

**VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS IN THE FIELD:
POLICIES AND PRACTICES OF PHOTOGRAPHY
IN ETHIOPIA**

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Abstract

My research examines the policies and practices associated with photography at major international development organizations operating in Ethiopia. The analysis is based on a series of semi-structured, in-depth interviews with communications officers working at these organizations, photographers, and photo subjects, as well as an examination of the official communications guidelines of the same organizations. The research was conducted over three months of fieldwork located in Addis Ababa, with some additional interviews in Asosa in the west. My work seeks to engage with and expand the literature of development photography practices, limited mostly to studies of communications officers, by taking a more holistic approach to photography, by viewing it as a series of actions guided by multiple actors' decisions. To this end, I identify a general agenda of photography projects, theorize about the philosophies of individuals and organizations operating in this field, and look to define the concept of dignity.

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List of Acronyms

ABC: American Broadcasting Corporation

CSO Law: Charities and Societies Law

CSO: Civil Society Organization

CIMMYT: International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center

ICIPE: International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology

IGO: International Governmental Organization

MSF: Médecins Sans Frontières

MTV: Music Television

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund

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1.0 Introduction

For many people in the Global North, the concept of “international development” might conjure up a series of images of what the world of aid and humanitarianism look like. But how is it that this idea is so grounded in imagery to many who are not immersed in this field? What are these images meant to tell us, and who decides what they look like?

Understanding the role of communications as a facet of the work that all development actors conduct is vital as a way to comprehend the ways that the public is informed about organizations’ ongoing work and how organizations themselves conceptualize their work. Visual communications, and photography in particular, is a quick and instantaneous way to convey a message to a large audience. Images are presented as unbiased pieces of information, often lacking any contextual specificity and therefore any ability to attribute true meaning. Yet this vagueness means “viewers are able to project whatever associations they might have into such images and retract the meanings which seem convenient to justify and legitimize their ready-made opinions” (Wodak, 2011, p. 71). Pictures that any audience sees automatically ignore the greater truth of any situation if further information or perspective is not provided, leaving much beyond the frame itself (Mjaaland, 2017), often an intentional act by the publisher. These are not passive snippets of material (Aiello, 2006); in fact, images are revelatory of the ways in which development is practiced and publicised to the masses, filled with data about the philosophies and approaches of the work that the publishing organization performs (Fehrenbach & Rodogno, 2015). In this way, visual media is an aspect of development *in practice* and must be conceptualized as such.

While a significant body of literature exists that discusses the employment of photographic images within development and humanitarianism, the vast majority of these comes

in the form of image case studies and theoretical commentaries on the impact and usage of photography (Seu & Orgad, 2017). These studies and analyses are no doubt crucial to putting in perspective how photography provides a window into a certain projection of “truth” about a place or situation. Case studies reveal themes and concepts that underlie the image that is circulated. For example, Manzo (2008) shows how the use of childhood and figures of children highlight a sense of vulnerability and danger of the work that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) do; Benton (2016) discusses how the juxtaposition of individuals of differing races and classes is meant to emphasize a sense of heroism; finally, Dogra (2011, p. 336) examines the usage of womanhood as a place of both “extreme vulnerability ... [and] of soft, touchy-feely emotions that encompass a ‘universal’ order.” In all of these cases, images are used both as a distancing tool and as a place within which the intended audience can identify and find a sense of compassion. There is almost an innumerable amount of this type of study, revealing the many themes that must be uncovered in images after they are published. Understanding how to identify the themes and messages within images is crucial, but another, more visual case study is no longer able to contribute in a significant way to the research. These themes, case studies, and further theoretical discussions of the employment of photography in a development context will be discussed in greater depth in my Literature Review chapter.

But considering this wide expanse of literature on the employment of images by development actors, the actual process of creation of images is little studied. In fact, Seu and Orgad (2017, p. 4) state that,

with the exception of some older studies such as Lidchi’s (1993) study of Oxfam and Cottle and Nolan’s (2007) study of NGO professionals, the goals, intentions and frameworks guiding humanitarian organizations in their communication have been largely ignored. Furthermore, while some studies of media and humanitarian organizations’ representations discuss the implications for media and NGO policy and practice, rarely do they make specific recommendations, nor do they engage with humanitarian organizations and/or the media directly.

The field of study that looks at communications as a practice and the daily work of many that work in development still has major gaps in knowledge (Isharaza, 2019; Nissinen, 2015). If the destructive and impactful nature of images circulated by development organizations is known, then the study of *how* these images are created is a vital one.

Lidchi's 1993 PhD thesis examines the way that one major NGO, Oxfam, practices photography that intends to show intended beneficiaries solely in a positive, happy light (Edkins, 2000). She conducts her research within the context of one major NGO's approaches and policies, but at this point, she wrote the piece over 25 years ago. Cottle and Nolan's 2007 article looks at the ways in which mainstream media techniques have infiltrated the NGO media sphere, interviewing six communications officers at major NGOs. Seu and Orgad's December 2017 book is the most in-depth analysis to-date, taking a psychosocial approach to understanding both public reactions to NGO images and communications materials and the perspectives of those within NGOs that create them through a series of interviews with individuals from both participant groups.

What remains from these main pieces of work about photographic production processes is a multi-organization examination of image policy and practice that takes into account the numerous levels of actors that are implicated in development photography. A study of this nature can reveal the different actors and their relative involvements in the relevant processes, the actual practices on the ground, and identify and define the language and wording that is a part of this industry. This thesis will endeavour to begin answering these important questions in its findings and will further demonstrate the need to explore this important aspect of development work in greater depth.

As is noted frequently within the discipline of visual anthropology, both the camera and the person behind it play a significant role in the image that is the end result of a photography project (Luvaas, 2019). Moreover, Tschirhart (2015) states that “the insertion of technique between the subject and the audience is a fundamental aspect of an NGO’s communicative labor” (p. 247), a fact that is overlooked by the current studies of photographic practice at development organizations. As well, interviewing only photographers and communications officers fails to recognize the agency of the subject of the photo and whether or not they had any involvement in the creation of the photo (Graham, 2014). This point is reinforced by Seu and Orgad themselves, who state that they hope “future research will address this gap” (2017, p. 6) in subjects’ points of view. Though I cannot interview a camera for obvious reasons, I seek to facilitate in the closing of these gaps in the literature by adding the perspectives of both photographers and photo subjects.

Moreover, the research published by Lidchi, Cottle and Nolan, and Seu and Orgad, is only executed in the context of the United Kingdom. While the site of many NGO headquarters, to be sure, their research is unable to answer questions about the work that is done in the spaces where development photography is actually done. It presumes that the policies created at the highest levels of operation are relevant to and internalized by in the communications work practiced within field contexts. This is possibly true, but it is impossible to know for sure without looking at the processes that happen at regional, country, and municipal offices. To discuss practices of media representation and photography in contexts outside of the Global North requires immersing the research in the context(s) where the practice is actually occurring (Mutsvairo, 2018, see p. 5-6; Isharaza, 2019). More specifically, Bosch calls for “an Afrocentric approach [that] sees African phenomena from the perspective of Africans as subjects instead of

objects” (2018, p. 417). Photographic philosophy and practice can only be understood to a finite extent if explored from the side of those working within a Global North context and ignores the participation of those in field locations abroad. In order to begin remedying this problem, I chose Ethiopia as my research site, centred around the main development hub and capital city Addis Ababa. The justification for this decision and relevant background context are explored later in this Introduction.

I aim to understand the organizational policies and actual practices of development photography and visual communications, in order to know the processes within photographic production and the more accurate and, hopefully representative valuation of policy components and ideas. In performing a discourse analysis on the official organizational guidelines and policies, and on individual attitudes towards the work of visual communications within development, I am also looking at the ways that visual communications are actually practiced in Ethiopia in various field projects. To these ends, the objectives of my study are:

- To construct a beginning-to-end model of the processes of development photography
- To critically examine the organizational discourse regarding photography through photography policies and guidelines
- To critically examine the attitudes and relevant concepts towards development photography of communications officers, photographers, and photo subjects
- To critically examine the actual, on-the-ground practices of development photography in the field
- To evaluate the relationship between policy and practice in the field of development visual communications

The research questions I sought to answer are the following:

- What are the philosophies and guidelines motivating the photography policies of development organizations and of those working within the field of photography?
- What are the actual practices of photography happening on-the-ground?

In order to accomplish these objectives and answer these questions, I conducted a series of individual semi-structured, in-depth interviews across three participant groups within Ethiopia.

Group One is comprised of eleven communications officers at various large-scale, international development organizations. Eight of these were at large-scale international NGOs based in Europe or the United States (Plan International, Oxfam, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), ActionAid, WorldVision, ChildFund, Save the Children, and CARE International), two were with research institutes (International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT), and International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology (ICIPE)), and one with an international governmental organization (United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)).¹ Group Two is comprised of five photographers who work for development organizations, four who work contractually for a variety of organizations, and one who is a full-time staff photographer. Group Three is comprised of four Ethiopian individuals from rural areas around the western city of Asosa who have participated in photography projects for various development organizations.

I also utilize the official organizational policies and guidelines circulated by some of the same organizations from which Group 1 participants were sourced. These guidelines provide insight into the specifics – or, as we will see, the generalities and lack of clarity – of what is considered acceptable in the production of photographs to be used by the organization in its materials. I also collected a small number of images of publications and posters around development organizations’ offices when allowed, which was on only three occasions (at Oxfam, WorldVision, and Save the Children). The reasons for this relatively small amount of material photographed will be delved into in the Methodology section. These images, while helpful, will not be used as main sources of evidence due to my limited ability to collect them and therefore there are not enough from which I can make serious claims.

¹ It important to note that while these are not all NGOs by definition, they hold the identity and goals of traditional NGOs and brand themselves as such.

My aim in analysing these sources of evidence (whether interview transcripts and policy guidelines) is to introduce a picture of what the practice of photography looks like within the development NGO sector. As should be clear from what I have already discussed, and what will be examined into in the literature review, there is very little evidentiary information around this aspect of work performed by NGOs. To understand this type of work that is done by the organizations and photographers with whom I interacted in a nuanced way at any point in time, we must first understand what it means to be in this field and where the power and decision-making ability lies. Therefore, that is what I seek to do in this thesis.

Before continuing, it is important to define how I understand some key terms in this research. Because these terms are employed in so many different ways in literature, it is essential to delineate their limits within the context of this thesis.

- **Development Organizations:** Any formal institution whose primary goals are social, economic, humanitarian, or political development. This includes NGOs, IGOs, and research institutes. This is kept intentionally broad because of the variation in organizations that this research interacts with, as well as to still be relatable to other research where alternate and more narrow terms such as “humanitarian aid organization” or NGO are used.
- **Visual Communications:** Any photographic or videographic material produced and disseminated by any kind of institution. While the focus of this research is photographic, many of the arguments made on the topic of visual communications by other authors include both in their analysis and videography cannot be considered irrelevant from any discussion of visual practices.
- **Communications Officers:** I use this term because of the variations in workflow and structure at the different development organizations in Group One. Not only did the job titles vary, but I was granted access to different levels of employees across the organizations as well.

Throughout the majority of this thesis I will be operating with a constructivist lens upon the words of the individuals whom I interview and upon the images they chose to reveal to me. This will allow me to treat the responses and stories of participants, organizational guidelines, and images as a discourse that is embedded within greater meanings about the ways that

photographic production is understood and approached. The perspectives of those working and participating in the process of development photography are in fact what shape the end outcome, not a concrete reality of what the process must look like; this is evidenced by the fact that philosophies of images have undergone multiple shifts over roughly the last 40 years, when it became a major part of development work (Nissinen, 2015). Taking their responses and understandings of this work as discourse will suggest meanings and relationships within the practice of photography. The key assumption here for the analysis that I embark upon is that any critical discourse analysis, or perhaps more accurately critical discourse *studies* (see Wertz et al, 2011) is how we relate theories of language, and language use to either a theory of society, or a *framing* of the way of a social group acts. In studying society, or any social group therein, through discourse, we must both contextualise and understand their representations through an analysis of its historical, socio-political and cultural foundations, and where these intersect with development as a practice, and with those who claim to represent it through how they depict the subjects of development. In this sense, then, discourse can be seen as an essential component in the creation of knowledge, meaning, and by extension representation. Critical discourse studies, in this sense, become about the ability to observe and unpack the way that individuals do work in a certain space, rather than an overarching theorization about the language specifically.

Sections that are not analysed through a constructivist, critical discourse studies lens are examined through *process studies*, which can also include an intuitive enquiry (see Anderson, 2011). These methods of analysis and how they play into my study will be explored further in the Methodology chapter.

Throughout the literature review and the presentation of my findings, I endeavour to provide context on the production and presentation of images, as it relates to their usage by

development organizations in Addis Ababa. I do this through an unpacking of representation and importantly by seeking to understand how representation through photography is determined and cultivated by those that work or are involved in this sector.

By privileging multiple voices within the field and executing the study at the level of the national office, I seek to contribute to the extant literature with an expansion of the field that takes seriously the role of multiple actors. I argue that development photography cannot be understood without a realization of the roles and decisions of the relevant individuals and organizations. This recognition is also in part why I have taken my study to Ethiopia, to explore the ways decisions and actors that are in the spaces where these projects take place influence the process. Through this study, I intend to take the focus of this field of literature out of offices in the United Kingdom and into a more practice-centred approach.

1.1 Background Context

Ethiopia offered a perfect first location to conduct this kind of study for two main reasons. First, as one of only two nations in Africa never to be officially colonized and with relatively few years of foreign occupation, there is a much wider range of development organizations with major stakes in Ethiopia than other nations whose development scenes are heavily shaped by their former colonizer. Their country is still greatly influenced less by the relationship with a single state, and more by the broader processes of international development and Euro-North American globalization (Jalata, 2009). In recent years, Ethiopia's economy has been increasingly dominated by the direct investment and trading relationship it has with China (Chakrabarty, 2016). Over 270 organizations listed under the category "Foreign Charities" in the nation's Charities and Societies Law (referred to as the CSO Law) are based in Addis Ababa, which includes over 95% of all Foreign Charities in Ethiopia as a whole (Chelkeba Worku,

2011). Second, and most importantly, as the focal point of the 1985 LiveAid concert efforts and many developmental efforts following, Ethiopia has long been at the forefront of development photography and central to the conversations surrounding photographic ethics and critiques.

To explain further the reasons this context was chosen for the study, and to provide some relevant information about the region's history of the topics with which I engage, the following section will offer a short history of development photography in Ethiopia. I will then discuss the current situation of media and development there, especially in terms of public understanding and how these are relevant at the level of communications within organizations.

1.1.1 History of Development Photography and Ethiopia

The most salient example of photography and development on a major scale is undoubtedly the 1985 LiveAid concert led by the likes of Bob Geldof and Bono. The event aimed to raise funds and promote awareness about the Ethiopian famine, centred in the Tigray region, through the use of celebrity status and two widely televised concerts in the UK and USA. Images circulated to large audiences in the west frequently showing such visceral content as “skeletal bodies of women and children suffering in the famine's wake” (Sussman Rumph, 2011, p. xxi). The mid-1980s saw Ethiopia become infamous in the mainstream media of Global North, though the images were used not to target Ethiopia specifically but rather to suggest a more general state of “Africans' inability to feed their own” (Sussman, 2012, p. 108).

The use of dramatic and intense images during the crisis concretized the use of photography as a main medium of communication for development, especially in humanitarian situations. It was part of the emergence of globalization and the public's knowledge of international disasters through more social communications tools as is prevalent today through social media. Music Television (more commonly known as MTV) was even a part of this mass

broadcasting of LiveAid and the events in Ethiopia through its “merging of popular music and corporate sponsorship” (Jones, 2005, p. 83) with a steady stream of images of vulnerability in the region. The images were so omnipresent that they “have ‘bunt themselves’ into many Westerners’ minds” (Mjaaland, 2009, p. 399).

The LiveAid era permanently marked the future of photography and its practice in Ethiopia. Many years on from that period, the effects of the LiveAid imagery are still very much at the forefront of the minds of Ethiopian residents. Individuals are no longer willing to be seen as passive or incapable of supporting themselves. One artistic photographer found that her efforts in the same region as the famine were controlled by what she termed “the photographic situation in Tigray, [in which] people thus constituted themselves precisely as able agents rather than helpless victims” (Tareke, 2009; Mjaaland, 2009, p. 395).

Ethiopians working in communications are now vividly aware of the disastrous effects of photography, but rather than reject its presence entirely, they have decided to embrace its power and take control of it for themselves. While LiveAid will never be washed away, its photography medium is being reclaimed by Ethiopians and they remain vigilantly conscious of the role of the camera.

1.1.2 Ethiopian Development and Media Today

Until the most recent government took power, led by Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed, Ethiopia was considered one of the most restrictive states upon its journalists and media in general (Gagliardone, 2014). The last 25 years of Ethiopia’s history are marred with a series of waves of repression and censorship under the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (Gagliardone, 2014), but the nation’s tradition of monitoring journalists and media began long ago during its earliest days of news reporting. For example, Menelik II chose the name for

one of the first circulated new publications, an indication of state influence from its inception. That trend continued through the reign of the Communist-inspired *Derg* from 1974-91, a period also marred by dictatorship and the “Red Terror” which left hundreds of thousands of people dead, and many people to seek exile (Zewde, 2009; Skjerdal, 2013). In the last decade, the federal government, particularly under Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, repeatedly cracked down on media activity that in any way questioned the actions of the state and overall a reduction in press freedoms (Skjerdal, 2013). This habit of corruption in the media presents itself today in the government’s attempts to quiet or downplay any reports of unrest in the nation: events such as the Gambella massacre in the early 2000s where it was “officially” stated that only about a dozen individuals died despite personal reports claiming significantly more (McGill, Iggers, & Cline, 2007) or the 2019 clashes in the Sidama region with similar claims of reduced casualties (“Ethiopia referendum,” 2019). The government also uses a series of laws in the name of national security, namely the 2008/2009 Anti-Terrorism Law (Skjerdal, 2017), to imprison journalists thought to question or challenge the state (see Davison, 2018).

With the arrival of Abiy’s administration, some of the opposition parties previously exiled were freed and all imprisoned journalists were released (“New era,” 2019). Despite his leadership as well as some early efforts to reform some of the censorship legislation, over 250 individuals were imprisoned without due process after the apparent 2019 coup d’état attempt (“Abiy Ahmed,” 2019). Media and information-sharing remains state-controlled and micro-managed, so even “private” – that is, not officially associated with the state – outlets are limited in terms of reliable data and often must resort to accepting the government’s statement (“In era of reform,” 2019). There are numerous journalists and organizations interested in promoting a

truly free press in the nation, but as of yet they have not gained enough traction against the power of the state media system to do so in a meaningful and lasting way.²

Related to development directly, this media environment has placed intense pressure upon those working within communications at various organizations. Restrictions upon publications and information-sharing also applied to many NGOs and other bodies in Ethiopia, especially in the earliest days of new media technologies and the Internet (Gagliardone, 2014). While telecommunications operations remain controlled by an unofficial monopoly of state-owned EthioTel, any attempts to capitalize upon the media's potential are slowed or halted due to the company's poor management (Gagliardone, 2014). Any information gathered by any organizations themselves must be published through their own private channels, or what is more frequently used today, social media platforms – though if contentious enough, it could still be prosecuted under the recent Cybercrimes law used to censor online discussions (“Civic Freedom,” 2019).

In terms of my own research, this fraught backdrop of media in Ethiopia meant that individuals operating within any field relating to media, press, or communications are essentially walking on political eggshells. Though restrictions are lifted right now, in many ways the Ethiopian government has shown that it is willing and able to revert to old tactics at any time in order to maintain control. While those working in the development context are somewhat on the fringes of the mainstream journalism censorship, many began their careers in journalism or have their educational backgrounds there as I will show. This close relationship between development communications and journalism plays out in the cautious and reluctant answers that many working in this field are willing to give.

² To contextualize this with the difficulties facing Abiy, see Girma, 2019.

