Photojournalistic Integrity
Codes of Conduct, Professional Ethics, and the Moral Definition of Press Photography

Vincent Lavoie
Translator: James Gussen
Honesty, responsibility, accuracy, truthfulness - these are the key terms found in the
codes of conduct for photojournalism, the legal documents intended to ensure the
integrity of the profession. To understand their moral imperative, one need only consider
the nature of the sanctions imposed on photojournalists who violate the provisions of
these normative documents. Morality in photojournalism is an unstable concept, one
which first emerged in a pre-legal form in the late nineteenth century. At that time,
articles in both the photographic and general press condemned the invasions of privacy
committed by amateur photoreporters. Photographic reporting was presented as a
licentious activity. The rapid expansion of photojournalism in the 1930s and the
heightened competition among reporters resulted in the proliferation of lawsuits.

With the industry in favor of self-regulation, the specialized literature of the day
attempted to establish guidelines for the profession by defining what constituted both
good and bad conduct in terms of decency and in information gathering. It was not until
after the Second World War, with the creation of powerful professional associations – in
particular the National Press Photographers Association (NPPA) - that the moral
standards of photojournalism were distilled into a set of axioms and expressed in the
form of codes. With the establishment of a code of conduct for news photography, what
was at issue was not so much the decency of the photographer as the journalistic
integrity of photography itself. The formalization of the moral precepts governing press
photography reached a peak in the early 1990s, as evidenced by the various amendments
establishing guidelines for the use of digital technologies in visual journalism. The
introduction of software applications in newsrooms was seen as a paradigm shift that
threatened the journalistic integrity of press photography as never before. This anxiety,
however, is only the most recent manifestation of a much older ethical preoccupation.
In this article, I will analyze some of the most crucial moments in the history of the ethical construction of photojournalism. As the type of photography most directly concerned with veracity, photojournalism has always been the subject of a discourse seeking to establish its ethical legitimacy. Why this ethical fragility of photojournalism? What definition of photojournalism do its codes of conduct construct? By examining the genesis and development of these codes, I hope to lay the foundation for a moral history of press photography that will take its place alongside the other histories of the field (aesthetic, social, institutional, and cultural), all of which play an equally central role in defining the complex identity of photojournalism.

The Genesis of the Codes of Conduct

The purpose of codes of conduct is to define and clarify the rules and responsibilities of the members of a professional association or group. Like charters or encyclicals, they set forth the duties and obligations that are specific to a given field. The codes of conduct have a normative value in that they formalize ‘the conditions that must be respected in order to uphold the integrity of a practice.’ They are prescriptive and comprise strict rules that specify what constitutes acceptable professional conduct. As the word itself suggests, a déontologie is a theory of duty, whose practical application is ensured by the code [The French for ‘code of conduct’ is code de déontologie; used by itself, the word déontologie means both ‘deontology,’ defined by Webster’s as ‘the theory or study of duty or moral obligation,’ and a professional code of conduct. – Trans.]. A detailed statement of the standards and principles that govern the practice of professions is perceived as a constraint, necessary for the common good. It is generally recognized that such regulation is desirable, since it lends legitimacy to the competence of the practitioner on the one hand, while, on the other, assuring the user that any abuses will be punished. Thus, in the field of journalism in particular, the code of conduct reassures the reader of the integrity and reliability of the information, while at the same time endorsing the value of the journalist’s work. What is indisputable, however, is that this moral guarantee also held symbolic and economic advantages for journalism that were essential to its viability as a profession. As Gilbert Vincent suggests, ‘codification thus seeks to delimit the field of legitimate activity in such a way that the practitioner him- or herself is legitimated in return.’

Moral philosophy distinguishes between codified systems of responsibilities and professional ethics. As mentioned, the former finds its origin in the formalization of duties specific to various fields, with their explicit purpose to uphold the moral integrity of the profession. Far less prescriptive and often quite vague, professional ethics goes beyond the restrictive framework of the code to address the social role of the profession, its responsibilities and fundamental activities. Universal moral values such as loyalty, honesty, and impartiality have their place within professional ethics, whose primary focus is the professional’s responsibility to others. It is professional ethics that seeks to protect the rights and interests of the non-professionals who are affected by a given practice. For example, the decision to publish a victim’s image in the press essentially falls within the purview of professional ethics.

