

The Global Visual Memory

A Study of the Recognition and Interpretation of Iconic and Historical
Photographs

Het Mondiaal Visueel Geheugen

Een studie naar de herkenning en interpretatie van iconische en
historische foto's

(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

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Abstract

Photographs of historical events can function as visual icons and as agents of cultural memory if they are widely circulated and recognized. Since the 1930s, such photographs have circulated across the world, which creates the possibility that photographs of historical events exist that are recognized by audiences in countries across the world. In this study, I define such photographs – if they exist – as being part of a global visual memory: images that are recognized by people worldwide.

In academic literature, it is often assumed that such iconic photographs with a worldwide reach exist. Very little research, however, has been devoted to establish facts about their recognition and interpretation. In this study, I have tried to find evidence of the worldwide recognition of 25 photographs that feature prominently in academic debates on iconic and historical photographs. I have included these photographs in an online survey, that was distributed by a survey sampling company to a controlled group of close to three thousand respondents, representative of their countries' population with regards to gender, age, and education level, in twelve countries: Argentina, Brazil, China, Germany, Great Britain, India, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Russia, Turkey and the United States. Respondents were asked which photographs they recognized, and were asked additional questions about their interpretation and assessment of six selected photographs.

The survey results indicate that there are indeed photographs of historical events that are recognized by audiences worldwide. A majority of survey respondents recognized four photographs: Carmen Taylor's photograph of a hijacked airplane flying into the World Trade Center (2001), Neil Armstrong photograph of Buzz Aldrin on the moon (1969), Alberto Korda's portrait of Che Guevara (1960), and Joe Rosenthal's photograph of US marines raising a flag on Iwo Jima (1945). Nick Ut's 'Napalm Girl' photograph (1972) and Jeff Widener's 'Tank Man' photograph (1989) are recognized by close to fifty percent of respondents. By proving the worldwide recognition of these photographs, I have also proven the existence of a global visual memory that has photographs of events in history as one of its component parts.

Other findings of this study include the conclusion that images that feature prominently in academic debates on iconic photographs are not always recognized widely among general, international audiences; that the interpretation of iconic and historical photographs varies strongly among different people and is less conclusive and less singular than is often assumed in academic articles; and that not only the exact interpretation but also the way people 'read' photographs is more varied than academic literature on iconic and historical photographs suggests. I identify five different ways in which respondents worldwide 'read' the photographs shown to them. This survey also underlines that online sampling can enhance our understanding of iconic and historical photographs and their relation to historical memory.

Preface

This study started with my fascination with the idea that I carry in my mind the visual memory of certain events in history that I have never witnessed firsthand, that I know from photographs that were taken to record a certain event at a certain place and time; and that other people in the Netherlands, in Italy, Russia, the United States, Argentina, China, and elsewhere can conjure up the same images – thousands, millions, perhaps billions of people across the globe with entirely different lives, priorities, habits, who nonetheless share amongst each other identical images of history.

I did not know if this idea was true. I could envision it to be true, and literature on photography and history describes such photographs, but as my fascination with that concept grew, I was surprised to learn that this idea – however convincing or intuitive – is not only unproven, but that there has never been a serious attempt to prove it. Therefore, I decided to think of ways how such a global visual memory might be proven to exist, and if I could provide a start, or at least an attempt, to prove its existence and to research it.

My fascination with photography started long before, when my sister Hester organized my eighteenth birthday present to be a 1970s Pentax camera with Zeiss zoom lens, which led to several photographic endeavours, including an exhibition of Bhutan photographs in a Amsterdam city center café and the conversion of my bathroom into darkroom with awkwardly marked bottles containing chemicals. But my interest in photography dwindled. It was nuclear strategy that led me back to it, or more exactly: my disappointment with it. I was initially excited with rational choice theory and nuclear matters, only to become disillusioned with what I saw as very shallow intellectual foundings of the concepts that govern nuclear strategy and, by extension, the safety of all mankind. I started looking for a new subject to engage with, and found it in photography.

I have to thank Rob Kroes for leading me back in that direction. More or less by chance, I became co-instructor of his course Photography in American History, and was inspired by his teaching, knowledge, and enthusiasm about the subject of photography; he also advised me before and during this project. But I have many more people to thank for contributing to this study. Joris van Eijnatten, who mentored this study, helped me make my self-imposed deadlines during his sabbatical year, and who arranged the funds, along with Maarten Prak, for the global internet survey that is at the heart of it.

I had much more help for this study. First of all, from Survey Sampling International (SSI), that sponsored this study by distributing and monitoring my photography survey among controlled respondent groups in twelve countries for a sharply reduced price. From Julie Crawford, who meticulously reviewed the first two chapters. From Grigore Pop-Eleches and Keena Lipsitz, who advised me on the survey questions and methodology. From Johan Schokker, Pieter van den Eeden, Hedda van 't Land, and my brother Gertjan, who advised me on statistical analysis. From Thomas Poell, Devin Vartija and Melvin Wevers, who helped me to prepare for the defense of my

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And I have learned that those sentences in which authors thank their family and/or bosses for supporting them, which always seemed bland and obligatory to me, are in reality an accurate reflection of the essential help of others in finishing a project like this one. So: my thanks also go out to Xandra Schutte, my editor-in-chief at De Groene Amsterdammer. And to my family, for providing time, support and patience: my mother Roelie, my children Lucas, Noah and Rosa, and most of all, Suzanne.

Introduction

Let's take three slices of time. In the first one, in June 1963, the world came to Netherlands, where this study is written, by courier, airplane, bus, bicycle and then sometimes train – in that order. Astronauts had already been sent into space and all kinds of technological marvels had spread across the world, but every day a package was made in the London office of The Associated Press, the world's largest distributor of news photographs, then wrapped and labelled 'Holland'.¹ The package was taken by a courier to Heathrow airport, and entrusted with a stewardess of the Netherlands' Koninklijke Luchtvaart Maatschappij (KLM). After landing at Schiphol, the stewardess would exit the airport's main hall, proceed to the bus stop for local transport, and hand the package to a bus driver destined for Amsterdam.

The stewardess would then re-enter Schiphol, call the Associated Press office on Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal and report the line and Schiphol departure time of the bus now carrying the package. The AP photo editor would then make his way to the Victoria Hotel bus stop, pick up the package and pay for a single fare. Back at the AP office he would reproduce the photographs, put them in envelopes marked with the names of AP subscribers, deliver them at their editorial offices by bicycle if they were in Amsterdam, and deliver the remaining ones at the Central Station for delivery by train. In June, 1963, one of the photographs delivered in this way would be known as 'The Burning Monk', taken by Malcolm Browne on June 11 of Thich Quang Duc, who burned himself to death on a busy intersection in Saigon. Earlier that year, photographs of police dogs set upon protesters in Birmingham, Alabama were distributed in the same way, just like those of Adolf Eichmann during his trial in Jerusalem, two years before.

And this was not just the case in the Netherlands. The expression that images 'traveled' across the globe was quite literally true for many places in the world until well into the last quarter of the twentieth century. It was also true in our first slice of time, in May 1937. Two years before, Associated Press had started its Wirephoto service, which transmitted news photographs by telephone line and radio. A true worldwide network that was transmitting images on a daily basis was now in place, but stations were so expensive that there were only a handful in the world, and quality remained poor. So when the German airship *Hindenburg* went down in flames on the airstrip of Lakehurst, New Jersey, American flying ace Dick Merrill loaded his small aircraft with photographic prints and copied movie reels of the disaster, and flew them across the Atlantic Ocean, sparking fierce competition for copies and participating in what was possibly the world's first global news event.

Things had changed dramatically in our third slice of time, on 11 September 2001, when news agencies, not just the AP but Reuters and Agence France-Presse as well, had their New York offices feeding a continuous stream of thousands of digital photographs to media all over the world: photographs from staff photographers, amateur

¹ The details of this process were recounted by Leny Stevense of The Associated Press Netherlands, in an interview with me on Friday, May 10, 2013

photographers, freelancers, plus a non-stop feed of still photographs created from television transmissions that were broadcasting live from New York City after the attack on the city's World Trade Center. Although almost no-one in the world knew what was going on, hundreds of millions of people were watching.

In those three moments in time, a cycle was turning at different speeds, producing, distributing and publishing news photographs around the world, that would provide images of historical events that continue to be re-published in mass media. The insatiable appetite for news photographs that we know to exist today has existed for a long time. They were produced in the millions before single photographs first started to find their way around the world in the 1930s, and their number can only be guessed at today. Remarkable about this process is not just that these photographs are produced in such high numbers, but also that they are destroyed at almost the same pace. Photographs do not pile up onto an unmeasurable stack of images. Almost all of them are discarded or temporarily stored and then discarded, after they have served their purpose as news images. Only a tiny fraction is preserved.

Some photographs that survive are reprinted in low numbers, in history books, for example. But some stay alive in public culture, and are reprinted in mass media, sometimes exhibited, and endowed with a high status as exceptional and important images. If they are often used in connection with a specific event in history, public memory can attach itself to them, and they can come to represent that event to a group of people. These widely used photographs of events in history are usually visually strong, can trigger powerful emotions, or stand out in other ways. If they are shown often enough, people in that group will recognize the photograph if shown to them, recall the story or historical narrative they associate with it, and may even conjure up the image in their minds. They will have become part of a public understanding of history; of collective memory. And they will have become iconic.²

In today's world, the groups that recognize similar photographs and associate them with historical events, have in theory become limitless. The expansion of news agencies that operate on a worldwide scale, and cultural interest and influence across international borders, have created worldwide audiences. The invention and widespread use of the internet has accelerated this process. In theory, at least, there may be photographs that were seen and are remembered by so many people worldwide, that they have become global reference points; that they have become part of the visual memories of people worldwide.

This study is born out my fascination with this subject. The thought that I may be able to recall photographs in my mind, and that millions, in some cases perhaps billions of people in the world can recall these same images, is amazing to me. That is already true for the Beatles Abbey Road album cover, or Marilyn Monroe on a New York subway

² The terms used here, such as collective memory, historical narrative, images that represent history, and iconic photographs, will be explained and discussed later in this introduction and in Chapter 1.

grate. It is much more so for events in history that were photographed, that found their way to a worldwide audience, and that have remained in circulation. If such images exist, they constitute some form of collective memory on a worldwide scale – a global visual memory.

The central question of this study is this: can we find evidence of such a global visual memory? To answer this question, we must define what global visual memory is, what its relation is to history and memory, and how photographs function in it. This will be done in this introduction and Chapter 1. I will argue in these sections of this study that we should regard photographs of events in history that are circulated and recognized widely within certain groups of people as agents of cultural memory. In light of the fact that photographs of historical events have circulated across the world since the 1930s, the possibility exists that there are photographs of historical events that are recognized by audiences in very different countries, across the world. If such photographs exist, they can act as global agents of cultural memory, and be a part of a global visual memory. I try to establish whether such photographs exist by means of an online survey, which opens up the possibility to ask two related questions. Firstly: what statistical conclusions can we draw about the recognition by respondent groups of photographs in the survey; and if we ask respondents to answer questions about their age, gender, media use, political views, etcetera, what other statistical conclusions can we draw about the recognition of photographs in the survey and demographical characteristics within the group of respondents? Secondly: if we include open questions in the survey regarding the interpretation of certain photographs, which findings present themselves regarding the question of how audiences in very different countries across the world interpret and 'read' iconic and historical photographs?

We can use the answers to these questions to verify some important hypotheses relating to iconic and historical photographs that are made in existing literature on the subject. These include whether there is a correlation between which photographs people in certain groups – cultural, generational or otherwise – label as 'important'; whether it is true that people, across the world or belonging to a certain group, 'read' the same message in photographs that they see as important; whether it is true that iconic photographs are vehicles that are empty of meaning, and whether people who agree on their importance can read different messages in them; whether people often read very vague and broad messages in iconic photographs; whether we have culturally defined iconic photographs.

The survey that will supply the data for these analyses will be discussed in Chapter 2. First, I will provide a more in-depth discussion of the concept of 'global visual memory', and explain objectives of this study.

Objectives

This study will define widely shared and recognized photographs of the past as a form of collective memory, or visual cultural memory to be more precise. This paragraph will define those terms, and to anchor them theoretically. I regard this study primarily as an exercise in cultural history, and my theoretical approach draws on academic sources that assess the impact of individual photographs on the public remembrance of history. This discussion has been waged chiefly in American and German publications since the early 1990s; and in earlier, more broadly international academic discussions on collective memory.

Following the pioneering work of historians Jacob Burckhardt, Karl Lamprecht and Johan Huizinga, the subdivision of the study of history known as cultural history has evolved significantly.³ Drawing on the new methods for studying and interpreting history these scholars proposed, on the new themes and sources they deemed suitable to study, and on their new approaches to writing, cultural history today has become a broad field, concerned with subjects beyond the traditional themes of historical research – politics, economics and religion – and with new source materials.

Two aspects of cultural history are significant for this study. Firstly, cultural history's interest in how history is remembered and reconstructed is important. It is no coincidence that the discipline of cultural history first flourished in the 1980s, as the traditional view of history – that historians should document what happened as an example to learn from for the future – was being challenged. 'This traditional account of the relationship between memory and written history, in which memory reflects what actually happened and history reflects memory, now seems rather too simple', maintains cultural historian Peter Burke, citing '[socially conditioned] selection, interpretation and distortion' as inevitable byproducts of reconstructing history.⁴ This awareness encouraged study into the ways in which societies remember history.⁵ A second important contribution of cultural history to historical scholarship is its attention to images and symbols, both as historical sources and as objects that carry cultural and social significance. If one perceives culture as 'the production and exchanges of meanings, between members of a society or group', following British cultural theorist Stuart Hall, then the vehicles for the exchange of meanings become important.⁶

³ The approach of these authors on the study of history is expounded in: Jacob Burckhardt, *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien* (München 1860); Karl Lamprecht, *Die kulturhistorische Methode* (Berlin 1900); Johan Huizinga, *Herfstij der Middeleeuwen* (Leiden 1919)

⁴ Peter Burke, 'History as Social Memory', in: Thomas Butler (ed.), *Memory. History, Culture and the Mind* (Oxford 1989) 97-98

⁵ See for instance: Lynn Hunt (ed.), *The New Cultural History* (Los Angeles 1989), as one of many possible examples.

⁶ Stuart Hall, *Representation. Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London 1997) 3

Photographs have justifiably received consideration in this respect, as cultural historians have focused on how certain images can be 'read' or how they were received at the time of their production – but that is not my primary concern. Instead, I will focus on photographs that have come to represent certain events in history, and have become part of cultural memory. These terms will be explained below.

Visual History

A scholar who studies the formation of a collective visual memory can lean on an impressive body of theoretical literature in various academic disciplines. This is a strength as well as a problem for the researcher. As historian William T.J. Mitchell lamented, there 'is a motley array of disciplines (...) converging on the problem of pictorial representation and visual culture', yet there is 'no satisfactory theory of pictures'.⁷ Though Mitchell certainly made a brave effort to supply one, more than a generation after he attempted it, there still is no comprehensive theory of pictures and visual culture.

There is, however, wide acceptance now by historians of images as historical sources, and significant interest in the political, cultural and social relevance of images (ranging from political propaganda to symbols of identity). This was certainly not always the case. Indeed, the current interest in photographs and other images are part of what Mitchell has called 'the pictorial turn' in the humanities, which began about a quarter of a century ago (if we regard Mitchell's call for such a turn as its starting point).⁸ The pictorial turn has been extended to the study of history, prompting analysis of the uses of images as source material, and into the way they were used during historical events. The incorporation of images into the field of historical research has had to overcome a certain 'iconophobia' in a field traditionally text-oriented, rationalistic and focused on state actions.⁹

Though the 'pictorial turn' impacted on historical scholarship generally, its incorporation took varied paths in the different western historical traditions. France was a forerunner in this respect, particularly through the approach of the Annales School, which focused on socio-economic themes, accepting images as (supporting) evidence. The Annales School also incorporated a focus on *histoire des mentalités*, the study of attitudes and mentalities in the past, which developed its own subdivision in French historiography in the 1980s.

⁷ W.J.T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory. Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago 1994) 9

⁸ *Ibidem*, 11-34

⁹ Term coined by German historian Habbo Knoch in 'Renaissance der Bildanalyse in der Neuen Kulturgeschichte', *H-Soz-u-Kult* (Jan. 21, 2004)

Although historians who focused on *mentalités* were not primarily concerned with images, visual analysis was incorporated through their appreciation for reconstructing people's beliefs and worldviews, as aptly described by historian Jacques Le Goff: 'A history without the imaginary is a mutilated, disembodied history'.¹⁰ An emphasis on the imaginary led these historians to the study of works of art, an inclination which endured as *histoire des mentalités* and then merged into *histoire culturelle*. These image-oriented scholars often focused on the relation between images (artistic or non-artistic) and the state.¹¹

Twentieth-century German historians began to consider the analysis and use of images for another reason: to investigate the politically and ideologically inspired violence that had tainted recent German history. From the 1980s, interest arose into the use of visual language and symbols in national-socialist mass media, in propaganda movies like Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph des Willens* (1934), and in public outreach by ideologically competing right-wing factions in Germany. German historians expanded their research on the political function of images to assess the role of images in public and private memory. This enquiry was accelerated in the 1990s with an explosion of public interest in Germany's history, and in the way Germany and Germans remembered or had chosen to remember the Second World War and other dark pages in the country's history.

This public interest in recent history was not just a German phenomenon. Its simultaneous occurrence in the United States, Great Britain, the Netherlands, and some Central European countries, has made it common parlance to speak of the 'memory boom', a Second World War-related phenomenon from the late twentieth century.¹² From around 2000, theorists increasingly focused on investigating how people and societies 'remember' important events, particularly via images¹³, and in 2000, the field had reclassified its terminology, with German historian Jens Jäger identifying a sub-discipline he called *Historische Bildforschung* (historical image research).¹⁴

¹⁰ Original: 'une histoire mutilée, désincarnée'. Jacques Le Goff, *L'Imaginaire médiéval* (Paris 1985) vii

¹¹ For instance: Dominique Poulot, *Musée, Nation, Patrimoine, 1789-1815* (Paris 1997) or Alain Besançon, *L'Image interdite. Une histoire intellectuelle de l'iconoclasme* (Paris 1994)

¹² Term introduced by American historian Jay Winter in: 'The Generation of Memory: Reflections on the Memory Boom in Contemporary Historical Studies', *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute* 27 (2000)

¹³ For a more detailed account of the increasing interest by German scholars in images and other visual materials, see Gerhard Paul, 'Von der Historischen Bildkunde zur Visual History. Eine Einführung', in: Gerhard Paul, *Visual History. Ein Studienbuch* (Göttingen 2006) 7-37

¹⁴ Jens Jäger, the scholar who coined this term, intended to clearly distinguish this *Bildforschung* (image research) from the previous *Historische Bildkunde* (historical image study). Previous methods of studying images were either directed at gathering photographic evidence to determine material or social conditions of particular historical periods; or were directed at interpreting the essential qualities of types or groups of images. These respectively socio-

In English-speaking countries, the 'pictorial turn' in academia can be traced to the 1990s, when a burgeoning interest in the United States, across several disciplines, in the cultural role of television, film, photography and other visual media led to the new field of Visual Culture studies, which incorporated art historians, cultural theorists and communication scholars. American historians who were drawn to the study of images often built upon this discipline and linked it to another intellectual concern: the formation of national identity and citizenship in the United States. They highlighted the central place symbols and depictions have in the origins, codes and access to an American national identity.¹⁵ Especially relevant for my study, however, was that American researchers devoted particular attention to photography. In the English-speaking academic tradition, photography had been established as idiomatic when the 'visual turn' in the humanities was theorized in publications by Susan Sontag, John Berger, Victor Burgin and others in the 1970s, and analyses of the role of Hollywood movies in American culture.¹⁶ Vicki Goldberg's *The Power of Photography: How Photographs Changed Our Lives* (1991) traced the influence of photographs on public opinion and on policy, and subsequent academic studies on photography, media and policy have established the ongoing significance of the visual in history.¹⁷

Historians who use images for their research work from different starting points, but commonly agree that images can be studied on different levels. Gerhard Paul's *Visual History* (2006) offers a five-point approach to studying images, ranging from factual analysis to iconography and viewer reception.¹⁸ Peter Burke's 'ten commandments' lists

economic and iconographic/art historical approaches to studying historical images, according to Jäger, can be supplemented by a third possibility: research into the 'historical conditions and meanings of images and their perception, as well as into their public, cultural and social role and their change over time and space'. (Translation by author, original: 'historische Bedingtheiten und Bedeutungen der Bilder und ihrer Wahrnehmung sowie auf ihre gesellschaftliche, kulturelle und soziale Rolle in sich wandelnden zeitlich-räumlichen Konstellationen.' Jens Jäger, *Photographie: Bilder der Neuzeit. Einführung in die historische Bildforschung* (Tübingen 2000) 11

¹⁵ For instance: Ardis Cameron (ed.), *Looking for America. The Visual Production of Nation and People* (Malden 2005), and David Hackett Fischer, *Liberty and Freedom. A Visual History of America's Founding Ideas* (Oxford 2004).

¹⁶ See: John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London 1972), Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York 2005; 1973), Victor Burgin, *Two Essays on Art Photography and Semiotics* (London 1976) and Victor Burgin (ed.) *Thinking Photography* (London 1982)

¹⁷ For instance: Bonnie Brennen, Hanno Hardt (eds.), *Picturing the Past. Media, History & Photography* (Chicago 1999), Julianne H. Newton, *The Burden of Visual Truth. The Role of Photojournalism in Mediating Reality* (Mahwah 2001), David D. Perlmutter, *Photojournalism and Foreign Policy. Icons of Outrage in International Crises* (Westport 1998) and Robert Hariman and John Lucaites, *No Caption Needed. Iconic Photographs, Public Culture, and Liberal Democracy* (Chicago 2007)

¹⁸ Paul's 5 levels of analysis are: 1. Factual analysis – analyzing material conditions in a certain period using visual sources from that time; 2. Iconography – analyzing images (both 'iconic' images

ten questions and precautions when analyzing visual sources, including scrutinizing the selection process by which an image was created, and determining the original purpose of the image.¹⁹ Cultural and other historians have used these and other contributions to develop what Gerhard Paul termed a *Schule des Sehens* ('school of seeing').²⁰

The importance of images in historical scholarship has clearly increased. Some cultural historians, however, believe that other historians 'prefer to deal with texts and political or economic facts, not the deeper levels of experience that images probe'; and speak of the continued 'invisibility of the visual'.²¹

Two important approaches have emerged out of the first decades of *Bildforschung*, to stay with the German term. Firstly, historians agree that when images are examined rigorously using critical historical source analysis, both their intended and, significantly, their unintended mediation of historical information can be assessed. Not only information carried by the image, but also its production, reception and usage can reveal historical information.

Secondly, historical image researchers generally assume that photographs are not merely *documents* but also *agents* of history: that they are used to pass on historical knowledge, to commemorate historic events, to construct narratives about the past and to endow photographs with social meaning. This approach has proven fruitful in generating comprehensive research among historians, communications and cultural

and popular cultural images such as postcards) as representations of the social attitudes of a period; 3. Function – analyzing reproduction, distribution, function; 4. Semiotics – analyzing visual significance and communication; 5. Reception/Aesthetics – analyzing viewer reception. Gerhard Paul, *Visual History*, 9. Other meaningful levels of analysis of photographs can be offered, but the relevant point here is not so much which levels are most important, but that photographs can be analyzed and interpreted on various levels.

¹⁹ Peter Burke, 'Visual History. The Ten Commandments', in: William Gallois, et al. (eds.) *The Pictorial Turn in History* (London 2008). Burke's 'commandments' are: 1. Is the picture drawn directly from the original object or from another pictorial representation of the original object? 2. Are there other pictures of the same object that could be used as contrast, to determine what kind of a selection process took place? 3. The complete picture, even its background details, has to be scrutinized to evaluate its accuracy. 4. One should always consider the possibilities of manipulation. 5. Who were the mediators, who made the picture in what kind of circumstances? 6. What was the material context of the picture, what was it originally created for? 7. How was the picture received when it was created, how in later times? 8. It is necessary to present the picture along with its historical context rather than isolated from it. 9. What more general remarks can be made about the interaction of the picture and the world outside? 10

. There are no general rules. Each historian dealing with pictures has to determine and follow his or her own set of rules. Summarized in: Gabriel Montua, 'Review: The Pictorial Turn in History', *H-Soz-u-Kult* (April 2008)

²⁰ Gerhard Paul, *Visual History*, 7

²¹ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing. The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (London 2001) 6

scholars, and quickly spread beyond the American scientific tradition.²² As Gerhard Paul asserts: ‘a new generation of historians [share the] assumption that images [...] construct a specific frame of meaning, in which people perceive history and construct social significance’.²³

Collective Memory

The traditional view of history held that what was remembered about the past was what actually happened, since it was noted down by historians and other men of letters who were inspired to keep alive the memory of deeds and events – history in the style of Herodotus and Cicero. This view of the relationship between historical events, written accounts of history, and memory, is now universally rejected by historians who point to the obvious dissimilarities between what different writers have deemed memorable and factual about identical events, and the interpretation and selection that historians inevitably engage in. Most scholars agree that both writing history and remembering history involve acts of selection, interpretation and emphasis – and hence involve the construction of narratives. These acts are not only performed by historians in their books and articles. Groups also select, interpret and emphasize history, leading to the creation of collective memories, and collective memory.²⁴

Since the concept of collective memory was defined by French philosopher Maurice Halbwachs in the 1920s, many others have studied how individual memories become incorporated into shared histories; and how and why societies remember (or forget) their past.²⁵ Academic interest in collective memory waned for some decades then intensified in the 1980s, again with different impulses in various countries. In France, the growing interest in collective memory was fed by Pierre Nora’s impressive project *Les lieux de mémoire*.²⁶ In Germany, early historical work on collective memory written from

²² In Germany, for instance, Christoph Hamann, Habbo Knoch and Cornelia Brink are among historians who have applied this view of photographs in their work. See: Habbo Knoch, *Die Tat als Bild. Fotografien des Holocaust in der deutschen Erinnerungskultur* (Hamburg 2001), Christoph Hamann, *Bilderwelten und Weltbilder. Fotos, die Geschichte(n) mach(t)en* (Berlin 2001) and Cornelia Brink, *Ikonen der Vernichtung. Öffentlicher Gebrauch von Fotografien aus nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslagern nach 1945* (Berlin 1998).

²³ Gerhard Paul, ‘Von der Historischen Bildkunde zur Visual History’, 19-20. Original: ‘die Ahnnahme, dass Bilder (..) einen spezifischen Bedeutungsrahmen konstituieren, innerhalb dessen Menschen Geschichte wahrnehmen und sozialen Sinn konstruieren.’ Translation by author.

²⁴ In the paragraphs below, works will be cited that describe this process.

²⁵ Maurice Halbwachs, *La mémoire collective* (Paris 1950) and Maurice Halbwachs, *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (Paris 1952)

²⁶ Pierre Nora, *Les lieux de memoire*, 7 volumes (Paris 1984-92)

the perspective of archaeology is still relevant today.²⁷ Interest in the historical dimension of collective memory mushroomed in various countries simultaneously in the 1990s, with the 'memory boom' linked to the First World War and especially the Second World War. A broad and ongoing debate on collective memory ensued.

In his two works on the subject, Halbwachs declared that memory is not an individual matter, whereby the individual autonomously assembles memories, independent of his or her community. 'It is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories', Halbwachs wrote. 'It is in this sense that there exists a collective memory and social frameworks for memory.'²⁸ Groups construct memories about the past, Halbwachs maintained; they determine *what* is memorable, and they determine *how* it is remembered. The resulting shared recollections can be defined as 'collective memory'.

Halbwachs stressed that collective memory often works subconsciously, that individuals often assume themselves to be the originators of thoughts, ideas, passions and recollections that were inspired by some group. In his view, groups are not solid and clearly defined but adaptive and overlapping: an individual, according to Halbwachs, can belong to several groups at once (for instance, *lycée* graduates, a certain generation, a profession, a town) and move through groups during their lifetime.

The main custodian of Halbwachs' legacy is German archaeologist Jan Assmann, who refined Halbwachs' view of collective memory by distinguishing between two types of collective memory. 'Communicative memory', according to Assmann, encompasses stories and interpretations about the past that are shared within a group and passed down from one generation to the next. Emotions such as pride, shame or anger often play a large role in them, and since these emotions fade when an event is farther away in history, views in communicative history usually don't last longer than a few generations. 'Cultural memory', in Assmann's conception, is not communicated but is anchored in artifacts, monuments, museum pieces, documents, symbols and other residues of the past that are regarded within a group as records and markers of history.²⁹ Assmann called the study of communicative memory 'mnemo-history': historical research 'concerned not with the past as such, but only with the past as it is remembered'.³⁰ Assmann did not regard this kind of research as genuine historical study, but many cultural historians have come to regard communicative memory as an

²⁷ Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (Munich 1992) is regarded as the first important German work on collective memory. Earlier, he edited: J. Assmann, A. Assmann, Hardmeier (eds.), *Schrift und Gedächtnis* (München 1984) and Jan Assmann, Aleida Assmann (eds.) *Kanon und Zensur* (München 1987)

²⁸ Maurice Halbwachs, *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (1952), translated by Lewis Coser as *On Collective Memory* (Chicago 1992) 38

²⁹ Jan Assmann, 'Collective Memory and Cultural Identity', *New German Critique* 65 (1995)

³⁰ *Ibidem*, 125

interesting topic of its own: a driver of history, politics, attitudes and culture that is an interesting and valid topic for historical research.³¹ In addition to Assmann's term 'communicative memory', cultural historians sometimes use 'living memory' or 'social memory' to describe the same phenomenon.

Scholars of collective memory today usually recognize the existence of individual, idiosyncratic memories, while regarding remembering as a principally social activity. A useful argument for this case has been compiled by sociologist Michael Schudson in his case study of collective-history-at-work, *Watergate in American Memory: How We Remember, Forget, and Reconstruct the Past*. Schudson uses the example of Watergate to illustrate how memory is essentially social.³²

Among historians, an as yet inconclusive debate has ensued on the relationship between history and memory. Though positions in this debate are widely nuanced, in general some historians lean towards a distinction between history and memory while others stress the overlap between the two.³³ The debate itself is not as relevant to this study as the significance of the broad acceptance of the concept of collective memory among historians, and their acknowledgment of the role it plays in the politics, cultural debates, and remembrance activities of societies today.

Reviewing changes in the field of history since the 1970s, Dutch philosopher of history Chris Lorenz concludes that: 'The notion of memory became the common denominator for anchoring the past in collective experiences of specific groups'.³⁴ 'Individuals "remember" a good deal that they have not experienced directly', writes Peter Burke.³⁵ And since these collective 'memories', these shared conceptions about the past, influence people's reactions and actions in the present, that implies that collective memory is one of the forces that shape the present.

The concept of collective memory is not without conceptual problems. Three of these stand out among many issues associated with collective memory. The first is the relationship between history and collective memory. The two are obviously not interchangeable. Indeed, as Assmann points out, 'History turns into myth as soon as it

³¹ See for instance: Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing. The Uses of Images As Historical Evidence* (New York 2006)

³² Michael Schudson, *Watergate in American Memory. How We Remember, Forget and Reconstruct the Past* (New York 1992) 51-52

³³ An overview of this debate (written from the 'memory' perspective) can be found in: Jay Winter, *Remembering war. The Great War between History and Memory in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven 2006)

³⁴ Chris Lorenz, 'Unstuck in Time. Or: the Sudden Presence of the Past', in: Karin Tilmans, Frank van Vree, Jay Winter (eds.) *Performing the Past. Memory, History and Identity in Modern Europe* (Amsterdam 2010) 69

³⁵ Burke, 'History as Social Memory', 99

is remembered, narrated, and used, that is, woven into the fabric of the present'.³⁶ Historians are invariably uncomfortable with this. Many have pointed out the predatory relationship between collective memory and history, with history as the victim and collective memory as the aggressor. It is widely acknowledged that historians cannot free themselves from interpretation and selection, yet they can still aim for high standards of accuracy and objectivity in preserving the past.

Such considerations are irrelevant to collective memory. 'The prime function of memory is not to preserve the past, but to adopt it, so as to enrich and manipulate the present', writes David Lowenthal in *The Past is a Foreign Country*, while Patrick Hutton argues that 'Collective memory is a tool not of retrieval but of reconfiguration [that] colonizes the past by obliging it to confirm to present configurations'.³⁷

Moreover, collective memories may be outright fabrications, according to Eric Hobsbawm's famous observation: "'Traditions" which appear or claim to be old are often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented'.³⁸ French philosopher Paul Ricoeur suggests that historians are engaged in a struggle against collective memory dominating the grand narratives of history, and that collective memory (or *offiziöse Geschichte*) is bound to 'assert its priority over history'.³⁹

These views are possibly too pessimistic. Yet collective memory is vulnerable to subjective views of history and myth-making, and unconcerned with being comprehensive, linear or logically coherent. Collective memory is highly adaptive, in that sense. It acts, as Barbie Zelizer explains, 'as a kind of history-in-motion (...) Remaking the past into material with contemporary resonance'.⁴⁰

A second problem associated with the concept of collective memory is the relationship between identity and collective memory. 'Every collective memory requires the support of a group delimited in space and time', Halbwachs wrote.⁴¹ But many scholars have pointed out that there is a reciprocal relationship between a group and its collective memory. 'Groups' are not natural entities, argues Benedict Anderson convincingly; they are creations. And for the creation of 'imagined communities', it works wonders to

³⁶ Jan Assmann, *The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge 1997) 11

³⁷ David Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge 1985) 210; Patrick Hutton, 'Collective Memory and Collective Mentalities', *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques* 15:2 (1989) 314

³⁸ Eric Hobsbawm, 'Introduction: The Invention of Tradition', in: Eric Hobsbawm, Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge 1983) 1

³⁹ Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting* (Chicago 2006) 167

⁴⁰ Barbie Zelizer, 'From the Image of Record to the Image of Memory. Holocaust Photography Then and Now', in: Brennen and Hardt (eds.), *Picturing the Past*, 99

⁴¹ Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago 1992) 40. In Halbwachs' view, the adaptive and transitory nature of these groups and their fuzzy and porous boundaries allows an individual to belong to several groups at once – *lycée* graduates, a profession, town, and so on – and to move in- and out of them as the individual moves through life.

string 'pearls' of history 'along a thread of a narrative'.⁴² This string can then become an anchor for identity. 'A community is reminded of its identity, as represented and told in a master narrative', observes British sociologist Paul Connerton.⁴³

And this is not always an innocent act. 'Each act of commemoration reproduces a *commemorative narrative* [that] provides a moral message for the group members', writes Israeli historian Yael Zerubavel. 'The master commemorative narrative focuses on the group's distinct social identity (...) The emphasis on a "great divide" between this group and others is used to dispel any denial of the group's legitimacy.' This opens the door to political purposes, such as the formation of nations or 'reinforcing a particular ideological stance'.⁴⁴

This ties in with a third problem associated with cultural memory: not everyone and not every group in society has equal opportunity to influence it. Power structures in society determine who has most ability to do so. Stuart Hall, in particular, emphasized that in the process of producing and receiving mass communication, power and status comes into play – both at the moments of 'encoding' and 'decoding'.⁴⁵

This dimension of power is not only important in relation to cultural expressions that reach a large audience, but perhaps even more so in relation to which are recycled and kept in circulation. 'The natural tendency of social memory is to suppress what is not meaningful or intuitively satisfying in the collective memories of the past', historian Chris Wickham and anthropologist James Fentress wrote, 'and interpolate or substitute what seems more appropriate or more in keeping with a particular conception of the world'.⁴⁶

For decades – in part inspired by historians who worried that memories of the Holocaust might fade away over time – the accepted view among historians was that forgetting history was intrinsically bad. Today, oblivion sometimes gets a better press. Some historians have come to regard oblivion as part of a normal process whereby societies choose what they want to remember and what to forget.⁴⁷ Writer and essayist David Rieff even offered an elaborate argument as to why this is necessary for societies to move beyond the constraints of the past in his book *In Praise of Forgetting*.⁴⁸ But as with the selection of what to remember, the selection of what to forget is tied in with

⁴² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (London 2003; 1983) 109. Anderson further explores the reciprocal relationship between narratives of history and group identity in pp. 155-163.

⁴³ Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge 1989) 71

⁴⁴ Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots. Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition* (Chicago 1995) 6-7

⁴⁵ Stuart Hall, 'Encoding, Decoding', in: Simon During (ed.), *The Cultural Studies Reader* (New York 1993) 90-103

⁴⁶ James Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory* (Cambridge 1992) 58-59

⁴⁷ See for instance: Paul Ricoeur, *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli* (Paris 2000) 589

⁴⁸ David Rieff, *In Praise of Forgetting: Historical Memory and Its Ironies* (New Haven 2016)

power, and trends in several academic fields, such as postcolonial studies, have focused on this aspect of cultural memory and the problems it presents.

Photographs as vehicles of cultural memory

Photography is a medium to which many of these ideas can be applied, particularly Jan Assmann's concept of cultural memory, and the concept of photographs as cultural vehicles, as described by Michael Schudson. A useful synthesis of both concepts is given by Annette Kuhn and sociologist Kirsten McAllister in *Locating Memory: Photographic Acts*. The authors describe photographs and photographic archives as 'repositories of collective memory' that offer 'narratives' to those who view them.⁴⁹

These photographs and photographic archives are partial and incomplete narratives, Kuhn and McAllister stress, but they remain remnants of the past that are used in societies, or by groups within societies, as sources for generating perceptions of and narratives about events in history. This view of photography and collective memory is in line with Assmann's concept of cultural memory. I share it, and in this study, the relation between photographs and collective memory will be viewed as such: photographs will be regarded as repositories and vehicles for collective memories.

Michael Schudson argues that many people have a flawed conception of collective memory, namely as a 'reservoir' or 'pool' of memories from which people draw for contemporary use. That is the wrong metaphor, argues Schudson. In order to understand collective memory, he maintains, it is important to realise that collective memory consists of certain events 'handed down through particular cultural forms and transmitted in particular, cultural vehicles'.⁵⁰ These include myths and folklore, books and artworks, public commemorations. Language is an important vehicle, with its modes of expression and conversation, its established metaphors and its idioms. And of course, images as well.

The idea that images reflecting history or narratives about the past are important to groups goes back to Émile Durkheim, Halbwachs' mentor. He believed that group belonging is reinforced by the shared attribution of intellectual and emotional meaning in 'collective representations' that reflect the history of the group.⁵¹ For Durkheim, these representations can be transcendental (like 'Heaven'), but they are often visible, symbolic or pictorial (the cross, the image of Madonna and Child).

⁴⁹ Annette Kuhn, Kirsten Emiko McAllister, *Locating Memory: Photographic Acts* (Oxford, 2006) 6

⁵⁰ Schudson, *Watergate in American Memory* 5. The same point is made by another scholar of collective memory (Jan Assmann's wife) Aleida Assmann, in: Aleida Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume. Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses* (München 1999) 132

⁵¹ Émile Durkheim explored this concept in *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (Paris 2003; 1912)

In the 1970s, sociologists applied Durkheim's concept to the 'collective representations' of modern society and particularly to photography: a relatively new cultural medium able to carry direct as well as more subtle messages.⁵² Viewed in this way, photographs are visual representations that communicate narratives of the past; visual components of the cultural memory of a group that communicate emotional and intellectual meaning to group members.

The groups in question, as described above, can be comprised of university alumni, inhabitants of a town, members of the same profession, etcetera. It can consist of members of the same nation. In that case, we might call the images that serve as vehicles for the group's historical narratives 'national visual memory'. The largest groups we could imagine would be larger than nations: generations, for example. Such very large groups would be characterized by the fact that they recognize and value the same 'collective representations'.

In our world today, with its extremely rapid distribution of images and worldwide trends across the globe, it is imaginable that such collective representations would have meaning to people worldwide. At least in theory, it could be possible that there are collective representations that are recognized and valued by people all around the world – perhaps not every individual, but a majority of people across national, generational, educational, and other boundaries. If such representations, and such a group, would exist, we could refer to images they recognize and value as 'global visual memory'.⁵³

The central hypothesis in this study is the possibility that such a global visual memory exists, and that photographs could be a part of that memory.

Dissertation structure

The chapters in this study strongly differ in character. In the introduction above, I discussed cultural history, academic discussions on the analysis of visual sources, collective and cultural memory, and narratives about the past. I offered the hypothesis

⁵² For instance: John Berger, *Ways of seeing* (London 1972), Donis Dondis, *A Primer of Visual Literacy* (New York 1974) or Julia Hirsch, *Family Photographs. Content, Meaning, and Effect* (New York 1981)

⁵³ Although this term is new, some researchers have written about the global dimension of collective and visual memory. British media scholar Anna Reading, for example, maintains that 'within the context of a media and cultural field that is digitized and globalized', a 'global memory field' now exists in which personal memories and identities are shaped. Anna Reading, 'Memory and Identity', *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 14 (2011) 4, 377, and Anna Reading, 'Memory and Digital Media: Six Dynamics of the Global Memory Field', in: Neiger, Meyers, Zandberg (eds.) *On Media Memory. Collective Memory in a New Media Age* (New York 2011) 241-252

that a global visual memory exists, with photographs of events in history as a component.

Chapter 1 will explore the relation between history, memory and photography, based on a critical discussion of existing academic literature. In this chapter, I will explain which ideas I share and which ones I reject, and explain how this study aims to add to this literature. In the first part of this chapter, I will identify problems in existing academic literature on history, memory and photography, and offer responses to them. The second part elaborates on concepts discussed in the Introduction. It discusses the memory function of news and of images, and offers the position that photographs can become cultural vehicles, connected to historical narratives and part of cultural memory. The third part of this chapter will examine the concept of iconic photographs, as well as their visual power, their use as symbols, and their use of iconography.

Chapter 2 describes the survey that I devised on the recognition and interpretation of iconic and historical photographs. The chapter describes the survey and its questions, the research conclusions I was hoping to find, and the methodology I used to establish which photographs should be in that survey. Also, I describe the twenty-five photographs that I have used in my survey, and illustrate with quotes and examples how these photographs feature in academic debates on iconic and historical photographs.

Chapter 3 offers a quantitative analysis of the results of the survey questions regarding photograph recognition. In this chapter I draw statistical conclusions on the recognition of photographs in all countries surveyed, as well as in individual countries. Where possible, I draw conclusions about the correlation between photograph recognition and cultural regions in the world, age groups across countries, political views, media use, and other distinguishing factors.

In Chapter 4 I offer a qualitative analysis of the survey results regarding the interpretation of six selected photographs. The first part of this chapter analyses survey results by country, which reveals interesting differences as well as similarities across countries. The second part of this chapter analyses patterns worldwide, and draws general conclusions about how people across the world read and interpret iconic and historical photographs.

Chapter I. History, Memory and Photography

This chapter provides a critical discussion of existing academic literature that explores the relation between history, memory and photography. This chapter serves three functions. Firstly, such a discussion allows me to build upon the work and insight of others concerning the way photographs work in collective memory, and add theoretical depth to the photography survey described and analyzed in Chapters 2, 3 and 4. Secondly, by identifying problems in this literature, and offering a response, it will sharpen and clarify my own position regarding the memory function of photographs. Lastly, it will clarify how this study relates to existing literature on history, memory and photography, and how this study adds to it.

Many academic texts have formulated general ideas and theories about how photographs – including those that shape historical memory – function in society. I find many ideas about the memory function of photographs and about how photographs function as icons very useful. These ideas will be discussed in the second and third section of this chapter. In the first section, I discuss approaches and academic attitudes towards the study of history, memory, and photography that I find less useful. These can be regarded as contrast points to the approach I have. The first section, then, provides a critical response to some popular approaches towards this subject. The second section elaborates on theoretical concepts on collective memory and images, which were discussed briefly in the Introduction. It offers the position that photographs can become cultural vehicles, connected to historical narratives and part of cultural memory. The third part of this chapter will examine the concept of iconic photographs, and critically discuss ideas offered about these photographs in existing academic literature. This discussion will clarify how my study adds to existing knowledge.

1.1 Starting Points: Problems in Academic Literature on History, Memory and Photography

1.1.1 Comprehensive Theory

The question how photographs work in documenting and remembering history recurs in different forms in a range of scholarly works, and has led to many insightful answers and hypotheses.⁵⁴ The question is fascinating, and is a leading theme of this study as

⁵⁴ This question, in various forms, can be found in the above mentioned works by Brennen and Hardt, Brink, Goldberg, Hamann, Hariman/Lucaites, Jäger, Knoch, Kuhn, Newton, Paul, and Perlmutter, and in many more, including: Barbie Zelizer, *Covering the Body. The Kennedy Assassination, the Media, and the Shaping of Collective Memory* (London 1992), Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget. Holocaust Memory through the Camera's Eye* (Chicago 1998) and Batchen, Gidley, Miller,

well. However, a conclusive answer, and in extension, a comprehensive theory on how photography works in this regard, has remained elusive. Scholars invariably remain cautious about the extent of their findings, even as the academic discussion has evolved over time.

