

Photography
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Session 3 – The Ethics of Photojournalism

For this session your activity will be a case study but before you start you should read through the following to get a better idea of what ethical considerations a photojournalist needs to consider.

The following six points covers some of the key ethical issues for photojournalists:

1. **Staging events** – The work of a photojournalist is very different from that of an advertising photographer. Their photographs are often used as evidence of events. For this reason it is seen to be compromising the truth claims of photography if you stage an event for you to photograph in order to make better images.
2. **Intruding on private moments** – The responsibility a photojournalist has to the subjects of their photographs is one of the most difficult ethical issues to define. This is mostly due to the fine line a photojournalist is expected to tread between what is in the public's interest and how does this infringe on a person's rights to privacy?
3. **Stereotyping the subjects** – Another area of a photographer's responsibility to their subjects that is also important to consider is how your photographs depict the subjects of your work. Are they accurate, fair and honest and do they represent your subjects in a prejudicial or unduly harmful manner?
4. **Intervening in events** – It is questionable if a photographer can document an event without intervening in it. However, the rule that photojournalists are expected to follow is that they should be observing news events rather than creating them. There may be times though that your responsibilities as a photojournalist to document events as they unfold, are challenged by your responsibilities as a human being to help others when they need it.
5. **Editing your photographs** – Though certain editing techniques are accepted there is an emphasis on photographers to maintain the integrity of the photographic images' content and context within photojournalism. Again this relates to the manner in which photographs are used as evidence within the media.
6. **Corruption** – Corruption is perhaps one of the least ambiguous of these issues but it is still something that is commonplace in the media on various levels. This is where a photojournalist allows political, civic, business involvements or other employment to compromise their independence when reporting on events.

Who defines the rights and wrongs of a professional photojournalist?

If you want to be a photojournalist in England you need to have a press card and there are numerous organisations that have the ability to assess and approve photographers as holders of the UK Press Card. These organisations are set up to uphold the conduct of photojournalists and include the Council of Photographic News Agencies Limited (CPNA), National Association of Press Agencies (NAPA), National Union of Journalists (NUJ) and The British Press Photographers' Association (BPPA).

The BPPA is an organisation of press photographers with the aim '*to promote and inspire the highest ethical, technical and creative standards from within the profession*'. This means that they are responsible for the ethical standards of photojournalists in the UK. So as one of the standard bearers of ethical practice for photojournalists in the UK their guidelines are about as definitive as you are likely to get. On their website their code of ethics reads:

Press photographers should:

1. Observe the highest ethical, technical and creative standards. They should conduct themselves in a manner reflecting those standards and be aware that their actions, both positive and negative, reflect on the profession as a whole
2. Not materially alter their images, or edit them in such a way as to give misleading impressions of news events
3. Provide accurate and comprehensive caption information
4. Resist any offers of payment or other inducements from third parties involved in the story to change the way they approach the coverage of news events
5. Remember they are subject to the laws of any country they work in
6. Always be aware of the codes of conduct observed by their employers and clients and act appropriately when working on their behalf
7. Treat people they meet in the course of their work with respect and dignity, giving special consideration to anyone suffering the results of war, crime or other difficulty or hardship
8. Protect their own intellectual property and respect the property of others
9. Defend media freedom, and the right to work in a fair and unfettered manner
10. Feel able to refuse any work involving excessive or unnecessary risks to themselves or others.

http://www.thebppa.com/content/uploads/150604-bppa_code.pdf