

Inter-Media Agenda Setting Role of the Blogosphere:  
A Content Analysis of the Reuters Photo Controversy Coverage During the Israel-Lebanon  
Conflict in 2006

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## **ABSTRACT**

Nataliya Rostovtseva: Inter-Media Agenda Setting Role of the Blogosphere:  
A Content Analysis of the Reuters Photo Controversy Coverage During the Israel-Lebanon  
Conflict in 2006

(Under the direction of Lois Boynton, Elizabeth Dougall, and Steve May)

On August 5, 2006, blogger Charles Johnson of Little Green Footballs wrote in his blog that one of the images by Adnan Hajj, a Reuters photographer, showed "blatant evidence of manipulation." The photograph depicted smoke rising over Beirut after an Israeli air strike. The smoke was altered using the "cloning" tool in Adobe® Photoshop® to achieve a more dramatic effect. The purpose of this study is to compare mainstream media coverage of this incident with that of the blogosphere. Qualitative content analysis is used to describe the relationship. The study demonstrates that the blogosphere has potentially both set and built the agenda for the media coverage of the Reuters controversy in the mainstream media. Also, both media platforms covered the same themes, but described them from different angles.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

On August 5, 2006, blogger Charles Johnson of Little Green Footballs wrote in his blog that one of the images by Adnan Hajj, a Reuters photographer, showed "blatant evidence of manipulation."<sup>1</sup> Johnson claimed that Hajj's photograph depicting smoke rising over Beirut after an Israeli air strike had been altered in Photoshop with the usage of the cloning tool to achieve a more dramatic effect. Shortly after this blog post appeared online, bloggers found more evidence of Hajj doctoring photographs. In a different image from Beirut, the number of flares dropped by the Israeli F-16 fighter was digitally increased from one to three by the same cloning tool. Adnan Hajj denied deliberate manipulation of the photographs. As a result of this investigation, Reuters fired Adnan Hajj and removed more than 900 of his photographs from their database.<sup>2</sup>

These photos caused a long-term investigation of the overall photo coverage of the Lebanon-Israel conflict by Internet users. Bloggers questioned further reports made by Reuters, the Associated Press and other agencies, accusing them of staging the events shown in the photos, and even providing false information. The author of the blog *Zombietime* investigated the "ambulance controversy," when the Associated Press reported that Israeli

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Johnson, "Reuters Doctoring Photos from Beirut?" *Little Green Footballs*, August 5, 2006, [http://littlegreenfootballs.com/weblog/?entry=21956\\_Reuters\\_Doctoring\\_Photos\\_from\\_Beirut&only](http://littlegreenfootballs.com/weblog/?entry=21956_Reuters_Doctoring_Photos_from_Beirut&only) (accessed November 28, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> "Reuters Toughens Rules After Altered Photo Affair," *Reuters*, January 18, 2007, <http://www.reuters.com/article/latestCrisis/idUSL18678707> (accessed December 5, 2008).

jets blasted two ambulances with rockets. He posted a detailed essay with a thorough analysis of the photos, proving that the cars had been destroyed a long before the blast took place.<sup>3</sup> This blogger collected almost all of the details about the controversies listed above and became a key source of information about photo coverage of the Israel-Lebanon conflict with more than 7,000 bloggers referring to his “Reuters Photo Fraud” entry.<sup>4</sup> Along with the actual investigation of the potentially fraudulent photos, *Zombietime*’s author suggested several theories as to why these events occurred. Among other things, he suggested that key Reuters personnel were Hezbollah sympathizers, or that the photographs were initiated by Hezbollah.<sup>5</sup>

Although these events have been widely discussed in the blogosphere since the story first broke in August, 2006, it took the major media two days to catch on. The first story about the doctored photo appeared in the mainstream media on Monday August 7, 2006, while major media outlets such as *The New York Times* and *Washington Post* did not cover the story until August 9, 2006. The blogosphere investigation made the story so popular that it moved to the pages of major newspapers. In this situation, bloggers served as independent investigative journalists who found the story, published it, and provided necessary background and analysis by looking deeply into other photo coverage of the Israel-Lebanon military conflict. This type of participation in the news production process allows the

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<sup>3</sup> “Reuters Photo Fraud,” *Zombietime*, [http://www.zombietime.com/reuters\\_photo\\_fraud/](http://www.zombietime.com/reuters_photo_fraud/) (accessed November 4, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> Google Blog Search results for “zomietime+reuters” query, <http://blogsearch.google.com/blogsearch?hl=en&num=10&c2coff=1&safe=active&ie=UTF-8&q=zombietime+reuters&spell=1&oi=spell&sa=X> (accessed December 7, 2008).

<sup>5</sup> “Reuters Photo Fraud.”

consideration of bloggers as citizen journalists, which makes the concept of the inter-media agenda setting applicable to the whole process.

The objective of this study is to look further into how the blogosphere might contribute to the media agenda. The research will focus specifically on how the bloggers framed the issue of the doctored pictures from Beirut, compared to the framing provided by the mainstream media. The purpose of this study is to provide deeper insight about the place of the blogosphere in the current marketplace of ideas.

The research employs qualitative content analysis in order to (a) analyze the frames that emerged from the blogosphere discussion of the photos doctored by Adnan Hajj and the mainstream media coverage of the case, and (b) to examine the potential relationship between the coverage in these types of media. The first section of this study will provide historic background for the blogosphere and the development of its credibility as a source of information. The literature review will explore the concepts of citizen journalism, gatewatching news production on the Internet and blogosphere, and also the agenda setting theory. The third chapter of the study will present both the research questions and methodology of the proposed research. The fourth chapters will provide the results of the research, while the fifth will describe the analysis.

## BACKGROUND

### *History of the Blogosphere*

In 1997, Jorn Barger created the term “weblog” on his site, RobotWisdom.com. As he stated, the word meant both a log on the Web, as a log of observations, thoughts, and ideas that he was posting, and a log of the Web, as a collection of links to different resources online. Authors consider this date an official birth of blogs.<sup>6</sup> Later most authors agreed with the statement that, in general, blogs are Web pages that are frequently updated, with entries centered on one topic and arranged in reverse chronological order.<sup>7</sup> As the blogosphere was developing, more detailed definitions emerged. For example, Perlmutter said that a blog is “(a) written in the style of a personal essay, journal entry, diary, or memoir, (b) interactive, (c) containing posts of varying length in reverse chronological order, (d) embedded with hyperlinks within text, (e) providing permalinks and allowing trackbacks, and (f) listing other blogs.”<sup>8</sup>

In 1999, the number of blogs could be estimated as several dozen, because authors had to develop the programming of the pages by themselves. All blog statistics were based on estimates, because there was no search engine that would track all the blogs in the Internet. Everything changed when several software companies developed easy-to-use tools

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<sup>6</sup> David D. Perlmutter, *Blogwars: New Political Background* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 62.

<sup>7</sup> Rebecca Blood, *The Weblog Handbook: Practical Advice on Creating and Maintaining Your Blog* (New York: Perseus Books Group, 2002).

<sup>8</sup> Perlmutter, *Blogwars*, 61.

for building personal blogs, such as Typepad, MovableType, LiveJournal, and Wordpress.<sup>9</sup> The real history of blog statistics began with the launch of Technorati – a blog search engine founded by David Sifry in 2003. In 2007 Technorati was declared the leading source of information about blogosphere statistics, and *Time* magazine included it in its list of “25 Sites We Can’t Live Without.”<sup>10</sup> Technorati started indexing blogs in March 2003. According to the reports, the initial number of indexed blogs was less than 250,000, but it was growing exponentially with 8,000-17,000 new blogs created every day.<sup>11</sup> In 2004-2005, the worldwide blogosphere was doubling in size about once every five months,<sup>12</sup> and by 2007, Technorati was tracking 130 million blogs worldwide.<sup>13</sup>

The blog readership statistics were also growing fast. According to the Pew Internet Research data, in 2003, only 11 percent of Internet users had read blogs. This number increased up to 17 percent in February 2004, and leapt to 27 percent in November of the same year.<sup>14</sup> In 2008, McCann reported that 77 percent of active Internet users read blogs. McCann also reported in 2008 that there are 26.4 million bloggers in the U.S.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>10</sup> “25 Sites We Can't Live Without,” *Time magazine Web site*, 2007 [http://www.time.com/time/specials/2007/article/0,28804,1638266\\_1638253\\_1638241,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/specials/2007/article/0,28804,1638266_1638253_1638241,00.html) (accessed November 26, 2008).

<sup>11</sup> “Technorati Tracks 3 Million Blog,s” *Sifry's Alerts*, July 07, 2004, <http://www.sifry.com/alerts/archives/000356.html> (accessed November 27, 2008).

<sup>12</sup> “State of The Blogosphere, March 2005, Part 1: Growth of Blogs”, *Sifry's Alerts*, May 14, 2005, <http://www.sifry.com/alerts/archives/000298.html> (accessed November 27, 2008).

<sup>13</sup> “State of the Blogosphere 2008: Introduction,” *Technorati*, September 22, 2008, <http://technorati.com/blogging/state-of-the-blogosphere/> (accessed November 25, 2008).

<sup>14</sup> Lee Rainie, “The State of Blogging,” *Pew Internet and American Life Project*, January 2005, [http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP\\_blogging\\_data.pdf](http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_blogging_data.pdf) (accessed November 28, 2008).

<sup>15</sup> “Power to the People – Social Media Tracker Wave 3,” *Universal McCann*, March, 2008, [http://www.universalmccann.com/Assets/wave\\_3\\_20080403093750.pdf](http://www.universalmccann.com/Assets/wave_3_20080403093750.pdf) (accessed November 15, 2008).

### *Credibility of the Blogosphere*

Online sources of information have gained popularity very quickly. Even in 1998, politically interested users considered online sources of information more credible than traditional media.<sup>16</sup> In one of the earliest studies of Web credibility in 2000, Flanagin and Metzger found that this source of news is considered as credible as traditional media channels, such as newspapers and magazines,<sup>17</sup> and four years later blogs were judged as being more credible than any other mainstream source of information.<sup>18</sup> One of the first studies of blog credibility was performed in 2004 by Johnson and Kaye, who found that almost three-quarters (73.6 percent) of blog readers viewed blogs as “moderately” to “very” credible, and only 3.5% consider them “not at all” or “not very” credible. Also, 72.2 percent of respondents thought of blogs as “moderately” to “very” in-depth sources of information.<sup>19</sup> A new study followed in 2007 with more detailed analysis of blog credibility. Johnson and Kaye found that mean scores of blogosphere credibility were higher than for any other source of information. The respondents deemed blogs low on fairness, but high in depth of information.<sup>20</sup> Another study performed in the same year revealed that people do not see any

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<sup>16</sup> Thomas Johnson and Barbara Kaye, “Cruising is Believing?: Comparing the Internet and Traditional Sources on Media Credibility Measures,” *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 75 (Summer 1998): 325–340.

<sup>17</sup> Andrew Flanagin and Miriam Metzger, “Perceptions of Internet Information Credibility,” *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 77 (Autumn 2000): 515-540.

<sup>18</sup> Thomas Johnson, Barbara Kaye, Shannon Bichard, Joann Wong, “Every Blog Has Its Day: Politically-interested Internet Users’ Perceptions of Blog Credibility,” *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 13 (November 2007): 100-122.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Johnson and Barbara Kaye, “Wag the blog: How Reliance on Traditional Media and the Internet Influence Credibility Perceptions of Weblog among Blog Users,” *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 81 (Autumn 2004): 622-642.

<sup>20</sup> Johnson, “Every Blog Has Its Day.”

significant difference between the credibility of traditional news sources and blogs.<sup>21</sup> Several other studies reflected the growing credibility of blogs.<sup>22</sup>

Credibility traditionally has been understood through the dimensions of expertise, accuracy and absence of bias. The new dimensions of credibility now include interactivity, identification and transparency.<sup>23</sup> Although there is no concrete definition of what is considered a credible blog, users say that the primary reason for this trend is that bloggers “rely on peer review of other bloggers to point out mistakes that can be easily and prominently corrected.”<sup>24</sup> Bloggers are more willing to disclose their political biases, as well as acknowledge errors and consider new information about the discussed topic. These factors contribute to the overall credibility pattern of the blogosphere.<sup>25</sup> It has also been proven that the more people use a certain type of media, the more likely they are to consider it a credible source of information.<sup>26</sup>

Technorati has developed its own way of measuring credibility, which has allowed for evaluation of the diversity of blogs within the blogosphere. Their authority rating counts the number of links to a unique blog; about 1.5 percent of active blogs worldwide have a

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<sup>21</sup> Stephen Banning and Kaye Sweetser, “How Much Do They Think It Affects Them and Whom Do They Believe?: Comparing the Third-Person Effect and Credibility of Blogs and Traditional Media,” *Communication Quarterly* 55 (November 2007): 451–466.

<sup>22</sup> Daniel Drezner and Henry Farrell, “The Power and Politics of Blogs,” *Public Choice* 134 (2008): 12-30; Thomas Johnson and Barbara Kaye, “In Blog We Trust? Deciphering Credibility of Components of the Internet among Politically Interested Internet Users,” *Computers in Human Behavior* 25 (2009): 175–182.

<sup>23</sup> Brian Carroll, “Online Credibility: New Paradigm Taking Shape,” *Furniture Today* 35 (May 14, 2007): 19.

<sup>24</sup> Johnson, “Wag the Blog”

<sup>25</sup> Carroll, “Online Credibility”

<sup>26</sup> 30, Tony Rimmer and David Weaver, “Different Questions, Different Answers? Media Use and Media Credibility,” *Journalism Quarterly* 6A (spring 1987): 28-36; Wayne Wanta and Yu-Wei Hu, “The Effects of Credibility, Reliance, and Exposure on Media Agenda-Setting: A Path Analysis Model,” *Journalism Quarterly* 71 (spring 1994): 90-98.

Technorati authority of 50 and more, which means that at least 50 other bloggers found their content worth linking to. Forty-five percent of blogs have the authority index of one and more.<sup>27</sup> There is also a general sense that blogs are being taken more seriously as information sources. Thirty-seven percent of bloggers have been quoted in traditional media, and bloggers themselves believe that blogs will be a primary source for news and entertainment in the next five years.<sup>28</sup> Sweetser, however, found that journalists did not find blogs to be credible sources of information, but the more they read and write blogs themselves, the more credible they perceive the information published in blogosphere.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> “State of the Blogosphere 2008: Who Are the Bloggers?”, *Technorati*, September 22, 2008, <http://technorati.com/blogging/state-of-the-blogosphere/who-are-the-bloggers/> (accessed November 11, 2008).

<sup>28</sup> “State of the Blogosphere 2008: Brands Enter The Blogosphere,” *Technorati*, September 22, 2008, <http://technorati.com/blogging/state-of-the-blogosphere/brands-enter-the-blogosphere/> (accessed November 11, 2008).

<sup>29</sup> Kaye Swetser, Lance Porter, Deborah Soun Chung, “Credibility and the Use of Blogs among Professionals in the Communication Industry,” *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 85 (Spring 2008): 169-185.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The topic of the study requires providing a comprehensive analysis of academic literature about contemporary trends in news production coverage. It includes the influence of citizen journalists and news blogging. The next section of the review will cover the shift from the gatekeeping to the gatewatching concept of news selection. This shift was propelled by a large variety of online tools for news publishing and discussion, and can be explained by the produsage concept, which is defined in the following section. The next part of the review is dedicated to agenda setting theory with a focus on the inter-media agenda setting between the Internet and blogosphere.

#### *Citizen Journalism and News Blogging*

The participation of the general public in the news production process has passed through several phases and started with the civic journalism initiative in early 1990s. With the growing perception that U.S. citizens are not actively involved in the political processes of the country, journalists started to look for a way to engage them into the discussion of current issues. The purpose of civic journalism, proposed by The Pew Center for Civic Journalism and The Poynter Institute for Media Studies in 1995, was to “improve the coverage of public life, especially election campaigns, by actively engaging the diversity and

complexity of citizens in that coverage.”<sup>30</sup> However, these projects were aimed mostly at launching collaboration between journalists and citizens in order to capture the issues of high concern in the local communities, to increase the quality of the stories published by journalists, and to improve the dialogue between local citizens and authorities. None of these projects featured citizens as news producers. Citizens served more as consultants and experts for journalists providing the opinions and insights.<sup>31</sup> The end of 1990s was marked as a period when citizens started to serve as news producers themselves without the participation of professional journalists. Citizen journalism, as it is understood today, is thought to have appeared first in 1999, when a group of media activists formed the Independent Media Center, Indymedia, to cover the World Trade Organization protests, because they were concerned that traditional media would fail to cover the event objectively. Later Indymedia grew into a global participatory network of journalists that reports on political and social issues.<sup>32</sup> The next breakthrough occurred during the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.<sup>33</sup> The event generated huge traffic to news Web sites, which became unavailable due to an extremely large number of visitors, causing people to turn to blogs and forums. This gave

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<sup>30</sup> Jan Schaffer and Edward Miller, “Civic Journalism: Six Case Studies,” *The Pew Center for Civic Journalism and The Poynter Institute for Media Studies* (1995) <http://www.pewcenter.org/doingcj/pubs/cases/index.html> (accessed November 25, 2008).

<sup>31</sup> Lewis Friedland and Sandy Nichols, “Measuring Civic Journalism’s Progress: A Report Across a Decade of Activity,” *The Pew Center for Civic Journalism* (November 2002), [http://www.pewcenter.org/doingcj/research/r\\_measuringcj.html](http://www.pewcenter.org/doingcj/research/r_measuringcj.html) (accessed November 25, 2008).

<sup>32</sup> Axel Bruns, *Gatewatching: Collaborative Online News Production* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2005): 81-119.