1.2 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is organized in a manner intending to clarify the problem, context, and show what my research is able to contribute to the discussion. Following this Introduction is an in-depth Literature Review exploring all relevant topics and taking a dive into the closest-linked studies to my own. The third chapter explores my methodology and engages with my positionality as a foreign researcher in Ethiopia. Chapters four through seven introduce and discuss each of my major research findings, as well as present their implications for the field. Chapter eight expands upon these theoretical and practical implications, placing these findings in conversation with each other, and then in discussion with the existing literature and how this work contributes to the greater field. Chapter nine concludes these arguments and considers how future work may continue to expand research on development photography.

2.0 Literature Review

This literature review will explore major themes related to the field of photography in development by exploring first the broadest relevant discussions and finishing with the most closely related studies. To begin, I will discuss the idea of “politics of representation,” a space that considers questions about who tells the story in imagery, what kind of message is meant to be conveyed, and what is revealed upon close inspection of the photo and its relevant context. I will continue by looking first at general discussions of pictures within development, and then with a more focused look at the modes of employing photographic imagery in development. I turn then to a sampling of pillar image case studies that reveal numerous themes embedded within photographs, all of which contributed to the mainstream discussions that led to so many organizations creating and implementing their photographic guidelines. I then turn briefly to discussions of visual ethics and the role of guidelines in visual practices. I will conclude with a critical examination of the other existent research that looks at specific practices within development organizations of photography, discussing how my own research will contribute to this space with more detail.

2.1 Uses of Photography

As is made clear through understandings of politics of representation, photography is a process through which multiple actors participate as well as a space where many voices are excluded, and various interests are always at play in these decisions and activities. There are decisive and intentional actions at all points in the production process, and these choices must be interrogated. Photography as a part of development work is well-recognized, and I will now explore the works of some authors who considered its role. I begin with a look into the concept

of politics of representation, then how it is theoretically understood in relation to photography, and then continue into more specific examples of its employment.

2.1.1 Politics of Representation

One of the foundational understandings of “politics of representation” comes from Shapiro, whose central concern “is always with the *imposition* of meaning upon individuals’ lives” (Rieder, 1989, p. 338, emphasis in original). How is the final product – the published photograph in the case of my own work – a result of the processes that it underwent in during creation? How was this image mediated and shaped by the actors implicit within it? What decisions are reflected in the image? These are the questions that one must ask when beginning to consider the role and significance of any form of representation. The foundation of his understanding of “politics of representation” and what it considers are in questioning what is presented to an audience. It is necessary to question what is presented to the audience critically, to interrogate and engage with the image. The information that is distributed by a publisher is selected for numerous reasons, and it is crucial that those decisions are read as meaningful, impactful, and indicative of power systems over the represented by the representor.

Shapiro notes that photography, “of all modes of representation, it is the one most easily assimilated into the discourses of knowledge and truth, for it is thought to be an unmediated simulacrum, a copy of what we consider the ‘real’” (1988, p. 124). Photography, being an “actual” capturing of a moment by a lens, suggests that what is seen is to be believed uncritically. But that negates the importance of the photographer, the camera, and the image subject in the process of creation. He continues, “When we interrogate photographs from the point of view of how they speak/think politically, it is necessary to think of them as discursive practices situated within the general economy of societal practices” (p. 129). I take his emphasis

on the importance of reading photographic representations as a form of discourse itself, in order to understand that the ways that photography is produced by development organizations as a part of their overall practices and not as passive communicative materials. Shapiro's focus on the ways that photography is used to suggest an element of truth, and of their political and discursive implications, became relevant to me as I decided to interview multiple actors within the system of photographic production to understand the intent of all of them.

Boltanski takes the idea of a "politics of pity" to put into perspective the intentions of the publisher in any form of representation. In a similar manner to Shapiro, Boltanski (1999, p. 150) calls for "the critical spectator ... [to] assume responsibility for unmasking the *manipulation* of which he thinks he is the target and endeavour to establish a different way of being concerned by what happens." It is the job of those observing the image to question what kinds of distance are in place between the photo and the onlooker, to question what meanings are being communicated. Boltanski continues, "here the inherent uncertainty of communication, which presupposes a decisive halt to the exploration of the other person's intentions, cannot be alleviated" (1999, p. 150). Going one step beyond recognizing the assumption of truth and authenticity within photographs, he highlights that in communicative materials there is always an element of uncertainty that needs to be addressed even if it can never be answered by the viewer alone.

Other readings of "politics of representation" take the term to mean the way that marginalized communities are included through forms of visual, participatory, or social inclusion. I will be using Shapiro's definition and forms of engagement with representation, and the difference between the two is salient. But these alternate conceptions of politics of

representation are also useful in understanding the power dynamics that underly visual forms of inclusion.

For example, Fullenwider (2017) understands of the politics of representation places the critical understanding of imagery within the context of colonialism. Though her analysis considers the role of Indigeneity in settler colonial states, it importantly discusses how representation can illuminate the stories of otherwise unattended groups, whether it is for good or bad (Fullenwieder, 2017). The ways that visual representations occur by actors (development organizations in my case) are a form of “discursive framing” by the dominant power in practices of images (p. 37). The stories that are told about marginalized communities or groups in the Global South are controlled by the powerful, dictating the narrative that is communicated through images. In a similar reading of “politics of representation” to Fullenwieder, Naidoo (2010) considers the ways that many common practices of inclusion in society still leave marginalized communities silenced, looking at the context of Nairobi, Kenya. Naidoo notes that in order to prevent further silencing or relegating of subaltern voices, it is critical that “homogenising images or constructions” (2010, p. 443) be rejected. Conceptions of the Global South that unify it into a narrow group of tropes ignore real lived experiences. Practices of photography become relevant here in promoting a view of the Global South that is representative of its challenges as well as of its opportunities, not sinking into lazy traps of long-held stereotypes of despondency.

The concept of “politics of representation” is necessary in the study of visual practices and philosophies at development organizations as it calls for the critical engagement with images as they are presented to the masses. It is the act not just of questioning what is presented, but who is doing the presenting, and why. By including the responses of multiple levels of actors in

photographic practice, I aimed to get a better picture of where the power and control lay within these processes; it meant I could determine how stories and narratives are shaped through images. These authors discuss the politics of representation but in a broad way, not specifically concerned with international development or how it is relevant in those contexts. The next section will consider how the theme of politics of representation is understood in many ways within image production and development organizations.

2.1.2 Theories of Photography and Politics of Representation

This section will explore the ways in which different authors broadly conceive of photography and imagery in a broad way, not by engaging with specific examples in most cases, but first and foremost by positing ideas on the relationships within photography and development first and foremost. Importantly, these texts place an emphasis on how images are used in development – this is, to take a politics of representation approach on the images that are created and circulated by NGOs.

Boltanski (1999), who also theorizes on concepts of politics of pity and representation, uses the idea of the “spectacle” to discuss how viewers of any image of the Global South are meant to understand the sensational, dramatic aspects of what they are observing. By referencing television commercials in particular, he terms the way that NGOs employ images and other advertising materials as “the spectacle of distant suffering” (Boltanski, 1999, p. 178). His book recognizes that the fundamental idea that at least what is suggested by these images is that the NGOs are communicating situations of reality and factual experience of individuals in the Global South (see p. 173). But, as Shapiro and Boltanski’s politics of representation tells us, the suggestion of reality is a fallacy in these images and ignores the power dynamics involved in the creation of the image, the decisions by all the actors present, and the mediated nature of what

is presented as the final product. Development organizations therefore use this trust from the viewer to be providers of information to show their work with frames of enticing and captivating scenes from the Global South, met with little criticism from the general public. Here it should also be noted that NGOs and development organizations are not just entwined in the imbalanced power dynamics of organization and beneficiary, but also that they are often ineffective at communicating news in general (Thrall, Stecula, & Sweet, 2014, p. 136).

In Stocchetti and Kukkonen's 2011 volume *Images in Use*, visuals are understood not by the meaning that they inscribe upon the setting and subjects shown, but of "the communicative strategies that inspire the uses of images by agents" (p. 3). In this way, the authors within the volume place the weight of their analysis of the politics of representation and communication, with many chapters focusing on topics within development issues. Stocchetti and Kukkonen note that "visual communication is powerful because it binds the viewer in a communicative relation where agency is hidden and meaning is ambivalent" (2011, p. 4). It is, therefore, obligatory for those in visual studies to engage with how images are employed, rather than a stagnant image case study that is limited by its scope of one or two images only. The ways that images are employed within various power structures are explored in numerous ways throughout the book. What is most salient in the case of this thesis are the specific examinations of power and process, especially that of Kukkonen.

Kukkonen considers three ways images may be understood and used, which she refers to as the "mirror," "map," and the "simulacrum" (2011). The mirror suggests that the image is a pure reflection of reality, which as I have discussed already, is impossible yet is often innately assumed to be the case. The map, Kukkonen states, "implies a constructed and controlled representation of reality ... composed to please and excite, its important elements are highlighted

for easy orientation” (2011, p. 60). This reading of an image is much closer to the analytic understandings of how development organizations, and powerful actors in general, shape images to match the story and meaning intended or desired, easily absorbed by the viewer. Finally, Kukkonen uses the simulacrum, a more abstract concept in which an image is seen that follows traditional conventions but is meant to question what reality is; she uses the example of the mockumentary, which takes the classic documentary style and depicts an obviously fake world. In development photography, this concept may be translated to instances when simplistic images are used to depict incredibly complex ideas. This is less pertinent in my own study but is an important tool as it shows the potential of the viewer to question reality if given the proper tools to do so.

Chouliaraki’s 2013 book *The Ironic Spectator: Solidarity in the Age of Post-Humanitarianism* views the practice of photography in development as a practice that is both performed and performative – performed by those in the areas where development work occurs, and performative by those who view the images of the work that is done and impose their own suppositions of “misfortune of vulnerable others” (p. 28). She considers four modes through which this is done, as she calls them, “appeals, celebrities, concerts, and news,” (Chouliaraki, 2013, p. 47), all of which contribute to a sense in the Global North of superiority, both morally and developmentally. It inscribes, over and over again, a sense that there is overwhelming suffering in the Global South, in distant places from the viewer. For her, the employment of images is in service of distancing the North from the South, all the while performing an act of caring and solidarity.

Fehrenbach and Rodogno’s 2015 book is meant to be taken as a historical trajectory of visual communication and development through a series of potent examples of its usage and its

strategies over time. As the editors state, its aim is to “enrich [the field] by exploring in detail actual practices, appeals, debates, ethics, technologies, distribution venues, and effects of humanitarian image campaigns across time and space” (Fehrenbach & Rodogno, 2015, 16). While the extent to which they actually achieve this goal is limited by the scope of their chapters, which tend to look at specific instances rather than themes, the book does reveal some trends that are important in understanding visual practices in development today. Discussing the historical use of photos of children, Fehrenbach highlights that “strategies of emotional address were developed that played upon the emotional resonance of familiar, and sometimes familial, photographic genres and practices [pre-1945]” (2015, p. 191-2). She notes that this is decidedly different from that which came after World War II, which has since been overwhelmingly depictions of “the previously colonized regions of the ‘Third World’” (Fehrenbach, 2015, p. 192). This shows the clear and intentional nature of photos that are managed by development organizations and publishers, who show certain images based on trends of the era rather than one constant way of practicing photography. All of these reflect choices made at some point by an actor with the power to dictate the story that is publicized.

Lidchi, whose 1993 study of Oxfam’s photographic practice was the first major exploration one of its kind in the field, notes in her chapter of Fehrenbach and Rodogno’s book that NGOs are “prolific cultural producers, [who] search constantly to circumscribe and fix meaning, most tellingly perhaps through the use of reportage and the regulation of documentary photography” (Lidchi, 2015, p. 294). Since the time of the Ethiopian famines broadcasted widely with LiveAid, NGOs have held the ability to make meaning about the Global South for their audiences. They are not objective observers or helpers, but rather their construction of the worlds within which they operate are broadcasted for massive audiences to see. Lidchi states

that today, “the *practice of representation* – the image of development – with the *practice of development*” (2015, p. 293, emphasis in original) are fundamental aspects of development organizations’ work. In relation to understanding the importance of photography at these organizations, it means that the processes within visual communication cannot be seen simply as a periphery part of the work done. It is a central part of the work that development actors perform.

2.1.3 Specific Modes of Employing Photography

Development organizations utilise images to effectively and quickly communicate ideas to their audiences. What is it that photos offer that connects the viewer to the message that is trying to be imparted? How does this legitimize or delegitimize the work that organizations conduct? What methods are employed in order to make these images useful? For example, Shepherd and Scarf discuss one usage in the case of resource management and mining efforts, showing how pictures circulated by the local company intended to suggest the objectivity of the organization (2006). By distancing themselves from the work that was done, the idea was to promote their work by attempting to depoliticize it through seemingly detached images. The motivation in this effort was to “justify development initiatives ... to compel them to volunteer their manual labor in rural development and environment initiatives” (Shepherd & Scarf, 2006, p. 290). It is the implicit truth that is suggested by photos that the organization relies on in order to pressure individuals into working for a seemingly oblique, unknown development company.

Many articles discuss actually how this distancing, this suggestion of objectivity, is practiced. As many of the authors I will consider point out, not everyone bursts into tears upon seeing a sad image of war or famine (for example, Höijer, 2004; Kyriakidou, 2014; Frosh, 2006; Orgad & Seu, 2014; Orgad, 2013). Höijer (2004) questions how people react to media reporting

on conflicts and human violence and shows that there are consistent traits that cause a visceral reaction in audience members. According to her study, the key criteria are the use of visuals of individuals crying and a focus on so-called “ideal victims” by which she means women and children (p. 520-2). There is a numbing effect upon many of people who see these images regularly through news coverage and other media outlets, but that these images remain thrust into our daily lives because of the need for foreign aid and the connection between visuals and donations (Höijer, 2004, see p. 518). Kyriakidou posits that this separation between viewer and image subject is intentional, wherein “viewers makes imaginative connections with the distant victims whose suffering they watch on their screens” (2015, p. 217-8). The situations of disaster shown repeatedly on screens are utilized not to create a sense of support for the far-away individuals but rather to merely conjure up a sense of connection for the viewer to the person. Kyriakidou states that “ultimately, the object of concern is not the suffering itself but its implications for the viewer. The distant other is not unwelcome but also not morally and emotionally engaging” (2015, p. 227). Her work emphasizes that the intention of photography and images is not necessarily in order to create a mass feeling of sadness amongst the foreign viewership, but to bring attention to the issue at least. Morality is lost in the distance of the physical image to the viewer far away observing over a screen. The witness to these images is imbued with several images of a disaster or war zone in order to create a picture of what that world looks like, not to be morally attached to the devastation there.

Orgad and Seu (2014) further the idea of distancing which they term “intimacy at a distance,” in which this close connection for the viewer is cultivated by the development organization (or media outlet, in some cases). It is a fine line that existed for the NGOs they interviewed felt existed, one in which viewers should identify in some way with the person in the

image but not be so devastated by it as to become overwhelming. As the authors point out, this mode of operating is an absorption of market logic in communication methods (p. 929), manipulated in order to raise funds, information which the NGO respondents offered up easily but also with the caveat that it also comforted the donator/viewer (p. 928). Therefore, images are meant to drum up a level of intimate identification with the subject of the image, but not to surpass that level and to make the viewer too upset. In this way, development images are about creating a feel-good experience for the viewer alone.

Other authors discuss the employment of photos by development organizations as a form of verification or a means to gain trust. As I previously discussed, photographs are often taken without question to be evidence of reality, ignoring the potential for mediation or manipulation of the image. Bake and Zöhrer say that despite this, images are still taken as a form of “authentication” of the work that the organization does because they are taken by the intermediaries of the organization who have immediate access to a place (2017). They discuss how multiple experts at Human Rights Watch, or even individual comic journalists/commentators, are given credence as information-providers because they are believed to be closely connected to the events on the ground. By constructing themselves as “primary witnesses,” the work they do is legitimized for the viewer (p. 87). Suzanne Franks, likewise, shows that due to an implicit trust by news agencies in many parts of the Global South, NGOs become newsmakers in their own right (2010). Because of minimal questioning and lack of access to field sites for many journalists, NGOs and other development actors are the only source of information and photographs of any event or situation, which not only further legitimizes their involvement in those places, but it prevents any serious questioning or truth-seeking into their actions. Their control over those spaces validates the organizations’ own interests and allows

them to control the narrative further through their own imagery (Franks, 2010). In this way, their trust in the NGOs is verified because there is no agent that discredits their presence in any space or challenges their right to become enmeshed in any situation.

2.2 Photographic Case Studies

The next section will explore the ways that past studies have shown specific photos or photo campaigns to be used by development agencies. The key difference here from the last section is that it is not about the direct, intended connection or message to the audience member in the photo, but rather themes embedded within the images themselves that are a function of the work of visual communication. These case studies explicitly look at what communicative tools are used by the photos, rather than what the greater use of the image was (although the two are not distinct categories as the tools used often inform the ways that images are employed). Some example images that are referenced will be included for context. What is interesting, though perhaps unsurprising, is that there is significant overlap between the example images and even the only four themes I consider, which will be explained below; this intersection is due to the multiplicity of inequalities that some of the photo subjects here represent. They are categorized in alignment with how the authors of the articles these examples are extrapolated from have framed them, but most of them could also be discussed in other arguments as well.

The list of themes present in development images is unending; one could eventually find evidence of any single motif within some organization's photography. For practical and thematic reasons, in this section I will explore only some of the themes that are discussed with great frequency in image analysis and case studies, which forms the greatest portion of the research in this field as I mentioned earlier. The four themes I will explore are gender, race, suffering, and branding; using these categories will allow me to discuss a wide array of images

while staying within the umbrella of development imagery. It is also important to recognize before I delve into this section that these types of analyses are critiqued for making up the bulk of studies without making much significant impact on the actual practices of photography at development NGOs, other than to reveal some themes within campaigns and other images (Seu & Orgad, 2017, p. 3). Despite these criticisms, these types of studies are important because they highlight some of the main issues with the types of images published, were of the first kinds of research that critiqued the mainstream way of photoreporting by development organizations, and can help reveal the ways in which the choice of specific images indicate intentions and motivations of the relevant organizations (Parry, 2011).

2.2.1 Gender

As Höijer (2004) identified, including women in images tends to inflict a stronger sense of connection for the viewer, at least more often than it does for images of men. Naturally then, discussions of the place of gender in development imagery are not uncommon. Analysing a former “The Girl Effect” campaign, Tschirhart (2015) examines the ways that using women and girls’ empowerment became a tool of commodification of the development work the organization conducts. Representing female empowerment visually became a step-by-step process to achieving their discursive aims, by “speaking for someone, by working to individualize empowerment and embody entrepreneurial investments” (Tschirhart, 2015, p. 252). By boiling down the complexity of the environment that the organization is operating within, it facilitates an easier connection for the audience to the subject in front of them. The campaign asks the viewer to “imagine a girl living in poverty,” and this act is, Tschirhart argues, to “erase a legacy of poverty, violence and colonization, the individualized depiction of empowerment allows for viewers to absolve themselves of the images of suffering and victimhood” (2015, p.

248). Additionally, through the use of girls or women as the central focus of the campaign, classic conceptions of gender relationships are reinforced, basing their claims on assumptions about gender and family dynamics in the Global South and the world (Tschirhart, 2015). In this campaign, The Girl Effect uses the image of a female to align itself with a specific discourse within development that applauds a limited conception of gender parity, in an attempt to motivate their donors and observers.

Dogra (2011) likewise considers the use of womanhood in imagery not to be passive but very much an active and political decision, one that takes the centralization of gender rights in development discussions and uses it to advance specific goals. She analyses publicity material issued over a twelve-month period coming from twelve different organizations. Through the “othering” of women in the Global South in these varied development organizations’ images, Dogra shows how themes of tradition, religion, motherhood, and others are employed through visual communications in order to highlight their “deservedness” of aid (2011, p. 336). The overall goal is to display the women in their images as victims: those that are both affected by men, inherently suggesting a sense of “good” in contrast to the male alternative (p. 346). Women of the Global South are shown in various lights, many of which contradict each other, for example as both traditional and deviant (Dogra, 2011), used in whatever way fits best with the goal of the specific image that would support the same goal of a deserving recipient of aid.

