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### Literature Review

Visualize a seven-year-old girl falling in love with a picture of the gorgeous Scottish Highlands; all she talks about is how she is going to grow up and live her life in happiness looking at that view every day. Now, flash forward ten years, she is seventeen and able to go to Scotland for spring break to see the place she has dreamed about almost every night for most of her life. As she hikes up the final hill that prevents her from seeing everything she has been waiting for, she is devastated by what is in front of her. The picture she grew up fantasizing about was a lie; the grass was a dull green, the cliffs were no longer towering overhead and the terrain was barren. Suddenly, something that brought this young woman joy became her greatest disappointment. Landscape photographers using editing programs have a direct correlation to people's expectations of what the reality of the places are. Many consumers and judges of photography competitions feel as though they are being lied to due to the number of edited photos they are being exposed to along with the extent of the edits. Photographers are no longer able to be trusted and their morals have been greatly impacted by the accessibility and use of photo editing. People need to be able to see a landscape picture and know the place they are seeing is real. Due to the new editing programs, photographers are distorting their pictures more often which has to lead to the downfall of morally correct professionals. Photographers morals have been lowered through the use of photo editing due to an industry

that doesn't have updated rules to go with new technology, creating a photo to stand out, having varied intentions, and setting their own boundaries.

For starters, new technology has become more advanced in recent years, yet the industry's rules have remained the same. Within the last decade, photo editing software, such as Lightroom, VSCO, and Photoshop, have made tremendous advances which give photographers more freedom to edit; however, the industry rules have not been updated to address major edits such as removing people or adding different skies. According to "Ethics of Digital Photojournalism," photographers editing their photos is not something that has started within the past decade, it's been around since photography started. Due to the new technology and its accessibility, the rules of what is acceptable in both competition and the industry itself need to be redefined. A large portion of photographers are getting disqualified from competitions due to over-manipulation however the rules are not clear enough for them to be able to know prior to getting judged what is considered to be too far. Photo editing is becoming just as much a part of photography as taking the picture, the industry needs to reevaluate what is allowed ("Ethics of Digital Photojournalism" par. 5-43). When photography started, there were ways to retouch certain parts of pictures however there was no way to alter an image past recognition. Now, thanks to new technology, photographers can change a photo as much as they desire. The rules, or lack thereof, for what is considered to be too much editing have not been redefined since the addition of editing programs. While photography used to be solely dependent on taking the photo; photo editing is now a vital factor in the photography process. In order to prevent photographers from getting disqualified, the feeling of being lied to, and deceptive images the photography industry needs to make a new set of rules that takes

programs such as Photoshop and Lightroom into consideration. Furthermore, "The Ethics of Photo Manipulation" reiterates that taking the picture itself is only a part of the photography process. The full process includes going into the editing process and making it what you want it to be (Norm par. 11). Essentially, both "Ethics of Digital Photojournalism" and "The Ethics of Photo Manipulation" mention the evolution of what is included in the photography process. Photography is no longer a one-step process; new technology and editing programs have become so widely used that they need to be incorporated into not only competition but industry rules as well. While photo editing tools have been used since photography began, only in recent years have they become an issue with determining what is too much. Moreover, "Landscape Photography's Dark Side" explains how the vast majority of today's photographers shoot in the RAW file, or camera file, then go back into some photo editing software and retouch things such as their whites/blacks, contrast, white balance and more (Payne par. 4). Considering most photographers are retouching their photos in post-processing, the industry needs to agree on a set of new rules that are based on both technology and ethics. The photography industry needs to contemplate how common photo editing usage is and create new rules dictating how much editing is too much while taking technology, the foundation of photography, and current rules into account. All in all, this age has new technology and the industry needs to create new and direct rules for how much editing is allowed for both competition and published work. Combining photographers, total freedom with editing programs, and a lack of firm rules is one factor in the deterioration of landscape photographers' morals.