Long before the first codes of conduct for photojournalism were drafted in the 1940s, the earliest expressions of an ethical concern for the subjects of photographs began to appear
in the photographic press (for the purposes of this article, limited to the United States and Canada). In 1890, in an article entitled ‘The Ethics of Hand Cameras,’ Henry Harrison Suplee laments the increasing number of photographers who record the actions of others without their consent. He deplores ‘the temptation to photograph anything and everything, regardless of the approval or the wish of the subject, and in many cases without informing him of the fact that he has been photographed at all.’ Such behavior is also condemned as excessively intrusive by the author of an unattributed article published in 1899 in the American Journal of Photography, who describes the photographers who invade the privacy of others. In this little treatise on photographic improprieties, the author, a defender of the right to one’s image before such a right was explicitly formalized, recounts how he had deliberately destroyed a photographer’s illicit negative showing a couple in a park. Contemporaneous with the rise of amateur photography and the introduction of portable cameras, these commentators framed the debate surrounding the liberalization of photographic practice as one of ethics, and not aesthetics, as did the pictorialists.

The profession’s moral standards became an even more pressing concern in the 1930s, with the mass proliferation of the illustrated press and the intensification of photojournalistic activity. The fierce competition among the principal actors (photographers, editors, and owners) resulted in frequent abuses, especially – where visual journalism is concerned – of invasions of privacy. The question was also taken up by the specialized literature of the time, which constituted the primary regulatory authority for the profession. Indeed, there were very few publications dealing specifically with visual journalism that failed to devote a lengthy passage, if not an entire chapter, to the ethical problems raised by the representations of the individual. Duane Featherstonhaugh, the author of Press Photography with the Miniature Camera (1939), exhorts press photographers to abstain from causing offense to their subjects. Following an ‘unwritten code of ethics,’ he enumerates the situations that are most likely to upset public opinion, urging the photographer to exercise discretion. Included in the list are photographs taken at the scene of an accident, a fire, or other disasters. The depiction of others’ misfortunes – the author cites the example of a mother bent weeping over the body of her dead child – is described as a delicate operation but one that the photographer has a right to perform.

In Featherstonhaugh’s opinion, photographers have an inherent right to document tragedies, provided they occur in a public place. The laws of the marketplace also encourage photographers to defy moral prohibitions. A photographer who shrinks from showing the distress of others, he suggests, would end up having a very brief career. This latter observation reveals a contradiction endemic to the industry, which consists in having to satisfy the irreconcilable demands of the fans of sensational images on the one hand and those of the moral ‘maximalists’ (to employ a contemporary term) on the other. The future codes of conduct of photojournalism would strive to balance these asymmetrical interests.

Although not yet formalized as legal documents, the codes of conduct of photojournalism were nonetheless already present, in substance, in the specialized literature of the 1930s. Published by three authors from the fields of government, publishing, and academia, Pictorial Journalism (1939) paved the way for the codification of professional conduct by subordinating the ethical dimension of photojournalism to a set of legal considerations. This work is emblematic of the gradual transformation of professional ethics into a code...
of conduct. In the chapter ‘Photography and the Law: Libel; Ethics; Copyrighting,’ the authors situate ethical problems within the broader context of the laws governing photojournalism. They discuss the law of copyright and provide a detailed description of the procedure for registering ownership of images as well as the penalties imposed in case of copyright infringement.

The passage in question establishes the press photographer’s rights and prerogatives. In order to show how semantically malleable images are as compared with text, they describe defamation lawsuits that can all be attributed to photographs having been poorly identified or captioned. Images that caricature their subjects or present them in an unfavorable light are also vulnerable to litigation. As an example, the authors cite an unflattering photograph of Theodore Roosevelt taken during his second presidential campaign. The image shows him in the posture of someone reacting to a defeat, an impression created by the fact that the photographer had captured what was merely a fleeting expression. This portrait of the candidate for the White House is an excellent example of the ‘candid camera,’ which spontaneously – and often indiscreetly – catches the subject in involuntary poses, gestures, and expressions.

The authors of *Pictorial Journalism* denounce such images as unethical, describing them as visual insults. They regard as the most reprehensible those images that depict the corpses of murder or accident victims or victims of lynchings without any journalistic justification whatsoever. They applaud, however, the fact that journalistic ethics has recently begun to prohibit the use of such images. This is seen by the authors as an indication of progress on the part of journalists as well as sensitivity on the part of the public.

