Assess your goals and modify your activities.
- Be wary of taking supplements I know little about. I will gather information on these supplements and read the labels thoroughly before I decide to take them.
- Set at least one less hour watching television and devote that time to playing instead.
- I will eat one more piece of fruit and substitute one low-fat vegetable dish in my nutritional meal every day.
- Be more sportsmanlike on the court, whether it's playing basketball or hockey.
- Spend five minutes stretching.
- Encourage — not harass — one sedentary person I care about to be physically active. I will offer to help and set aside time to help him start, even if it's as simple as going for a walk around the block with him one weekend.
- Strengthen my core — my abs and my back — with a variety of exercises at least three times a week, because I know that doing so will enhance my enjoyment of other activities.
- Remember to keep it simple.
Technology does make manipulating photographs easier. The public accepts manipulations in entertainment magazines, newsmagazines, and advertising. Readers purchase and support efforts that are clearly products of a great deal of manipulation, but how accepting are they regarding news photos? Is a distinction to be made between entertainment efforts and those the public generally trusts to offer an accurate picture of our world? One perspective, and apparently that of photo editors at the Inquirer, is, absolutely.

The Inquirer is working hard to circumvent behavior that would lead to misuse of the technology. The evidence collected for this study indicates that photo editors at the Inquirer are scrupulous when it comes to using imaging technology. In an effort to preserve the integrity of news photos, the Inquirer limited the use of retouching and manipulation tools in the digital darkroom. It is possible that the practice of the photographic principle enabled photo editors to embrace new technology as well as use it responsibly. By and large, they considered the type of story they were working on and the function of the news photo. In today’s high-tech, information-hungry society, establishing and maintaining standards by which news is processed is a task of great importance, and one that deserves a mindful eye.

References


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