

Computing + Photography?  
The Social, Legal, Professional and Ethical Issues



Student ID Number: **719690**

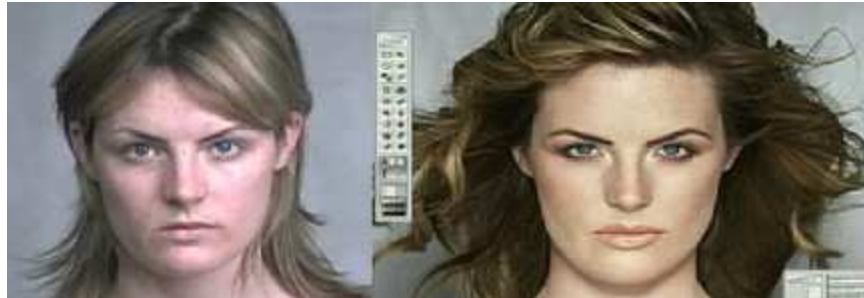
Teamwork Group: **CCTV**

Individual Topic:

**Computing + Photography?**  
**Social, Legal, Professional and Ethical Issues**

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**Introduction**



Are these 2 different people? If you were not very forward thinking, you might believe that these are in fact 2 different people and that this picture (and the inclusion of it) in this document is pointless.

The picture actually has more to it than that; it is a demonstration of how computing (and make up) can distort our perceptions of beauty. The average woman on the left is in fact adjusted to look like the woman on the right through digital manipulation and copious amounts of make up.

This assignment has been largely influenced by the Dove “Campaign for beauty” which was voted one of the “Most Memorable Ads of 2006” by BusinessWeek ([http://www.businessweek.com/innovate/content/dec2006/id20061222\\_238626\\_page\\_2.htm](http://www.businessweek.com/innovate/content/dec2006/id20061222_238626_page_2.htm)) and can be viewed at <http://www.campaignforrealbeauty.com/flat4.asp?id=6909>

There are other examples like the animated flash “retouch” on <http://demo.fb.se/e/girlpower/retouch/>

Digital photograph manipulation has received a large amount of attention after Reuters had issues with a faked picture of a Beirut bombing with "enhanced" smoke (Further Reading, BBC News Tuesday, 8 August 2006 : [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/5254838.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/5254838.stm)). Is it legal? Is it ethical? Is it even professional? And what happens to society afterwards?

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## **Legal**

The same laws that govern “negative photography” appear to apply to digital photography also.

The problem with treating them the same is that you are forgetting the ease that they can now be manipulated, stored, broadcast and published and used. These problems occur both domestically and publicly.

About.com highlights the following “What are your rights and responsibilities towards the privacy of others as a photographer? The legal answer will depend on which country you are in.” ([http://photography.about.com/od/legalissues/Legal\\_Issues\\_for\\_Phographers.htm](http://photography.about.com/od/legalissues/Legal_Issues_for_Phographers.htm))

Copyright also applies with the UK law allowing “up to six years from the moment any infringement occurs for the rights owner to seek a legal remedy.” (<http://www.epuk.org/ABCD-of-Copyright/176/infringements>)

Does the data protection act still apply? Staffordshire University seems to think so “Photographs constitute personal data so you must get consent from all the individuals concerned before you display their photographs.” (<http://www.staffs.ac.uk/legal/privacy/dpfaq/index.php#photoboard>)

The information commissioner provides guidelines for taking photos in school ([http://www.ico.gov.uk/upload/documents/library/data\\_protection/detailed\\_specialist\\_guides/taking\\_photos\\_in\\_schools.pdf](http://www.ico.gov.uk/upload/documents/library/data_protection/detailed_specialist_guides/taking_photos_in_schools.pdf)) states the following “Recommended Good Practice The Data Protection Act is unlikely to apply in many cases where photographs are taken in schools and other educational institutions. Fear of breaching the provisions of the Act should not be wrongly used to stop people taking photographs or videos which provide many with much pleasure.” Though that statement could probably have used a suitable alternative to the word “pleasure” it states that in many cases human intuition is the only real law governing photos in schools. This was the only mildly relevant quote available on the Information Commissioners website, that and CCTV cameras which would not directly cover the manipulation of images or the public use of them.

