PRECARIOUS PHOTOJOURNALISTS: HOW GENDER AND FREELANCE WORK SHAPE WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES AS NEWS PHOTOGRAPHERS

by

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(Under the Direction of Carolina Acosta-Alzuru)

ABSTRACT

Gender is an ever-present variable in work environments, and the field of photojournalism is no exception. Since the emergence of photojournalism as a field, women working in it have had to navigate a field that privileges men. Now, with the digitization of news, media organizations are downsizing or removing their photo departments completely, and freelance work has become the norm for those working in photojournalism. This is now a precarious profession. Photojournalists do not have the safety net of a steady income and they face new difficulties and roadblocks. Guided by feminist theory, this dissertation examines how women in photojournalism are impacted by freelance work. Through in-depth interviews with fourteen female freelance photojournalists, and an analysis of the Photo Bill of Rights, this study aims to understand the nuances around gender and freelance work. I found that women are reconceptualizing the field they work in, including the ethical codes that have historically guided it. I also found that gender can both help and hurt women as they try to gain access to the field. And, overwhelmingly, women are still asking for respect at work.

INDEX WORDS: Photojournalism, Feminist studies, News labor, Freelance work

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2021

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May 2021

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. A for being an amazing leader and chair. I appreciate the time and attention she gave to this project, and the constant support she has shown me while in the graduate program. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Peggy Kreshel, Dr. Kate Fortmueller, and Dr. Kyser Lough who each showed this project love in their own special way. I would also like to acknowledge Mark Johnson, whose expertise and advocacy have been a great benefit to my academic journey.

I would also like to acknowledge those that provided important emotional support throughout this project's creation: Paula Briscoe, Joel Hudson, Anna-Marie Hooper, and Solyee Kim.

Most importantly, I want to acknowledge here, and throughout this project, my appreciation for the women who gave me their time and shared their personal stories. Thank you.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I want to introduce this dissertation the same way I introduced it to the women who participated in this research study. It stems from the personal and branches into the professional and the academic. In other words, this research started from my own lived experiences as a photojournalist and political photographer. To know how I arrived at this project, is to understand a little bit about me. It is also essential to understanding the significance of this dissertation.

I studied visual journalism in my undergraduate program. I did this alongside some of the most talented and interesting women. As we studied light, composition and visual storytelling at a large research university, they became my most meaningful community. After graduating, I entered the field naively, expecting my working world to look like the classroom. After all, my journalism program prided itself on looking more like a newsroom than a stereotypical liberal arts program. However, this was not the reality I encountered. I quickly learned that I would enter spaces with my camera as the sole woman. I became used to navigating comments like "Did you bat your eyes to get this job?" and "I didn't know women were smart enough to shoot manually." And while these sexist experiences became routine, I never wanted to normalize them.

I was angry. And I wanted to do something about it. Fast forward to my doctoral program, where I knew I wanted to do research about the value of women in photojournalism. I wanted to be an advocate who listened to their struggles, celebrated their successes, and shared

their stories. And I wanted all of this to enter the academic space, where photojournalism professors were training future photojournalists.

As part of my doctoral assistantship I am a photojournalism instructor, and I feel morally responsible to prepare my students for the realities of the field they are about to enter. I want to teach them all the things I wish someone had told me. I want to go beyond skills and have my students read and discuss our field's professional problems, such as sexual harassment, assault, mental health struggles, and financial insecurities. I feel that if journalism education is truly about preparing you for a career with skills such as using a camera to tell stories, then I must also teach my students about the realities of our field. A professional field that is meaningful to democracy, but also full of problems.

In September 2019, I read a piece by Candace Jones (1996) which discussed how to successfully navigate a career in the film industry, a field where workers go from project to project instead of having a staff job. The article showcased an academic trying to speak on a topic she had obviously never navigated herself or bothered to ask anyone who had recently navigated it. The disconnect was troublesome. That article and the responsibility I feel as I teach a classroom full of future journalists lead me to the specifics of this project, which started with an impetus: I must talk about women who work as freelance photojournalists. Freelance is the reality today for photojournalists. Addressing the freelance realities would speak to the new and not so new hurdles that women are facing in the field, and how race, class, and age are all critical factors in making the field more inclusive for women.

To do this, I knew I had to listen to women freelance photojournalists. Not to give them voice, they have a voice, but to help make their voices louder and, importantly, to place these conversations where professors could hear them. In this sense, my dissertation is a key step in

accomplishing my life-long goal of being an advocate for women in photojournalism. One who both listens, and also celebrates, them.

Justification for this study

Since its inception, with the introduction of war photography into newspapers, the field of photojournalism has been dominated by white men. The field has had female household names, such as Margaret Bourke-White, but in the early history of photojournalism women often served in token roles. Newspapers did not start to routinely hire women in their photo departments until the 1980s (Darian-Smith, 2016), and today, for every three news photographers, two are men (Briscoe, 2014). The American Society of Newspaper Editors has routinely reported that photo departments are more male-dominated than any other department in news organizations (Briscoe, 2014).

Photojournalism associations, organizations, and academics are all working towards bringing gender equity to the field. Organizations like Women Photograph highlight women in photojournalism and collect data on news organizations' dedication (or lack thereof) to using the work of female photojournalists (Women Photograph). The National Press Photographers Association now provides resources for women working in the field such as the Women in Visual Journalism conference (Women in Visual Journalism). Trade publications and news organizations are exposing the many difficulties women in photojournalism face, including a significant problem with sexual harassment and assault (Amaria, 2018; Chick, 2018; Guerra, 2018). Scholars are taking an interest in this area too, as they recognize the value women bring to photojournalism as well as the hardships they face when pursuing a career in news work (Darian-Smith, 2016; Somerstein, 2018).

However, in the last decade, female photojournalists have faced additional challenges thanks to the shifting nature of the digital economy, with digital environments impacting the business models and financial stability of newspapers. Photo departments are typically the first to experience layoffs or to be removed completely when newspapers grapple with how to make ends meet (Anderson, 2013). When they are not removing photo departments completely, news organizations are often decreasing the size of their photo staff while increasing their budget for freelance photographers (Wheatley, 2013). The residual effects of relying on freelance photojournalists can have a significant effect on women working in this field. Some scholars have noted that women may choose to work as freelance journalists to escape the gendered structures within newsrooms (Massey & Elmore, 2011), while others have noted that project-based work does not rid women of gendered working experiences (Bielby & Bielby, 1996).

It is important to know and understand these consequences of the shift towards a digital economy because scholars have already found that having women's voices in news gathering and reporting can impact coverage. News consumers may only view certain types of images and visual stories if the field continues to stay predominantly male (Armstrong, 2014; Beam & Cicco, 2010; Len-Rios et al. 2005). In a democratic society, the diversity of voices in news coverage is vital to holistic reporting and understanding of government. Therefore, it is important that scholarship both includes and acknowledges those who are creating visual narratives about the world and their experiences.

Objectivity as a journalism value may be preventing scholars from digging too deeply into the issue of newsroom diversity (Steiner, 1998). Objectivity implies that "journalists' professional and personal experiences are irrelevant. Their histories do not enter into their work. Their identities do not matter" (Steiner, 1998, p. 146). This has been proven false by those who

have dared to investigate the topic. Having women in the newsroom can impact where stories are placed or if topics are addressed in the news coverage at all (Armstrong, 2014; Beam & Cicco, 2010; Mills, 1997; Marlane, 1999). Beam and Cicco (2010) stated, "women and men view the world through different social lenses" (p. 394), and those differences are translated into news coverage. Objectivity, one of the fundamental ideological components of journalism (Deuze, 2005), is understood and taught through male ideas of knowledge and news reporting (Chambers et. al, 2004). Men are more likely to approach objectivity in their news gathering, having a sense of detachment from their subjects. Female reporters also value objective reporting, but they are more likely to show concern for their subject's emotions (Beam & Cicco, 2010; van Zoonen, 1988). Many female journalists feel that male journalists hide behind objectivity, and in doing so, show less compassion for the subjects they cover (van Zoonen, 1988).

This dissertation is located at the intersection between digital news, precarious work, and gender. It aims to understand the gendered experiences of women working in freelance photojournalism. By focusing on gender issues in freelance photojournalism, this study places its focus on the new norm for photojournalism—project-based work—and explores how the freelance business model impacts women who have historically been disadvantaged in the field of photojournalism. I begin with an overview of the literature, including the following areas of interest: defining and differentiating photojournalism from other types of photography and journalism, a brief history of the field of photojournalism, an overview of journalism education and professionalization, news labor and the digital economy, project-based work in photojournalism, and women in photojournalism. Then, I explore the feminist theoretical frameworks that shaped this study, including how they informed the methods I used: in-depth interviews with women working in freelance photojournalism and an analysis of the Photo Bill

of Rights. Next, I provide the analysis of the data collection process and then conclude with some final thoughts and personal reflections.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter explores the new and established literature in this dissertation's areas of interests. I begin with an explanation of terms. This is followed by a brief presentation of the history of the field of photojournalism. Next, I look at the professionalization of photojournalism by examining journalism education and ethical codes. Following, I then review the literature on digital news labor, which then transitions into understanding how the digital economy has made the field of photojournalism precarious. I conclude with a section on gender, exploring the ways in which scholars have discussed how gender impacts work, particularly in the area of photojournalism.

Journalism vs. Photojournalism vs. Photography

To begin, it is important to define the term photojournalist and understand how photojournalists have differentiated themselves from other photographers and/or journalists. Newton positions the profession in the following way: "Photojournalists distinguish their images from others in part by intention: the purpose of making and distributing the image is to show the truth" (2009, p. 234). As described in the following section, the mechanics of the camera allowed people to witness and share a still moment in history that others would not have been able to experience (Newton, 2009). Training, education, and ethics, as discussed later, help photojournalists gather their images while serving as a documenter of history. They also

distinguish photojournalism as a distinct profession. While photojournalists emphasize telling truthful stories with their images, artists may be more concerned with the aesthetic of images; therefore, they might manipulate photos or situations to create the image they desire. Bock (2008) describes the tension between "art" and "fact," with photojournalists emphasizing the factual component of their images. Sometimes journalists, who are not photojournalists, do not understand this nuance and view photojournalism as a form of art (Hare, 2018). However, many photojournalists do differentiate themselves from artists as well as from photography hobbyists (Mäenpää, 2014).

Photojournalists' work experiences differ significantly from their writing counterparts. First, photojournalists have to physically be present to do their job; writers can do their jobs safely from their own homes (Somerstein, 2017). Photojournalists are also different from their writing colleagues because of the gear required to do their job. This gear is often large and expensive, and makes photojournalists easily identifiable, while writers can take notes discreetly (Somerstein, 2017). Having a camera, also often means there can be extra barriers to doing work. This may come in the form of having to negotiate with an image handler for a press pass to have access to a person or event to photograph. These image handlers may even limit where the photojournalist can stand during an event. Having a camera also means fighting physical barriers, such as anti-press people who may try to stand in front of photojournalists to prevent them from doing their job (Somerstein, 2017). Photojournalism also differs from writing, in that the gear is seen as the tool that warrants objectivity. Whereas it is assumed that a writer's objective mind can separate values from facts, that task is presumed to be done by the photographer's camera (Bock, 2012). This places photojournalism in an inferior position in the

news gathering process because it is not viewed as something that requires discernment and intelligence.

Even the literature on news workers evidences a lack of understanding of who photojournalists are. When scholars conceptualize the term journalist (Antunovic et al, 2019; Massey & Elmore, 2011), photojournalists are often not included. However, photojournalists view themselves as journalists. All photojournalists are journalists, but not all journalists are photojournalists. While the literature is growing in the area of visual communication, only a few scholars focus specifically on photojournalists (Bock, 2008; Grayson, 2013; Somerstein, 2020; Hadland, Lambert, and Campbell 2016).

History of Photojournalism

A brief history of photojournalism will help contextualize the profession. Before the camera, newspapers relied on artwork or engravings to visually depict the news for their audiences. With the invention of the camera, science and art came together for enthusiasts who could afford the large and expensive gear and chemicals required. Photography, it was eventually theorized, could provide objective truths and a sense of material reality (Brennen, 2009). Paradoxically, photographers and images have historically been undervalued in comparison to reporters and words (Thomas, 2007).

News photography picked up in newspapers starting in the late 1800s and early 1900s (Brennen, 2009). Technology adopted the fascination with realism in art and used images to cover crisis, specifically war. By 1925, the Leica 35 mm camera replaced the previously larger machinery of photography, allowing photography to be slightly more accessible (Mich, 1947). Margaret Bourke-White became the first woman to photograph war in the 1920s, and she would

later become one of the few household names of women working in news photography (Keller, 1996). Newspaper owners such as Pulitzer and Hearst began to encourage more photography in the early 1900s when they discovered that more photographs correlated with wider circulation, and the potential to increase advertising sales (Thomas, 2007). These publishers, not known for their high ethical standards, often encouraged staged and/or salacious images (Thomas, 2007). Objective news photography would come later with magazines.

Magazines would eventually become a popular form of communication, with the early success stories of *Time* and *Fortune* magazines. Henry Luce, who had seen success with these magazines, introduced a new concept with *Life* magazine in 1936: a news magazine that emphasized photographic work. News photos could now be consumed by many households and visuals became accepted forms of reporting the news. It has been argued that magazines like *Life* created the concept of objective news reporting through photographs (Brennen, 2009). Published, weekly, *Life* was a commercial success at the time often highlighting the work of Margaret Bourke-White. Before these particular publications, the occupation was described as "news photography," with some arguing that the term photojournalism started to appear in the presence of news magazines (Brennen, 2009).

The National Press Photographers Association was formed on May 22, 1947, to "advance press photography" (National Press Photographers Association). NPPA's first and long-time President Joe Costa is on record as describing news photographers being positioned as second-class citizens in the newsroom, where many thought that photographers were illiterate (Thomas, 2007). Some have argued that words are more valuable than images, as words are a product of the mind and images are a product of the body (Bock et. al, 2017). This tension can be seen even today when writers are valued more than photographers in the newsroom (Bock et. al, 2017).

These negative sentiments support the need for advocacy organizations like NPPA to exist. In its founding documents, the NPPA positions itself to "create, promote, and maintain...a higher spirit of fraternalism" along with its goals of educating people on the field and to advocate for those working in it. The NPPA's certificate of organization is one of the earliest written documents that spells out some of the duties and goals of photojournalism as a professional field. Even when doing so, women were left out of the conversation, with "newsmen" being the term used throughout its founding (National Press Photographers Association).

While brief, this history highlights the fact that in the newsroom, photojournalists are often seen as second-class workers, who must fight for their legitimacy in comparison to writers. Additionally, the field often has gendered expectations, with its roots in crisis and war, which historically have not been spaces where women have been allowed to enter professionally. Also, throughout history, women have faced their own unique set of barriers to enter the profession of photojournalism outside of being given a token role. In summary, the field has placed photojournalists, women, and other marginalized groups at a disadvantage.

Journalism Education and Professionalization

Journalists have positioned themselves as a cornerstone of democracy and are not afraid to note that the press is the only profession mentioned in America's constitution. However, conceptualizing news labor has proven to be a difficult task for scholars, as many still do not agree upon whether it is a profession or a craft, and digital journalism makes this task even murkier. The migration of journalism into digital spaces makes precarious labor a needed, but also challenging, area of study. Deuze (2005) argues that journalism is more of an ideology than a profession, and an essential part of understanding journalism is seeing how journalists position

and value their own work. The ideology of the profession of journalism has five key values in a democratic society: public service, ethics, objectivity, autonomy, and immediacy (Deuze, 2005). Deuze (2005, p. 447) defines those terms in the following ways:

- Public service: journalists provide a public service (as watchdogs or 'news- hounds', active collectors and disseminators of information).
- Objectivity: journalists are impartial, neutral, objective, fair and (thus) credible.
- Autonomy: journalists must be autonomous, free and independent in their work.
- Immediacy: journalists have a sense of immediacy, actuality and speed (inherent in the concept of 'news').
- Ethics: journalists have a sense of ethics, validity and legitimacy.