The aforementioned *The Power of Photography. How Photographs Changed Our Lives*, first published in 1991, is a case in point. It is a delightful book, thorough and insightful. Yet the book's subtitle suggests that it provides a conclusive theory on how photographs work to change our lives, and this is not the case. The author herself admits in her introduction that 'Studies on the impact of any medium generally come to very little. No one ever seems to find proof of what nearly everyone believes'. She therefore asks her readers to accept the statement that 'it is hard to deny what intuition, common sense, and personal experience keep drumming into mind – that certain images influence behavior'.⁵⁵

This might seem a disappointing start to an academic study, but later studies reach the same conclusion. The title of a 1999 collection of essays, *Picturing the Past: Media, History, and Photography*, might suggest a comprehensive answer to the nature of the interaction between history and photography. Yet its editors present the essays with the caution that they are 'suggestive rather than exhaustive in their treatment of the relationship between photographs and history'.⁵⁶

This has not changed. Take, for example, Barbie Zelizer's 2010 book *About to Die: How News Images Move the Public*. Zelizer, a distinguished and celebrated author, wrote it after 25-plus years of researching and writing on the subject of history, memory and photography. In her introduction, she explains how she will write about how 'pictures depict the news, how they figure in collective memory, and how they connect with the public at multiple points in time'; although Zelizer then adds that she can do no more than 'suggest a refinement of how news images have been thought to function and how the public has been thought to respond'.⁵⁷ This careful phrasing might reflect intellectual modesty of the author and academic custom, but also reflects the limitations in formulating definite conclusions about the interplay between history, memory and images.

Works on this subject have not produced a comprehensive, broadly applicable theory on how images influence the public and collective memory. Useful case studies on photographs range from work on photographs of liberated German concentration

Prosser (eds.), *Picturing Atrocity. Photography in Crisis* (London 2012), Annette Kuhn, 'Photography and cultural memory: a methodological exploration', *Visual Studies* 22 (December 2007) 3, 283-292

⁵⁵ Vicki Goldberg, *The Power of Photography: How Photographs Changed Our Lives* (New York 1991) 17

⁵⁶ Brennen and Hardt, *Picturing the Past*, 1

⁵⁷ Barbie Zelizer, *About to Die. How News Images Move the Public* (New York 2010) 2

camps to the Nick Ut's *Napalm Girl* (1973) and Richard Drew's *Falling Man* (2001).⁵⁸ The edited volumes in which they appear, and monographs on photography and history provide many insights into the interplay of history and photography, yet they also highlight the absence of grand theories able to explain how all of these photographs work in interpreting and remembering the world.

Scientists will always try to find general theories, and works on how photographs influence collective memory often reflect a desire to provide such comprehensive theories. I regard such ambitions as unrealistic, and the findings of this study (see Chapter 4) underwrite this conviction. I will therefore not attempt to phrase such a comprehensive theory.

1.1.2 Hostility towards Photography

A second approach to photography that has become widely accepted in a quite far-reaching form, is a negative or hostile attitude towards photographic representation. American critic and scholar Susie Linfield traces this curious phenomenon back to Susan Sontag and her *On Photography* – a text full of interesting, original and sharp observations but also unremitting in its hostility towards photographs. They are, according to Sontag, 'predatory', 'treacherous', 'mental pollution', 'imperial', and so on. 'To photograph people', writes Sontag, 'is to violate them. (...) It turns people into objects that can be symbolically possessed' and is therefore 'a soft murder'.⁵⁹

Because *On Photography* was such an influential text, Linfield argues that 'It is Sontag, more than anyone else, who was responsible for establishing a tone of suspicion and distrust in photography criticism, and for teaching us that to be smart about photographs means to disparage them'.⁶⁰ Linfield traces how 'scepticism about the photograph' by writers like Sontag, Roland Barthes and John Berger turns into 'outright venom' after the 1970s, with writer Allan Sekula classifying photography as 'primitive, infantile, aggressive', and art historian Abigail Solomon-Godeau maintaining that documentary photography is in essence a 'double act of subjugation'. Critical reflection on photography, observes Linfield, appears to be a discipline of 'congenital animus', with

⁵⁸ For example: Nancy Miller, 'The Girl in the Photograph: The Visual Legacies of War', in: Geoffrey Batchen et. al. (eds.), *Picturing Atrocity. Photography in Crisis* (London 2012); Cornelia Brink, *Ikonen der Vernichtung: Öffentlicher Gebrauch von Fotografien aus nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslagern nach 1945* (Berlin 1998); Robert Hariman and Louis Lucaites, 'The Times Square Kiss: Iconic Photography and Civic Renewal in U.S. Public Culture', *Journal of American history* 94 (June 2007) 1; Jennifer Hubbert, 'Appropriating Iconicity: Why Tank Man Still Matters', *Visual Anthropology Review* 30 (Fall 2014) 2; Sharon Sliwinski, 'Visual Testimony: Lee Miller's Dachau', *Journal of Visual Culture* 9 (2010) 3. Paragraph 2.4 offers more examples.

⁵⁹ Susan Sontag, *On Photography* 10

⁶⁰ Susie Linfield, *The Cruel Radiance. Photography and Political Violence* (Chicago 2010) xiv

many participants who seemingly 'don't really like photographs, or the act of looking at them'.⁶¹

Two qualifications need to be made here. Firstly, suspicion and hostility towards photography certainly predate Sontag and Sekula, and may have been present since the first days when 'writing with light' became technically possible. 'During this lamentable period, a new industry has arisen which contributes not a little to confirming stupidity', wrote the great French poet Charles Baudelaire in the 1840s. Photography, as he saw it, was a 'cheap method of disseminating a loathing for history among the people'.⁶² Around the same time, British poet William Wordsworth lamented that 'Man's greatest attribute' (the written word) was being degraded.⁶³

*Avaunt this vile abuse of pictured page!
Must eyes be all-in-all, the tongue and ear
Nothing? Heaven keep us from a lower stage!*

This hostility was often based on the threat this new mechanical art was thought to pose towards established practices: to painting and other classical arts in Baudelaire's case, and to the written word in the case of writers and journalists in the early twentieth century. One journalist wrote that the 'language of pictures' was taking Britain 'backward to the Stone Age of human intelligence'.⁶⁴

Sontag also was not the first of the modernist writers to be scornful of photography. *On Photography* was predated almost a decade by *Un art moyen*, translated as *Photography: A Middle Brow Art* by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, who described photography not only as inherently middle-of-the-road but also as an 'art that imitates art', suitable to 'barbarous taste'.⁶⁵

The second qualification is that animosity towards photography has always been more prevalent among art critics than among academics. Although Sontag's negative outlook did spill over into American visual studies academic publications, the hostility has ebbed significantly in recent years to give way to a detached analysis and the occasional celebration of photography's qualities. Linfield's own thoughtful book is a case in point.⁶⁶

⁶¹ Ibidem, 7-9 and 5

⁶² Translated and cited in: Jonathan Mayne, *Charles Baudelaire. The Mirror of Art* (London 1955) 44. Some marvellous daguerreotypes of Baudelaire have been taken, incidentally.

⁶³ William Wordsworth, cited in: Goldberg, *The Power of Photography*, 11

⁶⁴ F.J. Higginbottom, 'Work of News Photographers is not Journalism', *The Journal*. Cited in: Zelizer, 'Holocaust Photography', 101

⁶⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, *Un Art Moyen* (Paris 1965), translation in: Pierre Bourdieu, *Photography. A Middle Brow Art* (Stanford 1990)

⁶⁶ Susie Linfield, *The Cruel Radiance. Photography and Political Violence* (Chicago 2010). Other new types of writing and researching photographs are offered, for example, in: Geoff Dyer, *The Ongoing Moment* (London 2005); Rob Kroes, *Photographic Memories. Private Pictures, Public Images, and American History* (Lebanon 2007)

I think this more neutral approach to photography allows for better research and analysis, and aim to incorporate that as well.

1.1.3 Vehicles of Ideology

What values and memories, then, do these photographs invoke? A logical assumption would be that this depends entirely on what a photograph depicts. Yet many scholars have written about photographs as being intrinsically, and most importantly, vehicles of ideology. In 1973, critic Susan Sontag voiced this new dominant strain in the discourse when she stated that ‘the production of images furnishes a ruling ideology’.⁶⁷ Sontag’s assertion can be viewed as analogous to historians rejecting the notion that recorded, transcribed history is necessarily what happened; a necessary critical approach to a medium that was often viewed uncritically, and exposing how they communicate norms, views, and values.

But this (very) critical, uncompromising approach has become a new paradigm in the study of photographs in relation to society. Take for instance *No Caption Needed* by Lucaites and Hariman, an important book on the relationships between photographs, society and politics, written a generation after Sontag. In *No Caption Needed*, mass-printed photographs appear as if they were a dark creation from the visions of Joseph Goebbels. ‘Look at them critically’, the authors write, ‘and it is all there: the production of truth by a technological apparatus of surveillance; the gaze of social authority and its objectification of the other; fragmentary representations of events that reinforce dominant, totalizing narratives; artfully manufactured sentiments (...) used to justify state action, the reproduction of exploitative conceptions of race, class and gender’, and so on.⁶⁸ Photojournalism, the authors conclude, ‘might be the perfect ideological practice’ that produces relationships that are ‘arbitrary, asymmetrical relations of power’.⁶⁹

It is a good thing that these and other authors point out the mechanisms of control and power that can come into play regarding photographs and their social use. Yet the approach, as in the quotation above, of photographs as totalitarian all-purpose tools, is surely overly critical and ideological, and denies the other functions photography can have, such as documentary, or at the very least the role they can play in challenging the dominant narratives the authors assail.

Hariman and Lucaites’ view is not new. Art historian John Tagg judged photography to be ‘ultimately a function of the state’, serving the dominant elites’ ‘apparatus of ideological control’.⁷⁰ More recently, two editors of an important work on photography

⁶⁷ Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York 2005; 1973) 140

⁶⁸ Hariman and Lucaites, *No Caption Needed*, 2

⁶⁹ Idem.

⁷⁰ John Tagg, ‘The Currency of the Photograph’, in: Victor Burgin (ed.), *Thinking Photography* (London 1982) 122 and 123

and history instructed the reader that the essays in their book ‘reveal the ideological nature of photographic “evidence”’, because photographs that are used to remember history are ‘produced as documents by the dominant ideological apparatuses of media and government agencies’. The reader is informed that photographs ‘become part of a media strategy to articulate an ideological position’, and that ‘(t)hey reinforce the prevailing social and political narrative’.⁷¹ Another scholar maintains that when people have the feeling that they understand the content of an image, they are undergoing an ‘ideological sensation’.⁷²

In this paradigm, the ideological nature of photography is sometimes casually treated as an obvious truth, and other ideas on the subject summarily dismissed as antiquated. As communications scholar Kevin Barnhurst describes how this paradigm in visual studies ‘recount[s] the history of picture making as ideological, the story of an idea that became dominant’.⁷³

The paradigm that regards the entire medium of photography and its cultural applications as a tool for ideological control, has drawn criticism. When ‘ideological’ becomes a term that merely expresses that a photographer made a photograph with a certain intention, and that the photograph’s frame does not allow the viewer an alternative perspective, then the meaning of the term ‘ideology’ is strongly eroded and we might as well choose to abandon it altogether.

Visual studies scholars Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright make this point and add that, despite its widespread use and the fact that many scholars claim to use it neutrally, the term ‘ideology’ has not lost its pejorative connotation. They offer ‘set of beliefs’ as a more neutral and accurate term for the message that a photograph is intended to communicate by those who make or publish it.⁷⁴ I agree, and I will aim to study the message that people read in photographs without a predetermined attitude towards them.

1.1.4 *The Myth of Reality*

A last problematic aspect in much of existing literature on photography that is addressed here, concerns the relation of photographs to reality. As soon as the critical,

⁷¹ Brennen and Hardt, *Picturing the Past*, 6-7

⁷² Robert L. Craig, ‘Fact, Public Opinion, and Persuasion: The Rise of the Visual in Journalism and Advertising’, in: Brennen and Hardt (eds.) 37

⁷³ Kevin Barnhurst, *Seeing the Newspaper* (New York 1994) 27

⁷⁴ Lisa Cartwright and Marita Sturken, *Practices of Looking. An Introduction to Visual Culture* (New York 2001) 21. Sturken and Cartwright offer ‘set of beliefs’ as a more neutral alternative term. But since ‘ideology’ has a much more rousing ring to it, and many scholars who use the term ‘ideology’ are very conscious of its connotations, I don’t believe Sturken and Cartwright’s useful suggestion will make much difference.

academic analysis of photographs started in earnest – which ironically, only happened when photojournalism began to lose ground as a principal form of mass communication – analysts seized upon the relation between photography and the qualities of reality and objectivity often attributed to it.⁷⁵

In the first overview of the history of photography, art historian Beaumont Newhall had written in 1937 that there was a ‘quality of authenticity implicit in a photograph’, which therefore had ‘a special value as evidence or proof’.⁷⁶ This view suggested that viewers could actually see evidence for themselves in a photograph; they didn’t need a live testimony. Newhall was not expressing anything radical at the time; he voiced the consensus view on the truth value of photography that existed up to the late 1960s.

Eventually, scholars deconstructed this view. For cultural scholar William Stott, for example, photography that presents itself as an irrefutable depiction of reality is indeed ‘how documentary [photography] works. It defies comment; it imposes meaning. It confronts us, the audience, with empirical evidence of such nature as to render dispute impossible and interpretation superfluous’.⁷⁷ Stott’s critique demanded of scholars and critics to examine the many ways in which a photograph manipulates the perspective of its viewer.

Unfortunately, not only ‘critical analysis’ was the result of this enhanced view, but also a postmodern, all-purpose ‘shattering of belief’ and declaration of ‘the lack of reality in reality’, to borrow from French philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard.⁷⁸ Critics who rejected the ‘indisputable reality’ of photographs implied that photographs should be rejected as sources of reliable information altogether. Susan Sontag, for example, wrote that photographs can never be ‘a mirror of the world’ because of the multiple ‘cultural and political dimensions of seeing and constructing reality’.⁷⁹

This view has become commonplace: in contemporary texts on photography it is not hard to find casual dismissals of the referential value of photography and views expressing the ‘now-discredited authenticity once attributed to photography’.⁸⁰ This view has found acceptance with the general public. American photographer Arnold Newman supposedly said that: ‘Photography, as we all know, is not real at all. It is an illusion of reality with which we create our own private world.’ Whether Newman actually said this has become irrelevant: the quotation can be found on thousands of of photography-related internet websites. When this view is added to the contemporary use of digital photography in media which, as everyone knows, can be easily altered, it is not surprising that a publication introducing visual culture can identify among the

⁷⁵ Michael Griffin, ‘The Great War Photographs’, 126

⁷⁶ Beaumont Newhall, *The History of Photography. From 1839 to the Present* (Chicago 1982) 235

⁷⁷ William Stott, *Documentary Expression and Thirties America* (Chicago 1986; 1973) 14

⁷⁸ Citations from: Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Explained. Correspondence, 1982-1985* (Minneapolis 1993) 9

⁷⁹ Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, 18

⁸⁰ Nicholas Mirzoeff, cited in: Linfield, *The Cruel Radianance*, 12

general public ‘a suspicion that photographic media in general are so open to distortion that they must be treated with extreme caution’.⁸¹

This view supports a convenient excuse to discredit photographic evidence. To suggest that a whole category of source materials from the past is unusable and subjective is counterproductive for historical scholarship.⁸² Indeed; the whole profession of writing and studying history hinges on methods of critically examining sources to allow statements to be made about the past. No contemporary historian would ever treat writings by, say, Thucydides as objectively true, and would always analyze them critically as historical sources produced with a certain intention. There is no reason why photographs should be treated differently.

More important for this study, is that a discussion of the relation between photographs and reality overlooks the way photographs function in society, and in collective memory. The ‘truthfulness’ of photographs and their objectivity are relevant subjects, but if photographs function as agents of memory and serve specific historical narratives, they fail to address their function in society.

1.2 The Memory Function of Historical Photographs

1.2.1 The Art of Memory

Throughout history a primary function of the visual arts has been to create a likeness of someone or something that was worth remembering by the person creating or commissioning it.⁸³ This ‘memory function’ of art was explored for instance in the 1930s by British psychologist Frederic Bartlett and refined a generation later by his compatriot, historian Frances Yates, who applied the term the ‘art of memory’ to works of art that are produced to preserve memories of people and events.⁸⁴

Commissioning the ‘art of memory’ was a costly affair, and the service of painters and sculptors usually accessible only to the wealthy. This changed with photography. After the discovery of the glass-collodion process in 1852, street vendors in France sold photographs for as little as 2 francs. Set against a laborer’s daily wage – about 3.5 francs

⁸¹ Nicholas Mirzoeff, *An Introduction to Visual Culture* (London 1999) 89

⁸² Documentary photographer Ken Light summarizes the ‘critical’ responses photojournalists can expect: “Look. I’ve got a picture”, you say. “I was there.” Excuses are made: pictures can lie.’ In: Ken Light, *Witness in Our Time: Working Lives of Documentary Photographers* (Washington 2000) 4

⁸³ For instance: Robert Hirsch, *Seizing the Light. A History of Photography* (Boston 2000) 3

⁸⁴ Frederic C. Bartlett, *Remembering. A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology* (Cambridge 1932), ch. 11, and Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory* (London 1966). A more recent work on the subject, taking into account products of popular culture as well (Yates only focused on ‘high culture’) is: Patrick Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory* (Chicago 1993)

– this made photographs a luxury item, but one accessible to the masses.⁸⁵ As Scottish writer Jane Welsh Carlyle noted in 1959, ‘even the poor can possess themselves of tolerable likenesses of their absent dear ones’.⁸⁶

And they did. As writers and poets pondered the benign or malignant effects of photography, millions of photographs were displayed in homes in Europe and the United States – millions of relatively expensive daguerreotypes were made; cheap and portable *cartes de visite* were produced in even larger numbers; and stereographs, collodion plates and albumen prints were displayed in homes and photographic albums, answering the need, in the words of New Zealand art historian Geoffrey Batchen, ‘to include the virtual presence of those who are otherwise absent’.⁸⁷

From the first days of the new medium’s existence, Batchen chronicles, the camera was seen among cultural elites as well as the general public as a machine of memory, and photography was considered an art of memory.⁸⁸ Among writers, poets and scholars, discussion ensued as to whether memories in the human brain were similar to photographs. But as Batchen shows, the idea that photographs and memories are identical phenomena arose as quickly as the new medium caught on, ‘so much so that we usually construe photographs and memories as synonymous’, writes Batchen.⁸⁹ German essayist Walter Benjamin’s oft-cited conviction that people are only able to recollect the past in the form of visual images seems to reinforce this idea.⁹⁰

It was of course no coincidence that this idea arose and spread during the period when photography first gripped societies in Europe and America. As Dutch historian of psychology Douwe Draaisma proposes in *Metaphors of Memory* (2000), science has been supplying people with metaphors to perceive of the workings of memory throughout history. Whereas one philosopher in the 18th century envisioned memory as a ‘medullary screen upon which the objects painted in the eye are projected as by a magic lantern’, in the 19th century people naturally turned to photography and its unsettling ability to capture images; ‘gradually changing the human brain into a light-sensitive plate’, as Draaisma vividly explains, ‘the memory into an album full of silent snapshots’.⁹¹

What is important to emphasise is that photography clung to memory, attached itself to it, not only in the way people from the 19th century began to think about memory, but in the ways they stored their memories in the newly available and progressively developing form of the photographic image.

⁸⁵ Nicholas Mirzoeff, *An Introduction to Visual Culture* (London 1999) 72

⁸⁶ Cited in: Linfield, *The Cruel Radiance*, 15

⁸⁷ Geoffrey Batchen, *Forget Me Not. Photography and Remembrance* (Amsterdam 2004) 12

⁸⁸ Batchen, *Forget Me Not*, 8

⁸⁹ Ibidem

⁹⁰ Walter Benjamin, ‘Über den Begriff der Geschichte’, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Frankfurt 1974) 695

⁹¹ Douwe Draaisma, *Metaphors of Memory. A History of the Ideas about the Mind* (Cambridge 2000) 104. ‘Medullary screen ..’: Julien La Mettrie, quoted in: Ibidem

1.2.2 New Ways of Knowing

The connection between memory and photographs was not restricted to personal memories and photographs, although in the first decades after the invention of photography, the new medium was decidedly dominated by portraiture, and thus with the 'personal' dimension of photographic memory. Photographs during this time were either sold individually as prints or replicated by an artist and reproduced as lithographic prints: made from wood engravings or from *clichés*, metal plates cast from wood engravings. For almost half a century, photographs could not be directly transferred onto printed material, and the new innovation of halftone prints did not improve in quality until about the turn of the century.

Still, a strong connection between photography and the remembrance of public events was being established. Sales of memorial pictures could run into high figures. For example over fifty thousand *cartes de visite*-sized photographic prints depicting the fall of the Victory Column during the Paris Commune in 1871 were sold in Great Britain alone.⁹² The difference between photographic and gravure prints should not be overstated; it certainly should not be viewed as a binary opposition. The advent of illustrated newspapers like the *Illustrated London News*, *l'Illustration* or the *Leipziger Illustrirte Zeitung* was intimately connected to the invention of photography. These magazines routinely claimed that their gravure prints were made after photographs to enhance their credibility.

In the 19th century, images in illustrated newspapers on both sides of the Atlantic typically included portraits of important men and the occasional woman, reproductions of industrial and technological innovations and images of war and disaster. Lithographs were replaced by reprints of photographs from the 1890s, expanding the stockpile of photographic images spreading through industrializing Europe and America. From the turn of the century on, photographic prints were everywhere: in newspapers and magazines, on postcards and produced in series for collectors.

This proliferation of images and their pervasive public exposure had a profound effect on knowledge. As cultural historian Warren Susman pointed out, photography enabled a democratization of knowledge, generating 'new ways of knowing [which] stood in sharp contrast to old ways of knowing available in the book and the printed word'.⁹³ Before photography, sharing knowledge had been limited to the oral tradition, reading and cultural representation – with the latter forms confined to a small proportion of society. Photography changed this. It 'formulated a new sense of what knowledge was

⁹² Hubertus von Amelunxen, 'The Century's Memorial. Photography and the Recording of History', in: Michel Frizot (ed.) *A New History of Photography* (Cologne 1998) 132

⁹³ Warren Susman, *Culture as History* (New York 1984) 111

and a new estimate of the kinds of knowledge anyone might hope to have', writes historian Vicki Goldberg.⁹⁴

These new ways of knowing extended beyond time and location. Before affordable travel, peoples' imaginations were limited to their physical locale, supplemented by stories and seeing the occasional object or painting. But the ability to see gravures and photographs of places far away, of great events somewhere else or in the past, brought about, as Alan Trachtenberg suggests 'a great revolution in consciousness'.⁹⁵

Exposure to photographic images also influenced ideas about reality and objectivity. Indeed until late in the twentieth century, photographs were read as undeniable pieces of evidence. American historian Henry Wysham Lanier voiced the consensus view of his time, in the foreword to his ten-volume *Photographic History of the Civil War* stating that photographs formed 'a pictorial record which is indisputably authentic, vividly illuminating and the final evidence in any question of detail'.⁹⁶

Photography appeared to be an affirmation of objectivity. 'The uncanny ability of photography to re-present reality bolstered the apparently universal recognition of it as a supreme standard of accuracy and truth', writes Dan Schiller, commenting on the effects of photography in the 19th century. 'Photographic realism insisted and seemed to confirm that the only form of true knowledge was non-symbolic "reflection" of an objective world.'⁹⁷

This confirmation led to a view among the general public in industrialized nations that what the public previously imagined as knowledge because they had seen something 'with their own eyes', changed when people 'adopted the photographic image as the norm for truthfulness in representation'.⁹⁸ New research has nuanced the abruptness and completeness of this shift in perception, but it remains clear that with the advent of photography and mass media, the 'representational authority' of photography allowed it to serve as 'a yardstick of reality', which became, as Jennifer Green-Lewis explains, 'a fertile stereotype that not only reflected but created standards'.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Vicki Goldberg, *The Power of Photography. How Photographs Changed Our Lives* (New York 1993) 11

⁹⁵ Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs. Images as History: Mathew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York 1990) xiv

⁹⁶ Henry Wysham Lanier, *Photographic History of the Civil War. Vol. I* (New York 1911) 30. This trust in the 'ultimate' objectivity of photographic proof lasted until late in the twentieth century. Indeed, according to Barbie Zelizer, the trust in photographic evidence as the ultimate source of objective proof reached its high point with the publication of photographs that documented the effects of the Holocaust. See: Barbie Zelizer, 'From the Image of Record to the Image of Memory. Holocaust Photography, Then and Now', in: Brennen and Hardt (eds.) *Picturing the Past*, 98-121

⁹⁷ Dan Schiller, *Objectivity and the News. The Public and the Rise of Commercial Journalism* (Philadelphia 1981) 92-93

⁹⁸ Quoted from: William Mills Ivins, *Prints and Visual Communication* (London 1953) 94

⁹⁹ Jennifer Green-Lewis, *Framing the Victorians. Photography and the Culture of Realism* (Ithaca 1996)

1.2.3 The memory function of news

To understand how photographs are used to represent history, it is important to realize that only a small proportion of photographic images of the past have actually survived. Of the many tens of millions of daguerreotypes, *cartes de visites*, stereographs and other prints made in the 19th century, the vast majority is lost. Of those that remain, only a fraction were reprinted in publications, and can be considered 'in public use'. This is true for photographs from every era. Ever since photographs were first produced, there is a constant process of adding new photos and forgetting, erasing, and discarding almost all previously made ones. The speed of this process has become very high.

The scale of this continuous loss can be depressing, especially when it concerns important events in history. In Michael Griffin's essay 'The Great War Photographs', for example, the author deplores the 'staggering gap' between the millions of photographs that were made of the Second World War, and the remaining fraction available for reprinting and re-use.¹⁰⁰

Few photographs survive this continuous process of erasing by being stored in archives, private collections, photobooks, etc. Even fewer survive in public use. And again a fraction of those can become part of cultural memory, and become widely shared and widely accepted as having value.

The first step to becoming one of those select few, is that a photograph is published or stored by contemporaries who regard them as important. It is for this reason that it is often said that journalism provides a first draft of history. But of course, those contemporaries can have very different views of what images are worth keeping than people in later eras. 'Many "historic" events of the 19th century are regarded as such only because they appeared sensational to contemporaries', writes art historian Hubertus von Amelnunxen. 'Today they would often be seen as relatively trivial news items'.¹⁰¹ The images they discard, however, are usually discarded forever. Our ability to visualize the past is therefore influenced by the selection of visual media in that past. In visualizing the past, it is important to reconstruct attitudes in past times that determined their selection of the images they wished to produce and store. To give one example, in 1865 the pioneering publisher of the *Illustrated London News*, Charles Knight, reflected on 'the outward manifestation of our present social life' in his celebrated weekly newspaper, and concluded that his magazine had sent out its photographers and illustrators to 'every scene (...) where a crowd of great people and respectable people can be got together, but never, if possible, any exhibition of vulgar poverty'.¹⁰² A historian must be aware of the distorting effects of such an attitude.

¹⁰⁰ Michael Griffin, 'The Great War Photographs. Constructing Myths of History and Photography', in: Brennen and Hardt (eds.), *Picturing the Past*, 125

¹⁰¹ Hubertus von Amelnunxen, 'The Century's Memorial', 132

¹⁰² Charles Knight, quoted in: Gerry Beegan, *The Mass Image. A Social History of Photomechanical Reproduction in Victorian London* (London 2008) 3

News media serve as a function of memory, regardless of accuracy or the contemporary standards for depicting news and conditions. Photography's directness and the frequent re-use of archived images (especially if they are easily accessible and cost-free) reinforce this memory function in news media. As Kevin Barnhurst and John Nerone assert: 'Photography took on much of the memory function of news, crystallizing current events – abbreviating them for memory – but also relating past events, merely by reprinting'.¹⁰³

1.2.4 Seizing hold of a memory

News media are important in the initial selection and publication of photographs, but that is only a first step for a photograph to become part of cultural memory. When photographs of past events are republished today, it is because they serve some purpose for present use. Walter Benjamin has famously observed in his 1940 essay 'Theses on the Philosophy of History': 'Every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably'.¹⁰⁴

Images of the past are used in the construction of historical narratives for use in society today.¹⁰⁵ In the best cases, this is done by professional historians who follow the analytical methodologies of their academic discipline, but the ability to construct and influence such narratives lies in many institutions in society, and can have various motives. The construction of historical narratives, by whomever it is done, always involves selection, emphasis and wilful or inadvertent distortion. Furthermore, it often serves a purpose that is not detached or objective, but rather interested and subjective, concerned with the affirmation of a group identity, or aiming to promote a point of view. Walter Benjamin himself certainly did not believe in detached scholarly interest in the past. 'To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it "the way it really was" (Ranke)', he wrote, '(i)t means to seize hold of a memory'.¹⁰⁶

Photographs are particularly powerful tools for seizing hold of memories. As 'media for conveying the past', they can strongly imprint our historical consciousness, writes

¹⁰³ Kevin Barnhurst and John Nerone, *The Form of News. A History* (New York 2001) 146

¹⁰⁴ Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', in: Hannah Arendt, Harry Zohn (eds.) *Walter Benjamin: Illuminations* (New York 1968) 255

¹⁰⁵ For discussions on the construction (and merit) of historical narratives, see for instance: Carl Hempel, 'The Function of General Laws in History', *Journal of Philosophy* 39 (1942) 35-48; Louis Mink, 'Narrative Form as a Cognitive Instrument', in: Robert Canary, Henry Kozicki (eds.), *The Writing of History* (Madison, 1978); David Carr, *Time, Narrative and History* (Bloomington 1986); Roland Barthes, 'Introduction a l'analyse structurale des recits', *Communications* 8 (1966); Hayden White, 'The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory', *History and Theory* 23 (1984)

¹⁰⁶ Benjamin, 'Theses', 255

Harald Welzer.¹⁰⁷ I have observed this myself many times in the classroom: how students of history are stimulated by an actual depiction of the past rather than a verbal transmission; as if being seized by a much stronger communicative force than words. Images help students and others realize the actualness of history, how history is not an extended foreplay leading to the present – to the focal point in time that is now – but rather a continuous present, moving forward in time. When images are viewed in this context, they become an entry point for historical understanding and sensation. ‘Memory needs images’, Welzer writes, ‘because history attaches itself to them as something remembered and recountable’.¹⁰⁸

Photographs do not become images of history by themselves; they have to be displayed and recognized as such. ‘Images become history when they are used to interpret the present in light of the past, when they are represented and received as explanatory accounts of collective reality’, according to Alan Trachtenberg. ‘They become history when they are conceived as symbolic events in a shared culture’.¹⁰⁹

But this incorporation into a cultural legacy influences the photograph; envelops it in the cultural structures of the time in which it is displayed. Roland Barthes revisited this theme many times in his classic 1980s text on photography, *Camera Lucida*: photographs from the past and their impact will always be caught in a matrix of cultural connotations and structures at the time of their viewing.¹¹⁰ The original meaning of a photograph, as understood by its producer, original publisher and first audience, dissolves into the meanings constructed by their contemporary audience. Reconstructing history by using photographs from the past is therefore a ‘complex negotiation between what people know and what they see’.¹¹¹

Apart from what people know and see, many other factors come into play: what they expect to see in a photograph; how a photograph is reproduced, positioned and located in the media of reproduction, whether cues such as size or historical features suggest the importance or authority of a photograph, and the interplay with the text or caption around it. And of course the reception of a photograph is influenced by the cultural setting in which it appears and the cultural stereotypes and symbols to which it refers.¹¹² When photographs are incorporated in a shared culture as representations of history, they become markers by which history is remembered and anchored. Martijn Kleppe suggests that we can think of these images, which make people recall and imagine and

¹⁰⁷ Harald Welzer, *Das Gedächtnis der Bilder* (Tübingen 1995) 8. Translation by author.

¹⁰⁸ Ibidem.

¹⁰⁹ Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs*, 6

¹¹⁰ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida. Reflections on Photography* (New York 1982)

¹¹¹ Brennen and Hardt, *Picturing the Past*, 20

¹¹² This point will be discussed in more detail in section 1.3.2

feel a connection to history, as ‘photographic *lieux de mémoire*’.¹¹³ As visual commemorations, they can become ‘memory texts’, as defined by Annette Kuhn: cultural vehicles that recount the past.¹¹⁴

There is an inherent tendency to re-use the same images for these commemorations, for they will be trusted to call up the intended memories. This continued re-use makes these images, in the words of Robert Hariman and Louis Lucaites, ‘stock figures in memorial statuary, ceremonial oratory and other representational practices’.¹¹⁵ Peter Ludes describes these ‘stock figures’ as *Schlüsselbilder*, ‘key images’ that provide a ‘key’ to certain narratives.¹¹⁶

Photographs depicting the past that invoke narratives for viewers are therefore more than silent representations. Depending on the frequency and importance of their use, they can become ‘agents of memory’, claims Gerhard Paul, images that invoke a set of memories and possibly a set of values as well.¹¹⁷ The most powerful and the most reproduced of these agents of memory attract greater notoriety and exert greater influence, and can become iconic photographs.

In this study, I will build upon several concepts that are discussed above. I will use Annette Kuhn’s concept of photographs as ‘cultural vehicles’, and follow Trachtenberg’s ideas on photographs as images that become history when they are represented in historical narratives and symbolic events. If they are used in this way, they become part of cultural memory that can have the ability, as Gerhard Paul asserts, to serve to members of groups in society as agents of memory.

In academic literature, discussion about such photographs often occur under the label ‘iconic photographs’. These academic texts about what iconic photographs are and how they function, will be critically discussed below.

1.3 Iconic Photographs

‘People are sexually aroused by pictures; they break pictures; they mutilate them, kiss them, cry before them, and go on journeys to them; they are calmed by them, stirred by them, and incited to revolt’, art historian David Freedberg writes in *The Power of Images*. Freedberg asserts that people ‘give thanks by means of them, expect to be elevated by them, and are moved to the highest levels of empathy and fear’ by visual

¹¹³ Martijn Kleppe, *Canonieke Icoonfoto's. De rol van (pers)foto's in de Nederlandse geschiedschrijving* (Delft 2013) 41

¹¹⁴ Annette Kuhn, *Family Secrets. Acts of Memory and Imagination* (London 1995)

¹¹⁵ Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites, *No Caption Needed*, 2

¹¹⁶ Peter Ludes, *Multimedia und Multi-Moderne: Schlüsselbilder* (Opladen 2001)

¹¹⁷ Gerhard Paul, *Visual History*, 22

imagery.¹¹⁸ He suggests that throughout history people ‘have always responded in these ways’ to all visual imagery, not just photographs, and ‘they still do’.¹¹⁹

And of course, he is right – and photographs are a perfect example of this. Most of us can probably recall or imagine these kinds of responses triggered for us by photographs. Such personal responses to photographs are not necessarily solitary. ‘Reading’ a photograph may be a private affair, but if many people are triggered in the same way by an image, photographs can have a collective effect. This effect is powerfully evident in our responses to iconic photographs.

In the section below, academic literature on iconic photographs will be discussed critically. The first two sections discuss two main ideas that are often used to explain the function and power of iconic photographs: their visual power and their ability to connect to existing iconography. In the third section, the ability of iconic photographs to function as symbols of events in history will be discussed. The last two sections will discuss qualities of iconic photographs that can be studied with a repeatable method, and studies that have attempted to do this.

1.3.1 *The visual power of iconic photographs*

One of the most poignant and astute observations about photographs is that they ‘entice viewers by their silence’.¹²⁰ Television and film lack this quality to ‘freeze’ time. And it is precisely this still, frozen quality of photographs that generates an invitation to the mind to explore an image undisturbed by a flow of new stimuli that demand attention; to find meaning and implication in an image; to awaken the sensation of another time and place; to be lured into mentally reconstructing which events may have preceded the exact moment singled out by the photograph in time, and the suggestion of what will have come next.¹²¹ ‘A photograph provokes a tension in us’, Susan Moeller observes, ‘not only about the precise moment that the image depicts, but also about all the moments that led up to that instant and about all the moments that will follow’.¹²² Having an ‘eye’ for such a moment is often seen as the pinnacle of photojournalism – the hunt for, and the ability to capture the ‘decisive moment’, as Henri Cartier-Bresson

¹¹⁸ David Freedberg, *The Power of Images* (Chicago 1989) 1

¹¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹²⁰ Among others, Rob Kroes makes this observation in *Photographic Memories*, 68, as does Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs*, xvi, and also Alain Mons, who speaks of the ‘*silence sauvage*’ of photographs. Alain Mons, *La traversée du visible. Images et lieux du contemporain* (Paris 2002) 32

¹²¹ Of course, film and television stills do the same, mimicking photography’s qualities. Many news photographs today are in fact stills, plucked out of a long stream of back-to-back digital images by a photographer or editor after the filming of an event.

¹²² Susan Moeller, *Compassion Fatigue. How the Media Sell Disease, Famine, War and Death* (New York 1999) 39

famously put it, Alfred Eisenstaedt's 'story-telling moment', or the 'pregnant moment' in Victor Burgin's definition.¹²³ And indeed iconic photographs can be the result of such hunts for picture opportunities, such as Eisenstaedt's own 'Times Square Kiss' (1945). But they can also be staged affairs, such as Yevgeny Khaldei's 'Raising the Flag over the Reichstag' (1945); they can be *objets trouvés*, like Alberto Korda's portrait of Che Guevara ('Guerrillero Heroico', 1960); or amateur snapshots taken with borrowed cameras, like Carmen Taylor's picture of a hijacked plane hitting the South Tower of the World Trade Centre on 11 September 2001; and there are many more examples. Regardless of how they were made, photographs regarded as 'iconic' due to their frequency of appearance and the authority ascribed to them, tend to capture 'arresting moments'. They may be so visually striking that they keep being reprinted and remembered, like Steve McCurry's 'Afghan Girl' (1984). Usually iconic photographs combine a visually striking aesthetic with documenting, representing or calling into memory an important, dramatic or tragic historic event. Iconic photographs that combine communicative directness and representational authority with the capacity to act as agents of memory and markers of history can possess what Rob Kroes called a 'power of epic concentration, condensing the tragedy of history into a single arresting image', conveying to the viewer 'the urgent sense that here is what must be remembered'.¹²⁴

Some aesthetic qualities do resurface among iconic photographs to produce the 'arresting' effect of the photograph: the depiction or suggestion of human anguish; the depiction of strongly expressed emotions like despair or fear; and visual cues that suggest authority, such as a formal pictorial simplicity, a diagonal of depth; or the documentary-style use of black-and-white photography.

But since iconic photographs were often initially produced as news photographs, they can truly be 'decisive moments' in the sense that they could not have been taken moments sooner or later. The 'Tank Man' photograph (Jeff Widener, 1989) was taken at the exact moment a Chinese army tank came to a standstill at the feet of a lone protester. While this would have allowed the photographer a second or two for the decisive photograph, Richard Drew's 'Falling Man' (2001) was taken at the exact and only instant that the falling man in the photograph appeared controlled and unmoving, as proven by the sequence of photographs Drew took moments earlier and later.

¹²³ Henri Cartier-Bresson, *The Decisive Moment* (New York 1952); Victor Burgin borrowed the term 'pregnant moment' from Roland Barthes, who used it for film analysis, and applied it to still photography. Victor Burgin, in: Burgin, Donald, Kaplan (eds.), *Formations of Fantasy* (New York 1986) 90

¹²⁴ Rob Kroes, *Photographic Memories. Private Pictures, Public Images, and American History* (Lebanon 2007) 13

1.3.2 Iconic Photographs: Iconography

The capacity of photographs to enter cultural discourse and cultural memory as carriers of symbolic and metaphorical meaning is amplified when photographs are visually connected to existing aesthetic genres. Markers of collective memory are generally most effective, more easily remembered, and embedded in cultural discourse more easily if they reflect established cultural forms and concepts.

A certain category of images can appear in mass culture so often that they can form an iconography of their own, like 'the Palestinian stone thrower' or 'the hungry African child'. We can think of these as 'generic icons', to use a term coined by David Perlmutter, or as 'tropes', as described by cultural theorist Mieke Bal.¹²⁵ They can appear in endless variation. Media scholars Martijn Kleppe and Marta Zarzycka, for example, conclude that the images rewarded at the annual World Press Photo contest 'reflect the prevalence of a selected number of tropes, forming an endless variation on a few established iconographic motives (...) that act as figurative rhetorical devices appealing to both judges and wider audiences.'¹²⁶

These tropes can draw power from iconographic references. If photographs refer to a familiar cultural concept (for example, Christ's crucifixion) a viewer can associate them with that concept *and* its connotations. They spark an association with pre-existing knowledge and are thus connected to it. 'Photographs act as primes and metaphors for mental images that draw from social expectations and schema outside of and beyond the photograph', as Michael Griffin explains.¹²⁷

In western countries, these schema often relate to Christian iconography. The visual power of Lange's 'Migrant Mother', for example, derives from the way it 'inscribes itself into a larger, collectively remembered iconography of "Mother and Child"', and furthermore to pre-existing emotional appeals to innocence and a call to protect.¹²⁸ Other often cited examples are the visual emulation of the crucifixion in the 'Napalm Girl' and the 'Abu Ghraib prisoner' photographs, which then become metaphors for unjust suffering and brutality.

Photographs can have such an immediate connection to existing Christian iconography they are named in cultural discourse after their visual referent, like Lewis Hine's 'Madonna of Ellis Island' (ca. 1908), or the 1997 World Press Photo winner, the

¹²⁵ David Perlmutter, *Photojournalism and Foreign Policy*, 11; Mieke Bal, *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide* (Toronto 2002)

¹²⁶ Martijn Kleppe, Marta Zarzycka, 'Awards, archives, and affects: tropes in the World Press Photo contest 2009–11', *Media, Culture & Society* 35 (2013) 8, 977–995

¹²⁷ Michael Griffin, 'The Great War Photographs', 147. Cited by Griffin as a summary of findings in: Michael Schudson, 'Dynamics of Distortion in Collective Memory', in: Daniel Schacter, *Memory Distortion. How Minds, Brains, and Societies Reconstruct the Past* (New York 1995) 346–355; and Daniel Schacter, *Searching For Memory. The Brain, The Mind, and The Past* (New York 1996)

¹²⁸ Rob Kroes, *Photographic Memories. Private Pictures, Public Images, and American History* (Lebanon 2007) 75

‘Algerian Madonna’ (Hocine Zaourar). Of course, the visual reference does not have to be religious; portraits are sometimes said to accrue enhanced visual power from their resemblance to say, Da Vinci’s ‘Mona Lisa’ or Rodin’s ‘Thinker’. In practice, however, religious iconography dominates because of its prolonged legacy and its prominence in the history of art and culture.

The iconographic dimension and thus the visual power of photographs is largely determined by the pre-existing knowledge and cultural background of the viewer. ‘Images are part of a culture’, Peter Burke writes, and so to ‘interpret the message, it is necessary to be familiar with the cultural codes’.¹²⁹

It follows that the power and importance of certain photographs will be interpreted differently by different groups, and hence they will be preserved and re-used differently. These can be large national or religious groups, for instance, or groups delineated by cultural activities (*Tomb Raider* players), or by generation or occupation.

As people can be part of different social groups at the same time they may recognize the iconic power of some images and be receptive to their message, and not recognize that of others. Thus, although we speak of ‘iconic photographs’ as a coherent category, they are very diverse in function, recognition and group affiliation.

In the US-dominated field of visual studies, the subject of national and other delimitations of icons receives scant attention. In German academic discussion about iconic photographs, probably the most active after the American, this distinction between national and international icons is routinely made. Gerhard Paul reserves the term ‘supericons’ for iconic photographs that have a global reach.¹³⁰

If these ‘supericons’ indeed exist (and this study will try to provide evidence for this) there are interesting implications for social memory and global cultural integration. Perhaps a global visual collective memory, shaped around iconic photographs, has taken shape: one that exists alongside the different national and other identities that people have, as an added dimension of recognition and remembrance that people can have in common with others around the globe.

1.3.3 *Iconic Photographs: Symbols of events in history*

Iconic photographs must be published and viewed before they can have any impact. ‘The most important news photograph can make no more noise than a tree falling in a distant

¹²⁹ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing. The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (Ithaca 2008) 36

¹³⁰ Gerhard Paul, ‘Das Jahrhundert der Bilder’, 29. Paul and others also distinguish other categories of photographic icons such as ‘pop icons’ and ‘scientific icons’. Though useful, such categorization appears overly rigorous considering the wide connotations photographic icons can have, and the fluid boundaries of groups to which they appeal.

forest if it is not published', Vicki Goldberg reminds us.¹³¹ Many scholars take the publication and re-publication of iconic photographs for granted, as if this is something that naturally befalls important photographs. But news media have a 'memory function' in society precisely because they control this process of publication and re-publication. This suggests that iconic photographs cannot be studied in isolation from their means of communication.

As many case studies on individual iconic photographs have shown, the context in which iconic photographs are published in (print) media will strongly influence their subsequent place in public culture.¹³² For this reason, Gerhard Paul insists on using the term 'media icon' over 'icon', to stress the role of media in creating and perpetuating the iconic photographs.¹³³ David Permuter's critique of existing research on iconic photographs lists eleven 'elements' iconic photographs possess. Of these, five relate to the media use and placement of such images, from frequency of placement and transposability between different media, to marketability and prominence of media appearance.¹³⁴

When photographs repeatedly appear in main media in coverage of a certain event, they can come to represent it. 'Frequently reproduced photographs become part of a self-reinforcing feedback circuit', Patrick Hagopian writes. 'Images that are published again and again are those that first come to mind when lay people, writers or documentary producers think about the historical event that they depict.' These photographs 'serve as powerful evocations' that 'at once fix and disseminate memories of the past'.¹³⁵ The best known and most powerful of these images 'condense' the epic proportions of

¹³¹ Vicki Goldberg, *The Power of Photography*, 212

¹³² See for instance: the dozens of case studies collected in: Gerhard Paul (ed.), *Das Jahrhundert der Bilder. Bildatlas 1900-1949* (Bonn 2009); Gerhard Paul (ed.), *Das Jahrhundert der Bilder. Band II 1949 bis heute* (Bonn 2008); and case studies in: Hariman, Lucaites, *No Caption Needed*; Gerhard Paul, 'Mushroom Clouds. Entstehung, Struktur und Funktion einer Medienikone des 20. Jahrhunderts im interkulturellen Vergleich', in: Gerhard Paul, *Visual History*, 243-264; David Campbell, 'The Iconography of Famine', in: Batchen, Gidley, Miller, Prosser (eds.), *Picturing Atrocity. Photography in Crisis* (London 2012) 79-92, to name just a few from many examples.

