CHAPTER 13

PHOTOJOURNALISM

The still news picture, isolating a moment in time, has an affinity with the way we remember. It is easier for us, most of the time, to recall an event or a person by summoning up a single image.

Harold Evans, editor, *The Sunday Times*, 1978

OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter you will understand:

- The power of news photography
- How photojournalism evolved
- Different categories of news photos
- How to give editors the photos they need
- How to write captions
- Ethical issues related to photography.

Powerful photographs have helped end wars, build support for disaster victims, create fear and loathing of extremists, expose gross wrongs, and add value to news and feature articles. No one who has seen images of the attack on the World Trade Center in New York on September 11, 2001 will ever forget them. The same can be said of a 1972 photograph of Vietnamese girl Kim Phúc, 9, running down a road naked, screaming and terribly burnt after a napalm bomb explosion during the Vietnam War. Those images were indelible. They captured and froze moments that will never be repeated. They shocked the world. Yet the sources of those images, how they were photographed and their dissemination to the public could hardly have been more different.

First, there were multiple digital and video images of the attack on the World Trade Center. All were horrifying, and virtually all were captured in colour something that added to the drama and horror of the mass murder of more than 2700 people in the heart of one of the world's most populous and dynamic cities. In contrast, the photo of Kim Phúc was a single black-and-white image snapped on a rural road outside a bombed village in South Vietnam—something that, in its way, also added to the drama and horror. Third, many of the images of the 9/11 attack in New York were not shot by news photographers, but by ordinary people. In contrast, the photo of Kim Phúc was taken by an Associated Press news photographer, Nick Ut. Digital photography had not been invented and Ut used a film camera.

But the differences do not end there. Stunning digital images of the impact of aircraft slamming into the twin towers of the World Trade Center, subsequent fires, doomed office workers choosing to jump to their deaths rather than burn, and then the collapse and implosion of the towers were flashed around the world via the internet and television literally as those events were happening. In contrast, film from Ut's camera had to be processed in a chemical bath then printed on photographic paper in a darkroom. When the photo dried, it was scanned and eventually transmitted to newspapers via telephone lines, reprocessed so it was suitable for printing, and finally published.

Vietnamese-born Ut was subsequently awarded a Pulitzer prize. Miraculously Kim Phúc survived the burns to more than 60 per cent of her body, and later went to live in Canada.

Ut later told the BBC World Service how his news editors sent the photographs to US news agencies but:

> At first they didn't like the picture because the girl had no clothes. Then I told them about the napalm erupting in the village. The pictures were shown in America, they were shown everywhere. They were shown in all the communist countries—in China and in Vietnam. They still use the photo. Even though pictures (are taken) in every war, they still show the picture of Kim. They don't want it to happen again—not napalm (Ut 2005).

The Washington Post ran the photograph of Kim Phúc on its front page. Afterwards, then US President Richard Nixon reportedly complained the image must have been 'fixed' (Preston 2007). But such was the horror the photo generated in the US that it was credited with hastening the nation's withdrawal from Vietnam and the end of the war (Preston 2007). As former London *Sunday Times* editor Harold Evans (1978) said, 'It is more than a coincidence that the Vietnam war was at once the most unpopular in American history and the most photographed'. Similarly, support for the US-led Iraq War diminished after digital images of Iraqis being tortured and humiliated by US guards at Abu Ghraib Prison near Baghdad in 2004 were published around the globe. Some of those photographs were taken with digital phone cameras—an invention not imagined in the 1970s, and not yet widely available when the 9/11 attack happened.

SUCH was the horror the photo of Kim Phúc generated in the US that it was credited with hastening the nation's withdrawal from Vietnam and the end of the war. As Harold Evans said, 'It is more than a coincidence that the Vietnam war was at once the most unpopular in American history and the most photographed'.

Other examples of powerful news photo images over the years include:

- Photographs of the 1937 explosion of the Hindenburg airship in Lakehurst, New Jersey, with the loss of 36 lives;
- Horrendous photographs in the aftermath of the 2004 Madrid train bombings in which 10 simultaneous blasts killed 190 people and injured about 1800 (Irby 2004);
- Digital photographs from nations around the Indian Ocean of the Boxing Day 2004 tsunami which were flashed around the globe within hours via the internet;
- Photographs in the aftermath of the 2005 terrorist bombings on the London Underground—one of the first times images of breaking news were taken on mobile phones and sent directly to news outlets by members of the public;
- Heartbreaking photographs of the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires that claimed 173 lives in Victoria;
- On a happier note, an amazing 2009 photograph of 155 people, all of whom were rescued, standing on the wings of a jet airliner that made an emergency landing in the almost-frozen Hudson River in New York;
- Images of the 2010 earthquakes in Chile and Haiti that killed more than 200,000 people in Haiti alone and left millions homeless in both nations.

