Chapter 8
Conclusion and Implications

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8.1 Findings

The major theoretical questions of the thesis – how to describe evaluation in visual semiosis and visual-verbal intersemiosis – emerged out of the overarching aim of the thesis. This was to understand and describe how prominent verbal-visual news texts in prestige sites in a high circulation broadsheet newspaper evaluatively position readers towards knowledge presented in those texts. The eight texts chosen as the focus of the thesis inquiry (introduced and referred to as ‘standouts’ in Chapter 1) are large verbal-
visual displays that include news photos, main and sub-headlines and photo captions. Standouts can be read on their own though they also introduce and promote long investigative feature stories that follow them. The standouts chosen for analysis here all introduce front-page stories about the issue of asylum seekers from weekend news review sections in high circulation metropolitan broadsheets, stories considered here to be exemplary civic journalism texts. Four standouts are from an Australian newspaper, The Sydney Morning Herald and four from a Greek newspaper, Kiriakatiki, the Sunday issue of the Eleftherotypia.

The effort devoted to developing a systematic description of visual semiosis in the thesis (Chapters 3-6) was a response to the paucity of analytical tools available for describing evaluation in images compared to the wealth and sophistication of tools available for analysis of evaluation in language. It was felt that without developing visual description further a satisfactory description of intersemiotic evaluation in verbal-visual news texts would not be possible. The exploration of evaluative meaning in the naturalistic photograph undertaken here used as a model the SFL appraisal system developed to describe evaluation in language. This proved a fruitful approach resulting in a wide range of specific attitudinal and evaluative meanings in images being distinguished and described as options in a visual appraisal system. Though the visual options proposed here to some degree correspond to those in the verbal appraisal system, some have been adapted and others added to cover evaluative meanings found in a large data set of broadsheet news photos. This system was then used in the next phase of the thesis (Chapter 7), which explored evaluation in each of the eight verbal-visual standouts. This analysis revealed many commonalities in the rhetorical functioning of standouts from the same cultural context as well as some commonalities and many noteworthy differences across the two contexts.

In what follows, specific key findings are listed, first in relation to developing visual appraisal as it applies to the news photo and then in relation to the analysis of visual verbal news discourse. Following this, implications for theory and practice are elaborated on and finally, limitations of the thesis and opportunities it provides for future work are discussed.
8.1.1 Findings: visual appraisal

The following findings emerged from the building up of a visual appraisal system for news photos.

**Visual attitude**

* Even though only a few attitude values can be visually inscribed in a news photo, multiple attitude values can be visually evoked via a range of strategies, all dependent on visual ideation; and each type of visual evocation more closely approximates inscribed attitude than does that type of attitude evocation in language.

* All three types of attitude values can be identified in visual texts; affect and judgement values of all kinds are more easily evoked in viewers when recognisable social actors and action are depicted and/or implied; and evoked appreciation values of all kinds play an especially important and complex role in news photos.

* Selection of photos according to their ideational content seems motivated by their potential to afford/provoke attitude in viewers; and the high impact photos most sought after in the news are those that most directly evoke affect and judgement values.

* Multiple attitude values of all types may be evoked simultaneously in respect to one ideational element more readily than in language; this leads to evaluative complexity and density in a single visual *figure* and may also result in evaluative tension; for example, evoked appreciation values for a visual item may undermine or contradict simultaneously evoked judgement and affect values.

**Visual graduation**

* Presentation of photo content by grading or scaling visual ideational meaning up or down in different ways is a most important evaluative strategy in photos; these are graduation choices which flag, for the viewer, the attitudinal potential of ideation in the photo.

* Both types of graduation identified in language can also be identified in photos; [force] adjusts the level of impact of a visual element and [focus] adjusts its level of specification; visual options of [force: quantification] via mass, number, extent

* Realisation of each graduation value in the system proposed here is via two expression systems, identified and referred in the thesis to as ‘photographological’ systems; one set is spatial (camera distance and angles) and the other, is identified in the thesis as ‘textural’ (settings of light, tone, contrast, colour, speed, exposure, focus etc).

**Visual engagement**

* Both the main engagement options of monogloss (no voice acknowledged) and heterogloss (internal authorial voice or external voice/text acknowledged or incorporated) can be identified in the news photo.