¹³³ Gerhard Paul, 'Das Jahrhundert der Bilder. Die visuelle Geschichte und der Bildkanon des kulturellen Gedächtnisses', in: Gerhard Paul (ed.), *Das Jahrhundert der Bilder*, 29

¹³⁴ David Perlmutter, *Photojournalism and Foreign Policy. Icons of Outrage in International Crises* (Westport 1998) 11-20. Perlmutter's 11 elements (not a checklist of what an icon must have, but rather the elements they can have in random combinations) are: 1. Celebrity (of the picture itself), 2. Prominence (of appearance in media), 3. Frequency (of appearance in media), 4. Profit (of media and other copyright holders), 5. Instantaneousness (of fame), 6. Transposability (across media), 7. Fame of subjects, 8. Importance of events, 9. Metonymy (for dramatic events), 10. Primordality and/or Cultural Resonance (that an iconic photograph taps into), 11. Striking Composition. And he leaves out one (media) element that he mentions elsewhere in his text: Discussion of the iconic photographs' implications by 'discourse elites' (xiv).

¹³⁵ Patrick Hagopian, 'The Vietnam War Photography as a Locus of Memory', in: Annette Kuhn, Kirsten Emiko McAllister (eds.), *Locating Memory: Photographic Acts* (Oxford 2008) 202

history into a single image. When this happens, the photograph is implicitly distanced from the actual scene that was recorded in the picture, and transported into the metaphorical.

An iconic photograph can, in this sense, 'represent' some larger historic event or emotional appeal, like the 'Vietnam War' or the 'injustice of hunger'. If striking photographs get published and republished in various contexts and media, and enter public discourse as visual arguments and references, they 'begin to take on a widely recognizable form as cultural emblems', sometimes only loosely related to the exact conditions at the time the photograph was taken.¹³⁶

Many answers of respondents who took the survey on photography on which this study is based (later chapters will describe this in more detail) testify to this. They often describe a photograph as having a strong emotional impact on them, and subsequently identify the photograph as communicating 'the horrors of war' ('Napalm Girl'), that 'Americans are bad' (Abu Ghraib prisoner, 2003), and that 'greed hurts other people' (Kevin Carter's 'Vulture and Child', 1993), to pick some random examples. In the minds of these respondents, these photographs appear to have become detached from the exact historical conditions in Trang Bang, June 8, 1972, or Ayod, March 1993, and have been incorporated into larger, familiar narratives. This happens on a larger scale as well. 'In public memory', writes Michael Kammen, 'these decontextualized photographic moments become enveloped in aesthetic genres, historical narratives, and cultural mythology'.¹³⁷

When this happens, the protagonists in a photograph, the photographer and the original publisher can completely lose control over the content and meaning of these iconic images. The subject of Dorothea Lange's 'Migrant Mother' photograph (1936) remained bitter until her deathbed that she had not benefited financially from 'her' photograph while in public culture she remained a visual testament to self-sacrifice and nobleness in poverty.¹³⁸ Eddie Adams lost control over the use of his 'Execution of a Vietcong prisoner' photograph (1968) the second it was wired to the Associated Press head office, and he forever lamented its effect on the executioner, and its use as a 'protest picture'.

These pictures and other iconic photographs, then, may not be strict documents of history but rather 'repositories of meaning', in cultural scholar Paula Rabinowitz's definition, that cause 'history and image [to] rearrange themselves, as the image produces historical meaning as much as history makes sense of the image'.¹³⁹ Usually, this 'producing' of history has to be deduced from the role of a photograph in media

¹³⁶ Michael Griffin, 'The Great War Photographs', 139

¹³⁷ Michael Kammen, 'Some Patterns and Meanings of Memory Distortion', in: Daniel Schacter, *Memory Distortion. How Minds, Brains, and Societies Reconstruct the Past* (New York 1995) 330

¹³⁸ See paragraph 2.4.1 for a more comprehensive account of this photograph and the stories it generated.

¹³⁹ Paula Rabinowitz, *They Must Be Represented. The Politics of Documentary* (London 1994) 87

and other discourse in society, though in some cases, researchers find measurable evidence of a photographs' influence in society.¹⁴⁰

Paradoxically, as photographs become 'decontextualized' and start to serve as symbols rather than documents, they retain their strong, persuasive visual power and their function as 'agents of memory'. Indeed, many scholars believe that it is exactly this unspecific, abstract character of iconic photographs that make them agents of collective memory, as this allows the exact meaning of a photograph to be 'filled in', especially in cases where the function of collective memory is to underline dominant views of history and allow iconic photographs to 'represent consensus narratives condensed in familiar, emotionally charged scenes'.¹⁴¹

A decontextualized iconic photograph can be associated with vague events and messages and go through different phases, as different meanings are attached to it over time. As German historian Christoph Hamann shows, for example, in German post-war discourse the stark photograph of a statue overlooking Dresden after the Allied bombing in 1945, has come to stand first for German suffering during the Second World War, then for acts of terror by the imperialist powers (an East German term for the United States, Great Britain and France) and finally for the horrors of aerial bombardment.¹⁴² These views of course mirrored dominant views of history at different phases in (East) Germany's recent past.

This process of photographs transcending their context to be adapted into transitory cultural meanings has its critics. Barbie Zelizer, for instance, traces in several publications how photographs that were taken in liberated concentration camps in Germany and Poland in 1945 almost instantly became 'Holocaust photographs': interchangeable entities whose 'contemporary placement signaled the surrender of the image's referentiality to its symbolic status'.¹⁴³ Paula Rabinowitz holds Lange's 'Migrant Mother' up to her readers as a 'troubling story', a warning of how the context of an iconic image can be manipulated until 'whatever reality its subject first possessed has been drained away'.¹⁴⁴ And historian Gie Van Den Berghe condemns the hijacking and misrepresentation of iconic photographs, presenting his readers with a tableau of distortion depicting fifteen photographs and their afterlife.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁰ An example is Vicky Goldberg, who connects the photographs of the American dead on Buna Beach (George Strock, 1943) to a spike in US donations for the country's war drive. Goldberg, *The Power of Photography*, 199

¹⁴¹ Griffin, 'The Great War Photographs', 136

¹⁴² Christoph Hamann, *Visual History und Geschichtsdidaktik* (Freiburg 2007)

¹⁴³ Barbie Zelizer, 'From the Image of Record to the Image of Memory. Holocaust Photography, Then and Now', in: Brennen and Hardt, 114.

¹⁴⁴ Rabinowitz, *They Must Be Represented*, 87

¹⁴⁵ Gie Van Den Berghe, *Kijken Zonder Zien* (Kalmthout 2011)

The recurrence of this sentiment is puzzling. After all, simplification and transitory meanings are inherent to public discourse and to memory itself, public or private, especially when analyzed over an extended period of time. It is no surprise that when a historian or other scholar delves into the exact history of a symbol, metaphor or assumption in public discourse, research will show some degree of variation from the original has occurred.

Of course, some cases are problematic. As Zelizer shows, the imprecision of 'Holocaust photographs' and their interchangeable use, freed from historical specificity, has contributed to confusion about specific concentration camps and played into the hands of Holocaust deniers.¹⁴⁶ And the vulnerability of photographs and their subjects to serve as decontextualized symbols in public discourse, where there is often little interest in detailed knowledge of what a photograph actually depicts, can be shocking.

Historians should be precise in establishing what photographs document, and strive to protect these findings from outside interference, particularly by inserting them into public debate. They should not, however, claim to know the single and unambiguous meaning of a photograph, based on their background knowledge of it. Lastly, they should view the use of historical photographs in cultural narratives as worthy of its own cultural-historical analysis. While some scholars analyze iconic photographs principally to establish how visual images communicate (visual rhetoric) and treat the referentiality of images as an interesting footnote (scholars Robert Hariman and Louis Lucaites, for example), historians should keep both aspects in equal focus.

1.3.4 Qualities of Iconic and Historical Photographs

So what can we actually measure about these photographs? To answer that, we should first inventorize what iconic photographs in fact are, according to the academic studies on the subject. Earlier in this chapter, important academic works and ideas were discussed. In these works, various definitions and/or essential qualities of iconic photographs were proposed; often varying in emphasis and detail, but usually complementary.

In *Photojournalism and Foreign Policy*, David Perlmutter, draws up a useful 11-point 'checklist' of qualities. Iconic photographs, Perlmutter writes, must at least have some of these qualities. These qualities are: 1. Celebrity (of the picture itself), 2. Prominence (of appearance in media), 3. Frequency (of appearance in media), 4. Profit (of media and other copyright holders), 5. Instantaneousness (of fame), 6. Transposability (across media), 7. Fame of subjects, 8. Importance of events, 9. Metonymy (for dramatic events),

¹⁴⁶ Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget* and 'From the Image of Record to the Image of Memory'

10. Primordially and/or Cultural Resonance (that the icon taps into), 11. Striking Composition.¹⁴⁷

Quality no. 1 surely seems the most important of these qualities, although the others do weigh in. Which ones can we measure? Let us first begin by crossing out the qualities that would be hard or impossible to measure in a meaningful way. Nos. 2 to 5 can be measured, but not without serious issues. No. 2 can be verified, for instance by leafing through newspapers, but in our media-filled world with its huge supply of media outlets, a thorough and comprehensive inventory of prominence of photograph appearance (which would also imply qualitative analysis), would be a gargantuan task. The same is true for quality no. 3. No. 4 is problematic for two reasons. Firstly, copyright holders treat copyright profits as trade secrets. And secondly, when well-known icons like the portrait of Che Guevara and the moon landing photographs of 1969 are free, how should one weigh this quality? No. 5 is a quality that can be reconstructed for individual photographs, but it is hard to come up with objective standards for this quality. No. 6 is a quality that might have been a useful criterium in 1998, but not in our time with the easy and instant translation of images to various media. No. 11, finally, is an important but subjective quality that cannot be researched in a meaningful way.

The other qualities, however, we can actually research. We can of course measure the important quality No. 1, which surely is not on top of Perlmutter's list by accident: we can ask people through questionnaires or surveys which photographs they recognize. The same is true of nos. 7 and 8: we can ask our survey audience which subjects and events they recognize, and how they gauge them. We can also measure quality no. 9 in this way, by asking if people think a certain photograph represents a particular event. And we can gain insight into quality no. 10, if we submit our questionnaire to people in different cultures, and ask them about their 'reading' of certain photographs.

In the works of other scholars, we encounter many of the same points. The author of one of the most voluminous studies of iconic photographs, Gerhard Paul, also mentions the obvious fact that photographs need to have fame and ample media proliferation to be 'iconic'. He writes of 'media-icons' and speculates that there must be 'super-icons' that enjoy global recognition.¹⁴⁸ This notion of global 'super-icons' intersects with the idea that 'within the context of a globalized and digitized media and cultural field', a 'global memory field' now exists – an idea proposed by Anna Reading.¹⁴⁹

Paul agrees with Perlmutter that iconic photographs can be visual 'keys' to certain events and public memories, and also includes the idea that photographs can be keys to certain cultural values.¹⁵⁰ Peter Burke ascribes to this idea, stating that when one

¹⁴⁷ David Perlmutter, *Photojournalism and Foreign Policy*, 11-20

¹⁴⁸ Gerhard Paul, *Visual History*, 22

¹⁴⁹ Anna Reading, 'Memory and Identity', 377 and Anna Reading in: Neiger, Meyers, Zandberg (eds.) *On Media Memory. Collective Memory in a New Media Age* (London 2011) 241-252

¹⁵⁰ *Ibidem*

‘interprets the message’ of a certain image, ‘cultural codes’ come into play.¹⁵¹ Peter Griffin in turn ascribes to the notion how iconic photographs can be symbols for certain events, only loosely attached to the exact conditions of the time when and place where the photograph was taken.¹⁵²

1.3.5 Iconic and Historical Photographs: No Data Needed

The voluminous literature on history and photography is weighted heavily towards abstract analysis. ‘Photography’ often features in these texts as a general term, describing a category of objects that can be grouped together and analyzed as a whole. When individual photographs and their background feature in academic writing on the subject, they are often used as anecdotal evidence for a theoretical argument, or alternatively as a case study supporting a larger hypothesis on the workings of photographs in general.¹⁵³

There is much merit to this tendency towards abstraction and general claims. The aim to reach overarching conclusions is obviously one of the foundations of science. With regard to photography, the sheer number of photographs that have been made seems to preclude any other approach. In the particular case of photography and history, the tendency towards abstraction and general hypotheses may also be partly attributed to the fact that many original contributors to the analysis of photography, like the much-admired Walter Benjamin and Roland Barthes, were modernist writers fascinated with the effects of new technologies on their perception and thinking.¹⁵⁴

Nevertheless, the raw materials for scholarly analysis are curiously absent from, or of marginal importance to many academic texts on photography and history. Individual photographs and what we know about them, about their reception, and other facts, are often a surprisingly small ingredient of scholarly works on photography. This is unfortunate for several reasons – for one, because reading about photography can at

¹⁵¹ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing*, 36

¹⁵² Griffin, ‘The Great War Photographs’, 136

¹⁵³ Virtually all books on photography and history that are mentioned in Chapters 1 and 2 could be named here as examples, for instance: Bonnie Brennen, Hanno Hardt (eds.), *Picturing the Past. Media, History & Photography* (Chicago 1999), Julianne H. Newton, *The Burden of Visual Truth. The Role of Photojournalism in Mediating Reality* (Mahwah 2001), David D. Perlmutter, *Photojournalism and Foreign Policy. Icons of Outrage in International Crises* (Westport 1998) and Robert Hariman and John Lucaites, *No Caption Needed. Iconic Photographs, Public Culture, and Liberal Democracy* (Chicago 2007); Gerhard Paul, ‘Von der Historischen Bildkunde zur Visual History. Eine Einführung’, in: Gerhard Paul, *Visual History. Ein Studienbuch* (Göttingen 2000); Jens Jäger, *Photographie: Bilder der Neuzeit. Einführung in die historische Bildforschung* (Tübingen 2000); and many others.

¹⁵⁴ See for instance: Kathrin Yacavone, *Benjamin, Barthes, and the Singularity of Photography* (London 2012)

times feel like venturing into a hyperreality that is largely disconnected from the photographs themselves, but more importantly because the link between academic conclusions and actual research can become all too tenuous.

This problem becomes apparent in many texts on iconic photographs. As described in chapter 1, academic writings on iconic photographs often discuss their function as symbols and cultural markers and their place in collective memory, or they emphasize the individual fame and impact of certain iconic photographs in national, western, or unspecified cultures. These are indeed fascinating subjects, and one would expect that scholars who write about them would want to know which photographs actually *do* have widespread recognition; which ones are only recognized by many people in certain countries or cultures; whether the visual impact and perceived message that scholars attribute to certain photographs are indeed qualities that the larger public attributes to these photographs as well; whether people in one or various societies agree that certain photographs are important documents; whether the recognition of photographs is generation-based across nations; and so forth.

Strangely enough, none of these things have been researched. While 'iconic' and 'historic' are subjective labels with no ruling authority to check their application, they are widely used concepts in and outside of academia, and one would expect more scientific effort to enhance our knowledge about them. It is scientifically problematic when so many scholars agree on the power of individual, 'iconic' or 'historic' photographs and attribute various qualities to them, but make little effort to enhance our knowledge about their recognition, perceived content and impact. And yet the tools to do this have become available since the use of the internet has become widespread.

It is not true that the entire subject of iconic and historical photographs is solely based on literature and media study. There have been various attempts to establish more structured approaches to the subject. But the various approaches that have been employed all have obvious flaws.

The authors of best known work on the subject, Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites, who wrote the 2007 treatise *No Caption Needed: Iconic Photographs, Public Culture and Liberal Democracy*, explain their method to establish which photographs to analyze in general terms. They write that in order to establish which photographs 'stand out from all the others over time' they 'reviewed thousands of books, Web sites, museum shows, and related media regarding visual history and the history of photojournalism'. Then they bolstered their findings with 'obviously anecdotal techniques for tapping into public memory' like engaging with 'strangers next to us on airplanes'.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵ Hariman and Lucaites, *No Caption Needed*, 6, 309

Both methods that Hariman and Lucaites describe are problematic. The authors did not supply a list of the media and other sources they consulted to select their photographs. This may be understandable given their claim to have examined thousands of sources, but when even the most basic facts about their sources and their selection criteria remain unclear, it seems we are in fact talking about the general impression Hariman and Lucaites gathered from everything they read. Their procedure to tap into public memory is of course also problematic, and Hariman and Lucaites take note of that. Still, when the results of such conversations are so obviously ‘anecdotal’, as the authors state themselves, it is unclear why they include them in their methodology at all. It must be added that Hariman and Lucaites are much more rigorous in their analysis of public discourse in the United States, which is the real subject of their book. Yet it remains unsatisfactory that even in such a well-known book, one finds so few facts about the core material of iconic photographs themselves.

The same is true for another oft-quoted study on the role of photographs in public discourse. In his 1998 study *Photojournalism and Foreign Policy*, David Perlmutter analyzes convincingly how amazing powers are often attributed to iconic photographs, although there is scant or even any evidence to support those claims. But like other studies, when it comes to actually researching current public opinions about iconic photographs, Perlmutter’s study is on weak footing. Perlmutter uses media quotes and op-ed letters as a prime source, but one will not find more supporting evidence of his conclusions than his general impression of the answers in two questionnaires, which he laid before students who followed courses he taught two years before he wrote his study.¹⁵⁶ To be fair, Perlmutter used these questionnaire results mainly to illustrate some general observations that he wished to make about iconic photographs, not as core data for his argument. Still, the use of such results only highlights the fact that similar surveys have not been done among larger and more representative audiences.

The same point can be made about a study by Barbara Seels, Barbara Good and Louis Berry, who also used student questionnaires in their study on ‘Historically Significant News Photographs’. They observed that ‘little is known about how adults use [photographs] to cue recall of history’, and conducted a study in which ‘students were shown 30 slides of classic photographs used to teach history of photography’, with questions about their recognition and significance.¹⁵⁷ Like Perlmutter, they did not follow up on this study with questionnaire-based research using a larger and more diverse respondent group.

Another methodology was used by Martijn Kleppe in his dissertation entitled *Canonieke Icoonfoto’s*. Noting the empirical weakness of studies on iconic photographs, Kleppe

¹⁵⁶ David Perlmutter, *Photojournalism and Foreign Policy*, 9-10

¹⁵⁷ Barbara Seels, Barbara Good, Louis Berry, ‘Recognition and Interpretation of Historically Significant News Photographs’, *Journal of Visual Literacy* 19 (1999) 2, 125-138

proposed a new methodology. He leafed through a huge stack of Dutch history schoolbooks, and concluded that two photographs were reprinted often. He did not want to go as far as to conclude that these photos were iconic, but he did claim that they had at least *one* proven and objective qualification to be an iconic photograph included in David Perlmutter's 11-point list (see paragraph 1.3.3); namely that they were reprinted often.¹⁵⁸

Though this is clearly a transparent and repeatable process, the question very much remains what the results actually mean. Being reprinted is indeed a much-mentioned criterium for iconic photographs, but why several generations of history books are the best yardstick for this criterium is unclear. Moreover, in Kleppes study photographs of socialist leader Jelles Troelstra and the feminist activists Dolle Mina's outscore all others. They were reprinted more often in history books than photographs like Anne Frank's portrait or the murdered politician Pim Fortuyn lying in the street, though surely the latter function more as iconic photographs in contemporary Dutch culture. Kleppes method singles out two photographs that have lower media circulation, prominence and dramatic symbolism in contemporary Dutch public culture than others, which suggests that this methodology to establish which photographs 'act as media icons' is flawed.

The studies discussed here all attempted to establish structured and evidence-based research methodologies to study the various qualities that iconic photographs are said to possess. But they have not led to the establishment of widely accepted and applied methodologies to study such photographs. Put differently, when one leaves text-based analysis aside, the factual, evidence-based research concerning iconic photographs remains very limited.

One very recent text identifies exactly the same problems with the academic studies about iconic and historical photographs which I identified when I started this project in 2012. Akiba Cohen, Sandrine Boudana and Paul Frosh write in their 2018 article 'You Must Remember This: Iconic News Photographs and Collective Memory' that 'a particularly significant research lacuna concerns one key assumption in the research literature'.¹⁵⁹ They note that although academic literature often notes that 'iconic images are important vehicles of collective memory', authors never actually measure if these photographs are actually widely recognized or not.

Their answer is to use an internet-based survey – exactly the solution I chose. Their aim was 'to identify the most prevalent domestic-Israeli and foreign (non-Israeli) iconic news photographs that are recognized by the Israeli public' and to 'expose key features

¹⁵⁸ Martijn Kleppe, *Canonieke Icoonfoto's. De rol van (pers)foto's in de Nederlandse geschiedschrijving* (Delft 2013), 33, 94

¹⁵⁹ Akiba Cohen, Sandrine Boudana, Paul Frosh, 'You Must Remember This: Iconic News Photographs and Collective Memory', *Journal of Communication* 68 (2018) 453–479, 454

of their place in Israeli collective memory'.¹⁶⁰ Their research aim, therefore, was comparable to but different from mine. Their selection methodology for photographs was different as well. They used school history textbooks, interviews with historians and photojournalists, and brainstorming with colleagues and acquaintances to select their photographs. The three authors arrive at the solidly researched conclusion that photographs of the release of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit and the attacks of September 11, 2001 are recognized most among the Israeli public.

This research by Cohen, Boudana and Frosh demonstrates that internet-based surveys are a useful tool to study the recognition of iconic and historical photographs. They also strengthen my conviction that an internet-based survey is the right tool to research questions about a global visual memory.

As this overview has shown, previous studies regarding the recognition and interpretation of iconic and historical photographs often share a weakness in how they establish facts about such photographs. The survey that will be explained and analyzed in the next chapters, therefore addresses a crucial problem in existing literature on iconic and historical photographs, and adds to existing knowledge.

¹⁶⁰ Ibidem, 453

Chapter 2. The Global Visual Memory: An International Survey

2.1 Empirical Research Introduction

This dissertation, as described in the Introduction, draws upon established debates on the impact of photography on social and cultural memory. In the Introduction and Chapter 1, I argued that the mass dissemination of photographs over the last 180 years has influenced how history is remembered, in western societies and increasingly around the world. I put forward that iconic and news photographs of historical events have a memory function, and can invoke narratives about the past. I argued that we must regard photographs of historical events, if they are recognized by a large number of people, as a form of cultural memory. I offered the hypothesis that due to cultural globalization, there must be a global visual memory, which includes a limited set of photographs that people around the world recognize. But I showed that existing studies that try to establish facts about such such photographs and their recognition each have methodological weaknesses. In a global survey, completed by controlled test groups in twelve countries, I tested my hypothesis and addressed the weaknesses in existing literature. The results are described below.

This survey attempts to fill an important gap in current debates on photography, memory and history (see Introduction and Chapter 1): the almost complete absence of any objective facts and figures about the photographs in question. Studying historical photographs usually means citing from academic texts and news media, and then offering a hypothesis or summary. Use of quantitative and qualitative survey data is uncommon among historians, but in the case of collective memory, new media research tools can open new visions on old topics of debate.

The quantitative and qualitative data that I have gathered offers insight in global patterns of recognition and interpretation of photographs of historic events. Furthermore, it can be used to test existing hypotheses about the complicated interplay between photography, history and memory. In many studies, certain photographs are singled out because of their assumed fame, emotional impact and content. Scholars usually base their conclusions about individual photographs, certain photographic genres or even the entire medium of photography on literature study or mass media analysis. Whether the result of necessity or convenience, such studies inevitably retain a fundamental weakness regarding claims about certain photographs' fame, impact and supposed message. My research aims to address this problem.

The data that I have collected contains answers from almost three thousand respondents from twelve countries: Argentina, Brazil, China, Germany, Great-Britain,

India, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Russia, Turkey and the United States. I chose these countries because they have large populations (together they comprise over half the world's population), are culturally and politically influential, and are spread across different regions of the world. (Or they are the Netherlands, where this study was conducted.) Unfortunately, the survey sampling company that hosted my survey, Survey Sampling International (SSI), did not have enough penetration in Arab and African countries for representative sampling, so these areas of the world are 'blind spots' in my survey.

In december 2013 and January 2014, these respondents answered a set of questions about a collection of 25 photographs that were singled out in scholarly works on photography and history as very important and influential photographs. Often described with epitaphs such as 'iconic', 'world-famous', or 'seminal', these photographs have received much attention in scholarly and other works on photography and history. To determine this set of 25 photographs, I used discourse analysis of works on historical photographs by historians, media scholars, and other academics, and occasionally references in leading print and online media.

The respondents were first asked which photographs they recognized from this set of 25. Subsequently, they answered questions about the emotional impact of a selection of photographs from this set of 25. They answered questions about the 'central message' of these selected photographs, how important they considered them to be and during which historical event they thought they were taken. Respondents were selected to be representative for the national population in their respective countries according to the criteria of gender, age and education level. To enable more detailed analysis of respondents and patterns, questions were added about respondents' political views, their main source of news and frequency of news consumption, and their recognition of western landmarks and images of western popular culture.

With my global survey, I aim to obtain empirical evidence to answer these and related questions. Most notably, I intend to prove that a 'global visual memory' exists, and that it includes a limited set of photographs of events in the past that people in a range of countries across the world recognize. As described in the Introduction, I regard photographs of history that are recognized by people in a certain cultural group as 'collective visual memory'. If indeed we have witnessed in the past few years the emergence of a global cultural field, I regard the images of history that are recognized by people worldwide as part of a 'global visual memory'.

If there are indeed photographs that are recognized worldwide, then a global survey of photograph recognition should register that. Roughly half of the questions in the survey were devoted to this purpose; I will refer to this part of the survey as the *survey of photograph recognition*.

The other half of the survey questions probes respondents' opinions about particular photographs; I refer to this part of the survey as the *survey of visual content*. This part of the survey enables us to answer many questions and hypotheses about iconic and historical photographs, as well as about global audiences. For the selected photographs, we can actually check many of the qualities that iconic photographs have, according to Perlmutter and other scholars: we can check how important respondents think particular photographs are; how striking and powerful they judge certain photographs to be; we can research their metonymy – which important event various (groups of) people associate with particular photographs – and we can check in which culture or country these photographs resonate.

More importantly, we can use the answers to these questions to verify some important hypotheses relating to iconic and historical photographs: whether there is a correlation between cultural groups and which photographs people label as 'important'; whether it is true that people in the same cultural space 'read' the same message in photographs that they see as important and whether this differs from people in other cultures; whether it is true that iconic photographs are vehicles that are empty of meaning, and whether people who agree on their importance can read very different messages in them; whether people often read very vague and broad messages in iconic photographs; whether we have culturally defined iconic photographs.

If there really is a global cultural field, and we are to follow Halbwachs' and Burke's definitions of cultural memory, then people across the world should think similar photographs are important, associate them with certain events, and read a certain message in them. In order to study these questions, my survey presented the respondents with six photographs which according to academic contributions on photography have had profound impact on public attitudes in various countries, and have a profound and clear message. Paragraph 2.2.3 will elaborate on this point.

My survey concluded with questions about the respondents' background. These questions included basic demographic data: gender, age and education level. Survey Sampling International, the international survey and data collection firm which distributed and collected the surveys, provided twelve sampling groups representative of their national population in each of the twelve countries where the survey took place. Other demographical questions were added in the survey itself, regarding respondents' political views, their frequency of news media visits and main news source, their nationality.

The purpose of these demographic questions was to enable the discovery of hidden patterns behind respondents' answers to questions about individual photographs, and to enable a more thorough comparison than merely comparing national results. The hypothesis underlying these questions was that aside from national iconic photographs and nationally remembered and recognized historical photographs, there may also be

photographs that are recognized by certain age groups across nations, by groups across nations that share a certain education level, or groups across nations whose primary news source is identical. Such hidden patterns in the survey data should be discovered by the statistical analysis of recognition patterns and other answers provided by the respondents.

Needless to say, if indeed strong similarities emergence between age or other groups across nations, possibly linked to political views or media use, or other factors, this would provide very interesting insights into cultural globalization. Since media use, duration and level of education, and other factors influence which photographs people see, it would be an intuitive assumption that a statistical analysis of responses would demonstrate the existence of similarities in photograph recognition between age groups, and between people with similar education level or frequency of media use. My survey offers the possibility to check such assumptions.

The survey concluded with a question about respondents' recognition of major western landmarks and icons of western culture. These landmarks were the New York Statue of Liberty, the Eiffer Tower, the Beatles crossing Abbey Road, and Marilyn Monroe holding down her skirt. I intended to use the answers of respondents to this question as a measure of their exposure to western culture, which could be compared to other answers that respondents provided. After concluding the survey, however, I reconsidered if this question was truly useful as a measure of exposure to western culture, and I decided not to use the answers to it.

2.2 Selection

2.2.1 Selection Methodology

The most important research objective of my survey was to investigate whether I could find proof or indication of a global visual memory. That is: if I could find proof that there are certain photographs, taken in the past and depicting events in history, that are recognized by people in a geographically and culturally diverse set of countries, in different corners of the world.

I wish to stress that my intention was never to establish a 'most recognized photographs in the world' or 'most recognized iconic photos' list. I do believe that my survey gives a strong indication of the approximate level of recognition throughout the world of the photographs that are included in my survey. But I think a wider survey in more countries would be necessary to underwrite such claims. More importantly, if a 'most recognized' list would be the aim, a different methodology would be required, aimed at establishing which photographs are recognized most. For my purposes, an analysis of academic publications was suited, for it gave me a chance to build on the work of other scholars

in establishing which iconic and historical photographs were most likely to be recognized in different countries throughout the world, as well as provide me with data to test these academic texts.

I chose this methodology as well because establishing the print or circulation numbers of iconic and historical photographs is either not facilitated by those who might have relevant data, or not possible at all. There is no database of 'most published' or 'most seen' photographs. News agencies, such as The Associated Press and Agence France-Presse, sell publication rights to their photographs, and have no system to track how often the media who buy those rights publish the photographs in question. Stock photo agencies treat reprint numbers, downloads and copyright sales as company secrets. And even if they were available, the copyrights of many images have transferred repeatedly between companies over time, while other images are royalty-free or were printed or posted on the internet without paying copyright fees, making it virtually impossible to compile a reliable 'most published'-list.

Perhaps one day, image-recognition software and digitalization of libraries will have progressed so far that a reliable list, or at least an educated guess, can be made regarding publication numbers of individual photographs. Until that time, other research methods are needed to establish which photographs might be the most-published and most-recognized photographs in the world, or published so often and so prominently that they could be part of a global visual memory.

The method I chose, was to use discourse analysis of academic works on iconic and historical photographs, written by historians, media scholars, and other academic researchers, to establish a list of twenty photographs that feature prominently in academic debates on iconic and historical photographs. I analyzed academic publications to establish which photographs were often classified with terms to indicate their importance, such as 'recognized worldwide', 'iconic', 'published around the world', or other words and phrases indicating their importance. I also quoted similar mentions in mass media, such as high-quality newspapers, or non-academic books. By using this methodology, I built upon the assessment, conclusions and research of other scholars, to select twenty photographs of events in history that could possibly be recognized and remembered worldwide.

There are obvious downsides to this methodology. All of these scholars, writers, and editors might collectively be overlooking important, well-known photographs, and they might collectively overstate the significance and renown of others. But until image-recognition software and library digitalization make it possible to establish reliable counts of photograph publication figures, researchers will have to resort to imperfect methods like the one I used.

2.2.2 Iconic photographs from non-western countries

One significant drawback of this method, is that the academic debate about iconic and historical photographs is mainly waged in English, in western academic journals and books, and that it is dominated by US-based scholars. In Germany and France, among other countries, excellent research regarding photography is done. But even in those countries, many scholars write in English, publish articles in their own language together with a translation in English, or publish their articles with long abstracts in English, thereby engaging with the English-dominated academic debate. All of this adds to the danger that the debate on iconic and historical photographs is weighed towards photographs that are regarded as important by US-based scholars.

There are reasons why this methodology, with its predominance of publications in English, might not necessarily be a problem. Firstly, there is no way to work around the fact that international academic exchange does take place primarily in western academic journals, mostly in English. If an iconic or historical photograph indeed has a global reach and impact, it should reach these journals. If a photograph does not reach these journals, then its global reach is probably limited. This is not to deny the western bias of photography research, and not to deny the odds stacked in favour of western news photographs and photographic icons to reach a global audience – this bias and these odds undoubtedly exist. Still, it is unlikely that a globally recognized photograph of a historic event would be missed entirely in western-dominated academic debates, although it is plausible that the influence and global recognition of non-western photographs could be underscored and undervalued in those debates.

Secondly, my aim was not to find the most recognized photographs in the world, but to find evidence of a global visual memory exists that includes photographs of events in history. From that perspective, US-based research, with input from other western countries, is a logical place to start. The production of visual news, its selection for international distribution and the distribution infrastructure are all dominated by western news agencies. The fact that academic debates on iconic and historical photographs often feature images made in western countries, made by journalists working for western news corporations or media, or reflecting western concerns, might be a result of this dominance in global visual news production and distribution.

In part to address the problem of overrepresentation of western images, I included four photographs in my survey which feature less prominently in academic debates on iconic and historical photographs, but that are regarded as important in certain non-western countries. I included these photographs to test, firstly, whether the western focus of academic writings on photography was congruent with a higher recognition of western photographs compared to non-western photographs in a worldwide audience. Secondly, to test whether there might be iconic non-western photographs that are

underrepresented in academic writing on photography. And thirdly, to test if there are images whose recognition is high within certain cultural boundaries and low outside of them.

These four photographs include Mao Zedong reading the Chinese declaration of independence (Hou Bo, 1949), Mohandas Gandhi beside his spinning wheel (Margaret Bourke-White, 1949), the murder of Japanese socialist leader Inejiro Asanuma (Yasushi Nagao, 1960), and the last photograph of president Salvador Allende of Chile (Luis Orlando Lagos, 1973). My set of photographs already included two from Africa. To select these photographs from non-western cultural regions, I turned to advice from scholars if academic literature yielded insufficient information.¹⁶¹

The inclusion of these photographs was somewhat of a gamble, because I could not be sure what it would mean if these four photographs were not well recognized among a worldwide audience, or if there was no clear difference in recognition between countries. They could be the 'wrong' pictures: not well recognized while there were other non-western photographs out there that would have 'scored' better. Negative results (that is, low recognition scores of these non-western photographs) could mean that I – like other academics writing on photography – failed to see which non-western photographs are of global significance. It would only yield usable conclusions if one or more of these photographs would have a high recognition in one or more non-western countries, and low in western countries; that would indicate that there are non-western photographs that do have high recognition in the world while staying under the radar in western-dominated academic debates; and that this should be acknowledged in academic discussion on iconic photographs.

2.2.3 Six selected photographs

In the second part of the photography survey, respondents were asked if they thought six selected photographs had a central message, and if so, what message; during which event in history they thought these photographs were taken; how strong their emotional reaction to the photograph was; and whether they considered the photograph to be important (see paragraph 2.3 for exact questions and possibilities for answering). Finally, they were asked to answer questions about their occupation, frequency of media use and primary news source, and political views.

Because these questions were meant to expose possible differences in the way different countries, regions, age groups, etcetera, 'read' photographs, how they react to them, how important they find them, and what they know of their content, I selected six photographs based on my own expectation of how useful they would be to expose such

¹⁶¹ I was advised on Japan by Ivo Smits of Leiden University; on China by Anne-Christine Trémon of the University of Lausanne

possible differences. I therefore chose photographs that both have, according to scholars who have written about them, dramatic and evocative visual content and composition (see Chapter I for a discussion of these characteristics), as well as political dimensions. If respondents correctly recognized the historical event during which these photographs were taken, they could comment on the political message or content they perceived in the photograph; if they did not, they could still comment on the message and importance they perceived based on these photographs' visual content.

The photographs that best combined these two qualities were, according to my assessment, Lee Miller's photograph of Buchenwald concentration camp survivors (1945), Nick Ut's photograph of Kim Phuc in Vietnam (1973), Jeff Widener's photograph of the Tiananmen Square protester and a row of tanks (1989), Kevin Carter's photograph of a vulture and child in Sudan (1993), Richard Drew's photograph of a man falling from the World Trade Center (2001), and Sgt. Ivan Frederick's photograph of a hooded Abu Ghraib prisoner (2003). (See paragraph 3.4 for more information on these photographs.)

2.3 Survey Questions

As described above, my survey was divided into a section surveying respondents' recognition of certain photographs, a section surveying their opinions about the content of certain photographs, and a section with demographical questions. The next paragraph will describe and explain the survey questions. The survey itself (English version) is included as Appendix at the end of this study.

2.3.1 Questions on photograph recognition

The question in the first part of the survey, on photograph recognition, was:

– Q: Have you seen this picture before?

A: Yes / No / I am not sure

This question was repeated 25 times. Twenty of the photos that were shown to respondents were photographs that are identified as iconic, historic, or highly influential in academic contributions on photography or in mass media. The next paragraph will describe these photographs and their treatment in academic literature. Four were photos that I expected to be well known in one or a small number of countries, and little known in others. One 'control photo' was added which was never published

before, and could therefore not be recognized by anyone.¹⁶² These pictures were shown to respondents in random order. An answer was required to each question to move on to the next.

2.3.2 Open questions and assessment of importance and emotional impact

The 25 identical questions about photograph recognition were followed by a set of four questions, repeated for six different photographs (see paragraph 2.2.3 for more information on these photographs). These questions were:

- Q: During which event in history do you think this photograph was taken?
A: [Open answer]¹⁶³
- Q: Do you think this photograph is important?
A: Yes / No / I'm not sure
- Q: Do you feel that there is a certain central message in this photograph? If so, what is it?
A: [Open answer]
- Q: How strong is the emotional impact of this photograph on you? Rate on a scale of 1 (very weak impact) to 5 (very strong impact)
A: 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5

2.3.3 Demographic questions

The survey concluded with a set of demographical questions. These were:

- Q: What is your nationality?
- Q: What is your age?
A: 18-34 / 35-49 / 50 and over
- Q: What is your occupation?
A: Student / Retired/Unemployed / Employed. If employed, occupation: [Open answer]
- Q: What is your gender?

¹⁶² This photograph was taken by Dutch photojournalist Jörgen Caris. See paragraph 2.4.17 for more information.

¹⁶³ Since the survey was translated into 10 different languages (Chinese, Dutch, English, German, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Turkish), this resulted in just as many languages in the open answers.

– Q: How often do you watch, listen, or read the news, in newspapers, television, radio and internet?

A: Less than once a week / Once or a few times a week / Every day

– Q: What is your primary news source?

A: Newspapers / Television / Radio / Internet

– Q: What is your education level?

A: High School / Lower professional / Mid-level professional / Higher professional/University

– Q: In your political views, where do you rate yourself on a scale from left to right? 1=very left, 2=left of center, 3=center, 4=right of center, 5=very right

A: 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 / I would rather not say

A last question about photograph recognition concluded the survey. Four photographs which were mentioned above were shown (Statue of Liberty, Eiffel Tower, Beatles, Marylin Monroe) with the following question:

– Q: Which pictures show people or objects that you recognize? Please select:

A: Image 1 / Image 2 / Image 3 / Image 4 / All images

2.4 The Photographs

2.4.1 Dorothea Lange: Migrant Mother (1936)

American photographer Dorothea Lange's famous portrait of a mother with children was a product of structured attempts by a US federal government agency to influence national opinions through photography. In the United States, the economic boom of the 'Roaring Twenties' was reversed by the bank crisis of 1929, which triggered the Great Depression of the 1930s. President Roosevelt attempted to alleviate the social impact of the economic crisis by a set of improvised measures, known collectively as the 'New Deal'. Though the New Deal acquired fame in retrospect, it was a very controversial policy at the time. Especially controversial were measures which offered struggling farmers employment and housing in collective agricultural enterprises. The Resettlement Administration (later rebranded to the less socialist-sounding Farm Security Administration) attempted, through its Information Division, to provide positive angles on this practice. Film and written reportage were used, but the main

tool was photography. The FSA photographers produced a stunning 175,000 negatives in a few years.

Photographers who worked for the FSA generally needed little persuasion to frame the government's anti-poverty measures in a positive light. Dorothea Lange, for instance, used to make photographs that focused on and protested against poverty in the United States as personal statements before she came to work for the FSA.¹⁶⁴ She often focused on single mothers, uprooted by the Great Depression, and *Migrant Mother* was undoubtedly her masterpiece in that genre: the perfect 'worthy poor', to use William Stott's phrase. Returning home from a long assignment, Lange decided to visit one more 'Pea Picker's Camp' after she passed a sign with that phrase in Nipomo, California.

There, she shot six negatives of the mother, made prints and sent them to the FSA headquarters. One photograph showed her subject, a young but seemingly anguished mother, staring out with a baby on her lap and two more children huddling on her shoulders. At the FSA, the visual power of this image was instantly recognized. Within days, the picture was printed in dozens of publications in the US. Reacting to the publication of the photograph, readers of the *San Francisco Star* donated money and took to the road to save this 'Madonna with Children', but Florence Owens Thompson, the mother in question, had already left. She inevitably learned of the fame of the photograph, but remained embittered until her death that she couldn't 'get a penny' from her iconic portrait.¹⁶⁵

As with many other iconic photographs, *Migrant Mother* very quickly reached a large audience. The photograph was printed in millions of newspapers, brochures and magazines in 1936, and has been reprinted ever since in schoolbooks, popular media, post stamps and elsewhere. Without doubt, *Migrant Mother* is an impressive portrait. And it is a special picture, if only because it has remained a part of public discourse in the US and elsewhere for almost eighty years, as a visual metaphor for poverty and the era of the Great Depression. A range of scholars have written about its iconic power and impact in American society.¹⁶⁶ One author has claimed that *Migrant Mother* is 'probably the most frequently published photograph in the history of the medium', while

¹⁶⁴ An example of these is her powerful photograph *White Angel Breadline*, taken in San Francisco, 1933.

¹⁶⁵ Associated Press, "'Can't Get A Penny": Famed Photograph's Subject Feels She's Exploited', *New York Times* (18-11-1978) 12

¹⁶⁶ For example: William Stott, *Documentary Expression and Thirties America* (New York 1973) 50-66; Vicki Goldberg, *The Power of Photography*, 135-144; Lawrence Levine, 'The Historian and the Icon', in: Lawrence Levine, Alan Trachtenberg, *Documenting America 1935-1943* (Berkeley 1988) 15-42; Hariman and Lucaites, *No Caption Needed*, 49-67

Hariman and Lucaites state that Migrant Mother has become 'a standard against which other photographs are measured' in iconic standing.¹⁶⁷

As an icon, Migrant Mother is controversial. That is not unusual: as will become evident in this paragraph, controversy is such a common feature of the iconic and historic photograph that in my view, it is one of its defining qualities. (If one chooses to see controversy as an indication of the importance people attach to a certain photograph, then it makes sense that iconic photographs invariably generate debate.) Migrant Mother has been deconstructed and debunked in academic and general publications over the circumstances of its publication (against very strict instructions, Lange erased a thumb from the print, and she added a description that later proved to be incorrect in certain details), its purpose (as part of a government propaganda effort), over its mythology (that was regarded by some as sentimental and overblown) and the symbolic content (that was labelled by some as anti-feminist or pastoral).¹⁶⁸

After its initial fame, the photograph 'retired from active use' in the Second World War, according to art historian Sally Stein, but was given 'new legs' when Edward Steichen included it in his exhibition and book *The Family of Man*. Since the 1960s, according to Stein, 'it has been reprinted so often that many call it the most widely reproduced photograph in the entire history of photographic image-making'.¹⁶⁹ Artist Martha Rosler described the picture as 'the world's most reproduced photograph'.¹⁷⁰ According to American writer George Elliott, this continuous reproduction in the United States was driven by 'key people, editors and others [who], themselves finding it inexhaustibly rich, have urged the rest of the world to look at it'.¹⁷¹

Apart from being often reproduced, Migrant Mother has often been proclaimed as a powerful symbol. Hariman and Lucaites show how in the United States the photograph has been attributed vast influence, and endowed with many profound humanistic qualities.¹⁷² 'She has all the suffering of mankind in her but all of the perseverance too',

¹⁶⁷ Karin Becker Ohrn, *Dorothea Lange and the Documentary Tradition* (Baton Rouge 1980) xiv; Hariman and Lucaites, *No Caption Needed*, 330

¹⁶⁸ William Stott, for example, makes these points in: William Stott, *Documentary Expression and Thirties America* (New York 1973) 50-66; while Lawrence Levine, among others, argued that not only Lange, but all FSA-photographers were 'searching for perfect victims' to capture on film. Lawrence Levine, 'The Historian and the Icon', in: Lawrence Levine, Alan Trachtenberg, *Documenting America 1935-1943* (Berkeley 1988) 16

¹⁶⁹ Sally Stein, 'Passing Likeness: Dorothea Lange's 'Migrant Mother' and the Paradox of Iconicity', in: Coco Fusco, Brian Wallis (eds.), *Only Skin Deep: Changing Visions of the American Self* (New York, 2003)

¹⁷⁰ Martha Rosler, *In, around, and afterthoughts (on documentary photography)* (Halifax 1981) 315

¹⁷¹ George P. Elliott, *Dorothea Lange* (New York 1966) 7

¹⁷² Hariman and Lucaites, *No Caption Needed*, 60; 49-67

commented the head of the FSA's photography section, Roy Stryker.¹⁷³ And similar phrases have been used regularly ever since to describe the photograph.¹⁷⁴ As we will see in paragraph 3.4, claims about *Migrant Mother's* 'universal' fame are overstated. Although the photograph does have some global recognition, its global recognition is low compared to other iconic photographs.