Wilson (2011) examined three campaigns (from Oxfam, The Girl Effect, and Divine Chocolate) looking at the modes of employment of women in images and in her case, an additional examination of race in the same images, and to which I will return to in the following section. In the Oxfam case, Wilson states that the campaign booklet pages are constituted of images that mainly contain women and give “an overwhelming sense of ‘the South’ as a single,

though endlessly diverse, place where ‘poor women’ are constantly, diligently and happily engaged in small-scale but productive labor” (2011, p. 323). Wilson also looks at The Girl Effect as Tschirhart does, finding similarly that campaign videos ignore any context or experiences of the girls in their materials in order to generalize up to a broad trope of what it means to be a female in the Global South. The final example Wilson utilises is sourced from a fair-trade chocolate company, in which the woman is meant to represent her participation in the global economy as a cocoa producer. But her positioning and facial expression, Wilson claims, invoke a sense of feminine sexuality in the woman that reinforces the idea that she exists for the consumers’ pleasure (2011, p. 328). In all of these cases, Wilson posits that the goal is continue the practice of othering against women in the Global South through their constructions as low-level participants in the global market serving the consumer and viewer.

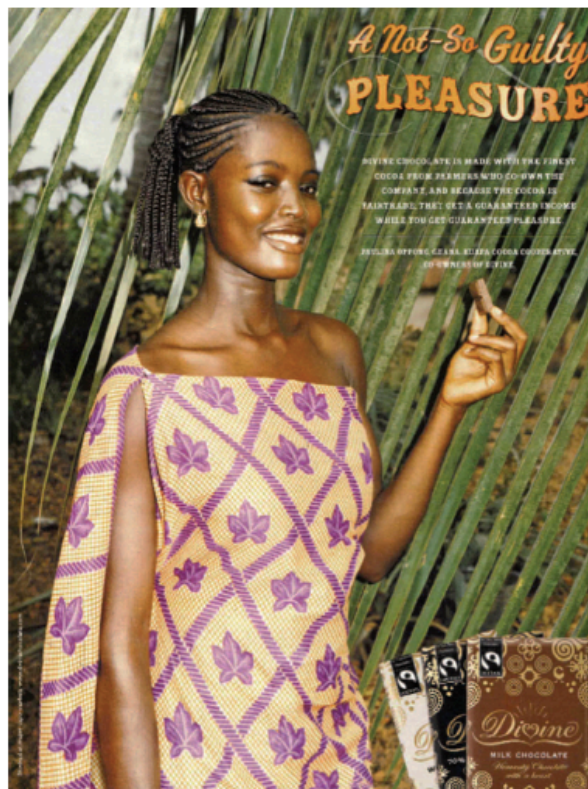


Figure 1: A magazine advertisement from a fair-trade chocolate company (Wilson, 2011, p. 327).

Tschirhart, Dogra, and Wilson all show one similar theme in their analyses: that the employment of womanhood is intended to ignore specific experiences, to “naturalise, depoliticise, and dehistoricise their lives and struggles” (Dogra, 2011, p. 346). In each of the studies I just discussed, the use of women and girls in images roots itself in current ideas of women’s liberation against oppression without allowing any contextual information provided with it. All three authors noted that this is in order to fit the neoliberal paradigm of development that glorifies the place of women in development.

2.2.2 Race

Race is another indicator used in images to suggest otherness by an organization, especially where white settler audiences constitute a large portion of the intended audience. As I stated, Wilson’s study considered not only the facet of gender in the campaigns she analysed but also the ways that race presented itself. In all three examples, she determines that “‘poor’ women in the global [*sic*] South continue to be racialized and exoticised even as the construction of these women as hyper-industrious entrepreneurial agents is incorporated in this process” (Wilson, 2011, p. 329). This practice further places individuals in the South as objects of development, emphasising racial difference as compared to the managers and planners of development (see p. 317). These images not only rely on historically-linked stereotypes of gender relations and inequality, but also of tropes of black men “as inherently ‘lazy’, irresponsible and preoccupied with sensual pleasure” (Wilson, 2011, p. 318), while women are shown as contradicting these negative qualities and as “deserving” of aid. Though still suggesting a sense of deservedness and participation in the economy, the example of fair-trade chocolate that Wilson references also sexualises the woman in the image and therefore suggests goodness while also hinting at the old trope of hypersexuality of black women.

In Radley and Kennedy's 1997 study of UK public reactions to a variety of images from development organizations, it was discovered that respondents inflicted their own meaning onto the images as much as the picture would allow, and often this included assumptions of racial difference and cultural distinction. Some of the pictures that garnered particularly visceral responses, especially one of a boy smoking a cigarette, were wholly rejected by the participants because it did not fit into their picture of "development" as a concept. Radley and Kennedy surmise that this is because the Global North participants in their study understand their own society in comparison to the perceived hardships in other parts of the world, and that "it is a signifier of other matters concerning race and nationality whose meaning transcends the question of charitable giving" (1997, p. 444). Beyond witnessing an apparent situation of need on the part of the image subject, viewers in the Global North inflict, consciously or unconsciously, their own racial biases and related conceptions of the difference to which race leads in the world (see also p. 450). The authors here that is the image viewer who imposes ideas of race upon the image, whether themes of race are meant to be a facet of the picture or not.



Figure 2: White firefighter in Boston area resuscitates black baby with mother in background (Benton, 2016, p. 192).

Benton (2016) analyses two photographs, one from a 1968 *Boston Globe* and one of a screencap of a 2009 American Broadcasting Corporation's (ABC) *Nightline* episode. In the article, Benton examines the notion of hero and victim and how it is exemplified through the race relations in each image. The *Boston Globe* image shows a white firefighter reviving a black baby after a fire in a nearby city, the baby's black mother crying in the background; the *Nightline* image shows Salma Hayek on a visit to Sierra Leone breastfeeding a young black baby, notably without the mother in the image. Benton asks questions about the relationship between both the firefighter-and-baby, as well as Hayek-and-baby, noting that what is inherent in both is a form of othering predicated on the differences of privilege displayed through race, gender, and of class. For example, she notes that "while race is read relationally in these photos, the images also fix the race of the children to notions of impurity associated with blackness" (Benton, 2016, p. 194). Connecting this to ideas of globalisation and humanitarian activity more specifically, Benton notes that the underlying suggestion in both of these images is the valuation of the different lives shown. Both images display a form of "risk," and the racialization of hero and victim is intended to place an emphasis on the lighter-skinned "hero" of each image (see p. 195).

2.2.3 Suffering and Need

One of the initial concepts that comes to mind when considering development imagery is that of poverty or of a sense of suffering. It is not a coincidence that when I describe my research to various people the response is often something that references pictures of starved, poor, dirty individuals in a nondescript country somewhere else in the world. It is also for reasons like this that many of the visual analyses consider the gaze of the Global North and conceptualisations of suffering. Because there is so much extant literature on this topic, and for brevity's sake, I will consider the work of only two sets of authors.

Gajjala, Gajjala, Birzescu, and Anarbaeva (2011) examine the visual practices of Kiva.org, a popular website that allows people to contribute to microloans for small entrepreneurs all over the world. With each individual's profile is a description of their economic goals and a picture of them. Gajjala et al. identify the techniques that Kiva.org uses in the images of their entrepreneurs, for example, one shows a woman

“looking down in the picture, and her eyes are semi closed. Her face does not reveal any emotion, nor is she looking at the camera. ... [it] serves to inadvertently portray the image of a borrower from the third world as an object of charity rather than as a budding entrepreneur” (Gajjala et al., 2011, p. 887-8).

Though the idea behind microfinance programs is of course to empower and bolster grassroots economies and entrepreneurs, what Gajjala et al. show is that the social enterprise uses images to suggest ideas of charitable and need-based giving on assumptions of suffering of individuals in the Global South. As the authors state, the type of picture that is most often utilized for entrepreneurs' profiles relies upon “a sustained representation of the borrower as fairly



Figure 3: A young girl during the Ethiopian famine in the 1980s (Sussman, 2012, p. 124).

vulnerable” (p. 889). While implementing a program aimed at self-sufficiency and growth of the economy, the images used work to do the opposite of empower.

Sussman (also sometimes cited as Sussman Rumph) considers the mid-1980s “poverty porn” that dominated the era, looking specifically at the LiveAid imagery. As I discussed in the Introduction, the history of LiveAid is a key reason for choosing Ethiopia as the site of my research – it will be seen in my findings that LiveAid is etched into the minds of those who work in visual communications in the nation. Attempting to influence mainstream popular culture in the West, The Band Aid Foundation, creators of the LiveAid campaign and massive charity concert, worked “to construct a different kind of visual humanitarian narrative about Africa for the Western public” (Sussman, 2012, p. 108). This form of imagery is what Sussman calls the “philanthropic gaze” (see p. 109), which seeks to make a trend out of the suffering of the “other” in Africa. It certainly succeeded for a time, at least to the extent that that type of starving, impoverished, and dirty photo subject is still at-the-ready in so many minds. In this way, the suffering trope of the 1980s image of Africa was also method of intense and immersive branding in the Global North of foreign aid (Sussman Rumph, 2011, see p. 97).

2.2.4 Branding

Just as in the LiveAid image of Ethiopia, branding is a key component of the development image in order to partake in a capitalist and consumer-driven market from which money and donations come. This is a critical paradigm to understand in communications at development. As Vestergaard points out, “the nature of humanitarian organizations’ branding strategies may have crucial implications for the construction of humanitarianism, and more generally, morality in the public sphere” (2008, p. 474). I turn now to some conceptualizations

of the way that branding is used and is a fundamental facet of photos published by various organizations in the development realm.



Figure 4: A young boy's fingers touch his mother's mouth at an emergency clinic in the Darfur region (Manzo, 2008, p. 633).

Vestergaard's study considers the branding techniques of Amnesty International, looking at both verbal and visual aspects and the ways the two are employed together. She first identifies the inherent irony of branding within communications at development organizations, stating that "one might see a contradiction between advertising's logic of recognition and the logic of education or awareness-raising which is a central objective for many humanitarian organizations" (Vestergaard, 2008, p. 472). This irony certainly looms over mass advertising efforts of many organizations. Yet even with this contradictory condition, large-scale

international development organizations are increasingly practicing classic marketing and branding techniques to reach out to larger audiences for donations and support (Dhanani, 2018).

In some cases, specific themes are employed in an effort to brand an organization, such as repeated imagery of children. Wells (2008) shows through an examination of ActionAid and Oxfam campaigns that children, through the notion of “child-saving” are used to bring immediate attention to the issue that the NGOs are facing. Because of the strong emotional response that can be elicited with an image of a child in danger, the photo is way to increase their donations, as they are “looking for material and emotional returns on their capital investment” (p. 236). In a parallel article, Manzo (2008) calls the use of children in danger in development photography a part of the NGOs’ identity itself. She states that the compelling imagery “is a sort of brand logo that advertises NGOs’ encoded humanitarian principles, reflecting back their organisational ideals as much as their purposes and objectives” (p. 635). In both of these analyses, branding was not taken to mean the insertion of a specific logo or direct promotion of an organization, but rather an identity-building activity that uses more subliminal techniques. Children are the catalyst for brand-building.

As is clear through these examples, a large portion of communications at development organizations is in the pursuit of branding and building a name in the field. In order to connect to the widest audience possible, all of these techniques and their growing regularity in visual communications is an indicator “that humanitarian organisations are increasingly [adapting] to the media’s production logic” (Von Naso, 2018, p. 76). It is a part of sending a message to their intended audiences, including donors and the general public. But if this is done through appropriating images of vulnerable groups like children, the practice must be questioned, and its dangers seriously considered. If the goals of development organizations are truly to assist

communities and provide help to those in danger, then the true ability to empower by these organizations must be questioned (Gwinn Wilkins & Enghel, 2013), as well as whether empowerment is the objective in the first place.

2.3 Visual Ethics

With growing criticism over negative imagery and the sensationalist depictions of development work, organizations began to realize by the early 1990s that instituting some kind of ethical guidelines was necessary. The extent to which these ethics were just a reaction to calls for change or reflected actual desires to change is dependent on the organization. Nevertheless, some major international NGOs, such as Oxfam and Save the Children, created and implemented sets of guidelines in the post-Live Aid era (Lidchi, 2015, p. 293). These standards emphasized the importance of truth-telling in photography, despite the fact that every image presented to an audience is inherently mediated and edited. This was by design, as Lidchi (2015) claims, the idea was to suggest that they were following a documentary style of photography in order to connote honesty and dissociate their own power structures from the image presented. Ironically, this dissociation was meant to further motivate viewers to give their help through seeing the “reality” of the situation. Despite this desire to detach the subject, viewer, and publisher, Edkins (2000, p. 157) notes that it is impossible to completely depoliticise any image of war, famine, poverty, other humanitarian crisis, or any setting where development work occurs. It is a decidedly political space, and the search for the “correct” ethical boundaries is a never-ending one as there can be no complete solutions (Edkins, 2000). Organizations are persuaded to establish guidelines in order to follow the calls of the international community and have to choose how much emphasis to place on them in the field.

A recently published textbook on visual ethics for photography students suggest that the five main concerns of any documentary photographer are: victims of violence, rights to privacy, subject/image/context manipulation, persuasion, and stereotyping (Lester, 2018). Guidelines set by many organizations today do concern themselves, directly or indirectly, with these five core concepts. For example, Oxfam's "Taking Photos in Humanitarian Crises" (2017) guideline highlights the following main ideas, which connect to the noted themes of visual ethics:

- Treat people with dignity and respect → Victims of Violence (and of other traumas)
- Get informed consent → Persuasion
- Train everyone involved
- Protect identities → Right to Privacy
- Share and use with care → Subject/Image/Context Manipulation, Stereotyping
- Get approval
- Make it participatory

These are broad rules and the meaning behind these concepts will be unpacked in detail in later chapters that analyse the discourse of guidelines and the communications officers I interview. Similar guidelines from other major international NGOs include themes along the same lines, aiming to adhere to the currently accepted standards of ethical photography. I will be addressing with the specific guidelines of the organizations I interviewed in the sixth chapter on Practice and Policy, but it is important to highlight here how broader concepts of visual ethics have infiltrated the sphere of development communications.

2.4 Practice of Photography within Development Organizations

The case studies I reviewed all speak to the idea that photography is a mediated and involved environment; that is, the images are selected with specific intentions about theme and goal with publishing. Examining the development of visual ethics shows clear and conscious deliberations on the place of guidelines and who they really benefit. The question that naturally follows that acknowledgement is: who is making all of these choices, and how? In the context of

development organizations, “editorial processes that are confined and shaped by NGO communicatory agendas inevitably result in the exclusion of voices” (Fairey, 2018, p. 121). Studies that seek to interrogate these questions and the ways that development and communications intersect are relatively new, and they have yet to be approached in enough ways so as to encapsulate the field in a meaningful way. The literature that does exist approaching this problematique is still limited in scope, so here I will take dive into this work to see what is done and what gaps remain. The majority of studies use communications officers and/or communications materials as the unit of analysis for the practice of development photography, some consider the photographer only. Research that includes both units of analysis or that considers the point of view of the photographic subjects in any way does not exist yet. This glaring gap is what I seek to address – the methodology chapter that follows will concentrate on how I attempt to achieve this.

I begin with a look at the studies that focus on communications officers at development organizations, which for the sake of these studies exclusively means NGOs. The majority of literature on photographic practice exists in this bracket and predominantly considers the ways that NGO communications officers treat and understand their work. As I stated previously, the majority of these studies focus on the United Kingdom headquarters of major NGOs (Orgad, 2013; Cottle & Nolan, 2007; Seu & Orgad, 2017; Orgad & Seu, 2014; Dogra, 2007). What is revealed through these studies is the constant state of flux that NGO communications officers feel. As trends both in criticisms of development imagery and in journalism generally ebb and flow, communications officers are met with perpetual demand to shift with audience demands. Orgad (2013) states that “NGOs take an interest in academic debate and critique with the latter often stimulating passionate responses and criticisms that inform their thinking about and

practice of producing visual representations” (p. 312). The questions that these articles engage with relate to how NGOs understand their roles, how they respond to critiques, and how the role of communications is related to the organizations’ work overall.

Cottle and Nolan (2007) raise the point that, despite not being traditional news-makers operating in a professional journalism realm, large NGOs adopt the “media logic” of mainstream media in order to make their material more accessible to the general public. The authors claim that NGOs are “packaging information and images in conformity to the media’s known predilections constitutes the ‘media logic’ which has now become institutionalized *inside* aid agencies” (Cottle & Nolan, 2007, p. 866, emphasis in original). If the goals of journalism are to report on objective truths, then adhering to its practices and methods must be the best remedy for an onslaught of critiques of representation (Orgad, 2013). But as Dogra (2007) highlights, this can often still mean a simplification of incredibly complex situations and work. To be sure, publicity and accessibility are important, but using what a journalist would consider a good photo may mean losing details that can provide significant information about the work that NGOs carry out.

Thus, engaging with the public can become a complicated task for communications officers. How do they toe the line of raising awareness and gaining interest, communicating intricacies, and remaining accessible? Seu and Orgad (2017) show in their analysis of ten NGO communications officers and members of the United Kingdom public that NGO that seek to challenge classic models of visual representation too much are often met with failure in capturing the public or too much criticism. For example, in comparing responses from both sides, it became clear that there was a “tension between the public’s expectation of messages about suffering, and NGO communications’ stress on positive depictions and the desire of some NGO

professionals to make the public feel good” (p. 17). There is a careful balance that must be sought between attracting an audience and piquing their interest in the subject, while also being cautious not to over-saturate their images with negative images or information – what Orgad and Seu (2014) term “intimacy at a distance.”

By engaging in locations outside of the UK or Global North context, analyses of visual communications are able to display where the cracks in the globally-managed communications practices happen. Witteborn’s (2010) study of a regional *Save the Children* office in western China city, Urumqi, shows that communications practices have an impact upon the communities where NGOs work and that the ways that it does affect the individuals there is often overlooked in global communications policies. Local offices will be much more in tune with the needs and challenges of the societies with which they engage, but Witteborn states that “transnationally operating NGOs as well as donors need to keep reflecting on the communication values they teach and support and the implications of their efforts for the individual and society” (2010, p. 369). Isharaza (2019) looks at communications officers’ practices in Uganda, Sudan, and Kenya regional offices of major NGOs and highlights that there are often several changes from global policy to field practices as “national office communication staff can, and in several instances do change the story direction” (p. 1774) because of their more robust understanding of site specificities. Field practices, Isharaza claims, are always in flux and shifting based on the needs of the region and the people they are serving. Agendas are always at play within the asks for certain images or stories, but these are always contested at the level of field sites. Witteborn and Isharaza’s studies show the ground-level changes that are always occurring for communications officers, even with specific directives in place from their superiors at the Global North-based

headquarters. This is why studying in the contexts where communications materials are produced is key to a true understanding of photography practice in development.

Research that looks to the role of photographers as agents in the process of communications production is similarly limited in scope. The literature predominantly looks at the dynamics of the photographer-subject relationship or that of the photographer-NGO. These relationships and dynamics are crucial to understand because, as Conrad (2015) points out, “there are discrete practices over framing and representation at work” (p. 276) affecting the outcomes of any photo project. Thomson and Greenwood (2017) show that photographers felt extremely limited in their choices when planning and executing a shoot, identifying thirteen factors in which the photographers felt limited or partial control and seven in which they felt absolutely none; there were only two (equipment and range of visibility) that they felt in control and only because they could select the tools they used. The photographers felt more subjective factors, like understandings of the media or the use of photos, were uncontrollable and they could not influence their participants’ prior notions about what images meant. Their study suggests that photographers need to engage in more conductive and reflexive conversations with the individuals and groups in their images due to their perceived inability to manage a situation. Thomson and Greenwood suggest that “once photographers are aware of the dynamic and ever-evolving nature of frames, they can react and organically respond, as appropriate, to structure a frame that is relevant to the situation” (p. 641-2). In this way, it is imperative that the role of the image subject(s) be understood as active participants in the practice of photography within development because of the level of influence they have on the settings and results of a shoot.