The argument that journalism is an ideology is important to note. Ideologies are a set of opinions, beliefs, and attitudes that seem like universal truths. Journalists do not have required certification or education, but by holding these five key values as universal expectations, journalists set boundaries to the profession. The same is accomplished with stated ethical codes. Ideas of right and wrong, insider and outsider, are established through journalism as an ideology. Scholarship has sometimes labeled this phenomenon as an "interpretive community" meaning photojournalists understand their working world through shared social experiences (Seo, 2019). Photojournalists gain more knowledge about their profession by interacting with others who are doing similar work (Seo, 2019).

As we begin to question photojournalism, particularly why the field is gendered, a reexamination of these values is needed. How can we say we should hire more women in photojournalism if all photojournalists are neutral and impartial? Maybe it is time to question objectivity. How can we say we value autonomy when we do not pay photojournalists a livable

wage or provide benefits such as health insurance? Maybe it is time to question the livelihood of our workers and the field's understanding of autonomy.

Mäenpää and Seppänen (2010) found that photojournalists are more concerned with traditional journalistic values than any other department in newsrooms. Mäenpää (2014) credits this to the camera being viewed as a more precise medium when compared to other forms of journalism. While these values and goals in journalism and/or photojournalism bring standardization and credibility to the profession, they can also harm people from marginalized groups. For example, scholarship on gender and journalism has also looked at newsroom values from a critical perspective, arguing that news gathering norms are masculine. Chambers, Steiner, and Flemming note that objectivity and impartiality, two ideals highly prized in journalism, are historically "anchored with a partial, male-oriented construction of knowledge, reportage and 'news 'which produced a patriarchal framework for the professionalization of the occupation" (2004, p. 7). Today, journalists are still expected to operate within newsrooms under specific professional norms, which are overwhelmingly created and led by male editors (Chambers & Steiner, 2009).

Understanding the incredibly high elevation of journalistic values in the field of photojournalism is crucial to studying those working in these spaces. These values, and the public good photojournalists believe they bring to democracy, can create a sense of purpose and foster pride in their jobs. A specific place where these values can be seen is in the NPPA's Code of Ethics. The NPPA is a non-profit dedicated to visual journalism, and its Code of Ethics are cited and enforced in the field of photojournalism. In its preamble, the Code of Ethics states: "This code is intended to promote the highest quality in all forms of visual journalism and to strengthen public confidence in the profession. It is also meant to serve as an educational tool

both for those who practice and for those who appreciate photojournalism." The seventeen bullet points that follow the preamble hold photojournalists accountable for creating honest images, as well as define appropriate professional behavior.

Ethical codes like these are often first presented to students while in journalism school. A degree in journalism is not required to enter the profession, though the major has become increasingly popular (Fletcher, 2018). Photojournalism education is important for a student's professionalization, because they can learn the language that defines a photojournalist and their work's significance in the newsroom. Photojournalism students can learn how to defend themselves through educational training on why photojournalism and photojournalists matter.

Professionalization is ultimately the groundwork for journalism education (George, 2011), even though there is still tension between defining the goals of journalism curriculum. As Lester describes, "[j]ournalism textbooks document what has been described and prescribed to students not only about what is newsworthy and how to report news, but also who can or should report the news and what personal attributes reporters need for success" (1995, p. 32). These personal attributes often correspond to whiteness and maleness. News gathering techniques are overwhelmingly taught by male professors at universities, even though classrooms are mostly comprised of women (Franks, 2013). That is why an understanding of women's position in journalism school is essential. Some journalism programs in their early histories attempted to exclude women from their programs; others made no efforts to specifically exclude women because administrators thought women would have no interest in studying journalism (Chambers et al, 2004). For many in photojournalism, their education is where they learn the discourse of the field and what is viewed as success in this career. By understanding a photojournalist's

training and education, scholars are given a glimpse into understanding how photojournalists conceptualize themselves, their work, and their position in the newsroom.

Throughout their journalism education, women are often encouraged to take more feature writing classes, and this is often where more female professors are found (Chambers et. al, 2004). These roots can be seen in the content female journalists are still covering today. Women working in traditional newsrooms are less likely to cover hard news and rarely have their work showcased on the front page of newspapers (Franks, 2013). Chambers, Steiner, and Flemming (2004) discussed how women are often "bunched" into more feminine areas of the newsroom such as education, and as a result, these subject areas of the newsroom are seen as less prestigious. Some scholars have argued that the internet and the growing presence of freelance positions has the potential to present women with more equal opportunities in journalism spaces (Antunovic et al., 2019; Franks, 2013; Steiner, 2017). These assumptions might be challenged as research begins to explore this space more.

Scholars have also argued that journalism schools focus too much on vocational training, instead of providing a traditional liberal arts degree (Salcetti, 1995). However, because the emphasis is often on vocational training, students learn what it means to be a "good photojournalist," which includes mastering skills in light and composition, but also understanding storytelling, ethical guidelines, and the personal attributes it takes to be successful in this field. I struggle with the perceived dichotomy of skills training and a liberal arts education as I teach my own introductory photojournalism course and find my path as an educator activist. I see tremendous value in teaching skills. Learning how to operate a camera and tell a story visually has provided me with personal and professional opportunities that are incredibly meaningful to my life. However, as instructors I think we must find more time to talk about the

ethical dilemmas presented with some of the skills we teach. Skills lessons, like depth of field, must be thought about in a deeper way than surface level skills that aide in storytelling: what lens a photojournalist uses, the distance they stand between the person or thing they are photographing, and the aperture they select are all decisions that impact what the audience sees in an image. Giving students the time and space to be reflective on why they make certain decisions, and the cultural consequences of these decisions must be incorporated into the classroom. I have also taught this course asking students to write reflections on all their assignments. Similar to a research journal, it allows the photojournalism student to see their relationship to their work. Skills are important, but finding the time and space to go beyond skills training (and more than the occasional ethics discussion), is vital to making photojournalism education a place that explores concepts of diversity and inclusivity. However, this translates to photojournalism and journalism instructors acknowledging that journalists have a relationship to their work and the tension this creates with teaching values like objectivity.

News Labor and the Digital Economy

The digitization of journalism has made the definition of "journalist" and the conceptualization of what journalists do incredibly fluid (Vos & Ferrucci, 2018). Digital labor has caused three unique problems for photojournalists that writers do not experience. First, programs and apps like Photoshop, Lightroom, Instagram, and Facetune, change people's relationship to still images. Therefore, people no longer assume that a photograph is a reflection of reality. Second, the democratization of cell phones and cell phone photography has led to the idea that everyone has the capability of being a photographer. Finally, photojournalists are having to differentiate their workflow and products from those of the lay person. As a result,

their work is treated, at best, as art rather than as journalism, making their presence to be perceived as less valuable in the newsroom during the decision making process.

With digital photography, the audience often no longer assumes images as representing reality. This phenomenon hurts the workplace value, and beliefs about, journalism. It can, therefore, impact the credibility and value of those working in photojournalism (Mäenpää, 2014). As photojournalists face attacks on their credibility, particularly in the era of "fake news," their position as journalists and the value of their work is questioned by their colleagues as well as by news consumers.

With easy access to cell phone cameras, everyone thinks they are a photographer. News managers have embraced this mentality as well, often viewing news photography as something anyone can do (Mortensen & Gade, 2018). An easy solution for news managers in times of financial crisis, then, is to ask their writers to take a cell phone picture of the event they are covering or to ask their audience to submit photos as a way to engage them with content (Mortensen & Gade, 2018). Either way, the news organization gets an image for free. In a digital environment, audiences are now producers as well (Hadland et al., 2016; Hanusch & Banjac, 2019). Photojournalists, in a precarious professional state, have to justify that their training and expertise have a value not easily replaced by an amateur with access to a cell phone (Mortensen & Gade, 2018). These situations where photojournalists are justifying their professional existence are damaging to the legitimacy of their profession.

Digital cameras are more accessible and have more capabilities than ever before. With their "continuous rapid-fire shooting, the ability to see images immediately, and reshoot or edit as needed," digital cameras perpetuate the illusion that the labor involved with photojournalism is now easy (Mortensen & Gade, 2018, p. 991). Photojournalists, in response, have developed

language that reiterates their training and ethical standing to underscore their legitimacy and the value they bring to the newsroom (Mortensen & Gade, 2018). Photojournalists have also had to reiterate their work norms and values in digital environments that emphasize their training rather than their equipment (Hadland et al., 2016; Mäenpää, 2014).

Proving their worth and being physically present to argue for their legitimacy can be challenging as digital labor for photojournalists has translated into less time in newsrooms and less influence when it comes to image selection (Klein-Avraham & Reich, 2016; Mortensen & Gade, 2018). Digital labor, without even considering the impacts of freelance markets and gender, already positions photojournalists as "less than" when compared to everyone else in the newsroom.

Precarity and Photojournalism

The challenges and barriers photojournalists experience in news organizations can be increased when the job becomes more precarious. The freelance journalist has been defined as a self-employed worker who contracts with a news organization to do a short-term assignment or to work on a specific project (Salamon, 2018), with photojournalists producing still images. Freelance work in journalism has often been characterized as a way for journalists to exert greater levels of professional control (Cohen, 2017). In a freelance environment, journalists have more control over the stories they tell, the hours they work, and the organizations with whom they publish.

But this personal freedom comes at a price, especially for photojournalists. In the last decade, freelance photojournalists increasingly find themselves in a precarious labor market that is unstable and often exploitive. In 2016, a survey found that photojournalists were most

concerned with: risk of injury or death, erratic income, and failure to provide for their families (Hadland et al., 2016).

Precarious labor can broadly be defined as unstable or insecure employment. Studies examining precarious labor look at the varying power structures that threaten someone's sense of stability and security in their work environment (Lorey, 2015). These studies cover the many professions that are becoming/are precarious which include journalists (Cohen, 2016), but also those working outside of journalism such as fashion designers and bloggers (Duffy, 2017; McRobbie, 2018) and actors (Vickey, 2016). Many of the people working in precarious professions face similar struggles. In photojournalism, precarious labor takes the form of freelance, project-based work; freelance photojournalists do not know where their next assignment or paycheck will come from. This type of project-based work has three distinguishing characteristics: a decrease in the total number of jobs, an increase in atypical work, and relatively low pay (Salamon, 2018). The result is what Duffy identifies as a "political economy of insecurity" (2017, p. 10). Precarious work can cause an increase in stress, health problems, and job insecurity (Hadland et al., 2016).

The economics of freelancing become a part of routine work: finding a target audience, selling content, updating a website, having a social media presence, etc. And while "flexibility" is a term that routinely appears in freelance discourse surrounding digital labor (Cohen, 2017), what is the tradeoff for a "flexible" career? Producing news content is no longer journalists' sole responsibility (Witschge & Harbers, 2018). Digital precarious labor for photojournalists means more work behind the scenes, work that is often unnoticed and/or uncompensated.

Who journalists are, and what their work looks like, has been redefined throughout history as technology develops and the field adapts. Often, these technological advancements are

elevated over the lived experiences of journalists (Lester, 1995). To be sure, before freelance work became the norm, photojournalists were already experiencing an identity change in the newsroom. When online journalism became more common place, many newsrooms thought video would be the answer to getting more eyes on their websites (Madrigal & Meyer, 2018). Without trained videographers on staff, news managers often left this new video responsibility to still photographers. "Visual journalist" was a rebranding that the news industry initiated (Newton, 2009). As time progressed and newspapers panicked over money, staff photojournalists were losing their full-time jobs at a drastic rate. Freelancers, then, have to redefine themselves and restate their value. Photojournalists are now having to train themselves in photo, video, and also in writing pitches to editors to show their value so they can land assignments. And because a photo editor may not know a freelancer's ethical standards and newsroom values, they are taking a risk on an unknown. This is significant at a time when media credibility is being attacked regularly by politicians and the public.

When the camera was invented, photography was seen as a way for science and art to join forces. News photos, then, can find their roots in art and in many ways are treated like creative work. This is most evident when news managers treat photos as page decoration instead of as news reporting (Hare, 2018). Because photojournalists are often labeled as artists instead of journalists by their media colleagues, their professional stability often mimics those working in creative spaces. McRobbie (2018) notes some common characteristics of those working in precarious creative labor markets: the need to have several jobs, the need to promote one's own work, the lack of a dedicated workplace, and the importance of networking. These attributes can also be found in freelance photojournalism with its low pay, the need to take corporate assignments alongside editorial, and the importance of a network to get the next job.

Those working in precarious spaces have to provide themselves structures that had previously been given by employers (McRobbie, 2018). The field of photojournalism is no exception. A newsroom has a clear hierarchy of power, with photojournalists reporting to their photo editor, and their photo editor reporting to an editor above them. A photo editor typically will assign stories to the photojournalist and provide any background needed. The photojournalist would also know the staff writer who is writing the story to which the image will be attached. Ideally, the two work together. The photojournalist knows there is a human resources department and a legal team available in the event of something such as sexual assault or an unlawful arrest by law enforcement. The photojournalist also knows when their paycheck will be deposited into their account, and how much it will be. The photojournalist might also earn paid time off or receive overtime payment for working extra hours during breaking news. When the structure of a newsroom is taken away, all of these knowns are no longer a reality.

Freelance journalists, finding themselves in precarious work, often have difficulty unionizing as it is hard to organize through their various employers and geographic locations (Salamon, 2018). The main unions for freelance journalists are for writers (Salamon, 2018), while organizations like the National Press Photographers Association have made recent advocacy pushes for freelance photojournalists (Osterreicher & Calzada, 2019). Without clear boundaries, legal representation, or a human resources department to report to, freelance photojournalists face many challenges when choosing precarious work. Without a dedicated workplace, people working in precarious creative fields lose out on equal opportunities and anti-discrimination policies in place at bounded organizations (McRobbie, 2018).

Female, Freelancer, and Photojournalist

News Production

With standardized reporting techniques in place, someone might ask why a diverse newsroom would even be necessary. Some scholarship has focused on the differing products between male and female journalists. Everbach and Flournoy (2007) found that in the newsroom, women have expressed concern over the definition of what even constitutes news, often finding gendered differences in the conceptualization of news. In terms of the use of sources, Beam and Cicco (2010) underscored that female journalists are more likely to use female and minority sources when reporting. Sensational news and relying on scoops are more likely to be associated with the work of male journalists than with the news stories of their female counterparts (Beam & Cicco 2010; van Zoonen 1988). And Grabe, Samson, Zelenkauskaite, and Yegiyan (2011) found that in election coverage, male reporters are more likely than female reporters to cover campaigns from the horserace perspective.

Len-Rios, Rodgers, Thorson, and Yoon (2005) found that news photos were more likely to include men, and these images were more likely to be in "masculine" areas such as sports. When women appeared in images, they were often in sections perceived to be feminine such as entertainment. Literature shows that women are more likely to photograph soft news and are rarely assigned political coverage (Darian-Smith, 2016; Somerstein, 2018). When they are photographing politics, women in photojournalism are more likely than men to be hindered by government image handlers, and are often given more hurdles to jump like filling out extra paperwork, which can limit their access (and ultimately their images) when photographing (Somerstein, 2018). By hiring more women and allowing female photojournalists the opportunity

to cover a diverse range of topics, the world could begin to see and understand their world differently.

Workforce

And even though scholarship shows that diverse news workers lead to diverse news coverage, American newsrooms are more white and more male than the overall workforce (Greico, 2018). Looking at contemporary journalism, women outnumber men significantly in undergraduate programs and even have slightly higher occupational numbers at the beginning of their careers (Chambers & Steiner, 2009; Franks, 2013). However, as time progresses, men outnumber women working in news (Chambers & Steiner, 2009). Scholars have theorized several reasons as to why that may be: barriers to advancement (Chambers & Steiner, 2009), childcare responsibilities (Chambers & Steiner, 2009; Franks, 2013; Ross, 2001), and the masculine news norms and values in journalism (Antunovic et al., 2019; Chambers & Steiner, 2009). It is important to underscore that a significant portion of the literature surrounding women in journalism is at least a decade old, hence it is essential that scholars routinely ask new questions about women's position in news work.

The field of photojournalism has also been overwhelmingly made up of white men. Even when taking into account the circulation size of a newspaper, the mean number of men in photo departments is twice that of women (Briscoe, 2014). In this male dominated field, not only are male photojournalists more likely to land prestigious jobs at top news organizations, they are also likely to make more money than their female counterparts (Lowry, 2015). These findings hold true, even though female photojournalists are typically more educated and more

technologically versatile (Lowry, 2015). Newsroom photo departments that are largely male dominated are likely to continue hiring more men as years pass (Briscoe, 2014).