The code of conduct of the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), adopted in 1923, was seen as a model for photojournalism. While it did not explicitly refer to press images, it introduced moral precepts that were readily embraced by the actors in the field of visual journalism. Article VII of the code of the ASNE, for example, condemns the insincerity of those who encourage base conduct by divulging sordid details in the name of noble moral values. The authors of *Pictorial Journalism* follow the spirit of the article in condemning the kind of horrifying images already noted, which they believe represent the ‘worst of our modern plagues.’ For his part, James C. Kinkaid, the author of *Press Photography* (1936), reproduces the code of the ANSE in its entirety in his chapter on ethics. Decency, of course, but also responsibility, impartiality, sincerity, independence, freedom (of the press), and fair play are all cited as canons to be observed: ‘There can be no greater duty to any news photographer.’ It is imperative, for Kinkaid, that photojournalism model its conduct on that of the written press. At stake is the ethical integrity of photography and of the profession itself.

### The National Press Photographers Association and the Question of Ethics

The importation of a system of regulations designed for print journalism into the field of press photography was symptomatic of two ambitions: first, to legitimize photojournalism by subjecting it to the same ethical standards as the written word; and second, to subordinate it to a duly constituted system of regulations. It was when the first...
professional associations of photojournalists were created that the need for a regulation of professional conduct was expressed.

Founded in 1945 to respond to the needs of the numerous war photographers who were returning to civilian life, the National Press Photographers Association (NPPA) serves as an excellent example of this desire to attach professional and corporate recognition to the question of ethics. In its early years, the NPPA devoted its energies to consolidating the still precarious professional status of the press photographer, and to defending his or her various rights. For the NPPA, the question of ethics is closely bound up with the legal question. This is made clear in its founding document. Adopted in February 1946, the NPPA’s constitution is accompanied by a code of conduct: the statement of the rights and duties of the press photographer appears to be a constituent part of the association’s legal existence. The NPPA’s code of conduct sets forth the mandate of the organization, described as ‘a professional society dedicated to the advancement of photojournalism, acknowledges concern and respect for the public’s natural-law right to freedom in searching for the truth and the right to be informed truthfully and completely about public events and the world in which we live.’ These introductory remarks are followed by eight articles recalling the fundamental values of photojournalism, its ethical ideals, the responsibilities of press photographers vis-à-vis the public, their commitments to their colleagues, their legal obligations, and their moral and civic duties.

In 1985, Claude Cookman, former picture editor with the Associated Press, and member of the NPPA published a laudatory account of the association’s early history which provides an exhaustive overview of the industry’s principal legal and moral accomplishments. Whether it be the establishment of a committee on the freedom of information and legislation affecting the profession, the setting up of a life insurance program, the production of educational films on the role of the press photographer in democratic societies, or efforts to bring about the repeal of Rule 35, which banned the taking of photographs in law courts, the NPPA’s various activities were aimed at reforming the legislative framework, social perceptions, and professional structures within which its members worked.

The duties of photoreporters, while not completely ignored, were at the very least subordinated to matters of public relations, as suggested in a speech by Bates Raney – an industrialist and friend of Joseph Costa, the NPPA’s founder – at the organization’s annual convention in 1948: ‘You may have a fine code of ethics and live up to it. Your deportment may be above reproach. You may be very conscious of all these things. But that is not enough. The public must know it, also.’ In the 1990s, the association published a series of books and brochures that were a great deal more forthcoming regarding the moral aspects of press photography. Photojournalism and the Law (1996), a practical guide to the legal issues surrounding press photography by Michael D. Sherer, a journalism professor at the University of Nebraska and chairman of the NPPA’s committee on the freedom of information, addresses the canonical aspects of photojournalistic law: protection of sources, invasion of privacy, and libel. The work’s objective is simple: to provide the members of the profession with a summary of the laws that could interfere with the production of ‘newsworthy images.’ Throughout the text, however, the author returns again and again to the importance of the press photographer’s social function, which he compares to that of a police officer. ‘News photographers and police officers have similar jobs,’ writes Sherer. ‘They both gather and report information.’
Some years earlier, the NPPA had published a brochure dealing specifically with the interactions between press photographers and the police, with special attention to the rights of victims. The authors of *Police/Media Relations and Victim’s Rights* (1991), which included journalism professors, photographers, police officers, and even victims, seek to promote a better collaboration among the members of this ‘ethical quartet’ by ensuring that the prerogatives of all are respected. For example, in a car accident with injuries, how is one to reconcile the power of the police, the dignity of the victims, the photographers’ freedom of the press, and the public’s right to know? The answers to such questions provided in the section ‘Issues of Ethics and Privacy’ are essentially of a legal nature, as though the courts were the main arena in which to work out the complex economy of the interests involved.