<sup>33</sup> Debashis Aikat, “The Blending of Traditional Media and the Internet: Patterns of Media Agenda Setting and Web Search Trends Before and After the September 11 Attacks,” *Annual Meeting of the International Communication Association* (New York, NY, 2005).

rise to “do-it-yourself journalism.”<sup>34</sup> Mass media started to employ this trend, and as a result, before the Iraq war, the BBC News asked its readers to send images of the anti-war demonstrations taken by digital cameras and cell –phones, and published the best ones on the BBC Web site.<sup>35</sup>

On the other hand, the credibility of the blogosphere can be undermined by the fact that bloggers do not have any professional ethics codes to guide them.<sup>36</sup> While one of the primary tasks of a professional journalist is to remove all personal biases,<sup>37</sup> bloggers are more likely to include unbalanced judgments into their statements.<sup>38</sup>

As the credibility of blogs has grown, online readers have begun to perceive them not only as a source of information about their friends’ day-to-day life, but also as an independent media where they could read stories about major world events. Having started as personal Web pages in late 1990s, blogs extended the overall idea of citizen journalism to the widespread trend of the news blogging: the practice of covering the news through blogging – whether by doing original reporting or by providing commentary on the news as it is reported in other news sources.<sup>39</sup> According to the Technorati rating published in June 2006, the

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<sup>34</sup> Shayne Bowman and Chris Willis, “We Media: How Audiences are Shaping the Future of News and Information,” *The Mediacy at the American Press Institute*, (2003) <http://www.hypergene.net/wemedia/weblog.php> (accessed November 28, 2008).

<sup>35</sup> “Your Pictures of the Anti-War Demonstrations,” *BBC News*, February 18, 2003, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/talking\\_point/2763101.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/talking_point/2763101.stm) (accessed November 29, 2008).

<sup>36</sup> Anne Broache, “An ethics code for bloggers?” *CNET*, November 29, 2006. [http://news.cnet.com/8301-10784\\_3-6139371-7.html](http://news.cnet.com/8301-10784_3-6139371-7.html) (accessed May 5, 2009).

<sup>37</sup> Jan Johnson Yopp, *Reaching Audiences* (Pearson, 2006): 257-275.

<sup>38</sup> Kaye Sweetser, “Blog Bias: Reports, Inferences, and Judgments of Credentialed Bloggers at the 2004 Nominating Conventions,” *Public Relations Review*, November 2007,

<sup>39</sup> Axel Bruns, “The Practice of News Blogging” in *Uses of Blogs* ed. Axel Bruns and Joanne Jacobs (New York: Peter Lange Publishing, 2006): 11-23.

number of blog entries marked as “news” was higher than for any other type of entries.<sup>40</sup> News blogging can take several forms, from micro-news reporting, such as covering the events that are important to small communities, to unfolding world events.<sup>41</sup> Another means of news blogging is news commentary, in which bloggers briefly summarize the issue, provide links to the news sources or other blogs, and add their own opinion about the covered event.<sup>42</sup> These characteristics became very appealing to online readers, who chose to read blogs because “blogs present information in ways that cannot be found elsewhere, as they keep the story going, provide links to other resources, in depth commentaries, and analysis and are not filtered or censored by traditional media gatekeepers.”<sup>43</sup> Also, since mass media en masse cannot be present at all of the events, bloggers are the ones who often provide unique photos or reports from the scene.<sup>44</sup>

Perlmutter created a list of events that contributed to the news blogging and blogosphere popularity in the media world. The list included the Lottgate (controversial remarks made by Senator Trent Lott that were widely discussed in the blogosphere and led to his resignation), the U.S. invasion of Iraq and the pro-war/antiwar debate, the tsunami in Southeast Asia, the London bombings, and Hurricane Katrina.<sup>45</sup> He also identified several roles of bloggers in the contemporary mass media, including their roles as compilers of

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<sup>40</sup> “State of the Blogosphere 2008: The What and Why of Blogging,” *Technorati*, September 22, 2008, <http://technorati.com/blogging/state-of-the-blogosphere/the-what-and-why-of-blogging/> (accessed November 27, 2008).

<sup>41</sup> Bruns, “The Practice of News Blogging.”

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Barbara Kaye, “Blog Use Motivations: An Exploratory Study” in Mark Tremayne *Blogging, Citizenship and Future Media* (New York: Routledge, 2006): 141.

<sup>44</sup> Axel Bruns, *Blogs, Wikipedia, Second Life and Beyond* (New York: Peter Lange Publishing, 2008): 69-99.

<sup>45</sup> Perlmutter, *Blogwars*, 68.

political information, informants in the political marketplace, correspondents, collectors of information, revisers and extenders of big media, investigative reporters, political analysts and critics, nontraditional experts, political watchdogs, political educators, and wisebots of politics and policy - the ones who scrutinize the information thoroughly.<sup>46</sup>

### *Prodsusage*

The growing accessibility and popularity of the Internet provided several tools that determined the development of the citizen journalism. Mass media cannot control the asymmetrical spread of information, because the users themselves now have access to the means of producing and distributing news, such as message boards, forums and blogs. These ways of communication allow many-to-many communication and, more importantly, peer-to-peer collaboration. Digital information can also be easily shared and modified. These developments, together with the fact that information consumers became more accustomed to actively seeking out the source of information, served as prerequisites to the concept of prodsusage, developed by Axel Bruns, who defined it as “the collaborative and continuous building and extending of existing content in pursuit of further improvement.” According to Bruns, this process “is built on the affordances of the technosocial framework of the networked environment” and on the harnessing of user communities that is made possible by their networking through many-to-many communications media.<sup>47</sup> There is no clear distinction between online news readers and news producers, since even if the users prefer to read news and discuss it in their blog, they also becomes news producers for those who pay

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid. 108-148.

<sup>47</sup> Bruns, *Blogs, Wikipedia, Second Life and Beyond*, 21.

attention to personal opinions and analysis. Also, the users who consume such news and leave comments to the stories are also participating in the news produsage process, as their feedback points out a direction for further investigation.

### *Gatewatching News Production*

The wide availability of secondary and, more importantly, primary sources of information online led to the reformation of the news production process itself. During the second half of the previous century, news selection was described by the concept of gatekeeping. Gatekeeping was first used by White's study of how an editor selected stories for publication from the newswire services.<sup>48</sup> Today, gatekeeping is defined as "determining what stories becoming known to journalists are worth investigating and covering in any detail... [and] examining which of the investigated stories are fit to be included in the final news project – newspaper, online news publication, etc."<sup>49</sup> The current challenge of the media is a shift from gatekeeping to gatewatching, a relatively new concept developed by Axel Bruns.<sup>50</sup> Gatewatching is defined as "the observation of the output gates of news publications and other sources, in order to identify important material as it becomes available."<sup>51</sup> The primary distinction between these two concepts is that in the gatekeeping process the news is first filtered and then published, while in the gatewatching process the news is first published and then filtered. According to Bruns, it "relies exactly on that ability

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<sup>48</sup> David White, "The Gate-Keeper: A Case Study in the Selection of News," *Journalism Quarterly* 27 (Autumn 1950): 383-390.

<sup>49</sup> Bruns, *Blogs, Wikipedia, Second Life and Beyond*, 71.

<sup>50</sup> Bruns, *Gatewatching* 11-30.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* 17.

of users to decide for themselves what they find interesting and worth noting and sharing with their peers.”<sup>52</sup> Gatewatching is a process of highlighting and publicizing the news, rather than filtering and publishing. The key role of citizen journalism here is that the stories became available in online communities for commenting, adding background and the evaluation of sources.<sup>53</sup> Bruns describes the gatewatcher news production as a four-stage process, which includes watching the news sources open to all users, submitting the selected stories, instant publishing or collaborative editing, and discussing the information, open to all users.<sup>54</sup> Therefore, gatewatching represents the application of the overall produsage principle of open participation and communal evaluation to news coverage.<sup>55</sup>

#### *Agenda Setting Role of the Internet*

In 1963, Bernard Cohen said that “the press may not be successful in telling people what to think, but they are stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about.”<sup>56</sup> McCombs and Shaw later expanded this statement into a theory of agenda-setting. After the initial study of undecided voters in 1968 in Chapel Hill, N.C., McCombs and Shaw examined a representative sample of all voters in Charlotte, N.C, during the summer and fall of 1972.<sup>57</sup> They detected a significant correlation between the emphasis given to an issue by the news

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<sup>52</sup> Bruns, *Blogs, Wikipedia, Second Life and Beyond*, 74.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.* 75.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.* 69-99.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* 76.

<sup>56</sup> Bernard Cohen, *The Press and Foreign Policy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963): 120.

<sup>57</sup> Donald Shaw and Maxwell McCombs, *The Emergence of American Political Issues: The Agenda Setting Function of the Press* (St. Paul: West Publishing, 1977).

media and the perception of the same issue by the general public.<sup>58</sup> Since that study, there have been hundreds of articles dedicated to the agenda-setting influence of the news media. Many of them have followed the original Chapel Hill example and examined political campaigns, while others have monitored public opinion in non-election periods.<sup>59</sup> Later McCombs summarized the necessary conditions for demonstration of the cause-and-effect relationship between media and the public agenda. They include a significant degree of correlation between the presumed cause and its effect; also, among the conditions, is that the cause must precede the effect in time.<sup>60</sup>

Even the mass media agenda can be influenced by external sources, described by the inter-media agenda-setting theory, which is another form of interaction between the mass media outlets. For example, McCombs stated that elite news media frequently exert a substantial influence on the agenda of other news media,<sup>61</sup> and *The New York Times* is one such example.<sup>62</sup> There have been many studies examining the role of elite mass media in setting the agenda for smaller publications.<sup>63</sup> This effect is not limited to the elite mass media only; for example, the film “Schindler’s List” has had a significant influence on the number

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<sup>58</sup> Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw, “The Agenda Setting Function of Mass Media,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 36 (Summer 1972): 176-187.

<sup>59</sup> Maxwell McCombs, *Setting the Agenda: The Mass Media and Public Opinion*, (Polity Publishing, 2006): 36.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>62</sup> Penelope Ploughman, “Disasters, the Media and Social Structures: A Typology of Credibility Hierarchy Persistence Based on Newspaper Coverage of the Love Canal and Six Other Disasters,” *Disasters* 21 (1997): 118-137.

<sup>63</sup> Craig Trumbo, “Longitudinal Modeling of Public Issues: An Application of the Agenda-Setting Process to the Issue of Global Warming,” *Journalism & Mass Communication Monographs* 152 (August 1995): 1-57; David Gold and Jerry Simmons, “News Selection Patterns among Iowa Dailies,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 29 (Fall 1965): 425-30; Charles Whitney and Lee Becker, “Keeping the Gates for Gatekeeper: The Effects of Wire News,” *Journalism Quarterly* 29 (Spring 1982): 60-65.

of articles about the Holocaust in major Canadian newspapers.<sup>64</sup> Development of the Internet contributed to the inter-media agenda-setting theory, and there is already some evidence of how the Internet affects the media agenda.<sup>65</sup> Some behavioral characteristics of the new generation have contributed to this shift, since the younger generation is less exposed to the traditional media than baby boomers.<sup>66</sup> Surveys show that the younger generation prefers to get news on the Internet,<sup>67</sup> which results in variation between the agenda of different populations. The agenda of people who are 18-34 years old is less correlated with the mass media agenda than that of the older group. The recent development of digital communication channels also influences this process. As early as 2001, Metzger and Chaffee defined that digital communication “will change from what issues the media tell people to think about to what issues people tell the media they want to think about.”<sup>68</sup> The Internet enables people to not only set their own media agendas but to influence others’ issue agenda by helping them locate and contact people who care about similar issues. It also gives more power to people who have an agenda item that is not normally reported in the major mass media. Several studies reported that the Internet public agenda does affect the media agenda,<sup>69</sup> and there are

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<sup>64</sup> Stuart Soroka, “Schindler’s List Intermedia Influence: Exploring the Role of “Entertainment” in Media Setting,” *Canadian Journal of Communication* 25 (2000): 211-30.

<sup>65</sup> Patricia Curtin and Kenn Gaither, “International Agenda-Building in Cyberspace: A Quantitative Content Analysis of Middle East Government English-Language Web Sites,” *Annual Meeting of the International Communication Association* (San Diego, CA: May 27, 2003): 1-58.

<sup>66</sup> Renita Coleman and Maxwell McCombs, “The Young and Agenda-Less? Exploring Age-related Differences in Agenda Setting on the Youngest Generation, Baby Boomers, and the Civic Generation,” *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 84 (Autumn 2007): 495-508.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Steven Chaffee and Miriam Metzger, “The End of Mass Communication?” *Mass Communication & Society* 4 (Fall 2001): 365-379.

<sup>69</sup> Yongick Jeong, Koang-Hyub Kim, and Woojung Shin, “Agenda Building Function of Internet Searches: Measuring the Unique Contribution of the Public Agenda on the Media Agenda,” *Annual Meeting of the*

several recent studies showing that the blogosphere has started affecting the media agenda as well. This trend is also supported by the fact that journalists themselves see great potential in the blogosphere's influence on the media. Thirty percent of American journalists visit blogs once a day, and 84 percent of them visited blogs at least once in the given year.<sup>70</sup> The study of the 2004 presidential elections showed strong correlations between blogs and the media agenda, while the effect of election ads on the agenda was less evident.<sup>71</sup> Wallsten identified a bidirectional relationship between blogs and the media agenda.<sup>72</sup> For example, "Baghdad Blogger" Salam Pax, who provided independent reports about the war in Iraq, was quoted by BBC, the *Guardian*, and *The New York Times*.<sup>73</sup>

But the most famous example of the blogosphere setting the agenda for the national media was the case of Senator Trent Lott. In 2002, there was the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday party of longtime South Carolina Senator Strom Thurmond, where Lott was one of the primary speakers. Among other things, he said: "When Strom Thurmond ran for president, we voted

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*International Communication Association* (New York, NY: October 10, 2008); Debashis Aikat, "The Blending of Traditional Media and the Internet: Patterns of Media Agenda Setting and Web Search Trends Before and After the September 11 Attack," *Annual Meeting of the International Communication Association* (New York, NY: October 10, 2008); Gyotae Ku, Lynda Lee Kaid, and Michael Pfau, "The Impact of Web Site Campaigning on Traditional News Media and Public Information Processing," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 80 (Autumn 2003): 528-547.

<sup>70</sup> Marci McCoy Roth, "How Journalists See the Blogosphere," (2004) <http://www.asc.upenn.edu/usr/mmccoy/blogs.pdf> (accessed November 29, 2008).

<sup>71</sup> Kaye Sweetser, Guy Golan and Wayne Wanta, "Intermedia Agenda Setting in Television, Advertising, and Blogs During the 2004," *Mass Communication & Society* 11 (2008): 197-216.

<sup>72</sup> Kevin Wallsten, "Agenda Setting and the Blogosphere: An Analysis of the Relationship between Mainstream Media and Political Blogs," *Review of Policy Research* 24 (November 2007).

<sup>73</sup> Daniel Drezner and Henry Farrell "Web of Influence," *Foreign Policy* 145 (November-December 2004): 32-40; See also Emily Metzgar, "Blogsetting; Traditional Media, Agenda-Setting and the Blogosphere," *Annual Conference of the Southern Political Science Association* (New Orleans, LA: January 2007); Kathy E. Gill "How Can We Measure the Influence of the Blogosphere?" (2004) [http://faculty.washington.edu/kegill/pub/www2004\\_blogosphere\\_gill.pdf](http://faculty.washington.edu/kegill/pub/www2004_blogosphere_gill.pdf) (accessed December 3, 2008); Kevin Wallsten, "The Blogosphere's Influence on Political Discourse: Is Anyone Listening?" *Annual Meeting of the Midwestern Political Science Association* (Chicago, IL: 2007).

for him. We're proud of it. And if the rest of the country had followed our lead, we wouldn't have had all these problems over all these years, either."<sup>74</sup> No journalists except ABC News reporter Ed O'Keefe paid attention to the fact that one of Thurmond's key statements when he was running for president in 1948 was: "All the laws of Washington and all the bayonets of the Army cannot force the Negro into our homes, our schools, our children." This story appeared in the blogosphere on the next day, and users started investigating other statements made by Lott, which turned out to be controversial as well. The mainstream media then paid attention to the blogosphere buzz, and the result of all the investigation was Lott's resignation.<sup>75</sup>

The literature review provided analysis of scholarly literature about contemporary trends in news production and the agenda setting role of the Internet. The following chapter will describe methodology and research questions of the study.

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<sup>74</sup> Hugh Hewitt, *Blog: Understanding the Information Reformation That's Changing Your World* (Nelson Books 2005).

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY**

The review of this relevant literature made me interested in the inter-media agenda-setting role of the blogosphere, particularly as it relates to the Reuters case described in the introduction, which pertains to the doctored photos associated with the Israel-Lebanon conflict in 2006. The research for this thesis will answer the following two research questions:

RQ1: How did blogosphere and mainstream media cover the story about photos doctored by Adnan Hajj? Which frames emerged in the blogosphere and mainstream media?

RQ2: What relationship, if any, is there between the blogosphere and the mainstream media coverage of the situation?

#### *Methodology*

Qualitative content analysis was used to illuminate frames that emerged in the blogosphere discussion and the mainstream media coverage of the doctored photos. Holsti defined content analysis as “any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages.”<sup>76</sup> There are two types of

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<sup>76</sup> Ole R. Holsti, *Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities*, (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1969): 14.

content analysis that are used in mass media research: quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative method is “concerned with the frequency of occurrence of given content characteristics,”<sup>77</sup> while the qualitative content analysis is defined as “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns.”<sup>78</sup> Mayring defined the qualitative method as “an approach of empirical, methodological controlled analysis of texts within their context of communication, following content analytic rules and step-by-step models, without rash quantification.”<sup>79</sup> The application of qualitative content analysis in this particular study was necessary to provide a comprehensive analysis of the frames that have emerged during the discussion of photo doctoring during the Israel-Lebanon conflict in 2006. Numerous studies have employed qualitative content analysis for the framing of different issues, such as health.<sup>80</sup> The list of analyzed types of media outlets included newspapers, movies<sup>81</sup> and photographs.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Alexander George, “Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches to Content Analysis,” in Klaus Krippendorff and Mary Angela Bock, *The Content Analysis Reader*, (Sage Publications, 2008): 144-155.