Much of the literature on women, or the lack of women in newsrooms, examines women in the newsroom in relation to their position as a wife or mother (Antunovic et al., 2019; Franks, 2013; Ross, 2001). Research has shown that women who have long careers in journalism are less likely to have children, while men in managerial positions in newsrooms regularly have families (Franks, 2013). Two-thirds of women with young children are choosing freelance careers over prestigious managerial positions in the newsroom (Chambers et. al, 2004). Antunovic, Grzeslo, and Hoag (2019) found through survey data that women with children were more likely to view their freelance careers as an opportunity for them to maintain their professional careers. However, the heavy reliance on survey data in these areas is highly problematic because survey data often fails to grasp the nuances of the human experience. By adding more qualitative work to these areas of study, scholars will be able to see a more holistic picture of the experiences of women working in freelance spaces.

Sexual harassment and assault are also serious problems embedded throughout all levels of the journalism hierarchy. In 1992, Weaver found that between 40 and 60 percent of female journalists in America have been harassed while on the job. A few years later, another study found that of the 60 percent of women working in journalism that found harassment to be a problem in the field, two-thirds had experienced non-physical harassment while 17 percent had experienced physical harassment (Walsh-Childers et al, 1996). It is worth noting that newsrooms, with their human resources departments, can provide various resources to their employees who have experienced sexual assault, but this help is less accessible when working as a freelancer.

Sexual harassment and assault issues are prevalent in the field of photojournalism as well. In 2018, *The Columbia Journalism Review* published a story including interviews from fifty female photojournalists, which shed light on this issue which had been quietly discussed for years (Chick, 2018). These stories were followed up by both *Vox* and *NPR*, with women speaking out on sexual harassment and assault issues within the field of photojournalism (Amaria, 2018; Guerra, 2018). Sexual assault and harassment are perpetrated by the subjects women photograph, their bosses in newsrooms, peers at conferences, and people exploiting young women seeking mentorship. It impacts women of color more frequently (Amaria, 2018; Chick, 2018; Guerra, 2018). In the year of its attempted #MeToo moment, the field of photojournalism acknowledged, at least for a moment, that many environments were not safe and welcoming for women. Once the boundaries of the newsroom are removed, easy access to resources in times of crisis are not provided by an employer. The burden of legal and medical action falls even more heavily on the shoulders of women working in freelance photojournalism.

Massey and Elmore (2011) surveyed over 500 freelance journalists and found that women were satisfied and liked their careers in freelance. Many women, however, also responded in this survey that they would not recommend freelance careers to their friends. The Photo Bill of Rights (2020) shared in their data presentation that women and non-binary photographers are more likely to leave the profession. The reasons for leaving as stated in this survey data were of financial nature and/or due to lack of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Business Owners

It is also important to briefly address the literature on women as entrepreneurs and business owners, as being a freelance photojournalist can be described as running a business with

the purpose of creating and disseminating visuals. Research has shown that in the United States, men are more interested than women in starting businesses, and this gap in entrepreneurial interest starts as early as in the teenage years (Wilson et al, 2007). For example, teenage girls are less likely to want to start their own business due to lack of confidence in their own abilities (Wilson et al, 2007). Wilson, Kickul, and Marlino (2007) found that this lack of self-confidence during the teenage years shapes the career path women choose later in life.

Even with this kind of socialization impacting women's career choices at a young age, many of them do run successful businesses. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, 36% of all business are women-owned, and 99% of those businesses are small businesses (McManus, 2017). Women working in freelance photojournalism are small business owners, and even though many female entrepreneurs own a small business, this does not equate to less challenges. For example, women's businesses usually generate less money than men's (McManus, 2017). Financial gaps have also been a significant problem for women working in journalism. In 2012, the median salary for a female journalist was $44,342, or 83% of men's median salary of $53,600 (Willnat & Weaver, 2014). Data provided by the Photo Bill of Rights (2020) states that Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino photographers have a greater concern to pay for their housing than white photographers. Gandia (2012) found that women dominate the freelance journalism field, but that does not necessarily translate into financial success, as men still occupy the higher earning jobs in freelance communities. Financial gaps are serious to consider as a barrier for women in photojournalism, particularly women of color.

Society's understanding of what personal attributes it takes to be a successful entrepreneur are often masculine in tone, where femininity is viewed as an entrepreneurial weakness (Ahl & Marlow, 2012). To combat this, strategies to support female business owners

often include help supplying resources that, in turn, help women with their perceived deficiencies (Ahl & Marlow, 2012). For women themselves, this often means balancing the fine line between presenting/performing the masculine norms to succeed in business, without losing their feminine touch (Ahl & Marlow, 2012). Gender performativity is discussed in detail in chapter three of this dissertation project.

Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed how photojournalists differentiate themselves from other photographers and journalists. Language is important. Photojournalists emphasize the ethics and factual nature of their imagery, while photographers are viewed as more creative, placing an emphasis on the artistic side of their imagery. And even though photojournalists identify as journalists, too, the nature of their work differs from that of the writing colleagues whose articles their work is often paired with. Photojournalists are always physically present when gathering images, while writers do not require that same physical presence to do their jobs. The physicality of the job translates into various work struggles for photojournalists, like safety and access.

This literature review also provided a brief history of photojournalism, as well as recent literature on digital journalism and its impact on the profession. While women have always been a part of the profession, the history of photojournalism shows that the profession itself has been gendered. The gendered nature of the work can be seen as early as in journalism education, where professors are often men and female students are encouraged to pursue feature over political stories. Journalism educational curriculum often mimics industry standards, too. These standards and news values, like how to define and practice objective reporting, have shown to

standardize and give credibility to the profession in meaningful ways while also harming and/or excluding journalists from marginalized groups.

The literature also shows how digital news labor often translates into precarious employment, with photojournalists working hard to know where their next, often small, paycheck is coming from. Because photojournalism has been viewed as an important part of democracy, one that serves as watchdog eyes; photojournalists see great value in the work they contribute to society. However, the economic structure of news media does not equally value news workers as people. Photojournalists are some of the most vulnerable workers in news media, losing their steady income in drastic ways and placing themselves in harm's way with little to no resources to support themselves. This precarious profession presents even more challenges to people belonging to marginalized groups, including women.

I conclude with some literature on women's position in photojournalism and as business leaders, and some literature showcasing why having women in photojournalism matters. Women working as freelance photojournalists have several identities that place them at a disadvantage. First, because they communicate with images instead of words, which is seen as less important. Photojournalists are often devalued in the media workforce, and are seen as more artistic and less intelligent than their media colleagues. Next, because they work as freelancers, they experience economic and personal hardships from the project-based nature of their work. Finally, because they are women. Women in journalism, and particularly in photojournalism, experience hardships such as field-wide sexism that turns a blind eye to sexual harassment and assault.

This literature review underscores the necessity of this project. Photojournalists can no longer be neglected from journalism studies, and as news workers should be studied at length. As labor studies focus on photojournalists, who they are and what they do, it is important to confront

the digitization of the profession as well as the economic realities of that profession that translate into a radically understudied area of news media. And when confronting these new realities, it is essential to use an intersectional approach that acknowledges that people's many identities have a direct impact on their work as well and how others accept or reject them within the profession. This study aims to begin a conversation about women who work as freelance photojournalists, and their unique experiences in a profession that is undergoing a digital and economical transition.

CHAPTER 3

THEORY AND METHODS

In this chapter I explain how theory and methods informed each other in this dissertation. The theory section moves from the general theoretical area where the study is located to the specific theoretical developments that it draws from. This section is followed by the research questions that evolve from the theoretical framework. The methods chosen and the process I followed are then detailed. The chapter ends with a brief summary.

Theory

Lindlof and Taylor define theory in communication research as "any systematically developed account of communication that seeks to explain what it is and how it works" (2017, p. 50). When pondering theory, a researcher is critically thinking about how they believe the world operates, and then uses that understanding to inform their questions as well as the data collection and analysis processes. In this section, I will briefly outline feminist studies, where this study is located. Then, I will describe the three theoretical spotlights that illuminate this project: Gender is performative, gender is a form of cultural capital used to gain power in fields, and precarious work involves redefining the field and those who can work in it.

Feminist Studies

This project is located in feminist studies. Feminism can be seen as "various social theories which explain the relations between the sexes in society, and the differences between women's and men's experiences" (Hollows, 2000, p. 3). Feminism is not a monolithic ideology; scholars approach feminist work using many different sources, viewpoints, and theoretical spotlights. Importantly, feminism is both an intellectual perspective and a movement. Therefore, feminist research is not only *about* women (and men), but also *for* them. The goal of feminist studies is to emphasize the importance of, and seek, gender justice in society. Feminist communication studies considers the relationship between gender and media production and consumption. This includes questions of who creates the news we consume, and why that matters. In particular, feminist scholars have explored the gendered working experiences of journalists (Steiner, 2012).

Feminist theory, broadly speaking, can be defined as having an "unconditional focus on analyzing gender as a mechanism that structures material and symbolic worlds and our experiences of them" (Van Zoonen, 1994, p. 3). Feminist theories use different approaches and perspectives that strive to explain gendered oppression and how it is perpetuated. In other words, feminist theories shape research with the goal of seeing gender justice in society (Dow & Condit, 2005). Importantly, against the mainstream epistemology that searches for value-neutral truths, feminists scholars assert that all knowledge is situated:

> [Feminists] stress the contexts in which we acquire knowledge, the embodied experiences that generate knowledge, the intersubjectivity of knowledge produced within communities, the possibility of gendered styles of cognition, and the extent to which

> women, and other disempowered persons, have been denied the status of knowers (Gilligan, T. G., 2013, p. 269).

In recent years, feminism has adopted an intersectional approach to identity. At its core, intersectionality is the belief that "[o]ppression can be explained by the interconnected workings of race, class, gender, sexuality, and other social categories people occupy" (Edwards & Esposito, 2020). That is, there is not a single variable contributing to someone's identity and/or oppression. Oppression is multi-faceted. Some feminist work has discussed women's oppression as if all women experience the same oppression. This often creates a narrative that elevates the concerns of straight, white, able-bodied women. Intersectionality addresses this problem in research and acknowledges that there is no universal woman.

My project is located within feminist studies because it is underpinned by the previous assertions. Gender, of course, is central to my research questions. But it is also important to underscore that this dissertation stands on the belief that women's experiences are essential empirical and theoretical resources. I am seeking to understand the experiences of women who work as freelance photojournalists. And in the formation and analysis of this project I also see myself.

Gender Performativity

To begin the groundwork for my theoretical framework, it is crucial to understand gender as a performance. To perform something means to act it out. Golombisky (2017) states that "[g]ender understood as performative affords a slightly more elastic view of gender by accounting for individual embodiment and agency" and that "performative gender is about ritually making it every day" (p. 339).

Understanding gender as a performance relies heavily on the work of Judith Butler (2015). For her, gender is something people act out from their very existence, and these acts are continuously repeated throughout the course of a person's life. These constructed ideas of gender and gender norms are often binary, precede people's existence, and are reproduced throughout time. People often measure themselves by whether or not they are "meeting the mark" (p. 30) and are constantly grading themselves (and others) as to whether or not their performance of gender is socially acceptable enough. Butler's overarching argument is that gender performativity is shaped by discourse and power. Ultimately, how well someone is performing their gender "correctly" gives that person legitimacy in society's eyes and the ability to act independently without criticism regarding their gender. To recognize a gender, Butler argues, a person must be using their body in a way that conforms to gender norms.

Somerstein (2019), while not using the specific language of Butler, argues that gender performances in photojournalism impact access to the field as well as the types of stories that are told. Somerstein assumes that men and women perform their gender in specific masculine and feminine ways, and through these particular performances, are either helped or harmed during their news gathering process. This theoretical assumption is particularly important when we examine photojournalism, a profession that requires the physical presence of the journalist with their camera at the news event they are working on.

Gender as Cultural Capital

To understand gender as cultural capital we must begin with field theory. Field theory was first developed by Bourdieu and was not feminist in nature. Other scholars, such as

Somerstein (2020), Lucht and Batschelet (2019), and Djerf-Pierre (2007) have reimagined field theory by placing gender at its center to understand who has access to a field.

For Bourdieu, a field is a social space where those who work agree on the norms for participating as well as on what is at stake by participating (1998). How people act within a field is based on "their perceptions of the field's structure and their more or less advantageous position within it—which, in turn, are shaped by prior experience, training, and social position" (Somerstein, 2020, p. 2). Bourdieu's field theory states that individuals use capital to compete for power and for recognition as a professional in their field (Bourdieu, 1993; Djerf-Pierre, 2007).

Hence, a field is dominated by whoever has the most capital (Somerstein, 2020). Cultural capital has been defined as, "an asset which embodies, stores or gives rise to cultural value in addition to whatever economic value it may possess" (Throsby, 1999, p. 167). Cultural capital is often intangible and has an inherent value which is given by the culture of a group (Throsby, 1999). Gender is a type of cultural capital. Gender roles, and the values placed upon different genders, are culturally constructed. "Masculine" and "feminine" are not fixed, but instead are constantly being negotiated throughout history (Hollows, 2000). Participants in a field can acquire more capital by playing the game correctly, whether that is learning new skills, having the right social network or even performing their gender "correctly" (Bourdieu, 2011; Lucht & Batschelet, 2019).

Gender is a form of cultural capital that is inherently part of the working experience. Lucht and Batschelet (2019) argue that social norms reinforce how gender is used as a form of cultural capital in journalism and that women are at a professional disadvantage in the newsroom. Djerf-Pierre (2007) notes how female journalists are often performing their gender in very particular, and often calculated, ways while working for newsrooms. In traditional

newsroom settings, women must act like "one of the guys" to conform and be seen as successful. But when women tried to enter journalism operations geared towards women, such as women's magazines, they used their gender to perform in more feminine ways.

Somerstein (2020) uses field theory to understand the experiences of women working in photojournalism. Through interviews of women working in photojournalism (staff, freelance, editing, and retired individuals), she notes that from the stories they are assigned and the access they are given, to the awards they receive, gender is negative capital for women. She argues that women are professionally disadvantaged "because their gender inhibits their capacity to abide the field's established rules" (Somerstein, 2020, p. 5).

Understanding gender as a form of cultural capital is important when studying women working in photojournalism. Photojournalism is a field because the journalism industry has rules that govern how to define, gather, and report the news, and everyone working in this space typically agrees on these values. Mäenpää (2014) has even argued that photojournalists elevate newsroom values higher than any other type of journalist. Photojournalism is a male-dominated field. This points to men having more cultural capital than women. Therefore, it is important to see how gender is used to get access and legitimacy within the field. Focusing specifically on freelance photojournalists, this study will also theorize how gender is used as capital in a field that is starting to lose its boundaries due to the digitization of news and new economic realities as photo departments are downsized or removed from organizations.

Precarious Work and the Evolving Field of Photojournalism

It is important to understand how work experiences may differ for individuals who are freelancers versus those with staff jobs. Working for one organization that provides resources

and support is radically different from going from project to project while supplying your own resources. The concept of precarious work is important because photojournalism is being drastically impacted by the digitization of news. More and more news photographers find themselves in a precarious work environment.

Butler (2015, p. 33) defines precarity as a "politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support more than others, and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death." Precarious labor can be defined as unstable or insecure employment, and a state of "endemic uncertainty and permanent change" (Deuze, 2013). Studies involving the precarization of employment often take the form of critiques of power structures in places that threaten a person's sense of stability and security in their work (Lorey, 2015).

Freelance workers in journalism are defined as self-employed workers who contract with a news organization to do a short-term assignment or to work on a specific project (Salamon, 2018). The nature of their work is precarious because it is not stable or secure.

Literature in the area of media studies points to three main arguments regarding freelance work in journalism. First, freelance work values generating revenue for news organizations, but does not prioritize providing livable wages for news workers (Deuze, 2013). This creates an environment where journalists and particularly photojournalists are doing a lot of unseen and unpaid labor. Second, freelance work has many negative psychological effects on workers (Duffy, 2017). This often means that working in freelance elicits a lifestyle that encourages poor mental health. And, finally, freelance work places women and ethnic minorities at a disadvantage (Warner, 2016). For photojournalists, the freelance model creates an environment that seeks to hire the "right" person, often meaning hiring a white man who already has resources and

connections with hiring managers and photo editors: “The freelance photojournalist model can be democratizing but only for those who are self-sufficient and resource-rich” (Thomson, 2018, p. 818).