While the organization’s current code of conduct respects the spirit and letter of the 1946 constitution, the economic, legal, and technological developments affecting photojournalism that have taken place since then have led to the introduction of new ethical criteria. The nature of the infringements of the privacy or moral integrity of those photographed has changed. Their definition now reflects the legal pluralism of the groups that make up civil society. Thus, it is forbidden to resort to stereotypes – ethnic, sexual, religious, and so on – in the photojournalistic depiction of individuals and communities. The press photographer is expected to feel compassion for victims. Vulnerable subjects must be depicted with dignity and respect. The photojournalist has truly become the gentleman described by Kinkaid in the 1930s. The NPPA’s code of conduct also prohibits any action that seeks to modulate or alter the representation itself. Thus, any form of direct intervention that might in any way alter the character of a situation being photographed as well as any type of *a posteriori* manipulation of the visual content of the image are formally and explicitly prohibited. Hence, it is a professional offense to reconstruct or stage the subject of a photograph, as it is to undertake any deliberate action capable of influencing the course of an event. Technical operations affecting the material integrity of the image itself, such as retouching and other types of manipulation, are strictly forbidden.

‘We Are Under Attack’

This latter point is especially important, since it relates to the challenges posed beginning in the late 1980s by the development of computer software applications. The impact of this technological development on photojournalism’s credibility appeared so great that a special code of conduct dealing specifically with the use of these applications was required. In 1991, the board of directors of the NPPA published a statement of principles entitled ‘Digital Manipulation Code of Ethics,’ which was intended to establish guidelines for the use of digital techniques. Since the credibility of a photographic representation depends on the viewer having absolute faith in its authenticity, the formulation of this amendment to the NPPA’s code of conduct provided the organization with a perfect opportunity to reiterate its fundamental values:

‘It is clear that the emerging electronic technologies provide new challenges to the integrity of photographic images ... [I]n light of this, we the National Press Photographers Association, reaffirm the basis of our ethics: accurate representation is the benchmark of our profession ... Altering the editorial content ... is a breach of the ethical standards recognized by the NPPA.’
‘We are under attack.’ In these terms John Long, the NPPA’s president when the ‘Digital Manipulation Code of Ethics’ was adopted, sums up the situation of visual journalism in an article, published on the association’s website, entitled ‘Ethics in the Age of Digital Photography.’ It is absolutely vital that the credibility of photojournalism and the public’s faith in that credibility, both of which have been battered and bruised by the ‘visual lies’ of digital publishing, be restored, and this is to occur through a renewed insistence on the ethical foundations of photojournalism. The accuracy of the press photograph, the quality – as much moral as it is factual – that made for the heyday of photojournalism, is to be reinstated as the cornerstone of a practice that is threatened today with corruption.

How? By subjecting digital practices to the authority of the analogue model. The field will retain its credibility provided the only types of digital manipulation permitted are those already accepted in the field of analogue photography: color correction, the restoration of missing lines and shapes, the elimination of dust, and cropping. The operations traditionally performed in the dark room remain the absolute standard of reference. The codes of conduct of the principal agencies and associations of journalists (chief among them the Society of Professional Journalists, the Canadian Association of Journalists, and the Associated Press) as well as those of the major daily newspapers (the *Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and the *New York Times*) all subordinate digital alteration to the canonical model of the analogue. Thus, it is permissible to eliminate an element from an image by cropping the scene but forbidden to remove the same element by using a software application. The failure to disclose any operation of this kind is defined as a professional offense, one punishable, and sometimes severely.