Whether news photographs are of war, tragedies, lucky escapes or happy events, there is much in the saying attributed to US advertising guru Fred Barnard, who pointed out in a 1927 advertisement for Royal Baking Powder, that one picture really can be 'worth ten thousand words' (quoted in Hepting 2004).

A brief history of news photography

In 1829, French artist Louis Daguerre invented a system of using light-sensitive salts on metal plates to capture images. The process became known for producing images dubbed 'daguerreotypes' (Stephens 1997, p. 269). Evans said newspaper photographers started working with daguerreotypes in the 1840s (Evans 1978, p. 1). Newspapers and magazines had published images before that, but they were hand-drawn illustrations reproduced with 'woodcuts' and later on zinc plates (Mott 1962, p. 501). In the 1850s and 1860s, newspapers published photographs of the Crimean War and American Civil War. By the 1870s and 1880s, photographs were being published regularly in newspapers and the 'new processes' were resulting in the establishment of new newspapers 'which relied largely on picture appeal' (Mott 1962, p. 502). One of these papers was an eight-page publication described as 'an unsensational forerunner of the modern tabloid' which was launched in 1873 with much fanfare and what turned out to be a sensational, but unsuccessful, promotional stunt to cross the Atlantic by balloon (Mott 1962, p. 502). But while some newspapers had been enthusiastic in embracing the newfangled technology of photography, a majority in the 1880s 'remained unexcited' and 'the toils of invention certainly seem ill-rewarded' (Evans 1978, p. 1).

Although news outlets were generally slow to realise its potential, photography continued evolving. By the mid-1880s photographs were being taken with cameras that recorded images on glass plates. The first Kodak film camera was sold in about 1890. Famous photographs, some of which were later shown to have been faked, were taken on the battlefields of World War I. But it was not until World War II that news photography, like so many other technologies, moved forward in leaps and bounds. Mott reported that during World War II photographers played a greater role than ever before in war reporting and were often able to transmit photographs over telegraph lines and by wireless 'to news desks along with the copy' (Mott 1962, p. 743). What Mott was referring to was the birth of 'photojournalism'. Before World War II, cameras had been so cumbersome and difficult to use that specialist photographers had taken pictures and journalists had written stories. There was little or no crossover. But new, smaller portable cameras were developed during the war. While cumbersome by today's standards, some were waterproof and dustproof and had a built-in flash. They could be used in the field by journalists and a new practice emerged in which 'occasionally a newsman made his report by pictures as well as words' (Mott 1962, p. 744).

Cameras and film continued to advance after World War II. Colour film became widely available and colour printing technology improved. In the late 1940s and through the 1950s, numerous pictorial magazines were published. They posed something of a threat to the advertising revenue of newspapers and the latter responded by publishing more and better photographs—although not in colour. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, single-lens reflex (SLR) cameras that allowed users to see images through the lens in the same way the camera saw them—instead of through a separate and not always accurate viewfinder lens—became commercially available. In the 1970s interchangeable lenses for SLR cameras were introduced. This meant the same camera body could be used for a range of photos, with the addition of telephoto lenses for distant shots, and other lenses for mid-range, close-up and wide-angle shots. Autofocus lenses became available in the 1980s. Digital photography was introduced in the latter half of the 1990s, and by the turn of the 21st century it was obvious that the immediacy and convenience of digital image making and storage was going to replace expensive and time-consuming film. In 2005 Kodak—the company that had pioneered the production of film cameras for the masses—closed most of its film-processing plants and four years later, in 2009, it stopped manufacturing colour film.

At the same time as cameras and photography were advancing, newspapers were changing. Prior to the 1990s newspapers had only been able to make limited use of a single colour—known as 'spot colour' and most commonly red—on selected pages. Printing colour photographs on newsprint was difficult, time-consuming to set up, and expensive. But from the late 1990s, advances in photographic image scanning and printing techniques saw newspapers move to full-colour production, and black-and-white photographs were no longer published in anything other than the smallest local papers. In the same period, news photographers started using digital cameras. Aligned

with that, the practice of sending news photos over 'the wire' fell by the wayside and was replaced by the much simpler and faster expedient of attaching photos to emails. By the early 21st century, newspapers were often publishing photographs of breaking news events which had been contributed by members of the public. After 2004, newspapers started routinely publishing breaking news stories and related photographs online—often within minutes of an event or incident happening.