On the side of the equation, Nissinen (2015) looks at the ways that photographers are similarly constrained by the organization that hired them. Photographers often go to the field

with certain dreams of the images that they will capture, but unable to actually take those photos because the “international agency and accepting commissioner directives may at times conflict with personal preferences and understandings of the situation” (p. 306). Not only are their superior’s specific instructions about the exact types of images to be collected a restraint upon their creativity, the ethical guidelines about the acceptable modes of engagement with participants often also prevent a natural photo from arising. Though the photographer may hold a more powerful status than that of their participant, they are also under the control of their host organization (see p. 314). Development organizations provide photographers access to project sites they may not otherwise be granted, and opportunities to take beautiful images that many creatives would appreciate (Grayson, 2014). But even presented these options, photographers must be constantly negotiating and navigating their environments to achieve the best image to which they are satisfied, and more importantly, what will make their client organization satisfied.

It is clear through these glimpses into photographic practice that there are major gaps in understanding about its relationship to development. The collection of research here shows that the gaps exist in recognizing the multiple layers of actors in the practice of photography, even though many acknowledge the importance of other players in the field. These authors look at the way photography is undertaken from the perspective of NGO communications officers – most often in the UK – and occasionally from photographers. They additionally highlight a gap in terms of location of research, as Isharaza (2019) is the only study that looks at the context of East Africa at all. It is here that I situate my research, as I acknowledge the importance of multiple actors in one context and continue to expand the field by investigating the context of Ethiopia.

3.0 Methodology

The research is exclusively qualitative, seeking to understand the meanings and approaches within the space where development and photography intersect. I conducted a series of semi-structured, in-depth interviews across the three sets of interview participants with which I worked. I also collected images from the office spaces of three development organizations that allowed me to do so. In the cases of other development practitioners, I was unable to take pictures either due to setting or organization policy. Finally, during my analysis, I undertook the process of concept development in analysing certain terms, and in particular that of the buzzword “dignity,” and sought to unpack the deep meanings behind it (Schulte, 2018). In the following sections, I will delve into my methods of recruitment, interview structure, analysis tools, and engage with my own positionality as it impacted upon my research.

My literature review chapter, and in particular the section on the “Practice of Photography within Development Organizations,” illuminates the clear need for an expansion of the study of photographic practices. There are currently no studies that use the three-group method, which I will describe in detail below, in order to triangulate a view into the way that photography practices occur and decisions within the field are made. Moreover, the location and access to certain perspectives by being in the field is crucial to what I aim to contribute to the overall literature and their role will be fleshed out below.

This chapter discusses the methodology and accompanying procedures used to examine the underlying themes of representation and the practices followed in creating images that are embodiments of representation. In this way, I will highlight the ways in which I am able to contextualize photography as it pertains to development organizations. It outlines the various qualitative strategies and processes used for collecting and analyzing data, and along with my

personal observations, it utilizes critical themes obtained from data coding to develop and draw out some of the objectives through the lens of my stated theme of representation. I also briefly cover the critical themes obtained from the data coding procedures and how these impacted the research and the subsequent findings. Other considerations herein are ethical and the establishing of my positionality as an “outsider” researcher, as well as the various material difficulties experienced in the field.

3.1 Participants and Access

For reasons already made explicit, I identified three groups of participants whose insights were each uniquely valuable in creating a larger picture of what the photography is within development in Ethiopia. By comparing and contrasting different perspectives and experiences of relevant actors, greater complexity is able to be addressed and extracted from the data (Palmberger, M. and Gingrich, A., 2014). The following will break down the methods of identification and access for each group.

3.1.1 Group 1

As a reminder, Group 1 participants consist of communications officers at a series of international development organizations based in Addis Ababa. This encompassed a variety of organization types: NGOs, governmental organizations, and research institutes. Addis Ababa has a wide variety of organizations, and I thus began my time there by making a list of organizations to contact. I reached out to these organizations by email, WhatsApp, or by going in-person to the head offices and scheduling a meeting. In-person was the most effective method at guaranteeing a meeting with someone, and in fact the only times that I successfully used the other methods was when I sent a message and indicated a connection to a mutual colleague.

In terms of identifying participants in this realm, I searched for major NGOs and other Global-North-based development organizations in the area through online lists and through my own knowledge of NGOs. When I identified the locations of these NGOs' offices in Addis Ababa, I went in-person and requested to speak to someone in communications and was often directed there shortly after arriving. Contacts for the other organizations I interviewed was either provided by another participant or a colleague at my internship with Fojo Media Institute.

By the end of my three months of fieldwork, I achieved contact and a subsequent interview with 11 unique participants in this category, broken down by organization type here:

- **Non-Governmental Organizations:** Plan International, Oxfam, Médecins Sans Frontières, ActionAid, WorldVision, ChildFund, Save the Children, CARE International
- **Governmental Institutes:** UNICEF
- **Research Institutes:** International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT) and International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology (ICIPE)

Most organizations were fairly welcoming to my research initiatives and allowed me to discuss the possibility of an interview with someone. In some cases, it was as if they could not say no because they did not want to appear to be hiding anything. More about the demeanors of my participants and their relevant organizations will be investigated further on in the thesis.

3.1.2 Group 2

Group 2 participants consist of professional photographers, four freelance and one permanent staff at an organization. Freelance photographers split their time between working for various development organizations and other projects including commercial work and personal pieces. Access to these participants varied greatly within the group: the first was a coincidental meeting with someone in Addis Ababa for a project with one of the organizations I interviewed, the second was a contact through my internship, the third a contact of the second photographer, the fourth worked at the same organization as one of my Group 1 participants, and the fifth I

found through searching online for photographers in the region. While it was harder to identify as many participants in this area, those that I did access appeared enthusiastic about the research and were all eager to partake.

3.1.3 Group 3

Group 3 participants, rural Ethiopians who have been subjects in development images, were the hardest to identify due to my own lack of knowledge of the countryside and languages in Ethiopia other than English. However, in my last month of research, I was offered the opportunity to travel to the city of Asosa, in the Benishangul-Gumuz region, with a Canadian-based NGO called Farm Radio to observe and assist their Monitoring and Evaluation activities for their programs (see Figure 5 for location reference). The contact to the organization was provided by my internship.



Figure 5: A political map of Ethiopia depicting both Addis Ababa and the Benishangul-Gumuz region, where Asosa is located. (Ezilon Maps, 2015).

In exchange for coming with Farm Radio and writing a story for their website, the woman I went with would help me identify participants and translate interviews. Participants were identified after group interview sessions conducted by my colleague with Farm Radio about their broadcast, who would then ask if anyone is willing to talk with the two of us about photography projects and their experiences. With each group interview conducted, at least one person volunteered their time and was a past subject of a photography project. This exchange certainly had impacts for my research in terms of power dynamics with my interview participants, and these will be dealt with when I consider my positionality below.

3.2 Interviews

Interviews for Groups 1 and 2 were conducted in English as the language is taught in school and university in Ethiopia and most people in the development field in the country can are conversant in it. Interviews for Group 3 were conducted in Amharic, the first language for most Ethiopians, and translated by my colleague with Farm Radio, Kidist Kebede. For the most part, the grasp of the English language is strong and it being a secondary language did not have a great impact on the flow of the interview. With the Group 3 interviews, the process was complicated, and my standard questions did not translate easily into Amharic. If I was in the field for more than two days, I would have worked to restructure them into smoother and more logical questions but there was not the time for that unfortunately. I was certainly able to garner useful data in Group 3, but perhaps a stronger understanding of Amharic would have allowed for a more natural conversation to ensue.

Interview participants were all informed of the intent of my research and that I recorded the session, and all gave consent. All of the interviews happened face-to-face with the exception of one phone interview and one emailed set of responses. The phone interview was unrecorded,

and I instead took a series of detailed notes and quotations, and we were still able to have a free-flowing conversation. The emailed interview of course did not allow for a natural discussion and is not preferable to an alternate mode of interviewing, but unfortunately was necessary due to the participants' busy schedule.

For all of my interview groups, I began with a standard set of questions designed to help me understand their knowledge of photography, their experience with it, and their philosophies about its use within development. In most instances, I reformulated the exact wording of each question to make it intelligible and flow in the conversation more naturally. For example, I often expanded upon key ideas in questions to clarify meaning, such as the idea of subject involvement in images. Appendix A shows the standard questions that formed the basis for each interview, by their participant group.

The final questions for Groups 1 and 2 regarding ideas about the responsibilities for visual media creators in development were added in after the first interviews were completed. Due to problems with probing these participants, and in particular members of Group 1, for their opinions about their work. I found that many of the responses I received fell in line with company policies and with no explanations originally; this way, I was able to gather some more personal viewpoints and move beyond what seemed to be scripted answers. When conducting interviews with these questions, I was able to construct a much more holistic picture of what the participant felt is important to understand in their field.

3.3 Methods of Analysis

With my field data, I sought to conduct a dual analysis through two methodologies, discourse analysis and process studies. Because I am seeking to understand both policy and practice in photography, both methodologies are necessary. Discourse studies proves useful to

examine the information gathered about policy and approaches to photography, which is an abstraction of the actual photography happening, as it must be understood through the frames that the organization and those working within it have regarding this work. Process studies is crucial in order to understand the ways that decisions are made in photography, how they impact upon practices, changes over time in the ways this occurs, and what factors are relevant in these activities (Bansal, P., Smith, W.K., and Vaara, E., 2018).

First, I aim to perform discourse analysis on the both the organization policies and guidelines of photography as well as the individual philosophies of those that work at the organization (Willig, 2014). Through discourse analysis, I seek to understand the intentions and meanings behind the way that organizations and communications professionals present and conceptualize their work in visual representation. As authors such as Schmidt (2010) and De Muller (2015) discuss, actors at the level of official organization create “an interaction ... between discourse and societal actions and practices” (Muller, 2015, p. 380). In conjunction with constructionism as my overarching operational theory, discourse analysis is epistemologically opposed to the idea of any concrete objective truths. Instead, it focuses on the way that worldviews are constructed through language and philosophies (Gralewski, 2011; Souto-Manning, 2014). The intention of the discourse analysis I provide here is *not* to perform a linguistical or dialectic analysis, but rather to unpack the specific words in the language of the guidelines I analyse. I am looking for the wording and how this impacts the actions and outlooks of those who interact with them, namely communications officers and photographers. I am aware of the great variety in approaches and forms of discourse analysis in existence (see Wodak & Chilton, 2005, for discussions on this), and want to be clear that this is what I aim to do.

LeGreco and Tracy (2009) offer a methodology called discourse tracing that seeks to “critically analyze the power relations associated with change and proceed with a systematic data analysis process” (p. 1517) and do so at micro, meso, and macro levels. In relation to my own research this will translate to, at the micro level, particular individual’s employment and understandings of terms. At the meso level, it is the organizational guidelines, which are used by many and are operating in the larger framework of development NGO ethics. Finally, repeated terminologies and concepts correlate to what the authors call the macro level of discourse tracing. Thus, through discourse tracing, I am able to piece together the ways that photography and the relevant concepts are conceptualized at the individual, organizational, and broader levels of development visual communications. The specific questions I asked when performing discourse analysis will be discussed in the sixth chapter as I introduce my findings. It should also be noted that I was only able to include certain guidelines that are publicly available, as some organizations do not make their documents accessible to the general population.

While I am not concerned with the specific timelines of each individual in their photography projects, I am interested in the changes over time to the ways decisions are made and the way photography is approached. For instance, what kind of impact did the post-1985 LiveAid era have upon Ethiopians’ understanding of photography, if any? What levels of decision-making occur at international headquarters, national offices, and then in the field? Answers to these questions have important influence upon what images are produced and are therefore key to my study. Process studies connects the discourse and philosophy with lived experiences (Varvin, 2011). This view provides context and clarity to the meanings in discourse revealed through a constructionist discourse analysis. The activities that occur during photography projects in the field do not happen in a vacuum, and there is a dynamic relationship

between practices and policy that process studies can unearth (Langley, Smallman, Tsoukas, and Van de Ven, 2013). In this way, my two methods of analysis are complementary and will both reveal depth in the realm of photography and the relevant practices.

All of my interview data, including recordings and notes, were uploaded and transcribed into NVivo software. Due to issues of complexity in interviews, especially relating to differences in communicative style and unspoken behaviours, I kept detailed notes before, during, and after the interviews that helped provide additional contextual information about the place, participant, and manner of the interview (Kowal & O'Connell, 2014). For instance, when a participant seemed to become defensive about their organizations' policies, I took note of this behaviour as it indicates that either there is something they feel they must hide, or that they do not trust my judgment as an outsider.

Using NVivo as the mode of transcription, data storage, and coding is shown to have great benefits for efficiency and transparency of process (Hoover & Koerber 2011). Potential areas for faults come when researchers assume the software is able to conduct a higher-level analysis than it is designed for, but it remains the responsibility of the researcher alone to avoid software failings (Hoover & Koerber, 2011). It is possible to identify or overstate themes in the research due to its ability to perform quick searches for specific terms, and while analysing data, I kept this in mind and performed all my own coding.

I thematically coded and analysed the responses by grouping responses by the type of response to each question, references to specific past projects, and repeat phrases across multiple participants. Open coding began while in the field and continued after my return; this type of coding, as pointed out by Brown, Forsyth, and Berthelot (2014), "helps researchers remain aware to their subjects' unique view of their own realities, rather than assume the subjects all share the

same views” (p. 222). Of course, it is crucial that I avoid imposing my own presuppositions of responses upon my participants, and by searching for commonalities among responses rather than searching for specific phrases, I am able to represent the data in a more honest and realistic way.

Through the processes of coding and analysis, certain themes revealed themselves that pushed my research in newer directions not anticipated during my pre-field stage. These themes help guide me in this research’s goal of a deeper understanding of what the role of photography is within the development NGO sector in Ethiopia. The interviews are utilized to shape the overarching timeline of photographic projects, who are the relevant actors in the process, and what the discrepancies and points of tension are within it. While my intent in studying the practices and philosophies of development photography remain core to my work, I also was able to gain an understanding of the beginning-to-end processes that occur for photography projects, which I will examine in the next chapter. As participants explained their various experiences in communications, certain regulatory procedures came up repeatedly. Examining this further, it became clear that these procedures, which occur across organizations, can be combined to create a guide for the way that photography is approached. In doing so, this baseline can be useful in understanding how the traditional model operates and how it may be altered in certain cases.

Another addition to my research is the identification and development of certain concepts that are prevalent in the field of visual communications. Concept development was not an original goal of mine, but as certain fraught and “development speak” terms repeated themselves across multiple interviews, I started to wonder about the implications of these terms. I will specifically examine the conceptualization and diverse meanings attributed to “dignity.” This word is so often spoken in this field, but rarely is it ever questioned. It became clear that the

importance and prevalence in the field of development communications needs to be unpacked and its usage known.

3.4 Positionality in the Field

As is the important and widespread practice in social science research, it is crucial that I also consider the impact of my own positionality upon my research design, fieldwork, and analysis. Beyond reflexivity, which is the conscious engagement with my own biases and identities (Bourke, 2014), positionality also involves the influence on spaces, research collection, analysis, and data reporting and inevitably has major impacts upon the outcomes of any research (England, 1994). While I am explicitly engaging with positionality here, I want to make clear that this is an ongoing process; by identifying my own categorizations I am not simply absolved of any misconduct in my research. I will discuss the ways that my own experiences and identities became relevant in my fieldwork and analysis, but it is something to be considered at all stages of the process.

To begin, I am a white, mid-20s, female, middle-class, university-educated, Canadian-American. These are the classifications that are either immediately or quickly apparent to most of the people with whom I interacted. This put me in the clear “outsider” category, certainly because of my race if nothing else. While there is a population of white expats living in Addis Ababa, the majority are extremely wealthy and not traversing the city by minibuses but instead by private car. This made me an outsider again, as in many ways I did not match the traditional mold of a white person there. In the field, I am read as inherently wealthy due to my presumption as being from North America and Europe. One way to mitigate this was to clarify that I am a student, which often helped form connections both in interviews and in daily

encounters, as well as alleviated the notion that I was rich just because of my race and home country.

For people working with development organizations, regularly dealing with foreigners (especially European or North American) was nothing new. At most development organizations, it meant that I was welcomed in fairly easily despite heavy securitization at the gates, as they likely believed I was someone from the head offices or set to meet with someone in the building. Most people are not allowed into the NGO buildings without proof of a meeting, but with the exception of one organization's campus, I was unquestioned upon entering or simply had to state that I was looking for someone. This certainly worked to my advantage in accessing participants, but it should not go on without being recognized as an artefact of imperialism and related, lasting power imbalances. However, because of the frequency with which foreign headquarter officials make visits, I often felt as if some of the interviewees read me in a similar way. For example, participants at NGO offices in particular would often show off their work and publications as if they were trying to prove their validity at the organization to me. I also felt my status as a researcher caused some participants to become defensive or seem on edge about their policies, as development researchers are often searching for critiques or to find flaws in programs. In some cases, participants informed me that the country director's approval was required in order to conduct an interview, but that was immediately forgone when I told them I had no intention of criticizing their work. Still, that did not mean some participants felt like it was their duty to represent their organization in a certain way, whether that was because I was interpreted as a foreign official or as a researcher.

Freelance photographers are seemingly more used to dealing with a variety of individuals, and probably also because they are not under the umbrella of a certain development

organization, they spoke more freely with me about their experiences. Two of my interviewees were non-Ethiopian photographers coming from Europe, and I did not expect my identity as a foreigner to be impactful to them (and it was not). But it should be noted that it did not appear to have a significant impression upon the other freelance photographers I interviewed as well, perhaps due to the fact they also regularly are hired by foreigners and the experience is not unique for them. The four freelancers were all excited about my research, more so than any other participants, as they perceived their work to be the central focus of my study. The permanent staff photographer, an Ethiopian, reacted similarly to my presence as other development organization staff did by repeating company policy to me and his uncritical description of the work he is asked to do – in staunch opposition to all other photographers.

The rural Ethiopians I spoke with were all male farm owners or farm workers who did not speak English. My access to them was provided by Farm Radio International, a trusted organization whose programs helped improve the farming outputs of the region by a large margin. This meant that at least one member of the organization was present and translating each interview, but sometimes up to three Farm Radio officials or their associates were present. This certainly impacts upon the types of data I collected; for one, I have to trust the direct translation of one person who may or may not be giving me complete answers. Additionally, as an international organization, there is an undeniable power imbalance between me as their associate and the participant as a beneficiary of Farm Radio's program, beyond the already-existent inequity as a foreign white woman. This could suggest that participants only "said what we wanted to hear," but responses to my questions varied greatly across each participant, which helps provide validity and trustworthiness to the responses.

Data collection is invariably affected by my own positionality, beyond the types of interactions that occurred between myself and my participants. The ability to access participants with relative ease is surely an important effect of my positionality in Ethiopia, but in addition, the study in and of itself is shaped by my own preconceived notions about the subject. By designing a study that is intentional in its inclusion of multiple perspectives, I began with assumptions about the way that photography is produced that does not align with much of the literature in this field. It presumes that there are objectives and philosophies of the people that I included in relation to photography and ignores the opinions of others that may be involved in photographic practices, like the communications managers at international headquarters that dictate the organizations' goals in media. Development studies today privileges the voices of the underrepresented, and while I believe that is crucial, it means that other relevant actors may be left out of the research. The interview questions I designed may also leave crucial points out that another researcher conducting a similar study may have been able to identify if alternate questions were asked.

It is the tendency of many who study visual media to simply critique the employment of certain images. While case studies condemning a series of pictures published by some organization are not hard to come by, it is harder to find one that truly engages with any positive benefits. Because of this overwhelming negativity in visual representation, it was certainly my subconscious presupposition that I would find some sort of incriminating information about my participants working at the development organizations. To some extent, I found negative responses that connect to many historical critiques of development photography, but there were also positive discussions. I accepted these, yes, but could they have been explored more like I

was wont to do with responses that exhibited less understanding about the negative uses of photography?