* The typical ‘unmarked’ photo is the monoglossic option in which no ‘voice’, authorial or external, is acknowledged – corresponding to the bare assertion or ‘factual’ proposition in language.

* Though there are not as many explicit visual heteroglossic options as in language, the following were identified in the photo:

  i. incorporation of an external voice/text via a ‘visual quote’ [attribute], either [incorporate] within the text or [substitute] as the text;
  
  ii. signalling of authorial subjectivity via ‘marked’ visual ideation (where unmarked depictions are known to be available) or marked expression (corresponding to modality in language) [entertain]; and
  
  iii. incorporation of an external non-news context via ‘visual suggestion’ or visual interdiscursivity [suggest], which may be the most powerful heteroglossic option as it evokes a complex of ideological and attitudinal meanings associated by the viewer with the suggested external context.

*All visual engagement options are seen to do attitudinal work in the news photo without affecting the photo’s factual status; this is true only for some verbal engagement options in the news story such as open heterogloss [attribute] via quotes. Where the
visual options in news photos foreground authorial subjectivity, that is, [entertain] or [suggest], they seem to affect the factual status of the photo less than do the same options in the news story.

**Conclusion: visual appraisal**
What seems to be unique to the visual semiotic, here of the naturalistic photo, is its capacity to simultaneously realise multiple values of different kinds from each appraisal system for each ideational element in a photo. Unlike language, a range of visual appraisal options in each system may be realised simultaneously in the one visual figure able to be read at a glance. And it is visual ideational affordance and its graduation in the news photo that do the most critical evaluative work, highlighting the evaluative consequences of routine decisions made in the editorial processes of photo selection and presentation.

**8.1.2 Findings: verbal-visual news discourse**
The following findings emerged from the critical analysis of verbal-visual news review standouts.

* Intersemiotic evaluative meanings, involving interaction and multiplication of meanings could be deconstructed in eight texts analysed in Chapter 7, in terms of contributions made by each semiotic, both within each stage of the text and in prosodies across all stages of the text, and in a more explicit way than has hitherto been possible

* A hitherto unrecognised verbal-visual news genre or text type, identified as the standout, was established by the analysis of eight texts across two contexts in the discourse analysis study in Chapter 7; this text type was found to have an orbital structure and primarily evaluative purposes, with verbal-visual intersemiosis contributing significantly to its potential for sophisticated and complex rhetorical effects.
The construction of evaluative key and stance can be described for a visual-verbal standout just as has been done for written news texts by Martin and White (2005) and Martin (2004a).

The evaluative key identified in all standouts from the one context within a one-year period was remarkably consistent, as was evaluative stance in respect to the asylum seeker issue, thus revealing systematicity in editorial choices on the one issue.

The Australian standouts were found to be more evaluatively complex than the Greek, with two different evaluative stances constructed by each standout in the former: both covert stances in correspondent key, one accessible only to the more informed and already aligned readers.

Though both sets of standouts used interdiscursivity as an evaluative strategy only the four Australian texts offer readers verbal-visual textual ‘pleasure’ via a familiar cinema entertainment context, suggesting a broader mass audience targeted than in the Greek texts.

8.2 Implications

8.2.1 Theory and methodology

Halliday (1992, 2008) has long pointed out that system and text are two perspectives on the same phenomenon of semiosis. In terms of research methodology then, it follows that developing theory by building a system of options for meaning is not a distinct enterprise from the analysis of text by ‘applying’ the system. Much of this thesis has been concerned with the building of a system of visual appraisal modelled on that of language and interrogating its relevance for image. The process involved applying the most general appraisal options that appear relevant for visual text to a broad range of visual data and proceeding to further delicacy in a repeated cycle of analysis and system building. Once the system was refined in this way, it could be deployed along with the verbal appraisal system to analyse more complex verbal-visual texts, as shown in Chapter 7.
Chapter 8: Conclusion & Implications

The implications of the thesis with respect to issues in theory and/or methodology are discussed here first in terms of how the thesis has added to and responded to current functional descriptions of visual semiosis, of verbal-visual intersemiosis and of evaluation. Second, implications with respect to the field of critical discourse analysis (CDA) of news media texts are discussed in terms of how the thesis has contributed to work in this more applied field.