2.4.2 Robert Capa: *The Falling Soldier* (1936)

If the Great Depression was the nadir of engaged documentary photography in the United States, the Spanish Civil War was its European equivalent. The left-right divide that tore Spain apart dominated all European societies at the time, and many Europeans felt intimately connected to one of the warring sides in Spain. Apart from fascists and other natural allies, the Nationalist side was also supported by some British establishment newspapers and the Hearst media empire, but most intellectual and cultural elites supported the Republican side. They included well-known writers like Ernest Hemingway, John Dos Passos and Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, and many photojournalists.¹⁷⁵

One photographer who would be transformed into a celebrity by the war, was a lively Jewish Hungarian named Endre Ernő Friedmann. In Paris, Friedmann barely made ends meet as a freelance photographer, and attempted to enhance his fees by signing with the alias 'The great American photographer Robert Capa'. Editor Lucien Vogel of illustrated weekly *Vu* was not fooled by this trick and summoned the 'ridiculous boy Friedmann' to his office. Nonetheless, *Vu* would print Friedmann's photographs, attributed to Robert Capa. And with reason, because the photographs that Friedmann/Capa sent from Spain were very good.

The body of photographs that photojournalists produced in the Spanish Civil War are among the greatest achievements of the profession. Photographers like Capa, his girlfriend Gerda Taro, their friend David 'Chim' Seymour, Ilya Ehrenburg or the Dutchmen Carel Blazer and Roeland Fernhout went to Spain out of ideological commitment and zeal, and produced war photographs as no one had seen before. New cameras and film made battle and action photos possible, offering audiences in Europe close ups of the war.

¹⁷³ Cited in: Roy Stryker, Nancy Wood, *In This Proud Land: America 1935-43 as Seen in the FSA Photographs* (Greenwich 1973) 19

¹⁷⁴ For example historian James Curtis: 'Migrant Mother became a timeless and universal symbol of suffering in the face of adversity.' In: James C. Curtis, 'Dorothea Lange, Migrant Mother, and the Culture of the Great Depression', *Winterthur Portfolio* 21 (Spring, 1986) 1, 1

¹⁷⁵ Caroline Brothers, *War and Photography. A Cultural History* (London 1997) 2

Unfortunately, sometimes it seems as if Robert Capa's *Falling Soldier* and the debate surrounding it are the only remnants of that production in public debate. Published in *Vu* in september 1936, it was part of a series of photographs that showed two falling soldiers under the header *Comments ils sont tombés* ('How they fell') and civilians under the header *Comment ils ont fui* ('How they fled'). The most captivating photo showed a man, a Republican militia member, with his arms outstretched, losing grip on a rifle, in the motion of falling backwards – a falling, and apparently dying, soldier.

The photograph was soon printed by left-wing illustrated weeklies and newspapers all over the continent, and soon in other parts of the world as well. The photo reached mainstream media like the United States' *Life*, liberal publications like Britain's *Picture Post*, communist media like France's *Regards*. *Life* referred to Capa as 'our agent' and asserted that he took 'the camera deeper into battle than has ever been done before'.¹⁷⁶ According to Capa's biographer Robert Whelan, upon publication the photograph 'was widely hailed as the most exciting and immediate shot of battle ever taken'.¹⁷⁷ Certainly the influential *Picture Post* thought so: in 1938, it labeled Capa 'the greatest war photograprer in the world'.¹⁷⁸

Capa's picture first became a powerful symbol of the left-wing cause in Spain, then a quintessential symbol of war's toll. Editors started referring to it as *Falling Soldier* or other nicknames. And its fame lasted, earning the photo reprints in books of war photographs and overviews of the twentieth century. 'It became the classic war image, as well as the classic antiwar image, of the twentieth century', Susie Linfield wrote.¹⁷⁹

Perhaps because of this fame and symbolism, the controversy about *Falling Soldier* is particularly strong. Various books and many articles have been written about the veracity of Capa's photograph, and the debate has been given much attention in mass media in various countries. Starting with Phillip Knightley's *The First Casualty* in 1975 and continuing to José Manuel Susperregui's 2009 book *Shadows of Photography*, many authors and studies have raised doubts about the veracity of Capa's picture, or have claimed to present irrefutable evidence that proves the photograph to be 'fake'. Those who do not believe the photograph to be a truthful depiction of a dying soldier, claim that Capa 'staged' his picture, that he lied about the circumstances during which it was taken, or doubt the identity of the soldier and location of the photograph.

Though the question of *The Falling Soldier's* veracity is interesting in itself, much more fascinating is the fact that such an old photograph continues to generate so much debate and passion. In a nutshell, the debate illustrates perfectly how historical photographs can connect to certain narratives about the past, the purity that many people demand of their symbols, and the continued belief in photographic objectivity among the larger

¹⁷⁶ Cited in: Richard Whelan, *This is War! Robert Capa at Work* (New York 2007) 43

¹⁷⁷ Richard Whelan, *Robert Capa: A Biography* (Lincoln 1994) 100

¹⁷⁸ *This is War!*, *Picture Post* (3-12-1938) 14

¹⁷⁹ Susie Linfield, *The Cruel Radiance*, 177

public. Moreover, as Barbie Zelizer observed in her book *About To Die*, the debate about the 'truth' of *The Falling Soldier* does not appear to have hampered 'its useful symbolic importation into multiple discourses about photography, death in wartime, and heroism.'¹⁸⁰

2.4.3 Sam Shere: *The Hindenburg Disaster (1937)*

The assignment that American news photographer Sam Shere reluctantly took on in May 1937 – to document the arrival of the German airship *Hindenburg* in Lakehurst, New Jersey – was a highly unlikely opportunity to carry him into photography's Hall of Fame. The *Hindenburg* had already made 36 successful flights and although it was still impressive to see the huge 'Zeppelin'-type dirigibles approach and dock, there was little novelty about it. Shere was at the drizzly Lakehurst airfield with 21 other still and movie cameramen, waiting for hours for the delayed airship. And then suddenly, it all went wrong in a matter of seconds, with the newsmen shooting pictures and movies while passengers and crew jumped from the *Hindenburg* after the hydrogen gas it carried to achieve lift caught fire, and send the airship crashing down, engulfed in huge flames. The *Hindenburg* disaster was surely not one of the world's deadliest accidents, with 36 fatalities, but it was the first time such a disaster was caught on still and moving images, and broadcast live on public radio. It has continued to fascinate, sparking a host of theories about the cause of the fire, and generating a steady stream of publications, such as the 2007 documentary *Hindenburg: The Untold Story*. And, of course, it generated huge attention at the time, primarily in the United States and Germany but in other countries as well. Photographs of the incident were published on spreadsheets in American newspapers and illustrated magazines, flown and wired across the Atlantic and published in Europe. Newspapers and illustrated magazines in Germany, France, England and other countries carried photographs of the *Hindenburg* within days of the accident. This extended coverage was surprising, in the sense that it was not the first nor the most deadly accident with this type of aircraft. Seven years before, the British R-101, the biggest dirigible at that time, also exploded, causing 46 deaths. The difference was the photographic record: the photographs that were available of the disaster and that found their way to the world's newspapers and magazines within days. The *Hindenburg* disaster, in short, was a major worldwide media event, a landmark (in the words of Vicki Goldberg) 'in the process of homogenizing experience within nations and to some extent across the world'.¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ Barbie Zelizer, *About To Die: How News Images Move the Public* (New York 2010) 185

¹⁸¹ Goldberg, *The Power of Photography*, 194

There were 22 still and movie cameramen present, and their pictures were taken from the same angle and at short intervals from each other; Sam Shere's photographs were just a few of many. Shere, a colorful photographer born as Samuel Shereshevsky in Minsk, then in the Russian Empire. Shere had moved with his family to the Lower East Side in New York, defied his father's wish to become a doctor in order to take on photography and spend time at sea. After establishing himself as a news photographer, Shere was sent to Lakehurst by his employer, International News Service. His photographs were distributed by Associated Press and its upstart wire service, adding speed and marvel to this visual news event.

As media researchers Robert Hariman and John Lucaites show, Sam Shere's photograph 'was fairly quickly recognized as the primary visual marker of the event', appearing 'regularly in histories and historical retrospectives', and being identified as such in various histories of photography or photojournalism.¹⁸² Because of the continued use of Shere's photograph as primary visual marker of this primary example of news event, cultural globalization and modernization, Beaumont Newhall, MOMA New York's curator for photography, donned Shere's photograph with the title 'most famous photograph ever taken' in his influential 1982 work *The History of Photography*.¹⁸³ Needless to say, Newhall provided no proof to back that claim, underlining the need for more factual research about recognition and renown of (news) photographs.

2.4.4 Alfred Eisenstaedt: Times Square Kiss (1945)

Alfred Eisenstaedt was one of the star news photographers who left Europe in the runup to the Second World War to practice their trade in the United States. The Prussian-born Eisenstaedt had taken up photography as a teenager, served in the German army during the First World War, and had devoted himself full-time to photography during the late 1920s. He quickly acquired fame, working primarily for the German office of Associated Press and for the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*. After emigrating to New York in 1935, he was hired as a staff photographer by *Life* magazine, a position he held until the magazine folded in 1972.

Eisenstaedt is now best known for the picture he took of a kissing couple during a Victory in Japan (VJ-Day) Parade in Manhattan, New York. Eisenstaedt and other photographers scoured Manhattan for pictures during the parade, and he managed to

¹⁸² Hariman and Lucaites, 'Ritualizing modernity's gamble: The iconic photographs of the Hindenburg and Challenger explosions', *Visual Communication Quarterly* 11 (2004) 8, and Hariman, Lucaites, *No Caption Needed*, 388. Examples of books on photography that identify Shere's picture as an important photograph: Richard Lacayo, George Russel (eds.), *Eyewitness: 150 Years of Photojournalism* (New York 1990) 81, or Peter Stepan, *Fotos, die die Welt bewegten* (München 2000) 54

¹⁸³ Beaumont Newhall, *The History of Photography* (New York 1982) 257

record this one right in the middle of that famous square. The image was published a week later in *Life*, and was reprinted and re-circulated often. In the United States, it quickly become a symbol of both the war's end and of America's greatest victory, activating, as one study puts it, 'the narrative of (..) "The American Century" in all it's glory'.¹⁸⁴

The photograph has not been out of popular culture in the United States ever since. One book on iconic photographs even claims that 'it is virtually impossible to encounter popular cultural renditions of World War II (..) without seeing this photograph'.¹⁸⁵ Though that is certainly exaggerated, in the United States this photograph has clearly found an enduring place in popular culture. Even just a partial glance at the most recent American cultural history scoops up a host of references to the photograph, including the annual mass re-enactment of the photograph in Times Square; the travelling display of a bronze life-sized statue and a plastic-and-aluminum 7.6 meter statue; references or reenactments of the kiss in the movies *Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian* (2009), *Watchmen* (2009), *Letters to Juliet* (2010), and *Men in Black III* (2012), in the 2014 video game *Wolfenstein: The New Order* and in singer Katy Perry's 2012 show in New York. The photograph also continues to generate news, in the form of ongoing speculation about the identity of the kissers, involving various mass media, military historians and even astronomers.¹⁸⁶ And the photograph even continues to generate controversy. In 2012 Crates and Ribbons, a London-based feminist website carried a post titled *The Kissing Sailor, or 'The Selective Blindness of Rape Culture'*, which argued that the kiss would clearly 'be considered sexual assault by modern standards'.¹⁸⁷ Though we must clearly recognize that fame in the United States does not equal fame worldwide, at the same time it is clear that the Times Square Kiss not only features in United States' popular culture. As other iconic photographs, it features prominently in many histories of photography or collections of famous photographs, including European ones.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁴ Robert Hariman, John Lucaites, 'The Times Square Kiss: Iconic Photography and Civic Renewal in U.S. Public Culture', *The Journal of American History* 49 (2007) 1, 124

¹⁸⁵ Hariman and Lucaites, *No Caption Needed*, 73

¹⁸⁶ For example: Juan A. Lozano, 'Man says he's the sailor in famous photo', *Associated Press* (August 3, 2007), Diane Bell, 'Famous "kissing sailor" photo sparks true detective tale', *San Diego Union-Tribune* (April 20, 2012); George Galdorosi and Lawrence Verria, *The Kissing Sailor* (Annapolis 2012); Donald Olson, Russel Doescher, Steven Kawaler, 'Astronomy & the VJ Day Kiss', *Sky and Telescope* (August 2015) 30–35.

¹⁸⁷ Unknown author, 'The Kissing Sailor, or "The Selective Blindness of Rape Culture"', *Crates and Ribbons*. <https://cratesandribbons.com/2012/09/30/the-kissing-sailor-or-the-selective-blindness-of-rape-culture-vj-day-times-square/> (Sept. 30, 2012, retrieved on Nov. 13, 2016).

¹⁸⁸ For instance on the cover (and, of course, inside) of Taschen's *Fifty Photo Icons* (Hans-Michael Koetzle, *Fifty Photo Icons* (Cologne 2011) 162-165); in Phaidon's *The Photo Book* (Phaidon Press editors, *The Photo Book* (London 2000) 134-135) and Cologne's Ludwig Museum's *Twentieth*

2.4.5 Joe Rosenthal: Raising the United States Flag on Iwo Jima (1945)

Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima is another image widely published in the United States and, as a consequence, endowed with global impact by American authors. The photograph was taken in the last year of the Second World War, when U.S. forces were pushing back the Japanese Imperial Army in the western Pacific Ocean. Iwo Jima was the first Japanese island the American forces would reach. The battle to capture the island was especially hard fought, and the raising of the American flag on its highest mountain therefore especially symbolic – and useful in a drive for war donations by the American public. Rosenthal, an Associated Press photographer, recorded a second raising of a flag on Mount Suribachi, prompting never-ending speculation about the photograph's 'veracity'.

Its effect was nonetheless profound. The first AP editor to lay eyes on the result, directly exclaimed 'Here's one for all time!' And indeed the picture featured in dozens of American newspapers within days, usually on the front page.¹⁸⁹ In *The Power of Photography*, Vicki Goldberg credits Rosenthal's photo with sparking a wave of patriotism and pro-war sentiment in the United States, and single-handedly giving the sale of war bonds a significant boost.¹⁹⁰ The U.S. Congress subsequently approved the image as the official symbol of the next War Loan drive and had over 3.5 million posters with Rosenthal's picture printed, a stamp, as well as tens of thousands of placards and billboards.¹⁹¹

The fame of this photograph persisted after the Second World War. *Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima* has been copied, appropriated and referenced so often in American culture that even a summary would be too long for practical purposes here.¹⁹² American mainstream media have consistently 'have encoded it with pro-American symbolism of national patriotism, unity, and victory', a study found, and in different points in time,

Century Photography (Museum Ludwig editors, *Twentieth Century Photography* (Cologne 2012) 148-149).

¹⁸⁹ Mark Rawlinson, *American Visual Culture* (New York 2009) 110

¹⁹⁰ Vicki Goldberg, *The Power of Photography*, 198

¹⁹¹ Karal Ann Marling and John Wettenhall, *Iwo Jima: Monuments, Memories, and the American Hero* (Cambridge 1991) 102-110.

¹⁹² For a discussion of its use in American culture, see for instance: James Bradley, *Flags of Our Fathers* (New York 2000), Marling and Wettenhall, *Iwo Jima: Monuments, Memories and the American Hero* (Cambridge 1991), Robert Hariman and John Lucaites, 'Performing civic identity: The iconic photograph of the flag raising on Iwo Jima', *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88 (2002) 4, 363-392, Hariman and Lucaites, *No Caption Needed*, 93-136

audiences of American students have ‘immediately recognized the preferred symbolic, iconic meaning of Rosenthal’s photograph’.¹⁹³

And that importance has carried over to the world, many writers maintain. Various studies rank *Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima* as one of the most reproduced photographs in history. A textbook on the cultural history of photography more cautiously states that Rosenthal’s image is ‘perhaps the most widely reproduced World War II photograph’.¹⁹⁴ A study of iconic photographs speculates that it might be ‘the most frequently published photograph in the history of the medium’.¹⁹⁵ Two other studies flatly describe the photo as ‘the most reproduced photograph in history’.¹⁹⁶

2.4.6 (Possibly) Lee Miller¹⁹⁷: *Holocaust survivors in Buchenwald Concentration Camp (1945)*

The lives of photojournalists are often remarkable, but that of Lee Miller is notable even in that competitive category. Discovered as a model at age 19 by publisher Condé Nast on a Manhattan street, she became one America’s most sought-after models of the 1920s. At age 22, she moved to Paris with the intention to work for Man Ray, and became his muse, lover, and associate. She also became friends with Picasso and a pioneer in surrealist photography. She returned to New York, opened her own studio, befriended Charlie Chaplin, was exhibited in the Brooklyn Museum along with photographers such as Edward Weston and László Moholy-Nagy, and gave it all up to marry Egyptian rail magnate Aziz Eloui Bey. She then grew tired of Cairo and Bey, moved to Paris, then London, where she remarried, and was investigated by MI5 on suspicion of spying for the Soviet Union.¹⁹⁸ She lived in London throughout the Second

¹⁹³ Spratt, Peterson, Lagos, ‘Of Photographs and Flags: Uses and Perceptions of an Iconic Image Before and After September 11, 2001’, *Popular Communication. The International Journal of Media and Culture* 3 (2005) 2, 118.

¹⁹⁴ Mary Warner Marien, *Photography: A Cultural History; Fourth Edition* (London 2014) 304

¹⁹⁵ Hariman and Lucaites, *No Caption Needed*, 329.

¹⁹⁶ R.S. Burrell, *The Ghosts of Iwo Jima* (College Station 2006) 189; Gerald Webster, ‘American Nationalism, the Flag, and the Invasion of Iraq’, *The Geographical Review* (10:1, Jan. 2011) 7.

¹⁹⁷ The film with the negative of this image is held by the United States National Archives, which files it as taken by ‘Private H. Miller. (Army)’. The image is often attributed to Lee Miller, who photographed extensively in Buchenwald during the day this photograph was taken. Because photographic work from the liberated camps was often poorly registered and erratically attributed to author, subject, time and place, by military and press offices in Allied countries, it is not certain that Lee Miller is the photographer who took this picture. Some scholars attribute it to Margaret Bourke-White (for instance: Carol Zemel, ‘Emblems of Atrocity: Holocaust Liberation Photographs, in: Shelley Hornstein, Florence Jacobowitz, *Image and Remembrance. Representation and the Holocaust* (Bloomington 2003) 210).

¹⁹⁸ Duncan Gardham, ‘MI5 Investigated Vogue photographer Lee Miller on suspicion of spying for Russians, files show’, *The Telegraph* (Mar. 3, 2009)

World War, accredited herself in 1944 as an American war correspondent and joined the Allied troops on their march from Normandy to Berlin.

In April 1945, she entered Buchenwald concentration camp and documented the incredible scene: rows of dead prisoners, beaten and dead German guards, survivors. One of the images she (probably) made, was of a group of emaciated prisoners, lying on bunk beds four high, with one naked man, covering himself, standing on the ground next to them. If ever an example was needed of how 'shocking' iconic images tend in fact to be not so very shocking at all, this could be one. Miller made extremely graphic images that day, much more harrowing than this one.

Still, this photo became well known, as a documentation and representation of nazi crimes and the Holocaust, 'one of the most frequently recycled photos from the camps', according to media scholar Barbie Zelizer. Zelizer documented how this particular photograph appeared shortly after the liberation of Buchenwald in major American and British newspapers and then 'quickly resurfaced in other publications'.¹⁹⁹ Zelizer meticulously reconstructed how images like this one, taken in the liberated camps, were collected, distributed and printed with very little regard for specificity; and how this particular photograph was reprinted and re-used many different references and interpretations.²⁰⁰ To her, this photograph therefore raises important 'questions about the use of photography as a memory tool'.²⁰¹

The first use of this photograph was as documentation and proof of nazi crimes in 1945. Aside from its use in newspapers and magazines, with the explicit intention of informing larger publics of German crimes, it also featured prominently in a travelling exhibition of the United States Library of Congress, enlarged to double-life size, with a caption next to it reading 'The Living Dead'.²⁰² In later decades, this and other images taken during the liberation of Buchenwald transformed into 'atrocities photographs' generically representing the horrors of the Holocaust.²⁰³ This particular photo was not an exception. 'Miller's images have come to belong to a well-known and widely reproduced group of images that serve to symbolize the Holocaust in its entirety', media scholar Sharon Sliwinski wrote, labelling this and other photos by Miller as 'now iconic'; so did other scholars.²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁹ Barbie Zelizer, 'From the Image of Record to the Image of Memory. Holocaust Photography Then and Now', in: Bonnie Brennen, Hanno Hardt (eds.), *Picturing the Past. Media, History & Photography* (Chicago 1999) 111

²⁰⁰ Ibidem, 111-115

²⁰¹ Ibidem, 115

²⁰² Janina Struk, *Photographing the Holocaust: Interpretations of the Evidence* (New York 2004) 131-132

²⁰³ This process is well documented by in: Barbie Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget: Holocaust Memory through the Camera's Eye* (Chicago 1998)

²⁰⁴ Sharon Sliwinski, 'Visual Testimony: Lee Miller's Dachau', *Journal of Visual Culture* 9 (2010) 3, 391. Other examples: For example: Andrew Frayn, Terry Phillips, 'Introduction: War and

Miller's photograph has sparked academic as well as non-academic debate. There has been an extensive search to establish which prisoners are shown in the picture.²⁰⁵ This debate has at times turned ugly and poisonous.²⁰⁶ Academic debates explore the question why this particular photograph came to stand out. Historian Cornelia Brink, for example, cites the photographs' resonance of Christian symbolism; philosopher Lynn Hilditch to that of 'the great Renaissance paintings'.²⁰⁷ Two other problems that continue to resurface in academic debate regarding this particular photograph and other photographs taken in German camps by Miller and colleagues, are firstly that they have had, in Susan Sontag's words, 'the power to define, not merely record' the terrible crimes of the Nazi regime.²⁰⁸ And secondly, that they present to the viewer a sense of understanding, of being able to imagine the Holocaust, while being, according to *Shoah* director Claude Lanzmann, among others, 'images without imagination'.²⁰⁹ Relating to Miller's work, those questions also focus on the shift in what her Buchenwald photos represent to viewers today and what they represented to viewers in 1945, and on the influence of surrealism on her documentary style.²¹⁰

2.4.7 Yevgeni Khaldei: Raising the Soviet Union Flag over the Reichstag (1945)

Russian press and army photographer Yevgeny Khaldei had been making impressive war photographs since the very start of the Second World War, in which his father and

Memory', *Journal of War & Culture Studies* 11 (2018) 3, 181-191. Bryna Gutner labeled Miller's photograph as having 'iconic status in America and Europe today', in: Bryna Gutner, *Holocaust photography: Iconic and imagined images* (Dissertation), (New York 2009)

²⁰⁵ See for instance: Yad Vashem, 'Anonymous No Longer; Former inmates on their wooden bunks, after the liberation of the Buchenwald camp Germany, April 1945', https://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/museum_photos/buchenwald.asp (accessed Nov. 13, 2018).

²⁰⁶ One of the people Yad Vashem and other researchers and institutions identified is Elie Wiesel. Skeptics who doubt his and other identifications in this Buchenwald photograph, cast doubt on his presence in the photograph, often as a way of casting doubt upon Wiesel's (and others') credibility. I do not wish to cite those websites here; a simple online search will lead those interested there.

²⁰⁷ Cornelia Brink, 'Secular Icons: Looking at Photographs from Nazi Concentration Camps', *History and Memory* 12 (2000) 123; Lynn Hilditch, *Lee Miller, Photography, Surrealism and the Second World War: From Vogue to Dachau* (Newcastle 2017) 109

²⁰⁸ Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York 2004) 22

²⁰⁹ Claude Lanzmann, 'The Obscenity of Understanding', in: C. Caruth (ed.), *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore 1995) 202

²¹⁰ Paula Salvio, 'Uncanny Exposures: A Study of the Wartime Photojournalism of Lee Miller', *Curriculum Inquiry* 39 (2009) 4, 521-536; Lynn Hilditch, 'Representing the Holocaust: Lee Miller's Concentration Camp Photographs as "Modern Memorials"', *The Lincoln Humanities Journal* 3 (Fall 2015) 95, 94-101

three of his four sisters were killed. Khaldei was constantly seeking to create rousing war photographs, and realized the visual power of a flag being raised after seeing Joe Rosenthal's *Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima*. He took an improvised red flag with hammer and sickle with him to Berlin, where he coordinated and shot what was to be another iconic Second World War photograph – a interesting case of a visual meme rapidly travelling across war zones.²¹¹ In the frame, a Red Army soldier raised the Soviet flag over the Reichstag while Berlin smouldered in the background and statues on the Reichstag's façade were forced to look on.²¹²

It was a very powerful image: with 'the symbolism of the raising of the flag, black and white but implicitly red, with a hammer and sickle, [with] dual associations of asserting the triumph of the Soviet state and that of the wider socialist movement', cultural scholar Jeremy Hicks wrote, propelling it as 'a widely recognized iconic image of the end of World War II in Europe'.²¹³ It would be used for propaganda purposes for decades: 'It circulated widely in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, when Soviet war memory became a monumental industry', historian David Shneer wrote.²¹⁴

While this didn't shield Khaldei from the Soviet Union's anti-jewish campaigns in the late 1940s, it made his picture a 'mythical photograph', a 'symbol of the Soviet victory over Nazism seen around the world' and 'recognized by everyone', according to French art historian Victor Barbat.²¹⁵ Others consider it 'perhaps the most famous photograph of World War II'.²¹⁶ These claims are surely exaggerated, but the photograph is a staple of retrospectives of the Second World War, and remains the subject of scholarly attention.

²¹¹ Michael Griffin, 'The Great War Photographs: Constructing Myths of History and Photojournalism', in: Bonnie Brennen, Hanno Hardt (eds.), *Picturing the Past: Media, History & Photography* (Chicago 1999) 144

²¹² An extensive account of the photographs' production and distribution can be found in: David Shneer, *Through Soviet Jewish Eyes: Photography, War and the Holocaust* (New Brunswick 2011)

²¹³ Jeremy Hicks, 'Appropriating the presence of history: raising the Victory Banner over the Reichstag', *Screen* 57 (September 2016) 3, 362–370

²¹⁴ David Shneer, 'From Photojournalist to Memory Maker: Evgenii Khaldei and Soviet Jewish Photographers', in: Harriet Murav, Gennadiy Estraiikh, *Soviet Jews in World War II : Fighting, Witnessing, Remembering* (Boston 2014) 198

²¹⁵ Victor Barbat, 'Bannières et drapeaux, sur quelques manières de les lever et de les représenter: l'exemple du Reichstag, mai 1945', *Mille huit cent quatre-vingt-quinze* 74 (2014) 3, 70-95

²¹⁶ This quote from: Henry W. Pickford, 'The Last Soviet Photographer', *Raritan* 31 (Winter 2012) 3, 89-95

2.4.8 Margaret Bourke-White: Gandhi at the Spinning Wheel (1946)

This photograph of India's independence movement leader Mohandas Gandhi by Margaret Bourke-White is another photograph that I included to test whether its recognition would be delineated by clear cultural boundaries. But the photograph would probably make a selection of photographs that are treated as 'iconic' in academic literature on its own.

Time Magazine wrote that Gandhi belongs to a worldwide 'group of iconic figures, and no single picture has become more closely associated with his life, and his way of life, than Margaret Bourke-White's 1946 portrait of the civil-disobedience pioneer beside his cherished spinning wheel.'²¹⁷ It is a 'masterful and iconic portrait', anthropologist Vyjayanthi Rao agrees. And Rebecca Brown asserts: 'This image is often found in books about Gandhi, and it has been cited in amateur painting, stamps, and even a recent award-winning telecom advertisement directed by Spike Lee. The image is iconic'.²¹⁸

If one understands the significance the image has in India, one of the largest in the world, one would probably agree. 'Both spinning and Gandhi himself serve as major icons of the nationalist movement [of India]', Rebecca Brown writes in *Gandhi's Spinning Wheel and the Making of India*. The book explores how Gandhi and spinning 'interact through imagery both before and after [Gandhi's] death', and how in Bourke-White's photograph 'the action and the icon collapsed into one another'.²¹⁹

In his drive for Indian independence, Gandhi 'deployed spinning as both icon and practice', Brown explains, to overcome the language differences and illiteracy among those he wished to reach on the subcontinent. 'Images drive the nationalist movement: they serve to communicate quickly and effectively what words cannot', Brown asserts. Bourke-White's photograph was perfectly suited for it, both because of the resonance of Gandhi's sitting posture with Hindu imagery, and the metaphorical economic and political meaning of spinning, which 'meant that spinning emerged as a metonym for the nationalist movement'.²²⁰

The story of how the photograph was taken has sparked its own mythology. Bourke-White had traveled to India for *Life Magazine* in 1946 to photograph its independence movement and was anxious to photograph Gandhi. But the hard-driving photojournalist

²¹⁷ Ben Cosgrove, 'Gandhi and His Spinning Wheel: The Story Behind an Iconic Photo', *Time* (Sep 10, 2014)

²¹⁸ Vyjayanthi Rao, 'Hindu Modern: Considering Gandhian Aesthetics', *Public Culture* 23 (2011) 2, 377-394, 383; Rebecca Brown, 'Spinning without Touching the Wheel: Anticolonialism, Indian Nationalism, and the Deployment of Symbol', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 29 (2009) 2, 230

²¹⁹ Rebecca Brown, *Gandhi's Spinning Wheel and the Making of India* (New York 2010) 9

²²⁰ *Ibidem*, 14, 10

ran into Gandhi's detachment and disregard for modern technology – and that of Gandhi's personal secretary. The secretary insisted that Bourke-White learn spinning 'in order to appreciate the moral and political significance of the *charka* [spinning wheel] as Gandhi's chosen symbol of the struggle for independence' before considering if she could photograph him.²²¹ Bourke-White relented, then haggled for permission to use flash (she got three) then lumbered her equipment in, while Gandhi tried to remain undisturbed. Finally, she made 'her famous portrait of Gandhi', Claude Cookman wrote. Gandhi's staff was indignant with Bourke-White, while Gandhi himself, according to Cookman, subsequently 'nicknamed her "the torturer"'.²²²

The encounter between Gandhi and Bourke-White was enlarged and outsized in the 1982 film *Gandhi*, with actress Candice Bergen playing Bourke-White. There is some criticism of this, as well as of the photograph itself. Vyjayanthi Rao writes that it is a photograph 'that drains the act of spinning itself of its political significance by foregrounding the *charka* as machine and simultaneously investing Gandhi with a subtle, private, and heroic aura, more attuned to a dominant, liberal American political sensibility'.²²³

2.4.9 Hou Bo: *The Founding of the People's Republic of China (1949)*

Though the twentieth century had more than a few, the moment China became an independent communist state is one of the defining moments of the twentieth century. It had profound political reverberations in its direct region and around the world, and sent the world's most populous country along the wild road of social and political experiment according to marxist ideology. The moment this happened was captured by two photographers, the married couple Hou Bo and her husband Xu Xiaobing, who would remain Mao's personal photographers during his years in power.

The photographs that would be most circulated were taken by Hou Bo, including 'The Founding of the PRC'.²²⁴ Other photos by Hou Bo that featured prominently in Chinese

²²¹ Vyjayanthi Rao, 'Hindu Modern', 384

²²² Both citations from: Claude Cookman, 'Margaret Bourke-White and Henri Cartier-Bresson: Gandhi's funeral', *History of Photography* 22 (1998) 2, 201

²²³ Vyjayanthi Rao, 384

²²⁴ The name is regularly used for three different photographs, one from Mao's right and two from his left, all in slightly different poses, not making things easier for researchers. With consultation of Anne-Christine Trémon of Lausanne University, I chose to include this one image in the global survey. The Mao portrait which hangs in Tiananmen Square is sometimes named as one of the most famous images in the world, 'an emblem of democratic dictatorship', 'worshiped by many with the most fanatical fervor', but it is actually an oil painting. Quoted from: Hanzhou Pang, *Visual Mao Zedong: Ideological Ideals and Rhetorical Ordeals* (Dissertation, Washington State Un., 2010) 5

government information and propaganda were *Mao Zedong Swimming across the Yangtze* (1955) and *Mao Zedong with Students from Latin America* (1959). This image does not feature prominently in academic debates, but was included for the moment it captures and to test whether sharply different results would emerge between countries, which would be an indication that historic and iconic photos can be constrained within certain cultural boundaries.²²⁵

The proclamation of the People's Republic of China was an affair that was anxiously awaited by his supporters, and many thousands thronged Beijing's Tianemen Square to attend. Mao delivered his speech and proclaimed 'The Chinese people have stood up', and was 'captured by the photographer Hou Bo, in that now-famous image, in the words of historian Chang-tai Hung.²²⁶ Chinese newspaper *Global Times* featured a portrait of Hou Bo, after she died in 2017, writing: 'When asked about her favorite photo, Hou insisted that it was *The Founding of the PRC*. "Long live chairman Mao and long live the Chinese Communist Party! This was a historic moment. I was really excited when I took this photo".²²⁷

2.4.10 Yasushi Nagao: Assassination of Inejiro Asanuma (1960)

This is also an image I included to measure differences in recognition in different countries, although it is also well-known and interesting in its own right. This chilling photograph by Yasushi Nagao of the assassination of Japanese socialist leader Inejiro Asanuma is a testimony to the power that still images can have. 'Asanuma's assassination by ultra-nationalist Otoya Yamaguchi was captured on film, though it is a single image that has become famous', William Andrews observes in *Dissecting Japan*.²²⁸

Japan was plagued by violent right-wing extremism in the late 1950s and early 1960s, targeting politicians, but also writers, journalists, and others. Inejiro Asanuma was 'perhaps a strange target for a young fascist, yet no doubt an easy one', Andrews writes.²²⁹ Although Asanuma was chairman of the Japan Socialist Party, there were more important leaders on the left. He was, however, much hated. In the 1930s, Asanuma was a member of several ultranationalist, pro-military groups, but grew dissatisfied with how Japan waged the Second World War and withdrew from politics. When he

²²⁵ As will become clear in the next chapter, the results were not very conclusive.

²²⁶ Chang-tai Hung, 'Mao's Parades: State Spectacles in China in the 1950s', *The China Quarterly* 190 (June 2007) 411-431

²²⁷ *Global Times*, 'Mao Zedong photographer Hou Bo passes away at 93', *Global Times* (Nov. 28, 2017), www.globaltimes.cn/content/1077615.shtml (accessed Nov. 14, 2018)

²²⁸ William Andrews, *Dissenting Japan: A History of Japanese Radicalism and Counterculture, from 1945 to Fukushima* (London 2016) 47

²²⁹ *Ibidem*, 48

returned to politics in the 1950s he now was strongly left-wing. He drew wide criticism for a 1959 visit to China, even from his own party, when he attacked the United States and returned wearing a Mao suit.

His would-be assassin was 17-year old student Otoyama Yamaguchi, who had already been arrested nine times for violent actions, and considered Asanuma 'a communist enemy of the people'.²³⁰ This 'child soldier of the far Right' was among a group that heckled Asanuma during a nationally televised debate in the runup to parliamentary elections.²³¹ While police busied themselves with disorderly protesters, Yamaguchi charged Asanuma and plunged a short *yoroi-dōshi* samurai sword in Asanuma's chest, withdrew and stabbed again.

Many journalists, tv-crew members and press photographers were present, but most were focused on the scuffle between protesters and police. Three photojournalists had their eyes and cameras trained on the assassination, and each took one photo of the act. One was out of focus, one had the act obscured, but one 'had the picture', as the photographer himself told his news desk on the phone.²³² This was Yasushi Nagao, staff photographer of newspaper *Mainichi Shimbun*. He was carrying the staple of pre-war photojournalists, the legendary 4x5 Speed Graphic, and had taken eleven 'standard' photographs of politicians speaking. He had left one remaining exposure. When Yamaguchi stabbed, Nagao waited an instant before taking his picture, and took it when the murderer withdrew the blade, ready to stab again.²³³

The photograph was printed widely in Japan, but was also distributed worldwide the same day by United Press International. The photograph won every important prize in photojournalism that year: World Press Photo, Picture of the Year, and Pulitzer Prize. It has remained in circulation, and inspired artists, such as Yasumasa Morimura, who re-staged the photo with himself as both victim and assassin.²³⁴

2.4.11 Alberto Korda: *Guerrillero Heroico* (1960)

This photograph, a portrait of the Argentinian revolutionary Ernesto 'Che' Guevara, can be safely claimed to be one of the most famous photographs of all time. Over half a century after it was taken, new books, documentaries and academic articles continue to be published about it, not to mention reproductions and references in art, culture and media.

²³⁰ Heinz-Dietrich Fischer, *Picture Coverage of the World: Pulitzer Prize Winning Photos* (Berlin 2011) 45

²³¹ Andrews, *Dissecting Japan*, 48

²³² Quoted in: John Faber, *Great News Photos and the Stories Behind Them* (New York 1978) 126

²³³ Fischer, 44

²³⁴ Yumi Yamaguchi, *Warriors of Art: A Guide to Contemporary Japanese Artists* (Tokyo 2007) 88

The photograph itself was taken during a memorial service in Havana, Cuba, in March 1960. Guevara was listening intently to a speech delivered by Fidel Castro, when he caught the eye of Alberto Korda, Castro's official photographer. Korda was struck by Guevara's expression, which showed 'absolute implacability', as Korda later described it.²³⁵ Korda hung a cropped version of the photo in his house, and for years occasionally gave copies to friends. In 1967 he gave two prints to Italian publisher Giangacomo Feltrinelli, who wanted to attract attention to Guevara's cause. Feltrinelli started to circulate thousands of posters with Guevara's image, as well as Guevara's diary with Korda's portrait on the cover.

After Guevara was tracked down and killed, the image started to be published worldwide. In Havana, the Ministry of the Interior hung a five-story reproduction from its façade. Protest groups like the Dutch Provo in Amsterdam appropriated the image, media such as *Paris Match* printed it, and artists such as Andy Warhol and Jim Fitzpatrick, who made a stylized, stark white and deep-black rendition of it, used in their work.

The image has since then made deep inroads in visual culture around the world. Dozens of museum and gallery exhibitions have centered on the image, it has featured on protest posters, murals, record covers, and a host of commercial products, such as T-shirts and mugs.²³⁶ Because of this avalanche of reproductions, Che's portrait is sometimes named as the most famous photograph in the world.²³⁷

Several books have been written about the image and its afterlife, including journalist Michael Casey's 2009 book *Che's Afterlife: The Legacy of an Image*, and *Che Guevara: Revolutionary and Icon*, by art curator Trisha Ziff.²³⁸ Documentaries have been made about the subject, such as *Che Guevara: Kordavision*, by Hector Cruz Sandoval in 2008 and, in the same year, *Chevolution*, by Trisha Ziff and Luis Lopez. Scholarly articles continue to analyze the many ways Che's portrait influences popular and visual culture around the world, especially in Latin America.²³⁹ With this continued attention for one

²³⁵ Quoted in: Jon Lee Anderson, *Che Guevara: A Revolutionary Life* (New York 1997) 465

²³⁶ For examples, see: Michiko Kakutani, 'Brand Che: Revolutionary as Marketer's Dream', *The New York Times* (April 20, 2009)

²³⁷ For instance by the Maryland Institute of Art, that named Korda's photograph in an exhibition catalogue "the most famous photograph in the world and a symbol of the 20th century". Quoted in: BBC News, 'Che Guevara photographer dies', *BBC News* (May 26, 2001) <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/1352650.stm> (accessed Nov. 6, 2018)

²³⁸ Michael Casey, *Che's Afterlife: The Legacy of an Image* (New York 2009), Trisha Ziff, *Che Guevara: Revolutionary and Icon* (New York 2006). Other titles include: Diana Diaz and Mark Sanders, *Alberto Korda: A Revolutionary Lens* (London 2007) and Oscar Sola, *Che: Images of a Revolutionary* (New York 2000)

²³⁹ For example: Guadi Calvo, 'Korda: la mirada de la Revolución', *Archipiélago. Revista cultural de nuestra América* 23 (2015) 90; Juan Esteban Alegría, 'Hacia una poética de la imagen del Che: denotación y connotaciones en torno a la fotografía de Alberto Korda', *Revista de la Academia* 24 (2017)

image, over half a century, this image was an obvious addition to the photography survey.

2.4.12 Malcolm Browne – *The Burning Monk* (1963)

‘No news picture in history has generated so much emotion around the world as that one’, US president John Kennedy said of Malcolm Browne’s photograph, months before images of his own death would move people around the globe.²⁴⁰ The ‘Burning Monk’ is the first of three photographs included in my survey that were taken during the Vietnam War. This is not because I have a particular fascination for the Vietnam War (though I do) but because that war and photojournalism are intertwined in a way few other events in history are. Patrick Hagopian describes this in his contribution to *Locating Memory: Photographic Acts*: ‘The images that constitute the visual archive of the [Vietnam] war – in books, documentaries and the recollection of commentators – are not moving images but still photographs’.²⁴¹

When calling the Vietnam War into memory, Hagopian asserts, documentary makers, writers, film editors do not choose randomly which photographs they would like to show. ‘Of the millions of photographs taken by war photographers and journalists’, he writes, always the same photographs are ‘selected by documentary-makers and writers and are the ones that first come to mind for inclusion in documentaries and books. (..) ‘Even if an editor or film producer has a wider knowledge of the photographic archive of the Vietnam War, they plump for the familiar images because those are the ones that encapsulate the war for ordinary viewers. These photographs are chosen because they are chosen many times before.’²⁴² The same three photographs are ‘always included in lists of the most important photographs of the Vietnam War’, according to Hagopian: the ‘Saigon Execution’ photograph (Eddie Adams, 1969), the ‘Napalm Girl’ photograph (Nick Ut, 1972) and the ‘Burning Monk’.²⁴³

On June 11, 1963, AP Saigon bureau chief Malcolm Browne was one of just a few journalists who had heeded a notice to foreign correspondents that ‘something important’ would happen on a certain intersection in South Vietnam’s capital. That day, a few hundred buddhist monks marched through Saigon’s streets to protest the rule of president Ngo Dinh Diem. A few blocks from the Presidential Palace, Thich Quang Duc exited a car, sat down in a lotus position on a cushion that younger monks had placed

²⁴⁰ Quoted in: Seth Jacobs, *Cold War Mandarin: Ngo Dinh Diem and the Origins of America's War in Vietnam, 1950–1963* (Lanham 2006) 149

²⁴¹ Patrick Hagopian, ‘Vietnam War Photography as a Locus of Memory’, in: Annette Kuhn, Kirsten Emiko McAllister (eds.), *Locating Memory: Photographic Acts* (Oxford 2008) 202

²⁴² Ibidem

²⁴³ Ibidem, 209

on the road, and let himself be doused with a mixture of gasoline and diesel that was designed, according to Browne, to 'produce a fire that was both intense and sufficiently long lasting'.²⁴⁴ He then struck a match, was immediately emerged in flames, burned for minutes, then fell over.