This is rather worrying; short of the BBC having a duty to represent the truth impartially there is little preventing them from doctoring photos. It would appear once a person signs a photographic release form the images are freely licensed for almost anything.

After all, the sun can publish topless pictures of a royal bride to be 10 years after the photo shoot occurred (<http://photography.about.com/library/weekly/aa060399.htm>).

So are there any specific laws about proper representation of the truth and the distortion of reality? I have yet to find any.

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Even Gary Hershorn, News Pictures Editor for North America Reuters states “What we in the news photo community need to regulate is what tools are used for photojournalism and what are not.

***Ethical & Professional***

The female object which we have come to recognise is under more intense pressure than ever before. Chivalry is dead. The United Kingdom in particular and many countries are suffering (or is it benefiting?) from an individualistic culture. Threats and the strangers that bring them lurk every corner. Now with our culture becoming increasingly motivated towards finding the “beautiful” those working in media are also under pressure to adapt to fit societies expectations. Not only do those in the graphics profession have more and more tools at their disposal, but they have an expectation from the public for them to use them.

The chances of a woman with a wart or a multitude of freckles featuring au naturel on the next cover of “Cosmo Girl” magazine? It doesn’t bear thinking about.

Shouldn’t the “graphics professionals” question whether it is moral the next time they reach for a tool in Photoshop? It’s hard to argue they are not aware of the distortion of reality that they are contributing to.

The responsibility falls very much on the photographer and the industry in which they are working in, Gary Hershorn, News Pictures Editor for North America Reuters states “There is not a Photoshop program for use by news photographers and another for advertising, where image-changing is tolerated.” This suggests that industries do in fact do things differently with regards to image editing and manipulation, which should mean that photographers and editors themselves should know the limits of their edits and behave responsibly.

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## **Social**

There are many good examples of images being digitally manipulated since the 1930's on <http://www.cs.dartmouth.edu/farid/research/digitaltampering/> some even managed to sway and control election results. As this is such a broad topic and this document tries to focus on a limited subset of digital image manipulation, I have elected to not cover this in too much detail.

The effects of editing the appearance of women to better reflect "beauty" interestingly apply to both males and females.

Males are affected, in the sense they expected more, they have an increasing pressure from their partners to re-assure them that there is nothing wrong with them. Studies have also been conducted into pornographic material and its links with impotency, research into the accessibility of images of "the perfect porn stars" has provided some interesting results. While researching for this document I encountered many websites which were willing to state the negative effects of pornographic material (both soft-core and hardcore) however these websites also had questionable bias when they included "He rejects the lord" as one of the crucial impacts of pornography. With or without biased studies it is widely accepted that the more attractive women appear in magazines and online the more men will expect. "Feminists argue that it is not the images (models) in themselves which are harmful, but the fact that women still derive much of their sense of self-worth from whether they please men."

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/medical\\_notes/1079435.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/medical_notes/1079435.stm)

Women's confidence is severely knocked. BBC news reported in 2001 that eating disorders are on the increase (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/1162151.stm>) with a record number of calls to the Eating Disorders Association alone with more than 18,000 calls in 2000. More chillingly "The EDA estimates that nearly 18% of anorexics calling its adult helpline will die". This is after the BBC in 2000 reported "The emphasis on super-thin models has been blamed for the increase in eating disorders"

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/medical\\_notes/1079435.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/medical_notes/1079435.stm)

Previously it was thought that only over-weight women were affected by the super thin models, but as WebMD reports "...a new study suggests that all women are equally, and negatively, affected by looking at pictures of models in magazine ads for just three minutes." And "Surprisingly, we found that weight was not a factor. Viewing these pictures was just bad for everyone," (<http://www.webmd.com/balance/news/20070328/models-mar-thin-womens-body-image-too>)

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***Public Reactions to the advert***

Is Dove acting selflessly?