Digital photojournalism

The combination of rapid technical improvements in photography, the advent of mobile phone cameras, unprecedented advances in newspaper production, the evolution of online news publication that make it a favoured source of breaking news, and the expectations of news consumers have made it mandatory for every journalist to learn at least the basics of news photography. There is still a role for specialist news photographers, especially when covering major events and for set-up shots. But every journalist should carry at least a lightweight, automatic, self-focusing camera. While often only used for relatively simple photo-stories, just carrying a camera with you means you can capture those rare moments when something unexpected happens. That might be while you are out covering a story—or perhaps even on the way to, or returning from, a story, or on the way to or from work. Then, like the World War II photojournalists, you will be able to file photos and words. As Evans said: 'The writer has a second chance, the photographer rarely' (Evans 1978, p. 21). In other words, a journalist can at least partly make up for a missed question or not being present when a storytelling moment happens by later interviewing witnesses; but the only way to a capture an image of a particular moment is to be there and take photographs.

While it would be ideal for every journalism student to undertake a photography course, it is not always possible. Therefore, while the information presented in the rest of this chapter will not turn you into a photographer, it does provide a basic photographic survival guide. After all a picture, even if mediocre, will attract a reader's eye, and there is every chance you might fluke the ultimate shot—especially if you take enough photos from different angles and with different camera settings.

As a first step, and to avoid confusion when talking to professional photographers who are not news photographers, it should be noted that there are two different meanings attached to the terms 'photojournalism' and 'photojournalists'. From a journalistic perspective, the terms are taken to mean a journalist who takes photographs and subsequently writes stories related to those images. From a purist photographer's perspective, however, a photojournalist is a person who tells stories without words, or with a bare minimum of words, relying instead on a photograph or series of photographs in what is sometimes referred to as a 'photo-essay'. When the terms are used here, it is in the journalistic sense.

Categories of news photos

There are three main classes of photographs used by newspapers, magazines and online news websites. The first is photographs that are so powerful they virtually stand alone with nothing more than a headline, or online heading, and a caption. Many of the 9/11 photos and the stark image of Kim Phúc discussed at the start of this chapter fall into this category.

Second, there are photographs that share their impact with words, so the two work together to explain a story. An example of the second category would be a photograph of the moment of the Hindenburg airship explosion in which words were needed to explain that the Zeppelin, which had just arrived from Germany, was filled with explosive hydrogen gas. After the explosion, Associated Press photographer Murray Becker explained how he had been at the right place at the right time and had taken a photograph at the critical newsworthy moment. Note that unlike a journalist or photographer today armed with a digital camera that can take shot after shot, Becker had to take a single photograph, remove a photographic plate from his camera, then insert a fresh plate before the next shot. He said:

> I had taken several shots as the Hindenburg approached the landing field and had backed away for a general view when the first explosion occurred. I had my camera up to the eye level when the ship burst into flames. Like a hunter, I had my sights on the target and my finger on the trigger. I shot the picture showing the first puff of flames. Changing my plates, I got a second picture of the airship striking the ground with flames shooting the length of the ship, and then started running for it (Becker 1937, p. 1).

The final category of photograph is one that is used to complement words and illustrate a story. Such a photo might be a symbolic image kept on file by a news organisation or one taken specially to illustrate a point. It is unlikely the photograph would be newsworthy in its own right. An example would be a photograph of a person fishing, or skiing, used in conjunction with a travel article.

The mechanics of producing good photos

Start by making a point of always leaving your camera set to autofocus and full general auto exposure mode. Also ensure its batteries are charged regularly and you have spare fully charged replacements. We cannot predict when we will see something that begs for a photo, so it is better to be able to grab the camera, turn it on and shoot, than to miss a shot of a lifetime—even if the resultant image is not perfect. After that initial shot, or series of a few quick shots, you can then do things like swap to a more appropriate lens if using an SLR, and adjust speed and exposure settings. As time passes, you should review the photos you have already taken to ensure the images are good enough and, if they are not, take more.

One of the truisms about photography is that even with the best cameras and lenses, lighting is everything. As Eismann, Duggan and Grey explained:

> The difference between an ordinary picture and a good photograph is the difference between just pointing and shooting and consciously working with composition, light, and camera controls to create a memorable image (Eismann, Duggan & Grey 2004, p. 271).