In addition to the outdated rules, photographer's are trying to create the best images imaginable in order to stand out. Due to the availability of more photo editing software, which allows more creative freedom, photographers ability to stand out is being threatened. More and more photographers are including drastic edits in their work in order to try and make a name for themselves. Instead of photography being looked at as a photo, it is now being looked at as a creative and interpretive art. To illustrate the shift in photography's purpose, "What Are The Ethics of Digital Manipulation in Photography?" photographer, Bryne, says he creates his photos like art, trying to make the best photo he can so that they will stand out from everyone else's (O'Neill par. 8). When Bryne uses the phrase "creates his photos" it shows that photos are no longer published as they were taken but used as a base for a whole new piece of artwork. Multiple photographers readily admit that they do everything they can think of to try and stand out, even if it means making a landscape unrecognizable. "Landscape Photography's Dark Side" directly states that "...it seems that certain landscape photographers have become so desperate for a sliver of social media attention in a suddenly over-crowded field that they are incapable of restraint" (Payne par. 6). Payne's idea describes just how desperate photographers are becoming to turn people's heads in their direction. Not only are the photographers being threatened by the technology but also by the people coming in who are using editing software to make photography an easy career. Photographers are competing against each other and edits; how can we expect a person to beat a perfectly made piece of art? The answer for most landscape photographers is that we can't. Similarly, "Ethics of Digital Photojournalism" highlights that photographers are trying to create an image that is too perfect to exist. They are trying to reach a level of perfection that is not possible to achieve so that they can stand out

from others ("Ethics of Digital Photojournalism" par 13-21). Landscape photographers are so adamant on becoming the best photographer that they are setting impossible goals for themselves. While photos can be improved, after a certain extent the edits just become pointless as they are no longer contributing to the betterment of the picture. In the end, photographers are trying so hard to stand out from the crowd and are striving for the impossible that they letting their morals shatter in the process of getting there. Photographers are so desperate for attention that they are abandoning any sense of ethically correct work they may have once had.

Furthermore, the intentions of the photographer's edits are varied. While some photographers edit their pictures with the intentions of showing viewers what the reality of the landscape is, others knowingly and purposely deceive their viewers into thinking a place looks one way even though, due to the amount of editing, that place does not exist. Based on "Landscape Photography's Dark Side" it is argued that photographs today are not supposed to show people the real world and its beauty; its purpose is to be a dramatic, interesting piece of art. Instead of showing the viewers how breathtaking the natural world is, photos are being warped to be more and more enticing to get more views. The photographers do not think, or care, about what effect their processing has on the consumers (Payne par. 24). The intentions of the photographer make a huge difference when it comes to talking about morals. Some famous landscape photographers, such as Tom Till, only edit the things that return the picture to how it looks through the human eye. Cameras will never be able to accurately capture the whites, blacks, colors, highlights, and shadows that humans are able to see. Trying to show people what the reality of the environment is should not be seen as morally corrupt. The lack of morals

enters when photographers add things into the landscape that are not there. Today, photographers are so consumed with trying to capture people's attention that they do not care about what type of unrealistic expectations they create for the consumers. Different photographers have different intentions for what they want people to think and believe after viewing their work. "The Ethics of Photo Manipulation" confirms that if the photographer is showing a picture intended to deceive the viewer, that is a problem. The way around that is if the photographer wants the photo to be perceived as a work of art opposed to an actual photo of the landscape that is passed off as realism (Norm par. 23). When people go to an art gallery, they are made aware of the pieces that are meant to portray reality versus the ones that are meant to be more of a fantasy style. Unfortunately, consumers of photography are often unaware of what is real and what isn't. According to "Ethics of Digital Photojournalism", drastic edits in photos that were submitted in competitions left the judges feeling as though they were being lied to. The photographers who make these extreme edits are worrying the judges, and industry, with the message they are sending out to not only other photographers but the consumers. Substantial manipulations of what was originally in the photo tell people it is okay to lie, or at least leave out/hide part of the truth ("Ethics of Digital Photojournalism" par. 8-13). When people look at a picture and think it is amazing only to find out it was altered beyond reality, it creates a sense of being lied to. Landscape photographers are supposed to be known as honest and reliable which is no longer the case due to photo editing. Not all photographers intend for their edits to make people feel like they are being lied to, they just want to create a pretty picture. Instead of photographers hearing about how their processing makes people feel and changing it, they are continuing to do it and even more extreme. Landscape photographers

no longer care about how people feel, they only care about getting their fame. The photo editing programs are causing photographers to give up the foundation of their jobs and morals. In brief, the intention of photographers edits does play a role in their moral standings. There are some who edit in order to try and show people what the view really looked like and want to remain honest while others turn their pictures into something that could never be possible in the context and still try to pass it off as real. Those who pass off highly edited photos as real lead consumers on, which leaves them feeling cheated. Photographers need to reclaim their moral standards and change their process when they find out people no longer trust their work or landscape photography as a whole.