Power dynamics are inevitably present in every aspect of research. By designing this research plan, determining who to ask for interviews, selecting certain questions, exploring certain responses further and not others, and more, I am the person who determines the outcome of this research. On the other hand, my participants actively chose to include or exclude any information in their responses to me, whether protecting personal or organizational information or deciding it was not worth their time to elaborate. Relationships are guided by the imbalances in power throughout the entire process and it is my duty as the researcher to try to represent the information as accurately as possible through honest and thorough presentation of findings.

4.0 Constructing a Picture of the Development Photography Process

There is currently a glaring gap in development photography literature where there could be an attempt to understand what the full process, beginning-to-end, of any given project is. This issue stems from the lack of attention given to on-the-ground practices of photography in general, and it means the decisions during any point of a project are not transparent (Isharaza, 2019). If we are to critically analyze the ways that photography happens, we must first understand the general set of steps that occur. In this section, I do not seek to explain any specific choices that are made by any individuals, but rather identify and explain the types of choices that have to be made by the relevant actors at every stage. In this way, I aim to begin the process of creating a timeline of a general photography project, looking to understand the ways that different actors are relevant at various stages. I seek to answer my first research objective here, which is “to construct a beginning-to-end model of the processes of development photography.” I argue that development photography must be analysed as a whole process, constructed of multiple levels of practice, rather than a product of policies made in international offices, far away from where the communicative labour is occurring.

It should be noted that this was added during my time in the field as I gathered information and an archetype of the development photography project revealed itself. As I asked questions about the approaches and practices of communicative labour to various participants, I realized that to understand the implications of these responses it is critical to also understand

what the basic steps are that must be undertaken in every project. While there are some limited studies that examine the philosophies of the communications officers involved as I have shown, (for example, Seu and Orgad, 2017; Dogra, 2007; Cottle & Nolan, 2007; Isharaza, 2019), these studies do not look at photography as a whole project. Because they are concerned with the communications officers at the international- or national-level offices, they do not look into the connections between what happens in those offices to the field. It is therefore critical that, if I am to understand any relationship between policy and practice, I must first try to identify a general timeline of events in any project. This section will read almost like a manual for development photography, but it is an important step in understanding the field in a holistic sense, rather than from the perspective of the policy-makers in the United Kingdom.

I take the idea of timelines as representations of progressions over a period of time, but that does not need to adhere to any one specific model or length (Yakura, 2002). Process studies offers the understanding that these timelines and activities are not fixed, but instead are built over time and are results trends over time (Langley et al., 2013). I will first look at the ways that pre-production decisions and considerations are made and what questions must be answered before any project is to start. I then look at the instructions given in the field and the kinds of shots that are sought, which can differ greatly between organizations. Finally, I look at post-production choices about which images to use, where to use them, and how images are managed after their initial use.

4.1 Pre-Production

Before any project can begin, an initial decision is made to document the work of a certain project or event in the field. As many participants pointed out, there are many reasons that a photography project might be undertaken: success or impact stories, to show a project's

progress, for sponsorship purposes, and more. The type of project and the organization's capacity will then determine what type of photographer is needed. In general, organizations have trained their communications staff in basic photodocumentation skills and have at least one basic camera for the staff members to use. If the project's images are intended to be widely used or for communications with major donors, an external, freelance photographer is often hired to raise the quality of the final product. One participant stated that their organization would outsource photography when "the magnitude of the task is big and requires sophisticated production, otherwise [we] manage it" (Participant 1.8).³ The implications of this model are that the majority of photography at the national level is low-budget and led by someone whose main training is not photography. They are trained in ethics and technical aspects before they go to the field, usually in the format of a once-a-year seminar, and generally sign a document ensuring they will adhere to the organization's instructions. Freelance, professional photographers will sign the same document, as well as documents stating they will comply with the specific organization's guidelines and project needs.

In rare cases, organizations have a photographer on permanent staff that will always go to the field, but this is an uncommon model. The research institutes that I interviewed shared a campus and a permanent staff photographer due to the large size of the organizations when combined. This means that there is general consistency and unity for the organization's publications and are led by a professional photographer trained and experienced in visual ethics. However, it does not allow much space for any creative differences or criticisms of the assignments to be raised by the photographer.

³ Note: participants are labelled by their group number first, and then by the order that they came in within that group. For example, participant 1.8 is in Group 1, and the eighth one to be interviewed in that category. Going forward, quotes will be notated with P and the participant code (Participant 1.8 = P1.8).

Once a photographer or staff member is selected for a project, the next step is determining the type of shots that are required. Depending on the intended audience or goal of the communications initiative, the kind of image will vary greatly. The demands placed on the photographer and their project are two-fold: first, to document the successes and/or future needs of any site, and second, to match the stylistic guidelines of the organization. In terms of program documentation, there are numerous influences on what this could look like; as one communications officer stated, “Here it depends. It depends on the type of activities, on the type of requests that are coming from the national office, the global headquarters, the regional office, as well as the program itself, on the ground” (P1.1). Thus, beyond a need to highlight the needs and achievements of any given project, the agendas of each level of management must also be satisfied. Photographs must be tailored to match the goals of higher-level management and donors as well as document the elements of the program on the ground.

In terms of style, nine (of the 11 interviewed) organizations noted that they prefer to use action shots that show beneficiaries partaking in the benefits of their program. For example, one stated “we don’t stage manage, ... and we don’t dictate them, ‘pose like this, be like that,’ we don’t say those things, ... we really want to take natural pictures” (P1.2). This is in order to increase the storytelling aspect of each image; as one guideline stated, “real moments of action and expression, captured in real un-posed situations, will bring a documentary ‘we were there’ authenticity” (Save the Children, 2016). An alternate model is one where organizations which utilize the model of individual sponsorship need portraits to send potential and recurring donors, with requirements like “children have to show their ears ... in such cases they might ask them to stand someplace. And it’s a serious picture” (P1.9). These are not necessarily different organizations, as both organizations that raised the idea of sponsorship pictures also noted that in

other circumstances they prefer naturalistic images. What is key here is that the type of image and the relevant style dictates the whole operation and the kind of campaign that is sought by the publisher. These stylistic aspects, in addition to other components, are often instructed through sets of guidelines that are given by the organization pre-field.

The scope and focus of each organization's guidelines vary; some prefer different guides per the needs of the assignment, and some have expansive instructions that can apply to all potential situations. I will be examining the language and wording of these documents later through the form of discourse analysis I described earlier – in chapter six, where a much more comprehensive examination of these documents can be found – but here I will introduce them and describe their purpose in order to show what is included in the ethical and technical considerations before photographers and others go to the field. These policies hold a prominent place in the pre-production phase of any photography project, as they set the tone for the organization and their goals in undertaking these activities. The guidelines I considered were published by WorldVision, ILRI, ActionAid, Oxfam, Save the Children, and UNICEF and all were the central policy given by the organization regarding the ethics and accepted practices of photography in the field, albeit with a variety of titles and included topics. In order to establish an acknowledgement of historical criticisms of unethical photographic practices, and that the organization operates without that classification of imagery, these images are read and signed before any project to show that the organization does not exploit their participants (Nissinen, 2015).

Included in these guidelines is everything from protection of participants to branding; I will look at these different topics each briefly to show their intention in being included in the pre-field stage. While the specificities of each guideline vary, there is significant overlap

between them that allows them to be looked at in unison. As Nissinen (2015) noted, these guidelines are part of a common practice among development organizations and all demonstrate similar principles. I identify four key themes from these documents: *Child and Participant Protections, Informed Consent, Branding, and Storytelling*. These are critical elements of the wording of these documents as well, and the meaning of this will be unpacked in chapter six.

Child and Participant Protection is the most prominent concept across these documents, and the core ideals of this theme are found within the other ideas as well. It is the foundation that drives all of these guidelines.⁴ As one communications officer stated, “There are certain standards that you have to meet when working with children ... in order to avoid any incidents of abuse in one form or another, exploitation” (P1.10). The intent is to ensure that the participant is comfortable and allowed to make any necessary changes so that they feel secure and confident in the picture being taken of them. One participant stated that, “in Ethiopia, if you ask a person for a portrait picture, they would want to fix themselves first. So that space should be given for them. You don’t just go there and shoot, shoot” (P1.2). When discussing this topic, guidelines vary in the different points that they emphasize as important, suggesting that much of their knowledge of how to take photos is based on personal experiences. In general, all will highlight the importance of “dignity” and “protection” (concepts that will be explored in-depth in chapter seven). Other recurring ideas include protection from risks and of identity, not showing subjects as victims, and generally having their best interests in mind. As the document guiding the two research institutes states, “in determining whether a photo of a child should be taken or used by ILRI, the best interests of the child must be paramount;” this explicitly includes getting their

⁴ Note that many of the organizations I interviewed were child-focused, and therefore have a particular attention in their policies and quotes towards children and youth, but the fundamental ideas remain throughout all of the organizations.

parent/guardians' consent, having the purpose explained to them, and that "child survivors of gender-based violence, abuse or exploitation must not be interviewed by persons untrained in psycho-social counselling." (International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), 2018).

Informed consent is sometimes discussed within the framework of participant protections, but it is prominent enough in all the guidelines as to warrant its own discussion. It is defined by Oxfam's guideline as "informed consent is more than someone just agreeing to be photographed. They have to understand who you are, how you will use the photo, and the possible consequences for themselves and their communities" (Hastie, 2017, p. 2). In interviews, consent was always raised in interviews with Group 1 participants without even my asking about whether it is considered by their organization. It is discussed in relation to the idea of protections and participant rights in photography, with participants often raising the idea that the organization wants to be "protecting the communities it serves" and that consent is one way of doing so (P1.11).

As seen in the literature review, branding and building of an organization's identity is a key part of photography. For some organizations, consent and protection are written into the brand guidelines, highlighting that those organizations understand ethics to be a part of their public persona. Save the Children is an example of this, stating that their brand as an organization is displayed through depictions of their behavior and personality – as compassionate, courageous, pioneering, and outspoken (Save the Children, 2016). UNICEF even sends some photographers on what they term "branding missions," in which they "need the photo for our brands, so it has to be close-up showing the person, the child, smiling" (P1.6). When a photo is used for brand- and image-building purposes (which for some organizations means any project), it is a prerequisite for the photographer that the image includes clear logos of

the sponsor. One photographer stated that he is asked for “photos who shows people receiving foods, like people carrying food, with the logos of the donor, the donator country or organization with the logo. For instance, if the food is donated by USAID, people are carrying the USAID sign” (P2.3). This type of imaging approach is explored in-depth in the following chapter, under the “Marketing and Branding” subheading.

In contrast to those who focus on branding, storytelling is the idea that visual communications should focus on larger narratives and discuss the situations of their program beneficiaries rather than a quick snapshot of what is happening on the ground. One communications manager stated that “every communicator ... should push stories, especially impact stories to the wider audience” (P1.5). This perspective involves more participatory approaches on the part of the photographer and other members of the communications team on assignment, as they pursue in-depth information about how the photo subjects have been helped by the organization’s programs rather than quick snapshots of the setting and people in it. This aligns with the idea of natural, action-oriented shots I mentioned earlier, but emphasizes even more in terms of a holistic picture and narrative. Storytelling approaches, in contrast with branding focuses, will be explored further in the next chapter as I discuss the ways in which individuals in the communications industry view their own work.

Finally, the last step before beginning a project is a negotiation between the photographer and the organization in terms of project requests. This applies much more to professional photographers rather than staff members, as communications officers sent to the field rarely contradict the guidelines and assignments as they will have already agreed to and helped design them. When requests for major projects requiring a professional photographer come down, the photographer not only has to sign on to the organization’s guidelines, but to the what the project

asks as well. In one case, a photographer working for an organization that deals with survivors of female genital mutilation stated that they were asked to document the process of a participant's stitches being taken out.⁵ When serious cases like this arise, the photographer will opt out of the project entirely. But it is possible for a negotiation process to ensue, or the photographer may consciously ignore specific conditions. For example, one photographer stated that he was uncomfortable with the questions he was supposed to ask refugees in a camp on behalf of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and when in the field, he "might filter them out" (P2.2) in order to make the interview more culturally sensitive.

4.2 In the Field

Once the preliminary decisions and logistics are sorted, the assigned photographer and team will embark into the field. Ideally, of course, the project in action embodies the goals and intentions set out during the planning phase. In reality, it is rarely the case that the practice reflects the policy. In chapter six, I will be exploring this distinction in more depth. Here, I will look at what kinds of decisions and actions transpire in the field that cause these changes. Four aspects I will be considering are instilling the assignment details in the photographer, working directly with subjects and other staff, obtaining consent, and successfully documenting the required projects. There are a great many obstacles that may arise in the field, but these three are recurring ideas throughout my own work.

Going into the field, photographers may have specific ideas of what they hope to capture, or at least what they think will be appropriate for the assignment. But organizations often do not allow for any leverage or creative exploration; as one photographer stated that he prefers to work for UN agencies that allow him to do more reporting based on his own interests, at the same

⁵ Photographer code left out for privacy and safety reasons due to the sensitive nature of this topic.

time, “most of them, they don’t allow me just to do that” (P2.3). Being on assignment means becoming a vessel for the vision of the organization itself, whether or not the call matches their personal style. This is normal, as it is the nature of being hired by an organization, but it means the photographer is required to step out of their normal ways of seeing through the camera and that their autonomy as a creator is limited, as they are looking for things they “are not necessarily interested in” (P2.1).

The ways that photographers and staff members should be engaging with potential photographic subjects is often delineated in the guidelines signed before going on location. For example, Save the Children’s policy states that “we aspire to live the highest standards of personal honesty and behavior; we never compromise our reputation and always act in the best interests of children” (Save the Children, 2016). One photographer, upon returning from a project with Save the Children Ethiopia, reported that the majority of the communications staff and potential subjects for the photos were all well-informed and polite when working with the project’s beneficiaries. However, an Ethiopian man hired for his videography work was the only person who actively did not care about his participants. The photographer reported, “these kinds of things, of not forcing situations, of saying ‘hi, how are you?’ They don’t give a fuck” (P2.1). This shows that, despite an organization’s genuine intentions in protection and care, it is up to the people that they hire for projects to internalize the goals and positive intentions if these ethics are to be upheld. The onus for accountability is on the person in the field, rather than the organization that is leading the assignment.

As organizations ask for more participation between photographer and subject, such as Oxfam’s call to “talk to people about how you want to photograph them, and ask for their ideas too,” (Hastie, 2017), it is up to the on-the-ground team to respect these mandates. However, one

way some organizations have sought to mitigate challenges around disrespect is to send one or more communications staff with photographers, and while not always successful in stopping poor behavior, it can be helpful in providing some guidance. A communications manager noted that “every photographer is not good with the subjects, with the children ... Normally they don’t go by themselves, I might join them or a program person might” (P1.6).

An important factor in engaging with subjects is obtaining consent. It is the most basic aspect of including the participant in the photo, and while communications staff will assert that it is a requirement and happens all the time in the field, the responses of both photographers and photo subjects suggests otherwise. Between the four photo subjects I interviewed, only one had consistently even been asked for consent for his picture to be taken in the first place, let alone for their opinions or participation in the project. The above Save the Children example is just one story of not paying attention to the needs of the participants; one photo subject explained that “when he was looking at the fall army worm [a pest infecting many farms in the Asosa region], the expert took his pictures. He didn’t even know that was taking his picture” (P3.1). Obtaining consent, while stressed and emphasized in guidelines and in offices as much as possible, is treated often as optional in reality. The reasons for this may be that it is considered cumbersome or can interfere with a more naturalistic picture, but organizations and those working for them cannot have it both ways. Consent is now regarded as an essential aspect to ethical photographic practices, and it needs to be taken seriously in the field as much as it is in pre-departure settings. This critical difference in policy and practice will be considered at length in chapter six, which looks at all of the policy and practice divides in development photography.

Finally, the photography project is naturally guided by its mission to document the organization’s program in that location. The overarching theme in everyone’s mind is about

making the project “purposeful, so you have to think about the shot, how you want to use it, what are the do’s and don’ts” (P1.2). All of the decisions, by staff, photographers, and even photo subjects, are led by the desire to capture enough strong images of the relevant program in action. In order to be successful, the organization must have something to show for the money spent on any communications effort. The end goal is to have something to “bring the story from the field out into the public” (P1.6), and therefore the other aspects of a project may be foregone in order to meet the assignment qualifications within the time allotted for the project. This may be the reason that some ethical considerations are overlooked, such as informed consent, as we have seen. In the field, staff and photographers must make decisions about how they want to manage any challenges in order to still meet the needs of the organization.

4.3 Post-Production

After a project is completed, much of the decision-making power returns to the communications team in the national and international offices. While in the field photographers, other staff members, and photo subjects have more control, communications officers are allowed final control over images and their usage. Decision-making power returns to the persons who are ultimately guiding the project and are able to determine what is worthy of publishing. Beyond analysis of technical factors (such as lighting, proper cropping, etc.), the communications officers are charged with the task of choosing which images are appropriate in representation of their organization. There are four key components to this post-production process: editing, accepting/rejecting, selection, and dissemination.

Editing images taken for a project requires the photographer, whether a hired freelancer or staff member, to consider exactly what the assignment is asking them to do and which images can best reflect that. One photographer explained that developing a strong working relationship

with the editor at the client organization is key (P2.1), so that the understanding of the vision of both the communications person and the organization is clear. Editing involves altering the pictures to be best quality, but the main step here is actually selecting and narrowing the image pool to be an appropriate selection of images for the communications person and project. In this step, the power is held in the photographer's hands, as they determine what the "right" images are. Selecting images should be based upon the project requirements, "their guide, the setting, and the kind of photos" that are asked of the photographer (P1.4). However, the same photographer that noted the importance of a good relationship with the editor also noted that even in the best working situations, in complex scenarios, they will still often send hundreds of images because of the convoluted nature of what they are trying to capture (P2.1). A typical selection of photos may be about 100 images sent to the communications officer, but if there were challenges to the project and uncertainty over what is appropriate, they may send up to 300 in some cases (P2.1; P1.4).

The accepting of images can either be up to the national or international office, depending on the organization's management structure. In many cases, when a national-level team receives a set of images from the field, they are required to send them to the international headquarters for approval and submission to an organization-wide database. Some photographers will even take pictures with the idea that it will be used for alternative purposes in the future, as one noted, "when I take pictures, I usually keep in my mind that it may be needed for publications as well. I try to capture most of the time, the portrait and the landscape orientations, so whenever there is a need" they will have something ready to go (P2.4). In working with headquarters, communications officers are tasked with sending images for approval from the highest-ranking communications office. One explained that "when we

communicate with our global office, or the international secretariat, they are communication professionals over there in the UK. ... Sometimes they reject when we send them pictures and advise us to send better quality pictures” (P1.7). These rejections can be based on a host of technical or thematic conditions; for example, a communications officer reported that their organization rejected a set of images from a hospital that showed children in distress. Even though it was accurate and displayed reality, “it was very debatable ... but they don’t work for our programs anymore, our organization, ... the philosophy of the organization, the worldwide organization” (P1.9).

Beyond a general approval of a wide swathe of images, there must be a certain few that are determined to be superior and the best images for the intended publication. When asked how photos are selected for publication, numerous factors were raised by the participants in Group 1. To some extent this step is led by personal judgements, but as Participant 1.2 points out, “that personal judgement is informed by our guidelines and principles” of the organization as a whole. Participants consistently mentioned technical concepts, such as available space in the future publication, the platform it will be used on, and good lighting. But in terms of critically analyzing images for their usefulness, the overarching and most repeated idea is that the picture reflects the purpose of the project, as reports, success stories, and campaigns all are designed quite differently. One participant explained that “It could be for a workshop, conference article, or stories ... The image or the pictures that we are using for workshop conferences is quite different from [that of] success stories” (P1.1). An extension of this is the notion that the images reflect the themes and mission of the organization itself, which often translates to not showing subjects as dirty, impoverished, or something related. According to one participant, “The images we use must abide [our organization’s] core value, should convey messages consistent with what

we do, reflect that girls and women are the heart of [our] work” (P1.11). Another participant similarly stated that it was important to show the organization as a partner of the community they serve, rather than as “arrogant” Global North-based neo-imperialists (P1.3). After those qualifications are satisfied, the communications officer will look to components like the composition and messages conveyed by the images, with one describing that they “prefer the full aspect that explains the feeling of the people and what we did for them” (P1.7). In essence, the process of image selection is one that requires identifying which options reflect the program being documented, the organization, the subliminal messages communicated, and are technically sound. Once these determinations are made by the communications officers, the images are ready for publication.