Generally there is little choice about what time of day or night news photographs are taken, but for portrait shots, images of nature, and landscapes try to avoid harsh midday sunlight. Soft morning light is best. The air is usually as clear as it will be all day, and light from the sun low in the eastern sky is diffused. If you do have to take a photograph in the sun, try to position yourself and, if possible, the subject so that he or she is not facing directly into the sun or the sun is not behind her or him, otherwise the photo will be harsh and there will be strongly contrasting facial shadows. Also try to avoid situations in which there are contrasting patches of bright light and dark areas of low light—a combination that can confuse exposure and focus sensors in cameras. Those points aside, good-quality cameras are remarkably tolerant and will do their best to help you if set to an automatic mode.

Composing a photograph

One of the most important, and most overlooked, aspects of photography is to look beyond the subject of a photograph to see what is in the background. Many an otherwise perfect shot has been ruined by a cluttered or inappropriate background. Say, for example, you are going to take a portrait shot. Look at the subject through the viewfinder, then look beyond the subject to see what the camera sees. Is there clutter, are there bright colours that will draw the eye away from the subject, is there someone or an animal doing something unfortunate, an advertisement, movement, signs? If so, reposition your subject so she or he is in front of a neutral, uncluttered background. As a general rule, the greater the distance between the subject and the background, the more the subject will stand out and the more blurred the background will become. But if you cannot reposition the subject, one helpful technique is to 'blow the background away' by using a telephoto lens—or telephoto setting, or portrait mode, if the camera has one—and then moving in as close as possible to the subject while maintaining focus on his or her face. If using a camera with autofocus for a portrait, always ensure the focus dot or ring in the viewfinder is centred on the middle of the face—that central point is where most cameras sense focus and light settings. If there is no focus dot or ring, it is safe to assume that the camera will sense its settings from the centre of the lens.

After considering the background, the next most important point is to think about how you will frame your shot. The vital thing here is ensure you provide editors with choices. Page layout, whether for print or online, generally dictates what shape a photograph will need to be before it can be published. There are two basic shapes:

vertical—a tall narrow image referred to in computer software as a 'portrait' image; and horizontal—a wide image referred to in computer jargon as 'landscape'. Even if an editor wants to publish a square image, as tends to happen online, she or he will crop it from either a vertical or horizontal shot. Therefore, because you have no idea when out in the field what shape hole on a page a photograph will need to fit into, you should always shoot horizontal and vertical versions of every photo you take—whether of a person, news scene, landscape, building, animal or event. Doing so is simple: hold the camera in its normal position for a horizontal shot, and turn it on its side for a vertical!

If taking portrait-style shots, say, of a character who is the subject of a feature article, always take several close-up head-and-shoulders shots as well as general, often more artistic, portrait images. The reason for doing so is because editors might want to publish a headshot—literally a photo of a head—or head-and-shoulders image as well as a main photograph. Similarly, when taking photographs of landscapes, buildings, news scenes and events, give editors a choice by taking a range of close-up shots and wider, more distant shots.

Tight shots

The more tightly an original photograph is framed in the viewfinder, the better it will be when enlarged. This is something many amateurs do not understand. Think of the numerous happy snaps you see in family albums in which there is a wide open foreground, masses of sky in the background and a person in between. Images like these do not work in print or online. Trying to crop them to get rid of foreground and background rarely works either because enlarging the person in the middle too much is likely to make the focus fuzzy and images pixelate. What does work are tightly framed images virtually cropped in the viewfinder. If you are taking a portrait shot, use the camera's zoom or a telephoto lens and get up close and personal—your aim should be for a warts-and-all image. If you are taking a news photograph, again make the images of the action fill the viewfinder—particularly for your first few shots—then photograph a selection of wider images.

Group photos also need to be tight, not just in the sense of filling the viewfinder, but also in terms of getting people in a group close to each other. Apart from people who lack insight, we humans instinctively value our personal space and are generally careful not to invade the personal space around others. While we let those we are close to and care about into our personal space, we literally keep others at arm's length. Thus if you gather together a group of work colleagues, school children, members of a team, or others and ask them to stand or sit together for a group photograph, they will usually come together and stand or sit near each other, but most will instinctively avoid being so close to others that they touch them. The resultant photograph will be of a group of individuals, not a group. From a photographer's perspective, you need to get every member of the group so close to those around them that they are touching, even overlapping, each other. The aim should be for a bright and tight photograph.