Freelance work creates an environment where news organizations save money and photojournalists are overworking to pay their bills. When news organizations start to rely on a freelance staff, the burden of employment shifts radically. It is now the individual photojournalist’s responsibility to find and/or maintain steady work (Deuze, 2013). Instead of having a full-time staff supported with benefits and resources, companies can create a freelance workforce that will increase their profits while decreasing the pay of those they are hiring. News organizations can continue to pay less and less because they know photojournalists are competing with each other to get an assignment in hopes of making at least some money, instead of nothing.

This also creates an environment where those who are working as freelancers are doing a lot of unseen and unpaid labor (Duffy, 2017). Freelance photojournalists must continually learn new skills in response to industry demands (Witschge & Harbers, 2018). Learning these new skills takes time and money. Freelance photojournalists also serve as their own accounting manager, human resources department, and legal team. This list could continue, but in summary, it is important to note that freelance photojournalists have challenges that those with a full-time staff position may never experience.

There are also negative psychological effects for those working in a freelance environment (Duffy, 2017). Wondering where their next paycheck may come from creates financial stresses. Many young freelancers also start working for free to gain legitimacy in the field. In that sense, they buy a narrative that states that they are building their portfolio and doing

what they love, as they gain valuable experience. However, working for free and then slowly negotiating for salaries is a difficult, anxiety-producing task. Freelance photojournalists also experience the effects of the emotional labor of having to constantly define what they do (McRobbie, 2016). Many photojournalists have to reiterate their training and past projects to argue that they are valuable. This can lead to lower self-worth feelings (Duffy, 2017). Studies have also shown that freelance work leads to higher stress levels and burnout rates (Photo Bill of Rights, 2020).

Also, working in freelance means experiencing many lifestyle changes (Duffy, 2017). For example, many freelance photojournalists must live in a larger city to have access to jobs, networks, and newsworthy topics. Larger cities also have more news organizations which increases the probability of working on assignments for several organizations. But these cities are also more expensive to live in, further deepening the freelance photojournalist's financial stress. Working in freelance photojournalism can also include abnormal working hours, leaving many photojournalists feeling isolated as they work alone and work during their friends' and family's free time. In general, working in freelance photojournalism often comes at the price of the photojournalist's mental health as well as their financial stability.

Freelance work also creates barriers for women and ethnic minorities (Warner, 2016). Organizations like Women Photograph have been providing data about the lack of diversity in photojournalism, and yet, not a lot has changed since this data first became available in 2017. That is partly because women and ethnic minorities are also at a disadvantage in a freelance business model (Photo Bill of Rights, 2020). When competing for jobs, for example, women often must have more education, contacts, and personal networks, than men do (Djerf-Pierre, 2007). Freelance work itself is gendered, relying on "historically constructed notions of

femininity - particularly discourses of community, affect, and commodity-based self-expression" which was discussed previously in relation to unpaid, behind-the-scenes work freelance photojournalists do (Duffy, 2017, p. 10). Overall, those with the most power at news organizations are largely focused on generating revenue, and not on the content being produced or the workforce creating that content. Those with the power to hire often rely on hiring the "right" person for a job (Warner, 2016). Hiring the right person encourages managers to rely on conventions that define who this "right" person is. That creates a cycle of hiring people from the same rolodex, giving new and diverse people less of a chance to land a job: "hiring decisions in journalism are primarily based on informal membership of existing self-similar networks of journalists" (Dueze, 2013). Photojournalism is already a field dominated by white men, and I believe the now heavy reliance on freelance photojournalists by news organizations further encourages this hiring pattern.

Theoretical Summary

In summary, the three theoretical spotlights that illuminate this dissertation study are: Gender is performative, gender is a form of cultural capital used to gain power when at work, and precarious work involves redefining the field and those who can work in it. When gender is something that is performed, theory supports that gender could be performed correctly or incorrectly. That is, women in photojournalism have to constantly navigate whether they are being too feminine or masculine at work. Because gender can be used as a form of cultural capital, the idea of performing correctly is immensely valuable. Showcasing certain gendered traits could give or take away access to a field where precarious—freelance—jobs are becoming the norm. As journalism becomes increasingly digital, and media organizations strive to save

money by relying on freelancers, women in photojournalism face new barriers to work. These three foundational arguments come together to best conceptualize gender issues in the field of photojournalism in the digital era, as work becomes more project-based for photojournalists.

Research Questions

Through in-depth interviews of female photojournalists working in freelance photojournalism and an analysis of the Photo Bill of Rights (Photo BoR), the following questions will be addressed:

1. How do women working in freelance photojournalism conceptualize their work?
2. How/when is gender used as a form of capital by women working as freelance photojournalists?
3. How does journalism education and professionalization impact the experiences of women working as freelance photojournalists?

This dissertation study answered its research questions by utilizing a multi-method approach that includes in-depth interviews and analysis of the Photo BoR. Next, I will describe what those methods are, why they were selected, and how these two methods of analysis helped address these research questions.

Methods

This study uses qualitative methodology because it privileges depth over breadth. Qualitative methodology is also particularly useful when we are studying lived experiences. It encourages cooperative relationships with the participants and often takes an intersectional approach to research, which are characteristic of feminist inquiry. The latter is important because

while centering gender throughout this dissertation, I always tried to not leave out other identities such as race and class.

Reflexivity is a crucial component of qualitative inquiry. Reflexivity occurs when the researcher critically thinks about their role in the research process and their position vis a vis the participants and is, generally, transparent about the research process (Lindlof & Taylor, 2017). Through constant reflection I dealt with the benefits and frustrations of seeing myself in the evidence I was gathering. At times, I celebrated my ability to connect with, and understand, the experiences of the women I interviewed. Other times, I wondered how much of myself I was projecting onto my interpretations of the data. Through journal entries, random notes, and conversations with myself I was able to think critically about the evidence in front of me, as well as confront my own personal experiences in a way that was meaningful and helpful for my final analysis.

The Study's Design

In-depth interviews with women who are freelance photojournalists and an analysis of the Photo Bill of Rights allowed me to gather the evidence for this dissertation. The data gathering period was May-September 2020 and was impacted, like all aspects of our reality, by the COVID-19 pandemic. Following is more detailed information on the two methods and the procedures I used to gather the necessary evidence for this study.

In-depth Interviews of Female Photojournalists

This dissertation study is based on semi-structured in-depth interviews with female photojournalists. An interview is a conversation that happens between at least two people with

the purpose of creating information about the research project. Semi-structured interviews are organized with an interview guide, but allow for deviations in the conversation elicited by the participant or by the researcher's need to tailor questions depending on the participant's experience. I chose in-depth interviews because they are a way to understand people, their experiences, and their viewpoints. Interviews allow the researcher to select participants who can provide answers for the research questions. By interviewing women working as freelance photojournalists, I acknowledge that their lived experiences and the words they use to describe these experiences are powerful forms of knowledge construction. Interviews allowed these women to speak about their own experiences working in photojournalism, without the restrictions of close-ended questions in a survey. As I planned and conducted the interviews, I was mindful of Hermanowicz's detailed description of the strategies a researcher should use when conducting interviews: converse, listen, probe, and be candid (2002).

I used snowball sampling to find the participants. I began by reaching out to women photojournalists I knew. Then, at the end of each interview I asked if the interviewee knew of anyone I should speak to. In this way my sample grew until I reached saturation. All initial inquiries were done via email. I interviewed a total of 14 women for this study whose information can be found under their pseudonym in the Appendix. Pseudonyms were assigned in an effort to protect the professional livelihood of the study's participants.

Interview questions were inspired by the scholarly and trade literature on this topic and by my own personal experiences as well. My questions revolved around the participants' education, conceptualizations of the profession, working experiences, career satisfaction, and how gender shapes all of these topics. I also gave each woman the space at the end of each

interview to talk about anything she wanted to, where the conversation often took an unexpected, but pleasant turn to a topic I had not planned for.

Interviews were conducted from May 15, 2020 through September 28, 2020. There was a period between June 9, 2020 and July 7, 2020 where I did not conduct any interviews. This pause in the interview process was necessary as I felt it was inappropriate to continue conducting interviews, considering the pandemic and protests occurring in the country, and how these specifically impacted photojournalists:

> I see news visuals, but I don't recognize the world I live in…How can I ask these women in photojournalism for an interview? One woman who freelances lost her eye. My friend [NAME REMOVED] was detained yesterday. A Black woman with a camera was problematic until a white reporter stepped in. People are dead. Families are torn apart. The world is on fire… (Research Journal, June 2, 2020)

After the month break, I felt more comfortable reaching out to photojournalists again, though admittedly it took me a while to conquer the social anxiety of sending that initial interview request again. I made sure my email language acknowledged the state of the world and emphasized that there was no rush to complete an interview. Half of the interviews (seven) were conducted before the self-imposed pause and half after.

Thirteen of the interviews were conducted on Zoom, and one was conducted on Google Hangouts. When interviewing, I asked all women if I could record the conversation. I wanted to be able to analyze not only our conversation, but their body language and my own. All women agreed to be recorded. Due to a technical problem, one interview was only recorded on audio. Interviews ranged from 45 to 90 minutes. I conducted the interviews from either my apartment or

from campus. Women participated in their interviews mostly from their homes, with one woman completing her interview from a hotel room while she was in-between photo assignments.

The interviews were transcribed and then analyzed. Transcribing was a type of initial analysis. After transcribing, I noticed the themes emerged from the data. I also looked for how the participants' responses addressed my research questions. Other readings were a part of my continuous analysis, as I worked to understand and interpret the data.

Analysis of the Photo Bill of Rights

The initial design of this study included field observations of female freelance photojournalists working on an assignment. However, the global health pandemic made observations impossible. The project was modified to include Zoom meetings where the photojournalist would discuss an assignment they had photographed. However, participants were overwhelmingly not interested in doing the follow-up Zoom "observation." What replaced the observations was an analysis of the Photo Bill of Rights. The Photo Bill of Rights is a document written by lens-based workers that outlines what they would like to see in their field as it relates to workers' rights. When describing the importance of studying the materiality of communication, Lindlof and Taylor (2017, p. 277) note: "Documents, objects, and places do in fact have a lot to "say" when they are read alongside the living voices of informants and other social actors."

In June 2020, during the period in which I had decided to take a break from interviewing, a group of "lens-based workers" released the Photo Bill of Rights (Photo BoR), which caused immediate conversation and elicited a certain degree of chaos in the photojournalism community. The Photo BoR addresses many of the topics my project was already exploring,

including health and safety, financial insecurity, and the role of objectivity. And as I began to speak to women again in July, the Photo BoR became an important topic. The document organically became a part of the conversations, either as the participants addressed questions I had previously prepared or when I gave them the space at the end of the interview to talk about whatever they wanted to.

I saw the Photo BoR as a necessary material to study, as this document was in conversation with the data I was already gathering through in-depth interviews. The Photo BoR was not the focus of the study but complemented what the women I interviewed were saying. It also contextualized this moment in photojournalism's history. As a feminist scholar, I felt this historical moment within the field was important to note and understand. It is a marker on the timeline of social justice for underrepresented groups in photojournalism.

The Photo BoR, while having the signatures of over 2,000 individual and more than 50 media-related organizations, was still the object of backlash from the photojournalism community. Some women celebrated it as a step in the right direction, while others scolded it for conflicting with photojournalism ethics. So in lieu of the field observations I could not conduct, I decided I needed to address the elephant in the room—the Photo BoR.

I examined the document and the conversations surrounding it. For the latter I focused my analysis on: A) The National Press Photographers Association press release that addressed the tension among its own members who were arguing over the Photo BoR. B) Two blog entries from photojournalists who represent the polarized views of the Photo BoR within the photojournalism community. Importantly, the Photo BoR analysis chapter also includes this study's participants' comments about the document. I did not prepare questions related to the

Photo BoR at any point throughout this project, but I still had data because the women were bringing it into our conversations on their own.

To analyze the Photo BoR, I began with what Hall calls the "long preliminary soak" (1975, p. 15). This was followed by a close reading of the text and identification of patterns in it. Hall also notes that this form of analysis "uses the preliminary reading to select representative examples which can be more intensively analyzed" (1975, p.15).

Reflexivity was also crucial in the analysis of this document. I was able to interview one of the authors before the document was published. At the same time, other photojournalism professors and even the Dean of the college where I study were participating in the dialogue surrounding the Photo BoR. There was no consensus in their individual positions regarding the document. In this environment, forcing myself to continuously "soak" with the data and be reflexive about it, created a space where I could see the document in a more analytical way.

Summary

My project is located in feminist studies, specifically feminist media studies, as it focuses on the gendered working experiences of women in freelance photojournalism. The project is guided by three theoretical spotlights: a) gender performativity, b) gender as cultural capital and c) precarious work. My research questions were explored through in-depth interviews of women working as freelance photojournalists as well as an analysis of the Photo BoR. The findings are detailed in the next two chapters.

CHAPTER 4

THE PHOTO BILL OF RIGHTS

In this chapter I discuss the Photo Bill of Rights (Photo BoR). It begins with a look at the Photo BoR's content, followed by information on who wrote it, its purpose and, importantly, its reception. The chapter ends with a brief explanation of how the Photo BoR provides context for the interviews conducted for this study.

Language

Before getting too far into an analysis of the Photo BoR, I want to provide some definitions and explain how they will be used in this dissertation. The key terms are: lens-based worker, independent worker, and freelance photojournalist. The definitions for lens-based worker and independent worker are quoted directly from the Photo BoR, while the one for freelance photojournalist is my own. I hope that stating these definitions will provide clarity in how these terms are used in this study, and why they matter.

> **Lens-based worker**: a blanket term encompassing (but not limited to) independent and staff photographers, videographers, editors, interns, photo assistants, and photo producers working for news organizations, publications, companies, and other hiring bodies within the visual journalism and editorial media industries, or "the industry."
>
> **Independent worker**: a tax and legal classification (also referred to as freelance/ freelancer, independent contractor, contractor, self-employed worker, or sole proprietor).

> Independent workers engage in labor for multiple hiring parties and have fewer protections under U.S. labor law than staff employees.

Freelance photojournalist: an independent photographer who does news photography. When I speak broadly on "the industry" I will use the term lens-based worker, as this blanket term can apply to all photographers and can be used as a means to differentiate who I am speaking about. All freelance photojournalists are lens-based workers, but not all lens-based workers are photojournalists. You will see the term lens-based worker mostly when I am referencing content in the Photo BoR.

The Document

Published online on June 22, 2020, the first line of the Photo BoR states:

> We have come together in the midst of COVID-19, alongside the movement to fight police brutality and systemic racism, to assert the rights of all lens-based workers and define actions that build a safer, healthier, more inclusive, and transparent industry.

Many advocacy groups have formed in recent years to specifically address inequalities in photojournalism and/or photography, but a document like this had never been published and disseminated so widely. At the time of this writing, the Photo BoR has been signed by 61 organizations and 2,556 individuals.

When the Photo BoR was published, the world was literally on fire. People were getting sick and dying at drastic rates because of the COVID-19 virus. Black people, such as Breonna Taylor, became world news stories as they tragically and wrongfully died at the hands of law enforcement. Protests started all over the country. The United States was left angry, sad, and frustrated with the current state of affairs.

All of these events impacted photojournalism. Many photojournalists lost their jobs and work possibilities at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, as the country mostly shut down. There were no campaign stops, sports games, or community events to photograph. Photojournalists lost their jobs and, with them, their financial stability (if they had stability in the first place). Other photojournalists, placing their lives on the line at the time of a relatively new and unknown virus, put on protective gear and went to hospitals to document the forefront of the medical fight against the virus. Freelance photojournalists accepted these assignments often without receiving any kind of extended support or resources from their employer should they get sick. A little over two months into the global health pandemic, Black Lives Matter protests started, and photojournalists again placed themselves in danger to document history and to serve as eyes so the world could see what was happening. Some photojournalists were arrested during the protests while doing their job, others were injured and many were emotionally exhausted from serving as eyewitnesses to the hate in their communities.