The label ‘photo-illustration’ frees the photographer or editorial board from this kind of ethical scrutiny. This designation serves to inform the reader that the reproduced image is the result of digital manipulation and hence cannot lay claim to authenticity. It tends to appear primarily in connection with fashion and advertising images, types of photographs that are not required to be truthful. Journalistic practice thus suggests that such alterations are only made to images that make no claim to objectivity. News images, the last bastion of visual journalistic integrity, remain ‘untouchable.’ The industry’s key players are unanimous on this score: ‘In news we don’t approve, but advertising and features do it,’ says Jack Corn of the *Chicago Tribune* about the use of digital technologies. ‘Manipulating news photos is something we do not do,’ claims Larry Nylund of *USA Today*. ‘For sure, not the news page,’ states Gary Settle of the *Seattle Times*.

The Analogue as a Cloak for Documentary Photography

Concealed within the invocation of the analogue as a symbol of journalistic integrity is an ethical touchstone even more central to photojournalism: documentary photography. The ‘attack’ of digital technologies actually threatens the documentary roots of photojournalism, regarded by many as the guarantor of its most noble aspirations. When John Long, in his article ‘Ethics in the Age of Digital Photography,’ concludes that ‘the bottom line is that documentary photojournalism is the last vestige of the real photography,’ he lays claim to the link between press photography and the documentary tradition. He is not the only one to do so. The adjective ‘documentary’ is
widely employed in contemporary codes of conduct to signify the ‘morality’ of the press image. According to the Sarasota Herald-Tribune, ‘The power of documentary photography is based on the fact that real moments are captured as they happen. Anything done to alter the process, before or after the image is recorded, diminishes that power and turns it into a lie.’ The San Francisco Chronicle stipulates, ‘When a photograph is altered or manipulated for illustrative purposes, the resulting image must be clearly labeled to indicate that it has been altered and is not a documentary news photograph.’ For the Norfolk Virginian Pilot, ‘The spirit of the documentary photo is to be honest.’

The assertion that press photography has its origins in documentary photography is a recurrent theme in the historiography of photojournalism. According to Arthur Rothstein, the author of Photojournalism (1956) and a former FSA photographer, the documentary photographer is invested with a moral mission that consists of bearing truthful witness to the facts. Rothstein maintains that the documentary photographer made a substantial contribution to photojournalism, and that persuasion rather than literal transcription of the facts is the heart of the documentary tradition. This moralization of photography is the source of the ethical mandate that is still ascribed to the press photographer today. In Words and Pictures (1952), Wilson Hicks emphasizes the social utility of the works of Jacob Riis and Lewis W. Hine, both of whom he situates within the same reformist perspective. ‘This was photography with a purpose, some of which helped to bring about reforms,’ writes Hicks of these images, which he compares to those of the FSA on the basis of a common commitment to social critique. This is an opinion shared by numerous authors, who deliberately cultivate this notion of a filiation between the documentary tradition and press photography. In an article from 1949, Werner J. Severin establishes this honorable pedigree in the clearest possible terms:

‘By 1935 the stage was set for documentary photography to record contemporary life on a larger scale than ever before. The technicians had provided the means to reproduce photographs in quantity. The picture newspapers, wire services, and magazines were available to distribute them to millions of readers. Fenton, Brady, Atget, Riis, Hine, the “f.64” group and others [notably Erich Salomon] had shown the way.’

Professor at the Arizona State University, Frank Hoy defends the sociohistorical relevance of photojournalism in analogous terms when he refers to the work of Riis and Hine, which is invariably invoked to underscore the ‘activist’ roots of photojournalism. Riis is described as the pioneer of the ‘concerned photographers’ (a phrase coined by Cornell Capa, who founded the International Center of Photography in New York in 1973, to describe photographers who pursue a moral agenda), while Hine is described as the father of American social documentary photography. A similar effort to enhance the status of photojournalism by associating it with documentary photography can be seen in the remarks of A. William Bluem, a historian of the television documentary, for whom ‘photojournalism closely parallels the documentary movement in still photography.’

Cited by Clifton C. Edom, a professor at the Columbia University School of Journalism, this statement sanctions the link, both historical and inalienable in character, between photojournalism and documentary photography. The fact that it was made by a specialist in the electronic media lends further support to the informational value of photojournalism: in this instance, the reference to documentary photography as a model is not so much to characterize the ‘style’ of press images as to validate their journalistic use.
In the 1970s, when the economic future of photojournalism as well as its position in the media seemed uncertain, the industry’s quest for historical legitimacy took a new turn. Documentary photography precedes photojournalism – this is the opinion of Gifford Hampshire, the director of Documerica, an environmental photography project formed in 1971 on the model of the FSA, for whom ‘documentary photography is the genesis of photojournalism.’ He further states, in a speech before the members of the NPPA, that ‘photojournalism is excellent only to the degree that the photographer practices the intellectual discipline of documentary photography.’ Documentary photography lends ‘dignity’ to photojournalism, to quote Clifton C. Edom.