Reactions to the advert I could find on a particular blog were what “SpongeGirl” wrote: “Intriguing video - although of course, I'd be even more impressed if it ended with "you're perfect as you are, honey, so don't bother with any moisturisers - even ours!”

On the same blog, “Kimberly” writes:

“I think the video is great but I have to agree with sponge girl on this one. I find it \*extremely\* creepy that this campaign was launched around a thigh firming cream. What kind of message does that actually send? "You're great just the way you are--except for your wobbly thighs." I just can't get over it.

I can understand products like moisturizers (especially living in Denver as I do), but thigh firming cream screams "It's not ok to be fat!" The dichotomy makes my head hurt.”

Can a company producing beauty products really hold themselves to blame for any distorted perceptions on appearances? Of course not! This is why in part the film seems to focus more on the manipulation of the photo post-capture. Revenue protection aside, the issues Dove raises are commendable when you consider the issues women face in their objectionification.

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## **Conclusion**

Though you can dismiss Dove's efforts as good PR, there are only so many extra bars of soap and moisturisers they can sell from this. There are very few laws on image manipulation and once a member of the public signs a release form for public release there is little law left governing that photo. In the mean time women are suffering from magazines providing beauty which is half simulated and half blatantly faked. We are left with just the reliance of the ethics and morals of the photographers and the graphics editors, is this enough? Largely perhaps, but there will always be one willing to abuse standard ethical protocol.

As the animated "GirlPower" flash website states (<http://demo.fb.se/e/girlpower/retouch/>) "The media world is becoming increasingly fixated on appearances, And the number of tricks used to achieve the increasingly exaggerated ideals is growing. Many models have plastic surgery and even more are retouched so they appear to have bigger breasts, smaller stomachs or fuller lips"... "We cannot stop the photos but we can make you aware that many of them are based on a lie. And because of this, it is completely impossible to compare yourself to them." GirlPower has a main site at <http://demo.fb.se/e/girlpower/> and was run by the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs of Sweden to encourage its citizens to be more "media aware"

This only leaves us with the option of raising awareness and reassuring both the young and the old that you can't believe everything you see.

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## References

### Images used in the compilation of this document:

- Cover Image : [http://www.femail.com.au/img/dove\\_face.jpg](http://www.femail.com.au/img/dove_face.jpg)  
(Linked from <http://www.femail.com.au/2249.htm>)
- Side by side comparison : <http://jilltxt.net/images/evolutiondove.jpg>  
(Linked from <http://jilltxt.net/?p=1783>)

### Images not used but still interesting:

- Cropped side by side without Photoshop :  
<http://www.englishrules.com/images/blog/dove-real-beauty.jpg>  
(Linked from <http://www.englishrules.com/archives/2006/we-cant-believe-our-eyes.php>)

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- Eating disorder information : <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/1162151.stm>
- Links between eating disorders and photography :  
[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/medical\\_notes/1079435.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/medical_notes/1079435.stm)
- More links between "model" photography and eating disorders :  
<http://www.webmd.com/balance/news/20070328/models-mar-thin-womens-body-image-too>
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[http://www.ico.gov.uk/upload/documents/library/data\\_protection/detailed\\_specialist\\_guides/taking\\_photos\\_in\\_schools.pdf](http://www.ico.gov.uk/upload/documents/library/data_protection/detailed_specialist_guides/taking_photos_in_schools.pdf)
- GirlPower : <http://demo.fb.se/e/girlpower/> (and the retouch special at <http://demo.fb.se/e/girlpower/retouch/>)

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Research used (but not quoted) in the compilation of this document:

- “Most Memorable Ads of 2006” - BusinessWeek  
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(<http://photography.about.com/library/weekly/aa060399.htm>)