<sup>78</sup> Hsiu-Fang Hsieh and Sarah Shannon, “Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis,” *Qualitative Health Research*, 15 (2005): 1277-1288.

<sup>79</sup> Philipp Mayring, “Qualitative Content Analysis,” *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 1 (2000): 5, <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1089/2385> page 5 (accessed December 31, 2008).

<sup>80</sup> Jennette Lovejoy, "Framing of Public Health Issues: A Content Analysis of Smoking Ban Coverage in Ohio's Six Major Newspapers," in *Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication* (Washington, August 2007); Amy Busher, “Framing Hillary Clinton: A Content Analysis of the New York Times News Coverage of the 2000 New York Senate Election,” Master’s thesis defended at the *Georgia State University*, (2006) [http://etd.gsu.edu/theses/available/etd-04282006-110950/unrestricted/busher\\_amy\\_200606\\_mast.pdf](http://etd.gsu.edu/theses/available/etd-04282006-110950/unrestricted/busher_amy_200606_mast.pdf) (accessed December 1, 2008).

<sup>81</sup> Thomas Christie and Andrew Clark, "Framing Two Enemies in Mass Media: A Content Analysis of U.S. Government Influence in American Film during World War II," *American Journalism* 25 (Winter 2008): 55-72.

<sup>82</sup> Carol Schwalbe and William Silcock, “Visual Framing of the Early Weeks of the U.S.-Led Invasion of Iraq: Applying the Master War Narrative to Electronic and Print Images,” *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 52 (September 2008): 448-465.

The analysis of the text was conducted using a framing approach. Sociologist Erving Goffman<sup>83</sup> and anthropologist-psychologist Gregory Bateson<sup>84</sup> are the researchers who are often credited for the introduction of the framing approach. The most-comprehensive definition of framing in mass communication was presented by Entman: "To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communication text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem or definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described."<sup>85</sup> Tankard, Hendrickson, Silberman, et al. defined a frame as "the central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration."<sup>86</sup> McCombs pointed out that it is important to distinguish frames that are attributes of the communication presentation and frames that are attributes of the objects being presented.<sup>87</sup> As an example of the first type of frame, he has named page placement, story format, and other mechanisms available to newspaper editors that might influence the level of readership for a specific story among their audience.<sup>88</sup> The

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<sup>83</sup> Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1974).

<sup>84</sup> Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind: Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution, and Epidemiology* (New York: Ballantine, 1972).

<sup>85</sup> Robert Entman, "Framing Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm," *Journal of Communication* 43 (September 1993): 52.

<sup>86</sup> James Tankard and others, "Media Frames: Approaches to Conceptualization and Measurement," in *Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication* (August 1991): 3.

<sup>87</sup> Maxwell McCombs and Salma Ghanem, "Agenda Setting and Framing," in *Framing Public Life* ed. Stephen Reese, Oscar Gandy and August Grant, 67-81 (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2001).

<sup>88</sup> Maxwell McCombs and John Mauro, "Predicting Newspaper Readership From Content Characteristics," *Journalism Quarterly* 54 (1977): 3-49.

second type of frame is presented, for example, by terms that are used for describing the objects.

### *Data Collection*

Data were collected from two types of sources: the blogosphere and mainstream media coverage of photo controversies during the Israel-Lebanon conflict in 2006. Because of the overall complexity of the issues raised in media coverage, the research was limited to the case of the doctored pictures taken by the Reuters photographer Adnan Hajj. This specific case was selected for the research, because (a) the story clearly began in the blogosphere and then spread to mainstream media, (b) the accusations of fraud were ultimately proven to be true, (c) this case resulted in a widespread questioning of the reliability of the media coverage of the conflict, and (d) the large amount of available material allowed for an extensive analysis of the situation, ensuring there is enough material to evaluate potential relationship between the blogosphere and mainstream media discussion. The sources were limited to English-language only.

Studies show that the strongest relationship between the public agenda and media coverage was found when analysis was conducted among the publications during the month immediately prior to the polls.<sup>89</sup> The same principle was applied to the analysis of the inter-media agenda setting between the blogosphere and mainstream media. The doctored pictures appeared in the Reuters sales database on August 5, 2006, and this date was set as the first timeframe for this analysis, while September 5, 2006, was the final timeframe. Both the blog entries and mass media coverage were searched for using the key words “Hajj” and

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<sup>89</sup> McCombs, *Setting the Agenda*, 44.

“Reuters.” Blog entries were accessed via the Google Blog search engine, and the mass media coverage was accessed via the Lexis Nexis database. The latter search was limited to the major U.S. and international English-language publications, including newspaper articles, newswires, and news transcripts from radio and television sources (editorials were not included in to the sample). Although the database contains news stories from the majority of English-language periodicals worldwide, its search capabilities were limited to the major publications, and the results did not include small, local editions. This limitation also affected the search results for radio and television transcripts. Also, although the search terms were appropriate and specific for the analyzed situation, the study may not include all the stories published on the topic of doctored photos, because not all of the stories may have mentioned the name of the photographer. Only this combination of search terms proved to be the most relevant for the purpose of the study and provided a large sample of stories dedicated to the topic. The initial search in the Google Blog Search retrieved 435 entries for period of August 5 – September 5, 2006. The initial search in the Lexis Nexis database among major U.S. and world publications and newswires for the same time period showed 69 results (34 newspaper articles, 17 news transcripts, 16 newswires, 1 magazine, 1 trade press publication, and 1 aggregate news source). In order to narrow down the number of items for analysis, randomized sampling was used. The search results were sorted by date of publication, and every sixth blog entry and every second media publication were selected, which made the total number of analyzed items of about 30 items from each type of source. All the duplicates and articles or blog entries that contain less than 10 percent of content describing the subject of the study were eliminated as irrelevant from the search results before the sampling.

### *Data Analysis*

The first phase of the analysis was dedicated to qualitative content analysis. The study employed a conventional approach to the qualitative content analysis, suggested by Hsieh and Shannon, where coding categories were derived directly and inductively from the raw data.<sup>90</sup> Themes of the story were used as units of content analysis. Data analysis started with a thorough reading of all data in order to obtain a sense of all the material. Then the materials were read word-by-word, wherein exact words that capture the themes of the news story or blog entry were highlighted. Next, the researcher read the texts one more time and marked them with the first set of labels for codes that reflected the themes covered in the texts. The labels that were reflective of more than one key theme were identified during the further analysis and included into the initial coding scheme. These codes were then sorted into 11 categories. Since the categories were developed inductively from raw data, the researcher used the constant comparison method to distinguish the categories and collapse them into narrow list.<sup>91</sup> It was possible that a body of text could belong simultaneously to more than one category.

Once the complete list of coding categories was gathered, the preliminary coding protocol was developed. Together with the qualitative categories, it included quantitative categories, such as type of medium (newspaper, news wire, blog entry, etc.), country of origin, date of publication, the outlet's circulation, and number of words. The test coding of a sample text was conducted to test the clarity and consistency of category definitions. The

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<sup>90</sup> Hsiu-Fang Hsieh and Sarah Shannon, "Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis."

<sup>91</sup> Barney G. Glaser and Anselm Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. (New York: Aldine Publishing Company, 1967).

next step was to code all the materials selected for the research sample. The following chapter provides detailed results of the performed qualitative content analysis.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

The search yielded a total of 331 blog entries and 69 mainstream media publications for the period from August 5, 2006 until September 5, 2006. The final coding sample was constructed using the random sampling procedure. Every second article and every sixth blog entry were selected for the analysis, which resulted in 55 blog entries and 34 mainstream media publications total. Twenty-two blog entries were eliminated from the sample for being either irrelevant, or a broken link. Two articles were eliminated from the mainstream media search results as they were copies of existing articles, and three items were eliminated for their lack of relevance to the topic at hand.

Bloggers were the first to publish information about the Reuters scandal involving a manipulated picture from Beirut. The initial entry was published on August 5, 2006, by Charles Johnson, a political blogger, who runs a Web site called Little Green Footballs.<sup>92</sup> The mainstream media began covering the story two days later on August 7, 2006.

The chapter is divided into three sections: (a) the description of the Reuters official statements, which were used as an information subsidy by both media platforms, (b) the description of the blogosphere coverage of the case, and (c) the description of the mainstream media response to the situation. Each of the two latter sections begins with general characteristics, such as main themes, the timeline of the coverage, and the most-popular

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<sup>92</sup> *Little Green Footballs*, <http://littlegreenfootballs.com> (accessed March 13, 2009).

topics. General information is followed by a detailed description as to how each theme was presented by authors and quoted sources.

### *Reuters' Official Statements*

Reuters issued two official statements as a response to the discovery of altered photographs (see Appendices 1 and 2). The first statement was published on August 6, 2006 — the day after the first picture was discovered. Reuters confirmed that the photograph was digitally manipulated using Photoshop software. The agency then announced the termination of all contracts with the offending photographer, Adnan Hajj. Moira Whittle, the head of public relations for Reuters, said that the photographer had denied charges of deliberate manipulation, claiming that he was trying to remove dust marks.<sup>93</sup> The first statement also mentions that Adnan Hajj was one of the photographers accused of taking staged pictures in the Village of Qana, Lebanon, a week before the doctored picture was discovered. The last paragraph of the statement, however, states that Reuters had reviewed the images from Qana and rejected the allegations.

The second official statement was made on August 7, 2006, after the second manipulation was discovered. The photograph featured defensive flares of an Israeli F-16 warplane, in which the doctoring portrayed three flares as opposed to one. Reuters announced that it withdrew all pictures by Adnan Hajj from its database, and tightened editing procedures for photographs from the conflict. The agency also apologized for the case. Reuters stated that “questions about the accuracy of the photograph arose after it

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<sup>93</sup> “Reuters drops freelance Lebanese photographer over image,” August 6, 2006, FreePublic <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1678852/posts> (last accessed March 13, 2006).

appeared in news Web sites on Saturday.” “Several blogs, including a number which accuse the media of distorted coverage of the Middle East conflict, said the photograph had been doctored,” says the statement.<sup>94</sup>

### *Blogosphere Coverage*

The final sample of blogosphere coverage included 33 blog entries. A majority of these publications were published during first three days of the scandal, while single entries appeared throughout the month following the discovery of the picture. Three main themes emerged from the selected blog entries: (a) the presentation of the facts about the story, (b) the political bias of Reuters or the mainstream media in general, and (c) the relationship between the blogosphere and the mainstream media.

**Table 1. Timeline of the Blogosphere Coverage.**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Just Facts About the Story</b>	<b>Political Bias</b>	<b>Blogs vs. Mainstream Media</b>	<b>Total Number of Entries</b>
8-6-2006	4	1	1	6
8-7-2006	9	2	-	11
8-8-2006	4	2	-	6
8-9-2006	-	2	1	3
8-10-2006	-	2	-	2
8-11-2006	-	1	-	1
8-13-2006	-	-	1	1
8-15-2006	-	1	-	1
8-18-2006	-	1	-	1
8-28-2006	1	-	-	1
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>33</b>

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<sup>94</sup> Reuters on the Run, *Little Green Footballs*, August 7, 2006, [http://littlegreenfootballs.com/article/21976\\_Reuters\\_on\\_the\\_Run](http://littlegreenfootballs.com/article/21976_Reuters_on_the_Run) (accessed on March 12, 2006).

The most popular type of story coverage comprised general facts about the altered picture. These stories appeared during the first three days after the discovery of the inaccuracy of the photograph, while the discussion of the media bias appeared consistently during the first week. The blogosphere did not pay specific attention to the fact that bloggers kept the mainstream media accountable, and only three stories in the sample were dedicated to this topic.

About one-third of bloggers included both the actual picture and its altered version. Furthermore, once a second manipulation was revealed on August 6, 2006, it was discussed by approximately a third of these bloggers as well.

#### Theme 1: Facts About the Case

When presenting the facts of the case, bloggers discussed the discovery of photograph manipulations. The stories that appeared on August 5, 2006 focused primarily on the fact that Reuters published a fake photograph. The entries that were published on the next day focused primarily on the fact that Reuters terminated its relationship with Adnan Hajj. Along with his termination, the agency announced “it would not use any more of his pictures after he doctored an image of the aftermath of an Israeli air strike on Beirut.”<sup>95</sup> The entries that were published later had a variety of different leads. Although the majority of entries were dedicated to the picture with the altered smoke — the airplane photo mentioned only as background information — a detailed description of the picture was provided further in the text and not in the lead.

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<sup>95</sup> “Reuters drops freelance Lebanese photographer over image,” August 6, 2006, FreePublic <http://www.freepublic.com/focus/f-news/1678852/posts> (accessed March 13, 2006).

Almost every author indicated that the picture was digitally manipulated. In addition to the word “doctored,” authors often mentioned the software program Photoshop® to describe the process of image alteration. Of particular concern to half of these authors was explaining that the manipulation did, namely, “intensif[y] the blackness of the smoke,”<sup>96</sup> “double the billow,”<sup>97</sup> and “add substantiality to the density of the smoke.”<sup>98</sup> Seven bloggers indicated specifically that the changes “made the devastation look twice as bad as it actually was,”<sup>99</sup> “[increased] the scale of the damage,”<sup>100</sup> or “made it appear the damage was more widespread than in fact it was.”<sup>101</sup> Some authors indicated that the photographer was trying to “exaggerate the impact of Israel’s attacking of Hezbollah in Beirut,”<sup>102</sup> or “to make the IAF attacks on Beirut look worse than they were.”<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Jack Cohen, "They Lie and Cheat," *ISBLOG*, August 18, 2006, <http://commentfromisraelblog.blogspot.com/2006/08/they-lie-and-cheat.html> (accessed March 20, 2009).

<sup>97</sup> Bryant Macale, "Media More Accountable Now Because of Bloggers," *Bryanton Post*, August 09, 2006, <http://bryantonpost.blogspot.com/2006/08/media-more-accountable-now-because-of.html> (accessed March 16, 2009).

<sup>98</sup> Roy Greenslade, "Reuters Axes Photographer Over Doctored Picture," *Greenslade Blog*, August 07, 2006, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/greenslade/2006/aug/07/reutersaxesphotographerover> (accessed March 16, 2009).

<sup>99</sup> Gal Beckerman, "Reuters Takes a Hit in the War on the MSM," *Columbia Journalism Review*, August 08, 2006, [http://www.cjr.org/behind\\_the\\_news/reuters\\_takes\\_a\\_hit\\_in\\_the\\_war.php](http://www.cjr.org/behind_the_news/reuters_takes_a_hit_in_the_war.php) (accessed March 16, 2009). (Columbia Journalism Review is not just a standalone blog, it is a news magazine that serves as a media critique.)

<sup>100</sup> Roy Greenslade, "Reuters Axes Photographer Over Doctored Picture"

<sup>101</sup> Jack Kelly, "Al-Reuters: Hezbollah Propagandist," *To the Point News*, August 10, 2006, [http://www.tothepointnews.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=2392&Itemid=130](http://www.tothepointnews.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2392&Itemid=130) (accessed March 10, 2009).

<sup>102</sup> Jake Tapper, "Photoshop Propaganda," *Political Punch*, August 11, 2006, [http://blogs.abcnews.com/politicalpunch/2006/08/photoshop\\_propa.html](http://blogs.abcnews.com/politicalpunch/2006/08/photoshop_propa.html) (accessed March 12, 2009).

<sup>103</sup> Jack Cohen, "They Lie and Cheat"

In addition to pointing out this manipulation, several authors also wrote on the obviousness of the manipulation, using such descriptions as: “poorly doctored,”<sup>104</sup> “low-quality [P]hotoshopping,”<sup>105</sup> and “blatant doctoring.”<sup>106</sup> One, in a more judgmental tone, wrote that the “photo was doctored so clumsily as to be almost laughable.”<sup>107</sup> Several bloggers also indicated that anyone could have taken note of such changes. Blogger Vanishing American wrote, “it does not take the eye of photographic expert, or any kind of enhanced viewing to spot the obvious alteration.”<sup>108</sup> Harold Davis of Photoblog 2.0 also noted, that “the manipulation is pretty obvious at sight to anyone who is familiar with the way the cloning tool works.”<sup>109</sup>

A second theme associated with uncovering the fraud was the consequences of the lack of authenticity of the photographs. More than half of these bloggers used information from either of the two Reuters’ official statements (see Appendix 1 and 2). Kim Priestap of Wizbangblog quoted the entire first statement,<sup>110</sup> while most authors preferred to use separate quotes, such as one from Reuters’ spokeswoman Moira Whittle, who said, “[the doctored

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<sup>104</sup> Gal Beckerman, "Reuters Takes a Hit in the War on the MSM"

<sup>105</sup> "Reuters Paints a False Picture of the Israel/Hezbollah War," *Dinocrat.Com*, August 6, 2006, <http://www.dinocrat.com/archives/2006/08/06/msm-paints-a-false-picture-of-the-israel-hezbollah-war/> (accessed March 12, 2009).

<sup>106</sup> Gal Beckerman, "Reuters Takes a Hit in the War on the MSM"

<sup>107</sup> Vanishing American, "Smoke and Mirrors," *Vanishing American*, August 9, 2006, <http://vanishingamerican.blogspot.com/2006/08/smoke-and-mirrors.html> (accessed March 12, 2009).

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Harold Davis, "A Pixel Is a Pixel," *Photoblog 2.0*, August 10, 2006, <http://www.digitalfieldguide.com/blog/582> (accessed March 12, 2009).