Dissemination of pictures can be done via multiple platforms, and this is often determined before the photography project is underway. Photos may be intended for magazines, pamphlets, website updates, or social media, to name a few options. As I stated earlier, photos may be stored in a database for many years as well, and when major news stories arise about those places later in time, organizations will look to those depositories for images that can be used alongside their reporting when they do not have time to hire someone (P2.2). Photos can see multiple lifetimes, being used in campaigns, then on social media, and accompanying news stories. This recycling is why it is so emphasized that images are reflective of the organization and its values, so not only are they appropriate in one circumstance, but they are translatable.

4.4 Implications

This chapter is descriptive in nature, but its necessity reveals a lot about the literature overall in this field. Because the literature has not considered multiple actors in the same study before, a consideration of the relationship and role of each actor was not necessary. Because I

argue it is critical to understand the field of development photography through multiple lenses, it is also important to first set the stage. This requires a roadmap of the steps and decisions that are made in photography projects, in order to see how and why each actor is relevant. Future research should consider how this basic agenda outlined here can be further developed, as well as any improvements that can be made to what I have described. The more refined this becomes, the more clearly photography practices can be analyzed and understood.

A challenge of this section is that there is unequal information about different kinds of projects available. As professional, unaffiliated photographers are more open about the cracks and weaknesses in the practice of development photography than those working for organizations, it is difficult to fully understand what a project might look like that is just taken on by the communications staff themselves. Photographers represent an interesting role in this field as a middleman between the communications officers and the subjects, able and willing to reveal more about the differences between practice and policy. They are also present for most of the process, beginning-to-end, and therefore should be treated as good sources of information on what the relevant steps are in projects going forward that seek to further develop this timeline. Their unique perspective cannot be overstated, and in future research on practices of photography, freelancers' voices need to be engaged with on a much deeper level. Similarly, the voices of image subjects should also be included and taken seriously in future research. Their experiences and knowledge cannot be overlooked anymore, as they are able to show significant diversion from the ethical standards that many organizations claim to adopt. Any study that considers the practices of photography, which is where the literature should continue to look to moving forward, must incorporate the perspectives of multiple actors that are present during the process.

5.0 The Journalism-Marketing Divide

This chapter explores the understandings of my participants in terms of what they perceive to be the responsibilities of visual communications, as well as their approaches towards the work. Here, I am considering philosophies of photography at the level of the individual, as opposed to that of the organization. Organizational policies and official standards reflect the interests of the institution, but it is important to see what kind of variance occurs between individuals that operate in this field. This chapter is therefore dedicated to answering my objective seeking “to critically examine the attitudes and relevant concepts toward development photography of communications officers, photographers, and photo subjects.” Many of contributions to this finding most often came in response to my questions that interrogated the reasons communications staff entered their field, and when I asked all participants what they understand to be the responsibilities of visual communications within development. However, a lot of the information presented in this chapter came from participants describing their experiences in past work, contextualizing it through ideas about their approaches and understandings about what they did.

Distinguishing between the individual and the organization is important, as it reveals any similarities or differences between how those working within the field view what they do and how they relate to it, in contrast to how the organization chooses to represent the work they do. A recurring theme across many participants, especially communications officers, is the idea of communications as a powerful tool to connect with massive audiences, and this is true and important. But it does not tell much about their philosophies, rather it shows their understanding

of why their job is critical to their organization's work. However, another insight from discussions with participants is that a key difference in their framework is whether they consider their work to be a kind of journalism or a kind of marketing. To some extent, this view is shaped by the organization with which the individual making this reference is associated. But in large part, it is revealed by the ways they talk about the communicative labour they perform and how they approach it. In this chapter, I argue that the distinction between journalism and marketing is an important one which dictates the type of work that the individual performs. While both have their own merits, I argue that injecting journalistic practices into development communications is more fruitful than a classic marketing one.

5.1 Journalism

Journalistic approaches seek to practice visual communications by placing emphasis on authenticity and truth-telling (Thomson and Greenwood, 2017; Zelizer, 2011). The goal is to document stories about the people related to the project or how the work of the organization has positively (or negatively, though this is much less common) impacted upon that community or the individual beneficiary. A key term associated with this approach is "storytelling," as individuals aligned with this camp accentuate the need to document single accounts of change over images that are intended to quickly draw in the viewer with sensationalism and branding. In many ways, this story-guided operation may still be oversimplifying complex issues and reducing narratives that apply to large populations to one individual or family. But as Nissinen (2015) notes, communications officers, and photographers in particular, realize that the best way to capture a situation while still maintaining some personal aesthetic preferences is through the act of storytelling.

In terms of technical aspects to image-based storytelling, Aiello (2006) offers three main components that can be employed to analyse the narrative quality of a picture or set of pictures. She calls these the central “metafunctions” (p. 91-2) that translate from an image to have meaning for the viewer: representation (what qualities the subjects are shown to possess), interaction/orientation (how the subject is made closer to or further from the viewer, such as eye contact), and composition/organization (relation to adjacent images or other subjects/objects within the frame). Understood through this framework, we can see how images go from static items to pieces of narrative work. The storytelling quality of an image may be bolstered further by a piece of writing that accompanies it, but in and of itself possesses the potential to connect to the audience through these techniques. While individual respondents do not discuss the technical approaches they seek out and employ in order to ensure a story is conveyed through an image, these are the characteristics that they would look out for.

Of the three participant groups, the idea of journalism and storytelling was directly raised by individuals in both Groups 1 and 2. Group 3 participants did not directly raise those ideas, but the core concepts underlying storytelling were discussed and it is possible that the word itself was left out in translation. Despite great diversity between the individuals interviewed, it was an idea that is at the forefront of many related to the field of development photography.

Freelance photographers, more so than any communications officers, tend to consider themselves photojournalists. Often, it is their stated identity that they are photojournalists above all else, and that their work with development organizations’ campaigns is secondary and more as a means of income. As one photographer bluntly stated, “I’m a photojournalist. Sometimes end up with the NGO, not to be too negative, but my heart is in photojournalism” (P2.2). The

same photographer described their approach when working for an NGO, one that pushes the requests of the assignment into a more story-oriented method:

“If you put it really black-and-white, if you interview that person about the benefits from the project, let’s say UNICEF is bringing a water pump, the beneficiary says, ‘yeah, I used to have to walk three hours, which means I didn’t have time to look after my children. I didn’t always have time. Now the water pump is just 10 minute walk, the water sanitation has improved.’ I know the whole drill. ... Yeah that wouldn’t be my approach. So even if they ask me to do that, I would say like, but what is the situation of the family? ... The woman has to take care of everything, the home, the kids, but also the income. And I would emphasize to put that in the story, why could she not live next to the water pump?” (P2.2)

In this example, the photographer took the same basic idea that the organization wanted to capture but finds a way to mold it into a journalistic piece. While still doing the same assignment, they recognize ways in which the original problem can be highlighted at the same time. As I will show in the following section, UNICEF is one of the most branding-oriented organizations that is covered by this research. The photographer’s claimed – note that I am not trying or able to prove whether this is his actual style of working, just that this is how he portrays it – methodology pushes back on that style and helps refocus attention to the beneficiary’s whole situation, rather than just that as it relates to what UNICEF has brought into their life. Another photographer noted that, through the process of talking with the photo subject and learning about their situation, that “it’s not like taking pictures, you become so related. ... If they are kids, they tease each other, they feel relaxed. There is a lot of interaction between us.” (P2.4). By entering the field with the mindset of creating a story, building a relationship, the engagement of the photographer with the photo subject becomes much more natural and the story becomes richer as a result.

It is important to reinforce here that this is the photographer’s perception and presentation of their work, and that in reality they may be more constrained than they indicate. They understand their work as photojournalism even in situations when they are hired for a specific task by a major NGO. In discussions of journalism versus marketing, the evidence is based on

the participants' descriptions of how they approach what they do, rather than my witnessing of any experiences.

Communications officers' beliefs about approaches to their work are often hard to distinguish from that of their parent organization, especially in cases where someone has worked for the organization for a decade or more. Ethiopians in this field can also be wary to reveal an association with journalism due to the fraught history of censorship and journalistic oppression in the nation; as one interviewee told me,

"I really wanted to be a journalist [in Ethiopia]. That was a very important historical page, in 2005/2006 [when he graduated]. When the country was running elections, but they were all fraudulent. ... Exercising journalism was not an easy thing to do in this country" (P1.10).

For these reasons, it can be difficult to uncover their journalistic inclinations even if that is the framework with which they approach their work. However, in asking the individual about what they consider the role of communications in development to be, their perspectives can begin to be parsed out. As the researcher, it allows me to differentiate between the policies they are meant to imbue as employees of their organization and what the individual's opinions.

This question revealed that many, though not all, communications officers understand their job to be about relationship-building and an extension of the support that their organization provides to the beneficiary. Though journalism is not always explicit in the conversation, the ideas of developing communications that works for the narrative of the subject and places the needs of the organization in the background are what indicate that there is a stronger link to journalism than to branding (Zelizer, 2011). For example, one explained that it is the responsibility of the communications person "to put in effort to maintain the relationship [with the beneficiary], in terms of giving back, helping them to understand what you do, why you are doing it, and also the results" (P1.4). Another stated that it is their job to "be accountable to the communities [they] serve" (P1.11). Truth and accuracy are at the core of journalism practice

(Zelizer, 2011; Bake & Zöhrer, 2017), and therefore the dedication to appropriate relationships and representation are closely related. Despite an avoidance of journalistic speech, the tenets of journalism are present.

Though they are not involved in the publishing process, photo subjects have clear ideas about the use of photography as well. For example, when asked what he believed to be the purpose of photography for development organizations, Participant 3.2 stated that “he believes it’s beautiful to show what has been implemented in the area. And experts want to know what is going on in the situation.” In a similar fashion, Participant 3.3 stated, “it helps to show the history of a thing or a place. It also shows the experience of one person to another with visuals.” For them, truth-telling and explanation of the development needs are key to what photography can do. The concern is not with the organization itself, but with the extent to which the accomplishments, failings, and experiences of development initiatives are occurring in the region. In this way, it is about revealing the nature of the situation through photographic storytelling projects.

5.2 Marketing and Branding

A marketing and branding approach is centred around the name and work of the organization, ahead of the livelihoods of the people that are beneficiaries of any given project. It is marked by frequent use of brand logos, and often also by less description attributed to an image. The goal is to build identity and display a direct connection to the person in the image, rather than letting a story be told that contextualizes the image. Individuals who align with this camp focus on alluring pictures that captivate the audience, and often want to highlight the organization’s involvement in some way through the image. Part of the allure of this method is that annual reports which boast the accomplishments of an organization have become an

important part of the branding process (Dhanani, 2019), and therefore the desire to incorporate direct promotion of the organization within images is understandable.

It is not uncommon for organizations to have their own “branding guidelines,” either in conjunction with the ethical protocol or standing on its own. Examples of these organizations as well as what is included in the guidelines were discussed in the previous chapter; Save the Children has its own Brand Identity guidelines into which ethical considerations are enmeshed, while others incorporate space for branding plans into a broader set of rules. In either case, it is important to note when analysing any guidelines how branding is approached. Some questions to consider are: is branding the primary focus of the organization? Is the priority ethics, and branding is a secondary endeavour? Do these guidelines advocate for a strong presence of logos and product, or is it more about the individual in the image? Is the goal to uplift the stories of the beneficiaries or the stories of the organization in that space? Knowing the answer to these questions can reveal a lot about the kind of communicative work that organizations are looking for in practice.

Communications officers are acutely aware of the dangers of being labelled as someone who is primarily concerned with branding and logos. Past critiques through visual case studies have raised the issue of incorporating traditional marketing strategies into the communications of NGOs (Von Naso, 2018; Vestergaard, 2008; Wells, 2008; Cottle & Nolan, 2007). They are also apprehensive of using terms like “smiling,” as it is likewise criticized for being fraudulent depictions of what happens on the ground (Kapoor, 2012; Dhanani, 2019). This tension is highlighted by one participant, who described how, in cases where the photo assignment was in service of their organization’s brand, “It’s all about giving that image that Ethiopian child, smiling, happy.” When asked about this reference to being “smiling and happy” in the next

question, he defensively responded, “I didn’t say smiling and happy. I said positive.”⁶ In this exchange, it is clear that the communications officer is aware of the implications of this language and quickly regretted saying it and was uncomfortable that I asked for a follow-up. They did not want to show their organization in a bad light, as a representative of them. Because of this, Group 1 members are not as open about their desire to brand and market their organization’s work in the same way they can be, even indirectly, open about their storytelling aspirations. Through analysis of the language that the respondents use in describing their work, what they prioritize can be determined.

One communications officer described how their organization removed logos from project signage because they believed that even the signs belonged to the community, then they went back to putting logos on all of their materials. The organization did so because “that was wrong, actually, you have to market. ... Marketing is communications” (P1.7). This is a similar approach to others, similar to Participant 1.6’s description of “branding missions” I described previously. Some individuals are primarily interested in how their organization is portrayed in the general media, and therefore are more invested in understanding how an image makes their employer look to the general public, rather than how it engages viewers with the subject. In certain cases, the communications officer told me their job involved being the liaison between the mass media and their organization (P1.7, P1.8, P1.5). These same participants also described their organization’s brand and branding guidelines in detail, showing a link between organizations and individuals concerned with the broader media and NGO communications. By naturally bringing up their role as mass media representatives of their organization’s brand, they highlight the fact that they view their job as a type of marketing.

⁶ Participant number excluded for privacy, sensitivity, and job security.

While photographers have a strong understanding of the relevance of branding and image-building when working for development organizations, none of the five I interviewed even hinted at the idea that it was the way they approached their work. For example, Participant 2.2 noted, when discussing working for MSF that “they are not very strong at showing their work. Okay, their brand is easy, you know, MSF, they are doctors, they do emergencies. There’s a lot of people that have a good understanding of their job.” Here he describes the identity-making efforts of Doctors Without Borders and that the overarching goal is to construct the public’s understanding of what it is MSF does, even without any specific stories or locations. It’s just about defining the parameters of the organization’s work, rather than telling any stories from the field.

Reflected in the above quote, one also recognizes the disdain that photographers have for branding-forward approaches. Another photographer explained that “visibility is one of the most important things for the NGOs I work for. Making sure, ‘oh, the logo is there,’ or they mention the organizations one way or another.” (P2.5). As I described in the previous section, photographers tend to view themselves as journalists above all else, and therefore prefer to distance themselves from the branding work that their employers perform. Even though ensuring there is proper space to insert a logo or product placement can often be part of the task, photographers describe that as part of the directive, rather than a part of their own work.

Though not using the language of communications, it is also clear that photo subjects do not view the importance of images to be for branding. As described in the previous section, their understanding of photography lends itself much more to storytelling and narratives than it does to marketing.

5.3 Implications

By identifying a difference in conceptualization of work for individuals working in this sector, we can begin to see how the person behind the work influences the end result. The organization's policies and approaches are still guiding the overarching idea of the communications work, but the person making specific decisions on the ground also is relevant. It is therefore necessary to consider the two, the organization and the individual, separately. This difference in individual framework in relation to visual communications raises the fact that persons operating in this field view their relationship to the beneficiaries in diverse ways and that this understanding influences the way they approach their work.

In separating the organization and the individual, I have pinpointed one of the divides that distinguishes some communicators from others. It is likely that there are many more characteristics that determine the ways that certain people make choices in communications, but this is a first step in opening that door to understanding how the individual affects the production. Journalistic practices take more caution to recognize the subject's agency and importance in the work of the organization, while a marketing approach places the emphasis on the organization's name and logo. The former privileges the stories from the field and lets the narratives from the work on the ground do the promotion work by showing the ways in which the organization has impacted upon individual lives. The latter seeks to tell grander accounts of the NGO as a whole, showing their work through product placement and vague images of places in which they work without much context, if any. It is not to say that journalism and marketing are always mutually exclusive, and in fact I believe they can work together well if employed cautiously. Organizations still need to demonstrate that it is their efforts making an impact on their beneficiaries' lives, but this can be incorporated into the narrative about the livelihood of the individual(s) being highlighted in a story.

While both are effective forms of communications in their own way, I advocate for journalistic approaches over marketing-focused ones because it raises the voices of the beneficiaries. Both the communications policies and the attitudes of those working in this realm of development organizations should be cognizant of the benefits of journalism as an approach and how it can serve both the NGO and its beneficiary. If the work that an organization is doing is impacting positively upon a community, individuals there should be allowed to share how they have gained. Keeping the focus on the larger organization detracts from the different kinds of work that organizations do in the field and proves less about the impacts of the work.

Something this research has not contemplated is whether some images are used as branding mechanisms without some of the traditional techniques of marketing that this chapter presents. Are there images that the same organizations I discussed as branding-oriented use that do not match these criteria? If so, why and how do they use them? How are the subjects constructed in those images, and what are the intended results of this? These are important questions for future research, but that is outside the scope of this particular study.

6.0 Practice versus Policy

One of the main goals of this research is to understand the relationship between practice and policy of development visual communications. As I described, previous studies looking at photography by development organizations only interview communications officers or, in a few cases, photographers. But these studies fail to see how organizational policies and forms translate in the field, which is why I attempted to understand the connection between policy *and* practice. This chapter will speak to the fractures in the system I have identified between what organizations claim they do versus what happens in the field. I will be looking first at the assertions of the guidelines and policies, then examine the field practices of development photography, and then compare and contrast the two. This chapter will therefore relate to multiple study objectives, which are “to critically examine the organizational discourse regarding photography through photography policies and guidelines,” “to critically examine the actual, on-the-ground practices of development photography in the field,” and finally, “to evaluate the relationship between policy and practice in the field of development visual communications.”

In this analysis, the importance of an inclusive study that considers photography practices at all levels will become very apparent. Though I have stated this in other ways in the previous two chapters, the incorporation of multiple actors is critical, and this chapter is testament to that. By showing the differences between policy and practice, I am able to show that it is not enough to take organizations’ employees at their word regarding the approaches to visual communications. To understand the field in-depth, the disjuncture between policy and practice through multi-actor discussions is required as will be seen in the following evidence. It

will also highlight the wide differences in understanding of ethics and photography through the dissimilarities between guidelines as well as practices.

In this chapter, I will begin by performing a discourse analysis on guidelines provided by the organizations represented by Group 1. Through this, I aim to show the themes emphasized through communications policies. Following, I will be looking at the practice-side of the equation, considering what certain respondents have divulged regarding what happens in the field. Third, I will be discussing the “divide” between the two: why practice and policy must be considered separate entities. Fourth, I consider the idea of “true partnership” and what is desired by participants instead of what is the norm in the field. Finally, I discuss the theoretical and practical implications of these points, affirming the importance of this debate within visual communications at development organizations.

6.1 Policies and Guidelines

Organizational guidelines qualify as what LeGreco and Tracy (2009, p. 1519) term “meso discourses, because they attempt to coordinate practices across several local sites.” Communications materials are not broad societal narratives reaching across multiple populations, but rather seek to unify behaviour across individuals and groups operating within the visual communications domain at development organizations. As LeGreco and Tracy (2009, p. 1520) highlight, this level of interaction represents “a space where social processes and practices are made meaningful through a dialectical play of action and context.” With this definition, we can conceptualize official guidelines as a manifestation of the organization’s desire to influence behaviour of those working within it based on what it perceives to be appropriate. It is an extension of the power that these organizations impose upon the spaces in which they operate, by delineating the type of interactions that can occur before, during, and after a visit to the field.