To get it you must put people at their ease—both with you and each other. Aim to make them forget the camera. Talk, joke, get members of the group chatting. Then, because someone will inevitably blink, cough, sneeze, look away or frown, take many more shots than you think you will need. Chances are there will then be at least one that is usable.

As a further tip here, but unfortunately one many wily politicians are aware of, you will occasionally encounter a publicity-seeker whom you do not want in a group shot, but who insists on joining in. If you can arrange the group in such a way that the publicity pest is at either end of the group, she or he can always be cropped out of the image later!

Using flash

Options to use 'fill flash' and red eye correction are two of the most useful functions of many cameras. Flash is not just for helping illuminate a scene in low light, it can also be turned on to obtain softer images in bright light. When photographing people and objects in brightly lit surroundings, you can use a camera's built-in flash—or in the case of a professional-level SLR camera, its accessory flash—to eliminate harsh shadows caused by ambient light; this is called fill flash. Check your camera's instruction book for details about how to activate the flash in conditions other than low light. In many SLR cameras with multiple automatic settings there is an option to use the 'P' (program) and/or 'AE' (auto exposure) mode and press a button marked with a lightning bolt symbol (↯) to pop up (or turn on) the flash so it can be used to fill in shadows on a subject's face. Many point-and-shoot cameras also have a flash that can be turned on—typically by pushing a button marked with a ↯ symbol or scrolling through a menu until 'fill flash' appears and can be selected.

Using fill flash can make an image that would have been unusable—because parts of it were too light and other parts too dark—usable. But be aware that the average built-in camera flash only works if the subject is within a distance of between one and four or five metres from the camera. If there is less than a metre between the camera and subject, the bottom of the photo might be dark and the top 'blown away', or too bright. If there is too much distance between subject and camera, the flash will not be intense enough to soften or eliminate shadows. These distances will vary if an accessory flash is used (see the following page).

Another useful tool is red eye correction. If you turn on a flash in a low-light situation, or a camera set to adjust itself automatically decides there is low ambient light and it needs to turn on its own flash, resultant images of human faces are likely to be ruined because the pupils in subjects' eyes will be unnaturally red. There can be similar problems photographing animals, only their eyes can be anything from green to blue or yellow. The problem is caused by the fact that the pupils in human and animal eyes open wide in low light, so that they can see. If a flash photograph is taken when the pupils in a person's eyes are wide open, the burst of light from the flash reflects off the blood-filled retina at the back of each eye and makes the pupils appear red in the

photograph.[1] Cameras with red eye compensation work by firing a preliminary flash that makes the pupils contract, then a second burst of flash when the photo is actually taken. Red eye reduction is most effective when a subject is looking at the camera. But sometimes it does not work, so it is wise to take a series of photos and check the images afterwards. If the red eye compensation did not work, try a different approach by turning red eye correction off, then shooting another sequence of photos in which the subject does not look directly at the camera.

If you have an SLR camera with an add-on accessory flash which can be pointed in different directions, an excellent way to avoid red eye problems (and hence any need for red eye correction) and be able to take soft, warm shots in low light is to use bounce flash. Instead of aiming the flash directly at the subject—something virtually guaranteed to produce a stark image—point the flash at a reflective surface, such as a white ceiling, midway between you and the subject. The burst of light from the flash will then travel from the camera to the reflective surface and be diffused before illuminating the subject. If you do not have an external flash, or a flash that can be pointed in different directions, good results can sometimes be obtained by placing a thin piece of white paper over the flash to diffuse the light.

Action photographs

There are two basic approaches to taking action photographs. One is to keep the camera as still as possible while you shoot, maybe on a tripod if you are at a sporting event and using a telephoto lens. The other is to move the camera so that it keeps the subject of the photograph—say, a runner or racing car—in focus and in the centre of the viewfinder at all times while repeatedly shooting images. This second method is sometimes referred to as 'panning' the camera. If used correctly, it will result in a clear image of the subject against a blurred background, an image that conveys an impression of speed and motion.

Whichever approach you employ, you will get the best results by using the automatic action—or sport—setting on a camera which has that option, or, if a camera has a manual setting, using the highest possible shutter speed for the light conditions. If the camera has autofocus, keep the subject in the centre of the viewfinder. If using manual focus, the best results will be obtained if you can set up the focus prior to taking the shot by finding some point, maybe on the ground or a finish post, where you expect the subject to appear and focusing on that. Then, when the subject moves to that point you know the focus will be sharp. This pre-focusing works especially well with sports such as car racing, or when taking photographs at the finish line of any kind of race.