<sup>110</sup> Kim Priestap, "Reuters Fires Lebanese Photo Faker," *Wizbang Blog*, August 6, 2006, <http://wizbangblog.com/content/2006/08/06/reuters-fires-lebanese-photo-f.php> (accessed March 12, 2009).

photograph] represents a serious breach of Reuters' standards."<sup>111</sup> Others quoted the information from the statements in an indirect way. For example, Jack Kelly wrote, "Reuters announced Sunday (August 6), that it was suspending its relationship with Adnan Hajj, a freelance photographer in Lebanon who had worked for the British news service since 1993, because he doctored a photograph in the aftermath of an Israeli air strike in south Beirut."<sup>112</sup> Although almost all of these bloggers used some information from the agency's statement, only two authors mentioned that Reuters apologized for the accident. Two other bloggers informed their readers that the agency had also tightened editing procedures for images in the Middle East, so that all the photos would be reviewed by the most senior editor on the Reuters Global Pictures Desk.<sup>113</sup>

A third theme that emerged involved the bloggers' attempts to get information as to why the picture was altered and who was responsible for the alteration. None of these blogs had any quotes from Adnan Hajj himself. Some of the bloggers did not suggest their own explanation, and preferred, rather, to use the official Reuters' response: "The photographer has denied deliberately attempting to manipulate the image, saying that he was trying to remove dust marks and that he made mistakes due to the bad lighting conditions he was working under," Moira Whittle said.<sup>114</sup> Only six bloggers used this explanation in their

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<sup>111</sup> Roy Greenslade, "Reuters Axes Photographer Over Doctored Picture."

<sup>112</sup> Jack Kelly, "Al-Reuters: Hezbollah Propagandist."

<sup>113</sup> Shane Richmond, "Where There's Smoke," *Shane Richmond on Technology*, August 2006, 2006, [http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/shane\\_richmond/blog/2006/08/07/where\\_theres\\_smoke](http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/shane_richmond/blog/2006/08/07/where_theres_smoke) (accessed March 16, 2009); Bene Diction, "Information Fraud - Faking Celebrity and War," *Bene Diction Blogs On*, August 7, 2006, <http://www.benedictionblogson.com/2006/08/07/information-fraud-faking-celebrity-and-war/> (accessed March 12, 2009).

<sup>114</sup> Kim Priestap, "Reuters Fires Lebanese Photo Faker."

entries, and one commented that “this was a terrible excuse.”<sup>115</sup> Another blogger referred to this statement, saying “Hajj himself gave no answer. Neither did Reuters.”<sup>116</sup>

In general, about half of the blogosphere authors addressed potential reasons for the photographer’s actions. Some of them suggested that Hajj was trying to improve the picture. For example, Gal Beckerman of *Columbia Journalism Review* speculated that the photographer panicked when he did not get a good picture: “I bet what happened is that he ... came away with nothing but bad shots, and made a poor choice in a moment of desperation. Nothing necessarily political about it.”<sup>117</sup> Harold Davis of Photoblog 2.0 posited that the photographer was most interested in the financial return of a photograph. “It is not clear whether the purpose of the digital manipulation was politically biased, or rather (more likely) to make the manipulated photograph more salable.”<sup>118</sup> Similarly, Forkum of Cox and Forkum, believed that the dramatic effect overrode sound judgment by the photographer: “... [A]pparently the photographer thought the photo of Beirut being bombed wasn’t dramatic enough.”<sup>119</sup> Although Hajj received the most blame, another author suggested that “the blame belongs with the editing staff at Reuters,”<sup>120</sup> who did not notice the alterations of the photograph.

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<sup>115</sup> "Reuters Drops the Ball," *Cynics Unlimited*, August 6, 2006, <http://www.cynicsunlimited.com/2006/08/07/reuters-drops-the-ball/> (accessed March 12, 2009).

<sup>116</sup> Gal Beckerman, "Reuters Takes a Hit in the War on the MSM."

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Harold Davis, "A Pixel Is a Pixel."

<sup>119</sup> Allen Forkum, "First Causalty," *Cox and Forkum*, August 6, 2006, <http://www.coxandforkum.com/archives/000903.html> (accessed March 12, 2009).

<sup>120</sup> "Reuters Drops the Ball," *Cynics Unlimited*.

Bloggers were not particularly active in quoting different types of sources. Although about half of their entries quoted or referred to Reuters' statement in some way, only two bloggers used other sources such as a professional photographer or another blogger. Twelve bloggers credited Little Green Footballs blog for discovering the pictures, and another eight authors credited Charles Johnson himself with a note about Rathergate (In 2004, CBS anchor Dan Rather presented six documents critical of President George W. Bush's service in the Air National Guard in 1972-1973. Charles Johnson was the one who proved that the documents were fake.<sup>121</sup>). Along with using quotes from external sources, eight bloggers also provided some background facts and mentioned other evidence of altered pictures or biased media coverage. The majority of these bloggers wrote about the potentially staged pictures in Qana. In this case, Salam Daher, a member of civil defense, was accused of posing in front of cameras with bodies of dead children in the village of Qana, Lebanon, after an Israeli attack on July 30, 2006. Richard North, a contributor of the *EU Referendum* blog, is credited for the investigation of this story. He produced a 75-page report with a detailed description of the photos he claimed to be staged.<sup>122</sup> Journalists, however, did not confirm the staging and claimed that North had no substantial evidence.<sup>123</sup>

Many of the entries published by bloggers were not limited to the facts of the manipulation. The following section discusses the political angle presented by bloggers.

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<sup>121</sup> Derick Vollrath, "Little Green Footballs Plays Big Role in Rathergate," *Blogs We Like*, [http://journalism.nyu.edu/pubzone/blogswelike/little\\_green\\_footballs\\_plays\\_b/](http://journalism.nyu.edu/pubzone/blogswelike/little_green_footballs_plays_b/) (accessed March 12, 2009).

<sup>122</sup> Richard North, "The Corruption of the Media," *EU Referendum*, August 28, 2006, <http://eureferendum.blogspot.com/2006/08/corruption-of-media.html> (accessed March 20, 2006).

<sup>123</sup> Jefferson Morley, "The Qana Conspiracy Theory," *World Opinion Roundup*, August 2, 2006, [http://blog.washingtonpost.com/worldopinionroundup/2006/08/the\\_qana\\_conspiracy\\_theory.html](http://blog.washingtonpost.com/worldopinionroundup/2006/08/the_qana_conspiracy_theory.html) (accessed March 20, 2006).

## Theme 2: Political Bias

The majority of the bloggers expressed concern over the political nature of the incident, accusing either the photographer or the agency itself of political bias. Six bloggers noted specifically that the photographer wanted to make Israel look bad. Nine authors emphasized that Adnan Hajj was also accused of taking staged pictures in Qana a week before the altered Beirut picture was discovered. One blogger said, “maybe I’m wrong in assuming this but I’d bet this guy is as anti-Israel and pro Hezbollah [sic] as they come.”<sup>124</sup>

In some entries, the discussion shifted to the political bias of Reuters: “Many media organizations are known to have an anti-Israel bias.... One of these is the Reuters news agency.”<sup>125</sup> Jonathan R. of *GopBloggers* wrote, “Reuters has long held an anti-American, anti-Israel bias.”<sup>126</sup> Another author wrote that a “random review of TV news feeds by Reuters ... show[s] a decided tilt against Israel,”<sup>127</sup> and that “the great majority of Reuters’ multiple daily news feeds monitored by Worldcasting seemed to examine events through Hezbollah’s prism.”<sup>128</sup> Some publications refer to the agency as Al-Reuters: “Al-Reuters is

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<sup>124</sup> Markedmanner, "Reuters Doctoring Photos!" *Markedmanner*, August 06, 2006, <http://www.markedmanner.com/2006/08/reuters-doctoring-photos.html> (accessed March 12, 2009).

<sup>125</sup> Jack Cohen, "They Lie and Cheat"

<sup>126</sup> "Reuters Admits Doctoring Photographs; Was Qana Staged?," *Gopbloggers*, August 7, 2006, <http://www.gopbloggers.org/mt/archives/004001.html> (accessed March 12, 2009).

<sup>127</sup> Alvin Snyder, "Reutersgate' Becomes an Issue in Reporting the Israel-Hezbollah War," *Public Diplomacy Blog*, August 9, 2006, [http://usepublicdiplomacy.com/index.php/newsroom/pdblog\\_detail/060810\\_reutersgate\\_becomes\\_an\\_issue\\_in\\_reporting\\_the\\_israel\\_hezbollah\\_war/](http://usepublicdiplomacy.com/index.php/newsroom/pdblog_detail/060810_reutersgate_becomes_an_issue_in_reporting_the_israel_hezbollah_war/) (accessed March 12, 2009).

<sup>128</sup> Alvin Snyder, "Reutersgate' Becomes an Issue in Reporting the Israel-Hezbollah War"

anti-American and anti-Israel.”<sup>129</sup> Randy of RightWinged used the title, “Adnan Hajj Reloaded - Another Hajj/Al-Reuters Photoshop.”<sup>130</sup> Jack Kelly from the ToThePointNews accused the agency of promoting Hezbollah’s interests and called Reuters a “Hezbollah propagandist.”<sup>131</sup> An author from CynicsUnlimited questioned the credibility of the agency, writing that “Reuters gives the public no reason to trust their reports any more than those of any idealist with a Blogspot account,”<sup>132</sup> and adding that it had lost “any media source’s most important asset – credibility.”<sup>133</sup>

A second theme that emerged in the political discussion of this case was the political bias of mass media in general. One of the bloggers referred to the altered picture as a “manipulation of media images for propagandistic purposes.”<sup>134</sup> An author from the Vanishing American wrote that there was a “definite pattern of deception and falsifying going on”<sup>135</sup> in the coverage of the Israel-Lebanon conflict. Alvin Snyder, who contributes to The Public Diplomacy Blog, described the media coverage of the Middle East events by stating that “the media ha[ve] chosen sides in the Israel-Lebanon War, and much is ugly.”<sup>136</sup> Gal Beckerman of the *Columbia Journalism Review* also agreed that “there is pro-Hezbollah

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<sup>129</sup> "Reuters Withdraws All Hajj Photos," *Morning Coffee*, August 7, 2006, <http://morningcoffee.wordpress.com/2006/08/07/reuters-withdraws-all-hajj-photos/> (accessed March 12, 2009).

<sup>130</sup> Randy, "Adnan Hajj Reloaded - Another Hajj/Al-Reuters Photoshop," *Rightwinged*, August 28, 2006, [http://www.rightwinged.com/2006/08/adnan\\_hajj\\_reloaded\\_another\\_hajjalreuters\\_pho.html](http://www.rightwinged.com/2006/08/adnan_hajj_reloaded_another_hajjalreuters_pho.html) (accessed March 12, 2009).

<sup>131</sup> Jack Kelly, "Al-Reuters: Hezbollah Propagandist"

<sup>132</sup> "Reuters Drops the Ball," *Cynics Unlimited*.

<sup>133</sup> "Reuters Drops the Ball," *Cynics Unlimited*.

<sup>134</sup> Jake Tapper, "Photoshop Propaganda," *Political Punch*, August 11, 2006, [http://blogs.abcnews.com/politicalpunch/2006/08/photoshop\\_propa.html](http://blogs.abcnews.com/politicalpunch/2006/08/photoshop_propa.html) (accessed March 12, 2009).

<sup>135</sup> Vanishing American, "Smoke and Mirrors"

<sup>136</sup> Alvin Snyder, "Reutersgate' Becomes an Issue in Reporting the Israel-Hezbollah War"

bias on the part of the mainstream media.”<sup>137</sup> He also emphasized that this photograph does not represent a single incident and that “this type of chicanery by photographers who are politically motivated happens all the time.”<sup>138</sup>

A specific emphasis was made on the role of Hezbollah in the media coverage of the conflict. Two bloggers published testimonials from CNN’s journalists Nic Robertson and Anderson Cooper, who revealed the routine mechanics of the “Hezbollywood propaganda tour.”<sup>139</sup> The same blogger provided statements by photographer Bryan Denton, who had observed routine staging of photos by Lebanese stringers and confirmed that those were not isolated incidents.<sup>140</sup> More than a half of these bloggers mentioned the Qana attack that happened on July 31, 2006, in which “photographs of the victims were ‘stage-managed’ by Hezbollah.”<sup>141</sup> One author wrote, “there have been questions about Qana the news media have made little effort to answer.”<sup>142</sup>

In summary, the bloggers included their opinions about political agendas of the photographer, Reuters, and news media in general as they discussed the manipulated photograph of the Beirut bombing. Additionally, bloggers praised their peers for being first to reveal the story and scooping the mainstream media.

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<sup>137</sup> Gal Beckerman, "Reuters Takes a Hit in the War on the MSM"

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Alvin Snyder, "Reutersgate' Becomes an Issue in Reporting the Israel-Hezbollah War."; Michelle Malkin, "Fauxtography: The Media Scandal Continues," *VDARE*, August 15, 2006, [http://www.vdare.com/malkin/060815\\_fauxtography.htm](http://www.vdare.com/malkin/060815_fauxtography.htm) (accessed March 12, 2009).

<sup>140</sup> Michelle Malkin, "Fauxtography: The Media Scandal Continues"

<sup>141</sup> Jake Tapper, "Photoshop Propaganda"

<sup>142</sup> Jack Kelly, "Al-Reuters: Hezbollah Propagandist"

### Theme 3: Blogosphere versus Mainstream Media

The fact that the doctored photograph was discovered by a blogger led some authors to discuss the relationship between the blogosphere and the mainstream media. Several entries speculated about some kind of war between these two media platforms, framing the revelation as a “huge victory of blogosphere,”<sup>143</sup> and an “online war in which bloggers have taken on the mainstream media.”<sup>144</sup> Two bloggers even noted that Charles Johnson received an email threat from one of Reuters’ staff member some time before the picture was discovered.<sup>145</sup>

Many of these authors referred to blogosphere as a watchdog for mainstream media accuracy. Blogger Cassandra 2004 quoted an article published in the *Jerusalem Post*, which said that “the fact that the online community rather than fellow mainstream media has become a watchdog of accuracy has surprised many who originally derided blogs as being ‘devoid of accuracy.’”<sup>146</sup> Jay Currie tried to describe a role of the blogosphere in the modern media arena, saying that “this was a great example of how blogs can do what the mainstream media is apparently unable to do: fact check and call obvious political bias.”<sup>147</sup> He added that “there are literally tens of thousands of bloggers engaged with this and they bring a huge set

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<sup>143</sup> "Reuters Drops the Ball," *Cynics Unlimited*.

<sup>144</sup> "Reutersgate Widening and Deepening," *The Cassandra Page*, August 12, 2006, <http://cassandra2004.blogspot.com/2006/08/reutersgate-widening-and-deepening.html> (accessed March 12, 2009).

<sup>145</sup> Alvin Snyder, "Reutersgate' Becomes an Issue in Reporting the Israel-Hezbollah War."; Tony Harris, Howard Kurtz, Brent Sadler and John Vause, "How Much Coverage of Terror Plots is Too Much?; Is Coverage of Mideast Conflict Fair?," *Reliable Sources at CNN*, August 13, 2006.

<sup>146</sup> "Reutersgate Widening and Deepening"

<sup>147</sup> Jay Currie, "Is Beirut Burning... No, Seriously," *Jay Currie*, August 6, 2006, <http://jaycurrie.info-syn.com/is-beirut-burning-no-seriously/> (accessed March 12, 2009).

of skills to detecting and revealing the frauds the MSM either try to perpetrate or are complicit in passing on.”<sup>148</sup>

The two Reuters statements indicated that the manipulation was revealed online. The agency even agreed with the scrutiny of the blogosphere. “I welcome, and Reuters welcomes, the scrutiny we come under from bloggers,” Paul Holmes, political and news editor at Reuters said in interview with the BBC Newsnight, “It makes [the] media more accountable,” he said,<sup>149</sup> adding: “I’m glad that we are being held up to this kind of scrutiny.”<sup>150</sup>

The blogosphere covered three main themes in the discussion of the doctored images from Beirut. Among other things, bloggers accused the mainstream media in political bias and unfair coverage of the Israel-Lebanon military conflict. The mainstream media reacted to the incident two days after the altered photograph was discovered.

### *Mainstream Media Coverage*

The final sample of mainstream media sources included 29 items. The first stories were published a day after the picture was discovered. Furthermore, the majority of items pertaining to this story appeared during the period from August 7-9, 2006. As is the case of the blogosphere coverage, three main themes emerged from the selected publications: (a) the presentation of the facts about the story, (b) the political bias of Reuters or the mainstream media in general, and (c) the relationship between the blogosphere and mainstream media.

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<sup>148</sup> Jay Currie, "Is Beirut Burning... No, Seriously"

<sup>149</sup> Bryant Macale, "Media More Accountable Now Because of Bloggers"

<sup>150</sup> Shane Richmond, "Where There's Smoke"

**Table 2. Timeline of the Mainstream Media Coverage.**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Just Facts About the Story</b>	<b>Political Bias</b>	<b>Blogs vs. Mainstream Media</b>	<b>Total Number of Items</b>
8-5-2006	-	-	-	-
8-6-2006	-	-	-	-
8-7-2006	4	-	2	6
8-8-2006	5	2	1	8
8-9-2006	-	1	4	5
8-10-2006	-	-	1	1
8-11-2006	-	-	1	1
8-13-2006	-	2	1	3
8-14-2006	-	-	1	1
8-16-2006	-	2	1	3
8-18-2006	-	-	1	1
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>29</b>

The most popular theme of the coverage was the relationship between the blogosphere and the mainstream media. Almost equal attention was given to presenting facts about the case and the political bias. Newspapers were the primary type of media in the sample; other media outlets included radio, TV, and wire sources (see Table 3). The newspaper materials included news stories, editorials and columns.

**Table 3. Types of the Mainstream Media Outlets.**

<b>Type of Media</b>	<b>Number of Items</b>
Newspaper	20
Radio	1
Wire	2
TV	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>29</b>

The sample included items from four countries, with prevalence of U.S. publications (see Table 4).

**Table 4. Mainstream Media Publications Split by Countries.**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Number of Publications</b>
USA	17
United Kingdom	5
Canada	3
Israel	4
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>29</b>

About 25 percent of publications showed the actual picture and its altered version, and once a second manipulation had been revealed on August 6, 2006; about half discussed this as well.