LeGreco and Tracy (2009, p. 1526) term this subset of discourse analysis methodologies “chronological ordering,” and note that its main purpose and achievement are that it “allows discourse tracers to illustrate which discourses are operating in a given situation.” Guidelines are extensions of the control the organization has over those that work for it, and discourse analysis provides a perfect methodology to critically engage with these expressions of power (Souto-Manning, 2014).

An entire thesis could be dedicated to a discourse analysis spanning multiple major NGOs, over many years and versions of guidelines. My goal is not to be exhaustive, but rather I seek to connect and identify general themes across these documents in order to present the language that is employed in communications materials. Through LeGreco and Tracy’s methodology of discourse analysis, which asks the researcher to use structured questions against each document, I identify “specific connections across cases or subcases” (2009, p. 1532). I use a simple set of standardized questions:

- What are the broad categories of communications each document identifies?
- Which categories relate to visual communications? (if not limited to photography policy only)
- What is the language employed to discuss each of these categories?
- What are the common practices/themes in these guidelines, defined as three or more mentions?
- Which practices/themes appear infrequently, defined as one or two mentions?

This set of questions allows for an introductory engagement with the major themes in each of the guidelines I accessed, as well as helps reveal the ways in which the documents are reflective of each other. The guidelines I considered were published by WorldVision, ILRI, ActionAid, Oxfam, Save the Children, and UNICEF.

While the documents all approach the issue with significance variance in the quantity and type of categories, the core ideas underpinning each document do connect. Performing a

discourse analysis through these questions reveals that the repeated or common themes are those that are vague and broad, while the infrequent themes are much more specific words and phrases with more clarity of meaning. For example, the phrase “best interests” appears in four of the six guidelines analyzed: Save the Children, ActionAid, UNICEF, and ILRI. There is never a definition of what this means included in any of these cases, which means it is up to the relevant actor to determine what they consider to be in the best interests of their participant. In this way, it is left up to the communications practitioners to decide what is appropriate, or “best,” for their subjects and not the individuals themselves. In contrast, a concept that was unique to one guideline was the idea of “heroes” (WorldVision). It asked for the subjects to be portrayed as heroes rather than victims of their situation, a clearer picture of what is asked of the communications actors working for that organization. By being more specific about what it considers appropriate, the parameters are at least more clarified than “best interests.” Other common phrases are protection, children, guardians, respect, dignity, and informed consent. Of these, children and informed consent are the only ideas that are discussed in a similar manner across guidelines. The others are either undefined or defined in varying ways by the organizations.

Aside from these unclear concepts of how to approach photography, some repeated ideas are rules about what cannot be done; these seem to be universally agreed-upon standards of what is inappropriate. These include: no identifying victims of sexual abuse, no identifying perpetrators of sexual abuse or exploitation, no identifying criminals, no geotagging/location metadata, and no accepting or giving of payments. These rules all relate to reducing direct harms to the subjects who participate in photography projects. With this list, we can start to formulate a basic understanding of what may be universal ideas of what ethics does not include. These are

the minimum ethics that all of these organizations recognize as the standards of inappropriate behaviour and practices.

The list of low-occurrence themes includes many important and oft-discussed ideas in visual image case studies, hinting at the idea that these may be included in response to critiques that have been raised against photographic ethics. These are: truthfulness, accuracy, ownership, local traditions, laws, rights, safety, risk assessment, shame, sharing of photos, imagination, and participation. Some of these are related, but not listed together due to their diverging definitions in the guidelines they come from. These ideas can be generalized to concepts of honest representation, inclusion, and minimizing risks in the field for both the subject and the communicators. These categorizations are interesting because they are more closely related to the criticisms of development photography historically, yet they appear to be less prominent in the guidelines that largely are responses to these mass critiques.

This brief discourse analysis highlights the fact that there is still little coherence on what is considered appropriate behaviour, save for the short list of off-limits actions I named. The commonly mentioned themes were broad and undefined, leaving interpretation of meaning up to the practitioner. Because of the open nature of the guidelines, photographers and communications officers are allowed to do more within the confines of the rules and translate them to fit their context. While contextually- and culturally-appropriate behaviour is necessary, too much leeway in these guidelines can be just as dangerous as not having guidelines at all. On the other hand, the lower-frequency use of key terms such as “risk assessment” and “safety” demonstrate that the main critiques of visual representation in development were taken up sparsely by organizations and their communications teams. As guidelines were established

largely in response the negative effects of unethical photography, it is important that they are reflective of the key ideas to come out of these critiques.

In either case, it is important that as these guidelines are refined and edited further, they incorporate the major photography critiques of recent years in strategic ways that do not allow for too much open interpretation and bending of the rules.

6.2 Practices of Visual Communication

The events occurring in the field during photography projects, as I will discuss here, are mainly revealed through interviews with photographers and photo subjects. It is through their telling of interactions with photography that we can begin to understand how visual ethics are taken up in practice, or rather, how they often are not taken up. This section will therefore detail some of the experiences that photographers and photo subjects have described, and the following section will discuss the differences between the stated ethics and guidelines of the organizations from reality.

As a major topic across guidelines, I will begin with the idea of informed consent. Among the photo subjects I interviewed, one was always given an explanation of purpose and asked for consent, one was asked in some instances and not others, and two were never asked for consent. Photographers also expressed some inconsistencies between different major organizations; as Participant 2.3 explained,

“When I worked for Save the Children, a consent form is a must. Because I am dealing with children. But when you deal with World Food Programme, I deal with the food. Sometime kids might be there, but it isn’t connected.”

He describes here two cases where the ethics of consent are approached differently, suggesting that because World Food Programme focuses on the food the fact that children are in the picture is less salient.

Photo subjects' experiences with photography vary in terms of interactions with photographers and organizations' officers. The first participant interviewed described his experience when he helped show the harmful effects of the fall army worm pest in many of the local crops. The agriculture expert he worked with "took his pictures, he didn't even know that he was taking his picture. While he was collecting this fall army worm for the investigation and further research ... he took the pictures, but he didn't sign any consent form" (P3.1). Another participant that was photographed on multiple occasions reported that "sometimes they explain the purpose of the picture, and they [take] his picture while he's in his farm. Sometimes in his workshops and meetings, they simply [take] the pictures of the group or the participants [without asking]" (P3.2). The third participant described that "they already asked him about photographing before they took the picture. He is the one who showed the direction on where to take the pictures" (P3.3). Finally, Participant 3.4 stated that "they asked his permission and they explained the objective of the picture." As these quotes illustrate, the experiences with informed consent differ significantly between even these four participants, all of whom have a similar profession and are from the same region. None of these participants were able to identify the organization that took their picture either, which can be attributed to simple forgetfulness or lack of self-identification on the part of the organization.

Outside of consent, other anecdotal evidence that arose naturally in conversation during = interviews can also shed light on the realities of photography and development. Describing past work with Plan International, one photographer stated that his experiences were so devoid of ethics that he wrote a letter stating he would never work with them again; among other issues, his main point of contention with the organization was that he found they did not have a shred of respect for the people they photographed. He shared, "They have no idea about ethics, it's

embarrassing. And they are Ethiopians visiting their own people ... So embarrassing, I was shocked” (P2.2). While not delving into specifics about this, he shared that the care they have for the photo subjects is minimal.

Not all experiences are negative, and it is important to remember and highlight that fact. Despite being highly critical of development photography and inappropriate practices, the first photographer I interviewed stated that,

“the level of development/involvement that the organization has in the place, that is changing everything. It happened to me that I worked with an organization that they just do the project ... In other cases, when the organization I was working with is very much involved in the community it makes everything much easier because they are already partners in the situation, and they understand why I am there” (P2.1).

While recognizing the harmful impacts of certain practices in the field and a general lack of ethics, it is important to also celebrate positive experiences that show there is a possibility to undertake photography projects in a more inclusive and representative manner. In the above quote we can see that, as a freelance photographer, this participant can speak to multiple types of approaches and relationships that are key to an ethics-centred photography assignment. This idea of long-term partnerships will be explored in greater depth later in this chapter.

6.3 *The Divide*

The anecdotes and experiences in the above are exemplary of the fact that, though ethics and informed consent are now considered important components of any photography assignment, they are not fixed and are conceptualized differently across organizations. Beyond this, if at least the *importance* of ethics and informed consent is agreed upon as the guideline discourse analysis suggests, they are practiced in unbalanced ways. Despite multiple Group 1 participants telling me that they care for their photo subjects and ensure that consent is informed and freely given during assignments, the Group 3 stories of experiences with development photography show that only two of the four were asked for consent and understood the purpose of the image

every time. Participant 3.2 was asked sometimes, and 3.1 had never been asked for consent and was not even aware of the image as it was being taken. In the experience of one photographer, people are not often allowed to say no to being in pictures (P2.1) despite that being a core tenet of informed consent.

In reality, the practice of development photography is flawed and while major improvements have been made, or at least attempted, there are still many issues with adherence to ethics. As the discourse analysis above showed, there is barely a standard to speak of, with significant differences across guidelines both in terms of language and definitions. Beyond that, there are many situations photographers and photo subjects are put in which they feel uncomfortable. As described in chapter 4, one photographer was asked to take pictures of a female genital mutilation reversal. The photographer stated that they would not do this, that it crossed ethical boundaries; as well, the other photographers described experiences in which they have had to reject a request from an organization because they were not okay with what was being asked of them. As Participant 2.1 simply put it, “this industry has no limits.”

Interestingly, my research also suggests that Ethiopians can be less cognizant of the importance of ethics than foreigners sometimes. Though there are many Ethiopians I interviewed that had strong ideas and convictions about its importance, there were some stories that contradicted the main principles of ethics and care for photo subjects in particular in practice. For example, Participant 2.3 told me he believes the post-LiveAid era critiques are political more than anything else. He stated that if there is truth to what you are showing, then it is reality and therefore fair game to show in images. This directly contradicts the idea of “respect” for the photo subject that came up in so many official guidelines; though it is truthful and accurate, it does not account for the sensitivities of the individuals in the image.

In a similar vein, Participant 2.1 described his experience after working with Save the Children Ethiopia as an overall positive one in which the majority of the people working for the organization were attentive and caring about their beneficiaries, with one major exception. The organization hired an Ethiopian videographer to document the same field visit and was described as “not giving a fuck” about anything relating to care for the local population. The participant stated that, “these kinds of thing, of not forcing situations, of saying ‘hi, how are you’” were not included in interactions with the organization’s beneficiaries at any time by this videographer.

In interviewing a communications person there, Plan International shared that the organization has extensive guidelines on identity, child protection, and appropriate use of images. Yet as the story with Participant 2.2 from the previous section illustrates, ethics and inclusive photography are not practiced by many in the organization within the Ethiopian office in his experience. These examples suggest that Ethiopians may be aware of the major criticisms of development photography, but in some cases have not embraced the core ideas of ethics and respect for photo participants.

These narratives demonstrate further that guidelines are far from enough in terms of ensuring respect within photography, and why we cannot take the word of communications officers on the topic of the ethics of their organization. Ethics are not something that can be in word alone but must be internalized by the people working in the field and the office as decisions are made and photos are taken. While guidelines are certainly an important start, they alone are not enough to ensure careful and respectful behaviour is occurring in the field. As Participant 2.1 stated, referencing another photographer’s quote, “aesthetics without ethics is cosmetic.”

6.4 The Role of True Partnership in Development Photography

So how do we move from the divide in policy and practice to realization of meaningful ethics? Based on responses from Group 3 participants of what their ideal experience would be with photography, my research suggests that a good place to start is simply for organizations to view photography as what I term a “true partnership” between photo subjects, photographer, and development organization. In this section I will explain the idea of a true partnership according to Group 3 and what these participants identified as important to them during photography projects, and then will give two examples of how organizations’ communications officers and photographers can be more cognizant of this in practice.

The concept of true partnership as I use and understand it here means the intentional inclusion and respect for all relevant actors in the development photography process, from communications officer to photographer to photo subject. This means that the requests and needs of the photo subject are listened to equally as much as those behind the camera and in the office. This simple idea comes from the responses of Group 3 participants to the questions, “If someone came for photography again, what would you want to happen? Do you want to be a part of the process or are you okay without explanation? Do you want to be a part of deciding how the picture looks or to have control over photography decisions?” These questions were designed with the intention of understanding the best possible scenario for photography for the participants based on their experiences, aside from being also designed for simple translation.

All four participants in Group 3 stated that they would want to fully understand the purpose of the person taking the picture. For example, one response was that “he believes they have to explain their objective. They have to tell [him] where they came from. He has to know the reason behind the picture” (P3.3) before taking part in the project. All of the responses to this question were along this idea of being informed and willing participants. This is clearly

connecting to the central ethical tenet of consent that is consistently raised by communications officers in interviews and throughout organizations' guidelines, yet as we have seen, is not always given credence in practice. If more people were to be conscious of informed consent in the field, that in and of itself would be a major step forward in ensuring ethical practices.

This line of questioning with Group 3 also revealed that the photo subjects would often like more of an active role in setting the stage for the photo. Despite photographers and communications officers sometimes hinting or stating that subjects are incapable or undesiring of the ability to control some of the photos (P1.3, P1.10, P2.4) the responses from Group 3 show just the opposite. For example, Participant 3.1 responded that “after they explain their objective, he will decide how they have to take the pictures. Because I [he] am the one who knows ... about this disease. So he has to help them, how take the picture.” The people in the region are the experts on whatever the development story is to be about, and therefore feel that they are the appropriate person to determine how it should be documented.

From these similar responses from all participants in Group 3, the research demonstrates that image subjects desire a more active role in photography that values their personal knowledge and awareness of a situation and ensures informed consent is given every time. These are not new ideas and in fact are both described in multiple guidelines for the major international development organizations that I analyzed. If that is the case, what are some steps that can be taken to actually guarantee that these goals of visual communications are realized in practice? Beyond repeating the importance of informed consent in the field, as that is surely known well-enough by those working for these organizations, what are the techniques that can be employed to increase inclusivity of photography projects?

One of the simplest ways this can be done is by regularly showing the participants the photos as the project continues, giving photo subjects the opportunity to see what is being captured of them and approve or disprove of the images. For example, one photographer stated that “what I do is, I try to show them with my camera, ‘you look great,’ they really like it. ... there is a lot of interaction between us” (P2.4). This kind of basic interaction between a photographer and subject can help put the person in the image at ease by respecting their decision to show themselves in a certain light with which they feel most comfortable. It does not take significant effort on the part of either person but can increase the amount of trust between all actors in the process.

Secondly, photographers and communications officers may offer the opportunity to choose the setting for the image. It is the case that photo subjects will have less knowledge about appropriate lighting and technical aspects of images but letting them guide the general place of the image will help increase their inclusion. It can also help increase the accuracy of the image produced in the end, as the person whose story is being told helps guide the narrative with this method.

6.5 Implications

This chapter sought to perform a brief discourse analysis on the available guidelines from organizations I interviewed in Group 1, look at descriptions of actual practices in the field, then identify the divide between policy and practice and what can be done about it. This is a broad space for this chapter, but putting these multiple analyses together helps pinpoint where the major gaps remain in development photography practice. In doing so, I have shown that despite emphasis on the role of consent and other major topics of photographic ethics, there are still

cases in which photo subjects are not being allowed the benefits of informed consent and respect from photographers and communications officers.

This chapter shows that a renewed look at guidelines and their meaning in the field is necessary. Guidelines are important documents to set standards of behaviour and practice, but their value is hollowed by the lack of adherence to the rules and procedures they set out. Guidelines should be established in a way that encourages compliance rather than as a loose set of suggestions with little to monitor and ensure observance of the rules. In addition, guidelines should have some sort of coherence and unified definitions outlined for broad concepts that recur throughout the documents. This chapter also shows that a re-evaluation of the practices in the field is needed for many organizations and communications practitioners. There are multiple instances that I detailed here that show lack of respect for the photo subjects and the importance of informed consent, despite heavy emphases on these concepts in communications policies as I have shown.

By beginning the process of contrasting policy and practice in development photography, we can again see the importance of talking to multiple actors involved in this realm. Additionally, by inserting practice into the discussion we can see critical place that understanding the on-the-ground events has in terms of development photography and how it shapes the entire process beyond what the guidelines say.

7.0 Towards a Conceptualization of Dignity

As one of the terms included in almost every set of guidelines in the previous discourse analysis, dignity is surely an important theme in visual communications. It was used by almost every single communications manager and photographer, unprompted by any question I asked, in interviews. But is it just a buzzword that these individuals associate with the work of communications, or does it have a greater significance? Buzzwords in development speak evolve and change over time but have the effect of “conferring on their users that goodness and rightness that development agencies need to assert the legitimacy to intervene in the lives of others” (Cornwall & Brock, 2005, p. 1045).

After just a couple of interviews with Group 1 and 2 participants, I realized that the word dignity was used frequently but did not seem to have a grounded meaning, which I will return to shortly. As a broad concept, the idea of dignity has been conceptualized in literature to say that there are two frames to keep in mind: “*substantive* claims about what it takes to have dignity [as humans] ... second, we make *formal* claims about dignity” which suggests that dignity has certain characteristics, and namely that it is unearned (Debes, 2017, p. 4). What I seek to do here is unpack the characteristics – to make formal claims about dignity – that lead, as we shall see, to its frequent use and emphasis within the communications field by development organizations.

Dignity as a theme has been explored in terms of our social world at large, yet it remains unmoored as an idea in terms of its relationship to communications and development

organizations. The closest research on dignity in the realm of development organizations is supported by Langmann and Pick (2014, p. 710-1), who state that “although dignity of research participants has been considered in research (e.g. Steel, 2009), the concept itself has not been the subject of close attention and theorisation.” I therefore sought to understand this further in future interviews, so I began to ask participants what they understood dignity to mean *only* if they used the word on their own. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this meant that I could ask seven of my eleven Group 1 interviewees this question (two were interviewed before I incorporated this question, one did not use dignity explicitly, and one interview was by email and could not answer follow-ups but did use the word). I was also able to ask one of my Group 2 interviewees this question. Through this question, I wanted to understand if there was a consensus on the importance of dignity and then if there was a unified definition of the term, and if so, what is it? This chapter will therefore look at the way dignity is incorporated into development communications language both in past research and as it relates to my own research, what the understandings of dignity are, and seek to identify a definition of the broad term. To this end, this chapter seeks to answer my third objective of “to critically examine the attitudes and relevant concepts towards development photography of communications officers, photographers, and photo subjects” by particularly exploring the conceptualizations of dignity as one of the key relevant concepts within the field and attempting to unpack a segment of development speak. While analyzing the evidence of individual respondents and organizational guidelines, this chapter will contribute to broader understandings of the communications field within development by looking at a major theme across the work in which all of these actors take part.

7.1 Dignity: One Key Term, Many Meanings

The frequency of the term dignity in interviews and guidelines shows with clarity that it is recognized as an important concept in photography. At the very least, it can be called a term that all working within the communications field in development appreciate for its significance and know that incorporating it into discussions about images demonstrates an understanding of its worth. In interviews, eight of eleven communications officers used dignity as a means to describe the work they endeavour to put out through photography projects. The other interview participant used words like “protection” to describe a similar notion; however, here I seek to define the particular concept of “dignity” and therefore will be focusing on the Group 1 and 2 members who used the word dignity alone.

A grounded meaning is yet to be attributed to dignity as it relates to visual communications and development, because the definitions that are given by interview participants and guidelines are inconsistent or non-existent. Few interviewees were able to give a clear definition of the word and how it relates to their work; most were unclear on its meaning and gave a non-answer that often included what dignity is *not*. As well, while many guidelines defined other concepts such as informed consent, none defined dignity. This is not because there is a clear meaning for dignity already in practice, and even if this was the case, why would so many also take the time to clarify the meaning of informed consent? In neglecting to define dignity within guidelines, there is a suggestion that the word already has a succinct meaning and use within the context of photographic practice. As the following evidence will show, this is certainly not the case – there is a massive variety in what this key term means to each person I asked.