This environment shaped how the visual organizations came together to advocate for themselves. The Photo BoR is largely for "independent [lens-based] workers" but acknowledges that it could apply to photojournalists with full-time positions at news organizations too. The document states that its purpose is to address inequalities in the field and to "aspire for this groundwork to amplify existing industry transformations worldwide." Stating that the Photo BoR is for independent workers underscores that freelancers face unique struggles that are so problematic that this group of authors felt a document was necessary to establish their basic rights.

The Photo BoR addresses the following concerns: health and safety, finance and grievance, abuse and sexual misconduct, parity, inclusion, and bias. Under each concern are

multiple paragraphs describing the problem followed by the actions to take towards its elimination. The subhead under “Health and Safety” outlines the demands in the following way:

> The physical and mental well-being of lens-based workers requires due diligence and transparent access to safety assessment, requisite hazard pay, personal protective equipment, training, and trauma-informed aftercare when necessary.

“Finances and Grievance” states:

> Financial respect and security is integral to the success of all lens-based workers. Create a transparent process for timely payment, advance payment, kill fees, and addressing financial and contractual issues without reprisal.

The demands for “Abuse and Sexual Misconduct” are stated as:

> Lens-based workers from marginalized groups are routinely subjected to sexual misconduct and abuse (microaggressions, discrimination, harassment, and assault) while working. Prioritize safety for all workers by proactively addressing concerns and grievances with policies meant to eliminate abuse and sexual misconduct.

The authors describe their wishes under “Parity, Inclusion, and Bias”:

> An ethical industry requires equitable access to opportunities and pay, as well as support for continued growth. Create codes of conduct, training, and clear systems to further identify and challenge implicit bias in decision making.

While asking lens-based workers, people in hiring positions, and others with power to amplify the message and to sign on, the Photo BoR concludes:

> This Bill of Rights is a first step toward working as a collaborative and conscientious industry. Change is possible if we are willing to identify and address consistent problems at the individual and institutional level. Visual storytelling at its best upholds integrity,

> respect, transparency, and accountability. Now is the time to work together to build a sustainable industry that is accessible, equitable, and inclusive for all; anything less impedes our ability to be a genuine mirror to the world.

The Photo BoR also includes a "Beyond the Bill" section which is defined as a "living document to build conversation and understanding about the many ethical issues lens-based workers encounter." Chapter 1 of "Beyond the Bill" is titled "Fostering Community" and looks at how to take the isolating job of an independent photographer and view the profession as a group who works together. Chapter 2 looks at implicit biases and how these impact lens-based workers' approach to their work and to each other.

In addition, the Photo BoR includes a glossary of terms, data on the industry, and a toolkit. The glossary provides a list of 38 words that could help readers get more out of the document. The authors note:

> We hope this glossary helps you better understand the importance of your everyday language, of using your words with care and consideration, and how using language thoughtfully encourages critical, reflective thinking.

In doing so, the authors set aside a specific space to carefully define words such as the "male gaze" so people are aware of what these terms mean and why this language was chosen in crafting the Photo BoR. On December 17, 2020, in the middle of writing this dissertation, the Photo BoR also added a section on language. It states:

> Language is powerful as it informs the way we think and the decisions we make… Photographic vernacular is filled with extractive language (taking pictures), violent language (describing photographers as shooters), and colonial language (my subject)…

We ask that photographers consider the impact of their own choice of words towards the people they photograph.

The "Data" section of the Photo BoR shares the findings from The Visual Storyteller Field Survey. This survey was answered by 712 visual storytellers in April 2020, one month into America experiencing the COVID-19 pandemic. The data is presented in aesthetically pleasing graphics and shows the result of the survey in terms of race, gender, and money. Here, photojournalists can find data about working conditions in their field.

There are two toolkits in the Photo BoR. One for lens-based workers and one for visual editors and institutions. The authors state that the toolkits should "offer context, resources, and best practices for lens-based workers and hiring bodies to successfully implement action steps." Both toolkits address the topics of health and safety, finance and grievance, abuse and sexual misconduct, parity, inclusion, and bias. The toolkits include email templates, links to resources, and questions to think about.

After reading and re-reading these documents, I believe the toolkit for the lens-based workers is a document comprised of lessons learned by the authors and a way for them to share that information with others in their field. In the toolkit for editors, the authors are able to address problems with those who hire lens-based workers without calling anyone out by name. Together, both toolkits are the authors' way of encouraging more critical thinking about how lens-based workers are treated, how they treat each other, and how the people they photograph are treated as well.

The Authors

The Photo BoR was authored by 17 individuals who represent eight different photography advocacy groups: Authority Collective, Color Positive, Diversify Photo, The Everyday Projects, Juntos, the National Press Photographers Association, Natives Photograph, and Women Photograph. Of the eight advocacy groups, three are explicitly described as organizations that help visual journalists. The other organizations mention photography or visual industries at large, but do not specifically call out photojournalism.

Understanding the language difference between photojournalism and photography is crucial. This distinction is important for the document itself as well as for its reception. As discussed later in the next chapter, film-native photojournalists make a hard distinction between photography and photojournalism. Digital-natives are more likely to see news work as one type of photography they do. How someone conceptualizes the profession may greatly impact how they read this document. It is important to note that of the organizations mentioned above, it was those overwhelmingly dedicated to photography, not journalism specifically, that wrote the document.

The Purpose

The Photo BoR states:

> This is not a legally binding document; this is a call to action. This is a guide. This is an ethical code. This is an opportunity to recognize the problems within our industry and act to solve them.

While some celebrate the flexibility of this wording, the document is confusing for some and even anger-inducing for others. Upon analysis, I agree with the first two terms. It is a call to

action and a guide, but it is not an ethical code. Ethical codes, when agreed upon by a professional field, have punishable actions for those who do not uphold the tenets. For example, photojournalists have been excluded from the profession for inappropriately editing a photo which goes against the NPPA's Code of Ethics. Because this document is a guide, with the authors often reminding us that it is evolving, it does not feel like a strict set of rules that everyone must follow.

While this freedom and flexibility does not create a firm ethical code, it does create a guide that allows many lens-based workers to sign on to. As mentioned, photojournalists and other photographers have different rules guiding their work, and to have a strict ethical code would not work for all. Photojournalism is no longer a one-size-fits-all profession, it now includes photographers who do multiple types of work. A call to action for the rights for visual creators in the workplace and a guide for those working in visual spaces on how to treat each other with respect fits here perfectly. In a world where freelancers wear many photography hats, this type of document fits the realities of those working with cameras.

But without strict rules, the Photo BoR also begs the question: so what? As people sign on to it, what does their signature mean? There is no enforceable body to address concerns of malpractice. And nothing is stopping or encouraging people from working with organizations who have not signed onto it. And some of the suggestions in the toolkit are in direct conflict with traditional understandings of photojournalism, such as asking for consent to photograph someone in public. Photojournalists believe in photographing news and public happenings, and consent is not required in that process.

Overall, it is an idealistic document that broadly addresses a diverse industry that already has multiple ethical codes guiding various types of lens-based work. It addresses important

issues freelancers face, begs people to take action to improve the industry at large, and gives workers resources to advocate for themselves, but ultimately does not drastically alter the field of photojournalism in a meaningful way. A code of ethics, in the traditional sense, may no longer be applicable as the field evolves. Ethical guidelines may be more appropriate as photojournalists now do many types of photography work, but still need to consider the ethical consequences of their work when documenting the news.

Overall, more than providing change for lens-based workers, the release of this document highlighted the internal division and tension amongst photojournalists. In the next section I will outline how women freelance photojournalists, the NPPA, and photojournalism bloggers confronted the Photo BoR.

Reception

Half of my interviews were conducted after the document was published, and the women brought the Photo BoR into our conversations, even though it was not in my interview guide.

Before the Photo BoR was published, I interviewed one of the authors, PAULA, who informed me that she was working on the document:

> I'm actually about two weeks from publishing a Bill of Rights, with about 17 co-authors that we've been working on for about two months, but doesn't like totally come up with solutions for all this stuff. [It] says, like, ‘Look, this is what we demand and this is what we need to function, and this is what we believe the publication should sign on to.

With that framework, I did not anticipate the uproar that this document elicited in the photojournalism community.

Not all the members of the NPPA, one of the photojournalism organizations listed as an author, were supportive of the Photo BoR. Tension formed among NPPA members who began arguing over the document. The division was so intense that the organization posted a press release two days after the Photo BoR was published, in which it acknowledged that many members were upset with the document, pointing specifically to The Toolkit (National Press Photographers Association, 2020). Using the photography/photojournalism language, it stated: "The Toolkit offers resources for a variety of visual disciplines, not just journalists." I view this statement as the NPPA acknowledging that The Toolkit did not align with traditional conceptualizations of photojournalism, but that this document was not "just" for photojournalists. The organization even defended its choice to be a part of the Photo BoR by pointing directly to their Code of Ethics to support its decision. The closing paragraph of the release states:

> The conversation about changing the status quo is long overdue, and we support the idea of our community engaging in respectful dialogue with their peers without harassment over nuanced topics of ethics in our industry as per our code of ethics.

The women I interviewed had differing opinions regarding the Photo BoR, evidencing the fractures within the field, and even amongst its women. One of the complaints I heard from my study's participants was voiced by LARA: "Sadly, sometimes you get one swing at things… I think that [the Photo Bill of Rights] was a complete mess, because photojournalism is not up for debate." LARA disagreed with the part of the toolkit that encouraged photojournalists to ask for consent of those she photographed. This is the same disagreement the NPPA press release references, as mentioned earlier. LARA also specifically had problems with the conversations around the male gaze, and she did not appreciate that the authors of this document were

questioning whether or not photojournalists had the ability to be objective. The tension between objectivity and fe/male gaze is so strong that working to improve the lives of photojournalists or questioning how things have always been done, can easily translate into a discourse that states that photojournalism has lost its credibility as a profession and/or as a credible news source. KATLIN outlined how the document discusses topics that need to be addressed, but notes that it overwhelmingly brings no justice to working photojournalists:

> Even the freelancer Bill of Rights has been circulating, which I assume you've seen that [I respond, "Oh, yeah!"]…So it's like there's efforts to get everybody to sign on to these things but like, what does it mean, right? Because we're all going to sign it obviously, but like the editors and the organizations that are hiring us like, did any of them really sign up? And then there were people that were just like fuming about it to on the internet you know and, so like sure we can all say, "This is the way we should work," but like who's going to enforce that? Like in the same way, like, who is going to enforce like sexual discrimination?

Other negative comments, as KATLIN mentions, were online. Two blog posts highlighting the two main contrasting opinions of the Photo BoR, circulated on Twitter. The author of one blog, a white man, stated the document is a "broad-sweeping dismissal of the accomplishments of 75 years of photojournalism, in favor of some newly arrived at, carefully outlined 'enlightened' view of what the REAL purpose of photography ought to be." There again you can see the language difference between photojournalism and photography. The author's blog post also accuses the Photo BoR of ageism, showcasing the divide among generations of photojournalists. Of importance is the tone of this specific statement, making it sound like the document was an arrogant effort to redefine photojournalism.

Another photojournalist, a white woman, represented the other side of the argument on the same platform, PetaPixel:

> The BoR is addressing systemic, society-scale issues that we are facing as an industry, not individual photojournalists…Those who are supporting the BoR are not ageist, nor we are not ungrateful to our mentors, but we are not going to stop until the world realizes that we all have a responsibility to understand our roles in this world. …My hope is that you, Mr. Burnett, and I, and each of us, can support ALL photographers and make our communities and stories more inclusive, and our industry safer and more beneficial for all of us. Please stop using your privilege and voice to interfere with conversations about inequity.

This conversation evidences the importance of intersectionality when understanding setbacks for marginalized people in photojournalism. Progress for people belonging to marginalized groups and working in photojournalism is significantly impacted by age. Addressing diversity problems in photojournalism means having tough conversations that may put into question ideas and beliefs about photojournalism that the field has valued since its existence. However, it does not mandate forgetting the field's history and its trailblazers.

Context for Interviews

My interview guide was created before the Photo BoR was written, but I can see the document's concerns and questions mirrored in the questions I wanted to ask. When speaking with my participants, I often told the women up front that my questions were organized in a particular way, but that we could take the conversation any direction they chose. Looking back at

the organization of my questions, they address the same issues as the Photo BoR: health and safety, finance and grievance, abuse and sexual misconduct, parity, inclusion, and bias.

I have spent a lot of time reflecting on the implications of my interview questions addressing the same concerns as the Photo BoR. How did that impact my analysis? When looking at the data, how do I decide what came first: the question I asked or each woman's own contemplation of the Photo BoR? And I have decided that it is near impossible to separate the two. Many women, before being interviewed, could have been thinking about the Photo BoR and mimicked some of its language in their answers with me. Other women could have been prompted by my questioning to discuss how they felt on certain issues. I can't separate the two in the seven interviews I had after the Photo BoR was published, as well as the additional interview with one of the authors.

But I think the most important takeaway is that the authors of the Photo BoR, the women I interviewed, and my own personal experiences as a woman working in photojournalism, are in agreement regarding the field's major issues. We are all requesting similar basic rights and decency while doing our jobs. We see problems in the areas of health and safety, finance and grievance, abuse and sexual misconduct, and parity, inclusion, and bias, and we want them addressed. Even women, like LARA or KATLIN, who disagreed with the execution of the Photo BoR, were still eager to talk about the same issues the Photo BoR addresses.

As you begin reading the next chapter, whether you see the Photo BoR as a guide, an ethical code, or in contradiction with the field of photojournalism, notice the themes that appeared in the conversations. It is easy to get caught up in industry specifics (and this dissertation will do that some, too). But, I believe that the important takeaway is that all of the women I interviewed are simply asking to be treated with respect, regardless of their own

feelings about the Photo BoR. They want to carry a camera and feel safe, mentally and physically. They want to use their skills and be compensated for the work they do. They want to have a mentor or go to conferences and not worry about being harassed or raped. They want to work in a field that values its workers and treats them decently and equally.

CHAPTER 5

INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

This chapter focuses on the in-depth interviews I conducted with women working as freelance photojournalists. It examines what it means to be a photojournalist and how gender shapes their working lives. The chapter traverses three main areas from the participants' point of view: defining photojournalism, conceptualizing freelance photojournalism, and gender as capital. In consequence, in the first section, the focus is on the profession of photojournalism and its role in society. This is followed by the examination of how the digital economy and the freelance nature of the profession have altered some people's understanding of photojournalism. This understanding is underpinned by the following concepts: education, finances, the role of objectivity, the importance of transparency, and the relationship, or even tension, between journalism and advocacy. The next section fleshes out gender as capital and is organized as follows: entrepreneurship, access, performativity, lifestyle choices, sexual harassment and assault, and intersectionality as a tool to understand the multiple layers of discrimination in photojournalism. I conclude the chapter with remarks on the analysis process.

What is Photojournalism?

The women I interviewed grappled with how to define photojournalism. Particularly with the question of how do we conceptualize photojournalism in a freelance world? Many of the women participating in this study understood their job as providing visual information needed in a democracy. For example, DOROTHY said:

> [Photojournalism is] giving [people in a civil society] a greater knowledge base to draw from when making important decisions about how to live their lives and how they want the government to help them do that…I believe photojournalism is an essential tool in civil society, in a democratic society, to help the electorate make informed decisions.

Serving as a crucial part of democracy is a heavy burden to bear, but one that inspired women to create credible, and ethical work, such as ALEXANDRA who stated, "I really drank the Kool-Aid about democracy and the Free Press. And so for me, like, holding up the tenets and ethics of photojournalism is really, really important." Viewing their job as an essential service in democracy often created a space to rationalize negative experiences with work, such as low pay. Because the job is seen as a public service to democracy, little pay is to be expected.

And while photojournalism has been a profession for decades, it is always evolving as technology evolves. The 2016 presidential election combined with a rapidly progressing digital environment changed how women understood what it means to be a photojournalist. The 2016 election of Donald Trump added the term "fake news" into everyday dialogue. Media consumers were distrusting and even hating journalists. At the same time, digitization changed how images are used and how they move across the Internet. Many of my study's participants discussed how the current political and digital environments impacted the way they viewed their job. DOROTHY, with over a decade of work experience, has witnessed many of these changes and how they have negatively impacted her work:

> We're in a really weird time right now where it's not really clear what our role… (pauses for thought) … is in making a picture, you know? Any photojournalist working for any organization with years of experience and integrity and truth, and that picture can be

> immediately undermined, it can be weaponized. It can be memed in a damaging way. It's unclear what photojournalism [is].