#### Theme 1: Facts about the Case

While presenting facts pertaining to this case, the mainstream media also focused on the discovery of photograph manipulations. The mainstream media's discussion provided practically the same information about the doctored photograph as the blogosphere. The vast majority of publications mentioned that the picture was digitally manipulated and exhibited smoke as being darker and more pervasive than in the original. Some of the authors or quoted sources paid attention to the fact that the changes portrayed the destruction of Beirut differently. Kathleen Parker of *The Philadelphia Inquirer* wrote that the picture "was altered to make damage from the strike seem much worse than it was,"<sup>151</sup> which is similar to what bloggers had said about the image. Geoff Dyer noted in his article for the British newspaper *The Observer* that the smoke has been added "to increase scale and intensity of the

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<sup>151</sup> Kathleen Parker, "When War Isn't Reliable," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 10, 2006.

destruction.”<sup>152</sup> Howard Kurtz, an anchor on CNN, described the changes were “making it look like there was more damage than was actually the case.”<sup>153</sup> Some sources employed a more judgmental tone by calling the alteration “amateurish,”<sup>154</sup> “clumsy”<sup>155</sup> or “beyond stupid.”<sup>156</sup> *The Jerusalem Post* noted that the picture “was so clearly doctored,” that many had questioned how it made it past the Reuters photo editor.<sup>157</sup>

In regard to explaining why the photograph was altered, the mainstream media provided the information from the first official statement, which claimed that the photographer was trying to remove dust marks (see Appendix 1). The mainstream media spoke to some of the Reuters’ staff and received a more detailed official position on the situation. The Morning Show on National Public Radio invited Garry Hershorn, Reuters photo editor, for an interview on August 8, 2006, where he suggested that the photographer “was trying to take a picture and make it better, rather than trying to take a picture and make a statement.”<sup>158</sup> Hershorn also explained that a potential reason as to why the picture was published in the database, was that it was a possible staff mistake. He stated: “I’ll be honest with you, this one [smoke picture] slipped through the system. It just came in, a photo editor

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<sup>152</sup> Geoff Dyer, "Comment: No Surprise that the Camera Lies: In Wars from the Crimea to Lebanon, Manipulating Images Has Been a Stock in Trade for Photographers," *The Observer*, August 13, 2006.

<sup>153</sup> Tony Harris, Howard Kurtz, Brent Sadler and John Vause, "How Much Coverage of Terror Plots is Too Much?; Is Coverage of Mideast Conflict Fair?," *Reliable Sources at CNN*, August 13, 2006.

<sup>154</sup> Renee Montagne, "Reuters Retracts Altered Beirut Photo," *National Public Radio*, August 8, 2006.

<sup>155</sup> *The Toronto Star*, "And Now It's Reutersgate," August 9, 2006.

<sup>156</sup> Deborah Howell, "A War of Images and Perceptions," *The Washington Post*, August 13, 2006.

<sup>157</sup> Sheera Claire Frenkel, "Reuters Pulls 'Doctored' War Photo. Web Logs Claim Victory in Battle Against Mainstream Media," *The Jerusalem Post*, August 7, 2006.

<sup>158</sup> Renee Montagne, "Reuters Retracts Altered Beirut Photo," *National Public Radio*, August 8, 2006.

looked at it, coded it, and sent to our clients.”<sup>159</sup> CNN’s Paula Zahn’s TV show invited Reuters global photo editor Paul Holmes, who said, “[Hajj] said he was doing it to try to remove dust specks from the image. We didn’t find that explanation convincing, so we told him that we would no longer use his photos.” As Hershorn did, Holmes also blamed the Reuters staff for the fact that the picture was made public. “It was handled by someone on a very busy day at a more junior level than we would wish for in ideal circumstances,” he said. Hershorn added the accident was the result of “human error,” not malicious intent.<sup>160</sup>

Another theme that emerged in the explanation of this case was the discussion of the conditions of military conflict. Sheera Frenkel, a journalist for *The Jerusalem Post*, referred to some of her sources, who said that, “since the violence began news agencies had to increasingly rely on freelance photographers and writers to cover the breaking news events in the region.”<sup>161</sup> *The Washington Post* quoted Joe Elbert, its assistant managing editor for photography, who pointed out the shortcoming of working with freelancers. “Some freelance photographers lack journalistic training. They are not operating under the same standards as most photographers throughout the world,” Elbert said.<sup>162</sup>

A third theme associated with this case was the Reuters response to the situation. Almost all publications mentioned that the agency fired Adnan Hajj and removed all 920 of his photographs from the database, while only one article mentioned that Reuters apologized

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Ben Wedeman, et al., "Israel Attacks Palestinian Refugee Camp in Lebanon; United Nations Debates Rival Middle East Peace Plans; How High Will Gas Prices Go?," *CNN News International*, August 8, 2006.

<sup>161</sup> Sheera Claire Frenkel, "Reuters Pulls 'Doctored' War Photo. Web Logs Claim Victory in Battle Against Mainstream Media," *The Jerusalem Post*, August 7, 2006.

<sup>162</sup> Deborah Howell, "A War of Images and Perceptions."

for the accident.<sup>163</sup> Furthermore, three items included the information that agency had tightened its editing policy for photographs coming from the Middle East.<sup>164</sup> Chris Johns, editor-in-chief at *National Geographic*, was invited to CNN, where he said that “Reuters did exactly what should be done. They were transparent. They were open. Openly admitted the error and removed the photographs, and I think took a very difficult situation and handled it well.”<sup>165</sup> Shane Richmond, news editor of Telegraph.co.uk, was quoted in *The Guardian*, as saying, “Reuters, for example, responded to the Hajj claims with speed and transparency.”<sup>166</sup> Charles Johnson was invited to CNN, and also provided a positive evaluation of the agency’s actions. He said, “I think overall, they did handle it pretty well.” Johnson, however, as well as two other sources in other publications, suggested that the agency should had evaluated all 920 photos taken by Hajj and make the results of this investigation public.<sup>167</sup> There were negative evaluations as well. A *Toronto Star* journalist wrote, “that’s no defense for the

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<sup>163</sup> Sheera Claire Frenkel, "Reuters Pulls 'Doctored' War Photo. Web Logs Claim Victory in Battle Against Mainstream Media," *The Jerusalem Post*, August 7, 2006.

<sup>164</sup> Seth Sutel, "Reuters Cuts Ties with Photographer over Manipulated Images," *Associated Press Finacial Wire*, August 8, 2006; Katharine Q. Seelye and Julia Bosman, "Bloggers Drive Inquiry on How Altered Images Saw Print," *The New York Times*, August 9, 2006. Deborah Howell, "A War of Images and Perceptions"

<sup>165</sup> Ben Wedeman, et al., "Israel Attacks Palestinian Refugee Camp in Lebanon; United Nations Debates Rival Middle East Peace Plans; How High Will Gas Prices Go?"

<sup>166</sup> Patrick Barkham, "Media: Spot the Difference; After a blogger Revealed that a Mainstream News Agency Was Using Images Doctored by a Freelance Photographer, New Media Have Confronted Old over Who and What to Trust," *The Guardian*, August 14, 2006.

<sup>167</sup> Alan Colmes, Sean Hannity, Greg Burke, Rick Lenethal and Carl Cameron, "Talking Points Memdo and Top Story," *Fox Hannity & Colmes*, August 7, 2006; Ben Wedeman, et al., "Israel Attacks Palestinian Refugee Camp in Lebanon; United Nations Debates Rival Middle East Peace Plans; How High Will Gas Prices Go?"; Tony Harris, Howard Kurtz, Brent Sadler and John Vause, "How Much Coverage of Terror Plots is Too Much?; Is Coverage of Mideast Conflict Fair?," *Reliable Sources at CNN*, August 13, 2006.

Reuters screw-up, for which there is no excuse,”<sup>168</sup> and also blamed the Reuters staff for the accident, stating that “a good photo editor should have spotted that fakery.”<sup>169</sup>

Along with presenting the facts about the story, fourteen journalists also provided background information about other examples of photo manipulation. Seven authors mentioned the Qana controversy, while others used a variety of cases including the altered photograph of Egyptian pyramids made by a photographer of the *National Geographic*,<sup>170</sup> enhanced color of the sky made by a staff member of the *Charlotte Observer*,<sup>171</sup> and usage of the clone stamp Photoshop tool by an Associated Press photographer.<sup>172</sup>

In the discussion of facts of the case, mainstream media authors and quoted sources covered the discovery of the altered photograph, reasons for why the photograph was made public, conditions of military conflict and specific details of working with freelance photographers, as well as some evaluation to the Reuters response. Authors also saw a political angle in the situation, which is discussed in the following section.

## Theme 2: Political Bias

The discussion of a political angle in the mainstream media was different from the one in the blogosphere. The publications were looking at a broad picture of political bias in

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<sup>168</sup> *The Toronto Star*, "And Now It's Reutersgate"

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Ben Wedeman, et al., "Israel Attacks Palestinian Refugee Camp in Lebanon; United Nations Debates Rival Middle East Peace Plans; How High Will Gas Prices Go?," *CNN News International*, August 8, 2006.

<sup>171</sup> Seth Sutel, "Reuters Cuts Ties with Photographer over Manipulated Images," *Associated Press Financial Wire*, August 8, 2006; Katharine Q Seelye and Julia Bosman, "Bloggers Drive Inquiry on How Altered Images Saw Print"

<sup>172</sup> Seth Sutel, "Reuters Cuts Ties with Photographer over Manipulated Images"

general, rather than addressing the motivation of the photographer. Even if Hajj's political bias was mentioned in the article, it was positioned as being the "tip of the iceberg."<sup>173</sup> *The Washington Post* called the media coverage of the Israel-Lebanon military "a war of images and perceptions."<sup>174</sup> Joel Mowbray, of *The Washington Times*, wrote that, "long-whispered questions about the reliability of Arab stringers and freelancers came to the forefront."<sup>175</sup> Mowbray also quoted *Jerusalem Post* reporter Khaled Abu Toameh, who said: "Sadly, things like this happen a lot, especially when your local fixers are openly affiliated and have a clear agenda."<sup>176</sup> Mowbray also expressed a concern about the amount of influence that different organizations may have on media coverage. He wrote that "the Palestinian propaganda machine has enjoyed tremendous success over the years hoodwinking supposedly sophisticated Western journalists. And Hezbollah appears to have done the same over the past month."<sup>177</sup> *The Guardian* quoted an unnamed British journalist, who admitted that "a limited amount of 'staging' goes on"<sup>178</sup> in the Middle East. The Canadian newspaper *The National Post* concluded an article with the phrase: "Still, most people in the Western world are not getting a true picture of this [Israel-Lebanon] war."<sup>179</sup>

A second topic that was raised by the mainstream media was the uncovering of the potentially staged photographs of the Qana attack. Some publications provided evidence that

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<sup>173</sup> Sheera Claire Frenkel, "Reuters Pulls 'Doctored' War Photo. Web Logs Claim Victory in Battle Against Mainstream Media"

<sup>174</sup> Deborah Howell, "A War of Images and Perceptions"

<sup>175</sup> Joel Mowbray, "Presenting False Images," *The Washington Times*, August 16, 2006.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Patrick Barkham, "Media: Spot the Difference"

<sup>179</sup> Lorne Gunter, "Selective Outrage," *National Post*, August 8, 2006.

“much of the ‘rescue’ effort at Qana was staged for gullible Western reporters.”<sup>180</sup> Blogger Richard North of the EU Referendum blog was quoted in several articles. He was one of the key investigators of the staged Qana coverage in the blogosphere, and believed that “the mainstream media [were] swallowing Hizbullah [sic] propaganda.”<sup>181</sup> “Blogs can’t replace them [the media] but the reason I started blogging is to address the bias (of mainstream media),” North said.<sup>182</sup> He also added that “blogs are now part of an old-fashioned propaganda war.”<sup>183</sup>

*The Jerusalem Post* addressed the image of Israel during the military conflict. Daniel Pipes, a journalist at the *Post*, made a suggestion that when the “world’s most prestigious press organizations effectively take Hizbullah’s [sic] side in its war with Israel they inadvertently reveal a profound transformation in the logic of warfare.”<sup>184</sup> He also noted that “Adnan Hajj’s distortions . . . were calculated to injure Israel’s image thereby manufacturing internal dissent diminishing the country’s international standing and generating pressure on the government to stop its attacks in Lebanon.”<sup>185</sup>

The mainstream media also raised the question of journalism ethics in general and specifically regarding digital media. British newspaper *The Guardian* was the only one that covered the topic of which changes are acceptable in photojournalism. Patrick Barkham, also with *The Guardian*, wrote that, “All photographers I spoke to agreed it was acceptable to

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Patrick Barkham, "Media: Spot the Difference"

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> Daniel Pipes, "Strange War Logic," *The Jerusalem Post*, August 16, 2006.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

darken or lighten pictures or parts of pictures, such as sky (following the accepted professional principle that you only do with digital what you could do in a darkroom).”<sup>186</sup>

The discussion of the political angle included the general discussion of political bias, media coverage of the Qana attack, the image of Israel, and the ethics concerning photo altering. As previously mentioned, the majority of publications described the role of the blogosphere in the current media arena.

### Theme 3: Blogosphere vs. Mainstream Media

The mainstream media paid much attention to the fact that the altered picture was discovered and brought to the public’s attention by bloggers. The majority of publications were dedicated to this theme. Several of them mentioned a war between the blogosphere and the mainstream media. Sheera Frenkel of *The Jerusalem Post* titled her article “Web logs claim victory in battle against mainstream media.”<sup>187</sup> She wrote, “Web logs however are claiming the incident as a victory for Web sites that have waged their own war against the mainstream media since the violence on the North began.”<sup>188</sup> A lead of a *Toronto Star* newspaper article said that a Web site Little Green Footballs “nailed the news agency Reuters for its doctored photo, .... [T]he right-wing blogosphere has been crowing about how it once again shot down the mainstream media.”<sup>189</sup> Randy Dotinga, a correspondent at *The Christian Science Monitor*, suggested that bloggers are always trying to catch the mainstream media’s

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<sup>186</sup> Patrick Barkham, "Media: Spot the Difference."

<sup>187</sup> Sheera Claire Frenkel, "Reuters Pulls 'Doctored' War Photo. Web Logs Claim Victory in Battle Against Mainstream Media."

<sup>188</sup> Sheera Claire Frenkel, "Reuters Pulls 'Doctored' War Photo. Web Logs Claim Victory in Battle Against Mainstream Media."

<sup>189</sup> *The Toronto Star*, "And Now It's Reutersgate"

mistake and titled his article “A blogger shines when news media get it wrong.”<sup>190</sup> A staff writer at *The Guardian* accused the mainstream media of being “supposedly duplicitous” and asked if the blogs were finally shining a light on a multitude of photographic sins.<sup>191</sup>

Some publications gave credit to the blogosphere for being the watchdog for the mainstream media. Sean Hannity, a co-host of Hannity & Colmes, said, “Thank God for the new media. Thank God for the bloggers. Thank God for people who are paying attention . . . . [T]hey have the ability to get this information out, because it gets more sinister than that.”<sup>192</sup> Daniel Sieberg, a CNN technology correspondent, emphasized the role of bloggers in the investigation. He said, that “If it hadn’t been for the blogging community, Hajj’s fake photos may have never been exposed.”<sup>193</sup> *The New York Times* writers Katharine Seeyle and Julie Bosman wrote that “blogosphere is making it easier to catch the manipulators.”<sup>194</sup> David Shamah of *The Jerusalem Post* even recommended his readers to pay attention to the Little Green Footballs.<sup>195</sup>

Unlike the blogosphere, mainstream media sources tended to provide comments from academic sources. *The Christian Science Monitor* editor reached Kenny Irby from the Poynter Institute who said, “I’ve had more conversations with bloggers who just say they want to make sure [the media] projects accurate information. . . . That’s a good thing. Media

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<sup>190</sup> Randy Dotinga, "A Blogger Shines when News Media Get It Wrong," *Christian Science Monitor*, August 9, 2006.

<sup>191</sup> Patrick Barkham, "G2: Shortcuts: Photos under Fire in the Propaganda War," *The Guardian*, August 9, 2006.

<sup>192</sup> Alan Colmes, et al., "Talking Points Memdo and Top Story"

<sup>193</sup> Ben Wedeman, et al., "Israel Attacks Palestinian Refugee Camp in Lebanon; United Nations Debates Rival Middle East Peace Plans; How High Will Gas Prices Go?," *CNN News International*, August 8, 2006.

<sup>194</sup> Katharine Q Seelye and Julia Bosman, "Bloggers Drive Inquiry on How Altered Images Saw Print," *The New York Times*, August 9, 2006.

<sup>195</sup> David Shamah, "Keeping the Big Boys Honest," *The Jerusalem Post*, August 18, 2006.

organizations have to be aware that we're not the absolute authority."<sup>196</sup> The Associated Press provided a quote by Dhavan Shah, journalism professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison: "Bloggers are watching the media from the left and right. That provides checks and balances on the media in the same way the media [are] supposed to provide checks and balances for the government."<sup>197</sup>

Mainstream media also provided an opportunity for bloggers to explain their position. Blogger Charles Johnson was invited to several TV shows, and Arianna Huffington of HuffingtonPost.com joined Johnson at one of them. She said that Johnson's investigation of the photo from Beirut was "another example of bloggers ... holding the mainstream media accountable. ... This is exactly what bloggers should be doing. ... [W]e should hold all journalists accountable, whether they are photojournalists or not, for deceptive statements, whether they're images or words."<sup>198</sup>

Mainstream media portrayed Charles Johnson in a very diverse way. Dinesh Ramde, a writer with the Associated Press, called him "a Los Angeles based musician who runs the conservative blog Little Green Footballs."<sup>199</sup> *The Christian Science Monitor*, on the other side, described Johnson as "one of the most influential, popular, and disliked political bloggers," and also mentioned that he is a "50-something computer programmer and Web

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<sup>196</sup> Randy Dotinga, "A Blogger Shines when News Media Get It Wrong"

<sup>197</sup> Dinesh Ramde, "Firing of Reuters Photographer Prompted by Janesville Man," *The Associated Press State & Local Wire*, August 16, 2006.

<sup>198</sup> Tony Harris, Howard Kurtz, Brent Sadler and John Vause, "How Much Coverage of Terror Plots is Too Much?; Is Coverage of Mideast Conflict Fair?," *Reliable Sources at CNN*, August 13, 2006.