Malcolm Browne took several photographs of the event, but one that has drawn most attention shows Duc still virtually untouched by the fire, poised and serene while bright flames shoot from his body and clothes. It was distributed by the AP and 'leaped off every front page in the world the next morning', stated one history of the Vietnam War, 'seen on the front pages of newspapers all around the world', according to another.²⁴⁵ The photo had an immediate impact, according to several studies. One stated that the photographs' 'undeniable force transfixed the attention of the American public' on the events in Vietnam and 'became a frame through which many Americans perceived the events in South Vietnam'; another that people 'reacted with shock and horror to this spectacular event'.²⁴⁶ One study stated Duc had become 'both martyr and icon in the international media'.²⁴⁷

Still, what the photograph exactly meant quickly became a point of discussion, especially in the United States, as George Dionisopoulos and Lisa Skow illustrate.²⁴⁸ 'Agony in South Vietnam', the *Christian Science Monitor* headlined an article on the 'Burning Monk' photograph, while *Life Magazine* titled its article 'An angry Buddhist burns', and later, when other monks followed Duc's example, 'Another monk gives himself'.²⁴⁹

Indeed a curious process of imitation followed the publication of Browne's photograph. The media fallout turned 'a mere document recording some trivial event into one of the most iconic images of the twentieth century', one study writes, and made a previously 'unimaginable' act imaginable to humankind.²⁵⁰ And by doing that, another study asserts, it founded 'the modern lineage of self-immolation'.²⁵¹

²⁴⁴ Malcolm Browne, *Muddy boots and red socks: A reporter's life* (New York 1993) 9

²⁴⁵ Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (New York 1983) 281; Christian Appy, *Vietnam: The Definitive Oral History, Told From All Sides* (London 2008) 64

²⁴⁶ Edward Doyle, Samuel Lipsman, *The Vietnam experience: Setting the stage* (Boston, 1981) 67; George Dionisopoulos, Lisa Skow, 'A struggle to contextualize photographic images: American print media and the "Burning Monk"', *Communication Quarterly* 45 (1997) 4, 396

²⁴⁷ Mark Lewis Taylor, 'Oriental Monk as Popular Icon: On the Power of U.S. Orientalism', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 79 (Sept. 2011) 3, 743

²⁴⁸ Dionisopoulos, Skow, 'A struggle to contextualize photographic images', 393-409

²⁴⁹ 'Agony in South Vietnam', *Christian Science Monitor* (June 27, 1963) 18; 'An angry Buddhist burns', *Life* (June 21, 1963) 24; 'Another monk gives himself', *Life* (Sept. 6, 1963) 30

²⁵⁰ Marko Stamenkovic, 'A Man, Burning: Communicative Suffering and the Ethics of Images', *Antae* 2 (March 2015) 1, 41

²⁵¹ Michael Biggs, 'Dying without Killing: Protest by Self-Immolation, 1963-2002', in: Diego Gambetta (ed.) *Making Sense of Suicide Missions* (Oxford 2005)

2.4.13 Eddie Adams – Saigon Execution (1968)

In early February 1968, a few days after the Vietnamese Tet Offensive took the United States' military and political class by surprise, presidential candidate Robert Kennedy said of the Vietnam War: '[It does not] serve the interests of America to fight this war as if moral standards could be subordinated to immediate necessities. Last week, a Vietcong suspect was turned over to the chief of the Vietnamese Security Services, who executed him on the spot. The photograph of the execution was on front pages all around the world—leading our best and oldest friends to ask, more in sorrow than in anger, what has happened to America?'²⁵²

Robert Kennedy was among the first, but certainly not the last, to identify Eddie Adams' photograph as an exceptionally influential one. 'The Saigon execution photo and film seem a classic case of a powerful image that drove public opinion and elite decision-making', Richard Perlmutter observed. 'Hundreds of politicians, reporters, editors, and scholars have asserted, at the time and through today, that "this was the picture that lost the war," or "this was the picture that drove the American public against the war." These claims are not limited to opponents of American intervention in the Indochina conflict. "Powerful picture" believers include hawks and doves, protesters and generals.'²⁵³

The photograph was made by Associated Press photographer Eddie Adams, who was present when South Vietnamese police captured Viet Cong suspect Nguyen Van Lem on February 1, 1968, the third day of the Tet Offensive. The surprise attack led to many casualties in South Vietnam's capital, Saigon, and threw the city into chaos. Police General Nguyen Ngoc Loan was present as well. With his pistol, he waved his people away from the bound prisoner and then, in a seemingly casual way, shot him through the head. Adams photographed the gruesome scene at the exact moment the police general fired a bullet into the captive's head.

The photograph 'appeared on the front page of most newspapers; it was to be reprinted *ad infinitum* in magazines and books to the present day', wrote Richard Perlmutter, who researched the publication, reception and afterlife of the Saigon Execution photograph extensively. 'The iconic status of the picture was rapidly fixed and remains so to this day', he added.²⁵⁴ In another book, Perlmutter wrote that 'when people talk or write

²⁵² Robert Kennedy, cited in: Robert Kennedy, 'Speech of February 8, 1968', in: Robert McMahon (ed.), *Major Problems in the History of the Vietnam War* (Lexington 1995) 343

²⁵³ David Perlmutter, 'Photojournalism and Foreign Affairs', *Orbis* 49 (Winter 2005) 1, 115. Perlmutter cites dozens of examples in Appendix A of: David Perlmutter, *Photojournalism and Foreign Policy: Icons of Outrage* (New York, 1998) 137-140

²⁵⁴ David Perlmutter, *Photojournalism and Foreign Policy: Icons of Outrage* (New York 1998) 36

about [the Tet Offensive] at least a sentence is devoted (often with an illustration) to the Eddie Adams picture'.²⁵⁵

Other scholars agree. 'It now seems obligatory, when the war and photography are mentioned in the same context, to cite the Adams picture as an example of a photograph that changed the course of history', Robert Hamilton wrote.²⁵⁶ Eddie Adams' photograph 'described the conflict', Susan Moeller wrote; it 'anchored itself in public memory', according to Stephan Schwingeler and Dorothee Weber; is a 'world famous' photograph (Andrea Miconi), 'famous' and 'infamous' (Sylvia Shin Huey Chong); a photograph with 'the capacity to conjure the entire war', according to Marita Sturken.²⁵⁷ Vicki Goldberg called it 'a key memory and a potent symbol of the war' that was 'reprinted and shown on television all over the world', while Robert Hariman and John Lucaites described it as an 'icon of the Vietnam War' whose 'moral punch comes from its documentation of how the state can kill with such complete lack of regard for the pain it is causing'.²⁵⁸

A photograph, also, that has continued to attract criticism. Susan Sontag wrote in *Regarding the Pain of Others* that 'there can be no suspicion about the authenticity' of what Adams' photograph shows, and that nonetheless 'it was staged'. General Loan 'would not have carried out the summary execution had [journalists] not been available to witness it'.²⁵⁹ Adams himself was critical as well. 'I was getting money for showing one man killing another', he later said, as one of many expressions of remorse. 'Two lives were destroyed, and I was getting paid for it. I was a hero'.²⁶⁰

Recent scholarship focuses on the function of the image in American public culture. Sylvia Shin Huey Chong argues that the photograph was restaged in *The Deer Hunter*,

²⁵⁵ David Perlmutter, *Visions of War: Picturing Warfare from the Stone Age to the Cyber Age* (New York 1999) 207

²⁵⁶ Robert Hamilton, 'Image and Context: The Production and Reproduction of The Execution of a VC Suspect by Eddie Adams', in: Jeffrey Walsh, James Aulich (eds.), *Vietnam Images: War and Representation* (New York 1989) 171

²⁵⁷ Susan Moeller, *Shooting War: Photography and the American Experience of Combat* (New York 1989) 86; Stephan Schwingeler, Dorothee Weber, 'Das wahre Gesicht des Krieges: Die Hinrichtung in Saigon von Eddie Adams. Das Entstehen einer Ikone vor dem Hintergrund ihrer Publikationsgeschichte in den Printmedien', *Kritische Berichte* 33 (2005) 1, 36; Andrea Miconi, 'Saigon Execution, 1968: «The Photo That Lost the War»?', *Problemi dell'informazione* 43 (April 2018) 1, 63-86, 63; Sylvia Shin Huey Chong, 'Restaging the War: "The Deer Hunter" and the Primal Scene of Violence', *Cinema Journal* 44 (Winter, 2005) 2, 89-106; Marita Sturken, *Tangled memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS epidemic, and the politics of remembering* (New York 1997) 93

²⁵⁸ Vicki Goldberg, *The Power of Photography*, 226; Hariman and Lucaites, *No Caption Needed*, 196, 197

²⁵⁹ Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York, 2003) 53

²⁶⁰ Quoted in: BBC News, 'Eddie Adams' iconic Vietnam War photo: What happened next', *BBC News* (January 29, 2018), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-42864421> (accessed Nov. 30, 2018)

and 'recentered the narrative on Americans as victims'.²⁶¹ Andrea Miconi argues that the photograph 'shaped the collective memory of Vietnam', and that in United States' public culture it first served as 'a representation of war's cruelty and meaninglessness', and later became 'part of the broader healing process produced by American cultural industry'.²⁶²

2.4.14 Neil Armstrong – Moon Landing (1969)

On July 20, 1969, a landmark event took place when two astronauts first walked on the moon, as part of the United States lunar mission Apollo 11.²⁶³ During the two hours and fifteen minutes that Neil Armstrong and Edwin 'Buzz' Aldrin spent on the moon surface, they took several color photographs. These photographs have become 'one of the most famous sets of images of the past century', assert David Perlmutter and Nicole Smith Dahmen, 'many of which have become visual icons in our collective consciousness'.²⁶⁴

This is particularly true of one frontal image of Aldrin, taken by Armstrong, with Aldrin's face hidden behind the reflective visor of his helmet. Not only Aldrin and the moonscape behind him are visible, but also Armstrong and the moonscape and equipment around him. The image was printed in media across the world, including on the front page of the *New York Times*, *Paris-Match*, *Life*, *Newsweek*, and scores of other leading print media.²⁶⁵ And it continues to be reprinted prominently in media and photography collections.²⁶⁶

Perlmutter and Dahmen affirm that Armstrong's image of Aldrin is 'an image that continues to be regularly reprinted in popular literature and textbooks'. They write that '[t]his photo is frequently cited as one of the most watched and wondered-over icons of the modern age, unlike some photo icons that are generationally or nationally

²⁶¹ Sylvia Shin Huey Chong, 'Restaging the War', 89

²⁶² Andrea Miconi, 'Saigon Execution, 1968', 63

²⁶³ Another image from space that was widely printed and widely discussed in academic literature, is the photograph known as 'Earthrise', taken by astronaut Bill Anders on December 24, 1968, of a distant earth with the moon's surface in the foreground. I decided not to use this photograph in my survey, because I did not consider it a photograph of 'an event in history', and therefore considered this photograph outside the aims of my research.

²⁶⁴ David Perlmutter, Nicole Smith Dahmen, '(In)visible evidence: pictorially enhanced disbelief in the Apollo moon landings', *Visual Communication* 7 (2008) 2, 229–251, 233

²⁶⁵ Harold Evans, *Pictures on a Page. Photojournalism, Graphics and Picture-Editing* (London 1997) 151

²⁶⁶ For example in: Marie-Monique Robin, *The photos of the century: 100 historic moments* (Paris 1999), and in and on the cover of: Kathleen Perricone (ed.) *World's Most Iconic Photographs. 100 Pictures That Changed History* (New York 2018)

restricted in their fame'. They consider it 'an example of famous photos with a universally subscribed truth value'.²⁶⁷

European scholars have also attributed fame and significance to the photograph. Udo Hebel and Christoph Wagner put the picture on the cover of their book *Pictorial Cultures and Political Iconographies*. They consider the photo 'one of the most prominent illustrations of the political impact and ideological implications of visual images', and write about its 'very position and aura as one of the most powerful pictures of 'the American century'.²⁶⁸

François Brunet et al. also used the photograph on the cover of their book, *L'Amérique des images : Histoire et culturel visuelles des États-Unis*. They consider the photo a prime example of the images with which the United States 'inundates the planet' and creates 'an American visual culture made of civic monuments'.²⁶⁹ Mathilde Arrivé wrote that this photograph illustrates 'the ability of images to engage with discourse and to provoke other images, while crystallizing fears, hopes and fantasies'.²⁷⁰

Armstrong's photograph not only features in academic debates on the impact of photography and on the influence of American culture, but is also prominent in research about conspiracy theories. In 1976, the pamphlet *We Never Went to the Moon* was published. The pamphlet relied primarily on raising doubts about the veracity of the moon landing photographs, especially the photograph featured here.²⁷¹ Attempts by NASA and others to refute these claims have often proven futile. Conspiracy theorists' claims of NASA's supposed manufacturing or tampering with evidence, assert Viren Swami et al., remain focused 'particularly [on] photographs of the moon landings'.²⁷²

2.4.15 Nick Ut – Napalm Girl (1972)

When the subject of 'iconic photographs' is struck up, the photograph referred to as Napalm Girl (or one of its many other nicknames) is never far away. The name refers

²⁶⁷ Perlmutter and Dahmen, 233

²⁶⁸ Udo Hebel, Christoph Wagner (eds.), *Pictorial Cultures and Political Iconographies: Approaches, Perspectives, Case Studies from Europe and America* (Berlin 2011) 11

²⁶⁹ François Brunet, et al., *L'Amérique des images : Histoire et culturel visuelles des États-Unis* (Paris 2013) 7

²⁷⁰ Mathilde Arrivé, 'François Brunet, dir., L'Amérique des images. Histoire et culture visuelles des États-Unis', *Transatlantica* 1 (2013)

²⁷¹ See for instance: André Gunthert, 'Du bruit dans l'image (l'homme a-t-il marché sur la Lune?)', *Histoires Visuelles* (14 November 2009), and: David Perlmutter, Nicole Smith Dahmen, '(In)visible evidence: pictorially enhanced disbelief in the Apollo moon landings', *Visual Communication* 7 (2008) 2, 229–251

²⁷² Viren Swami et al., 'Lunar Lies: The Impact of Informational Framing and Individual Differences in Shaping Conspiracist Beliefs About the Moon Landings', *Applied Cognitive Psychology* 27 (2013) 71–80, 72

to a photograph of Kim Phuc, taken by Vietnamese photographer Nick Ut in 1972. Ut was informed an air strike by the South Vietnamese air force on a village near Saigon, and had gone there with colleagues to document it. The village was supposed to be free of civilians, but after the airstrike little children came running down the road. Ut took a few photographs of them, centering on a little girl whose clothes were burned away by the fire of the napalm bombs. He then helped her get to a hospital, before delivering his photos. The New York AP office at first refused to put the photo on wireservice because of frontal nudity, but Ut's bureau chief convinced them otherwise.

The photo very powerful composition instantly began to generate attention, with its apocalyptic background, desperate children and agonized facial and body expression of the little girl in the center of the frame. The photograph is often credited with a huge impact upon public opinion and US policy in Vietnam, though it is obvious from its date alone – it was taken in June, 1972, when US ground troops had all but left Vietnam – that this is untrue. But it was featured in media around the world in 1972 (leading US president Nixon to wonder if the photo might be 'fixed') and has not left public attention since.

The photograph 'shocked the world' and has 'circulated widely in the world since', according to literary scholar Nancy Miller.²⁷³ It won both the Pulitzer Prize and World Press Photo in 1973, was featured in the controversial documentary *Hearts and Minds* a year later, and continues to be part of visual culture: featuring in history books, books on visual culture, documentaries and works of journalism. Historian Patrick Hagopian asserts that the Napalm Girl photo is 'the most famous, and most frequently reproduced, image of the [Vietnam] war', and has become a 'common cultural reference point' across the world.²⁷⁴

To some scholars, that description does not cover the Napalm Girls true scope in visual culture. 'Vietnam Napalm' (an alternative name for the Napalm Girl Photo) 'is the most famous photograph of the twentieth century', Jill Scott wrote in cultural studies journal *Queen's Quarterly*.²⁷⁵ And the photo continues to attract attention, as well as Kim Phuc herself. It even re-entered controversy recently, after Facebook tried to ban use of the image on its platform because of child nudity.²⁷⁶ After a 'global outcry', led by a Norwegian newspaper that published a front-page open letter to Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook apologized, and issued a statement, stating that 'we

²⁷³ Nancy K. Miller, 'The Girl in the Photograph: The Visual Legacies of War', in: Geoffrey Batchen e.a.(eds.), *Picturing Atrocity. Photography in Crisis* (London 2012) 147 and 154

²⁷⁴ Patrick Hagopian, 'Vietnam War Photography as a Locus of Memory', in: Annette Kuhn, Kirsten Emiko McAllister (eds.), *Locating Memory: Photographic Acts* (Oxford 2008) 213

²⁷⁵ Jill Scott, 'Photography and forgiveness', *Queen's Quarterly* 113 (2006) 4, 606

²⁷⁶ See: Yasmin Ibrahim, 'Facebook and the Napalm Girl: Reframing the Iconic as Pornographic', *Social Media + Society* 3 (Oct-Dec. 2017) 4, 1-10

recognize the history and global importance of this image' and 'its status as an iconic image of historical importance'.²⁷⁷

2.4.16 Luis Orlando Lagos – Allende's Last Stand (1973)

Decades before “9/11” became a shorthand for the terrorist attacks in the United States in 2001, the numbers were already a shorthand for a painful memory in another country. On that day, in Chile in 1973, armed forces under the command of Augusto Pinochet surrounded the palace of the country's elected president, the democratic socialist Salvador Allende. With tanks in the streets and military aircraft dropping bombs on the presidential palace, Allende delivered a farewell speech on live radio. He then killed himself. Four months later, a *New York Times* correspondent in Latin America was offered a photograph of Allende with gun in hand and helmet on his head, surrounded by armed bodyguards, standing in a doorway of the presidential palace, and everyone in the picture scanning the sky anxiously. According to the anonymous provider, the photograph was taken on Allende's last day.²⁷⁸ The *Times* published the photograph on its front page. A few months later, it won the World Press Photo Award.

The *Times* did not know the identity of the photographer, and World Press Photo for decades classified the photo under 'anonymous'. In February 2007, however, Chilean newspaper *La Nación* revealed that the photographer was Luis Orlando Lagos Vásquez, Allende's official photographer, who had smuggled the rolls of film from the presidential palace in his clothes. He had died a few weeks before, aged 94. *La Nación* recounted how Lagos' house was raided repeatedly after the coup, and his photographic equipment destroyed. Traumatized, he had kept quiet about his authorship of the photographs. Subsequently, he was never recognized as the author, and never collected any royalties of the photographs that 'had begun to roll around the world, in thousands and thousands of copies' in the aftermath of the coup.²⁷⁹

The photographs caused controversy, because they showed Allende as a hero (and therefore vilified the United States, who had backed his enemies), and cast doubt on the official account of his death. It was widely doubted that Allende had killed himself, as the coup plotters maintained. An international investigation, however, confirmed Allende's suicide in 2011. This had an effect on how the photograph was read. Writing in the 1990s, war photographer Philip Jones Griffiths wrote that the photograph 'not

²⁷⁷ Sam Levin et.al., 'Facebook backs down from 'napalm girl' censorship and reinstates photo', *The Guardian* (Sept. 9, 2016)

²⁷⁸ As recounted by the *Times* photo editor, John Morris, in: John G. Morris, *Get the Picture. A personal history of photojournalism* (Chicago 1998) 263-264

²⁷⁹ Cora Gamarnik, 'Fotografía y dictaduras: estrategias comparadas entre Chile, Uruguay y Argentina', *Images, mémoires et sons* (June 10, 2012)

only disproved accounts of [Allende's] suicide in the presidential palace, it established the facts in a way that none of the thousands of column inches previously had done'.²⁸⁰ After Allende's suicide was confirmed, *Time* magazine wrote that the photograph 'became revered as an image that immortalized Allende as a hero who gladly chose death over dishonor'.²⁸¹ Another controversy surrounding this photograph is whether it was actually taken on September 11, 1973, or during the failed 'Tanquetazo' coup of June 29, 1973.²⁸²

Regardless of correct or incorrect interpretations, the photograph became 'celebrated', according to Didier Aubert, and an 'iconic image of the coup', according to Constance Ortuzar.²⁸³ Fernando Camacho Padilla and Laura Ramírez Palacio go further. 'This photograph is, surely, one of the most important portraits of the 20th century, with great international resonance', they wrote.²⁸⁴ They also had direct effect, according to these scholars. 'Images were decisive to generate national and international rejection against the *Junta Militar*', they maintain, and Lagos' photograph was especially important in this regard: 'an extremely valuable document' that both captures Allende's end and 'give[s] account of the repression and censorship when Pinochet came to power'.²⁸⁵

2.4.17 Jörgen Caris – *Albanese Children Playing* (1997)

In the mid-1990s, Dutch novice photographer Jörgen Caris was seeking a powerful subject for his graduation portfolio to finish his MA in Fine Arts. He found it in the mysterious, chaotic Albania of those transition years. Once he arrived there, he found himself in the midst of widespread popular unrest. For his safety, and because he

²⁸⁰ Philip Jones Griffiths, 'Death of the photographer', *Index on Censorship* 28 (1999) 6, 221

²⁸¹ Time editors, *100 Photographs: The Most Influential Images Of All Time* (New York 2016) 75

²⁸² Constance Ortuzar, for example, believes the image to be from June 29, 1973. See: Constance Ortuzar, 'Visualizing "the other 9/11": memory of the Chilean coup', in: Christian Delage, Peter Goodrich (eds.), *The Scene of the Mass Crime: History, Film, and International Tribunals* (Abingdon 2013) 180. Most scholars, however, believe the photo to be taken during the coup of Sept. 11, 1973.

²⁸³ Didier Aubert, 'De Capa à Gamma : le photojournalisme au révélateur chilien', *Dans Monde(s)* 2 (2015) 8, 121-140, 130; Constance Ortuzar, 'Visualizing "the other 9/11": memory of the Chilean coup', 180

²⁸⁴ Fernando Camacho Padilla and Laura Ramírez Palacio, 'Fotografía y memoria visual de la dictadura militar. Reflexiones desde la historia. Photography and visual memoirs of military dictatorship', *Reflexions from history*, *Revista Austral de Ciencias Sociales* 34 (2018) 53-70, 56

²⁸⁵ *Ibidem*.

couldn't afford a new airplane ticket, he left the country, forced to leave much of his work behind, he later told in a newspaper interview.²⁸⁶

Caris, who is a personal friend, agreed to offer one of his unpublished photos from Albania as 'control photo' for my survey – no one in the world, except perhaps a few of his colleagues, has seen this photo; it is not on the internet and there is certainly no academic debate about it. The photo does have some qualities often ascribed to iconic photographs, with its striking black-and-white composition and image of threat, and is therefore well suited as an inconspicuous 'control photo' in this group of twenty-five.

2.4.18 Steve McCurry – Afghan Girl (1984)

In 1984, war photographer Steve McCurry took a remarkable photograph of the then twelve-year old Afghan refugee Sharbat Gula. McCurry had made a name for himself photographing the Afghan civil war, just before the Soviet Union invaded the country in 1979, and subsequently photographing conflicts in Cambodia, Lebanon and between Iran and Iraq. In 1984, he was taking pictures in the Nasir Bagh refugee camp near Peshawar, Pakistan, when he came upon Sharbat Gula, and took several pictures of the girl. In many she is smiling, or looking away. In the one that became famous, her face is blank, and her green eyes have a perplexing gaze, straight into the camera.

The photograph instantly attracted attention when it featured on the cover of *National Geographic* in 1985, and has been widely reprinted and re-used since. 'The photograph came to take on iconic status', Vera Mackie wrote, 'first appearing on the cover of *National Geographic* in June 1985, and then recycled in a range of other contexts'.²⁸⁷ Mytheli Sreenivas labels the photograph 'one of the most reproduced photographs in the world, appearing on rugs, coffee mugs, postcards, and posters'.²⁸⁸ And Rae Lynn Schwartz-DuPre writes: 'Since her 1985 debut, *National Geographic's* Afghan Girl has been reprinted numerous times, circulated through popular media by way of television, art galleries, hardcover coffee table books, calendars, Web sites, and movies.' She labels the picture an 'iconic photograph' that 'has circulated extensively within media discourses including *National Geographic's* 100 Best Pictures, museum exhibits, speeches,

²⁸⁶ Romana Abels, 'Plots stond leerling-fotograaf midden in Albanese brandhaard', *Trouw* (March 6, 1997) <https://www.trouw.nl/home/plots-stond-leerling-fotograaf-midden-in-albanese-brandhaard-ad8fe215/> (accessed Nov. 14, 2018)

²⁸⁷ Vera Mackie, 'The 'Afghan Girls': Media representations and frames of war', *Continuum Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 26 (2012) 1, 115-131, 120

²⁸⁸ Mytheli Sreenivas, 'Teaching about "Other" Women: Developing a Global Perspective on Gender in the Classroom', *Transformations* 15 (Spring 2004) 1, 28-39, 33

history books, sculptures and the popular 2002 follow-up article and accompanying film *The Search for the Afghan Girl*.²⁸⁹

That this photograph would achieve such fame was hardly something to be expected. Among many other authors, Holly Edwards points out how remarkable it is 'that Afghan Girl has become a virtual icon in a visually saturated society'. 'Countless images (some of them "beautiful", powerful, dangerous, or otherwise provocative) have simultaneously come and gone without a trace', she notes. 'Somehow, this one has repeatedly reached benumbed and satiated audiences, eliciting fascination and even activism.'²⁹⁰

This fascination has remained, both outside academic circles and within. Many scholars are highly critical of the public fascination and perhaps adoration of the Afghan Girl photograph. 'The highly publicized [photograph] has come to stand for the plight of Afghan women and refugees worldwide. One could argue it has functioned as First World's Third World *Mona Lisa* – an exoticized "Other" onto whom the discourse of international human rights has been placed', Wendy Hesford and Wendy Kozol wrote. The 'iconic image' justifies 'the representational politics of pity', they argue, and perfectly 'fit[s] in with Western myths of deserving victims'.²⁹¹

Already in the 1980s, this sentiment was used for political purposes, according to Rae Lynn Schwartz-DuPre. The use of the Afghan Girl photograph in United States media 'offered viewers the opportunity to rhetorically constitute public support for President Reagan's initiative to arm Afghanistan', she argues.²⁹²

Such criticism of the Afghan Girl's use in western countries', and especially the United States' public sphere intensified after the US invasion of Afghanistan in late 2001. After the invasion, the Afghan Girl photograph was republished often, especially after Steve McCurry travelled to Afghanistan in 2002 to locate and photograph the now 29-year old 'girl'. *National Geographic* and numerous other publications republished the Afghan

²⁸⁹ Rae Lynn Schwartz-DuPre, 'Portraying the Political: National Geographic's 1985 Afghan Girl and a US Alibi for Aid', *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 27 (2010) 4, 336-356

²⁹⁰ Holly Edwards, 'Cover to cover: The life cycle of an image in contemporary visual culture', in: Erina Duganne, Holly Edwards, Mark Reinhardt (eds.), *Beautiful suffering: Photography and the traffic in pain* (Chicago 2007) 76

²⁹¹ Wendy Hesford, Wendy Kozol, 'Introduction', in: Wendy Hesford, Wendy Kozol (eds.), *Just Advocacy? Women's Human Rights, Transnational Feminisms, and the Politics of Representation* (Piscataway 2005) 1

²⁹² Rae Lynn Schwartz-DuPre, 'Portraying the Political', 336. The point that the photograph made for a perfect victim in western publications is also made in: Anna Szörényi, 'The Face of Suffering in Afghanistan: Identity, Authenticity and Technology in the Search for the Representative Refugee', *Australian Feminist Law Journal* 21 (2004) 1

Girl photograph alongside one of the new portraits. An 'Afghan Girls' drive by the magazine raised 22 million dollars in public donations.²⁹³

Many scholars saw a link between the republication of the Afghan Girl photograph and the context of the invasion of and aid to Afghanistan in which it was published. Slovene philosopher Renata Salecl was relatively cautious when she wrote of the re-emergence of the Afghan Girl photograph: 'The eyes open a space where we can create our own fantasies about what this girl's gaze means, perhaps also about the role we could play in a potential response to her request; for example, supporting an intervention in this part of the world.'²⁹⁴

Others established the same connection, in harsher terms. 'The return of "the Afghan Girl" in the "war on terror" is no coincidence', Suvendrini Pera wrote. 'Her green-eyed gaze legitimises a new set of interventions – humanitarian, military, legal, socio-cultural, economic, political – in the war in Afghanistan'.²⁹⁵ Barbie Zelizer agreed. The way this 'iconic image of war refugees' was re-used in 2002, she wrote, supported 'assumptions about the war held by the forces responsible for its prosecution', and made media who did the republishing 'complicit, if not consciously so, in using images in ways that upheld larger strategic aims'.²⁹⁶

The photograph's political usefulness for the US administration under George W. Bush did not end with justification of the invasion of Afghanistan, some critics argue. One line of criticism argues that '*National Geographic's* strategic redeployment of the Afghan Girl' helped the Bush administration 'to render acceptable and intelligible what the American public had once vehemently opposed: biometric national identification technologies'.²⁹⁷

2.4.19 Jeff Widener – Tank Man (1989)

In the spring of 1989, student protests developed in Beijing's central Tianenmen Square, which developed into mass gatherings, calling for political and social reforms in China. On June 3 and 4, the China's People's Liberation Army stunned the protesters and the world by clearing the square with extreme force, with estimates of the death toll

²⁹³ Suvendrini Pera, 'The Gender of Borderpanic', in: Maureen Cain, Adrian Howe (eds.), *Women, Crime and Social Harm: Towards a Criminology for the Global Age* (Oxford 2008) 86

²⁹⁴ Renata Salecl, 'Les fraudes dans le domaine de la médecine légale : à la recherche perverse de la trace matérielle de la réalité', *Savoirs et clinique* 16 (2013) 1, 179-189

²⁹⁵ Ibidem, 87

²⁹⁶ Barbie Zelizer, 'Death in Wartime. Photographs and the "Other War" in Afghanistan', *Press/Politics* 10 (2005) 3, 26-55, 34

²⁹⁷ Rae Lynn Schwartz-DuPre, 'Rhetorically Representing Public Policy: *National Geographic's* 2002 Afghan Girl and the Bush administration's biometric identification policies', *Feminist Media Studies* 7 (2007) 4, 433-453, 433

running from hundreds to thousands of deaths. The next day, several photographers, using zoom lenses, captured an extraordinary event. A column of tanks, coming up on Chang'an Avenue, on the north edge of Tiananmen Square, was blocked by a lone man carrying grocery bags, who repositioned himself repeatedly as the leading tank tried to steer around him.

Associated Press photographer Jeff Widener had his film with several photographs of the incident smuggled to the AP office in Beijing, and was greeted the next day with messages on the clipboard with congratulations from all over the world: 'Widener's tank man fronting all UK newspapers half page. '; 'Tank man fronting all European papers'; 'Tank man fronting USA Today and International Herald Tribune', etcetera.²⁹⁸ Although other photographers had captured the same moment, Widener's image was the one directly distributed over news wire and printed by a host of media the next day. According to writer and essayist Pico Iyer, the man who is now known as the Tank Man 'was seen in his moment of self-transcendence by more people than ever laid eyes on Winston Churchill, Albert Einstein and James Joyce combined'.²⁹⁹ David Perlmutter labeled the image the 'supericon of Tiananmen'.³⁰⁰

The Tank Man has created for itself 'a monumental space of global spectatorship', Yasmin Ibrahim wrote.³⁰¹ The continued reprinting, re-posting and other use in countries around the world, according to Margaret Hillenbrand, has led to 'countless reversionings of Tank Man over the last 25 years', such as 'political cartoons, memes, posters, YouTube remixes'.³⁰²

Its initial reading in Western countries was of the image as an embodiment of the evils of Chinese communism, and the yearning of people all over the world to have Western-style freedom.³⁰³ The photograph thus has 'come to constitute the compass point for virtually all Western [understandings of] contemporary political and cultural life of China', according to Michael Dutton.³⁰⁴ Philosopher Slavoj Žižek remarked that the 'tiny

²⁹⁸ Patrick Witty, 'Behind the Scenes: Tank Man of Tiananmen', *The New York Times – Lens Blog* (June 3, 2009), <https://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/06/03/behind-the-scenes-tank-man-of-tiananmen/> (accessed Nov. 18, 2018)

²⁹⁹ Pico Iyer, 'The Unknown Rebel', *Time* (April 13, 1998)

³⁰⁰ David Perlmutter, *Photojournalism and Foreign Policy: Icons of Outrage in International Crises* (Westport, 1998) 61

³⁰¹ Yasmin Ibrahim, 'Tank Man, Media Memory and Yellow Duck Patrol. Remembering Tiananmen on Social Media', *Digital Journalism* 4 (2016) 5, 582-596

³⁰² Margaret Hillenbrand, 'Remaking Tank Man, in China', *Journal of Visual Culture* 16 (2017) 2, 129

³⁰³ Kay Schaffer, Sidonie Smith, *Human Rights and Narrated Lives: The Ethics of Recognition* (New York, 2004) 204; C. Lee, Li, and F. Lee, 'Symbolic Use of Decisive Events: Tiananmen as a News Icon in the Editorials of the Elite U.S. Press', *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 16 (2011) 3, 335–356; Jeffrey Wasserstrom, 'Current Chinese Protests and the Prism of Tiananmen', *International Journal of Press/Politics* 8 (2003) 1, 81–86

³⁰⁴ Michael Dutton, *Streetlife China* (New York, 1998) 17

young man' gave the West an experience of 'transparent clarity' about China and thus about itself.³⁰⁵

Current debates around the Tank Man photograph explore how iconic images (such as this one) acquire new meaning in new times, new context and new media. Anthropologist Jennifer Hubbert argues, for example, that the Tank Man image was 'modified and repurposed to new political ends', and in the twenty-first century starts to speak to shortcomings in Western democracies as well as in China.³⁰⁶ Sandrine Boudana and Paul Frosh argue that when iconic images become 'memes', their significance dissolves and they may degrade public culture.³⁰⁷

2.4.20 Kevin Carter – *Vulture and Child* (1994)

When South African photojournalist Kevin Carter made a photograph that led to intense discussion and public reactions in different places around the world, he was not seeking out a place with harrowing conditions but was rather seeking respite from the violent and intense scenes he had been documenting for years. Carter decided to be a photojournalist after he witnessed the Church Street bombing in Pretoria, an ANC bomb attack that killed 19 people and wounded 217, when he was aged 22. The next ten years, Carter documented the last years of Apartheid rule, with its violence from the state and between South Africa's ANC and Inkatha.

Carter and other photojournalists had banded together in what they called 'The Bang Bang Club'. In 1993, his fellow 'club'-member Joao Silva had asked Carter to come with him on an assignment for the United Nations to document the famine and civil war in Sudan. Carter accepted, and the two first photographed in the city of Juba, then in village of Ayod. After taking photographs in the village and the aid center, Carter walked off into the bush around it, and found a little child, collapsed on the ground. As he prepared to take pictures, a vulture landed close by, and eyed the child while he photographed it. He then, as he later told Silva, scared the vulture away, waited, and saw the child get up and walk on toward the aid center.

After the *New York Times* and South Africa's *Mail & Guardian* published the photograph, it instantly attracted attention. It was 'displayed in many other publications as a

³⁰⁵ Slavoj Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real! Five Essays on September 11 and Related Dates* (London, 2002) 45–46

³⁰⁶ Jennifer Hubbert, 'Appropriating Iconicity: Why Tank Man Still Matters', *Visual Anthropology Review* 30 (Fall 2014) 2, 114

³⁰⁷ Sandrine Boudana, Akiba Cohen, Paul Frosh, 'Reviving icons to death: when historic photographs become digital memes', *Media, Culture & Society* 39 (2017) 8, 1210–1230

metaphor for Africa's despair', the *New York Times* later wrote.³⁰⁸ 'The picture had caused a sensation. It was being used in posters for raising funds for aid organizations', according to Carter's colleagues Greg Marinovich and Joao Silva. 'Papers and magazines around the world had published it, and the immediate public reaction was to send money to any humanitarian organization that had an operation in Sudan.'³⁰⁹ Scholars agree. 'It was an immediate sensation and was reprinted in newspapers and magazines around the world', a scholar wrote.³¹⁰ 'The photo went around the world', asserted another.³¹¹ One scholar described it as the 'picture that made the world weep'.³¹² But the fallout was not always positive. 'The reaction to the picture was so strong that *The Times* published an unusual editors' note on the fate of the girl'.³¹³ Hundreds of *Times* readers wrote or called the newspaper to enquire about the fate of the child, or venting anger at the photographer.³¹⁴ The debate about the ethics of the photograph was sharpened when Carter first won the Pulitzer Prize with his photograph, and then committed suicide, a few months later. 'The notoriety of the photograph and the public nature of Carter's death generated a firestorm of controversy about this photo, about photojournalism, and about how photos of human suffering function in contemporary culture', Laurie Cassidy wrote.³¹⁵

Debate about the photograph continued as it was, in Maronivich and Silva's words, 'becoming a symbol of famine, and used as such throughout the world', an 'icon of starvation' and later a 'metaphor for Africa's despair', according to the *New York Times*, and 'an icon of Africa's anguish', to *Time* magazine.³¹⁶ In fact, so much has been written

³⁰⁸ Bill Keller, 'Kevin Carter, a Pulitzer Winner For Sudan Photo, Is Dead at 33', *The New York Times* (July 29, 1994)

³⁰⁹ Greg Marinovich and Joao Silva, *The Bang Bang Club. Snapshots from a hidden war* (New York 2001) 151

³¹⁰ Jack Lule, *Globalization and Media* (Lanham 2011) 12

³¹¹ Emmanuel Alloa, 'Changer de sens. Quelques effets du "tournant iconique"', *Critique* 8 (2010) 9, 647-658

³¹² Wai Kit Ow Yeong, 'Our Failure of Empathy: Kevin Carter, Susan Sontag, and the Problems of Photography', *Think Pieces: A Journal of the Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences* 1 (2014) 1, 9-17,

³¹³ Bill Keller, 'Kevin Carter', *The New York Times* (July 29, 1994)

³¹⁴ Scott MacLeod, 'The Life and Death of Kevin Carter', *Time* 144 (Sept. 12, 1994) 11, 70-73

³¹⁵ Laurie Cassidy, 'Picturing Suffering: The Moral Dilemmas in Gazing at Photographs of Human Anguish', *Horizons* 37 (2010) 2, 195-223, 208

³¹⁶ Marinovich and Silva, 151; *New York Times* quoted in: Laurie Cassidy, 'Picturing Suffering', 208, and in: Barbie Zelizer, 'Cannibalizing Memory in the Global Flow of News', in: Neiger, Meyers, Zandberg (eds.), *On Media Memory: Collective Memory in a New Media Age* (Houndmills 2011) 31; *Time* quoted in: Scott MacLeod, 'The Life and Death of Kevin Carter', 71

about this photograph that, according to Brandon Golob, a 'large body of literature [...] surrounds it'.³¹⁷

One theme in this literature is concerned with the 'interchangeable' quality of Carter's photograph as a symbol of despair or hunger. Barbie Zelizer used the example of Carter's photograph to illustrate what she calls the third stage of the 'cannibalization of memory', namely 'displacement, where over time the elements imported as mnemonic frames for local experience are sustained at the expense of the original event'.³¹⁸ Another theme has been the 'cultural appropriation of suffering', as embodied by this photograph, according to Arthur and Joan Kleinman.³¹⁹

Some scholars investigate the morality of looking at Carter's image of the suffering child (first thought to be a girl, but later identified as a boy); a recent study has even sampled opinions of photojournalists, students, and random participants on the ethical choices Kevin Carter faced when taking his photograph.³²⁰ Others investigate the purpose of its publication. Jennifer Wallace, for example, argues that Carter's photo 'raises more accurately and vividly the question which Brecht posed: what is the use of tragic representation if it changes nothing?'³²¹ And still others see Carter's photograph as a prime example of the predatory nature of photojournalism: as 'the most famous subject to the charges' that photographs (and photographers) can be 'voyeuristic, exploitative, and even pornographic'.³²²

2.4.21 James Nachtwey – Rwanda Genocide Survivor (1994)

The genocide that took place in 1994 in Rwanda is sometimes referred to as the 'unseen genocide' because it took place largely out of view of international audiences, until well after the killing had started. There were photographers present during and immediately after the worst violence. Among them was James Nachtwey, whose photograph of a

³¹⁷ Brandon Golob, 'Restricted Representation: The Role of Ethics and Esthetics in Framing Images of Suffering', *Journal of Human Rights* 12 (2013) 4, 511-522, 514

³¹⁸ Barbie Zelizer, 'Cannibalizing Memory in the Global Flow of News', in: Neiger, Meyers, Zandberg (eds.), *On Media Memory: Collective Memory in a New Media Age* (Houndmills 2011) 32

³¹⁹ Arthur Kleinman and Joan Kleinman, 'The Appeal of Experience; The Dismay of Images: Cultural Appropriations of Suffering in Our Times', *Daedalus* 125 (Winter 1996) 1, 1-23

³²⁰ For example: Brandon Golob, 'Restricted Representation: The Role of Ethics and Esthetics in Framing Images of Suffering', *Journal of Human Rights* 12 (2013) 4, 511-522; Laurie Cassidy, 'Picturing Suffering: The Moral Dilemmas in Gazing at Photographs of Human Anguish', *Horizons* 37 (2010) 2, 195-223; ethical choice sampled in: Yung Soo Kim, James Kelly, 'Photojournalist on the Edge: Reactions to Kevin Carter's Sudan Famine Photo', *Visual Communication Quarterly*, 20 (2013) 4, 205-219

³²¹ Jennifer Wallace, *The Cambridge Introduction to Tragedy* (Cambridge 2007) 166

³²² Safia Swimelar, 'Human rights visible through photography and film', in: Anja Mihr, Mark Gibney (eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Human Rights* (London 2014) 425

Hutu man, marked with deep scars from machete slashes across the face won World Press Photo the next year. Science Author Laurie Garrett, wrote in *The Lancet* how James Nachtwey 'led war photographers' to photograph the violence, and that by doing so, placed 'indelible images in worldwide collective consciousness'.³²³

It is not an image that is universally lauded. Some photography critics disapprove of what they see as Nachtwey's aestheticizing of violence and victims. 'Some photographers continue to instrumentalize the visible wounds of survivors as metaphor', Zoe Norridge, curator of the exhibition *Rwanda in Photographs: Death Then, Life Now*, wrote. Norridge acknowledged that the image is the 'arguably most famous photograph of the 1994 genocide', that 'has been used repeatedly alongside news articles about Rwanda'. 'Even two decades after the genocide the photograph continues to be favoured by both Rwandan and foreign picture editors', she writes. Still, Norridge feels the image is a 'powerfully evocative simplification' and a 'visual reduction' of the subject himself and the genocide.³²⁴

James Nachtwey's work, in fact, is often at the heart of discussions about aesthetics in war photography, with Rwandan Victim as one of the exhibits. Journalism scholar Susie Linfield, for example, insists argued that 'Nachtwey's insistence on coherent aesthetic structure is a manner of 'shaping pain' that is necessary for its reception in the world today'.³²⁵ Nachtwey's stated ambition to create famous photographs that 'become a part of our visual history, to enter our collective memory and our collective conscience' adds to this debate.³²⁶ This photograph has been included because of the significance of its subject and to test whether the Rwandan genocide is really such an underrecognized historical event – at least in the case of this photograph – and because of the extensive debate that surrounds this particular photo, Nachtwey's work in general, and the visual style it represents,.

³²³ Laurie Garrett, 'Rwanda: not the official narrative', *The Lancet* 392 (15–21 September, 2018) 10151, 909-912

³²⁴ Zoe Norridge, 'Photography, Film and Visibly Wounded Genocide Survivors in Rwanda', *Journal of Genocide Research* 20 (Jan. 2018) 3

³²⁵ Susie Linfield, *The Cruel Radiance: Photography and Political Violence* (Chicago, 2012) 214. This debate, and the Rwanda case, also feature in: Nick Hughes, 'Exhibit 467: Genocide Through a Camera Lens', in: Allan Thompson (ed.), *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide* (London, 2007) 231–7; Angi Buettner, 'Media Representation of Catastrophe, Holocaust Imagery, and the Politics of Seeing', *Medianz: Media Studies Journal* 11 (2008) 1; Piotr Cieplak, *Death, Image, Memory: The Genocide in Rwanda and Its Aftermath in Photography and Documentary Film* (London 2017); and Holly Edwards, 'Cover to Cover: The Life Cycle of an Image in Contemporary Visual Culture', in: Mark Reinhardt, Holly Edwards, (eds.), *Beautiful Suffering: Photography and the Traffic in Pain* (Chicago 2007) 75–92; Vincent Lavoie, 'L'Enfer de James Nachtwey: protocole pour une photographie compassionnelle', *Protée* 37 (2009) 1, 35–45

³²⁶ Quoted from: James Nachtwey, *Inferno* (New York 1999) 471

2.4.22 Richard Drew – *The Falling Man* (2001)

After the hijacked airplanes flew into the towers of the World Trade Center in New York on 11 September 2001, fire and smoke forced people to flee upward, and eventually to jump to their deaths to escape the flames. Their number may have run up to two hundred people. Veteran AP news photographer Richard Drew, who half a life earlier had photographed the fatally wounded Robert Kennedy, photographed these falling people. Reviewing his images, he was struck by this single image of a man who, by all appearances, was falling straight, controlled and serenely to his death (a quality lacking in the other photographs made of the same person). According to Drew, this photograph told a 'very important part of the story. It wasn't just a building falling down, there were people involved in this'.³²⁷

The image draws its power from the fact that it 'presents us with terrorism as a human experience, not just a political crime', according to Susie Linfield.³²⁸ But it did not instantly achieve status as an iconic photograph. The image appeared the day after the attacks in *The New York Times* and hundreds of other newspapers around the world. This drew widespread criticism, forcing many newspapers to issue apologies.³²⁹ Journalists who tried to establish its story met angry responses, being accused of exploiting a person's death.³³⁰

But the image did not fade out of public use. In 2003, journalist Tom Junod wrote a widely quoted article in *Esquire* about the photograph, titled 'The Falling Man'. This article in turn inspired the 2006 documentary *9/11: The Falling Man*. When this image started to re-appear in the media, it attracted attention from media scholars and critics, and inspired novels such as Jonathan Safran Foer's *Incredibly Loud and Extremely Close* and DeLillo's *The Falling Man*.³³¹ As the distance in time increased to the 2001 attacks, the Falling Man was reprinted increasingly often, overshadowing other photographs as a central image representing the terrorist attacks, prompting Rob Kroes to predict that in the future, the photograph 'will be seen and remembered in its full iconic power, finding its place in the continued quest for the meaning of 9/11'.³³²

³²⁷ Peter Howe, 'Richard Drew', *The Digital Journalist* (October 2001)

³²⁸ Susie Linfield, 'Jumpers. Why the most haunting images of 2001 were hardly ever seen', *New York Magazine* (Aug 27, 2011)

³²⁹ Tom Junod, 'The Falling Man', in: Geoffrey Batchen e.a.(eds.), *Picturing Atrocity. Photography in Crisis* (London 2012) 171; Aaron Mauro, 'The Languishing of the Falling Man: Don DeLillo and Jonathan Safran Foer's Photographic History of 9/11', *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 57 (Fall 2011) 3, 584-606

³³⁰ Tom Junod, 'The Falling Man. An unforgettable story', *Esquire* (Sept. 9, 2016)

³³¹ Mauro, 'The Languishing of the Falling Man'

³³² Rob Kroes, 'Indecent Exposure: Picturing the Horror of 9/11', in: Derek Rubin and Jaap Verheul (eds.) *New Debates in American Studies: American Multiculturalism after 9/11* (Amsterdam 2009) 67-79

And this indeed is what happened. The status of Drew's image as a central representation of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 has continued to grow, leading various scholars to describe it as an 'iconic image of 9/11 attacks'.³³³ To others it became the central image of those attacks, 'an image that, perhaps more than any other, epitomizes the tragedy and the horror of the September 11 catastrophe in Western cultural memory'.³³⁴ Recent scholarly debates explore what the initial disappearance of the Falling Man from the public eye implies, its subsequent return as an icon of those terrorist attacks, and its influence upon US culture and art.³³⁵

2.4.23 Carmen Taylor – Hijacked airplane about to hit the World Trade Center South Tower (2001)

The maker of this photograph, Carmen Taylor, was an unlikely candidate to create an image in such an elite group of widely recognized pictures. Taylor was an auditor in a nursing home and a resident of Ft. Smith, Arkansas, who in September 2001 went on a five-day holiday trip to New York, and boarded a ferry to the Statue of Liberty on the morning of the 11th. She had borrowed a Sony digital camera from her son, which she used to make photographs after American Airlines 11 hit the North Tower of the World Trade Center. Eighteen minutes later, 'I looked up again and this plane went by so I just put my camera back up', she later said. 'That's when the second explosion took place'.³³⁶

On the advice of bystanders, Taylor sent her photograph of United Airlines 175, just before it hit the South Tower, and her photograph of the tower engulfed in a ball of flames, to her local Arkansas television station, which aired them immediately. Local

³³³ For example: Winfried Gerling, 'Falling Men – Images of the Falling Human in Art and Photography', in: A. Hernandez (ed.), *Apocalypse. Imagining the End* (Oxford 2014); K. Andén-Papadopoulos, 'The Trauma of Representation: Visual Culture, Photo Journalism and the September 11 Attacks', *Nordicom Review* 24:2 (2003) 29-104; Nicolaus Mills, 'Images of Terror', *Dissent* 56:4 (Fall 2009) 75–80

³³⁴ Andrea D. Fitzpatrick, 'The Movement of Vulnerability: Images of Falling and September 11', *Art Journal* 66:4 (2007) 84-102. This article explored the question whether all art that has the act of falling as its subject should be reinterpreted after the Falling Man photo – a question underlining its (supposed) influence.