Visual semiosis
In terms of theory relevant to visual meaning, the thesis adds to and elaborates on the two metafunctional descriptions of visual semiosis available at present, those of O’Toole (1996) and Kress and van Leeuwen (2006). O’Toole usefully applies rank scale to images but describes fine art images only and his metafunctional descriptions are not presented as systems. The thesis therefore builds more on Kress and van Leeuwen’s descriptions, which offer both semantic systems and expression options for all three visual metafunctions in a wide range of image types. The thesis specifically addresses their limited exploration of evaluation in images by developing a description of visual evaluation modelled on the appraisal system. By focusing on one context (broadsheet news) and one medium (naturalistic photograph), this thesis has thus interrogated, added to and offered alternatives to Kress and van Leeuwen’s visual metafunctional descriptions in general, and in particular to their description of interpersonal meaning.

Overall the findings to emerge from the building of the visual appraisal system in the thesis have demonstrated that, though not attempted by Kress and van Leeuwen, evaluation in naturalistic photos can be described with some delicacy even though most visual evaluation in these images is dependent on visual ideational meaning. The visual descriptions of evaluation developed here also demonstrate that visual appraisal offers a clearer picture of tenor in news photos than do Kress and van Leeuwen’s interpersonal descriptions. Also, gradient visual expression forms have been named ‘photographological’ here, corresponding to graphological and phonological in language. That is, light, colour, tone, contrast, focus, exposure and speed choices, included in Kress and van Leeuwen Modality markers, are named here ‘textural’ photographological expression forms; and size of frame, horizontal and vertical camera angles, realising Kress and van Leeuwen’s Interaction and Composition systems, are named ‘spatial’ photographological expression forms. In the thesis, both textural and
spatial options are shown to realise a range of evaluative meanings, particularly of graduation and engagement.

The visual heteroglossic option [suggest], also referred to in the thesis as interdiscursivity in the photo and highlighted as a visual evaluative choice in news photos, corresponds to what Kress and van Leewuen refer to as the ‘polyphonic’ image. They illustrate this in fine art and advertising images (2006: 171-172), noting that art images commonly deploy a complex mixture of genres, styles and voices to great effect. This thesis has shown such polyphony exists in many naturalistic news photos and is a significant evaluative option, whether marked, and so a heteroglossic choice, or not.

**Verbal-visual intersemiosis**

The thesis has also contributed to present descriptions of verbal-visual intersemiosis in the area of evaluation. Though progress has been made in functional descriptions of intersemiosis (as reviewed in Chapter 1.2 and O’Halloran, 2008) such descriptions have been less comprehensive and more metafunctionally limited than those of visual semiosis, with most focus so far being on ideational meaning.

This thesis identifies verbal-visual semantic units at different ranks allowing each semiotic within a unit of any rank to be considered in terms of its semantic contribution to the unit. By also applying appraisal categories across both semiotics in a verbal-visual unit, this thesis allows each semiotic to be considered specifically in terms of its contribution to verbal-visual evaluation. The application of appraisal to verbal-visual analysis in this way has provided further evidence of multiplication of meaning in verbal-visual units. This has been by specifying for the first time how each semiotic contributes to appraisal, and how intersemiotic evaluative prosodies are built up across and between semantic units in a verbal-visual text.

**Verbal appraisal**

**Use of verbal system as model for other semiotic systems**

Though the verbal appraisal system has been valuable heuristically in describing visual evaluation, its use has raised the issue of whether it is appropriate to use the same feature names for a different semiotic. In the visual descriptions here feature names are maintained for the broadest categories in each appraisal system as they were found to be
comparable in the visual. Where no equivalence was found in sub-options, different categories and feature names have been proposed (e.g. in visual graduation). In some cases, however, even where visual features are not exactly equivalent to the verbal, names have been maintained as ‘placeholders’ to provide maximal transparency for those already familiar with appraisal (e.g. the heteroglossic options of [attribute] and [entertain] in visual engagement).

Another issue raised by visual description here is how to represent in a system network either-or choices, which may also be simultaneous. The fact that all contrasting options identified in each of the visual appraisal systems are simultaneously available (often in a single visual element) has revealed a significant difference between the verbal and visual semiotics. It has also pointed to the need to seek a better way of representing such semantic ‘density’ in the visual.