In that sense, for some of these women photojournalists, freelance work became a way to distance their work from any negative stereotypes about their profession.

What is Freelance Photojournalism?

Freelance photojournalism is a unique area of photojournalism to study because working for multiple outlets and publications, and going from project to project, changes the nature of the job. Understanding these changes is important to update how people view the professional field and those who work in it. The conceptualization of photojournalism appears to have evolved as freelance becomes the norm in the profession. This evolution is explored through the following themes that emerged in analysis: education, finances, transparency, objectivity, and advocacy.

Education

The ethics of photojournalism, learned in school or from industry ethical codes, shape how photojournalists conceptualize their work. While everyone I interviewed has a college degree, not everyone studied journalism. Other majors included psychology, art, and forestry. When interviewing these women, I noticed that there was often a divide among how they conceptualized their work based on their educational background. MARY, when discussing her experiences as a freelance photojournalist stated, “I didn't go to journalism school, so I'm not sure I really like learning the rules on [finances].” This language showcases that industry standards are taught in school, and those who do not receive journalism degrees do not always see themselves as playing by those rules. They like being freelance photojournalists because they

feel they have more control of their work, and they can distance themselves from the current problematic news media, as discussed earlier. This also translated into critiquing certain language and standards often used in photojournalism. MARY, for example, discussed how photojournalists are trained to think there is "the photo" for every story, and how this assumption limits the visuals photojournalists produce. BRALEE discussed how news outlets often stereotyped people, particularly those from rural communities, and she valued her role as a photojournalist because she could provide a more nuanced story. This nuance did not come from journalism school, she studied forestry, but from her own lived experiences.

Those who had graduated from a journalism school were less critical of the news industry and saw their training as a chance to get a step ahead by gaining access to industry professionals. CAROLINE, for example, met a photo editor at a workshop for her class and later used that contact to land assignments right out of college. SCHEANA, with the help of her undergraduate professor, was able to intern at CNN after college. At this internship, she was able to witness what freelancers were doing correctly or incorrectly. This helped her progress her own career.

While the access to industry professionals was a positive experience, all of the women I interviewed who studied journalism saw their education as dated. The women who graduated from college in the last five years think that their professors did a great job at preparing them for a digital environment, but not for a freelance one. Business skills were often neglected in class, or only highlighted very briefly.

While receiving their undergraduate journalism training, many women thought at one point they would be able to have a staff job. As graduation approached or passed, they realized that the staff jobs that their professors often referenced were not available to them. SAVANNAH had the opportunity to meet freelance photojournalists who spoke as alumni at her school. She

noted that there was always a disconnect in their presentations, however: "[Guest speakers had] been staffed at AP for 30 years or something crazy…so there's like, there's such a security in that because you've had income coming through and a 401k." Women like SAVANNAH were having to start their careers as freelancers without this financial security and often had no reference point for how to navigate this from their educational experiences. Because education was built around industry professionals' experiences, younger women, such as CAROLINE, were taught that freelance was a career path a person could only take after making contacts from working in an established newsroom. This mindset created self-doubt in the early stages of her career.

College was also where many women first experienced sexual discrimination or harassment while working as a student photojournalist. For some of them these negative experiences happened while working at their college newspapers or on an assignment for class. Other women's first remembered gendered experience occurred while working at an internship. For example, ANNA-MARIE, while doing a sports assignment for an internship, had fans yelling inappropriate things to her: "[They were] yelling out, like, asking what it would taste like if they went down on me…It was really filthy." Some women described how all of these experiences are particularly jarring because their classes consisted mostly of women. In that sense, the classroom environment was an idealistic, but not a realistic, space for women.

Finances

The NPPA's Code of Ethics states that photojournalists should strive to: "Avoid political, civic and business involvements or other employment that compromise or give the appearance of compromising one's own journalistic independence." Overwhelmingly, the women I interviewed,

while all identifying as photojournalists, did at least some photography work that was not editorial in nature. Many took on corporate advertising assignments, nonprofit work, and/or PR photography. ELIZABETH stated it most plainly, “I define myself as a photojournalist, even though a lot of the work I do isn't necessarily journalism right now. But I think the same skills end up applying in the long run.” Accepting non editorial assignments appears to be in direct conflict with the Code of Ethics, but perhaps also speaks to how the ethical code has not evolved with the reality of the job.

This is most obviously seen in the language people used when discussing their work. It is the same language I learned in school: Photojournalists are journalists. Everyone else with a camera is “just” a photographer. The implied notion is that a photojournalist has an extra level of training, education, and clear ethical boundaries. This also implies an elevation of photojournalists above other lens-based workers and users. And while many of the women I interviewed still want a distinction between professionals and hobbyists, they would also like for those who only do editorial work to not look down upon those who accept other types of assignments.

The women I interviewed often felt like the hard distinctions between photojournalist and photographer were decided years ago, when newspapers had staffs:

> [Photojournalism is] one type of photography you do. And I know that sort of some old school folks might have sort of qualms about that…it's because they never had to work outside of a staff or whatever, like, but it's definitely a result of, like, a lack of dealing with what the reality of the industry is now (ANNA-MARIE).

> There's a huge range of sort of secondary revenue streams that can allow you to pay your rent and stay afloat financially, while you pursue the work that you're really passionate about. And I think there are a huge number of ways to do that, and I think pretty much every photojournalist I can think of does some of those things because…who is actually making a complete annual salary as an independent photojournalist from pure news photography? I don't think there are many people (PAULA).

MARY pointed out how hypocritical the conversations around photojournalism and finances are:

> [Photojournalists] work for Bezos, and we work for Murdoch and we work, you know, and our work is primarily distributed on Facebook and Instagram, like, and Twitter, like, there's no independent…there's no, like, non-political, like non-commercial entity…and our work is paid for by advertising on these platforms so like, to me, the idea that there's some kind of ethical issue with shooting for Adidas…like, fuck you.

This is an important, and often overlooked, aspect of journalism. It is not devoid of politics, and its finances are overwhelmingly supported by advertising. If the project the freelancer is working on is editorial in nature, transparency is the photojournalist's goal. Many of the women talked about the importance of being up front with editors regarding where their paychecks come from, especially if the source of revenue could be seen as a conflict of interest.

In order to pay their bills, freelance photojournalists have to conceptualize photojournalism differently than the staff photojournalists that came before them. Several of the women discussed how it may seem counterintuitive, but freelance photojournalism is a way to gain financial stability because of these multiple, and potentially reliable, sources of income. Having a staff job seems more like a risk to the women I interviewed, because of the shrinking size, or outright removal, of photo departments across the country.

Objectivity

Financial conflicts of interest are problematic because of the role that objectivity plays in journalism and photojournalism. In these interviews, both the definition of who photojournalists are— and what they document and how—also revolved around objectivity. Some women saw objective reporting as "doing their job" by documenting and not inserting themselves into the stories. Many viewed objectivity as covering multiple viewpoints in a story, especially viewpoints that contradict what the photojournalist may believe in. Most, but not all, of these women questioned what it meant to be objective when doing their jobs. MARY underscored how the mainstream definition of objectivity places photojournalists from marginalized communities at a disadvantage:

> If you're not neutral on something like racism, you know, or like for women that we might be perceived as overly emotional about anything, there's always that concern about being perceived as unhinged or emotional if you're passionate about something…which isn't something that men really have to worry about…there's that sense of having to police yourself to fit an objectivity frame that is actually really the white male perception of objectivity, which is a very privileged position that doesn't feel personally threatened by these issues.

ANNA-MARIE further fleshed out this point:

> This country has so much racism and sexism baked into it, to be a woman to be Black, to be Latinx, to be indigenous, your very existence is political. Your existence in this country is political and politicized because you are placed down lower on the power totem pole…by sort of setting that standard and being like, 'Oh, you have to be

> objective'. You've automatically basically ruled that the only people that can be trusted to give us the news and give us their point of view of the news that will give us a 'fair' (motions quotation marks) point of view of the news are white men.

While the women I interviewed did want to: a) document history, b) play an important role in democracy, and c) cover multiple sides to a story; they believed that objectivity was an unobtainable construct. PAULA summarized it bluntly: "We've pretended that we're these impartial third parties, that's total bullshit."

I particularly enjoyed a camera analogy that ANNA-MARIE used when discussing objectivity. I have heard and read that photojournalists are objective because of the gear we carry. Photojournalists are not able to spin their words, they simply document what is in front of them. ANNA-MARIE's analogy debunks this rationale:

> When you have a camera, what do you need? You have the camera body and what else? You have the lens, right? Every lens has a point of view. Even a 50-millimeter lens or a 35-millimeter camera is limited, right? …it might see in the perspective that your eye sees, but it doesn't get your peripheral vision…In fact it sees that it's kind of sees one of the smaller ranges, you know, because it can't see that close, but it also can't see the periphery so like to that that effect, every person sees the world through a lens. You need a lens to see the world and that lens is shaped as much by how the world interacts with you as it is by how you interact with the world.

For these women objectivity was often a way to negate their lived experiences, forcing them to mold into a standardized version of a photojournalist that looked and acted like a straight, white man. Many of the women mentioned the "white male gaze," language which is defined in the Photo BoR glossary:

> Referencing the feminist theory of how women are perceived and their identity is perpetuated through the male perspective in media and modern culture. Specifically putting women in stereotypical roles of being sexual objects from a male perspective. See also Western Gaze: the visualizing of people and communities in the Global South in a colonial or imperialistic way.

The "male gaze" language caused a lot of debate around the Photo BoR in the photojournalism community at large. In my interviews, LARA saw that language as sexist: "It's an insult. It's like if we said, a skirt lens worker." She was the only person I interviewed that felt the document was sexist, and that the language of male gaze was inappropriate in journalism. Other women used this language freely in their conversations with me.

Transparency

Some of the language surrounding transparency mimics that of objectivity. All of the women, when discussing their role as photojournalists mentioned the importance of being fair and of documenting various viewpoints:

> [We photojournalists] hold ourselves to the standard of being honest about, like, you know, reporting the truth, even if the truth doesn't back up the side that we identify with…I think it's hard to hold yourself to, but that's what makes you a journalist, if you're not making propaganda, meaning, you're willing to show things that don't show your side and a pretty light" (MARY).

The underlying assumption is that photojournalists will take the time to be reflexive about their news gathering approaches. If they hold certain beliefs, what can they do to make sure other voices are seen, too? Like a scholar continuously reflecting on their relationship to their work,

DOROTHY notes that transparency should be a continuous process: “If I'm transparent about my ethical code and my process and what I'm doing, I can do what I want, and if you don't want to accept it or publish it or look at it, that's totally fine too.”

This transparency and reflexivity not only takes time, but can also have financial consequences. DOROTHY was hurt financially when she was transparent about her ability to be objective. While photographing a gubernatorial campaign in 2016, she realized she could not photograph a politician without letting her feelings for the politician impact how she approached her work. She made a public declaration on Instagram stating that she no longer could view herself as an objective photographer during this campaign cycle. Friends in the field reported back to her that she lost out on jobs, even non-political work, because of this disclosure. And while this hurt her, she still feels that she made a decision that was honest and ethical.

Advocacy or Action in a Democracy?

A related theme to transparency and objectivity, is the idea of advocacy work. An advocate is a public supporter of an event or cause. For LARA, this idea is in tension with objectivity: “The call to activism is not in the conversation with photojournalism, period. …When you're at work you're at work.” Like with objectivity, there is the notion that the photojournalist separates their feelings from their work. The goal of photojournalism, as LARA would see it, is to document the truth and to not focus on the outcome.

Many women, however, when discussing their work and why it matters, spoke of how images have the ability to bring about change. They entered the field because of their desire to document history and to see people take action as a reaction to their work. KATLIN, whose

photojournalism projects often cover race issues in southern states, notes how her images should be an important part to bringing about a positive change in America:

> We're sort of living in this moment that is really important to bear witness to that. Historically, you know there's an opportunity to see and document things that really do tell the story of the time that we're in, and the country that we're living in, that we haven't really changed. I think there is this, like, moment of reckoning happening now that it's, like, 'are we going to be, you know, the United States of America, like, this time next year, like, are we going to, like, really acknowledge our history and, like, create a new path forward, or are we going to actually slip backwards a little bit and, like, sink back into the things that inevitably, we always were?

When she is documenting, she is there to report the truth. But by sharing the truth, she hopes that people may change.

KATLIN was not alone. Many of these women shared that their interest in photojournalism stems from their desire to cover issues surrounding social justice. For instance, DOROTHY discussed how her job satisfaction has decreased over time because her images do not elicit changes or progression due to the high speed at which stories move through the news cycle. She described how heavier projects that she has photographed used to lead to change. But those projects, such as documenting an ICE Detention Center, do not lead now to any local, state, or federal changes:

> So, even though I know the stories are important, they're still worth telling…they're draining and depressing. And you don't even get the satisfaction of a job well done, because the whole point on reporting on major problems is that somebody goes and fixes the problems. The problems don't get fixed.

The very thin line in the sand appears to be similar to the notion of agenda setting. A common statement I heard in my undergraduate training was, “Journalists aren’t telling you what to think, they’re telling you what to think about.” Agenda setting is a political act. When choosing to document a moment in history, the women I interviewed often felt like they were not telling people how to solve a problem. By choosing to document a problem, however, they were hoping the issue will be brought into public and private conversations. And it is those conversations that will hopefully lead to change.

Gender as Capital

If all photojournalists are objective, fair, ethical, etc. then why would it matter who is hired to photograph an issue or event? Gender as capital is most clearly seen in the Photo BoR’s definition of identity:

> The individual characteristics by which a person is recognized. Identity is actually psychological, however, as we use it now, an identity often means a social category, defined by membership rules, characteristic attributes, expected behaviors, or socially distinguishing features that a person takes special pride in or views as unchangeable but socially consequential (Photo Bill of Rights, 2020).

Being a woman who works in photojournalism is special, as the Photo BoR acknowledges any identity can be, but being a woman working in photojournalism is not without consequences. The following themes appeared when interviewing women about their role and experiences as women working as freelance photojournalists: entrepreneurship, access, performativity, and sexual harassment and assault.

Entrepreneurship

Being a freelance photojournalist means that the responsibility to get assignments to photograph relies on the photojournalist instead of on the news organization. Photojournalists' skills must go beyond that of journalism as they now take on every responsibility that in a news organization would have its own department. LARA expressed her thoughts on entrepreneurship with great passion:

> The biggest thing that we're not talking about is you're a business owner. So you actually just take the word freelance off the table, you're a business owner. That was it took me, I would say maybe like six years to even understand that. And you go to change my verbiage, and my attitude towards my resources, and I don't just mean like monetary. I mean, like, what it takes to be the entire marketing, creative, accounting, everything.

All the women interviewed agreed. Their work is no longer confined to the traditional space of photojournalism, they must also be successful business owners. And some of them believe that women are not socialized to be successful business owners.

> I mean the things that you need to be a successful freelancer, you know, a strong marketing and promotional spirit…Women are not socialized to engage in fully, to the extent that men [are]…there's so many things like that that put women at a disadvantage in a competitive open marketplace (DOROTHY).

SCHEANA credited her dad for socializing her to be a successful business owner. For example, he taught her to negotiate for higher pay rates even when she accepted "little" jobs as a teenager. She noted how growing up this way gave her the skills to negotiate for higher salaries as a freelance photojournalist. This was not the norm, though. Most of my study's participants discussed how women were not socialized to negotiate for higher salaries. They were often

worried about seeming unappreciative of an opportunity or coming off as abrasive to a photo editor when asking for higher pay.

Another example of socialization in relation to seeking work was PAULA's story about grant applications. The night before our interview, she was reviewing grant applications from photojournalists. She was serving as one of the reviewers to decide which photographer would receive money. She noted a pattern of language differences between men and women:

> I think there's such a socialized confidence gap in young men and young women starting out in the industry. As someone who does a ton of reading of grant applications, it is fascinating to me to see the difference of language, where, it will most often say like "if I get this grant, I will do this," and then almost always men say "when I get this grant, I will do this."