<sup>199</sup> Dinesh Ramde, "Firing of Reuters Photographer Prompted by Janesville Man"

designer” who turned into an Internet celebrity “sought out by CNN and regularly roasted by liberal critics.”<sup>200</sup>

The results of the study showed that both the blogosphere and the mainstream media covered three main themes, although the focus of the coverage differed between the two platforms. The blogosphere focused primarily on the facts of the incident with an emphasis on the political bias, while the mainstream media paid much attention to the blogosphere and its role in the case. The following chapter will provide a detailed analysis of the results.

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<sup>200</sup> Randy Dotinga, "A Blogger Shines when News Media Get It Wrong"

## CHAPTER IV

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, results of the study's two research questions are analyzed and discussed in sequential order. The chapter also includes a conclusion, limitations of this study, its implications and suggestions for future research.

#### *Analysis and Discussion of the Research Questions*

In this section, each research question is analyzed and discussed based on the results of the performed content analysis. The analysis was designed to answer two research questions. The next section will provide a brief analysis of the Reuters response to the incident, and will be followed by analysis of themes that emerged from the blogosphere and the mainstream media coverage.

#### Reuters Response

Reuters' response to the discovery of the manipulated images was one of the factors that affected the media coverage of the case. The most substantial effect was delivered by the official statements issued by the agency. The first document was published the day after the first picture was discovered, and the second one was distributed on the next day after the second manipulated image was revealed by bloggers.

First, the agency reacted to the situation in a timely manner, which supports suggestions made by crisis communication experts. Seeger, Sellnow and Ulmer suggest that organizations must respond to crisis, and "when the response is adequate and remaining

questions are answered, the organization is able to move past the crisis.”<sup>201</sup> There are several different ways that an organization may address the crisis. According to the image restoration theory developed by William Benoit, there are five strategies - denial, evading responsibility, reducing offensiveness, corrective action and mortification.<sup>202</sup> Reuters apologized for the incident in its statement, and also announced that the editing procedures for the photographs from Middle East will be tightened. Therefore, the agency used both the corrective action and mortification strategies in dealing with the crisis.

Secondly, the results of the study showed that bloggers and mainstream media did not use everything that Reuters said in its statements. The relationship between the attributes of an organizational message and those used in the media coverage is usually described by agenda building theory.<sup>203</sup> A 1970s study performed by Leon Sigal showed that majority of the articles that appeared in *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* were coming from routine channels such as press releases and official proceedings, and not investigative reporting.<sup>204</sup> It was also revealed that journalists tend to be selective in what they deem important to put in a story, and that they often use only portions of an information subsidy.<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> Matthew Seeger, Timothy Sellnow and Robert Ulmer, *Communication and Organizational Crisis* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2003). Page 75.

<sup>202</sup> William Benoit, *Accounts, Excuses, and Apologies: A Theory of Image Restoration Strategies* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995).

<sup>203</sup> Patricia Curtin and Eric Rhodenbaugh, "Building the News Media Agenda on the Environment: A Comparison of Public Relations and Journalistic Sources," *Public Relations Review* 27, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 179-195.

<sup>204</sup> Sigal Leon, *Reporters and Officials* (Lexington: Heath 1973): 119-130.

<sup>205</sup> Sherry Holladay, "Are They Practicing What We Are Preaching? An Investigation of Crisis Communication Strategies in the Media Coverage of Chemical Accidents," in *93rd Annual Meeting of the National Communication Association* (Chicago, IL, 2007).

Information subsidies are defined as sources of raw information used by journalists in writing news.<sup>206</sup> They are considered an influential part of the agenda setting process.

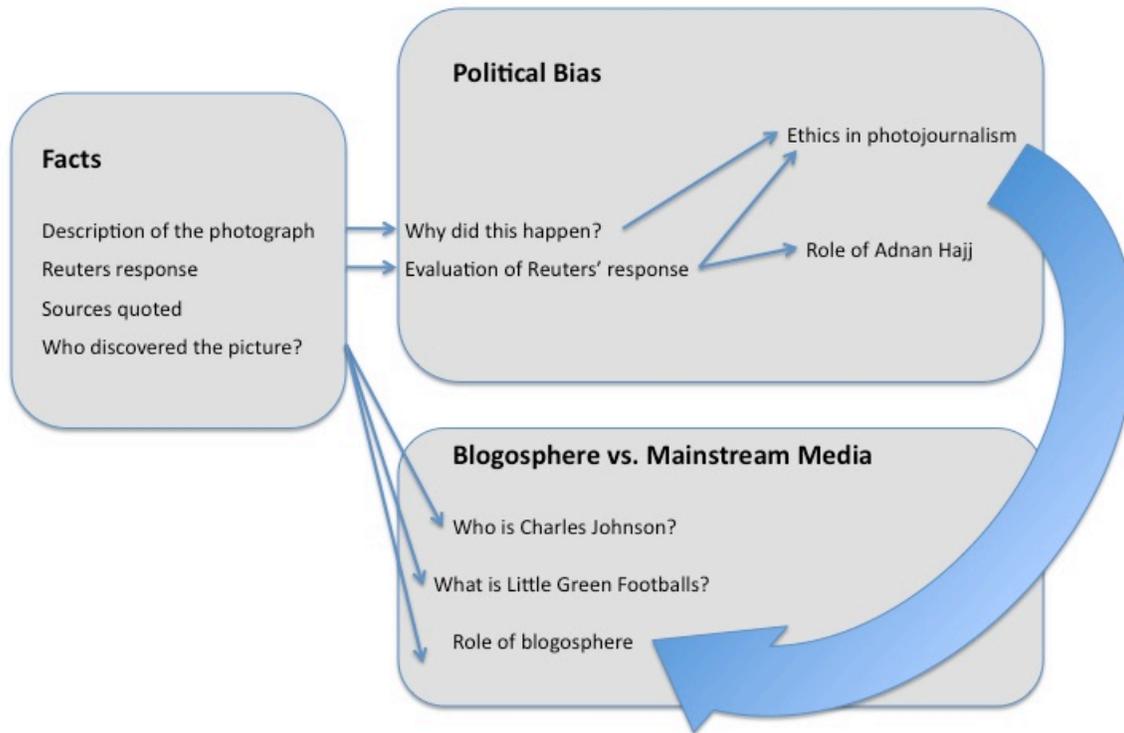
The next two sections will address the research questions of the study.

*RQ1: How did the blogosphere and mainstream media cover the story about photos doctored by Adnan Hajj? Which frames emerged in the blogosphere and mainstream media?*

The altered photograph was discovered by Charles Johnson on August 5, 2006, and the blogosphere reacted the next day. The mainstream media started covering the story on August 7, 2006. The results of the content analysis showed that both the blogosphere and the mainstream media addressed three main themes: (a) the presentation of the facts about the story, (b) the political bias of Reuters and the mainstream media in general, and (c) the relationship between the blogosphere and mainstream media. This section will analyze the similarities and differences of how different media platforms covered the themes mentioned above. Simple statement of facts was the most popular approach in the analyzed sample of blog entries, while the mainstream media's attention shifted to the relationship between the blogosphere and mainstream media in the discussion of the doctored photographs. One reason that the media in this study may have used this focus is because they did not break the story and had to come up with another angle; in this instance, it was how bloggers were the first to find the discrepancies. Another reason could be that the mainstream media are still trying to define their relationship with the blogosphere, and journalists used this case to continue the discussion and express opinions about bloggers.

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<sup>206</sup> Judy VanSlyke Turk, "Public relations Influence in the News," *Newspaper Research Journal*, 1986: 15-27.



**Figure 1. The list of Categories.**

In the analyzed sample, the percentage of bloggers who published the actual photograph and its altered version was slightly higher (33%) than the percentage of mainstream media publications (25%) who exhibited these photographs. This finding may be explained by the fact that the blogosphere is a digital media and bloggers are not limited by time, column area, or television formatting, as mainstream media journalists sometimes are. Although many media sources have Web sites as well, the study analyzed only newspaper publications and TV and radio transcripts; therefore we couldn't compare online mainstream media coverage with the blogosphere. The results of this study show that the traditional media, however, paid more attention to the second altered picture, which portrayed an Israeli

F-16 warplane. In the analyzed sample, about one-third of bloggers and one-half of mainstream media publications mentioned the second altered photo. A potential reason for this might be that the second picture was discovered by the blogger Rusty Shackleford, who published his story at 7:05 p.m. CST on August 6, 2006.<sup>207</sup> The majority of analyzed blog entries (17 of 30) were published between August 6 and 7, and there possibly was not enough time for this story to spread in the blogosphere. The discovery of the second photo was announced in the second official statement made by Reuters. There is a chance that the mainstream media picked up the information about the second photo from the statement, since most publications contained facts about all Hajj's pictures being withdrawn from the database, which was also included in the second statement. There also might be a possibility that journalists monitored blogs more closely after the first picture was revealed.

#### Theme 1: Facts about the Case

There were several similarities in the way the blogosphere and mainstream media in this study presented facts about the case of the altered photo. Both media platforms described the photograph as digitally altered and often mentioned the software program Photoshop to describe the process. They also indicated that the doctored picture showed more smoke and expressed specific concern that the changes made the damage of the Israeli attack look worse. Authors also agreed that the manipulation was rather obvious.

A majority of the publications from the sample used the information from either of the two Reuters' official statements (see Appendix 1 and 2). More importantly, these

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<sup>207</sup> Rusty Shackleford, "Another Fake Reuters Photo from Lebanon," August 6, 2006, *The Jawa Report*, <http://mypetjawa.mu.nu/archives/184206.php> (accessed March 17, 2009).

information subsidies were used in the same way. In this study, many publications contained the facts that Reuters fired Adnan Hajj and removed all 920 of his photographs from the database, while only a few bloggers and mainstream media journalists mentioned that the agency had apologized for the accident and implemented tighter procedures for images from the Middle East. Some bloggers and traditional journalists also used the official explanation of alterations provided by Reuters, which stated that the photographer was trying to remove dust marks from the photograph.<sup>208</sup>

Unlike the mainstream media, bloggers tended to see a political bias in the situation and the intent of the photographer to make the picture more appealing, while the mainstream media discussion sometimes shifted to the bad conditions of the military conflict itself or a junior staff mistake that allowed the picture to be published. In the analyzed sample, bloggers were more likely to criticize Reuters' actions, while the mainstream media used a more neutral position. This finding may represent the professional solidarity of the mainstream media and the intent to present a balanced description of the situation by providing several explanations for the fact that the picture was altered and was allowed for publication in the database. Bloggers, on the other hand, are not bound with any obligations and often express personal opinions, which journalists are not allowed to make.

Another way in which these two media platforms can be differentiated was in their use of external sources. Journalists usually have broad access to sources that represent diverse opinions, which also allows them to present a more balanced story. It is likely that an average blogger does not have access to the top management of the company he is writing

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<sup>208</sup> Reuters on the Run, *Little Green Footballs*, August 7, 2006, [http://littlegreenfootballs.com/weblog/?entry=21976\\_Reuters\\_on\\_the\\_Run&only](http://littlegreenfootballs.com/weblog/?entry=21976_Reuters_on_the_Run&only) (last accessed on March 13, 2009).

about, nor would he have a chance to get in touch with high-profile experts. In the discussion of altered images from Beirut, two Reuters' official statements were the primary quoted sources of the blogosphere. Bloggers used quotes by Reuters head of public relations Moira Whittle, the agency's photo editor Tom Szlukovenyi, and also Charles Johnson himself. It is fair to suggest that they were more likely to use the information that was available online, rather than trying to reach sources themselves. Mainstream media not only used the official statements, but also reached out to experts from academia, provided opinions of professional journalists and photographers, and also reached out to bloggers other than Charles Johnson. They also were able to get additional information from Reuters by talking to Reuters' photo editors Harry Hershorn and Paul Holmes. It is important to note that none of the publications from both the blogosphere and the mainstream media provided any direct quotes from Andan Hajj.

Evaluation of the Reuters response to the situation varied depending on the type of media. In the analyzed sample, bloggers were more likely to accuse the agency of political bias or emphasize that they didn't find the agency's response satisfactory. The mainstream media in this study, however, was more likely to agree with the agency's actions, saying that they did exactly what should have been done.<sup>209</sup> It is very interesting that Charles Johnson, a blogger himself, referred to the Reuters response in a positive way during a CNN televised interview, while his initial entry about the altered photograph was rather critical.

In this study, both media platforms paid attention to other samples of journalistic manipulation. In the sample, bloggers focused primarily on the most recent case of the Qana attack coverage; the mainstream media included more examples of manipulations as part of

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<sup>209</sup> Ben Wedeman, et al., "Israel Attacks Palestinian Refugee Camp in Lebanon"

their stories. Along with Qana, journalists mentioned the case in which a *Los Angeles Times* photographer manipulated an image of British soldier<sup>210</sup> in Iraq, and went back even as far back as to track photo manipulation during the American Civil War.<sup>211</sup> Journalists were willing to show that manipulation of photographs was not specific for the Israel-Lebanon conflict, but was rather a common event that potentially, has nothing to do with political bias of the photographer who altered the picture.

More than half of both the mainstream media and the blogosphere sources credited either Little Green Footballs or Charles Johnson himself for discovery of the photograph. If authors didn't mention a specific resource or name, they tended to at least mention that the story was first discovered by bloggers. About one-third of bloggers and journalists mentioned that Charles Johnson investigated the Rathergate story. Since the investigation performed by Johnson during the Rathergate helped reveal journalistic fraud, this potentially added to Johnson's credibility in the Reuters case.

In summary, bloggers and the mainstream media both relied on the Reuters statements as information subsidies, but traditional journalists also used a variety of external sources. The mainstream media tended to use more sources and present more balanced description of the situation, while bloggers focused primarily on the facts and speculations that supported their concerns about political bias. Traditional journalists also evaluated the agency's response in a positive way, while bloggers either used a neutral position, or accused Reuters of political bias.

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<sup>210</sup> Geoff Dyer, "Comment: No Surprise that the Camera Lies.>"; Patrick Barkham, "G2: Shortcuts: Photos under Fire in the Propaganda War"

<sup>211</sup> Patrick Barkham, "G2: Shortcuts: Photos under Fire in the Propaganda War"

## Theme 2: Political Bias

Although both media platforms covered the notion of political bias, they portrayed this issue differently. The blogosphere was more likely to look for personal responsibility by accusing either the photographer or Reuters itself for intending to portray Israel in a negative light. The Qana controversy can be described as an example of the difference between the coverage of the bias issue. For instance, bloggers in this study often mentioned that Adnan Hajj was the one who took the staged photographs after the Qana attack. The analyzed sample of the mainstream media outlets either questioned the staging of Qana controversy coverage, or cited it as another example of potentially biased, but not fully confirmed, coverage of the Israel-Lebanon military conflict. Both media forms described how Hezbollah tried to affect the media coverage, and again bloggers were more focused on the role of the media and wrote about Reuters helping Hezbollah. On the other hand, the mainstream media focused on the other side of the problem and discussed how terrorist organizations conduct guided tours for journalists.

Traditional journalists also discussed the downside of working with freelance photographers, which was also an attempt to broaden the discussion. None of the mainstream media sources directly accused Reuters of political bias. The primary reason for these differences might be that journalists tried to look for potential implications of this case for their work, since they could have found themselves in a similar situation. They tried to make conclusions that could be used by other media outlets. For instance, they could have reviewed the procedure of hiring freelancers in order to avoid such incidents, or provide additional guidelines for staff that works closely with Hezbollah to emphasize its potential influence on media coverage. Both media platforms discussed the political bias of media in

general, using the Middle East conflict as an example. They agreed that Adnan Hajj's actions were just a single example of the bigger picture. They quoted sources who confirmed that staging and biased coverage really does take place in the Middle East.

### Theme 3: Blogosphere versus Mainstream Media

In this study, the mainstream media paid more attention than its blogging counterparts to the blogosphere's role on the media arena. The blogosphere itself did not focus on it as much. In the analyzed sample, only three bloggers had chosen this topic as a main theme for their blog entries.

In the discussion, both media platforms referred to the blogosphere as a watchdog for the mainstream media and mentioned a war between the two. In their entries, bloggers took a rather aggressive position against mainstream media, and some of them even mentioned that Charles Johnson had received threats from Reuters' staff.<sup>212</sup> The mainstream media, on the other hand, together with writing about the war with bloggers, tended to praise the blogosphere and welcomed its scrutiny of traditional publications. Traditional journalists, however, sometimes tried to portray the blogosphere in a rather frivolous way by calling Charles Johnson a "pony-tailed musician"<sup>213</sup> or a "50-something computer programmer and Web designer," as if they were trying to emphasize that he is not an expert in politics. At the same time, they called Johnson "one of the most influential, popular and disliked political bloggers."<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> Alvin Snyder, "Reutersgate' Becomes an Issue in Reporting the Israel-Hezbollah War.," "Reuters Drops the Ball," *Cynics Unlimited*.

<sup>213</sup> Randy Dotinga, "A Blogger Shines when News Media Get It Wrong"

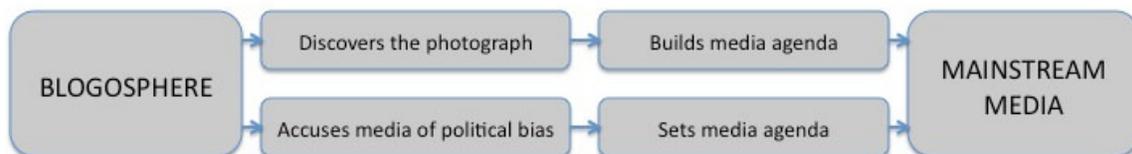
<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

In the discussion of the blogosphere, the mainstream media turned to experts in order to provide commentary about the blogosphere's role in the media arena. These sources agreed that bloggers serve primarily as watchdogs for the mainstream media.

*RQ2: What relationship, if any, is there between the blogosphere and the mainstream media coverage of the situation?*

In order to track the relationship between the blogosphere and the mainstream media coverage one must look at all three themes that emerged in the coverage of the analyzed incident. It is important to emphasize that, in general, both media platforms covered the same themes, but covered them from different angles.