³³⁵ For example: Kate Birdsall, 'Frenzied Representation and the Forbidden Image: 9/11' Falling Man and the Unrepresentable', *Epiphany: Journal of Transdisciplinary Studies* 8 (2015) 1; Rob Kroes, et.al., 'The Ascent of the Falling Man: Establishing a Picture's Iconicity', *Journal of American Studies* 45 (November 2011) 4; Guy Westwell, 'Acts of Redemption and "The Falling Man" Photograph in Post-9/11 US Cinema', in: Terence McSweeney (ed.), *American Cinema in the Shadow of 9/11* (Edinburgh 2017)

³³⁶ The Associated Press, 'Amateur Photographer Captures Attacks', quoted in: *USA Today* (Sept. 12, 2001) <https://usatoday30.usatoday.com/tech/news/2001/09/12/attack-digipics.htm> (accessed Nov. 14, 2018)

Associated Press staff saw the images on television, informed the head office, which contacted Carmen Taylor and distributed two of her images worldwide within minutes. 'Almost overnight, the power of spot news photography slipped from the hands of the skilled, passionate photojournalist into the pockets of consumers everywhere', AP's photo editor of that day later said. 'The amateur who is on the scene becomes the first eye on history'.³³⁷

This was certainly true for the attacks of September 11, 2001. While more narrative, symbolic, and ambivalent photographs of the 9/11 attacks were withheld from circulation after fierce condemnations, or withheld by photographers themselves to pre-empt condemnation, as in the case of Richard Drew's *Falling Man* or Thomas Hoepker's *Brooklyn, September 11, 2001*, 'hard news' photographs like that of Carmen Taylor were constantly sent over news networks all over the world. And they were printed, in unusually large numbers and large formats: 'for a global public (...) the events of September 11 were shaped largely through their visual representation. Images were everywhere', communication scholar Barbie Zelizer wrote.³³⁸

There is indeed evidence to suggest that global audiences were following fast, highly similar news flows and images through the large news agencies. Christina Archetti found indications of 'news similarity among countries' in their coverage of 9/11, while Shahira Fahmy, in an analysis of English and Arab language newspapers, found that 'the vast majority of photographs [they used] were from the main western news agencies: AP, AFP and Reuters'.³³⁹ And one of the photographs that was extensively used then, and is still often used today, is that of Carmen Taylor.

It is no surprise then, that this photograph is rarely missing from any major photographic commemoration of the 9/11 attacks in major news media, usually being either among the most prominent or among the first images to be shown – like in *The Washington Post's* 'most iconic photos from Sept. 11 and its aftermath', published on the 9/11 anniversary in 2018.³⁴⁰

³³⁷ Vin Alabiso, interviewed in: David Friend, *Watching the World Change: The Stories Behind the Images of 9/11* (New York 2007) 95. Details of how Taylor's photo reached a world audience were also taken from that book.

³³⁸ Barbie Zelizer, 'Photography, Journalism, and Trauma', in: Stuart Allen, Barbie Zelizer (eds.) *Journalism After 9/11* (New York 2011) 57

³³⁹ Cristina Archetti, 'Comparing international coverage of 9/11: Towards an interdisciplinary explanation of the construction of news', *Journalism* 11 (2010) 5, 570; Shahira Fahmy, 'Emerging Alternatives or Traditional News Gates. Which News Sources Were Used to Picture the 9/11 Attack and the Afghan War?', *Gazette Journal for Communication Studies* 67 (2005) 5, 381

³⁴⁰ Amanda Finnegan, 'The most iconic photos from Sept. 11 and its aftermath', *Washington Post* (Sept. 11, 2018) <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/retropolis/wp/2018/09/11/the-most-iconic-photos-from-sept-11-and-its-aftermath/>. Other examples include: British newspaper *The Telegraph* (<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/picturegalleries/worldnews/8739384/911-anniversary-in-pictures-the-attack-on-the-World-Trade-Center-in-New-York.html>), Australian daily *Sydney Morning Herald* (<https://www.smh.com.au/world/september-11-2001-historical->

Academic debates do acknowledge this, though usually in a general form. Andres Jahn-Sudmann suggests that photographs like Carmen Taylor's 'are given their iconic expression through the uniqueness of the event', rather than through an artistic expression.³⁴¹ While this is undoubtedly true, this comment seems to imply that photographs which 'are given their iconic expression' in that way are less iconic than more symbolic images with more 'artistic expression' such as Richard Drew's *Falling Man*. Editors of the prominent media who feature Carmen Taylor's photograph in their 'most iconic photographs'-overviews of the 9/11 attacks seem to disagree.

2.4.24 Ivan Frederick – Abu Ghraib prisoner (2003)

During the United States' occupation of Iraq, the US Army and CIA detained thousands of Iraqi prisoners in a former prison in the Baghdad satellite town of Abu Ghraib. In November 2003, the Associated Press published a long report, detailing beatings, torture, deaths, and other inhumane and illegal treatment at the Abu Ghraib prison. It did not attract much attention at the time. That changed when television news program *60 Minutes* featured a story in April 2004 on the Abu Ghraib torture, laced with photographs taken by the prison staff themselves, documenting the abuse. Around the same time, *The New Yorker* also published an article by Seymour Hersh, entitled 'Torture at Abu Ghraib'. The news, now accompanied by shocking photographs, caused global outrage. Archbishop Giovanni Lajolo, foreign minister of the Vatican, stated that the torture amounted to 'A more serious blow to the United States than the September 11, 2001 attacks. Except that the blow was not inflicted by terrorists but by Americans against themselves.'³⁴²

The images 'displayed vividly to the citizens of the world' torture by US army personnel, professor of journalism Mark Danner wrote. And: 'It took the Abu Ghraib photographs [...] to bring Americans' torture of prisoners up for public discussion.'³⁴³ A photograph that quickly started to stand out, although it was less graphic and cruel than many others, was one of the hooded prisoner Ali Shallal al-Qaisi standing on a box, who was told that he would be electrocuted through wires that were attached to him if he fell

20110830-1jjjq.html), or even US news outlet Breitbart News (<https://www.breitbart.com/politics/2018/09/11/images-911-visual-remembrance/>). (All websites accessed November 14, 2018)

³⁴¹ Andreas Jahn-Sudmann, 'The Falling Man. Das erste Post-9/11-Bild', *Medienwissenschaft* 2 (2010) 167

³⁴² USA Today, 'Vatican calls prison abuse a bigger blow to U.S. than Sept. 11', *USA Today* (May 12, 2004)

³⁴³ Quotes from: Mark Danner, 'Torture and Truth', in: David Strauss, Charles Stein (eds.), *Abu Ghraib: The Politics of Torture* (Berkeley 2004), 6; Mark Danner, 'Torture and Truth', *The New York Review of Books* 51 (June 24, 2004) 11, 63

off. It was to be 'the most emblematic image of the torture scandal', Dora Apel wrote, an image that 'resonates with allusions to the crucifixion, robed monks, the Statue of Liberty, the [Ku Klux] Klan, the executioner, the mask of death'.³⁴⁴ It 'unites figures of torture and sacredness or divinity', commented W.J.T. Mitchell.³⁴⁵

The photograph was printed by news media across the globe, became the basis of antiwar images, and was copied in murals in Tehran and Sadr City, Baghdad.³⁴⁶ In Gaza, Commonwealth war graves were destroyed and posters of the Abu Ghraib prisoner with a swastika printed over it glued to the broken tombstones.³⁴⁷ The image was used as inspiration by British sculptor Tim Shaw, American artist Richard Serra, by Canadian musician Tim Hecker, by director Alfonso Cuarón in his movie *Children of Men*. It was also used on the cover of various books, such as *Abu Ghraib: The Politics of Torture* and *Torture and Truth: America, Abu Ghraib, and the War on Terror*.

The image also sparked a wide academic debate on a range of questions. These included questions about how iconic news photographs exercise power in shaping news, politics and public opinion; how they influence the framing of news by news media; how they impact security; how conceptions of pornography influenced the reception of this photograph; and how visual media can be deployed as a weapon.³⁴⁸ One and a half decades after it was first published, the image still continues to generate new research.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁴ Dora Apel, 'Torture Culture: Lynching Photographs and the Images of Abu Ghraib', *Artforum* (Summer 2005) 91

³⁴⁵ W.J.T. Mitchell, 'Echoes of a Christian Symbol', *Chicago Tribune* (June 27, 2004)

³⁴⁶ Apel, 'Torture Culture', 95-96

³⁴⁷ The Associated Press, 'Palestinians destroy graves in Gaza Commonwealth cemetery', *The Associated Press* (May 10, 2004)

³⁴⁸ See for example: Kari Andén-Papadopoulos, 'The Abu Ghraib torture photographs. News frames, visual culture, and the power of images', *Journalism* 9 (2008) 1, 5-30; W.L. Bennett, R.G. Lawrence, S. Livingston, 'None Dare Call It Torture', *Journal of Communication* 56 (2006) 3, 467-85; Michael Williams, 'Words, Images, Enemies: Securitization and International Politics', *International Studies Quarterly*, 47 (2006) 4, 511-31; Frank Möller, 'Photographic Interventions in Post-9/11 Security Policy', *Security Dialogue* 38 (2007) 2, 179-96; Stephen Eisenman, *The Abu Ghraib Effect* (London 2007); Nicholas Mirzoeff, 'Invisible Empire: Visual Culture, Embodied Spectacle, and Abu Ghraib', *Radical History Review* 95 (2006) 21-44

³⁴⁹ For example: Joey Jakob, 'Beyond Abu Ghraib: War trophy photography and commemorative violence', *Media, War & Conflict* 10 (2017) 1, 87-104; A. Cohen, S. Boudana, P. Frosh, 'You Must Remember This: Iconic News Photographs and Collective Memory', *Journal of Communication* 68 (June 1, 2018) 3, 453-479

2.4.25 Pete Souza – Situation Room (2011)

During the presidency of United States president Barack Obama, former news photographer Pete Souza was made official White House photographer. In that capacity, he made many thousands of photographs of the president at work and at home. On the afternoon of May 1, 2011, he followed Obama and his most senior national security staff into the White House Situation Room, and photographed them while they followed a raid by United States special forces on a compound in Pakistan where they believed Osama bin Laden was hiding. In the center of the photograph is a general, Brad Webb, who is monitoring the raid on his laptop. All others, including Obama, his vice president Biden, and his secretaries Clinton and Gates, are intently watching a screen that is outside the photograph.

Souza's Situation Room photograph was published a few days later, after Obama had announced in a nationwide address that Bin Laden had been killed. According to Katrin Dauenhauer, '[t]he picture accrued iconic status almost immediately and headlined the front pages of many influential U.S. and international newspapers'.³⁵⁰ Others scholars agreed. The photograph 'was published on the front pages of [leading US newspapers], and many other leading national newspapers across the globe', and hence the 'image has rapidly accrued iconic status', wrote Liam Kennedy.³⁵¹ 'There has been a huge amount of speculation about what this photograph depicts', according to Kennedy, although regardless of its content all the commentary, remediations, and high circulation make this photograph 'a significant visual event'. He asserts that the photograph 'has been widely labeled "iconic" as well as "historic"'.³⁵²

Since its publication, the photograph has received ample scholarly attention. Megan McFarlane analyzed 'the image's persuasive power within various public spheres', and argued that the photograph 'contributes to the increasingly visual aspect of the rhetorical presidency' of Barack Obama.³⁵³ Jennifer Wallace analyzes the photograph as 'a visual recognition of polarised enmity', and asserts: 'such is the tragic spectral image which haunts the Pete Souza iconic representation of the war'.³⁵⁴

The photograph also inspired several works of art. A video installation by Chilean artist Alfredo Jaar, for example, which was exhibited in galleries in Berlin, New York and Paris. In an essay about the installation and the photograph that inspired it, Mafalda

³⁵⁰ Katrin Dauenhauer, 'Between Ethics and Aesthetics: Photographs of War during the Bush and Obama Administrations', *Amerikastudien / American Studies* 58 (2013) 4, 625-646, 637

³⁵¹ Liam Kennedy, 'Seeing and Believing: On Photography and the War on Terror', *Public Culture* 24 (2012) 2, 261-281, 265 and 266

³⁵² *Ibidem*, 265, 266

³⁵³ Megan McFarlane, 'Visualizing the Rhetorical Presidency: Barack Obama in the Situation Room', *Visual Communication Quarterly* 23 (2016) 1, 3-13, 3

³⁵⁴ Jennifer Wallace, 'Photography, tragedy and Osama bin Laden: looking at the enemy', *Critical Quarterly* 57 (2015) 2, 17-35, 32

Dâmaso analyzed 'the reasons why this image has become so iconic'.³⁵⁵ Berlin artist collective Rimini Protokoll used the 'celebrated photograph' for an interactive artwork.³⁵⁶ And it was re-enacted in director Polly Findlay's rendition of Sophocles' play *Antigone*, in London's National Theatre in summer 2012. As 'a visual echo of the well-known photograph by White House photographer Pete Souza', Jennifer Wallace wrote in an essay on the photograph, 'the *tableau vivant* produced a gasp of recognition from the audience'.³⁵⁷ The photograph itself, Wallace argues, continues to invite reflection on 'the complicated process of looking at the enemy' in contemporary war.³⁵⁸

³⁵⁵ Mafalda Dâmaso, 'On *May 1, 2011* (Alfredo Jaar, 2011) – Expanding the Frame of the Original Photograph', in: Elena Stylianou, Theopisti Stylianou-Lambert (eds.), *Museums and Photography: Displaying Death* (London 2017) 277-292, 279

³⁵⁶ Marion Siéfert, 'Situation Rooms de Rimini Protokoll. Du politique aux politesses', *Agôn* (20 mai 2014)

³⁵⁷ Wallace, 'Photography, tragedy and Osama bin Laden', 17

³⁵⁸ *Ibidem*

Chapter 3. The Global Visual Memory Survey: A Quantitative Analysis

In this chapter, I will offer a quantitative analysis of the results of the photography survey. This chapter will begin with a section that explains and elaborates on the data that was collected with the photography survey. The second section will draw conclusions from the survey results about the existence of a Global Visual Memory. The third section will offer general conclusions about respondents' recognition of the photographs in the survey, focusing on individual photographs and groups of pictures with similar recognition scores. The fourth section will look at recognition scores and demographic factors such as age, nationality, and political views. The fifth section will analyze respondent's answers about the emotional impact of selected photographs on them. The sixth section will offer a quantitative analysis of how respondents rated the importance of these photographs. The seventh and last section will offer a quantitative analysis of combined statistics, merging findings about the recognition, emotional impact, and perceived importance of the photographs presented to the survey audience.

3.1 The Dataset

The survey consisted of closed as well as open questions, so that the answers can be analyzed in quantitative and in qualitative terms. But first, I will provide some basic numbers about the survey and about the answers that were collected with it.

A total of 2,936 respondents took part in the survey, roughly evenly divided over twelve countries, an average of 245 per country. The survey was distributed by Survey Sampling International (SSI), a company that provides survey sampling and data collection. SSI distributed my survey online to panel members in these countries. SSI manages online panels with many thousands of respondents in countries across the world, and keeps statistics on personal data such as age, gender, et cetera. I wanted each group of respondents to be representative of their country's population with respect to gender, education level and age. To achieve this, SSI opened the online survey to all their respondents in the countries where my survey ran, and automatically closed the survey to respondents from each particular group (age, gender, education) where representation was reached. Because all respondents who had started the survey were allowed to finish, some distortion here was possible.

As described in Chapter 2, the respondents were (roughly) evenly spread across twelve countries: Argentina, Brazil, United States, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Turkey, Russia, India, China, and Japan. SSI provided me with all respondents' IP addresses, numbered them and provided the time when they started and completed

their surveys. I combined all answers in integrated SPSS (.sav) and Excel (.xls) files, with a number assigned to each country: 2,936 rows for all respondents, and over 70 columns assigned to individual questions and other variables such as respondent number and country code.

A central problem in all surveys is reliability. To enhance reliability, I used a professional survey sampling company for distribution. To enhance reliability even more, I included in the first part of the survey (the 25 questions on photograph recognition) a 'control photo' that no-one could have seen before. Of all respondents, 263 (9 percent) responded 'Yes' to the question whether they had seen this photo before. These respondents were possibly 'cheating', by just clicking the first option ('Yes') to each question. If they were indeed 'cheating', their results would 'pollute' the survey results. But respondents could have had other, valid reasons to answer 'Yes' to this question – perhaps many just made one mistake here, and faithfully completed all questions.

To determine what to do with these respondents, I ran a quality control calculation on my data that is common in statistical analysis. First, I assigned a 'score' to all answers in the first part of the survey, the part where respondents were asked whether they had seen 25 pre-selected photographs before. The possible answers in this part of the survey were Yes (1), No (2) and I'm not sure (3). Since I was looking for photographs that people all over the world recognize, and which they have apparently stored as a visual memory in their minds, I only counted a 'Yes' as a positive result. I assigned a 'score' of 1 to each 'Yes', and 0 to 'No' and 'I'm not sure'. Then I added all results up for each respondent. I called this number the 'photograph recognition score' of each respondent, which by definition varied from 0 to 25.

One would expect that few people would recognize all photographs, and few people would recognize no photograph at all; in a 'normal' situation, most respondents should therefore be clustered around the middle scores. This offers an opportunity for quality control, because when one expects to see answer scores rise and fall in a 'normal' way, it means that a diagram of these scores would resemble a 'normal curve' of standard deviation (a curve shaped like Napoleon's hat, known as 'bell curve').

In Figure 3.1 we see a diagram of all respondents' photograph recognition scores (the total number of photographs they recognized out of the 25 photographs that were shown to them). The 'normal curve' of standard deviation for this question was automatically generated and shown as a line.

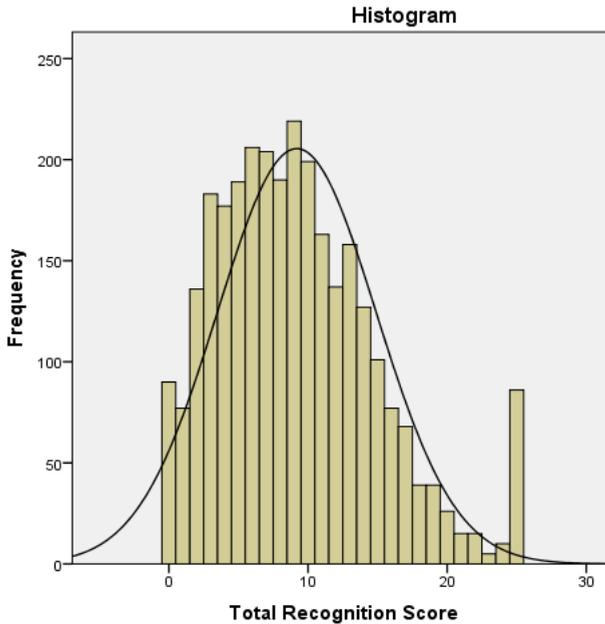


Figure 3.1 Histogram of photograph recognition scores. Vertical bar represents number of respondents, horizontal bar represents recognition scores (the total number of photographs that a respondent recognized).

There is clearly something odd here. The bars that indicate actual answers follow the normal bell curve quite well, rising above or falling below the line. But then, at the score of 25, there is a sudden spike: apparently the number of people that recognized 25 photographs is many times the number of people that recognized 23 or 24 photographs. Obviously, this indicates ‘false’ answers; or, put differently, it indicates that many respondents just clicked ‘Yes’ to each question, the first answer option.

If these ‘cheating’ respondents would be the same ones who answered ‘Yes’ to Question 17, the curve of total recognition scores would resemble the bell curve better if I filtered these last respondents out. To test whether this was the case, I re-ran the same calculation with respondents filtered out who answered ‘Yes’ to Question 17. The diagram of photograph recognition scores then looked as shown in Figure 3.2.

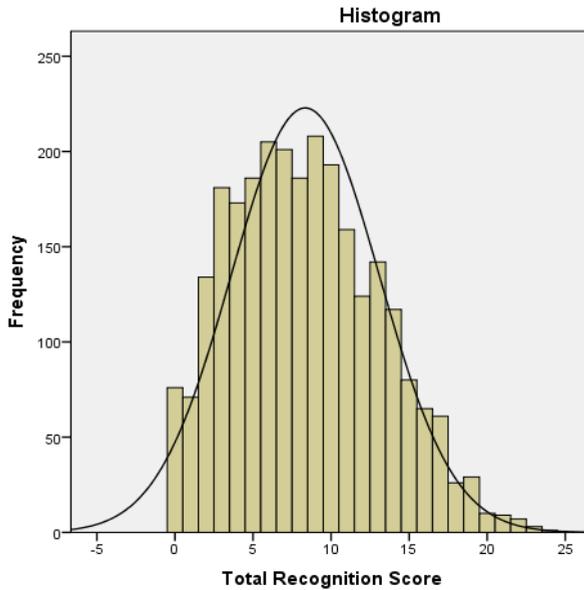


Figure 3.2 Histogram of photograph recognition scores, with respondents who answered ‘Yes’ to Question 17 filtered out. Vertical bar represents number of respondents, horizontal bar represents recognition scores (the total number of photographs that a respondent recognized).

This is clearly a more ‘normal’ and logical distribution of answers. This implies that filtering out the respondents that answered ‘Yes’ to Question 17 indeed makes for a ‘cleaner’ and improved dataset, with more reliable answers. I therefore continued my survey analysis with this restricted group of respondents. All conclusions below are drawn from this new, restricted dataset.

The quality of this dataset was confirmed by a Reliability Analysis in SPSS. The Cronbach’s alpha for the photograph recognition data (the answers of respondents to the question which photographs they recognized, or answers to Question 1 through 25, excluding control photo 17) is 0.84, a coefficient close to 1 that indicates a reliable dataset with high internal consistency.³⁵⁹

Filtering out the ‘Question 17/Yes’-group affected my country datasets in a markedly different way. Figure 3.3 shows the number of respondents who answered ‘Yes’ to Question 17 (and who were subsequently filtered out), by country.

³⁵⁹ For more information about this statistical test, see for instance: Mohsen Tavakol, Reg Dennick, ‘Making sense of Cronbach’s alpha’, *International Journal of Medical Education* 2 (2011) 53–55

Country * Photo17 Crosstabulation

Count		Photo17		Total
		0	1	
Country	Argentina	203	21	224
	Brazil	197	43	240
	China	208	22	230
	Germany	220	11	231
	Great Britain	239	15	254
	India	179	56	235
	Italy	210	15	225
	Japan	245	10	255
	Netherlands	229	12	241
	Russia	269	9	278
	Turkey	224	35	259
	USA	224	14	238
Total		2647	263	2910

Figure 3.3 Diagram of answers to Question 17 by country. 0 indicates ‘No’ or ‘I am not sure’, 1 indicates ‘Yes’. Last column (‘Total’) represents total number of answers per country.

Figure 3.3 shows that the number of respondents who ‘recognized’ Photo 17 was relatively high in India and Brazil, and relatively low in Russia, Japan, Germany and the Netherlands. Filtering out respondents who had answered ‘Yes’ to Question 17 therefore implied filtering out relatively many results from India and Brazil – unfortunate, but necessary to get more reliable statistical results. The following analyses in this chapter are all based on the filtered dataset – with respondents who answered ‘Yes’ to Question 17 filtered out.

3.2 The Global Visual Memory: A Proven Reality

The first, and for me most important research outcome, was an answer to the question: Can we find proof of the existence of a global visual memory, using a worldwide online survey?

As explained above, my methodology was to present a worldwide audience, in the first part of my survey, with twenty photographs that feature prominently in academic debates and literature on iconic and historical photographs, and ask them whether they had seen these photographs before. To these twenty photographs, I added four

photographs to test regional or national iconography, and one test photograph. The results of this first part of my survey are presented in Table 3.4.

Fig. 3.4	Photograph	Total resp.	Yes/No.	Yes/Perc.
Photo1	Migrant Mother	2642	340	12,9
Photo2	Falling Soldier	2642	245	9,3
Photo3	Hindenburg Disaster	2643	957	36,2
Photo4	Times Square Kiss	2642	1096	41,5
Photo5	Iwo Jima	2641	1424	53,9
Photo6	Buchenwald	2643	859	32,5
Photo7	Reichstag 1945	2641	824	31,2
Photo8	Mao	2642	951	36
Photo9	Gandhi	2641	756	28,6
Photo10	Asanuma Murder	2640	313	11,9
Photo11	Che Guevara	2643	1844	69,8
Photo12	Burning Monk	2642	464	17,6
Photo13	Saigon Execution	2641	619	23,4
Photo14	Moon Landing	2638	2101	79,6
Photo15	Napalm Girl	2641	1271	48,1
Photo16	Allende	2640	196	7,4
Photo18	Afghan Girl	2645	1083	40,9
Photo19	Tank Man	2642	1284	48,6
Photo20	Vulture and Child	2642	854	32,3
Photo21	Rwanda Victim	2642	105	4
Photo22	Falling Man	2644	949	35,9
Photo23	9-11 Airplane	2642	2261	85,6
Photo24	Abu Ghraib	2644	436	16,5
Photo25	White House Room	2639	852	32,3

Figure 3.4 Photograph recognition, worldwide. Table shows the photo number (corresponding to the Question number in the survey), its shorthand name, the total number number of

answers to the question: 'Have you seen this picture before?', the total number of respondents who answered 'Yes', and the percentage of respondents who answered 'Yes'.

Important and surprising conclusions can be drawn from this set of dry numbers. Most importantly, they support the central hypothesis of this dissertation: that there are photographs of events in the past that are recognized by people all over the world. This proves the existence of what I have called the global visual memory: a limited set of images that people all over the world have seen and remembered; images they have stored in their heads as visual memories of the past.

Of course, the survey only included photographs that are considered iconic or of historic significance in academic literature. The possibility remains that this methodology has excluded photographs that are part of this global visual memory. Recognizing this possibility, we can nonetheless conclude that by using this method, we have found photographs that feature prominently in academic debates on iconic and historical photographs, and that are recognized by people all over the world.

A bar chart of score results makes clear at a glance that there are three 'outliers' in my set of 25 photographs: pictures that are recognized by more than two thirds of all respondents. (Figure 3.5)

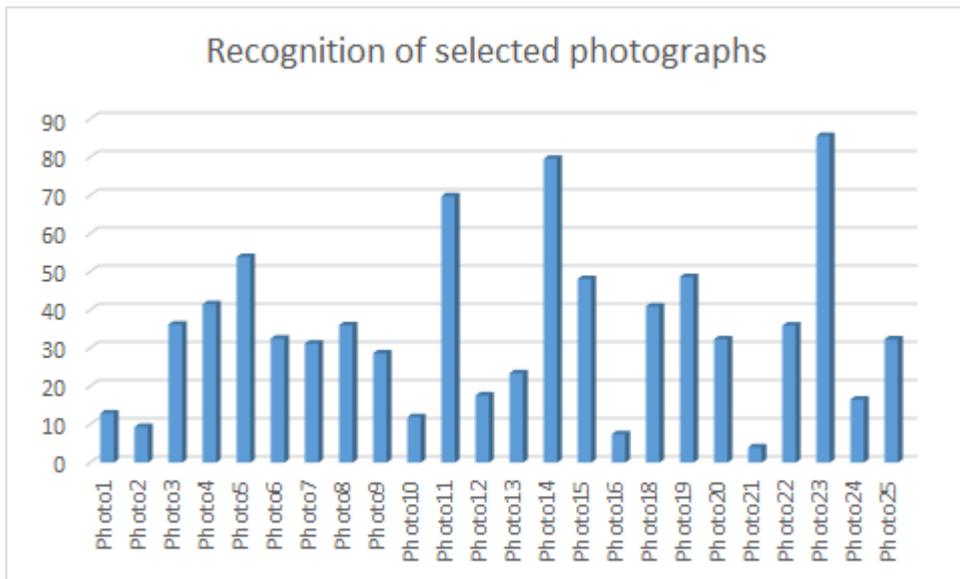


Figure 3.5 Percentage of respondents who recognized the survey photographs. (Test photograph 17 is omitted.)

The three images that are clearly recognized more often than the others are the portrait of Che Guevara (Photo 11), recognized by 70 percent of all respondents. Before I ran the survey, I expected Che's portrait to beat all others in recognition, as it used to be an icon in communist, non-aligned and developing, and industrialized countries alike. Its recognition is indeed high, but in overall recognition it was surpassed by the photograph of the moon landing, or more accurately Buzz Aldrin standing on the moon (Photo 14). This picture was recognized by 80 percent of respondents. Even more people recognized the image of the second hijacked plane about to strike the South Tower of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. This image was recognized by 86 percent of respondents, making it – with the necessary qualifications – the most recognized photo in the world.³⁶⁰

I expected the global visual memory to be small, containing about five to eight photographs of our past that circulate enough to make them recognized worldwide. It is a matter of more or less arbitrary decisions where we draw the line in this matter. If we decide that the global visual memory can only include photographs that are recognized by two thirds or more of our sample group, then the portrait of Che Guevara, the Moon Landing and the 9/11 Airplane make up that visual memory.

If we make the cutoff point 50 percent, and determine that a photograph belongs to the Global Visual Memory if it is recognized by half or more of all the people in the world, then the raising of the flag on Iwo Jima (Photo 5) is also part of that global visual memory. This icon of the United States victory in the Second World War was recognized by 54 percent of all respondents.

If we take a lenient approach on what constitutes 'half' of all respondents, we can include two more photos whose recognition percentage is close to 50 percent. The first is the photograph of the 'Tank Man', the solitary protester on Tiananmen Square in 1989 (Photo 19). It was recognized by 49 percent of respondents. And lastly, we might also be lenient in the case of the photograph of the 'Napalm Girl', the Vietnamese girl Kim Phuc running from her burning village after it was bombed in 1972 (Photo 15). It was recognized by 48 percent of respondents. Although these two photographs have a global recognition that falls just below the 50 percent line, including them in a list of

³⁶⁰ One possible explanation for the high recognition of the Moon Landing and the 9/11 Airplane is that respondents did not actually recognize *this* particular photograph, or weren't sure if this was the photograph they had seen before, but answered 'Yes' because they either recognized the event that the photograph captured, or knew that they had seen pictures of the event though not necessarily this one. I recognize this possibility. Unfortunately, there is no reliable way to test this. Uniformity of questions was important to achieve plausible results, and therefore I did not want to phrase the question 'Have you seen this picture before?' differently for these or other photographs of well-known news events. Since I have no other reason to doubt the high recognition scores of these two photographs, I will treat them as accurate. Future surveys could test this phenomenon of possible 'association recognition' – respondents that say they recognize a picture because they recognize the event it depicts.

photographs that are recognized by a majority of people worldwide does justice to their wide recognition, and to the fact that their recognition is closer to the Iwo Jima photograph than to the next photograph on the list. I will readily admit that this is an arbitrary decision.

One could also argue that a limit of 50 percent is too high; that we should consider photographs that are recognized by 40 percent or a third of global respondents as being part of the global visual memory. The 40 percent mark would expand the Global Visual Memory with the Times Square Kiss (Photo 4), recognized by 42 percent of respondents, and the Afghan Girl (Photo 18), recognized by 41 percent of respondents. A cutoff point at one third would add the Hindenburg Disaster (Photo 3), Mao proclaiming the People's Republic of China (Photo 8) and the Falling Man (Photo 22), all recognized by 36 percent of respondents. The photographs of the Buchenwald survivors, the Soviet flag being raised on the Reichstag, the Vulture and Child, and the White House room during the Bin Laden raid all fall just one or two percent short of the one third cutoff point, but are still recognized by a significant part of my respondents. They would make the cut if the bar was set at 30 percent.

It is clear that the photography survey has found several photographs that are recognized by many people worldwide. If the results of this survey are indeed an accurate reflection of the recognition of the photographs included in the survey in the countries that were sampled, a global visual memory clearly exists, with photographs of events in history included in it. We are left with the decision to determine where to draw the line on which photographs are part of it and which ones fall outside.

I think it is a logical approach to regard photographs that are recognized by a majority of the world's population or more as being part of the global visual memory. And I am inclined to be lenient in the case of the two photographs that are recognized by almost half of all respondents, but just below fifty percent of them. I readily admit that both these decisions are arbitrary. Nonetheless, in the remainder of this dissertation, I will consider these six photographs to be part of the global visual memory: the hijacked airplane about to hit the World Trade Center South Tower on September 11, 2001 (Carmen Taylor), the Moon Landing (Neil Armstrong, 1969), the portrait of Che Guevara (Alberto Korda, 1960), raising the flag on Iwo Jima (Joe Rosenthal, 1945), the Tank Man (Jeff Widener, 1989), and the Napalm Girl (Nick Ut, 1972).

It was not the intention of this study to find the world's most recognized photograph. But it is interesting that three photographs in the survey have such a high recognition among all respondents worldwide. If we assume that academic attention to the power, importance, and influence of individual photographs is a good indication of their global reach, and we then assume that photographs that feature prominently in academic discussions on iconic and historical photographs include the world's most recognized photographs, then we should conclude that this study provides some ground to claim

that Che Guevara's portrait, the Moon Landing and the 9/11 Airplane are among the world's most recognized photographs of events in history. But more research is needed to underwrite this conclusion.

3.3 The Recognition of Iconic and Historical Photographs: General Conclusions

3.3.1 Hard News Trumps Iconography

As already stated, I expected to find a limited set of photographs with worldwide recognition. I was not so much surprised by the six images that proved to have the highest recognition, but I was surprised by their respective ranks and scores. The most recognized photographs are what are known as 'hard news photographs' of major events – photographs whose power does not flow only from their visual strength but from the event they depict. A general conclusion should be that more or less straightforward 'news' photographs of important historic events are remembered more widely than 'iconic' photographs with a strong symbolic or iconographic content. The two most widely recognized photographs are of the 9/11 attacks and the moon landing. They handsomely beat photographs that are considered very important cultural landmarks by scholars who study photography, like Dorothea Lange's Migrant Mother (13 percent), Robert Capa's Falling Soldier (9 percent), and the Abu Ghraib prisoner (17 percent).

These last three 'underrecognized' photos all draw much of their power from the echoes of Western (Christian) iconography. One could conclude that Christian iconography is much more important to western academics, writers and critics than to a mixed, worldwide audience. Apparently, strong symbolic content and iconic status in western society does not equal worldwide recognition. Similarly, one could conclude that photographs that require some background knowledge about the cultural or political meaning of the photograph are recognized less by a global audience than photographs that require little interpretation.

These conclusions could be countered by pointing out the 'iconographic' photographs that did score high in recognition. Che Guevara's portrait owes much of its strength to iconography; to its visual echoes to portraits of Jesus Christ and of great leaders. The Napalm Girl's impact is also partly due to its iconography. But this does not change the fact that the 'hard news' photographs in my set of 25 scored much higher, and 'iconographic' photographs much lower, than their respective prominence in academic writings on photography would suggest; Capa's Falling Soldier and Lange's Migrant Mother have received much more scholarly attention than Neil Armstrong's photographs of the moon landing and Carmen Taylor's photograph of the 9/11 attacks.

In the case of the 9/11 attacks, my sample included two photographs from the same event: a more 'symbolic' and a hard news photograph. The recognition of the 'hard news' photograph was much higher, thus strengthening the impression that 'hard news' trumps iconography when it comes to sticking in the minds of a general audience.

In the future, academic literature and research on iconic photographs should reflect this outcome. Surely, we should not do away with our attention to iconographic and symbolic photographs, but photography scholars should pay more attention to news photographs that tend to be underexamined when we put too much of a focus on the first category. Therefore, in scholarly works more 'hard news' photographs should be included; they should receive more attention and research; and claims that certain iconographic historic and news photographs are widely recognized, should be treated with caution.

3.3.2 A Middle Group of 'Quite Well Recognized' Photographs

Though I did expect a limited set of widely recognized photographs, I was surprised to find such a wide middle section of 'quite well recognized' photographs: pictures that were recognized by a significant number of respondents. I expected to find a wide gap between the most recognized photographs and the rest. But twelve photographs, half of the set of twenty-five minus the control photo, were recognized by a quarter to half of the respondents.

The best recognized of these photos was the Afghan Girl, Steve McCurry's haunting portrait of a young refugee. I was not surprised to find that it scored well, as it has been reprinted over and over again in quality and popular press, and published on the web, for its stunning visual power. I was happy to find that Alfred Eisenstaedt's Times Square Kiss had such a high worldwide recognition, as it is a visually cheerful and positive addition to this rather gloomy set of historic icons. Like the Afghan Girl, it is low on news value (though it captures a historic moment) but rich in aesthetics and emotive appeal.

The next segment, photographs recognized by a third to 40 percent of respondents, included some surprises. Firstly, the Hindenburg disaster. This 'hard news' photograph was once considered to be widely recognized and very influential. But that was decades ago and many other seminal photographs and documented disasters have followed since. In 1936, the fact that such a disaster could be captured on film and distributed across the globe was new and stunning, and that novelty has certainly worn off. The fact that, in the face of this, the Hindenburg disaster remains such a well recognized news photo testifies to the staying power of iconic photographs, even in an age when the visually spectacular is all around us. And it is another 'hard news' photograph that scores remarkably high in a lineup primarily consisting of more symbolic photographs.

3.3.3 Mao: Non-Western Icon

More surprising, however, was the second photograph in this ‘middle’ category of photographs with a recognition score between 25 and 50 percent: Mao Zedong proclaiming the People’s Republic of China (recognized by 36 percent of all respondents). Not surprisingly, this photograph was well recognized in China itself. But it’s significant recognition in other countries testifies to the fact that non-western photographs can reach global audiences and become well recognized around the world. In the previous chapter, I acknowledged the dominance of western photographs in my survey. This is not surprising, since the selection was made by analyzing the academic debate on iconic and historical photographs, and this debate is dominated by western, especially US-based scholars.

But it does not follow from this fact that this selection method is necessarily flawed, or that there must necessarily be a better selection method. Not only academic debate on photography is dominated by scholars in western countries. Western culture in general and U.S. culture in particular have an unparalleled global reach. Additionally, the production of visual news, its selection for international distribution and the distribution companies and infrastructure are all western-dominated as well. In short: the dominance of western images in my survey might be a result of my methodology, but might nonetheless correctly reflect which images have the highest global recognition. Regardless, I do acknowledge that my methodology resulted in a survey weighted towards western images.

I included photographs like Mao’s proclamation³⁶¹ to test, firstly, whether the western focus of academic writings on photography was congruent with a higher recognition of western photographs compared to non-western photographs in a worldwide audience. And secondly, to test whether there might be iconic non-western photographs that are underrepresented in academic writing on photography.

Obviously, this was a gamble, because I could not be sure what it would mean if the non-western photographs that I included were not well recognized. They could be the ‘wrong’ pictures: not well recognized while there were other non-western photographs out there that would score better. Negative results (that is, low recognition scores on these non-western photographs) could mean that I – like other academics writing on photography – failed to see which non-western photographs are of global significance. Only positive results would really yield usable conclusions; primarily, that there are non-western photographs that do have high recognition in the world, and that should be included in academic discussion on worldwide icons of photography.

In the case of Mao’s declaration, this is the case. With a global recognition of 36 percent, it is the best recognized photograph from a non-western country with primarily non-

³⁶¹ Others are Allende’s last stand, Gandhi at the spinning wheel and Asanuma’s murder.

western concerns. (In the case of the Vulture and Child photograph, for instance, highlighting famine in Africa, one could argue that this photograph speaks foremost to western concerns of aid, responsibility and guilt.) Furthermore, as paragraph 3.4 will show, this photograph is recognized much more by audiences in the Global South or the former Second World than in the Global North or the former First World.

The high recognition of Mao reading his declaration reminds us of the fact that in academic literature on photography, terms like 'global icon' and 'worldwide recognition' are easily used in connection with western photographs, and that academics should both use caution with that label and devote more attention to non-western photographs that are recognized and have meaning to a global audience.

3.3.4 Commemoration Through Photographs

The next two photographs, ranked by global recognition, are two documents that have been used as visual monuments, as commemorations of horrible events in the past. The 'Falling Man', the strangely serene photograph of a man who jumped out of the burning North Tower of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, was also recognized by 36 percent of respondents. The photograph of emaciated prisoners at the Buchenwald concentration camp, taken in 1945, was recognized by a third.

Though they are very different photographs of very different events, these pictures serve a similar function in western society. Criticized in the case of the Buchenwald photograph by writers like Barbie Zelizer, lauded in the case of the Falling Man by Tom Junod and others, these pictures are prime examples of photographs that come to represent, in public discourse, a main historic event, and that serve as a visual condemnation and commemoration of these events. They have traded their specificity to a particular person and story in exchange for generality.

In the case of the Buchenwald photograph, it was not clear from the sizeable bibliography on photographs of concentration camps, the Holocaust, and other crimes during the Second World War, which photograph I should select (as described in paragraph 2.4). There might be other photographs that depict Holocaust survivors and victims that would have received a higher recognition score. Still, this was a photograph whose recognition score was low, compared to the attention it has received in academic writings, and considering the importance scholars have attached to it. Other photographs from the Second World War were recognized more often, and many people did recognize during which historic event this photograph was taken (see chapter 4).

Barbie Zelizer, Susan Sontag, and others have warned of the dangers of lumping photographs of Holocaust survivors and victims together as one photographic 'trope', but the low global recognition score of this photograph as compared to other

photographs does raise the question whether (western) scholars overestimate the impact and global significance of this and similar photos because of the importance and gravity that are attached to these photographs in western culture and among academics. Further research, that would include more photographs that depict victims, survivors and perpetrators of the Holocaust, is needed to answer this question.

3.3.5 The Global Visual Memory: No Erosion Over Time

If we continue to move down the list of total recognition scores, we next encounter president Barack Obama and his national security team, monitoring the raid on Osama bin Laden’s compound. This photograph was taken in May 2011, and was the youngest photograph in my selection, less than three years old at the time the survey was conducted. This photograph was included in the survey because it was widely published at the time of Bin Laden’s death – every self-respecting news outlet carried it and the White House actively tried to keep it in public attention. If this photograph received high recognition scores and older photographs in my selection would not, that would indicate some sort of erosion or fading of public memory over time.

Not only did the White House Room photograph fail to suggest a conclusion along those lines, the survey results seem to suggest the opposite: that time plays a limited role, or is a negligible factor, in the Global Visual Memory. Five of the top ten most recognized photographs are over half a century old. When visualized in a chart (Figure 3.6), no meaningful pattern can be discerned, both at the ‘high end’ (most recognized photographs) and at the ‘low end’ (least recognized photographs).