**Extending verbal appraisal**

Working on the development of a visual appraisal system has required a deeper consideration of how the [heterogloss] option of the engagement system is realised in text, whether visual or verbal. Heteroglossia in the present verbal system now includes options which foreground the internal authorial /textual voice – the contracting [proclaim] and expanding [entertain] option – and those which incorporate an external voice – the contracting [endorse] and expanding [attribute] options. One issue that arises concerns the interpretation of ‘external voice’ and the potential that exists for its realisation. In the verbal engagement system, external voice is most often interpreted as text (e.g. attributed words, phrases, sentences, texts). In the news photo, however, external voice has been interpreted more broadly to encompass both text and context. In other words, the visual engagement system, like the verbal, allows for realisation of an external voice as text (i.e. [attribute], but it also allows for realisation of an external ‘voice’ as context (i.e. [suggest]) via the incorporation of an external register, genre (or style) into the text for evaluative purposes. This phenomenon has long been noted and discussed in verbal text by CDA theorists, and labelled as ‘interdiscursivity’ (Fairclough 1992a and elsewhere), a term also used in this thesis to refer to the visual heterogloss option of [suggest]. This option has also been extended to comparable verbal meaning in Chapter 7. Given that interdiscursivity is acknowledged in much of the CDA literature
as significant for evaluative meaning in verbal text, it may need to be accounted for in the SFL verbal appraisal system.

A related question concerns the way lexical metaphor and allusion, as evaluative strategies, fit into the present appraisal system. In CDA, these have been closely linked with interdiscursivity as contributing to the incorporation of an external ‘style’ or ‘discourse’. In SFL, though described as a means of provoking attitude via ideational meanings introduced from another field, the heteroglossic aspect of lexical metaphor has not been explored. There is no mention in writings on appraisal of how lexical metaphors may also be associated with a recognisable external context in terms of genre and aspects of register other than field. That is, two metaphors (such as ‘plummet’ and ‘nosedive’ used in the news) may provoke a similar attitude value via similar ideation as well as similarly flag this attitude via infused high force graduation, but each also suggests a different external register. The different ideological and attitudinal meanings carried by the external context for the readers may be critical in constructing their evaluative response to the text and its ideation.

**News discourse and critical discourse analysis**

The findings regarding news photos in the thesis have added to the accumulated and consistent findings of CDA since the 1970s (e.g. Fowler et al, 1979; Fairclough, 1992c, 1995; Martin, 2004b, Martin and White, 2005, White, 1997) concerning the ideological and evaluative functioning of so called ‘objective’ and ‘factual’ verbal news reports. As Zelizer (2004a) points out, though much of the journalism literature now accepts these findings for verbal news text, the truth value of the news photo generally remains unchallenged in the profession. This thesis extends Zelizer’s work on the news photo (1995a,b, 1998, 2004b, 2005, 2007) by demonstrating that visual factuality is a rhetorical effect whereby evaluative meanings are present but are more covert than in obviously manipulated photos. These meanings may thus have a more powerful effect on viewers.

The findings regarding news review standouts have extended to verbal-visual news text the notion of evaluative key and critical stance whereby each of the three types of key and of stance is associated with a different appraisal syndrome in written news texts (Martin, 2004a, Martin and White, 2005). Though not as systematically explored as
stance, verbal-visual keys identified in standouts include both the relatively constrained correspondent key and the less constrained commentator key, and in both, the ‘factual’ status of news photos seems to covertly endorse authorial evaluation.

The analysis of standouts has extended Martin and White’s (2005) news discourse analysis in two ways:

i. by revealing that two different keys and stances may be available in the one text, each of the latter accessible to different reader groups via different ‘readings’ of the text; and

ii. by demonstrating that critical stance as found in commentator key in the literature (Iedema et al, 1994; Martin and White, 2005) can also be constructed by covert means in correspondent key, both in verbal and verbal-visual news text, and thus can also be found in ‘news analysis’ texts, as demonstrated in both verbal-visual news review standout and investigative story.

The thesis findings from its discourse analysis study of eight instances of a proposed new verbal-visual news genre, the news review standout, extend and elaborate on the relatively few CDA studies of verbal-visual news; the thesis also adds to CDA findings and descriptions of ‘hybrid’ news texts which ‘entertain’ or ‘personalise’ at the same time as they inform or comment (Fairclough, 1992, 1995; Chouliaraki, 2004, 2005, 2006).