The relationship between two media platforms in this research can be described with a scheme provided below.



**Figure 2. The relationship between the Blogosphere and the Mainstream Media**

#### Theme 1: Facts About the Case

As it was mentioned earlier, journalists do not use all of the data provided in the information subsidies. This statement is also applicable to the analyzed case. We see that the blogosphere and mainstream media used the same primary information subsidies: either of Reuters' official statements and the initial blog entry made by Charles Johnson. They pulled the same frames from the Reuters materials and placed the same emphasis on the general

description of the situation, by reporting that the picture was doctored, the photographer was fired, and that all of his pictures were withdrawn. Both media platforms in this study almost ignored the apology made by Reuters and did not pay attention to the tightened editing procedures. From the crisis communications point of view, it is obvious that although Reuters' statements reached journalists and bloggers, they chose not to use both components of the Reuters response — corrective action and an apology.<sup>215</sup> Therefore, the response did not reach those people who read blogs and pay attention to mainstream media.

From the agenda building point of view, it is evident that both journalists and bloggers acted in the same way and processed the information subsidies similarly. This result is supported by scholarly sources. Pincus et al. showed that journalists prefer not to reprint information from press releases, but use it together with another sources and other facts.<sup>216</sup> Holladaw also showed that non-public relations staff members are usually quoted more often than official corporate sources.<sup>217</sup> Reuters used this specific part of the news production process by providing access to its staff members and making them available for comments. Two Reuters photo editors, Paul Holmes and Harry Hershorn, were invited to radio and television shows, and were quoted in several newspapers. However, these two speakers did not address any of the crisis communications measures, but rather focused on the potential reasons of the incident.

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<sup>215</sup> William Benoit, *Accounts, Excuses, and Apologies: A Theory of Image Restoration Strategies*.

<sup>216</sup> David Pincus, Tony Rimmer, Rayfield Robert and Fritz Cropp, "Newspaper Editors' Perceptions of Public Relations: How Business, News, and Sports Editors Differ," *Journal of Public Relations Research*, no. 5 (1993): 27-45. *Public Relations Research*, 5, 27-45.

<sup>217</sup> Sherry Holladay, "Are Rhey Practicing What We Are Preaching?"

The fact that the second manipulated photograph was also discovered by bloggers leads us to a conclusion that in this study bloggers acted as investigative journalists. Almost every blog entry in the analyzed sample included not only factual statements about the incident, but also a personal commentary provided by a blogger. This supports the concept of news blogging, which was described by Axel Bruns. He wrote that news blogging is a practice of covering the news through blogging – whether by doing original reporting or by providing commentary on the news as it is reported in other news sources.<sup>218</sup>

## Theme 2: Political Bias

Overcoming personal and cultural biases is considered as one of the primary tasks of a professional journalist.<sup>219</sup> The coverage of the Israel-Lebanon military conflict raised the issue of political unfairness exhibited by journalists working in the region. In regard to the notion of political advancement, it might be possible that the mainstream media were trying to respond to the blogosphere's accusations of bias, and therefore the blogosphere had built a news agenda for the traditional media. The results of this study show that the blogosphere was actively discussing that Adnan Hajj and/or Reuters itself were supporting Hezbollah by publishing doctored pictures, while the mainstream media were trying to provide another explanation of the event. Along with issuing two official statements, Reuters made two of its photo editors available for interviews, and they suggested that the photo was published due to a staff member's error, that the photographer tried to make the photograph more appealing and that he was not making a political statement. Also, journalists raised the question of working with freelancers in general and conditions of military conflict. It appears that

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<sup>218</sup> Axel Bruns, "The Practice of News Blogging"

<sup>219</sup> Jan Johnson Yopp, *Reaching Audiences* (Pearson, 2006): 257-275.

bloggers in the analyzed sample were trying to find the responsible person or organization, either the photographer or the agency, or even mass media in general, while journalists were more likely to look for an explanation and, potentially, come up with a solution.

Since the qualitative characteristics of this study do not allow one to make cause-and-effect conclusions, it can only be assumed that the blogosphere accusations of bias made the mainstream media pay much more attention to this aspect, and journalists appeared to respond to the blogosphere. Considering the definition of agenda setting as “telling people what to think about,” it can be suggested that the blogosphere probably “told” the mainstream media to think about political bias with regard to the Middle East conflict and its coverage. A quotation by Garry Hershorn, a Reuters photo editor, supports this assumption. He said that “the photographer was trying to take a picture and make it better, rather than trying to take a picture and make a statement.”<sup>220</sup>

The Qana attack preceded the discovery of Hajj’s pictures and can be considered a catalyst for the media bias discussion. Discovered and widely discussed by bloggers, this story occurred a week before the Hajj’s altered photos were revealed. Bloggers provided the Qana photographs as a primary example of biased coverage, and even Reuters mentioned it in its first statement saying, “he [Hajj] was among several photographers from the main international news agencies whose images of a dead child being held up by a rescuer in the village of Qana, south Lebanon, after an Israeli air strike on July 30 have been challenged by blogs critical of the mainstream media’s coverage of the Middle East conflict.”<sup>221</sup> The mainstream media also picked up the Qana topic. Canada’s *The National Post*, for example,

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<sup>220</sup> Renee Montagne, "Reuters Retracts Altered Beirut Photo," *National Public Radio*, August 8, 2006.

<sup>221</sup> “Reuters drops freelance Lebanese photographer over image,” August 6, 2006, FreePublic <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1678852/posts> (last accessed March 13, 2006).

expressed a concern that people were not getting a true picture of the Israel-Lebanon conflict, and this statement was inspired by the Qana coverage. Other mass media outlets in this study, however, stated that the accusations of staging were not confirmed.

The fact that media coverage of the Qana attack became a hot topic in the discussion of the manipulated photographs from Beirut can be considered evidence of substantial credibility of the blogosphere among traditional mass media. During a single week, mass media were discussing the facts that were discovered by bloggers. It also reflects that the citizen journalism concept<sup>222</sup> has become more prevalent in the analyzed media coverage, since it was bloggers who brought attention to the unfairness of media coverage about the military conflict. Bloggers served both as agenda setters and agenda builders during the Israel-Lebanon military conflict, which provides an additional perspective for future research. They built the media agenda by analyzing the fairness of the media coverage in Lebanon, and set the agenda by focusing on the political bias of the mainstream media.

### Theme 3: Blogosphere versus Mainstream Media

As bloggers were responsible for the discovery of the altered photograph, it made mainstream media pay much more attention to the blogosphere. Journalists referred to bloggers in a variety of ways. Some sources mentioned a war between bloggers and journalists; others called them watchdogs for the mainstream media. The discussion of Charles Johnson in particular shows that different journalists have different attitudes toward the blogosphere. One journalist described Johnson both as a “most popular blogger” and “a

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<sup>222</sup> Axel Bruns, *Gatewatching: Collaborative Online News Production*, 81-119.

ponytailed musician.”<sup>223</sup> It is evident that the journalistic community does not share a common attitude about the blogosphere. The altered photo from Beirut and its discovery by bloggers was another reason for journalists to explore what they think about bloggers and mass media should react to their invasion into journalistic work. While some recommended reading *Little Green Footballs*,<sup>224</sup> others tried to describe Johnson in a rather frivolous way.<sup>225</sup>

The history of the relationship between the blogosphere and traditional media shows that bloggers are becoming agenda setters for the traditional media. Along with the photographs from Beirut and Qana, it was the investigation by a blogger that finally lead to the resignation of Senator Trent Lott; furthermore it was Charles Johnson, a blogger, who discovered fraud carried about by CBS anchor Dan Rather. With the development of the history of such investigations, the credibility of the blogosphere grows as well. The results of this study show that a vast majority of analyzed publications refer to the blogosphere as a primary investigator of an incident. Authors recalled Rathergate as another successful example of bloggers’ investigation. We see that while journalists serve as watchdogs for the government, bloggers are sometimes presented as watchdogs for the mainstream media. This relationship might lead to a suggestion that blogosphere is becoming a fifth power of the democratic process because they do affect the mainstream media actions in some instances.

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<sup>223</sup> Randy Dotinga, "A Blogger Shines when News Media Get It Wrong," *Christian Science Monitor*, August 9, 2006.

<sup>224</sup> David Shamah, "Keeping the Big Boys Honest," *The Jerusalem Post*, August 18, 2006.

<sup>225</sup> Randy Dotinga, "A Blogger Shines when News Media Get It Wrong," *Christian Science Monitor*, August 9, 2006.

## *Conclusion*

This study has demonstrated that there is a potential relationship between the media coverage of altered photographs provided by the blogosphere and the mainstream media. The framing of the notion of political bias in these two media platforms and the history of the Qana controversy show that the blogosphere actively raised the issue of bias and forced traditional journalists to respond to these accusations. Also, it was evident that while bloggers shared a common position towards the mainstream media in the case of altered photographs, the mainstream media has not defined its attitude to blogosphere and its relationship with it.

The purpose of this study was to look deeply into the blogosphere's role in a contemporary marketplace of ideas. First, the study demonstrated that the blogosphere had definitely built the media agenda by discovering the altered photograph. Also, it had set the agenda for the media coverage of the controversy by accusing the mainstream media of bias. The reviewed scholar literature provided evidence for one-directional<sup>226</sup> and bi-directional<sup>227</sup> relationships between two media platforms. This study suggests that the blogosphere can affect the mainstream media coverage (one-directional influence) in two different aspects.

Second, it was expected that the influence of the blogosphere would be more direct and the mainstream media would cover the same topics in the same way. The study showed

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<sup>226</sup> Yongick Jeong, Koang-Hyub Kim, and Woojung Shin, "Agenda Building Function of Internet Searches: Measuring the Unique Contribution of the Public Agenda on the Media Agenda"; Debashis Aikat, "The Blending of Traditional Media and the Internet: Patterns of Media Agenda Setting and Web Search Trends Before and After the September 11 Attack"; Gyotae Ku, Lynda Lee Kaid, and Michael Pfau, "The Impact of Web Site Campaigning on Traditional News Media and Public Information Processing."

<sup>227</sup> Kevin Wallsten, "Agenda Setting and the Blogosphere: An Analysis of the Relationship between Mainstream Media and Political Blogs."

that traditional journalists covered the same themes from different angles as compared to bloggers.

Third, along with influencing the mass media agenda, bloggers served as journalists who performed an independent investigation of the media coverage during the Israel-Lebanon military conflict. Therefore, we can apply the concept of citizen journalism to this particular case and consider bloggers as citizen journalists who are also serving as watchdogs over the mainstream media.

#### *Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research*

This study has several limitations that should be considered for the application of the results and future research. First, the research employed qualitative analysis, which does not allow for generalization of results. Therefore, the conclusions made for the research are applicable for this case only and do not represent the entire state of the blogosphere and the mainstream media.

Second, the research was limited to English-language publications only. Since this case related to an international military conflict, analysis of blog entries and mainstream media publications published in Hebrew and Arabic, as well as other languages, may lead to more insight into the issues addressed in this study.

Third, the Internet is changing constantly with Web pages being moved, deleted, and edited. Since the study was performed almost two years after the discovery of the altered pictures, it is very likely that some of blog entries dedicated to this topic were no longer available.

Finally, Lexis Nexis is a database that contains data from only major English-language national and international publications. Therefore, not all of the articles and definitely none of non-US television and radio transcripts were included into the sample.

The focus of this study has been to look for a relationship between the blogosphere and the mainstream coverage of the doctored pictures, which were taken during the Israel-Lebanon military conflict. Examination of the relationship between these two media forms has considerable potential to find a place for the blogosphere in the modern marketplace of ideas. Future research would extend this study and benefit the field of mass communications. First, it might be beneficial to pursue additional studies on how bloggers may be agenda setters and agenda builders at the same time.

Second, there is a need for a comprehensive analysis of how mainstream media portray the blogosphere and how they define the blogosphere's place in the contemporary media arena. Considering the results of recent blogosphere credibility studies, where journalists tended to read more blogs while still not considering them credible,<sup>228</sup> future research would allow one to follow the development of a relationship between bloggers and journalists.

Third, in order to evaluate the cause-and-effect relationship between the blogosphere and mainstream media coverage, it would be beneficial to perform a series of surveys or in-depth interviews with journalists who quoted or referred to bloggers in their publications. This would reveal actual motivation when using the blogosphere as a source of information.

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<sup>228</sup> Kaye Swetser, Lance Porter, Deborah Soun Chung, "Credibility and the Use of Blogs among Professionals in the Communication Industry."

Fourth, whereas this study provided an analysis of English-language media only, it would be helpful to investigate the cultural and political sides of the analyzed case. Engagement of researchers who speak Arabic and Hebrew will provide detailed information about how the Eastern media reacted to the investigation performed by an American blogger. Obtaining broader access to English-language publications in some other countries would contribute to this insight as well.

Finally, it might be beneficial to make a comprehensive case study of the entire coverage of all of the controversies that occurred during the military conflict between Israel and Lebanon in 2006. It would also be helpful to provide a historical background for the relationship between Hezbollah and the mainstream media and to see whether the mainstream media addressed the organization's influence before the conflict.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1

#### Reuters Official Statement, August 6, 2006<sup>229</sup>

LONDON, Aug 6 (Reuters) - Reuters, the global news and information agency, told a freelance Lebanese photographer on Sunday it would not use any more of his pictures after he doctored an image of the aftermath of an Israeli air strike on Beirut.

The photograph by Adnan Hajj, which was published on news Web sites on Saturday, showed thick black smoke rising above buildings in the Lebanese capital after an Israeli air raid in the war with the Shi'ite Islamic group Hizbollah, now in its fourth week.

Reuters withdrew the doctored image on Sunday and replaced it with the unaltered photograph after several news blogs said it had been manipulated using Photoshop software to show more smoke.

Reuters has strict standards of accuracy that bar the manipulation of images in ways that mislead the viewer.

"The photographer has denied deliberately attempting to manipulate the image, saying that he was trying to remove dust marks and that he made mistakes due to the bad lighting conditions he was working under," said Moira Whittle, the head of public relations for Reuters.

"This represents a serious breach of Reuters' standards and we shall not be accepting or using pictures taken by him," Whittle said in a statement issued in London.

Hajj worked for Reuters as a non-staff freelance, or contributing photographer, from 1993 until 2003 and again since April 2005.

He was among several photographers from the main international news agencies whose images of a dead child being held up by a rescuer in the village of Qana, south Lebanon, after an Israeli air strike on July 30 have been challenged by blogs critical of the mainstream media's coverage of the Middle East conflict.

Reuters and other news organisations reviewed those images and have all rejected allegations that the photographs were staged.

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<sup>229</sup> "Reuters drops freelance Lebanese photographer over image," August 6, 2006, FreePublic <http://www.freepublic.com/focus/f-news/1678852/posts> (last accessed March 13, 2006).

## Appendix 2

### Reuters Official Statement, August 7, 2006<sup>230</sup>

LONDON, Aug 7 (Reuters) - Reuters withdrew all 920 photographs by a freelance Lebanese photographer from its database on Monday after an urgent review of his work showed he had altered two images from the conflict between Israel and the armed group Hizbollah.

Global Picture Editor Tom Szlukovenyi called the measure precautionary but said the fact that two of the images by photographer Adnan Hajj had been manipulated undermined trust in his entire body of work.

“There is no graver breach of Reuters standards for our photographers than the deliberate manipulation of an image,” Szlukovenyi said in a statement.

“Reuters has zero tolerance for any doctoring of pictures and constantly reminds its photographers, both staff and freelance, of this strict and unalterable policy.”

The news and information agency announced the decision in an advisory note to its photo service subscribers. The note also said Reuters had tightened editing procedures for photographs from the conflict and apologised for the case.

Removing the images from the Reuters database excludes them from future sale.

Reuters ended its relationship with Hajj on Sunday after it found that a photograph he had taken of the aftermath of an Israeli air strike on suburban Beirut had been manipulated using Photoshop software to show more and darker smoke rising from buildings.

An immediate enquiry began into Hajj’s other work.

It established on Monday that a photograph of an Israeli F-16 fighter over Nabatiyeh, southern Lebanon and dated Aug 2, had also been doctored to increase the number of flares dropped by the plane from one to three.

“Manipulating photographs in this way is entirely unacceptable and contrary to all the principles consistently held by Reuters throughout its long and distinguished history. It undermines not only our reputation but also the good name of all our photographers,” Szlukovenyi said.

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<sup>230</sup> Reuters on the Run, *Little Green Footballs*, August 7, 2006, [http://littlegreenfootballs.com/weblog/?entry=21976\\_Reuters\\_on\\_the\\_Run&only](http://littlegreenfootballs.com/weblog/?entry=21976_Reuters_on_the_Run&only) (last accessed on March 13, 2009).

“This doesn’t mean that every one of his 920 photographs in our database was altered. We know that not to be the case from the majority of images we have looked at so far but we need to act swiftly and in a precautionary manner.”

The two altered photographs were among 43 that Hajj filed directly to the Reuters Global Pictures Desk since the start of the conflict on July 12 rather than through an editor in Beirut, as was the case with the great majority of his images.

Filing drills have been tightened in Lebanon and only senior staff will now edit pictures from the Middle East on the Global Pictures Desk, with the final check undertaken by the Editor-in-Charge, Reuters said.

Hajj worked for Reuters as a non-staff contributing photographer from 1993 until 2003 and again since April 2005. Most of his work was in sports photography, much of it outside Lebanon.

Hajj was not in Beirut on Monday and was not responding to calls. He told Reuters on Sunday that the image of the Israeli air strike on Beirut had dust marks which he had wanted to remove.

Questions about the accuracy of the photograph arose after it appeared on news Web sites on Saturday.

Several blogs, including a number which accuse the media of distorted coverage of the Middle East conflict, said the photograph had been doctored.