The revision of the codes of conduct in the face of the new ethical challenges posed by digital photography, the invocation of analogue photography – a practice that is quickly becoming obsolete – as an ethical safeguard for photojournalism, and the appeal to documentary photography as a model: all of these are hallmarks of the ‘deontology’ of photojournalism today. The history of photography is full of examples of such historical retreats in response to new technological, cultural, or symbolic situations. This morality of the analogue that the signatories of the codes of ethics attempt to defend against the impropriety of the digital is actually the symptom of an even deeper anxiety: the fear that photojournalism is in danger of losing its ethical foundation. And yet the code of conduct regarding the use of digital technology is only the most recent manifestation of an anxiety that is endemic to the entire history of photojournalism. Whether in unwritten or in duly codified form, the ethics of photojournalism is part of the moral construction of a practice that lacks any stable definition. Current research on the history, semiotics, and aesthetics of photographic illustration comes to a similar conclusion: photojournalism is a category that is fundamentally unstable and continually in the process of being reconfigured by discourse. The ethics of the press image are a product of these historical reconfigurations. In reality, then, photojournalism’s ‘deontology’ should really be regarded as an ontology, since it is the essence of the practice itself that is still in question.

NOTES

5. Henry Harrison SUPLEE, ‘The Ethics of the Hand Cameras,’ The Photographic Times 19, no. 429 (December 6, 1889): 608. Suplee published his criticism when portable cameras for amateurs were
first being marketed, and it echoes a widespread sense of dissatisfaction resulting from the increased liberalization of photographic practice.


7. The ethical concerns of print journalism are framed more in terms of professional integrity and fair trade. This can be seen in a speech delivered by Melville E. Stone, the general manager of the Associated Press, to the students of Columbia University, the future seat of the administration of the Pulitzer Prize, and reported in the *New York Times*: ‘Mr. Stone laid down three rules of conduct which should be observed in the conduct of the business end of a newspaper. A paper should not print advertising matter as news, he said, and news should be clearly distinguishable from advertising matter. As his second principle Mr. Stone said that advertisers should be correctly informed as to the circulation of a newspaper. And finally there should be no discrimination in the matter of advertising rates.’ See ‘Newspapers Educate Here,’ *New York Times*, May 15, 1909.


9. ‘It is the world of Aristotle, among others, who advocates an entire way of life and not just a code of good conduct in society, as well as that of Kant, for whom we have moral duties to others but also to ourselves. I describe such a world as “maximalist.”’ Ruwen Ogien, *L’Éthique aujourd’hui. Maximalistes et minimalistes*, Collection Folio essais (Paris: Gallimard, 2007), 12.


12. ‘If the published photograph is one which tends to hold him [the subject] up to scorn or ridicule and thus injure him in his social or business relations, he may have grounds for a civil libel suit against the newspaper,’ L. Vitray, J. Mills Jr, and R. Ellard, *Pictorial Journalism* (note 10), 388.

13. ‘Only a few years ago newspaper ethics forbade the use of photos of corpses, whether accident or murder victims. Public feeling and newspaper practice in this respect have changed,’ ibid.

14. This code of conduct is available online at the website of the Center for the Study of Ethics in the Professions at the Illinois Institute of Technology (Chicago): http://ethics.iit.edu/indexOfCodes-2.php?key=18_113_1262.

15. ‘A newspaper cannot escape conviction of insincerity if while professing high moral purpose it supplies incentives to base conduct, such as are to be found in details of crime and vice, publication of which is not demonstrably for the general good.’ The continuation of the article is categorical regarding the anticipated consequences of any laxness in this area: ‘Lacking authority to enforce its canons, the journalism here represented can but express the hope that deliberate pandering to vicious instincts will encounter effective public disapproval or yield to the influence of a preponderant professional condemnation,’ *Canons of Journalism* (1923), American Society of Newspaper Editors, http://ethics.iit.edu/indexOfCodes-2.php?key=18_113_1262


22. ‘In a strictly technical sense, the photojournalist has the legal right to photograph private individuals caught in public interest events, even though those events may be embarrassing to those involved. This is because the courts consider such moments to be news worthy and of interest to the public.’ Steve Haines, ed., *Police/Media Relations and Victim’s Rights* (Durham, NC: National Press Photographers Association, 1991), 20.