Photographers setting their own boundaries for what is too much editing is the final factor in lowered morals. The photography industry does not have a set of rules that strictly dictate how much editing is allowed which gives photographers the freedom to set their own boundaries. While some photographers remain trustworthy, most photographers have no problem making extreme edits and disregard what effect it has on people. "Landscape Photography's Dark Side" discusses that the problem with photographers setting their own editing boundaries is that viewers no longer know what is real, or what they can trust. For those who want to keep their photos completely honest, many viewers are questioning whose photos they can rely on to know they're real. While most people in this age are used to being exposed to edited landscape photos, many people no longer know what to expect for what is real (Payne par. 32). When the consumers can no longer distinguish between what is real and what isn't, photographers need to reevaluate how much they are altering their pictures. Instead of photographers taking pride in people not being able to tell if it has been edited or not, they

should be trying to change how many edited photos are being released. Photographers have complete freedom to alter an image as much as they want to which is driving them to lower their morals and abandon caring about the effect they are having on the viewers. "Lightroom Landscapes" confirms that the editing process and extent to which photos are edited are completely up to the photographer. Some photographers like to leave their photos at the RAW file while others will alter a photo to the extent that it isn't even recognizable as the same (Clifford par. 14). Instead of letting photographers choose their own boundaries, the industry needs to set very clear rules for how much editing is allowed for pieces or work submitted into competitions or published in magazines. If a photographer has their own website, they should be able to put out whatever level of work they want. That being said, magazines such as National Geographic should only publish pictures if they meet a certain requirement of the photos natural state. Magazines and competitions that allow these drastic edits are encouraging photographers to lower their morals and create an image that does not actually exist. Contrary to what some sources have said, "What Are The Ethics of Digital Manipulation in Photography" states that there are numerous photographers who have no issue with using photoshop to improve the quality of their photos but have an issue with drastically changing their photos (O'Neill par. 5). Knowing there are photographers out there that disagree with major edits in a photo goes to show that not all photographers "lie" about what the scene looked like; some still have strong morals when it comes to editing. Letting photographers set their own boundaries is not always a bad thing as long as they are setting that boundary based on high personal morals. If photographers are setting their boundaries based on what will get them the best picture, their boundaries will be much larger and their morals much lower. According to "Ethics of Digital



Photojournalism", the industry has more technology available to photographers now than it did when the rules for what's acceptable were made. Without more strict rules being official and more than just opinion based, photographers have the tough choice of having to draw the line for what is considered too far while editing. Each photographer has a different bar set for what is morally acceptable when it comes to how much editing is too far. There is no set line which leads to a lot of misunderstanding when it comes to if the photos are ethical. Photography is a subjective art, as is photo editing. All photographers want their pictures to tell the viewers a story but they all do it in their own way and complexity ("Ethics of Digital Photojournalism par. 21) Each photographer has their own boundary, that means there are hundreds of thousands of different boundaries within the industry. Photographers know the feeling they had when they took a picture and they want people to feel that way looking at it. The only issue with that is that they are editing their pictures so extremely that their intended messages are getting lost in the process. Adding an industry standard set of rules will help prevent photographers from changing images past recognition. Though it may not be intentional, photographers are lowering their morals to set their boundaries that are there only to get the awards. Clearer rules will help photographers build back up their morals and return to being known as reliable. Allowing photographers to set their own boundaries for how much editing is acceptable is the final factor in what is lowering their morals. Having their own boundaries has caused photographers to stop caring about what their edits do to consumers and only care about how to create the best picture.

Landscape photographers' morals have significantly deteriorated due to using photo editing software in an industry that has outdated rules paired with updated technology, creating

an impossible image to stand out, having varied intentions, and having self-set editing boundaries. As the Scotland Highlands scenario indicates, photo editing in landscape pictures creates expectations that can only be met by drastic edits. The photography industry and individual photographers need to reassess how often programs like photoshop is used. Lowered morals have led to people being unable to trust what they see along with being disappointed by the reality instead of appreciating the beauty in front of them. There are multiple ways to solve the issue of lowered morals in the photography industry. Magazines, competitions and independent photography galleries can create clear rules for how much photo editing is allowed in the work displayed, photographers should talk to the people who are viewing their work and see if they feel as though they are being lied to and the industry needs to inform photographers how to improve their raw skills instead of their editing skills. Photographers having stricter boundaries and more feedback on the effect they are having on people will cause them to return to displaying reality and improving their abilities instead of compensating for lack of knowledge with editing. With the effects of landscape photographers editing their pictures in mind, photographers, the industry, and society can reflect on how significant this issue is and work on returning photography to its unadulterated state.

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