### Appendix 3

#### Study Sample: List of the Mainstream Media Publications

No	Newspaper	Country	Type of Media	Title	Date
1	The Gazette	Canada	Newspaper	Reuters Drops Photographer	8/7/06
2	The Jerusalem Post	Israel	Newspaper	Reuters Pulls Doctored War Photo. Web Logs Claim Victory in the Battle Against Mainstream Media	8/7/06
3	The Washington Times	USA	Newspaper	Tsk, tsk, tsk	8/7/06
4	Fox	USA	TV	News	8/7/06
5	Fox News Network	USA	TV	Talking Points Memo and Top Story	8/7/06
6	Associated Press Wire	USA	Wire	Reuters Cuts Ties with Photographer over Manipulated Images	8/7/06
7	The Guardian	UK	Newspaper	Middle East Crisis; Journalism Reuters Sacks Freelancer over Doctored Photo	8/8/06
8	CBS	USA	TV	No title	8/8/06
9	NPR	USA	Radio	Reuters Retracts Altered Beirut Photo	8/8/06
10	NBC	USA	TV	News	8/8/06
11	The Sun	UK	Newspaper	Snapper is sacked for faking pics	8/8/06
12	National Post	Canada	Newspaper	Selective Outrage	8/8/06
13	CNN	USA	TV	No title	8/8/06
14	The New York Times	USA	Newspaper	Bloggers Drive Inquiry on How Altered Images Saw Print	8/9/06
15	Toronto Star	Canada	Newspaper	And Now It's Reutersgate	8/9/06
16	The Guardian	UK	Newspaper	G2: Shortcuts: Photos under Fire in the Propaganda War	8/9/06
17	Christian Science Monitor	USA	Newspaper	A Blogger Shines when News Media Get It Wrong	8/9/06
18	Washington Post	usa	Newspaper	Blogger Takes Aim at News Media and Makes Direct Hit	8/9/06
19	Philadelphia Inquirer	USA	Newspaper	When War News Isn't Reliable	8/10/06
20	The Jerusalem Post	Israel	Newspaper	Reutersgate Spreads to Other Media Outlets Gains	8/11/06

				Momentum on the Web	
21	Washington Post	USA	Newspaper	A War of Images and Perceptions	8/13/06
22	The Observer	UK	Newspaper	No Surprise That the Camera Lies	8/13/06
23	CNN	USA	TV	How Much Coverage of Terror Plots Is Too Much?	8/13/06
24	The Guardian	UK	Newspaper	Spot the Difference: New Media Have Confronted Old Over Who and What to Trust	8/14/06
25	The Jerusalem Post	Israel	Newspaper	Strange War Logic	8/16/06
26	Associated Press Wire	USA	Wire	Firing of Reuters Photographer Prompted by Janesville Man	8/16/06
27	The Washington Times	USA	Newspaper	Preventing False Images	8/16/06
28	The Jerusalem Post	Israel	Newspaper	Keeping the Big Boys Honest	8/18/06

## Appendix 4

### Study Sample: List of the Blogosphere Publications

No	Entry Title	Date	Link
1	Reuters Fires Lebanese Photo Faker	8/6/06	<a href="http://wizbangblog.com/content/2006/08/06/reuters-fires-lebanese-photo-f.php">http://wizbangblog.com/content/2006/08/06/reuters-fires-lebanese-photo-f.php</a>
2	Reuters Paints a False Picture of the Israel-Hezbollah War	8/6/06	<a href="http://www.dinocrat.com/archives/2006/08/06/msm-paints-a-false-picture-of-the-israel-hezbollah-war/">http://www.dinocrat.com/archives/2006/08/06/msm-paints-a-false-picture-of-the-israel-hezbollah-war/</a>
3	Is Beirut Burning... No Seriously	8/6/06	<a href="http://jaycurrie.info-syn.com/is-beruit-burningno-seriously/">http://jaycurrie.info-syn.com/is-beruit-burningno-seriously/</a>
4	Another Fraudulent Adnan Hajj Photo	8/6/06	<a href="http://littlegreenfootballs.com/weblog/?entry=21969&amp;only&amp;rss">http://littlegreenfootballs.com/weblog/?entry=21969&amp;only&amp;rss</a>
5	First Casualty	8/6/06	<a href="http://www.coxandforkum.com/archives/000903.html">http://www.coxandforkum.com/archives/000903.html</a>
6	Reuters Axes Photographer over Doctored Picture	8/7/06	<a href="http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/greenslade/2006/aug/07/reutersaxesphotographerover">http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/greenslade/2006/aug/07/reutersaxesphotographerover</a>
7	Where There's Smoke	8/7/06	<a href="http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/shane_richmond/blog/2006/08/07/where_theres_smoke">http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/shane_richmond/blog/2006/08/07/where_theres_smoke</a>
8	Information Fraud - Faking Celebrity and War	8/7/06	<a href="http://www.benedictionblogson.com/2006/08/07/information-fraud-faking-celebrity-and-war/">http://www.benedictionblogson.com/2006/08/07/information-fraud-faking-celebrity-and-war/</a>
9	Not Enough Drama	8/7/06	<a href="http://crossthebreeze.com/2006/08/07/not-enough-drama/">http://crossthebreeze.com/2006/08/07/not-enough-drama/</a>
10	Hezbollah Supporter - Reuters Doctoring War Photo	8/7/06	<a href="http://lateatnightmusings.blogspot.com/2006/08/hezbollah-supporter-reuters-doctoring.html">http://lateatnightmusings.blogspot.com/2006/08/hezbollah-supporter-reuters-doctoring.html</a>
11	Reuters Withdraws all Hajj Photos	8/7/06	<a href="http://morningcoffee.wordpress.com/2006/08/07/reuters-withdraws-all-hajj-photos/">http://morningcoffee.wordpress.com/2006/08/07/reuters-withdraws-all-hajj-photos/</a>
12	Reuters Pulls All Images by Hajj Photographer Caught Doctoring Lebanon Pics	8/7/06	<a href="http://www.steveambrose.net/woodshed/?p=183">http://www.steveambrose.net/woodshed/?p=183</a>
13	Photographer Caught Doctoring Lebanon Pics	8/7/06	<a href="http://arabist.net/archives/2006/08/07/photographer-caught-doctoring-lebanon-pics/">http://arabist.net/archives/2006/08/07/photographer-caught-doctoring-lebanon-pics/</a>
14	Reuters Drops the Ball	8/7/06	<a href="http://www.cynicsunlimited.com/2006/08/07/reuters-drops-the-ball/">http://www.cynicsunlimited.com/2006/08/07/reuters-drops-the-ball/</a>
15	Reuters Admits Doctoring Photographs: Was Qana Staged?	8/7/06	<a href="http://www.gopbloggers.org/mt/archives/004001.html">http://www.gopbloggers.org/mt/archives/004001.html</a>
16	Reuters Pulls Doctored Photo	8/7/06	<a href="http://www.popphoto.com/photographynewswire/2772/reuters-pulls-doctored-photo.html">http://www.popphoto.com/photographynewswire/2772/reuters-pulls-doctored-photo.html</a>
17	Reuters Takes a Hit in the War on the MSM	8/8/06	<a href="http://www.cjr.org/behind_the_news/reuters_takes_a_hit_in_the_war.php">http://www.cjr.org/behind_the_news/reuters_takes_a_hit_in_the_war.php</a>
18	Reuters Doctoring Photo	8/8/06	<a href="http://markedmanner.blogspot.com/2006/08/reuters-doctoring-photos.html">http://markedmanner.blogspot.com/2006/08/reuters-doctoring-photos.html</a>
19	Reuters Yanks the Photoshopping	8/8/06	<a href="http://jackbrummet.blogspot.com/2006/08/r">http://jackbrummet.blogspot.com/2006/08/r</a>

	Photographer		<a href="http://euters-yanks-photoshoppng.html">euters-yanks-photoshoppng.html</a>
20	Adnan Hajj Denies These Photos Are Fake	8/8/06	<a href="http://mrssatan.blogspot.com/2006/08/adnan-hajj-denies-these-photos-are.html">http://mrssatan.blogspot.com/2006/08/adnan-hajj-denies-these-photos-are.html</a>
21	Reuters Caught Lying for Hizbalah Then Apologies	8/8/06	<a href="http://cantankerouscamel.blogspot.com/2006/08/reuters-caught-lying-for-hizballah.html">http://cantankerouscamel.blogspot.com/2006/08/reuters-caught-lying-for-hizballah.html</a>
22	Media More Accountable now Because of Bloggers?	8/9/06	<a href="http://bryantonpost.blogspot.com/2006/08/media-more-accountable-now-because-of.html">http://bryantonpost.blogspot.com/2006/08/media-more-accountable-now-because-of.html</a>
23	Smoke and Mirrors	8/9/06	<a href="http://vanishingamerican.blogspot.com/2006/08/smoke-and-mirrors.html">http://vanishingamerican.blogspot.com/2006/08/smoke-and-mirrors.html</a>
24	Reutersgate Becomes an Issue in Reporting the Israel-Hezbollah War	8/9/06	<a href="http://uscpublicdiplomacy.com/index.php/newsroom/pdblog_detail/060810_reutersgate_becomes_an_issue_in_reporting_the_israel_hezbollah_war/">http://uscpublicdiplomacy.com/index.php/newsroom/pdblog_detail/060810_reutersgate_becomes_an_issue_in_reporting_the_israel_hezbollah_war/</a>
25	Reuters: Adnan Hajj Is Not Still Taking Pictures for Us	8/9/06	<a href="http://blogs.usatoday.com/ondeadline/2006/08/reuters_adnan_h.html">http://blogs.usatoday.com/ondeadline/2006/08/reuters_adnan_h.html</a>
26	Al-Reuters: Hezbollah Propagandist	8/10/06	<a href="http://www.tothepointnews.com/index.php?option=com_content&amp;task=view&amp;id=2392&amp;Itemid=130">http://www.tothepointnews.com/index.php?option=com_content&amp;task=view&amp;id=2392&amp;Itemid=130</a>
27	Photoshop Propaganda	8/11/06	<a href="http://blogs.abcnews.com/politicalpunch/2006/08/photoshop_propa.html">http://blogs.abcnews.com/politicalpunch/2006/08/photoshop_propa.html</a>
28	A Pixel Is a Pixel	8/11/06	<a href="http://www.digitalfieldguide.com/blog/582">http://www.digitalfieldguide.com/blog/582</a>
29	Reutersgate Widening and Deepening	8/12/06	<a href="http://cassandra2004.blogspot.com/2006/08/reutersgate-widening-and-deepening.html">http://cassandra2004.blogspot.com/2006/08/reutersgate-widening-and-deepening.html</a>
30	Fauxtography: The Media Scandal Continues	8/15/06	<a href="http://www.vdare.com/malkin/060815_fauxtography.htm">http://www.vdare.com/malkin/060815_fauxtography.htm</a>
31	They Lie and Cheat	8/18/06	<a href="http://commentfromisraelblog.blogspot.com/2006/08/they-lie-and-cheat.html">http://commentfromisraelblog.blogspot.com/2006/08/they-lie-and-cheat.html</a>
32	Adnan Hajj Reloaded - Another Hajj/Al-Reuters Photoshop	8/28/06	<a href="http://www.rightwinged.com/2006/08/adnan_hajj_reloaded_another_hajjalreuters_pho.html">http://www.rightwinged.com/2006/08/adnan_hajj_reloaded_another_hajjalreuters_pho.html</a>

## Appendix 5

### Coding Sheet for Content Analysis of the Israel-Lebanon Photo Controversy

Article ID: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Type of source:

- a. Blog
- b. Mainstream Media Source

#### If answered (a) to the Question 1:

2. Link
3. Entry Title
4. Date of the Entry (MM/DD/YY)
5. Word Count
6. Pictures provided:
  - a. Yes
  - b. No

#### If answered (b) to the Question 1:

7. Media Outlet Name
8. Country
9. Publication Title
10. Word Count
11. Byline
12. Date of Publication (MM/DD/YY)
13. Pictures provided:
  - c. Yes
  - d. No

#### A. Main theme of the publication:

- Facts about the incident
- Political bias
- Blogosphere versus mainstream media.

#### B. Reuters response:

- Fired the photographer
- Removed all his 920 pictures from the database
- Issued an apology
- Tightened editing procedures for the pictures coming from Middle East.

#### C. The “smoke” picture alteration:

- Was manipulated using Photoshop (clone tool)
- Show more and darker smoke
- Make destruction look worse
- Make Israeli [attack] looks worse

- Make the picture more dramatic
- Obvious fake – changes are amateurish.

**D. Sources quoted:**

- Reuters head of PR Moira Whittle [official statement]
- Tom Szlukovenyi, Reuters Global Photo Editor [official statement]
- Paul Holmes, Reuters photo editor
- Harry Hershorn, Reuters photo editor
- Charles Johnson, from LittleGreenFootbals
- Professional photographer or photo editor
- Professional journalist
- Blogger
- Expert from academia.

**E. Why did this happen:**

- Hajj was trying to remove dust marks
- Hajj was trying to make the picture more salable and appealing
- Hajj was trying to help Hezbollah
- Bad conditions of a military conflict
- Reuters has anti-Israel bias – another proof of that.

**F. Evaluation of Reuters' response:**

- Their apology is not enough
- They have to evaluate all 920 pictures submitted by Hajj
- They did everything right.

**G: Who discovered the picture?**

- Bloggers
- LittleGreenFootball (Johnson not mentioned)
- Charles Johnson.

**H: LittleGreenFootbals is:**

- A political blog
- An anti-Muslim Web site
- A pro-Israel Web site.

**I: Charles Johnson is:**

- An influential political blogger
- The one who discovered fake documents presented by CBS (Rathergate)
- 50-something programmer
- Professional musician who keeps a blog
- Anti-Muslim blogger.

**J: Adnan Hajj:**

- Took staged photos in Qana
- Worked for Reuters in 1993-2003 and since 2005.

- Is a Hezbollah-friendly photographer (anti-Israel bias).

**K: Blogosphere:**

- Won a battle with mainstream media
- Is a watchdog over the mainstream media
- Blogosphere scrutiny is very beneficial.

**L: Ethics in photojournalism and Israel-Lebanon conflict:**

- Hezbollah propaganda affects the media coverage
- Certain amount of bias coverage always happens
- Qana attack pictures were staged
- “Green Helmet” personage as an example of staged pictures in Lebanon
- Another samples of photo frauds provided
- Editors should be more educated and vigilant.

## Appendix 6

### Coding Instructions for Content Analysis of the Israel-Lebanon Photo Controversy

#### Coding Sheet

Article ID: \_\_\_\_\_

14. Type of source:
  - a. Blog
  - b. Mainstream media source

#### If answered (a) to the Question 1:

15. Link
16. Entry title
17. Date of the entry (MM/DD/YY)
18. Word count (*in order to estimate the number of words, select the text and go to Word->Tools->Word count*)
19. Pictures provided:
  - a. Yes
  - b. No

#### If answered (b) to the Question 1:

20. Media outlet name
21. Country
22. Publication title
23. Word count
24. Byline
25. Date of publication (MM/DD/YY)
26. Pictures provided:
  - a. Yes
  - b. No

#### **A. Main theme of the publication:** (*Read the story title and first two paragraphs to identify the main focus of the story*).

- Facts about the incident
- Political bias
- Blogosphere versus mainstream media.

*While coding frames of the story, choose all that apply.*

#### **B. Reuters response:**

- Fired the photographer
- Removed all his 920 pictures from the database
- Issued an apology (*phrases saying that agency apologized for the incident count too*)
- Tightened editing procedures for the pictures coming from Middle East.

**C. The “smoke” picture alteration:**

- Was manipulated using Photoshop (clone tool) (*reference “digitally manipulated” counts too*).
- Show more and darker smoke
- Make destruction look worse
- Make Israeli [attack] looks worse
- Make the picture more dramatic
- Obvious fake – changes are amateurish.

**D. Sources quoted:**

- Reuters head of PR Moira Whittle [official statement]
- Tom Szlukovenyi, Reuters Global Photo Editor [official statement]
- Paul Holmes, Reuters photo editor
- Harry Hershorn, Reuters photo editor
- Charles Johnson, from LittleGreenFootballs
- Professional photographer or photo editor (*other than Reuters staff members*)
- Professional journalist
- Blogger (*other than Charles Johnson*)
- Expert from academia.

**E. Why did this happen:**

- Hajj was trying to remove dust marks
- Hajj was trying to make the picture more salable and appealing
- Hajj was trying to help Hezbollah
- Bad conditions of a military conflict
- Reuters has anti-Israel bias – another proof of that.

**F. Evaluation of Reuters’ response:**

- Their apology is not enough
- They have to evaluate all 920 pictures submitted by Hajj
- They did everything right.

**G: Who discovered the picture?**

- Bloggers
- LittleGreenFootball (*mark this option if LGF is credited even if Charles Johnson is mentioned*)
- Charles Johnson.

**H: LittleGreenFootballs is:**

- A political blog
- An anti-Muslim Web site
- A pro-Israel Web site.

**I: Charles Johnson is:**

- An influential political blogger
- The one who discovered fake documents presented by CBS (*references to Dan Rather,*

***Rathergate etc. also count)***

- 50-something programmer
- Professional musician who keeps a blog
- Anti-Muslim blogger.

**J: Adnan Hajj:**

- Took staged photos in Qana
- Worked for Reuters in 1993-2003 and since 2005.
- Is a Hezbollah-friendly photographer (*or has an anti-Israel bias*).

**K: Blogosphere:**

- Won a battle with mainstream media (*a war between mainstream media and blogosphere does not have to be exactly mentioned, see if the relationship between two media platforms are described as confrontation*)
- Is a watchdog over the mainstream media
- Blogosphere scrutiny is very beneficial.

**L: Ethics in photojournalism and Israel-Lebanon conflict:**

- Hezbollah propaganda affects the media coverage (*this might include guided tours for journalists conducted by Hezbollah*)
- Certain amount of bias coverage always happens
- Qana attack pictures were staged (*the author should be very positive that the Qana coverage was staged*)
- Staging in Qana was not confirmed (*the text author should have expressed some doubt or clearly say that these accusations were not confirmed*)
- “Green Helmet” personage as an example of staged pictures in Lebanon
- Another samples of photo frauds provided (*other than Qana*)
- Editors should be more educated and vigilant.