The thesis adds to CDA descriptions of a written media genre referred to as a type of ‘news analysis’ (Martin and White, 2005) or news feature story (Iedema et al, 1994), an influential media genre that has not been paid as much attention as it deserves; the thesis offers an analysis of two such stories, introduced and re-instantiated by standouts analysed.

8.2.2 Practice: journalism & education

Journalism

The visual appraisal system that has been developed and applied in this thesis offers a way of gauging and describing, in terms of evaluative ramifications, the immense
complexity of visual and verbal-visual information that appears to be taken in
effortlessly in an instant. It reveals the rich and condensed evaluative capacity of the
photo and explains the much discussed but so far not systematically explicated power of
the photographic image to uniquely affect or move us. In doing so, the thesis has
revealed the complexity that must be managed during image production in order to
achieve desired rhetorical effects, as well as the potential for mismanaging choices and
thus creating undesired effects. The latter is more likely if expression options available
to producers, now greatly increased with more accessible digital technology, are not
recognised or explicitly identified as having specific evaluative consequences.

Though the journalism practice literature details many visual and some verbal-visual
production choices and emphasises the importance of making the ‘right’ choices for an
appropriate evaluative effect, it has not managed to explain what makes a choice the
right one or the effect appropriate. Even in the magazine journalism literature, more
attuned to the links between image, visual design choices, evaluative effects and reader
tastes and values, what counts as a ‘good’ choice is often seen as subjective and its
evaluative consequences as unable to be systematically explained or taught. This thesis,
however, shows how semiotic choices concerning evaluation can be not only named but
also understood and explained in terms of individual and interacting news production
choices. This is what journalism scholar Zelizer has repeatedly called for in her work,
pointing to the limited articulation of journalistic practices surrounding the use of photos
(see Chapter 2.1.2). Without vocabulary to identify visual choices as evaluative or to
make connections between expression, meaning and context, journalists and editors
cannot properly control their practice. Unless all choices made can be named and
connected, it is ‘soft’ practice (Kress, 1995), which is not adequate where the work
involves high levels of civic responsibility, as in the broadsheet news reviews focused
on in this thesis.

This thesis has identified and named a range of expression choices made in editorial
production of news photos in terms of their evaluative effect, presenting the latter as
meaning choices in three appraisal systems. These may seem complex and overly
detailed to practitioners but the broad distinctions made may be relatively easy to apply
as they articulate and systematise the meanings of actual expression choices being made
daily in what is already complex and detailed though perhaps intuitive journalistic
practice. The technical knowledge of photojournalists and editors should allow them to identify photographological expression choices even more precisely than was possible in the thesis. Even if only the most general semantic categories in the system are used this will allow each of the many visual expression and photo selection choices to be overtly linked to each other and viewed as contributing to a type of evaluative meaning targeting an intended readership. Where the same general appraisal categories are also applied to words accompanying photos, then practitioners can also identify interactions between visual-verbal choices in terms of their evaluative effects on putative readers.

There are also important implications for journalistic practice in recognising the front page verbal-visual displays in broadsheet news review sections as a standout – a news genre or text type in its own right – as well as the introductory stage of investigative news review feature stories. The standout is often read as a substitute for the longer ensuing story, one typically researched and written by high status investigative journalists. The ethical imperative to closely consider the evaluative stance of the standout in relation to the story calls into question current practices where the news review standout is produced in relative isolation from the written story. The analysis of both Greek and Australian news review texts on asylum seekers in Chapter 7 showed that consistent choices, over the period of a year in respect to the same issue, were made by text producers in both cases. This raises questions about how deliberate some of the evaluative choices and rhetorical effects are.