---

1 Many animals, including dogs, have a different eye structure to humans that enables them to see in the dark. A flash reflects off a membrane behind the retina that humans do not have, resulting in a green, blue or yellow pupil.

Another factor that will help get the best possible action shots is to shoot them in as much light as possible. While it is impossible, for example, to control the weather when shooting outdoor sporting events, shots taken when the sun is shining or under thin, high cloud will nearly always turn out better than those taken under heavy cloud or late in the day when light is fading.

Working with a photographer

Depending on the size and resources of the publication you work for, and if it employs specialist photographers, it is generally best if you have the option of doing so to work with a specialist photographer when covering a breaking news story or interviewing for a feature. While not always possible, and while it is important to be able to take your own photographs, there are major advantages in working as a team. One is that a photographer can get shots while you interview. That way you can each pay full attention to your specific tasks. Among other things, while an interviewee is engrossed in talking to you, she or he is likely to forget about the camera and be less self-conscious, more relaxed and more natural—things that help a photographer who remains in the background capture character-revealing images.

It is also safer when photographers and journalists can work together on difficult or dangerous assignments. They can discuss story ideas and strategies in the same way that television journalists and video camera operators work together. They should look out for each other and warn the other of dangers. Photographers and video camera operators are often vulnerable because they must focus on what they see through the lens and may not have a broad view of a developing situation. The journalists they work with must bear that in mind, warn of dangers and do their best to provide protection.

Writing captions

Many people read a caption under a photograph before they read an accompanying article. This is because it was the image, more than the story's headline or online heading, that drew their eyes. Captions, which are also known as 'block lines', are therefore at least as important as headings and story intros. Yet many journalists and sub-editors do not seem to put the same degree of thought into writing a caption as they would an intro or headline. A former editor of *The Sunday Times* in the 1970s, Evans (1978) had a radical suggestion about how to improve the quality of captions. Complaining that beneath a caption of former US President Jimmy Carter speaking, a caption said 'President Carter speaking' while a photograph of the British Prime Minister getting into a car was captioned 'The Prime Minster enters a car', Evans (who was writing in an era when virtually all editors and nearly all journalists were male) said:

> The tendency of caption writers to treat the reader as a moron is easily corrected by the editor striking his employee a hard blow on the head, twice, with a blunt instrument. When he comes to he should be reminded of the what? where? when? why? questions the picture raises (Evans 1978, p. 257).

Good captions must expand on picture content, not restate it, or describe it. They should add context and make people want to read the accompanying story. The basic rules of caption writing are as follows:

- Do not repeat wording from the headline or body of an article an image accompanies.
- As a general convention, always identify people in a photo from left to right. The only exception would be if one person in a photograph is more significant to the story the photograph accompanies than all the rest, in which case it can be legitimate to name that person first, then name the others from left to right.
- Check the spelling of names—is it consistent with the spelling in the article?
- Do not guess what a subject is thinking or make assumptions about their emotional state—chances are you will be wrong!
- It is a convention of news writing style that captions should always be written in the present tense.
- Keep captions short and to the point. Do not waffle.
- Use active voice and active verbs.
- Ensure information in a caption does not conflict with information in the story a photograph relates to.

Photojournalism ethics

Photographs have been faked and retouched for as long as there has been photography. But the advent of digital cameras and use of computer programs such as Photoshop have made faking and retouching easier. Memorable examples of faked photographs include a 1982 photograph on the front cover of *National Geographic* magazine in which the Egyptian pyramids were moved closer together to make the image fit the page. In 2006 there was an infamous example in which a photographer working for Reuters news agency manipulated a photograph to make it more dramatic by adding heavy plumes of black smoke billowing from buildings in Beirut after an air attack on the Lebanese capital. Reuters subsequently sacked the photographer and issued a 'picture kill' notice while also withdrawing the photograph from its website. The agency apologised and said, 'The image had been digitally altered using the cloning tool in Photoshop so that it showed more smoke' (Reuters 2007).