When asked what kind of images their organization looks to receive from photography projects, Group 1 respondents often stated something along the lines of, “it’s pretty much a

straightforward visual, dignified, and that people are happy and are willing to allow you to use their picture” (P1.2), or that you have to make sure you select pictures that “respect their dignity” (P1.1). Notice that these two usages come from the two first communications officers interviewed, and that neither come with context or specifics about what dignified means in these cases (and that an extended quote would not provide these things, either). This lack of deeper explanation is, as I alluded to in the introduction to this chapter, what led me to begin asking for further clarification in subsequent interviews.

The responses to being asked what the definition of dignity is varied across the board. Some were unable to give anything beyond a couple examples of what they do not include, which often seemed to connect to ideas stemming from the post-LiveAid era of image critiques. These included Participant 1.7, who stated that “a lady with dirt on it, it’s not something that goes with dignity,” and 1.10, who vaguely noted that “I can do [it] by way of examples. I don’t have to take pictures of children where flies are flying over their faces, they are not so tidy, things like that.” Participant 1.9 similarly defined it as “for example, if the children are very dirty, with running nose, or with flies on them, or undressed, if they are very sad, we don’t use that picture.” The only interviewee who was able to give a definition not in the negative form responded that dignity meant “we have to be respectful to children, to anybody in the first place. We have to be respectful, to cultures, not only individuals, but to their values, their cultures” (P1.8). This is a strong and sound definition, and perhaps is something with which the other communications officers would agree if asked. But this is the only respondent of those asked in Group 1 to define dignity to give an actual definition, and that fact is expressive of the low level of clarity that the term dignity has in this field. The photographer who was asked gave examples of their experiences in the field as well, but also concluded her response with what they

understood to be the essential question to ensure dignity: “how do I document, if they are depressed or if there is an anxiety when they are telling their story, how do I portray these people and how do they want to be portrayed as well?” (P2.5).

7.2 Defining the Concept of Dignity

In the only study to deeply consider the word and its impact, Langmann and Pick (2014) attempted to define the word dignity as it related to research photography, which somewhat correlates with that of development photography. The authors noted that important facets of a project that values dignity are empowerment, clear communication, ensuring informed consent, protection of anonymity. Langmann and Pick state that together, these characteristics all work to value the rights of the individual being photographed. They also note that caution should be given to “dignity-in-outcome” as well as “dignity-in-process” (p. 713), meaning the practices in the field and those in the editing and publishing phases are of equal importance when considering the needs and truths of those being represented.

As the previous sections’ quotes illustrate, dignity is an important facet of the work done in visual communications and development but seems to lack a unified definition about how to achieve it. It is clear that there is an understanding of its significance, if nothing else: there is *implied* consensus. It is possible that the participants all recognize dignity in a similar manner to one another, and that though communicated differently, there is a common intention. Despite this, it is important to note that there is still no unified sense of meaning discernable from these interviews and that there is considerable space for interpretation of the meaning and importance of valuing dignity in the field.

The concept of dignity is central to the visual ethics and practices, and because of this those working in development photography should be able to describe its meaning and what its implications are in the field. A term so omnipresent in visual communications should carry a definition as other vocabulary do, either within photographic guidelines or between the individuals working at these institutions. As it remains now, it acts as a buzzword devoid of content or true weight.

While there is still much research to be done on this topic, I propose to introduce a definition here that can be used as a preliminary guide in the realm of development photography. Based on the discussions around the term in interviews and its framing in guidelines, dignity is “the privileging and respecting of the photo subject’s autonomy, stories, and culture before that of the photographer, project being documented, or relevant development organization, still seeking to achieve the goals of the specific photography assignment.” There are three important characteristics to this definition: it places the photo subject first, expresses that there are numerous actors and goals that are at play in any given project, and still hopes to successfully document the individuals, things, and places pertinent to that project.

First, as many of the image case studies in the post-LiveAid era reflect, in some way, there is a need to accurately portray and tell the stories of those in the picture and not rely on vague or outdated stereotypes to imply a certain meaning that is often based on certain prejudices. The language of “dignity” has stemmed from these criticisms but is yet to be implemented in a meaningful way, as I found. Therefore, this definition intentionally places the most value upon the individuals in front of the camera; as some of the Groups 1 and 2 interviews alluded to the importance of this and Group 3 interviews often showed this valuation of the photo subjects was missing from actual practices of photography. Despite the lack of attentiveness

usually given to the photo subjects and the changes to practice it would take to achieve this aspect of dignity, if realized, the accuracy and storytelling abilities of development photography will greatly benefit.

The second facet of the definition is that there are numerous interests involved in a project. As I described in earlier chapters, there are multiple relevant actors' whose goals for a project may vary and that this is a key feature of development photography because of the unique kinds of objectives that are intertwined into what goes on in the field and is important to remember when considering why dignity may not always be given the proper attention. A related third point of this definition is that despite the challenge of focusing on the dignity of the photo subjects, the photographer's vision, and that of the organization, the goal is still to capture the events and developments that have arisen through the program being documented.

The definition of dignity that I proposed here can be adapted and added to, but the core tenets of what I recommend should remain present. It is preliminary and certain organizations may need to amend it to their specific needs, but the values of putting care for the subject's autonomy and character first and foremost in practice and still documenting the project to match everyone's vision should remain. If dignity is to be considered core the execution of development photography projects, and it should as so many case studies have shown, then these ideals need to continue as a central part of how assignments in the field are approached.

7.3 Implications

My aim in this chapter was to demonstrate the recognized importance of dignity as a facet of development photography, but also the lack of consensus around what that means both in theory and in practice. In this way, I showed that despite a stated intention of care for visual ethics, there is little understanding of what that means when in the field. In addition to showing

the lack of policy adherence, Group 3 responses about their experiences with photography and development organizations illustrate the lack of dignity as a practice when assignments occur. Through the evidence of the attempts to define dignity by Groups 1 and 2, in conjunction with the experiences of Group 3, I have shown the connotation of dignity as a buzzword but also the lack of clarity and grounded meaning surrounding the word.

In doing this, I am able to identify one of the ways that development organizations have endeavoured to show a response to the criticisms over images in the post-LiveAid era but failed to do so with minimal impact. While certain types of images are mostly unused today, such as the “flies on the face” trope of impoverished or dirty children, the true goals of dignity have yet to be realized. Because of the lack of clarity on the subject, organizations can *claim* that dignity is important to them but remain aloof to the actual practices on the ground; these are more often fraught with lack of attention to informed consent or little care to involve the photo subjects with which they work. It is a critical point because it highlights the depth of understanding of the post-LiveAid criticisms that most organizations have as well as their ability to skirt the real intentions of dignity. Writing a definition of dignity helps to ground the word in real meaning and prevents misuse of the concept or confusion over how to practice it in the field.

By creating a definition of dignity, even a preliminary one that is open and welcoming to adaptations and amendments, I emphasize the need to have consensus over major buzzwords in photography and development organizations more generally. Open-ended concepts allow for twisting and manipulating of the intentions behind key words, such as dignity in visual communications. Future research and communications teams at NGOs need to consider the implications of leaving such crucial concepts to open interpretations and should look to identify other vague terms and their usages and meaning in development photography as well.

8.0 Discussion and Conclusion

After presenting the findings from my fieldwork, I will now conclude by connecting the previous four chapters to the literature that I discussed in the beginning of this thesis. I seek to place these arguments in the larger body of knowledge of development visual communications and prove why what I show here is important new information to this field. I will then show that my findings are logical and reasonable conclusions from the data I collected, while considering my own role in interpreting the evidence. I will conclude with a brief discussion about the possibilities this thesis opens for future research and studies in visual communications.

8.1 Discussion with Current Literature

This section will focus primarily on connecting this research and its findings to the current debates on the practice of photography within development organizations as that is how I locate this research in within past literature. As a brief reminder, this work was limited in scope of interview participants as well as in location. The majority of interview-based studies in this discipline are restricted to communications officers exclusively and fail to recognize the relevant actions of other people with a role in the processes of visual communications. A small number of publications consider the role of the photographer in the field, and none so far seriously accounted for the place of photo subjects as influential individuals during production. Furthermore, with the exception of Isharaza's (2019) recent study, none occurred at offices in the entirety of the African continent and therefore could not speak to the influence of any national-level decisions and planning. Just looking at methodology, my work contributes to the

expansion of interview participant groups and the use of multiple types of participants in one study, as well as by continuing studies such as Isharaza's in taking this study out of the Global North and moving it to national level offices in Ethiopia.

I have presented four major findings that came from the three months of fieldwork I completed: a holistic picture of the development photography process, the journalism-marketing divide, the practice-policy divide, and a preliminary definition of dignity as it is understood in this field. For each of these, I will discuss how they influence our understanding of visual communications and development, their implications in expanding our knowledge, and why these are important discussions to what we know. Each finding sought to impart context upon the images published by development organizations by revealing information about the way that these photos are produced and the actors in this space.

The first finding, which undertook the mission of creating a roadmap of the development photography process, is integral to any future research that is done on this topic. In order to expand our understanding of the processes and individuals immersed in visual communications, an investigator must know the structure of what occurs from the point in which a campaign or photography assignment is decided upon, to the field, to the publication and editing procedures. This can only be done with further discussions and interviews that take seriously the role of multiple actors, as this thesis has done, in order to contribute to this outline of the development photography process through the lens of the many types of people involved. For example, photographers are able to provide significant data on this subject because they are often present for the majority of the planning and execution periods, as well as often are a part of the selection and editing of images. Previously, the attention given to photographers was minimal at best and explored only their role and experiences. But by looking at multiple participant groups

simultaneously, I am able to identify a preliminary skeleton of the photography timeline that may be useful in future research that seeks to interrogate one or multiple aspects of the field. It is also important that the nascency of this guideline not be understated, as I am sure there is more to be added or edited through further research. However, my own fieldwork is able to pinpoint the steps I described in chapter four and for the first time juxtapose the pre-production, production, and post-production phases in one study.

The second finding describes certain individuals' framing of their work and identifies a major divide between two types of approaches, that of journalism and of marketing/branding. Notably, I distinguish this from the level of the organization, as it is the construction on behalf of the individual that is salient in this case because it is described in interviews as their own approaches. This necessary separation shows the individual autonomy that many working in this sphere have or feel that they have, and the ability of those individuals to work outside of the prescribed assignment parameters or organizational guidelines.

Those who considered their work to be journalistic in nature focused on storytelling and narratives that arose from the life histories of the individuals who benefit directly from the NGO project or program being documented. As I showed, journalistic approaches favour the agency and voices of the beneficiaries while still being able to display the benefits that the relevant programming has brought to them. In contrast, those who discussed their work from a marketing perspective talked about their work as more about direct promotion of the organization for which they worked, including logo placements and showing their employees in contact with their beneficiaries. This divide reveals two important factors for consideration in our knowledge of development visual communications. First, there is an essential conceptual distinction between an organization's policy and an individual's approach; second, whether someone privileges

journalism or marketing is revealing about their understanding of the importance of the beneficiary in having their story told or their face shown for branding purposes.

The third finding I presented discussed a critical discrepancy between practice and policy at the level of the organization. I first analysed the language employed by the available organizational photography policies coming from NGOs that overlapped with my Group 1 interviews to identify the common wording and instructions, demonstrating there that the policies most often utilize vague terminology. I compared findings from this discourse analysis exercise with anecdotal evidence of field experiences from Groups 2 and 3, highlighting notable gaps between the stated policies of NGOs and the photographic practices in the field. This chapter shows, more so than any others, the imperative to examine multiple participant groups and in locations where images are captured, as studies that only look at communications officers in the UK are incapable of revealing these deep discrepancies in policy and practice. This difference needs to be interrogated on a level beyond what this research sought out to do, and the reasons for this distance between the guidelines and the experiences of those in images must be explored. Before this, the literature in this field was unable to even recognize this difference, let alone begin to explain its existence. Image guidelines exist in large part as a response to criticisms which emerged from the post-LiveAid era case studies, so why are their instructions and policies not internalized by the photographers and communications people in the field meant to exhibit better behaviour?

The final finding chapter interrogated the use of the word dignity as it was brought up by guidelines, communications officers, and photographers, seeking to identify a meaning for the term. I showed that dignity was a buzzword in development photography, but that it has no grounded definition that is understood or discussed by the people working in that field. Without

any identifiable definition, dignity is tossed around to demonstrate that the person using it understands that visual communications work should be cognizant to pay attention to dignity in practice. Similar to the practice-policy divide, this demonstrates the need to be attentive to the actual practices and intentions of those working in development photography beyond what is said by a communications officer. Even more, the need to define dignity in a concrete way highlights the need for those researching similar topics to explore the possibility of other misused or undefined buzzwords and potentially outline a definition for them. Important concepts such as dignity should not be left up to individual interpretation in the field, meaning that it could be overlooked entirely, to which multiple Group 3 interviews alluded.

Despite being such an integral part of the work that development organizations do, visual communications is a wildly under-studied area of knowledge and there is so much room to expand our understanding. Visual communications in particular is a rapidly growing type and used mode of transmitting information about an NGO's mission and various programs. Each of these findings sought to begin the process of unpacking some of the major questions that remain around photography, its production, the policies surrounding it, and the people that are involved in it beginning to end. What these point to as a whole is the need for a great deal more research in this area, considering its implications for the success and the structuring of an NGO's identity, and it reveals a lot about the ways in which those organizations do their work.

8.2 Conclusion and Future Research

It is interesting and revealing that, though all important in their own right, there is overlap between the findings that this thesis presented. In some way, each chapter pointed to the lack of clarity for people working with development photography and how it causes confusion and mistakes for communications officers, photographers, and photo subjects. There is no consensus

on the meaning of terms, how to practice what the guidelines lay out as important, and the way to approach photography as a facet of development work. Each of the chapters showed a different way that this disorder manifests itself, and in this way, the findings reinforce each other by showing this overall trend of confusion.

There is a great deal more research needed in the field of visual communications and development NGOs. This thesis has illuminated the need to continue studying and exploring the intricacies of this part of development work, how it affects and is affected by the way an organization approaches its work, and where problems exist that can be rectified. What I have shown here are the beginnings of unpacking this aspect of NGOs, highlighting some of the complexities and disparities between policy and actual practices in multiple ways. While there are many more findings that can be teased out of future research, the four major topics that I have presented today are the most important and reasonable to come out of the data I collected.

These findings can hopefully act as a base for future research in this field. Each discussion is meant to represent an important first step in opening up the conversation around visual communications. The sketched-out timeline of photography projects will be edited and tweaked for the individual needs of each organization, naturally, and other steps may be pinpointed in the future to add to the skeletal framework that I outlined. The two divides, journalism-marketing at the individual level and practice-policy at that of the organization, indicate that there are likely other important discrepancies that can be parsed out from future studies. In order to accomplish this, it is important that there are more studies that compare multiple perspectives and are able to visualize photography as a holistic event rather than view it from interviews with only one type of participant included. Laying out a definition of dignity

also presents a case for the unpacking of many more key words and language employed in visual communications.

It should be clear by now that future studies need to continue expanding the methodologies used in this topic area, through discussions with multiple participant groups and by posing new research questions in contexts where photography projects actually occur. There is no doubt that more discrepancies in policy and practice exist, or that new trends or ideas are still to be unearthed. It is imperative that future research, therefore, expound on the ideas here and create new questions around this kind of work and its relevance at development NGOs. Looking ahead, the nature of the relationships between the three types of participants I identified can be explored. In addition, in order to gain a more nuanced and finite understanding of the photography process, an ideal situation for this would be to observe every step from planning to publishing at one or more organizations. Through this, any missed pieces of the timeline will be filled in and possibly new information about decision-making powers will arise.

These are some examples of possible future studies based on the findings that this three-month fieldwork in Ethiopia was able to bring up. The potential for new questions and angles on this topic are endless, and the literature remains in its infancy in terms of the possibilities for greater understanding of development NGOs and photography.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Questions

The following is the standard set of questions for each participant group. In all cases, due to the nature of a semi-structured interview, further questions were asked to gain more information and to elicit a more holistic response. If the participant raised the idea, I also always included a question about their understanding of the meaning of dignity.

GROUP	QUESTIONS
Group 1	1. How long have you been working in development media, and what is the nature of your job? 2. Does your organization have general staff take photos in the field, or do you have permanent staff photographers, or do you outsource your photography work? Why? 3. When choosing images to publish in campaigns, with articles or as general website images, what criteria are used to help select images? Do they vary depending on the circumstance? 4. Generally speaking, what are the reasons you may choose to publish one photo over other options? 5. What guidelines do you, or your organization, give to photographers hired to capture images in the field? 6. Do you or your organization have any policies regarding the responsibilities towards the individuals or groups in your images? If so, what informs these policies? 7. What level of involvement do the individuals or groups that are the subjects of the images you or your organization captures have in photo set-up or creation, if any? 8. Where does your organization's communications strategy come from? 9. To what extent are you aware of the body of academic literature criticizing the portrayal of image subjects as reliant on the West and in perpetual poverty? To what extent are you aware of various development organizations' guidelines/principles outlining some best practices for image publication? 10. Does this literature and/or guidelines and principles impact the way you conduct your work? If so, how? 11. What do you consider to be the responsibilities of the communications sector within your NGO?* 12. What lead you to enter the communications sector/field, and why with a development NGO? Do you feel the reasons that motivated you are in alignment with your organizations' policies?*

Group 2

1. What organization(s) do you work for, and are you a freelance photographer or are you a permanent member of their media team?
2. When in the field taking photos, is there anything in particular that you are looking for? If so, what do you seek to capture?
3. When working for development NGOs, what kind of photos are commissioned or bought?
4. What kind of guidelines are you given when in the field taking photos?
5. Are there any personal limitations to the types of photos you capture? If so, what are they?
6. What level of involvement do the individuals or groups that are the subjects of the images you capture have in photo set-up or creation, if any?
7. To what extent are you aware of the body of academic literature criticizing the portrayal of image subjects as reliant on the West and in perpetual poverty? To what extent are you aware of various development organizations' guidelines/principles outlining some best practices for image publication?
8. Does this literature and/or guidelines and principles impact the way you conduct your work? If so, how?
9. What do you view to be the responsibility of visual media creators in the development NGO field?*

Group 3

1. Have you ever had your picture taken by any development organization?***
2. Who was this by and what was this experience like?
3. When they took pictures, did they ask for your consent and/or explain what they were doing?
4. If someone came for photography again, what would you want to happen? Do you want to be a part of the process or are you okay without explanation?
5. Do you want to be a part of deciding how the picture looks or to have control over photography decisions?
6. What do you believe to be the role of photography for organizations?

*These questions were added after the first two Group 1 interviews and the first Group 2 interview to help reveal more about the individual and determine any contrast to the related organizational policies.

***This was a preliminary question to identify suitable participants as well as the opening question to the interviews in order to get the conversation started.

Appendix B: Participant Demographics

Participant Number	Sex	Estimated Age	Country of Origin	Location/Modality of Interview	Organization (if applicable)
1.1	Female	35	Ethiopia	Addis Ababa	Plan International
1.2	Female	35	Ethiopia	Addis Ababa	Oxfam
1.3	Female	40	Germany	Phone	Médecins Sans Frontières
1.4	Female	40	Ethiopia	Addis Ababa	CIMMYT
1.5	Male	45	Ethiopia	Addis Ababa	ICIPE
1.6	Male	30	Ethiopia	Addis Ababa	UNICEF
1.7	Male	45	Ethiopia	Addis Ababa	ActionAid
1.8	Male	50	Ethiopia	Addis Ababa	WorldVision
1.9	Female	40	Ethiopia	Addis Ababa	ChildFund
1.10	Male	45	Ethiopia	Addis Ababa	Save the Children
1.11	Female	55	Ethiopia	Emailed Responses	CARE International
2.1	Male	45	Argentina	Addis Ababa	
2.2	Male	65	Netherlands	Addis Ababa	
2.3	Male	35	Ethiopia	Addis Ababa	
2.4	Male	40	Ethiopia	Addis Ababa	ILRI (partner organization of CIMMYT and ICIPE)
2.5	Female	30	Ethiopia	Addis Ababa	
3.1	Male	25	Ethiopia	Asosa	
3.2	Male	60	Ethiopia	Asosa	
3.3	Male	60	Ethiopia	Asosa	
3.4	Male	70	Ethiopia	Asosa	