If the standout stance is to be fully considered, producers first need recognise the standout as a text in order to also recognise and make explicit the evaluative consequences of all production choices, particularly all those created by verbal-visual interaction. Currently, even where visual choices and verbal elements of the standout are both considered in light of the written story, each semiotic may be the responsibility of different producers. Thus, decisions about the verbal may be made separately from those about the visual and so prevent evaluative consequences of verbal-visual interaction from being fully considered even intuitively by experienced professionals. This can lead to the kind of evaluative mismatch identified between story and standout stance found in the SMH news review feature story entitled *Wait in fright*. 
Another consideration regarding verbal-visual standouts is recognising the multiple and possibly conflicting evaluative demands of the context in respect to standouts, particularly those on the cover page of a weekly news review section. These can include attracting and engaging a mass readership, forming attitudinal alignments with different groups within that audience and at the same time reflecting on a serious social issue. The thesis has shown that different evaluative choices in the standout may be aimed at different reader groups but unacknowledged intersemiotic complexity may prevent consideration of how they may conflict. For example, some verbal-visual evaluative choices aimed at entertaining or pulling in readers may interact with evaluative choices in visual or verbal elements aimed at informing or commenting on an issue. The result is that what is considered a successful standout by the editor and readers may not always be a faithful reflection of the written story in terms of evaluative stance. Though all four Australian standouts seem designed to easily lure a mass audience and not alienate readers whatever their position is on the issue, choices ensuring these aims in one standout have been shown to contribute to constructing a stance at odds with the story.

**Education**

Teacher educators and writers of educational materials need a similarly deep understanding of visual and verbal-visual evaluation and its effect on the presentation of knowledge. One of the noticeable differences in education texts today from that of previous generations is the increasing prevalence of multimodality in texts, much of it dependent on verbal-visual intersemiosis involving naturalistic photos. In subjects like history and social studies, it is imperative for educators to understand how image-text relations work in powerful yet highly implicit ways to produce moral and ideological outcomes (Freebody and Zhang, 2008). The thesis findings can directly inform such understandings.

**8.3 Limitations and Future Directions**

This research project is necessarily limited in terms of the data, the theoretical and analytical focus and the ability to speak directly to practitioners. The various ways in which the ideas presented here could be taken further are outlined below.
8.3.1 Data

To extend the research done in this thesis, further data sets can now be considered in terms of the visual appraisal system developed.

• Firstly, it can be applied to more news photos from the same broadsheet newspaper that the thesis data is drawn from, as well as from other print and electronic news sites. This would both test and refine the proposed system.

• Secondly, changing trends in visual evaluation choices in the news photos published over a period of time can be identified using the appraisal system and linked systematically to social context. These include changes in the one broadsheet across different historical periods and during significant social events, and differences between photos in broadsheets and tabloids or magazines about the same event.

• Thirdly, though only news photos were examined in the thesis, the visual appraisal system may also be useful more generally in analysis of evaluation in naturalistic photos from non-news sites, particularly where visual rhetorical effects are critical, as in media advertisements (extending CDA work such as Thibault (2000) on TV ads), in official government reports (such as the Bringing them Home report commissioned by the Australian government (discussed in Martin, 2004b) and formal education texts, particularly in history and social science (discussed in Freebody and Hedberg, 2005)

In this thesis, both visual and verbal appraisal has been used to describe intersemiotic evaluation, evaluative key and stance in eight broadsheet news review standouts from two countries. This can now be extended by application to further broadsheet news review standouts on the same and on other topics, to standouts from other Australian newspapers and to those from other countries. It can also be extended to other kinds of verbal-visual news text, which are increasing in number in all news sites. In this way, not only broadsheet news but also internet news sites can be examined more closely in terms of overall evaluative stance.
8.3.2 Theoretical and analytical focus

In terms of future directions in theory, extensions can be suggested in respect to both visual and intersemiotic texts.

**Visual semiosis**

The description of visual evaluation may be extended beyond appraisal by also applying descriptions of visual interpersonal meaning in recently SFL work on children’s picture books (Painter, 2007, 2008; Painter, Martin and Unsworth, in press). For example, their systems of ‘focalisation’ and ‘ambience’ seem relevant for the thesis data and may complement the visual appraisal system. In relation to verbal-visual texts, SFL descriptions of genre, evaluative stance and key (Martin and White, 2005) were applied to standouts in the thesis but not to news photos. However, the visual analysis in the thesis suggests that this would be a fruitful path to follow. A first attempt, made in Economou (2008) proposes ‘visual record’ and ‘visual interpretation’ keys for broadsheet news photos. A further development would be to examine whether visual genres corresponding to hard and soft news stories (Iedema et al., 1994) may also be distinguished in daily news photos.