A few years earlier, there had been what became a famous example of a digital manipulation undertaken by some newspapers for the opposite reason—to sanitise an image to make it less dramatic and less disturbing than it actually was. The photograph was shot by *El Pais* photographer Pablo Torres Guerrero immediately after the 2004

Madrid train bombing. The colour image, which was circulated internationally by Reuters, showed a wrecked train and dead and injured people in a railway yard. In the lower left of the photograph was part of a human thigh and femur. Some newspapers published the photograph as it was. Others manipulated it to either remove the image of the body part; cover it with type; replace it with railway ballast stones; print the photograph in black and white so the thigh was less noticeable; or crop the photograph so tightly the body part was not shown. Poynter Institute visual journalism group leader Kenneth Irby said editors who removed or disguised the thigh and femur believed the photograph was too gruesome, and that publishing it without manipulation would have been in bad taste because it would have upset some of the people who viewed it (Irby 2004). Newspapers that published the image unchanged included *The Washington Post*, which printed the picture in full colour on its front page, as did Spain's *El Pais*. Irby (2004) said such newspapers felt it was important for readers to see the reality of terror. He said the manipulation happened despite it being a policy at Reuters that organisations which subscribed to its service should not electronically manipulate a photo to change its content (Irby 2004).

Journalists have four sources of news photographs: those taken by their own organisation's professional photographers, images from wire services, photos they take themselves, and contributed photographs. Contributed images are from two main sources: public relations firms and advertisers, and members of the public. If a news organisation and its photographers and photojournalists are ethical and do not manipulate their own photographs in ways that distort truth, the most likely source of faked or (as was highlighted in Chapter 6) misrepresented images are contributed photographs. Problems are exacerbated when photos which have been faked but in which the manipulation has not been detected are subsequently transmitted by news agencies. John Long, then ethics co-chair and a past president of the US National Press Photographers' Association (NPPA), warned more than a decade ago that: 'Our readers and viewers no longer believe everything they see. All images are called into question because the computer has proved that images are malleable, changeable, fluid.' But:

> Once the shutter has been tripped and the moment has been captured on film, in the context of news, we no longer have the right to change the content of the photo in any way. Any change to a news photo—any violation of that moment—is a lie. Big or small, any lie damages your credibility (NPPA 1999).

There is no parallel organisation to the NPPA in Australia, but the *Media Alliance Code of Ethics* applies equally to photojournalism as it does to all journalism. As explained in detail in Chapter 4, it says respect for truth and the public's right to information are fundamental tenets of journalism, and journalists should report and interpret honestly striving for disclosure of all essential facts (*Media Alliance Code of Ethics* 2005).

Ethical codes aside, and while there will be scandals from time to time about faked photographs, one of the greatest disincentives to photographic fraud is closely related to the computer technology that makes digital faking possible. While computers, the web and internet make rapid dissemination of photographs possible, they also make it easy for photographs to be digitally examined by experts around the globe. Some of these experts, and certainly many bloggers and websites such as Snopes.com and the Museum of Hoaxes, delight in exposing fakes—something that should make prospective image manipulators think twice, especially if they value their names and their jobs!

Finally, when should you not take photographs? Details are explained in Chapters 16 and 17, but generally it is illegal to take photographs in courtrooms and even court buildings; to take photographs if trespassing on private land; to photograph subjects engaging in 'private acts' in situations in which they would not generally expect to be photographed; and to publish photographs that identify child victims of crime or victims of sexual offences. As explained in Chapter 16, it can also constitute *sub judice* contempt to publish a photo that identifies a person accused of a crime if there is doubt about whether that person or another person actually committed the crime.

While we do not own our own image and it is generally not a problem taking photographs of people in public places, it can be illegal if a photographer behaves offensively, in a threatening way, causes a public nuisance, or takes indecent photos. Also be careful taking photographs of children. While it is not generally illegal to photograph a child in a public place, community concerns about paedophiles photographing children and publishing pictures via the internet have made child photography a sensitive issue. Unless circumstances of a breaking story dictate otherwise, as they did in relation to the Vietnamese girl Kim Phúc, the commonsense approach is to seek parental permission before photographing minors. It should be borne in mind that large shopping centres are private property and management can prohibit photographs being taken. Shop and gallery owners can also prohibit photos being taken on their premises. But photographs of the insides of shops and shopping centres can be shot by a photographer who is outside in a public place, such as a public street.

Total packages

One of the biggest advantages in becoming self-sufficient as a photographer and writer is that a photojournalist—and particularly a freelance photojournalist—who can write well and take high-quality photographs can supply total packages of stories and images. Thus a journalist who owns her or his own camera, a portable computer with a wireless broadband account, and a good mobile phone can become a self-sufficient unit. That journalist has much more to offer than a rival who can only supply words.