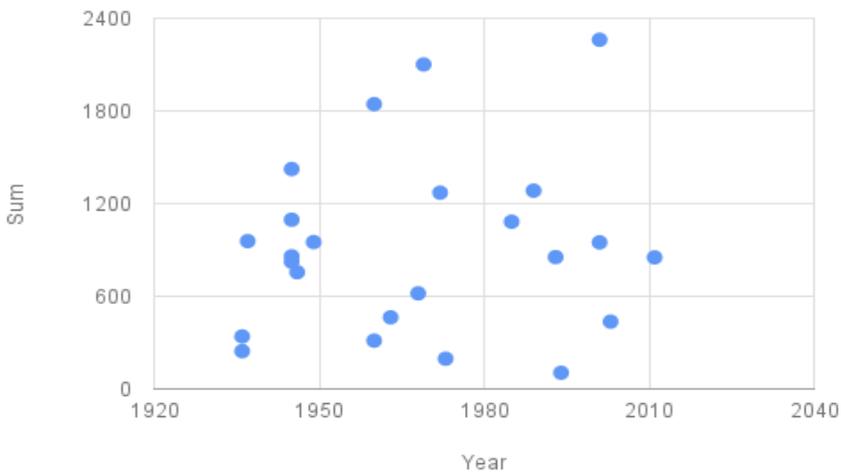


Figure 3.6. Number of people that recognized a photograph versus the year it was published.

Like the White House room, Kevin Carter's picture of the Vulture and Child, and Yevgeny Khaldei's picture of the Red Army soldier raising the Soviet Union flag over the Berlin Reichstag in 1945, were recognized by almost a third of the global panel of respondents. In the case of the Vulture and Child, its visual power, its depiction of famine and its evocation of the act of witnessing and standing by the suffering of others, have continued to raise interest in the photograph, and have made it well recognized all over the world – though perhaps not enough to consider it a truly global iconic photograph. The same is true for the Reichstag 1945, which has continued to attract attention for its depiction of Soviet triumph and of a moment of historic importance.

3.3.6 *Regional Icons*

With a global recognition of 29 percent, the image of Gandhi at the spinning wheel is not a global icon, but well recognized. However, the recognition of this image varies strongly from country to country. Almost all Indians recognize it (94 percent), and they make up 22 percent of all respondents who recognized this picture. Gandhi's image therefore underwrites the intuitive hypothesis that regional icons exist, which have very high recognition within one country or cultural area, and very low recognition elsewhere. Gandhi's image was included to test this hypothesis, just as the image of Mao, Asanuma, and Allende.

At closer examination, the conclusion about regional icons turns out to be more less clear-cut. Mirroring Gandhi's picture in India, the picture of Mao was recognized by 98 percent of all Chinese, and they make up 21 percent of all respondents who recognized it. The number of people who recognized Mao's picture, however, is higher in most countries than the photograph of Gandhi and more evenly distributed over all countries. In the case of the photograph of Gandhi, three countries supply over half of all respondents who recognize it (India and, curiously, Argentina and Italy).

The picture of Allende, shortly before his death, was not recognized primarily by his fellow-South Americans in Argentina and Brazil. Surprisingly, the top-three countries where this picture was recognized were Russia, India and China. One could argue that Allende's photo is well recognized in China and Russia because they are (former) communist countries and the coup against Allende has become a symbol of imperialism and oppression of the socialist cause. In this explanation, Allende's last photo would have been often used in these countries, leading to a high recognition there today. But this is speculation, and it would not explain the photograph's recognition score in India. More important, however, is that the very low recognition scores of this photo make it rather unfit for any conclusions – in retrospect, this photograph was not a good pick. Similarly, the Asanuma Murder photograph yields unclear conclusions. Japanese make

up almost 30 percent of respondents who recognized it, but even in Japan the people who did not recognize outnumbered the ones who did. In short, more research is needed to reach reliable conclusions about regional icons.

3.3.7 *Graphic Images of War and Violence*

There are several images of war and other violence in the survey. A notable group was taken during the Vietnam War. These Vietnam War images always loom large in discussions on the impact of photography upon shaping public opinion. As explained in the paragraphs on the individual photographs in the survey, these photographs are often credited with a strong impact on public opinion, especially in the United States, and on shaping U.S. government policy. This is especially true of the Napalm Girl photograph, but to a lesser extent also of the street execution in Saigon, taken in 1968, and of the Burning Monk, taken in 1963. As demonstrated in the above named paragraphs, these photographs were considered very important and influential at the time, and still feature prominently in discussions on the impact of photography.

From the survey, it can be concluded that the Napalm Girl has decisively eclipsed the other two photographs in global recognition. This is not surprising in the case of the Burning Monk, since it is deemed less influential in academic works on photography, and is probably less reprinted and re-used than the Napalm Girl, though of course reliable data to prove this is not available. In the case of the Saigon Execution, however, we have a photograph that intuitively would seem to be on par in both respects with the Napalm Girl. Perhaps that is not the case. What is clear, however, is that the global recognition of the Saigon Execution is far lower.

These three pictures, then, suggest that 'Vietnam War photographs' might be a useful category in American culture, but not beyond. These are photographs that are all graphic, violent, and taken during the same conflict. The (much) higher recognition of the Napalm Girl could be interpreted as an indication that people tend to look away from photographs that are too graphic, too violent, and too explicit, and that as a consequence, photographs that *suggest* violence rather than actually showing it or its results, are more often used as 'horrible' testaments to war than more 'horrific' images. Griselda Pollock, for instance, makes this case.³⁶² More evidence is needed, however, to bolster this hypothesis.

Another photograph that is often considered to have been very influential, is the photograph of the torture victim at the Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad, taken in 2003.

³⁶² Griselda Pollock, 'Photographing Atrocity: Becoming Iconic?', in: Geoffrey Batchen et.al.(eds.), *Picturing Atrocity. Photography in Crisis* (London 2012) 66

It is a surprisingly low-scoring photograph, in light of the global outcry it caused not long ago, and because it had demonstrated the power of photography (the abuse and torture had already been revealed, although only partially, by Amnesty International and the Associated Press months before the ‘leaked’ photographs caused such a stir).

Still, my survey suggests it is recognized by one in six people worldwide. Not even in the United States itself or in Turkey, a neighboring country of Iraq, was the photograph well recognized – about one in five people in those countries had seen it before. Just as curious is that the photograph is almost completely unknown in Russia, even though in recent years its mass media have seized upon every bit of news that cast the United States in a bad light.

The unfamiliarity of global audiences with the Abu Ghraib picture is, to me, one of the biggest surprises of my survey results. I have no good explanation for it.

3.3.8 Academia Icons: Migrant Mother and The Falling Soldier

Among the least recognized photographs from my group of twenty four – hovering around a global recognition score of ten percent – are two of the most lauded and researched photographs in history: Dorothea Lange’s *Migrant Mother* and Robert Capa’s *Falling Soldier*. Much has been written about their fame by various scholars (see previous chapter). While these photographs undoubtedly have an important place in the visual culture of the United States and European countries, the claims towards the global recognition and therefore global impact and significance of these two photographs must be considered false. My study suggests they are simply not recognized by enough people worldwide.

This conclusion has an important implication for academic works on iconic photographs. Because it suggests the existence of a class of photos that we could consider ‘academia icons’: photographs that feature prominently in academic debates on photography, despite a low global recognition. Claims about the global impact and recognition of certain iconic photographs have always lacked scientific basis: chapter two explains how academic and other texts on iconic have always relied on methods such as gathering media quotes from one or a small number of countries to underwrite claims of the iconicity or even ‘global significance’ of a photograph. The low scores of *Migrant Mother* and *The Falling Soldier* in my survey illustrate the dangers of such claims.

In the case of *Migrant Mother*, one could argue that an American bias was in play: because the photograph is an American icon, and because so much academic literature on photography is written by American scholars, one could conclude that these scholars were simply treating ‘famous in America’ as equivalent to ‘famous in the world’ – an inclination that can be observed in American culture in general. But the *Falling Soldier*

is not an American icon: taken in Spain, by a Hungarian émigré working from Paris, and to this day hotly debated in various European countries.³⁶³

So perhaps the fault lies somewhere else: in the cycle of writers, curators and academics recycling, echoing and amplifying interest in these photographs, that retain their iconic status in part or primarily because so much is written about them – a self-reinforcing mechanism. I believe this hypothesis to be true, though more research is needed to substantiate it. I will limit myself here to point out the significant gap between claims about these photographs' fame and impact around the world and their very low recognition by a general public.

3.3.9 *Seen Famine and Unseen Genocide*

By far the least recognized photograph in the survey was James Nachtwey's *Rwanda Victim*, taken in the aftermath of the genocide in Rwanda in 1994. This photograph might not have been expected to be one of the top finishers, but a recognition score of 4 percent is surprising given the fact that it is described as the most often used image of one of the most important events of the last decades. Its low recognition score is also surprising in light of the fact that close to a third of respondents recognized the *Vulture and Child*-image by Kevin Carter.

These two images are frequently used as visual shorthands for the cliché view of Africa as continent of sorrow. They were taken around the same time, so they would have had roughly similar conditions when entering the global news stream. Since the image taken in Sudan represents a far less deadly and impactful event than the Rwandan Genocide, we have to search for explanations for their strongly varying recognition scores in their visual power.

In the case of the photographs from Rwanda and Sudan, we shouldn't draw far-reaching conclusions on a comparison of just two images. Still, the wide difference in recognition seems to confirm two earlier findings. One is the conclusion that 'hard news' photographs generally seem to be remembered better by general audiences than photographs with a strong iconographic or suggestive power. The Rwanda-Sudan photographs seem to support this conclusion, because in Carter's photograph one is looking at the news itself: namely, that people – children – are dying of hunger in Sudan. In Nachtwey's photograph, one is looking at the evidence (and suggestion) of past violence.

³⁶³ See the paragraph on *The Falling Soldier* in the previous chapter.

3.4 The Recognition of Iconic and Historical Photographs: Conclusions About Age, Nationality, and Other Demographic Factors

3.4.1 Generational Icons

One of the surprises for me was that statistical analysis of the results showed little variation between age groups in the recognition of photographs. Before conducting the survey, I expected there to be significant differences between the recognition of famous and historical photographs between, for instance, millennials and baby boomers. If confirmed, that would imply there would be ‘generational icons’: photographs that are well recognized by people of a certain age span and not by others. This would have been a finding with interesting implications about cultural globalization, because that would have shown that different age groups across the globe share certain cultural knowledge.

However, the recognition of the 25 photographs in my survey is remarkably consistent over the boundaries of different generations. A line chart of the photograph recognition scores of the three age groups in my survey illustrates this (see Figure 3.7).

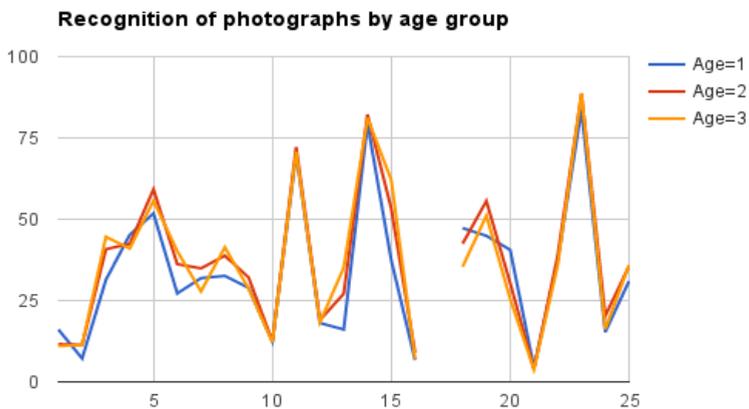


Figure 3.7. Recognition of photographs by age group. Vertical bar indicates the percentage of respondents that answered ‘Yes’ to the question whether they recognized a certain photograph. Age=1 represents respondents aged 18-34; Age=2 respondents aged 35-49; Age=3 respondents aged 50 and over. Horizontal bar indicates the corresponding number of the photograph in the survey. Note that image no. 17 was a test photograph. Since it was filtered out of the database, the graph shows a break at that number.

Figure 3.7 illustrates that age is not a significant determinant for which photographs a person recognizes. If we use the term ‘memory group’ for people who share a similar set of collective memories, then these survey results demonstrate that age is not a defining factor in determining to which memory group a person belongs.

But some qualifications need to be made. Although recognition patterns of the test photographs are remarkably similar for the three age groups in the survey, a closer look at the data reveals that there are, in fact, significant differences in the recognition of some photographs. In fact, in these cases the differences are so significant, that it appears as if 'generational icons' do exist. This can be read from the table below.

Photograph	Age group 1	Age Group 2	Age Group 3
Migrant Mother	16,1	11,6	11
Falling Soldier	7,2	11,4	11,4
Hindenburg	31,4	40,8	44,6
Times Sq. Kiss	45,2	42,4	41
Iwo Jima	51,8	59,2	55,7
Buchenwald	27,2	36,2	40,2
Reichstag 1945	31,9	34,9	27,8
Mao	32,6	38,8	41,4
Gandhi	28,9	32,1	28,7
Asanuma murder	12,4	12,5	12,2
Che Guevara	70,2	72,2	70,8
Burning Monk	18,1	19	18,3
Saigon execution	16,1	27,1	35,1
Moon Landing	79,4	82,2	81,1
Napalm Girl	37,4	53,3	62,1
Allende	6,7	9	7
Afghan Girl	47,3	42,5	35,4
Tank Man	44,9	55,6	51,1
Vulture and Child	40,6	30,4	25,6
Rwanda victim	4,4	4	3,8
Falling Man	37,2	38,8	35,9
9/11 Airplane	83,7	88,5	88,7
Abu Ghraib	15,3	20,3	16,2
White House room	31	35,6	35,9

Figure 3.8. Recognition scores of photographs (in percent) among three age groups: 18-34 (Age group 1), 35-49 (Age group 2) and 50+ (Age group 3).

More than a few of these photographs show recognition scores that vary 50 percent or more from one age group to the next. In the case of one photograph, the recognition score among one age group differs more than a hundred percent with another. Most of these cases belong to the older photographs in the survey. The recognition of Migrant Mother, the oldest photograph in the set of 25, is almost fifty percent higher among people aged 18-34 than among those aged 50+. Conversely, almost sixty percent more people aged 50+ recognize The Falling Soldier than people aged 18-34. There is also a significant difference in the case of another 1930s photographs: the Hindenburg disaster: the number of people aged 50+ that recognize it is over 40 percent higher than the number of people aged 18-34 who do. I can offer no satisfying suggestion why these numbers are so different. It is important to note, however, that in all three cases these photographs have low overall recognition scores, making it hard to really draw any conclusions from them.

That is not the case for the next photograph with similarly strong differences: the photograph of Buchenwald concentration camp survivors. The number of people aged 50+ that recognize this picture is almost fifty percent higher than the number of people aged 18-34 who do. Considering that this photograph is recognized by a far higher number of people than the first photographs, this is a more significant finding. It is also a more important finding, in terms of its implications, because the recognition gap across generations suggests that younger generations across the world have been less exposed to knowledge of the Holocaust than older generations.

A next war that generated many historic and iconic photographs is the Vietnam War. Photographs from this war are recognized much more often by people aged 50+ than 18-34. The recognition of the Napalm Girl photograph is 66 percent higher among people aged 50+ than among people aged 18-34. And people aged 50+ are more than double as likely to recognize the Saigon Execution: the difference in recognition scores across those generations is 118 percent.

There are also well-recognized photographs that have significantly higher recognition scores among people aged 18-34 than 50+. One is the Afghan Girl, recognized by over a third more people in the first age category than in the third. Much larger, and more interesting, is the difference in the case of Kevin Carter's Vulture and Child. That image is recognized by almost 60 percent more people aged 18-34 than 50+. It is interesting to speculate what the reason for this is: whether the difference can be explained by a higher exposure of young people to this image, a higher sensitivity to it, or something else. If the difference is caused by a higher exposure of young people to the photograph, it would be interesting to find out why that is the case; whether it is because of a higher use of this image through new media, because young people read and watch more about

human rights issues, or something else. I can only speculate on the reason for the difference, but the difference is there.

One must therefore conclude that the recognition of historic and iconic photographs is generally similar across generations, but in spite of that general rule-of-thumb, 'generational icons' still do seem to exist.

3.4.2 Recognition of Iconic and Historical Photographs by Country

A main reason to conduct the survey in twelve countries across the world was to be able to compare answers by country. Because most photographs that feature prominently in academic literature on iconic and historical photographs were made in western countries or center on western concerns, one would expect average recognition scores to be higher in western countries. If cultural and geographic proximity to western countries was indeed the prime determinant for recognition scores, one would expect very high recognition scores in the United States, the country where most photographs were made that feature prominently in academic discussions on the subject; high but perhaps slightly lower scores in other western countries; and lower recognition scores elsewhere. However, a glance at average recognition scores by country does not reveal such a general conclusion.

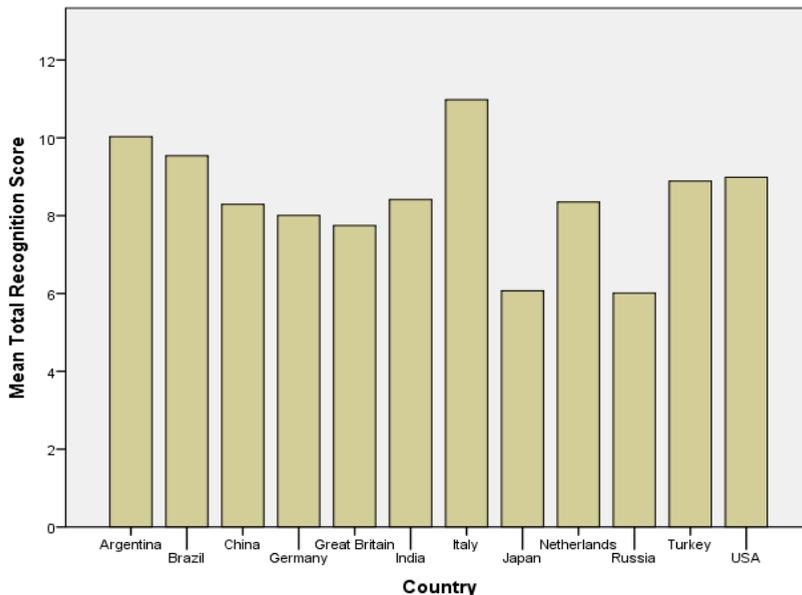


Figure 3.9. Average photograph recognition score by country.

As Figure 3.9 shows, photograph recognition varies significantly per country. Italians recognize almost twice as many photographs from the set of 24 images as Russians and Japanese. This is a striking outcome. It seems only logical that recognition scores would be low in Japan, a country that is culturally and geographically quite far removed from western countries. That becomes an unconvincing conclusion in light of the much higher scores among respondents in China and India.

And if cultural and geographic proximity to western countries was the prime determinant for recognition score, it would not explain why Russian respondents would have the lowest average score. It would also not explain why respondents in the United States, the dominant country in news image production and distribution, do not stand out. They recognize about as many survey photographs as Indian and Turkish respondents, less than Brazilian and Argentinian respondents, and are beaten handsomely by Italian respondents. Perhaps high recognition scores are an indication of how outward-looking people in certain countries are, but this is no more than a hypothesis. More research could hopefully shed light on these differences.

3.4.3. Recognition of Iconic and Historical Photographs by World Region

At the outset of my research, I expected to find that the recognition of photographs, the emotional response to them, and the estimation of the importance of photographs would show clear variations between different regions of the world. To measure this, I grouped countries together in various clusters, to see if I could find cultural regions: groups of countries with similar answering patterns. I made five of these clusters. I divided countries according to continent. I made a cluster of the 'Global North' and the 'Global South'. I grouped OECD and Non-OECD countries together. I used the Huntingtonian categories of 'The West and the Rest'.³⁶⁴ And I revamped the antiquated notions of the First, Second and Third World, to see if the Cold War past has implications for the reading and recognition of photographs today.³⁶⁵

³⁶⁴ Samuel Huntington used this term in his chapter 'The West and the Rest: Intercivilizational Issues' in: Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (London 1996) 183-206

³⁶⁵ OECD countries: Germany, England, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Turkey, USA; Non-OECD countries: Argentina, Brazil, China, India, Russia. The 'West' is a problematic category, with several academic debates connected to its use. It is beyond the aim of this study to enter these debates. I will use Huntington's conception of 'the West' and therefore treat the following countries as part of it: Germany, England, Italy, Netherlands, and the USA; The 'Rest': Argentina, Brazil, China, India, Japan, Russia. (Turkey, in Huntington's conception, is a 'torn' country (Huntington, 148). 'Global North': Germany, England, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Russia, Turkey, USA; 'Global South': Argentina, Brazil, China, India. 'First World': Germany, England, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Turkey, USA; 'Second World': China, Russia; 'Third World': Argentina, Brazil, India.

But as far as photograph recognition is concerned, no clear conclusions present themselves. Though photograph recognition varies strongly from one country to the next, no immediate conclusions about world regions can be read from the graph in Figure 3.9 or the numbers in Table 3.10 (average recognition scores per country). Russians and Japanese score very low; other European and Asian countries score much higher. With an average recognition score of 8.34, many western countries actually score just below the global average. And multiple non-western countries score higher than western.

Country	Arg	Bra	Chi	Ger	GB	Ind	Ita	Jap	NL	Rus	Tur	USA
Average Recognition Score	10.03	9.54	8.29	8	7.74	8.41	10.98	6.07	8.35	6.01	8.89	8.99

Figure 3.10. Average photograph recognition scores per country. Overall average is 8.34.

Average recognition scores in western countries are, in fact, significantly higher than in non-western countries: 9.04 versus 7.40. But as the graph in Figure 3.9 makes clear, there is not so much a clear ‘average’ among the seven non-western countries, but five who score about or slightly above the world average and two – the ‘outliers’ of Russia and Japan – that score significantly lower. This anomaly defies straightforward conclusions about the average photograph recognition in non-western countries as a group.

The low scores in Japan and Russia also make other conclusions about world regions more difficult. Some regions have very similar recognition scores: those in OECD and non-OECD-countries are virtually identical. Others have significant differences, like the Global North, which scores lower than the Global South. But as with the ‘western’ versus the ‘non-western’ countries, that difference is a result of the low scores in just two countries: Russia and Japan.

The marked difference between continents, however, cannot be solely explained by the low recognition scores in Japan and Russia. South Americans, on average, recognized almost two-and-a-half photographs more in the survey than Asians (9.79 versus 7.47) and also clearly more than Europeans (8.22) and North Americans/USA residents (8.99). I have no explanation why this is the case, but it is clear that continents are a more important factor for photograph recognition than other ways of clustering nations. Still, conclusions in this respect are hard to draw.

Although an analysis of average photograph recognition per world region yields fewer results than I anticipated, a few interesting insights can be gained by focusing on the recognition of individual photographs. We should use caution before drawing

conclusions in this regard, as illustrated by the example of the photograph of Mao Zedong reading the Chinese Declaration of Independence, described in paragraph 3.3 as a ‘non-Western icon’. Its recognition scores are high in the former Second World (in this survey China plus Russia) and, to a lesser extent, Asia (China plus Japan and India). But these high scores are solely the result of the photographs’ extremely high recognition in China (98 percent of Chinese respondents recognize it). In the case of the photograph of the Vulture and Child, we can observe similar significant variations of recognition scores, which cannot be explained by one country’s high recognition scores (see Figure 3.11).

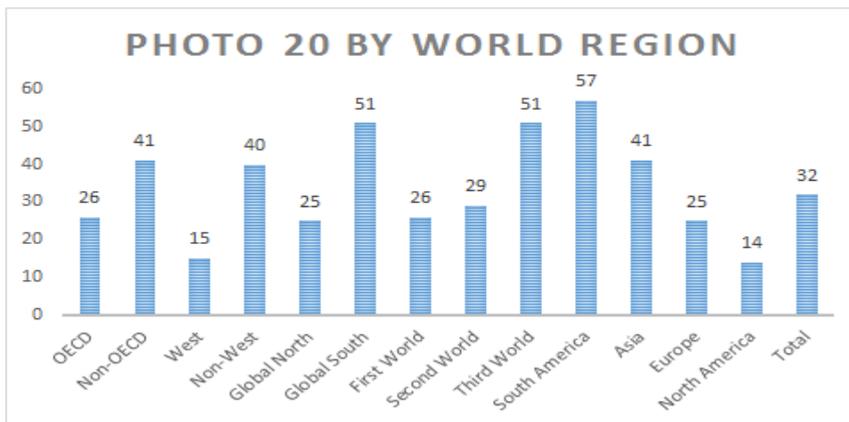


Figure 3.11 Recognition of Vulture and Child (Photo 20) by world region. Graph indicates percentage of respondents that recognize the photo.

The bar chart in Figure 3.11 reveals striking differences in the recognition of Vulture and Child between world regions. The image, a chilling visual illustration of the horrors of famine, is recognized by about one in seven people in western countries, but by forty percent in non-western countries. If we divide the sampled countries in other categories, we see similar striking differences. In the Global South, the photograph is recognized by twice as many people as in the Global North, and by twice as many people in the (former) Third World as in the (former) First World. Four times as many South Americans recognize the photo than their fellow Americans in the USA. This is surprising, since the photo won the Pulitzer Prize, awarded in New York, which sparked a sharp debate in the *New York Times* and other media. But US residents are not the only ones who don’t recognize the Vulture and Child. Even less Britons recognize it (11 percent), and less than one in ten Germans do. High recognition in Turkey raises the average in Europe.

These numbers are so strikingly different, that it is interesting to speculate on the reasons why the recognition of the Vulture and Child is so much lower in Western

Europe and the US than in other countries. One could speculate that the difference in economic development and average income between these two sets of countries translates into a different sensitivity to this image, or different use in media and books. But these are unproven hypotheses; it would be interesting to see future research that could prove where this difference stems from. In any case, it is clear that the Vulture and Child is not part of the collective visual memory in Western Europe and the United States, and it is in many parts of the world outside the West.

There are other photographs that underscore the variation in photograph recognition across the world. Yevgeny Khaldei's photograph might not figure as prominently in academic literature on iconic and historical photographs as other photos, but that is probably more an indication of its very low recognition in the United States (10%) than of its global reach. Of course, its recognition is high in Russia (78%), but in China, another former communist, 'Second World' country, its recognition score is still double as high as in the former First World (46% against 23%).

Another such photo is that of Gandhi at his spinning wheel. This photo might not be widely regarded as a global icon, but its recognition in the Global South is more than twice as high as in the Global North (46% against 21%). In (former) 'Third World' countries, its recognition is 57 percent, against 24 in the First and only 11 in the Second.

Though the photographs mentioned above show significant differences in recognition among people in different world regions, they are exceptions. In fact, in the data from my survey, international categories such as Global North and South, or former First, Second, and Third World, only occasionally arise as significant in terms of photograph recognition. It is interesting that in this data, the Global North and South, and the former First, Second, and Third World, more often appear to be meaningful cultural categories than the 'West' and the 'Rest' or OECD and non-OECD countries. Still, as described above, the difference between these regions can often be explained as a result of one country's particularly high or low photograph recognition score, rather than being an indication of a coherent recognition pattern in these regions.

A more important pattern of variation can be discerned between continents. As the table below illustrates, average recognition scores vary significantly across continents, with Asians recognizing a quarter less photographs, or almost two-and-a-half pictures, from the sample set than South Americans.

Continent	Average Total Recognition Score
South America	9.79
Asia	7.47

Europe	8.22
North America	8.99

Figure 3.12. Average total photo recognition score, by continent.

The difference between continents can be seen in the recognition scores of a number of photographs. The Afghan Girl, for example, is recognized by 59 percent of South Americans, but just by 22 percent of people in Asia – the continent where the photograph was taken. The photograph of the lone protester in Beijing, the so-called Tank Man, is another photograph taken in Asia but recognized much more often in South America than in Asia itself: 64 percent against 37 (more people in China recognize it than in Japan, but less than in India). Curiously, this phenomenon of photographs taken in Asia but recognized much more in other continents, especially South America, extends to other photographs as well. The Napalm Girl is recognized by 65 percent of South Americans, against 35 percent of Asians. The Saigon Execution is recognized by 16 percent of Asians, against 25 percent of South Americans.

This clear difference between continents, especially Asia and South America, can be seen in the recognition scores of other photographs not taken in Asia. The Falling Man, for example: recognized by 21 percent of Asians, against 46 percent of South Americans. The Buchenwald photo was recognized by 18 percent of Asians, against 48 percent of South Americans. And of course the portrait of Che Guevara: 46 against 91 percent. But not all photographs are recognized less in Asia than elsewhere. As noted above, Gandhi at the spinning wheel, Mao reading his declaration, and the Asanuma murder are more often recognized in Asia than in other continents: recognized respectively by 41 percent, 49 percent, and 25 percent of Asian respondents. Most surprisingly, the recognition in Asia of Robert Capa’s Falling Soldier far exceeds that in other continents. It is recognized by 15 percent of respondents in Asia, against 8 percent in South America and Europe, and a mere 3 percent in North America/USA. This is quite surprising, especially in light of the facts that the photo was taken in Europe, by a Hungarian photographer living in Paris who became famous in the United States, and that this photo continues to generate controversy in European and American academic circles and popular media.

There are also a few examples where it is not Asia, but rather North Americans/U.S. residents, who trend away from the rest. Perhaps not coincidentally, this is often the case with photographs that were taken in the United States or during one of the United States’ foreign wars. The photo of the Hindenburg disaster, for instance, is recognized by more than half of all US residents, but its recognition is much lower in the rest of the world. The same is true for recognition of the Times Square Kiss: recognized by 36 percent of Asians and 37 percent of Europeans, but 70 percent of US residents. Also in

the case of the Migrant Mother, the flag on Iwo Jima, the Saigon Execution, and the White House room during the Bin Laden raid, recognition scores are much higher in the United States than in the rest of the world. These findings once more underline the dangers of equating the wide recognition or supposed fame of a photograph in the United States with renown and recognition in the rest of the world.

These differences in the recognition of various individual photographs suggest that photograph recognition varies strongly between continents. If one looks at general recognition patterns by continent, this conclusion is partially confirmed (see Figure 3.15).

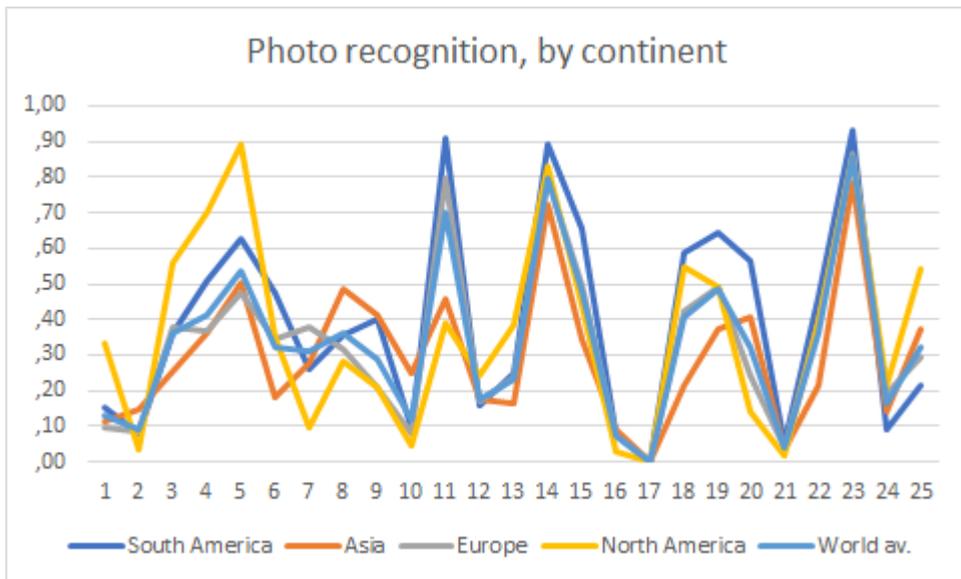


Figure 3.15 Recognition patterns, by continent. Horizontal axis indicates survey photograph number; vertical axis indicates percentage of respondents who recognized a photo. Lines represent continents; light blue line represents world average.

In the case of many photographs, recognition by continent indeed varies significantly, producing ‘messy’ recognition patterns (lines that trend away from each other). This is especially the case on the left of the chart (roughly: photographs before 1970) where the lines in general run further apart from each other than on the right of the chart (photographs after 1970). After 1970, only in the case of the Afghan Girl, the Tank Man, the Vulture and Child, and the White House Room (photographs 18, 19, 20, and 25) do we see significant differences across continents.

We can draw three conclusions from this. Firstly, the recognition of older photographs apparently varies more strongly across continents than the recognition of younger ones. Secondly, the common divergence of recognition is wholly absent in the case of the two most recognized photographs in the survey: the Moon Landing and the 9/11 Airplane (photographs 14 and 23). On all continents, those two photographs are recognized by surprisingly similar numbers of people.

The third conclusion is perhaps most important for future research and publications on iconic and historical photographs: namely that not only Asia, but also North America/the United States most often, and most extremely, trends away from the world average. Of all continents, photograph recognition in Europe is most often in line with the world average: the grey (European) line often blends perfectly with the light blue line (world average). South America follows the world trend less smoothly, but only strongly trends away in the case of photos 18, 19 and 20.

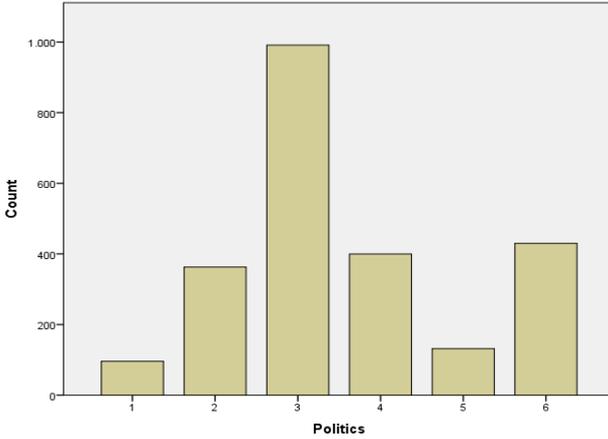
It is more surprising that not only Asia, but also North America/USA, most often trends away from the world average. As demonstrated in chapter 3, it is quite common among American academics to equate the supposed fame of a photograph in the United States with worldwide recognition and prestige, which betrays the assumption that what is true for the US is somehow indicative for the whole world. But as Figure 3.15 demonstrates, this assumption is false. In no less than nine cases, recognition in the United States differs sharply from the rest of the world.³⁶⁶

3.4.4 Photograph Recognition and Politics

The distribution of political preferences over respondents corresponds to what one would expect of a random sample group. Figure 3.16 shows the distribution of answers to the question how respondents rate their political views.

Figure 3.16 (Next page). Number of answers to Question 57: 'In your political views, where do you place yourself on a scale from left to right? 1=very left, 2= left of center, 3= center, 4=right of center, 5= very right.' Respondents who preferred not to answer this question chose option 6.

³⁶⁶ In the USA, the recognition of photographs 1, 3, 4, 5, 13, and 25 is significantly higher than the world average; it is significantly lower in the case of photographs 7, 11, 20. ('Significant' in this case refers to a recognition score that is at least 10 percentage points higher or lower than the world average.)



As Figure 3.16 shows, about half of the respondents who did provide an answer to this question identify their political views as ‘center’ (3), with a smaller and roughly equal amount of people identifying as ‘center-left’ and ‘center-right’, and a still smaller roughly equal amount of people identifying as very left or very right. There are no surprises here, and indeed the ‘normal’ distribution of political preferences suggests that respondents, as a rule, truthfully answered the questions in the survey.

Photograph recognition is quite evenly spread over the five political categories. However, a comparison nonetheless yields the surprising conclusion that respondents with extreme-right political views recognize the most photographs: two photographs more on average, than their counterparts who identify their politics as far-left or centrist. (See Figure 3.17)

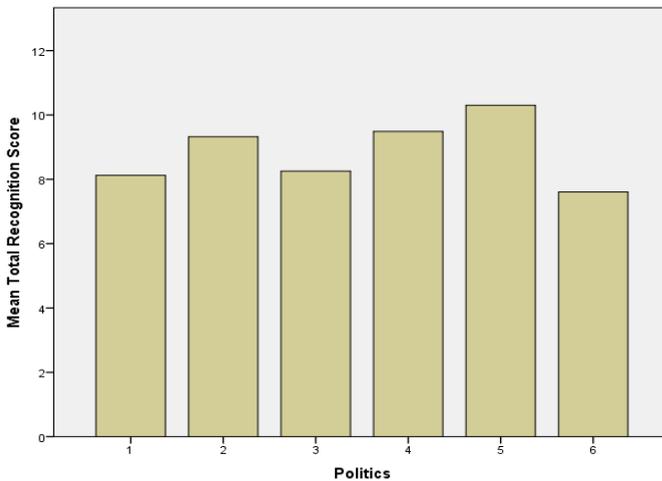


Figure 3.17. Average photograph recognition score per political group. (Respondents rated their political views on a scale from 1 (very left) to 5 (very right); respondents who did not wish to answer chose 6.)

This is a curious finding, for which I have no explanation. It is interesting to reflect on its implications; about whether people with very right leaning political views are exposed to more photographs in general, to historical or iconic photographs, whether they are more sensitive to them and remember them better, or whether political conservatism is connected to a greater interest and remembrance of (images of) history – and if any of these is true: why? I have no supporting data to reflect on any of these questions, and I will limit myself to stating this surprising conclusion. As the next paragraph will show, my data reveals more surprising conclusions about politics and photographs.

3.5 Emotional Impact of Iconic and Historical Photographs

In the second part of my survey, respondents were asked to answer questions about the emotional impact, the importance, the moment in history and the central message of six selected photographs. The latter two questions were ‘open’ questions. The former two categories, about emotional impact and importance, were ‘closed’ questions. The first of these questions asked respondents to rate the emotional impact of a photograph on them on a scale of 1 to 5. The second asked them whether they thought the photograph is an ‘important’ photograph (to be answered by choosing Yes/No/I’m not sure). The answers to these two ‘closed’ questions, can be statistically analyzed. In this paragraph, I will offer a quantitative analysis of responses about emotional impact (Questions 27, 31, 35, 39, 43, 47).

3.5.1 Emotional Impact: Three Observations About the Survey Results

I will start this paragraph with general observations about the data for this question. As a reliability test for answers to the ‘emotion’ questions, I made a histogram of all answers. I added up all six responses each respondent gave to the six questions about emotional impact. We can call this number the ‘Emotional Impact Score’ for each respondent, which can range from 6 (when a respondent answered ‘1’ to each question) to 30 (when a respondent answered ‘5’ to each question). A histogram of Emotion Scores is shown in Figure 3.18.

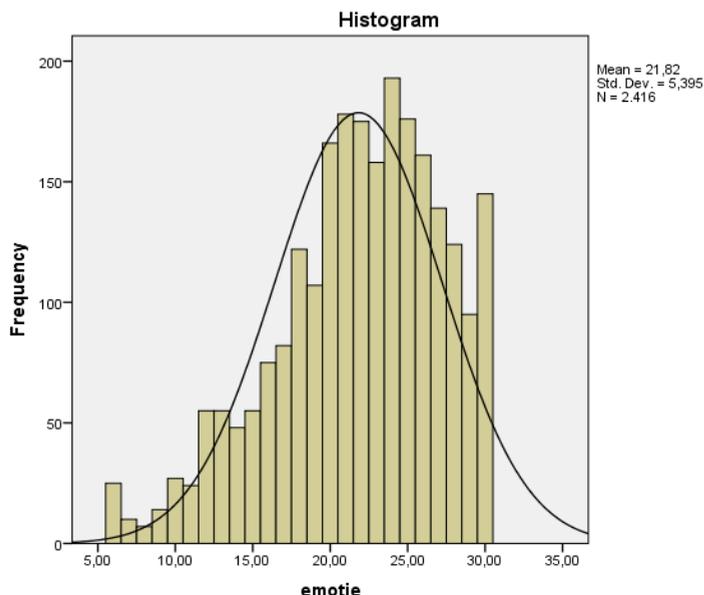


Figure 3.18. Histogram of Emotional Impact Scores, the sum of respondents' answers to the questions about the emotional impact of six selected photographs (Questions 27, 31, 35, 39, 43 and 47), and a 'normal' curve projected over them.

From Figure 3.18, it can be concluded that the emotional impact of these six photographs was generally high (the actual answers are mostly situated to the right of a normal distribution line). Moreover, they follow a 'normal' distribution quite well, indicating reliable answers. There is, however, a spike at the Emotion Score of 30, which suggests that about 70 respondents just clicked '5' to each of these questions when they perhaps didn't feel that way – at least not for all six photographs. This distortion is clearly visible, but is much smaller than in the case of the Histogram of photograph recognition scores (Figure 3.1). Also, the Cronbach's alpha for all answers is still 0.82, indicating high internal consistency and suggesting a reliable dataset, and respondents who generally answered consistently and reliably. I have therefore not filtered out respondents with an Emotional Impact Score of 30, and have used all answers.

A second general observation that can be made is that the emotional impact of the six selected photographs apparently varied significantly, and are not related to whether respondents have seen the photograph before. The Abu Ghraib prisoner elicited little emotional response from the respondents, with an average score for this photograph of 2.96 on a scale of 1 (weak impact) to 5 (very strong impact). In contrast, the average score for the picture of the 'Napalm Girl' and 'Vulture and Child' was higher than 4. (See Figure 3.18) The highest scoring photograph, Vulture and Child, was also among

the lesser recognized photographs in this list, and photographs with similar recognition scores (e.g. the Napalm Girl and the Tank Man) show large differences.

Photo	Average emotional response score
Buchenwald	3.85
Falling Man	3.50
Napalm Girl	4.14
Tank Man	3.19
Vulture and Child	4.18
Abu Ghraib	2.96

Figure 3.19. Average score of all respondents to the question: ‘How strong is the emotional impact of this picture on you? Please rate on a scale of 1 (weak impact) to 5 (very strong impact)’.

The highest scoring photographs are those with suffering children in it; congruent with the intuitive assumption that children trigger the strongest emotional response in people. The lowest scoring photograph is the Abu Ghraib photograph. This is an interesting outcome. The Abu Ghraib photo was taken relatively recently and received ample media attention in many countries around the world. It carries strong overtones of Christian iconography (providing a visual echo of Christ on the cross). And it also carries a more visual suggestion of direct cruelty than the ‘Tank Man’ and the ‘Falling Man’, photos that both score higher. Perhaps the abstract nature of the picture and its low average recognition (20 percent in this survey) influenced its relatively low average emotional impact. It could also be true that researchers and writers on photography (in other words, a visually educated group) read and perceive a stronger visual content in this photograph than randomly chosen respondents.

A third and last general observation about the survey results, is that the standard deviation of answers – that is, how much individual answers differ from each other – is remarkably different between the six photographs. If all respondents supply the same answer to a question (for instance, an emotional reaction score of 4.0 to a certain photograph), the standard deviation of the answers is zero. In reality, answers differ, so that we can calculate how much the answers fluctuate, and how far they deviate from the average. The more they fluctuate and the more they deviate from the average, the higher the standard deviation will be.

In the case of the six photographs in my survey, the differences in standard deviation are pronounced. In the case of the Napalm Girl, the standard deviation is the lowest at 1.1, indicating that respondents rated the emotional impact of the photograph on them in a relatively similar way. This is also true for the Vulture and Child and the Buchenwald photograph, both with a standard deviation of 1.16. But the emotional reactions vary much more in the case of the other photographs. The standard deviation was 1.29 in the case of the Tank Man, 1.35 for the Falling Man and 1.36 for the Abu Ghraib prisoner. This is an interesting difference, because the photographs with relatively low standard deviation all show actual suffering or its results, and the ones with relatively high standard deviation are more politically charged photographs which suggest, but not actually show, physical pain. A possible (though insufficiently proven) hypothesis could be that photographs that do show actual effects of pain elicit more similar reactions in people all over the world, and photographs that leave more room for interpretation elicit more varied reactions.

3.5.2 Emotional Impact of Photographs: National Differences

If the emotional reaction to photographs is an indication of cultural values, one would expect to see differences in emotional reaction scores between countries. And indeed, the variation between countries was quite pronounced, with Italians, Brazilians and Argentinians reporting the highest emotional response to photographs.

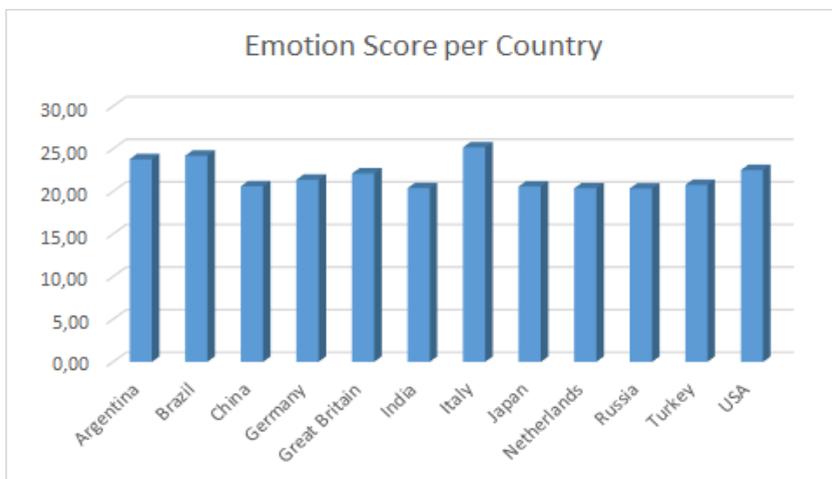


Figure 3.20. Average Emotion Score per Country.