Access

And having the "hustle," as SCHEANA put it, to land assignments takes time because of the need to build relationships with photo editors. Photo editors are the ultimate gatekeepers. They are typically the point of contact at an organization who makes the decisions on who will photograph a story and what images get published. Generally, the photo editor has a preexisting relationship with the photojournalist. But it can also be that the photojournalist was a recommendation from another photojournalist that the editor knows and trusts. In some cases, the editor found the photojournalist's pitch in their inbox or stumbled upon their work online. It becomes the photojournalist's responsibility to make sure she has formed enough relationships to have work to pay her bills. MARY points out how crucial photo editors are, "I mean if an editor gets fired, or moved to a new section, or quits, or has a baby, there goes my entire relationship

with the publication." The women I interviewed also noted that most photo editors were white men.

Sometimes gatekeepers—photo editors—denied women stories or access to sources because of their gender. ALEXANDRA recalled a conversation with a photo editor who said: "Like I have four six-foot-four guys in the newsroom that can photograph protests all day, like, what can you do?" Several participants reported having to do a lot of fluff stories to prove themselves before they were given the more serious assignments they wanted. Many of the women also described how photo editors are constantly looking to win awards, and this thought process impacts who gets hired for an assignment:

> The competitions and awards…you know I feel like that's why it has been so homogenized in a way because it's like the same people are judging these awards that are shooting for these awards and the same people win…The organizations that are hiring, like, they're going to hire the photographers that have won the awards because they want to win the awards. The New York Times wants to win the award so they're going to hire for the awards…So it's almost like the existence, or like the actual existence of these award programs…it's actually like embedded within that like male white dominated, you know, industry (KATLIN).

Awards, then, are an added barrier for women to break through. Some of the more well-known and established photojournalists I interviewed credited winning an award as part of their success in the field. But those same women were quick to point out that the awards system often prevents many women from breaking into the field as easily and getting "big" assignments or working for larger publications.

At the same time, many women also expressed that they were often given stories because of their gender. These stories were regularly viewed as projects that required more emotional sensitivity and the ability to approach the topic in a more delicate manner. The women did not view this as the product of negative gender stereotyping. Instead, they saw it as evidence that their feminine qualities are strengths in their ability to tell stories:

> It's not that we're more sensitive or emotional. It's that we're socialized to be more sensitive. … As a journalist and author our greatest liability is our compassion and our ability to process other people's pain and suffering, and translate it photographically for viewers (DOROTHY).

> I think that as a woman, there's a different thought process that goes into making photos, especially when there's something that's extremely sensitive. And I observed this very well… During Rayshard Brooks' service…And I know it's gonna sound very generic, but this is what I saw: how aggressive some of the men were as far as getting the photo versus, me being observant of what is the most, what's the most sensitive care that I can take in this moment. And, yeah, you know, how do I respect this but also get what I need? (JASMINE)

Performativity

Relationship building and access to sources and stories also translate into how women feel they must act when working. Because photojournalism requires the person to be on site, unlike a writer who can often report from home, women sometimes felt there were expectations for them to act a certain way. These expectations came from the people they were

photographing, from other photojournalists, and from society in general. This performance, many stated, was often one of the more physically and mentally exhausting things about their job.

Performing sometimes began before these women left their homes to take their first picture. It often began when they were getting dressed as they thought about how their outfit would appear to other photographers. A few of them felt they needed to dress androgynous for work. Some saw dress as a way to be accepted by other photojournalists who might be working the same event, and a way to fit in with their mostly male peers. Dress was also sometimes a mechanism to prevent sexual harassment or assault while on the job. “I do the no makeup, hair in a ponytail, polo and, like, pants that are two sizes too big, just so I don't grab the attention of male colleagues” (MEGAN). Some conversations around dress related to how women worried an overly feminine appearance would translate into being viewed as unprofessional. MARY reflected on dress being a big part of her conscious decisions earlier in her career:

> Female sexuality, sensuality can be perceived as something that, like, degrades your seriousness. When I first started out as a photographer. I just never, ever entered a professional space not buttoned up to here (motions to her chin) with my hair in a bun, you know? I mean, I was very, very careful about dress, about what kind of images of me might end up online, just nothing that seemed too feminine because I equated feminine with, like, unprofessional.

SCHENA, who is an early career photojournalist, reinforced this:

> I make sure to dress super modest, because I don't want any, like, I don't want to appear that I’m, like, trying to be feminine in any way, which is ridiculous…I’ll pick out an outfit for a photoshoot and I'll make sure that, like, not only is it practical, like, I'll be

comfortable in it, but like, if I bend over in any way, like, everything is tucked in.

Many women, particularly the women who were newer to the profession, felt like they had to be bubbly and approachable when photographing people. They felt like they were their authentic selves but leaned into certain personality traits of theirs. “You got to be, like, bubbly in a way…that’s yourself, but you're like an amped up version of yourself” (BRALEE).

For example, DOROTHY saw her ability to perform as an asset to getting better access to stories:

> One of the reasons that I like to think I'm good at my job…it’s not that I'm a chameleon, I'm always me, but I do what I need to do to help build trust as quickly as possible, like, and sometimes that means wearing a camo hat with a [COLLEGE LOGO] because like the cameras are, you know…we aren’t winning any fans over out in the countryside.

CAROLINE, who lives and works in a southern state and has been working as a freelancer for one year, saw many of her identities coming together to impact how she acts while on assignment:

> I think of it more as like… the idea of being, like, a young Southern white woman is, like, I definitely become more polite than I would be with, like, just my friends and stuff and I, you know, say ‘Yes ma’am' and ‘No sir’, like all of these kinds of things that maybe I wouldn't necessarily say, or act like if I wasn't in that role.

Life as a Freelancer

The COVID-19 pandemic dominated the context in which I conducted this study’s interviews. It was also one of the motivating factors for the authors to write the Photo BoR. As discussed previously in the Photo BoR chapter, COVID-19 was a new and deadly virus that shut

down the country, and even the world, in the early months of 2020. At the time of writing this, there is still uncertainty surrounding the virus and when things will be “normal” again. The disease spreads rapidly, and government officials in America continue to argue over the health of individuals as well as the economic success of the country if/when businesses are required to close to prevent the spread of the disease.

This context impacted how women viewed their work. Some news organizations furloughed staff members. Many freelancers lost out on work entirely. Those who did have the opportunity to work, may choose not to work as the health risks outweigh the financial gain. Others continue to work but with face masks and fear as they enter spaces, such as the massive protests occurring throughout the country, where the virus could spread quickly. Here, photojournalists continue to document even though those who hired them are not likely to provide health insurance or protective gear to freelancers to carry out their jobs.

Many of the women I interviewed discussed how they were currently struggling with their mental health because the virus had shut the world down, and many had lost out on work or did not feel comfortable taking work because as a freelancer they did not have the necessary support from their employer should they get sick. ANNA-MARIE, for example, was living with a parent with pre-existing health conditions who would be more at-risk with the virus. When describing how she could not take work during this time, she hypothetically asked: “You're gonna put my mother at risk for, you know, a $500 day rate?” Even with this logic, the extra free time often reminded the women of their financial insecurities. Also, it made them feel like they were not helping by being inside, because the women were so used to being on the front lines of history.

The interviewees also referenced Pre-COVID-19 times. Many of these women struggled with their mental health before the virus, particularly with time management and work-life balance. Their ability to get assignments often impacted their sense of self-worth. Almost every woman stated that she feels satisfied with her work-life balance when she's focused on work, instead of life. But, when they had free time, these women often felt like they were missing out or not doing their job properly. Many of them discussed having to force themselves to "clock out" from work, so to speak. Because news is 24/7, it can be hard for freelancers to leave their work mentally, because not tuning into the news and constantly hustling for the next assignment creates a headspace where they feel like they are not doing their job well. But, in an effort to better their health, women use tactics such as muting social media and news alerts on their phones. I appreciated this comment from SCHEANA because I have had this experience many times as well:

> But with freelance it's hard to ever be completely off, like, there have been times where I'm like, 'Okay, I'm done with work for the day.' I'm about to sit on the couch and watch TV, and then I'm scrolling on Instagram and I see that someone's posted like, 'Hey, I'm looking for a photographer, I'm looking for this.' And so I'm upright and light back on the computer, like, I can't miss this opportunity.

Work still manages to seep into personal time for most of the women I interviewed. Many of them planned vacations around photo projects. Some, such as BRALEE and KATLIN, photographed their families for projects.

A few of the women described lying or keeping information about their mental health from photo editors, because they feared it would impact their ability to get work. MARY, who suffers from Post-traumatic stress disorder from some of the work she has done, prefers to tell a

photo editor that she cannot take an assignment because she already is booked, rather than saying that she is in therapy, working through trauma. A majority of the women discussed suffering from work-related anxiety or depression.

Working as a freelancer also often translates into working in isolation. Most of the women critiqued the lack of feedback from, or relationships with, the organizations they work for, which makes it challenging to improve and grow as a visual storyteller. But the regular isolation also makes it hard to feel valued or to form community. Having a photo community is important because you can share resources and help each other grow. Many women credited mentorships with other women as a way to have their "big break" into photojournalism or to just learn valuable business lessons. Women have to go out of their way to find spaces, such as female mentorships or women's conferences, where women's voices are heard.

Some women also discussed how their job impacted their families. I intentionally did not include questions on my interview guide about marriage or children, because too often discourse about women and work are reduced to family life. I do recognize that it is part of the conversation, but I only wanted women to speak about it, if they chose to. A few of them spoke about how being a freelance photojournalist negatively impacted their ability to get married or have children. These women noted that they chose to never get married or to not have kids because the job was too self-involved. LARA, for example, knew she would be away from home photographing assignments at night or would not have a steady income, and did not think that was a fair environment for a family. BRALEE, on the other hand, entered the profession because she was a wife and mother. Her freelance profession gave her the option to work from home a lot, because she was either editing from her home office or at home waiting for her next

assignment. Her family lives nearby and could watch her children when she had an assignment. This setup, overall, allowed her to spend more time with her kids.

I asked all of the women if they would recommend a career as a freelance photojournalist to someone else, and they all framed their answer in terms of mental strength. Freelance photojournalists, they felt, should have the mental strength to deal with constant rejection, stressful and hazardous environments to photograph in, and unfair treatment by the field, particularly in the form of low pay. These conversations inevitably were almost always wrapped into a pretty bow, with some form of "but, I love what I do" comment.

And every woman I interviewed did express loving their jobs. Most of them feel their work is important and valuable to their communities, country, or world. Their work also gives them inside access to moments that people outside of journalism would not be able to experience, such as knowing the news before it becomes news. But beyond the product of their work, many expressed finding joy in traveling and meeting new people. Doing something different every day was also important, many even expressed appreciation for avoiding the dreaded desk job.

Sexual Harassment and Assault

Sexual harassment and assault were discussed in nearly every interview. Women spoke about agents, photographers, internet trolls, and people that occupied spaces in which they were photographing, being inappropriate. As MARY put it, "The risk of harassment or worse is baked in at every level."

Some of the women discussed the 2018 CJR article about photojournalism's problem with sexual assault and harassment (Chick, 2018). The overall consensus was that the

conversations happening in 2018 were necessary and important, but ultimately had not created significant, meaningful change. DOROTHY even described how the topic did not receive the same attention as other topics in the photojournalism community:

> It was telling where, you know, when a new camera will come out, you see on social media people link to left and right or it's like [when] there was kind of like a toning scandal or something like a contest scandal, everybody would be linking to it, and talking about it. But the CJR article in particular, very few people linked to it. Very few people commented on it.

This sentiment speaks to what is prioritized in the field, and potentially how slow the field is to recognize or address systematic problems impacting marginalized communities.

As mentioned, access to editors is key to getting jobs. Sometimes a photojournalist gets access to editors by working with an agent or by participating in workshops, both of which were sources of harassment and assault for the women I interviewed. MARY, for example, was excited an agent wanted to have lunch with her at an early stage of her career. She recalled the following story:

> Early on in my career, an agent with a boutique photo agency took an interest in my work [and he] took me out to lunch one day… My boyfriend at the time had been like, he's not interested in your work he's just…interested in you… which really hurt my feelings, and I was like, 'Well you know couldn't I just be good?' …The agent invited me to join the agency … and [later] I got a text message from the agent saying, you know, '*I'm in love with you*.' …you know I couldn't join the agency, couldn't deal with that agent anymore, and had to go to my boyfriend and say, 'You know, yeah, you're right. He wasn't interested in my work he was trying to sleep with me.'

Workshops, another common place for growing your skills and careers, were also often places where women were assaulted or harassed. One woman, who reported her experience with sexual assault at a prestigious workshop, described how there was still no closure to the issue, because it is treated as a "one-off" experience, and not addressed throughout the field. Experiences like these not only make women feel unsafe when networking, they create self-doubt in how a woman perceives their own work. Some women noted how workshops and conferences for women are much safer and welcoming spaces.

Digital harassment is also something women have to be conscious of. ALEXANDRA discussed how she intentionally leaves her phone number off of her email signature, even when a photo editor criticized her for this, because she is worried about receiving inappropriate conversations from colleagues with immediate and easy access to her number. Social media is also a place where many of these women had to think of, or worry about, harassment. Many of them discussed how they receive nasty comments on the pictures they posted. SAVANNAH and MEGAN both described how posting personal pictures on Instagram can lead to negative experiences. SAVANNAH, for example, posted a picture of herself at a concert and a source who follows her on the platform made a comment to her while at work about it that made her feel uncomfortable. And so while most people can use the social media platform to share parts of their lives, women in photojournalism have to navigate their posts differently, and mostly use the platform for their professional work.

Women of color experienced extra layers of harassment and assault:

> It's already easier for people to feel like they can attack us, attack women, and just speak to us, like, rudely and just be disrespectful. But I think that being a woman of color gives people a little even more license to do that (ALEXANDRA).

She later described an instance in which she was photographing a campaign event for Bernie Sanders and a videographer also working the assignment said to her: “Wow, it's really nice to see a woman like you out here, like, all the rest of you are ugly.” JASMINE described how a male photographer told her during the Black Lives Matter protests that she was only asked to photograph the assignment because she is a Black woman.

When recounting these stories, these women often discussed how, when experiencing harassment and assault as a photojournalist, being a freelancer added another layer of problems. Some had photo editors who stepped in to help, but many women accepted harassment or assault as a part of the job and never told anyone outside of their peer group about their experiences, if they mentioned it to anyone at all. Most women did not know of resources that could even help freelancers when they did experience harassment or assault. Women did come together to form what DOROTHY explicitly labeled a “whisper network.” The Photo BoR defined the whisper network as:

> The unstructured, asystematic [sic], and often very discreet ways in which marginalized workers share information about professional and personal abuse as a means of warning and protecting colleagues. Whisper networks often take shape via word of mouth, private forums, or online documents.

However, some women may not know, or are not part, of this network, allowing these problems to continue within the field.

Belonging to Multiple Marginalized Groups

Women working in freelance photojournalism, also navigate many other identities that position them differently in the field. The most common discussions outside of gender were

about class, age, and race. MARY described intersectionality as it relates to the field of photojournalism:

> I feel like I've always struggled with how to get the conversation to the point where it needs to be which is like, people want to talk about race, or they want to talk about women, or they want to talk about class, and I'm like, y'all…This is the struggle, the whole fucking struggle.

Women were quick to discuss class in our conversations. MARY later described how class shapes photojournalism:

> I would say maybe half of the people that I think that are doing freelance editorial assignments are independently wealthy. And that's a direct result of how broken the economics of the industry are.

Most obviously, the gear required to do the job is very expensive. For example, when CAROLINE was filing her taxes after her first full year as a freelancer, she realized that she had only made $1 that year after she had bought her gear. Some women stated how the financial security that came from their parents or a spouse, allowed them to pursue photojournalism. Because they had another steady source of income, the unreliable freelance income was not as problematic to them as it is for people who are solely responsible for their own financial stability. Which also means that those who do not have the luxury of financial stability may not pursue or maintain a career as a freelance photojournalist.

Age was also a significant factor in our conversations. Many women discussed old, male photographers as a sort of stereotype throughout the interviews. MEGAN, for example, stated the kind of hostility she felt just by walking into the media room because she was a young woman occupying that space:

> Because I'm sitting next to guys in the media room that have been doing the same thing for the last, like, 30 years, and they're still working at it and…I don't know, like, I've been, like, already dominating…I feel like it can be a blow to their ego.