And two final tips relating to photojournalism. First, most cameras have plenty of memory, so take many shots of the same subject using a range of different camera

A photojournalist who can write well and take high-quality photographs can supply total packages of stories and images... That journalist has much more to offer than a rival who can only supply words.

settings and different camera angles. Doing so will increase your chances of fluking the ultimate photograph! Second, and this is particularly important if freelancing, find out what file format the organisation(s) you supply photographs to prefers.

- The favoured format for images published online and in newspapers is commonly JPEG. This is also a near-universal format supported by almost all photographic software and by major camera manufacturers including Nikon and Canon. Eismann, Duggan and Grey recommended setting cameras in which there are file format options to save images at the highest possible quality JPEG format, which is often labelled 'large' (Eismann, Duggan & Grey 2004, p. 27).
- RAW is a generic but brand-specific file format supported by different camera manufacturers. While RAW files are high quality, they can generally only be processed with brand-specific software.
- Photoshop handles different formats but it also supports its own PSD file format.
- TIFF is the other major format, but its files are huge compared with JPEG and they are not readily transmitted as email attachments. However, many publishers of high-quality images use RAW and TIFF files because they produce richer photos than JPEG.

DISCUSSION POINTS

1 Can a journalist satisfactorily conduct interviews and take photographs for the same story? Or is that sort of multi-tasking asking too much?

2 Could there be potential problems associated with carrying your own camera with you wherever you go? If so, what might they be?

3 Should specialist newspaper and magazine photographers feel threatened by photojournalists who can write and take photographs, or are the two roles so different it does not matter?

4 Is it legitimate, and ethical, for a publication to either crop or digitally manipulate photographs like those of the Madrid train bombings that are so graphic they could disgust and/or disturb readers if published in their original form?

5 What sort of news-related images should never be published? Why? Who should decide?

6 Following on from Discussion Point 5, if you were an editor, would you have published photographs on your newspaper's front page of people literally a fraction of a second from death as they were falling from the World Trade Center towers in the 9/11 attack? Why or why not?

7 Should a photographer or journalist ever get to a point when they stop being an observer and become a participant in an unfolding event? If so, at what point? If not, why not?

NEWS PRACTICE POINTS

1 In this chapter there is reference to Nick Ut's photograph of Kim Phúc and the impact that image had around the world. There is at least one other starkly horrifying photograph that is also credited with changing US attitudes to the Vietnam War. It was taken by a different photographer almost literally as a person was shot in the head by a Saigon police chief in a street in 1968. Go online and find both photographs. Explain in a few words what made each so compelling.

2 There has been considerable discussion in this chapter about news photographs of tragedy and disaster, but not all news is bad and not all photographs are tragic. Find at least two uplifting news photographs from either online or print editions of major news publications. Explain in a few words how you would categorise each image and why—as virtually stand-alone, as one in which picture and words carry equal weight, or as an image that merely adds value to the words in an article.

3 Where could you undertake a good-quality course in photography? Does your university or institution offer one? If not, where is the nearest? Find out how much the course would cost and how long it would take to complete.

4 Conduct an experiment with a group photograph. Get a camera and ask a group of at least five people to stand together for a group shot. Members of the group can be acquainted, but must not be family or partners. Do not ask them to do anything more than stand as a group and look at the camera. Take several photographs. Then tell the members of the group they must bunch up and stand as close as they can—so close their bodies touch each other. Take several more photographs. Compare the images from the first series of photographs with those from the second. Which would you publish?

5 Find three captions in a newspaper, magazine or online news site that work well with a photograph and three that the writer should be ashamed of. Briefly explain in writing what is good about each of those you like, and what is bad about each of the others.

6 If you have a camera, get out its instruction book and see what it says about using fill flash, or just flash. If you do not own a camera, borrow one (and also its instruction book) and do the same thing. Now take someone outside in bright sunlight and experiment by taking photographs of their face with them facing directly into the sun and also side-on to the sun; first with no flash, then with flash. If there are still shadows on the subject's face after using the flash, move closer and try again. Compare all the shots. Which images are best?

7 Who is the Australian you would most like to write a pictorial feature article about? Explain why in about 250 words.

8 Follow up Practice Point 7 by writing a letter to the person explaining you would like to interview them for a story and take their photo. See if you can get them to agree, then arrange a time and place to conduct the interview and take your photographs. Then write the story, caption your photos, and do your best to have the package published.