**Verbal-visual intersemiosis**

Now that the standout has been identified as verbal-visual text type it can also be explored in terms of recent SFL work. Martin’s (2008, to appear, a) ideas on instantiation and individuation offer useful ways of understanding and describing verbal–visual intersemiosis through the notions of commitment and coupling. Though this work is compatible with the approach taken in this thesis, and some use was made of it, it was not sufficiently developed at the time to be incorporated fully in the thesis framework for verbal-visual analysis. Further work could approach verbal-visual appraisal analysis in both standouts and other texts by interpreting intersemiosis in terms of the differential ‘commitment’ of meaning by the different kinds of semiosis involved. Other recent SFL work has shown how Bernstein’s sociology of education (1996) can be combined with appraisal analysis to explain the relationship between rhetoric and knowledge (Hood, 2004a). Since the standouts analysed here are considered pedagogic in nature, Bernstein’s ideas on recontextualisation and pedagogic discourse could clearly provide further fruitful interpretations of the findings.
8.3.3 Practical applications: journalism and education

As well as making a durable contribution to theory and analysis, the findings provide insights for practice, particularly in journalism and education as outlined below.

Journalism

This project gives rise to a number of still unanswered questions about what journalists do, questions which it would be worthwhile to explore in further research working alongside journalists. Given that detailed microanalysis and delicate theoretical descriptions as presented in this thesis may present difficulties to busy practitioners, suggestions for future directions begin with making findings in this thesis of some direct use to them. A project to explore how research findings could be translated into practice may involve working with willing professionals (photographers, photo-editors, news designers and editors) in civic journalism sites, such as broadsheet news review sections, where there is concern about knowledge construction and rhetorical effects. Questions to be answered include: what criteria do journalists actually use (and do they articulate these) when they make decisions about news photos and accompanying words at different stages of the production process? Can the application of the appraisal system in practice encourage the more systematic identification of individual and interacting editorial choices (expression choices which may at present be seen as merged in practice)\(^1\). And can applying appraisal provide a means for linking these editorial (expression) choices with intended evaluative effects (meaning) on a target audience (context)?

Though some journalism training is specifically devoted to issues related to the use of news photos (cf. Visual Journalism section at [www.Poynteronline.com](http://www.Poynteronline.com)), none offer the kind of systematicity that work in this thesis could potentially offer. With collaborating journalists contributing their knowledge of the context and production, relevant visual expression systems could be built for the news photo and the appraisal system be made user friendly for application to verbal-visual semiosis.

\(^1\) Halliday’s (1970) description of three simultaneous lexicogrammatical systems revealed for the first time to language practitioners the specific and systematic choices that are interwoven in the production of each English clause.
Education

In a similar way, projects involving collaboration with those responsible for creating education texts and materials could help translate the thesis findings in the education context. There is a pressing need for better understanding of the operation of visual evaluation and verbal-visual intersemiosis and its effect on the representation of so-called factual knowledge in contemporary education texts, as noted in The National Curriculum Board’s ‘Framing Paper for English’ 2008 (www.ncb.org.au). An understanding of how photos and their interaction with words can construct an evaluative stance towards content is thus most critical for education materials producers. By working in collaboration with practitioners, educators could use the thesis findings to help arrive at workable descriptions of visual and verbal-visual evaluation needed for this context.

8.4 Conclusion

The explosion of visual and intersemiotic texts in the contemporary world of news media and of education at all levels means the need for critical and analytical tools to describe the evaluative import of such texts has become ever more pressing. Though specialist scholars, including SFL linguists, have been studying visual and verbal-visual meaning in the past two decades more systematically than ever before, their work has not yet been taken up into everyday understandings, nor into the mainstream imagination as to what literacy means. Neither has this work been fully integrated yet into teacher education, nor entered into the vocabulary of composers of all kinds of contemporary texts including practising journalists. Even news editors and news designers, with a large body of intuitive knowledge, experience and skills concerning the use of visual meaning, do not know these things in a way that affords a pedagogy or critique. That is why the contribution of this thesis to literacy practice matters more now than it would have 30 years ago (when visuals were far less prevalent), and more than it will 30 years from now, when journalists and teachers may be talking about these things very differently. Despite being limited in various ways, the thesis makes a contribution to addressing a pressing need and has the potential to provide a basis for future research of both theoretical and practical value.