What was more interesting to me was the way women divided photojournalists into old and young categories. Even though some of the women I interviewed had worked in the field for over a decade, "older," I realized, meant to have worked with film at some point. Younger photojournalists were digital natives. And the narrative I heard repeatedly was that younger women wanted to be advocates for more equality in the field, where older women felt like those conversations were ignoring their role in shaping the history as early trailblazers. PAULA summarized this division:

> I think it's this unfortunate sense of like, 'Well you're not giving us enough credit for what we had to go through and the path that we had to forge that actually made space for you and that's, that's totally true… I think we all have to acknowledge that as younger women photographers like, yes absolutely, you were the people who made sure that we could be here. But also, we can still say it's not good enough, like, we're still allowed to say we have to keep pushing, there is still a long way to go.

This tension creates division among photojournalists and a space that is not conducive to working towards progression. PAULA added: "In the boomer generation, there was only one seat at the table, and so the net social effect that it had was it put women against each other instead of against the men."

For the purposes of this dissertation study, I reached out to photojournalists who were film photojournalists in their early careers; but they never responded. This could be because I am

seen as an outsider academic. But even with my photojournalist identity, I belong to the digital native category, furthering cementing my outsider status for them.

Race was also a topic of discussion, with white women recognizing their privilege and women of color talking about the unique hardships they experienced that other women might not encounter. JASMINE reflected: “Yes, we are Black, we have been oppressed for so many years and now here we are trying to take this step to tell more stories and still being oppressed, in the process.” When I asked JASMINE about what would improve her experience as a Black woman working as a freelance photojournalist, she stated that she simply wanted to feel safe while photographing and she wanted the people around her to feel safe with her photographing them.

Summary

I think in advocating for social justice, it is easy to want a clear path to “victory.” As I sit and look at some of my written notes from these interviews, I see “*What is the answer?*” written and circled aggressively on one of my pages. It was written on a day I was working on conceptualizing photojournalism, and also working through the concept of age and its relationship to my research questions.

This analysis details the unique lived experiences of the women I talked to. None of them were exactly alike. Still, they also have shared struggles. The latter are also present in the Photo BoR. They tell us about what must improve in the field and the obstacles women who work in it face day in and day out.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS

Using a combination of in-depth interviews and an analysis of the Photo BoR, this dissertation sought to understand the complexities of being a woman in photojournalism, particularly as it relates to freelance work. I asked questions about the professionalization and the work experiences of women, always acknowledging that gender, along with other personal identities, can impact a person's experience with work, making this project fall under feminist communication studies.

In this conclusion, I revisit the research questions that guided this study: 1) How do women working in freelance photojournalism conceptualize their work? 2) How/when is gender used as a form of capital by women working as freelance photojournalists? 3) How does journalism education and professionalization impact the experiences of women working as freelance photojournalists? I also address the limitations of this project as well as outline future research in this area. I conclude with my own personal reflections.

Conceptualizing Work

The digitization of news has largely impacted the conceptualization of who photojournalists are and what they do for work. Previously, photojournalists had staff jobs and a reliable source of income allowing them to find their professional identity in news work. However, the economic realities of freelance work force photojournalists to wear many

photography hats, including public relations, advertising, and nonprofit photography work. This new reality has implications for the ethical standards that guide the field of photojournalism.

Working as a freelancer also changes what photojournalists must do behind the scenes. In a nutshell, these women are all business owners. Their workload now includes marketing, legal, and accounting responsibilities, just to name a few. Their job goes significantly beyond the duties associated with telling a story with a still image. These additional responsibilities can add stress, and often translate into many hours of unpaid labor. At the same time, working in freelance can also be liberating because, even though their paychecks may not reflect this, women can feel more stable as they watch staffers lose their full-time jobs when organizations downsize.

Working as freelancer also gives women the opportunity to distance themselves from "the media" that are losing trust and credibility with the public. Freelance photojournalists are also given the space to question the rules that govern their field, like objectivity. Many of them are elevating transparency in their work. The distance from "the media" that freelance work allows these women is evidenced in the fact that the Photo BoR was created by freelancers and not staff photojournalists. This speaks to the harsh realities of freelance work that motivated the document's publication and points to the fact that women working as freelance photojournalists are still asking for basic rights. It also underscores the ability of freelancers to join together and question the field in radical ways. In many cases, staff photojournalists may not have the luxury of doing the same.

Notwithstanding the many changes that the digital, freelance environment has brought to photojournalism, professional ideals are still important for women who work in freelance photojournalism. Still images continued to be viewed as a way to inform people about what is

going on in their communities and government, and photojournalists take on the responsibility of communicating these stories to their audiences. Information as a key public good motivates women to continue to do their best possible work, even in some of the worst working conditions. Working conditions that include digital, verbal, and physical harassment.

Gender as Capital in the Field

Women in photojournalism navigate a gendered field. Conversations about women in photojournalism become even more nuanced when factoring in the economic realities of freelance work. Some of the women I interviewed felt that they are not socialized/instructed about topics like entrepreneurial leadership in the same way men are. This is another roadblock that women doing freelance work must navigate around. They are business owners who must constantly promote themselves and their work to land future paid assignments and they do not feel they have been equipped to do so.

Women also worry about not performing their gender "correctly" when they work. This is a significant factor in a profession that requires physical presence at news events. "Correct" gender performativity in photojournalism translates into women not appearing too angry, abrasive, or emotional when advocating for themselves or their work. Gender even impacts how women in in the field dress and speak to others while on the job. Sometimes gender performativity means not sharing information about the status of their mental health, the unsafe scenarios they face while on assignment, and even sexual harassment and assault.

Depending on the nature of the work, gender can give, but also take away, access to assignments. This includes the necessary access to editors and sources that impacts the actual assignments and the kinds of assignments they are given because of their gender. For example,

women may lose out on their chance to photograph a protest because of their height, but may be given a different story to document for its emotional complexities. This further increases the argument to have news organizations reexamine their organization from the top-down, and to reflect on who is or is not getting hired for work and why that may be.

Importantly, gender is just one identity that women in photojournalism navigate. Many of them belong to multiple marginalized groups, making their professional experiences even more challenging. Women of color and/or women with limited or no financial support face barriers to work regularly. The conversations surrounding women in photojournalism cannot neglect that the field privileges white women as well as those who are independently wealthy.

Professionalization and Education

Women in photojournalism tell stories about their government and communities using still images. Furthermore, many of them want these images and stories to elicit change and improvements within their communities or country. This desire—this advocacy—seems to be in tension with the objectivity tenet that is assumed in the profession and present in its ethical codes. Some women photojournalists are questioning objectivity, arguing that it is a tool of oppression. For them, transparency is a less oppressive professional standard, but no less important.

Objectivity is not the only ethical standard questioned. Some of the field's ethical standards, particularly as they relate to finances, are nearly unachievable in a freelance world. As described previously, because photojournalists go from assignment to assignment, they must take on multiple types of photography jobs, not just news work. This is in direct conflict with the code of ethics that states that photojournalists should avoid "business involvements or other

employment that compromise or give the appearance of compromising one's own journalistic independence." This conflict evidences that organizations like the NPPA must reexamine the professional standards guiding the field and adapt them to new realities. In a sense, this is what the Photo BoR attempted to do. However, because the Photo BoR is not an ethical code and is not enforceable, it has no real power within the field. Ethical codes should be enforceable and should be articulated with the realities of the professions they purport to orient. In other words, and in this case, they should also address the realities of photojournalism, including the profession's economic realities.

Professional standards and ethical codes are often learned in college. Many of the women questioned their journalism education. Those who studied journalism in college received excellent training in digital skills. However, their educational experiences largely neglected the entrepreneurial training they need to succeed as freelancers. In addition, the women who did not study journalism did not feel as if they always played by the same professional rules as those photojournalists who went to journalism school and were not afraid to be critical of the field.

Depending on the woman's age, the tensions between understanding their evolving profession and how to move it forward for themselves were made evident differently. Compared to film-natives, digital-natives view themselves as having radically different understandings of how photojournalists should conduct business. This is most obvious in the conversations surrounding the Photo BoR. What professional standards should photojournalists continue to cling to, and which ones can be acknowledged as contributing to problems for women in photojournalism? There is no consensus regarding these questions. Even when factoring age out, not all of the women I interviewed fully supported the Photo BoR.

When discussing issues of diversity and inclusion, it appears that photojournalists need to work on becoming a more unified group of professionals instead of manifesting hostility towards one another. While arguing over who has insider or outsider status as a photojournalist, many have missed the point. Women who tell stories visually are still lacking basic rights and battling for them. And in the process of arguing over the details and nuances of documents and inititatives like the Photo BoR toolkit, we should not forget that human decency is what is really on the line.

Limitations of this Study

This study is mostly based on the experiences of the women I interviewed. Therefore, who they are, and who they are not, both strengthen and limit the project. The lack of age and race diversity is, probably, the study's most important limitation. While I made an effort to recruit a group of diverse women, in terms of age and race, the photojournalists who agreed to speak with me are overwhelmingly young, white women. They underscored key points regarding my three research questions. At the same time, the lack of film natives in my study translates into the absence of their experiences and perspective, their definition of the profession and their relationship with younger female photojournalists. This study fleshes out how young women in photojournalism feel they are perceived by more veteran photojournalists. However, it does not include the other side of the conversation: how veteran photojournalists see the younger generation, and how this impinges on their view of the field.

In a similar vein, the lack of racial diversity in the study's participants points to the absence of the perspectives of women of color. Importantly, the fact that the women I talked to

are similar to myself in terms of age and race, underscores the urgency of reflection as a continuous and necessary process throughout the study.

Further Research

The previous sample limitations indicate the path to further research on this topic. But, in addition to a more diverse group of research participants, it would also be important to expand the focus on journalism education by including an examination of photojournalism curricula and interviews with journalism educators and scholars. How do academics conceptualize the profession? And how does this impact the educational experiences of students? Additionally, future research should include photojournalism ethical codes and ethical conversations surrounding justice for those working in this field. Following the conversation and role played by the Photo BoR would be important too.

Personal Reflections

These reflections are the end product of my research journal entries, the time I spent soaking with my own experiences and relationship to my dissertation, and the conversations I had with people both inside and outside the field of photojournalism. I have organized my reflections in the following way: my first confrontation with trying to define who photojournalists are, how this impacted the conceptualization of my own career, and how I found a new set of friends throughout this project.

It surprised me, but maybe it should not have had, that in this dissertation I spent a lot of time trying to define what is photojournalism and who is (or is not) a photojournalist. The definition of photojournalism was a question first presented to me in my undergraduate program.

This first attempt at defining photojournalism frustrated me so much that when I think about it, I can still visualize the classroom and remember how the conversation made me feel. In that class, I was required to do a public speaking assignment on visual journalism. I decided to speak about Pete Souza. At the time of my presentation, Souza was actively serving as the Chief White House Photographer for then President Barack Obama. He had also previously served as an Official Photographer for the Raegan administration. His resume also included working at newspapers and teaching photojournalism. But what I was most interested in sharing with the class was his political work. I eagerly spoke of how "cool" it would be to have a job where you followed a politician and photographed her/him. I saw this role as one of an important documenter of history with incredible access that would allow the photojournalist to tell unique stories that the public often would not be able to see. I also just found Souza fascinating as a person to have served as a visual creator for two presidents who could not be ideologically more different, but who both understood the power of the visual.

I was met with sharp criticism by my professor. Little did I know that he had planned to talk about Souza later in the semester, but that in light of my presentation, he had decided to speak about him right then. The topic of conversation: is Pete Souza a photojournalist? And my professor strongly felt he was not. My professor described Souza's work as propaganda and problematic. I wanted to crawl under the classroom table and hide out of embarrassment. But I was also angry because I could see his underlying assumption: you either were a photojournalist or you were a photographer. Furthermore, photojournalists were inherently ethical, while photographers were not given that benefit.

That conversation still haunted me when, in the middle of my master's program, I accepted the position of official photographer for a politician (the same professor who critiqued

Souza and the handling of government photography actually recommended me for this position). Even though I had already worked within traditional journalism, was I no longer a photojournalist? Was my work suddenly problematic? I still told stories visually. These had a particular audience in mind. I built relationships and earned access to tell these stories from a nuanced perspective. The job description was the same for the photographers working for the newspaper. Corporate advertising from the newspaper supplied their paycheck, and taxpayer dollars supplied mine. But to the photojournalists covering the same politician, I was an outsider and, therefore, inherently problematic, even though we all did similar work: we told stories visually.

I know there is a widespread understanding that working for a politician translates into losing any type of watchdog status. But what has always stuck with me, since that conversation in my undergraduate program, is the division and tension among photojournalists and others who also carry a camera. Through my studies and when speaking with the participants of this dissertation study, I was able to hear how other people conceptualized the profession. And what I found brought a huge sigh of relief: there were people like me who did not view photojournalism as "us" versus "them," but rather a larger community of people. This provided me a unique perspective of the conversations around the Photo BoR. A diverse set of photographers, including photojournalists, wrote this document. Instead of seeing it as an "us" versus "them" argument, I saw camaraderie and unity among the authors, all professionals who tell stories visually and who wanted people to be treated fairly at work.

My own views of objectivity are baked into this study. Throughout this project—in its theoretical foundation, methods of inquiry, gathering of the data and its analysis—I see myself confronting ideas about objectivity. Even as an eager twenty-year old journalism student who

landed a job at her hometown paper, I was questioning objectivity. I felt this incredible weight while working on assignments as I tried to scrape myself of my identity and feelings in my work. How did people achieve this? I often felt like I was falling short in my work because I could always see myself in it. It wouldn't be until I started my Ph.D. program and began exploring cultural and feminist perspectives, that I fully understood why I struggled with objectivity.

From the questions I asked to the way I interpreted the data, my lived experiences are very much a part of this project. Looking back, it makes sense that the questions and concerns I have had about journalism would lead me to a project like this. As someone who has always felt uncertain about how to obtain value-free journalism, it makes sense that I am studying women and the value they bring to photojournalism. Nonetheless, as I write these sentences, I still worry about how others will read or interpret this project.

But even with those worries, I reflect on the many amazing women I met and how blessed I feel to have had a chance to hear their stories. Because I worked as the only photographer for a politician, I felt like I never belonged in the photojournalism community. This project allowed me to connect with so many new and interesting people in incredibly meaningful ways. I hope the information I shared honors their words and lived experiences. I hope it also, at the very least, provides new information and perspective to the conversation surrounding women in photojournalism. And I hope these conversations bring about real change.

Conclusion

Visual storytelling matters. Pictures are a way we learn, quite literally, what our world looks like. And because images are an expression of culture, we should care about image creators. People have a relationship with their work, and it should be concerning that the field

lacks diversity. We should ask the question in a million different ways: why is the field of photojournalism gendered and how do we change it?

This project has looked specifically at women who are freelance photojournalists, because the lives and experiences of women working as freelancers are unique. They are business owners, who must routinely navigate the economic realities of a digital news world that often neglects the importance of images and image creators. And while there is obvious tension within the field as it evolves alongside technology, I hope this project shows the importance of coming together to fight for women's rights within the field.

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APPENDIX: INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

This table pairs pseudonyms with professional and other self-reported identities. It includes the women I interviewed only when their real identity cannot be deduced. Respecting their professional livelihood was my top priority.

Pseduonym	Professional Identity	Other identities shared with researcher
Alexandra	Full-time photojournalist	33; Indian, Latin American
Anna-Marie	Full-time photojournalist	37; White
Bralee	Full-time photojournalist	37; White
Dorothy	Full-time photojournalist	36; White
Caroline	Part-time freelance photo editor; part-time freelance photojournalist	23; White
Elizabeth	Full-time photojournalist	26; White
Jasmine	Full-time photojournalist	36; African American; lesbian
Katlin	Full-time photojournalist	31; White
Lara	Full-time photojournalist	Greek, Italian
Mary	Full-time photojournalist	36; White
Megan	Full-time photojournalist	26; White
Paula	Full-time photojournalist	33
Savannah	Former full-time freelancer, recently accepted full-time staff position at a local newspaper	26; White

Pseduonym	Professional Identity	Other identities shared with researcher
Scheana	Full-time food and culture journalist (images and words)	30; White