24. Kinkaid paints a flattering portrait of the press photographer, whom he depicts as an extremely courteous and civilized individual. To judge by his account, the press photographer has become a gentleman. James C. Kinkaid, *Press Photography* (note 17), 266.


26. Ibid.


28. There are numerous instances of such punishment. However, it is worth mentioning an example reported by André Gunthert among others, which concerns a photograph taken by Adnan Hajj during an attack on Beirut in August 2006. Posted online on August 5, the image, credited to Reuters, shows a view of the Lebanese capital with a column of smoke rising on the left; the column of smoke contains a repeated pattern, an indication that the photograph has been altered. On August 7, Reuters released a statement in which it affirmed having ‘zero tolerance for any doctoring of pictures’ and indicated that it had removed Hajj’s 920 photographs from its picture library and severed all further relations with him. See André Gunthert, ‘L’affaire Adnan Hajj: première manipulation emblématique de l’ère numérique,’ *Archives de la recherche en histoire visuelle* (Paris, École des hautes études en sciences sociales), August 8, 2006, www.arhv.lhivic.org/index.php/2006/08/08/204-laffaire-adnan-hajj. Computer science has developed special ‘image forensic techniques’ that make it possible to detect such ‘unauthorized’ digital manipulations. See Hany Farid, ‘Photo Fakery and Forensics,’ *Advances in Computers* 77 (October 2009).


30. The citations that follow are from interviews conducted by Sheila Reaves. See ‘Digital Retouching,’ in Paul Martin Lester, ed., *NPPA Special Report* (note 18), 45–46.


38. In his introduction to the catalogue for the exhibition The Concerned Photographer, Cornell Capa defines the meaning of this phrase precisely by invoking Lewis W. Hine, whom he describes as a ‘humanitarian-with-a-camera’ and whose own words he cites: ‘There were two things I wanted to do. I wanted to show the things that had to be corrected. I wanted to show the things that had to be appreciated.’ See Cornell Capa, The Concerned Photographer (New York: Grossman, 1968), n.p.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
43. All the prohibitions laid down by the codes of conduct – the bans on staged scenes, on digital alterations and reconstructions, etc. – are repeated in the eligibility criteria for the major competitions (Pulitzer, World Press Photo, Eye of History Contest, etc.). This can be seen by comparing the codes of conduct with the regulations of the most prestigious photojournalistic competitions: the criteria for the belle image, or beautiful image, are modeled on those of the bonne image, or good image. Is it any wonder that references to documentary photography are obligatory as well, and not just in the calls for submissions but even in the instructions transmitted to the members of the jury? The coincidence of the ethical and aesthetic precepts is complete. The rules are identical with the regulations.

ABSTRACTS

As the type of photography most directly concerned with veracity, photojournalism has always been the subject of discourses that seek to establish its ethical legitimacy. What is the source of this ethical fragility of photojournalism? What definition of photojournalism do its codes of conduct construct? By examining the genesis and development of these codes, the author sets out to analyze some of the most decisive moments in the history of the ethical construction of photojournalism. The article seeks to lay the foundation for a moral history of press photography that will take its place alongside the other histories of the field (aesthetic, social, institutional, and cultural), all of which play an equally central role in defining the complex identity of
photojournalism. Current research on the history, semiotics, and aesthetics of photographic illustration shows that photojournalism is a category which is fundamentally unstable and continually in the process of being reconfigured by discourse. The ethics of the press image is a product of these historical reconfigurations.

AUTHORS

VINCENT LAVOIE

Vincent Lavoie is a professor and director of graduate studies in the Department of Art History at the Université du Québec à Montréal. The focus of his research is discursive strategies for the ethical and aesthetic valorization of photojournalism. He is a regular member of Figura, Centre de Recherche sur le Texte et l'Imaginaire (Research Center on Text and the Imaginary) in Montreal. He has just published Photojournalismes. Revoir les canons de l'image de presse (Éditions Hazan, Paris).