Figure 3.20 illustrates this: it shows that respondents in most countries reach an 'emotion score' of around 20. These countries are China, India, Japan, the Netherlands, Russia and Turkey. Germans score slightly higher (21.38), followed by Brits (22.10) and Americans (22.51). High emotion scores are recorded by Argentinians, (23.78) and Brazilians (24.19), and Italians are (on average) most impacted by the photos in this survey, with an average emotion score of 25.18.

There is not an obvious explanation for these per-country differences, but they are quite large: the (average) impact of these selected photos is consistently higher on people in Argentina, Brazil and Italy than on people elsewhere. This difference could only be explained by offering hypotheses about shared cultural characteristics between these countries (for instance the 'Latin' origins of or catholic dominance in their culture). This, of course, would be speculative.

A second rung of countries is formed by the United States and Great Britain, with similar emotional response scores; interesting, since they are often mentioned as having a shared 'Anglo-Saxon culture' (though the term is contested). The lower-scoring countries do not seem to share any obvious common characteristics, and the variance between most countries with regards to emotional impact scores is low. Therefore, few general conclusions about emotional impact and nationality can be drawn. I had hoped the answering patterns about emotional impact would offer more distinct national differences or regional patterns, but this is not the case. This could be regarded as an interesting outcome by itself: apparently, the emotional impact of this selection of six historical and iconic photographs is quite similar on an audience of Japanese, Russian, German, Indian, Dutch, Turkish and Chinese respondents. Or, in other words: Italians, Brazilians, and Argentinians have a stronger emotional response to the iconic and historic photos in this survey; in the rest of the world, the emotional response is quite similar.

3.5.3 Emotional Impact of Photographs: Differences between Continents and Regions of the World

The remarkable differences in emotional impact scores between countries raise the question whether similar differences exist between continents and regions of the world. I had certainly expected that the emotional reaction to historic and iconic photographs would vary significantly across various continents and world regions. Often-used categories to group countries together are the 'Global North' and 'Global South', the 'West' and its opposite 'the Rest', OECD and non-OECD countries, and the countries of the former First, Second, and Third World. Although these categories are primarily political and economic in character, they are often assumed to have an important

cultural dimension as well. I expected this to be reflected in the emotional reaction of respondents in these regions to the photographs in my survey.

This hypothesis was proven to be invalid. Average emotion scores (the sum of the emotional reaction scores of 1 to 5 that respondents reported to six selected photographs) showed little variation across world regions. The emotional response to photographs was almost identical in OECD and Non-OECD countries (21.84 and 21.80, respectively). The difference was also small between the Global North and South (21.63 and 22.26, respectively) and between the 'West' and the 'Rest' (22.29 and 21.58, respectively). Differences were more pronounced, between the 'First', 'Second' and 'Third World' (21.84, 20.46 and 22.85, respectively). An analysis of emotional responses to individual photographs yielded similar results: few marked differences, and an overall picture of conformity across regions of the world.

If one accepts emotional reaction to photographs as an indication of cultural values, then this outcome would imply that world regions (or at least the ones used in this analysis) do not seem to exist in a cultural sense. In other words: the often-used categories of the 'West' and the 'Rest', OECD and Non-OECD, Global North and South, and former First, Second and Third World – are perhaps meaningful categories in an economic and political sense, but my survey suggests that they are less meaningful categories to distinguish between cultures.

With regard to emotional response to photographs, continents seems to matter more than global regions or divides. Emotional response in South America is higher than in other continents, especially Asia. Asians, with an average emotional response score of 20.53, have a significantly lower emotional reaction to the six selected photographs than South Americans (23.98).³⁶⁷

Not all individual photographs show the same gap between continents. The largest difference in emotional impact is elicited by the the photographs of the Vulture and Child and the Napalm Girl. South Americans report an average emotional impact of 3.7 (on a scale of 1 to 5) to the Vulture and Child photograph – meaning that a large majority of South Americans answered '5' (or 'very strong emotional impact') to this question. The average difference between the answers of South Americans and Asians to this question is 0.77. The difference is just as big in the case of the Napalm Girl: 0.76. Interestingly, these photographs are both centered around a suffering child. The average difference between South Americans and Asians is much smaller in the case of the Tank Man and the Abu Ghraib prisoner. With regard to these two pictures: the average emotional impact of the former is actually higher on Asians than on Europeans, and similar in the case of the latter.

³⁶⁷ Europeans and North Americans score 21.66 and 22.51, respectively.

Visually represented in a line chart, the emotional reaction of respondents on different continents looks as in Figure 3.21.

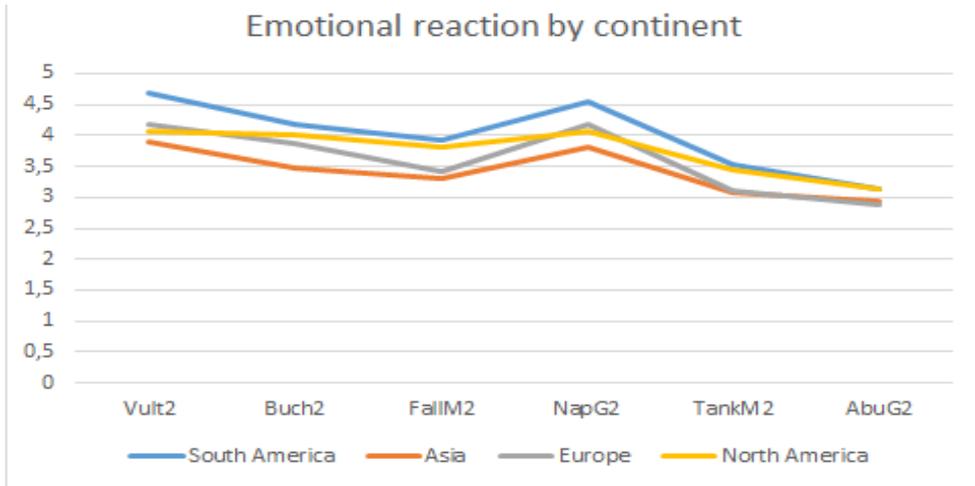


Figure 3.21. Average emotional reaction to six photographs by continent. Vertical axis represents emotional impact as reported by respondents on a scale of 1 (very weak) to 5 (very strong); horizontal axis represents the six photographs; lines represent continents.

Figure 3.21 illustrates the notion that Asians, on average, have the lowest emotional reaction to historic and iconic photographs, and South Americans the highest. Notable is that Asians have (about) the same reaction as Europeans to photographs that show (suffering of) adults, but not to photographs that show (suffering of) children. The only exception to that conclusion is the Buchenwald photograph.

Striking as well is that the pattern of responses by North Americans (in this survey: people from the USA) is slightly different from that of people from other continents. They appear to react more strongly toward the photographs of the Falling Man, the Tank Man and the Abu Ghraib prisoner – all images that in American (academic) literature are often associated with strong political messages. North Americans/respondents in the United States also diverge from respondents in other continents in the case of the Vulture and Child and the Napalm Girl: they react less strongly to these photographs, which show suffering children, than people on other continents. These are interesting results. One intriguing hypothesis, to explain these differences (though this is clearly not proven sufficiently by these results), could be that people from the USA are emotionally triggered more than people in other regions of the world by photographs that can be interpreted to have more political implications, and less by photographs that appear to show suffering in a more general sense. Another (unproven)

hypothesis could be that people in the United States are more prone to the (contested) phenomenon of 'compassion fatigue'.³⁶⁸

3.5.4 Emotional Impact and Age

In my survey of global attitudes towards photographs, age was another interesting category. In our increasingly interconnected world, the possibilities grow for transnational cultural groups³⁶⁹ to form; for instance, groups based upon age. The results of my survey offer limited evidence to support this hypothesis. When looking at age groups, there are only a few marked variations in rating the importance to the six selected photographs. These do, however, include interesting cases.

When the emotional impact scores are categorized by age group, few differences can be seen. Generally speaking, answering patterns do not vary much across age groups. But as with recognition scores by age group (see paragraph 3.4.1 *Generational Icons*), the Buchenwald photograph provides an exception. Of people aged 18-34, 30.4 percent rate the emotional impact of this photograph on them as '5' (Very strong). Among people aged 50+, that percentage is 44.6: almost fifty percent higher. The Abu Ghraib photograph displays a similar difference (though lower in absolute numbers). Here, 21.4 percent of people aged 50+ report a 'very strong' emotional impact, versus 14.7 percent of people aged 18-34.

While the Buchenwald and Abu Ghraib photos show the largest gaps, the percentage of people who mark a photograph as having a 'very strong impact' on them (5 on a level of 1-5) is continuously higher among people aged 50+ than among people aged 18-34. Only in the case of the Vulture and Child photograph, more people aged 18-34 report a 'very strong impact' of this photograph on them as people aged 50+.³⁷⁰

This raises the question: do people aged 50+ have a stronger emotional reaction to historic and iconic photographs that show suffering than people 18-34? This

³⁶⁸ This term, describing the phenomenon of a decreasing compassionate reaction to photographs, as a reaction of people to frequent exposure to them, was coined by media scholar Susan Moeller in: Susan Moeller, *Compassion Fatigue. How the Media Sell Disease, Famine, War and Death* (New York 1999). The same phenomenon, described in different words, was also described by, among others, Susan Sontag, Barbie Zelizer, and Alfredo Jaar. (In, respectively: Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York 2005; 1973), Barbie Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget. Holocaust Memory through the Camera's Eye* (Chicago 1998), Alfredo Jaar (interview by Ruben Gallo), 'Representations of Violence', *Trans Arts, Cultures, Media* 3:4 (1997). The existence of this phenomenon, it must be added, is not accepted by all. See for instance: Susie Linfield, *The Cruel Radiance. Photography and Political Violence* (Chicago 2010) 45-48

³⁶⁹ For a discussion of these, see the Introduction

³⁷⁰ The percentages of respondents who rate the emotional impact of the Vulture and Child photograph on them as 5 ('very strong') is 58.2 (people aged 18-34), 55.6 (people aged 35-50), and 56.8 (people aged 50+).

proposition, although interesting and provocative, must be dismissed because, as stated above, the differences between age groups are actually small. But the intuitive assumption must be dismissed as well that young people have a stronger emotional reaction to these photographs of suffering than older people. Respondents aged 18 to 34 comprise the millennial generation, which is often (at least in western countries) associated with liberal/progressive views. If this is true, it does not translate into a stronger emotional reaction to historical photographs that show suffering.

3.5.5 Emotional impact and politics

In the last part of the survey, respondents were asked to rank their political views on a scale of 1 (very left) to 5 (very right).³⁷¹ I was curious if there would be a connection between the emotional impact of photographs on viewers and their political views. Emotional connection to other people's woes are often seen as a trait of the political left – the term 'bleeding heart liberals', that conservatives in the United States sometimes use for their political opponents, is an illustration of this. Several photographs in the second part of the survey show suffering, for instance in the photo of the liberation of Buchenwald (1945), Kevin Carter's photo of vulture and child in Sudan (1993), and that of Kim Phuc in Nick Ut's photograph of her, running from a napalm attack (1972). There is also in photojournalism a long tradition of left-wing activism, from legendary photographers like Robert Capa and Dorothea Lange to 'human rights photography' and other examples.

But the results of the photography survey, however, do not establish a connection between politics and emotional responses to the six photographs in the second part of the survey at all. Consider Figure 3.29:

Figure 3.29. Average emotion score per political group. Vertical bar represents average emotion score of all respondents (emotion score is the sum of the emotional impact of six selected photographs on respondents, which they were asked to rate from 1 (weak impact) to 5 (very strong impact)). Horizontal bar represents political views, rated by respondents on a scale of 1 (very left) to 5 (very right). Column 6 shows respondents who preferred not to answer the question about their political views.

As can be seen in Figure 3.29, there are only negligible differences between the various political groups when it comes to emotional response to these six photographs.

A focus on individual photographs yields even more surprising results. Respondents who place themselves on the far right of the political spectrum appear to be most moved by the photograph of Buchenwald survivors. Almost half (46.2 percent) of them

³⁷¹ Respondents had the option to not answer this question, and choose 'I would rather not say'.

indicate that the Buchenwald photograph has a 'Very strong' emotional impact on them; the highest percentage of all political categories. They are also emotionally more impacted than others by the photograph of the Tank Man in Beijing (the percentage of far-right respondents who feel the photo has a 'very strong' emotional impact on them is almost double as high as among politically centrist respondents; 34.8 and 18.6, respectively). The same is true for the Abu Ghraib photograph (it elicits a 'very strong' emotional reaction in 30.3 percent of far-right respondents, versus 15.3 percent among centrist respondents and 14.6 percent among far-left respondents). And it is also true for the Falling Man, though the percentage of far-right respondents is also highest among those who indicate that the Abu Ghraib photograph has a 'very weak' impact on them. In all photos except the Falling Man, respondents who identify as 'very left' have the highest percentage that indicates that the selected photographs have a 'very weak' emotional impact on them. In the case of the Vulture and Child, that percentage is more than three times as high among far-left respondents as among politically centrist respondents, and almost five times higher than among those who identify as 'center-left' (14.6 percent, 4.5 percent, and 3.0 percent, respectively).

These significant differences in emotional response between political groups would suggest that similar strong variations would exist among respondents' valuation of the importance of these six photographs. However, no significant differences and patterns can be discerned between different political categories of respondents in relation to the question whether they consider the selected photographs important or not.

3.6 Rating the Importance of Iconic and Historical Photographs

3.6.1 General conclusions

The second category of closed questions asked respondents whether they thought six selected photographs were 'important' (to be answered by choosing Yes/No/I'm not sure). An analysis of answers to these six questions can start with an overview of worldwide percentages of respondents who answered 'Yes', per photograph. Such an overview yields a few surprises.

As Figure 3.22 illustrates, three photographs stand out from the rest. Close to three quarters of respondents thought the Buchenwald photograph was 'important', almost four in five thought the Vulture and Child photograph was, and even more qualified the Napalm Girl photograph as such.

Photo	%
Buchenwald	74.1
Falling Man	48.9
Napalm Girl	80.7
Tank Man	53.6
Vulture/Child	78.8
Abu Ghraib	33.2

Figure 3.21. Percentage of all respondents who qualified the six selected photographs as 'important'.

Not only are these percentages very high, for every single photograph they are also much higher than their recognition among all respondents. In the case of the Napalm Girl photo, the percentage of people who regard it as an important photograph is over thirty percentage points higher than its average recognition among all respondents. The difference is over forty percentage points in the case of the Buchenwald photograph and forty-five percentage points in the case of the Vulture and Child photograph. In both of these cases, the number of respondents who regard these photographs as important is more than double the number of respondents who recognized them. Also the photograph that is clearly regarded, on average, as the least important of these photographs, the Abu Ghraib photograph, is regarded as important by twice as many respondents than those who recognized it.

This is an important finding. It implies that people base their assessment of a photograph's importance not only on what they (think they) know it depicts and their familiarity with it, but also on what they read in it. The assessment that a photograph is important, by someone who has not seen the photograph before, is necessarily based on the interpretation by that person of the visual qualities of the photograph, and/or that person's interpretation of what the photograph depicts and what it communicates about that subject.

It is important to note something that one might easily overlook. Not to miss the forest for the trees, we should conclude from this overview of global averages that people see photographs of events in history as important. Not all photographs, obviously, but there are clearly photographs that many people in different countries all over the world assess as 'important'. The six photographs respondents were asked to assess were taken from twenty photographs that feature prominently in academic discussions on

iconic and important historical photographs, and the average assessment of their importance among a general group of respondents is quite high, with scores under fifty percent as the exception. Figure 3.22 further illustrates this point.

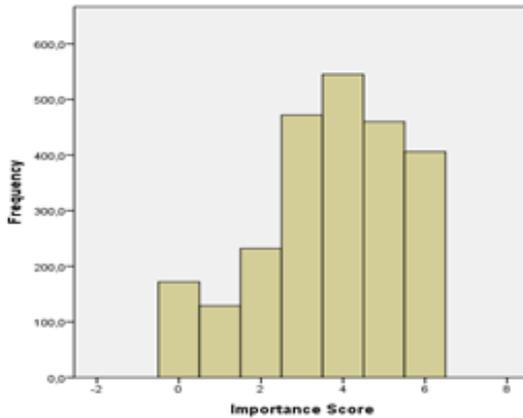


Figure 3.22. Frequency of importance scores among all respondents. Vertical bar represents total number of respondents who arrived at a certain importance score, horizontal bar represents importance score (the number of times a respondent answered 'Yes' to the question 'In your opinion, is this an important photograph?', which was asked of six photographs).

As Figure 3.22 shows, people most frequently thought that four of the six photographs shown to them were important, followed by three and five, with all six photographs not far behind. Least common were low importance scores, where respondents assessed just one or two photographs as important, or none at all.

The evidence collected in this survey about the assessment of importance of iconic and historical photographs by general audiences is limited. It was not the prime focus of this study, and further research could significantly improve our understanding, by increasing the number and variety of photographs that are shown to respondents, their selection and the variety of questions asked about this subject. But also by themselves, these are interesting results.

3.6.2 Assessment of importance by country

The previous paragraph described how the assessment of the emotional impact of the six photographs in the second part of the survey did not vary significantly between countries. That was very different for the assessment of their importance. Consider the table below.

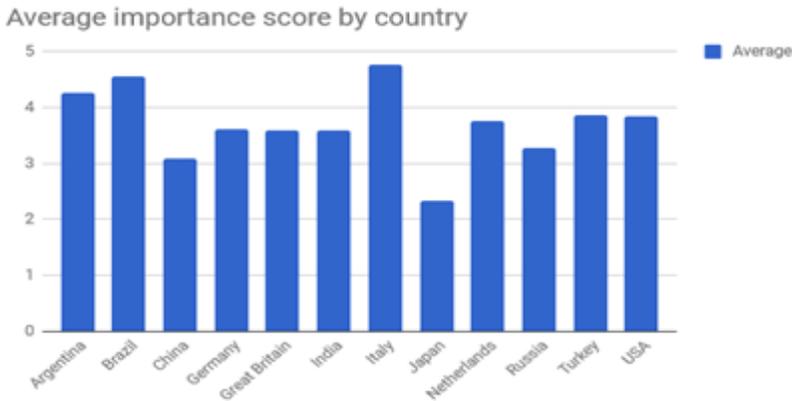
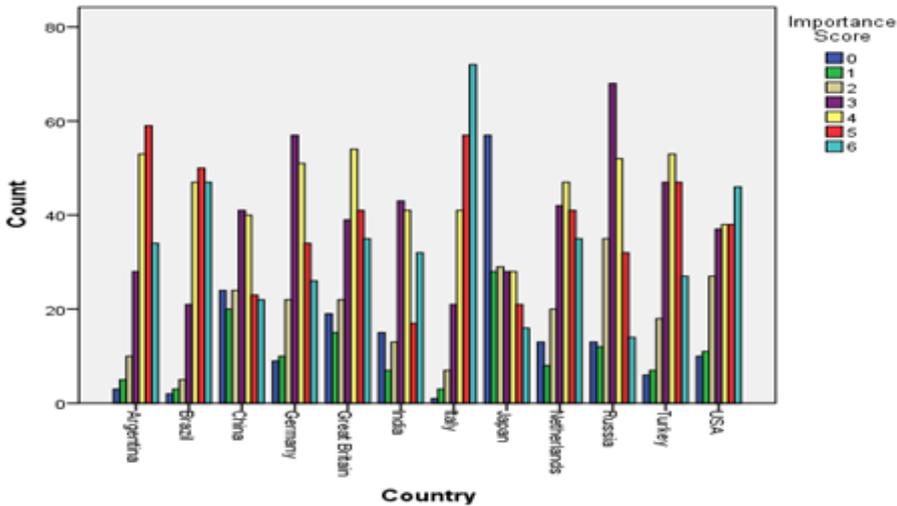


Figure 3.23. Average importance scores by country

As Figure 3.23 illustrates, average importance scores varied significantly between countries. In Japan, respondents saw an average of 2.33 photographs as ‘important’; in Italy, more than double that number (4.76). Also in Argentina and Brazil, respondents relatively often saw photographs as important, with China and Russia trailing a group with average scores between 3 and 4, and Japan well behind. The three countries where respondents, on average, judge the most photographs to be important, are the same countries where respondents reported the highest average emotional impact (Italy, Argentina, Brazil).³⁷² The relatively very low score of Japan is surprising. Not only is it much lower than the world average (3.69), but it also trends away strongly from the rest. Figure 3.24 illustrates this.



³⁷² The average importance scores in each country were: Argentina 4.27, Brazil 4.55, China 3.08, Germany 3.61, Great Britain 3.59, India 3.59, Italy 4.76, Japan 2.33, Netherlands 3.77, Russia 3.27, Turkey 3.87, USA 3.84. The world average was 3.69.

Figure 3.24. Importance scores, by number of respondents, by country. Vertical axis represents number of people who had a certain importance score. Horizontal axis splits respondents by importance score (0 to 6), and by country.

Figure 3.24 illustrates how many Japanese respondents thought not one photograph was important: their number was around eighty, much higher than in other countries. In Japan, the most common importance score was zero. Put differently: among Japanese respondents, those who thought that not one photograph of the six that were shown to them was important, formed the largest group. I have no logical explanation for this. Figure 3.24 also illustrates that six was the most common score in Italy: respondents who thought that all six photographs were important formed the largest single group among Italian respondents. This was also true of the United States, although the average emotion score among US respondents was much lower than among Italian respondents (3.86 versus 4.76).

3.6.3 Education and assessment of a photograph's importance

An interesting result of the survey is a correlation between education level and the perception of a photographs' importance. In each of the selected six photographs, the percentage of respondents who answered 'Yes' to the question 'In your opinion, is this an important photograph?' was the highest among respondents who received higher education and lowest among respondents who received lower education (see Figure 3.25).

Low	3.31
Middle	3.78
High	4

Figure 3.25. Average importance score among respondents with similar education level. Importance score is how often respondents answer 'Yes' to the question: 'In your opinion, is this an important photograph?', repeated for six photographs. Education level is as reported by respondents to Question 56.

Apparently, respondents were likely to assess more photos in the second part of the survey as 'important' when their education level was higher. This could indicate that people in general are more likely to see photographs as important when their education

level is higher, although it would be premature to draw that conclusion from this survey. More research and evidence would be needed to underwrite that finding.

3.7 Combined statistics

In this paragraph, research findings will be described that combine statistical data from different categories.

3.7.1 Correlation between emotional impact, assessment of importance, recognition, and politics

It might be an intuitive assumption that emotional impact, assessment of importance, and recognition of photographs are interrelated: that someone looking at photographs might judge those photos to be more important if they have a higher emotional impact on him or her, or if that person recognizes those photos. In the previous paragraphs, several aspects regarding the relation between these factors have been analyzed. We can also calculate their correlation, and express it in graphs. We then see a correlation between these factors. But while all graphs show a clear linear correlation, they also show strange deviations from the average trend that are not easily explained. Consider Figures 3.26, 3.27, and 3.28:

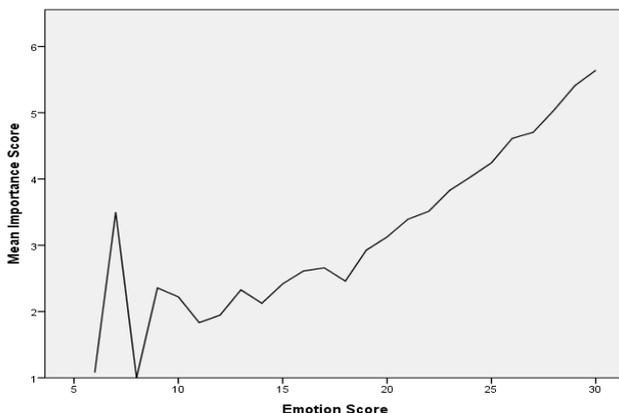
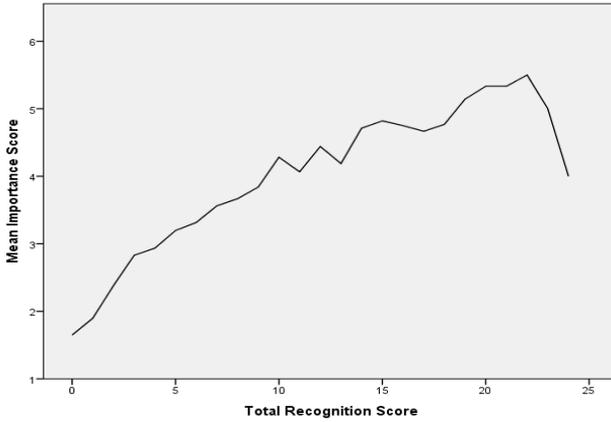
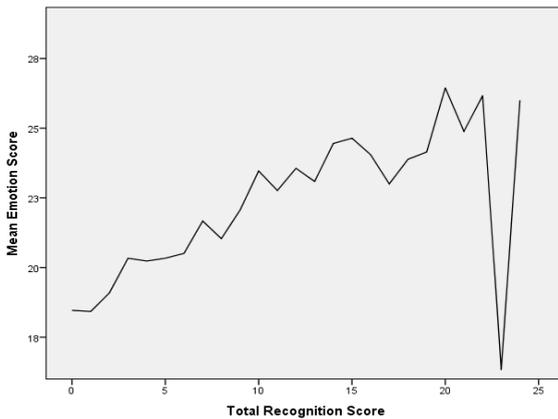


Figure 3.26. Assessment of importance of six selected photographs versus emotional impact. Vertical bar represents average importance score of all respondents (importance score is the sum of the number of times a respondent answered 'Yes' to the question: 'In your opinion, is this an important photograph?', repeated for six photographs). Horizontal bar represents

average emotion score (emotion score is the the emotional impact of a photograph that respondents reported on a scale of 1 to 5, repeated for six photographs).



3.27. Assessment of importance versus photograph recognition. Vertical bar represents average importance score of all respondents, horizontal bar represents average recognition score of all respondents (recognition score is the sum of how many times a respondent answered 'Yes' to the question: 'Have you seen this picture before?', repeated for 25 photographs).



3.28. Emotional impact of photographs versus recognition. Vertical bar represents average emotion score of all respondents (see Figure 3.26 for a brief explanation). Horizontal bar represents average recognition score (see Figure 3.27 for a brief explanation).

All three graphs show a linear correlation between the different factors. Figure 3.26 illustrates that emotional impact and assessment of importance of the six photographs in this part of the survey are correlated: on average, respondents who judged more photographs to be important also reported higher emotional impact of these photographs on them. As stated above, this is perhaps an intuitive assumption: that

people who are emotionally impacted by a photograph are more likely to see that photograph as important, and less likely to do so if the photograph has a lower emotional impact on them.

But Figures 3.27 and 3.28 tell a different story. Figure 3.26 shows the correlation between answers regarding the same six photographs, but Figures 3.27 and 3.28 correlate the emotional impact and assessment of importance of six photographs in the second part of the survey with the average recognition score of twenty-five photographs in the first part of the survey. The correlation between these factors is therefore more surprising. Apparently, respondents worldwide reported (on average) a higher emotional impact of the six selected photographs if they recognized more photographs of the 25 shown in the first part of the survey. And apparently they also judged more of the six photographs in the second part of the survey to be important if they recognized more of the 25 photos in the first part.

This is an interesting finding. One possible explanation could be that people respond to photographs in a different, pre-determined way: that people who remember photographs better are also more likely to see significance in them, and are more inclined to be emotionally touched by them. This responsiveness to photographs would be a very interesting phenomenon, if it indeed exists. Another possible explanation would be that there is something like 'visual literacy', whereby people become more likely to see photographs as important or to be touched emotionally by them if they have seen and have remembered more photographs. Both these possible explanations for my findings are very interesting, but more research is needed before we can say anything definite about this subject – also because anomalies in the three graphs suggest more research is needed.³⁷³

Another correlation that can be found through statistical analysis is between how often respondents read, listen to, or watch the news and how often they view the photographs in the second part of the survey as important photos. Figure 3.29 illustrates that, on average, respondents who follow the news more frequently assess more photographs as being 'important'.

³⁷³ The spikes at the lower end of the graph in Figure 3.26, the high end of the graph in Figure 3.27, and especially the very low dive at the higher end of the graph in Figure 3.28, are strange but they are also based on the average of a much lower number of respondents than the results in the middle of the graph (see Figure 3.2). The graph, in other words, is an average that is based on much more respondents in the middle of the graph and on a much lower level on its left and right ends. The line is therefore impacted much more at both ends by respondents who quit the survey after completing the first part of the survey. This is for instance the case with the strange downturn in Figure 3.28: two respondents with a recognition score of 23 quit the survey after completing the first part, disproportionately influencing the graph.

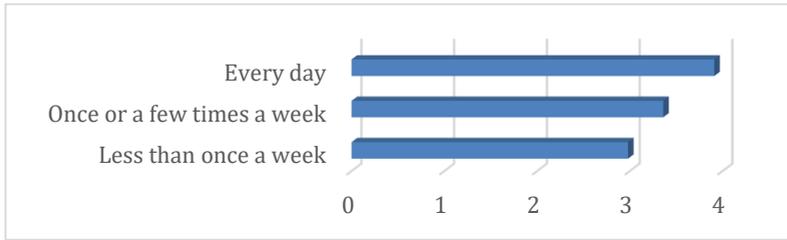


Figure 3.29. Average importance scores versus frequency of news. Bars represent all respondents who watch, read or listen to news with a similar frequency: every day, once or a few times a week, or less than once a week. Horizontal scores represent how often these respondents, on average, answered 'Yes' to the question: 'In your opinion, is this an important photograph?', repeated for six different photographs.

A last correlation to be described here concerns that between education and assessment of importance of selected photographs. Of the six photographs in the second part of the survey, respondents who read, watch or listen to the news more often find almost one more photo important than those who update on the news less than once a week (average importance scores of 3.91 versus 2.98). This correlation suggests that people who read, watch or listen to the news more often, see more significance in iconic and historical photographs than those who update on the news less frequently. More research could underwrite this claim with more evidence.

A similar correlation can be found between level of education and the total recognition of photographs. Consider Figure 3.30:

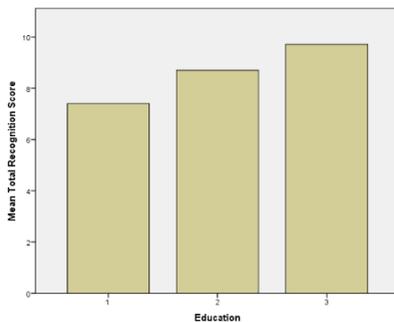


Figure 3.30. Recognition of photographs and education level. Vertical bar indicates the average number of photographs that respondents recognize (of the 25 photographs shown to them in the first part of the survey). Horizontal bar represents highest completed education level, reported by respondents as either High School/Lower professional, Mid-level professional, or Higher professional/University education.

As Figure 3.30 illustrates, respondents who report to have finished higher levels of education also recognize more photographs in the first part of the photography survey. Respondents with higher education recognized more than two photographs more, on average, than those with lower education. This suggests that the more education people have, the more iconic and historical photographs they recognize. This would be a logical explanation, since more years of education can expose people to more iconic and historical photographs, but we would need more evidence to make any definite statements about that.

To conclude this section, let's consider the relation between political views and emotional impact of photographs.

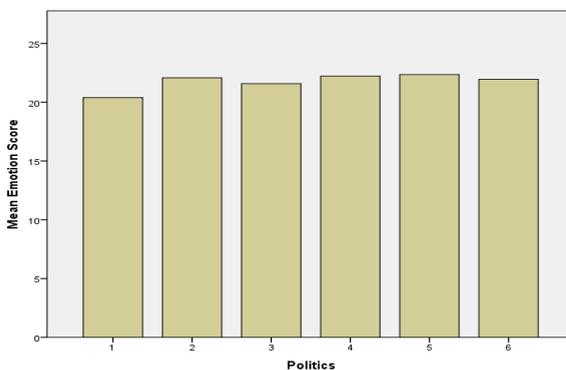


Figure 3.31. Average emotion score per political group. Respondents were asked to rate the emotional impact of six photograph on them on a scale of 1 (weak impact) to 5 (very strong impact). The six answers (to Questions 27, 31, 35, 39, 43 and 47) were added up to a single 'Emotion Score' per respondent. Respondents were also asked to rate their political views on a scale of 1 (very left) to 5 (very right). This graph shows the average emotion score of respondents per political group. Column 6 shows respondents who did not wish to identify their politics.

Empathy and emotional response to the suffering of others (which many of the photographs in the selection of six show), are usually associated with the political left. Phrases like 'bleeding heart liberals' (in United States politics) frame empathy as a left-wing affliction. In photography in particular, there is a long tradition of left-wing activism, from legendary photographers like Robert Capa and Dorothea Lange to 'human rights photography' and other examples. But apparently that does not translate into a higher average emotional response to these six photographs.

A focus on individual photographs yields even more surprising results. Respondents who place themselves on the far right of the political spectrum appear to be most moved by the photograph of Buchenwald survivors. Almost half (46.2 percent) of them

indicate that the Buchenwald photograph has a 'very strong' emotional impact on them; the highest percentage of all political categories. They are also emotionally more impacted than others by the photograph of the Tank Man in Beijing (the percentage of far-right respondents who feel the photo has a 'very strong' emotional impact on them is almost double as high as among politically centrist respondents; 34.8 and 18.6, respectively). The same is true for the Abu Ghraib photograph (it elicits a 'very strong' emotional reaction in 30.3 percent of far-right respondents, versus 15.3 percent among centrist respondents and 14.6 percent among far-left respondents). And it is also true for the Falling Man, though the percentage of far-right respondents is also highest among those who indicate that the Abu Ghraib photograph has a 'very weak' impact on them. In all photos except the Falling Man, respondents who identify as 'very left' have the highest percentage that indicates that the selected photographs have a 'very weak' emotional impact on them. In the case of the Vulture and Child, that percentage is more than three times as high among far-left respondents as among politically centrist respondents, and almost five times higher than among those who identify as 'center-left' (14.6 percent, 4.5 percent, and 3.0 percent, respectively).

These significant differences in emotional response between political groups would suggest that similar strong variations would exist among respondents' valuation of the importance of these six photographs. However, no significant differences and patterns can be discerned between different political categories of respondents in relation to the question whether they consider the selected photographs important or not.

3.7.2 Response groups

Using statistics, it can be calculated which photographs are recognized most by different respondent groups. With such a calculation, hidden patterns among respondents can be identified. If we choose to work with groups that contain at least one hundred respondents, and we rank them according to how well they recognize any photograph in the first part of the photography survey, several interesting conclusions present themselves. In Figure 4.31, the top ten of these groups is shown, ranked by their recognition of any photograph.

Age	Gender	Frequency News	News source	Education	Political views	Employment	Photo No	Group size	Recognition
	Male	Every day			Right of center	Employed	23	119	98,30%
	Male		Internet		Right of center		23	115	96,50%
	Male	Every day			Right of center		23	165	96,40%
50+					Left center		23	104	96,20%
35-49		Every day			Right of center		23	106	95,30%
35-49	Male	Every day		Higher		Employed	23	111	94,60%
35-49	Male	Every day		Higher			23	128	94,50%
	Male				Right of center	Employed	23	162	94,40%
	Male		Television	Higher		Employed	23	105	94,30%
	Male			Higher	Right of center		14	103	94,20%

Figure 3.32. Response groups, top 10 ranked by highest percentage of individual photograph recognition. If a box contains a description, this is one of the variables that characterize this group. Groups measure 100 respondents or more, and are ranked by recognition percentage of any photo in the first part of the survey. Column 8 ('Photo No') indicates which photograph is recognized by the percentage shown in the last column.

If we look at these results, several interesting observations can be made. Not so much about the photograph that each of these top ten respondent groups recognize: since photograph 23 (the 9/11 Aircraft by Carmen Taylor, 2001) was the most recognized photograph in the survey, it is no surprise that it is this photograph that the first nine groups with the highest recognition percentages recognize. What is more surprising, is how high the percentage of recognition is. Of all the male respondents who are employed, identify their political views as right of center and follow the news every day, over 98 percent recognize this photograph – almost everyone in this group. It is a strange thought that this finding suggests that almost everyone in the world who meets these criteria will recognize this picture if shown, but that is exactly the case.

Respondents can belong to different groups, and this top ten list contains many of the same respondents. The highest scoring group is made up of employed male respondents with center-right political views who check the news daily. They resurface in various other 'top ten' groups. It is therefore not very relevant to follow the list from the highest scoring group and then down. Instead, it is more interesting to look at how well other photographs are recognized, and at which other groups score relatively high or low.

The first other photograph we encounter if we move down this list, is Neil Armstrong's photograph of the Moon Landing (1969). Since this was the second most recognized in the survey, it is not surprising that it emerges near the top of this list. The respondent group that recognizes this photograph most often, is comparable to that which recognizes the 9/11 Airplane photograph: males with center-right political views, with 'higher education' as variable added.

If we look at which groups recognize individual photographs most, we find that the recognition percentage among these groups is usually around 1.5 to two times as high as their average recognition worldwide. For example, the photograph of the Hindenburg explosion (Sam Shere, 1936) is recognized most often by males over fifty years of age, who check the news every day, primarily on television. Their recognition percentage of the Hindenburg photo is 71.4 percent (36.2 percent average among all respondents).

The groups that emerge as having the highest recognition percentages are usually male, often employed, often with higher education and often following the news on a daily basis. Margaret Bourke-White's photograph of Gandhi (1946) is the only photograph that is recognized most by people whose primary news source is newspapers. Steve McCurry's 'Afghan Girl' (1984) is the only photograph most often recognized by students (at 64.4 percent). Kevin Carter's 'Vulture and Child' photograph (1993) is the only photo recognized most by people in the youngest category: by 18-35 year old males who check news every day and have with mid-level education as their highest completed education level. Two war-related photographs are recognized most often by groups whose members are male, over fifty years of age and either retired or unemployed: Nick Ut's 'Napalm Girl' photo (1972) and (possibly) Lee Miller's Buchenwald photo (1945). Politics emerges as one of the defining variables of the groups with the highest recognition percentages in the case of four photographs. In the case of the Moonlanding photograph (Neil Armstrong, 1969) and the Falling Man photo (Richard Drew, 2001), the highest scoring groups identify their political views as center-right. In the case of Jeff Widener's photo of the Tank Man (1989) and Alberto Korda's portrait of Che Guevara (1960), the groups with the highest recognition percentages identify their politics as center-left.

These findings are based on groups whose cutoff point was set at 100: they all comprised of at least 100 respondents. If we set the cutoff point lower, we get other groups into focus, although they represent fewer people. With a cutoff point at 25, we find many groups that have a very high recognition percentage of certain photographs. Thirty-nine respondent groups of 25 people or more have recognition percentages of 100 percent, meaning that the people who made up that group all recognized a certain photograph. They usually recognized the same photographs as above (Carmen Taylor's 9/11 airplane photograph, 2001, and Neil Armstrong's moon landing photo, 1969), and

their composition is comparable to those mentioned above. But with a cutoff point at 25, other groups emerge as well. A list of ten high scoring groups is provided below.

Age	Gender	Media Freq	News source	Education	Politics	Profession	FotoNr	Grp. Size	Recogn.	Emotion	Importance
50+		Every day	TV	Lower	Not say		23	27	100%	24,7	4,0
50+		Every day			Very right		14	30	100%	24,7	4,3
	Female	Every day	TV	Higher	Center	Student	11	30	100%	24,5	4,4
18-34	Male		Internet		Center	Student	23	31	100%	22,8	4,1
	Female	Every day		Middle	Center	Retired	23	33	100%	22,8	3,8
35-50	Male	Few t./week	Internet			Student	23	26	100%	21,2	3,4
18-34		Every day			Very right		14	29	100%	22,6	4,2
				Higher	Left/center	Retired	23	27	100%	22,8	4,1
50+	Female				Center	Retired	23	28	100%	23,8	4,5
	Male	Every day		Lower	Center		23	45	100%	22,4	3,8

Figure 3.32. Ten response groups that had a 100 percent recognition percentage of a photograph in the survey. If a box contains a description, this is one of the variables that characterize this group. Groups measure 25 people or more. All groups have a recognition score of 100%. In total, 39 groups do.

The ten groups listed here are among 39 groups that had a 100 percent recognition score of a particular photo. Even a quick glance on this table illustrates that there is much more variation between groups than between the highest scoring groups with a minimum group size of 100.³⁷⁴ There are groups here whose members have completed lower education as their highest education level; other groups have completed mid-level or higher education. There are a few groups whose members are aged over 50 years old, but also groups whose members are aged 18 to 34, and 35 to 50. There are mixed, male and female groups. There are groups whose members get their news primarily through the internet, but also groups whose primary news source is television or newspapers. There are groups with politically central views, but also groups whose members have very right wing views; and groups of students as well as groups of retired respondents.

A notable group consists of female students who have already completed higher education (one level, presumably), who check the news daily and primarily on television, and who have centrist political views. Respondents who checked these boxes, regardless of the country where they live, all recognized Alberto Korda's portrait of Che Guevara (1960). Similarly, people over fifty years old who check the news daily and who have very right-wing political views all recognize Neil Armstrong's moon landing photo.

³⁷⁴ Of the 39 groups whose members all recognized a certain photograph, the ten shown here were purposefully grouped together to illustrate the greater variety among these groups than among the groups (shown in Figure 3.31) that consisted of at least 100 respondents.

Retired women over fifty years old, with centrist political views, all recognize Carmen Taylor's photograph of 9/11/2001.

No other photograph was recognized by 100 percent of people in a group of at least twenty-five respondents. Among these, Joe Rosenthal's photograph of the United States' flag being raised on Iwo Jima (1945), is the first if we move down the list. It was recognized by 96 percent of 35 to 50-year old male respondents with higher education and politically central views, who check the news daily (on the internet). Next are Eddie Adams' photograph of a street execution in Saigon (1968) and Nick Ut's Napalm Girl photograph (1972), both recognized by 93 percent by retired males aged over 50, who check the news daily. And so we can move down the list, to ever lower percentages.

Apart from photograph recognition, we can also use respondent group analysis to identify which respondent groups find various photographs in the second part of the survey important most often. If we rank the respondent groups (consisting of 25 people or more) according to how important they find the photographs in the survey, the highest groups consist of higher educated females, who identify their politics as center-left.

If we rank respondent groups based on their emotion score (the added sum of six answers, when respondents were asked, in the second part of the survey, to rate the emotional impact of six selected photographs on them, on a scale of 1 to 5) this difference is even more pronounced. We find the first male group quite far down the list, with an emotion score 1.5 points lower than the first female respondent group (24.7 versus 26.2).

3.7.3 Respondent Groups

Another way of categorizing respondents is by dividing them in respondent groups, across national boundaries, based on politics, education and age. Education level had three variables (lower, mid-level, higher), age as well (18-34, 35-50, and 50+), and politics six (very left-wing to very right-wing, and one category for those who chose not to answer). If we categorize respondents in this way, we get fifty-four respondent groups. These are, for example, people aged 18-34 with mid-level education who identify their political views as very left, or people aged 50 or more with higher education, who identify their political views as central.

Of these groups, four groups emerge that recognize the most photographs. Most photographs are recognized by higher educated people aged older than 50 with extreme-right political views. They recognize twelve photographs on average. Other high-scoring groups are middle-educated people aged 18-34 with very right-wing political views, higher-educated people aged 18-34 with very left-wing political views,

and higher-educated people over 50 with center-right views. Their scores are 11.27, 11.31, and 11.38, respectively. By far the lowest scoring group is lower educated people aged 18-34 with very left-wing political preferences (an average photograph recognition score of 4.5).

These are interesting results. That people aged 50 or over with higher education feature twice among the four groups who recognize the most photographs is not very surprising, given the fact they presumably would have seen more photographs in their lives than younger people, and their education presumably brought them in contact with more educational material and media. But the prevalence of political groups with strong left and right-wing views is surprising, especially that two groups with very right-wing views are among these four. I have no satisfactory or even speculative explanation for it, and it is an obvious subject for more research.

Instead of with age, education and political views can also be combined with nationality to produce different respondent groups. When this is done, we get 216 respondent groups. Among these, lower educated Russians with politically centrist views recognize the least photographs: just 3.6 on average.³⁷⁵ Lower-educated Chinese with center-right views scored slightly higher, at 4. The highest-scoring of these groups of respondents was made up of higher educated Brazilians with extreme-left political views (who recognized 15.4 photographs on average).

³⁷⁵ Subgroups that consisted of five or fewer respondents were not taken into account.

Chapter 4. The Global Visual Memory Survey: A Qualitative Analysis

The global visual memory survey included various types of questions: questions to be answered by Yes/No/I don't know, questions to be answered on a scale of 1 to 5, and open questions. This chapter will offer an analysis of the survey results of the last category, open questions. The first paragraph will offer analyses of answers by country; the second will offer general analyses.

4.1 Qualitative Analyses by Country

4.1.1. Argentina – *'The dishonor of the powerful'*

One finding in the previous chapter was that Argentinian respondents reported the strongest emotional responses to the photographs shown in the second part of the global survey. With this in mind, it is interesting that relatively many Argentinians answered that they read 'no message' in various photographs that were shown to them in the second part of the photography survey. This includes many cases when the respondent correctly identified the historical event during which a photograph was taken and/or classified the photo as 'important'.

Several Argentinian respondents, for example, correctly identified the Vietnam War as the historical stage for the Napalm Girl photo, but read no 'message' in it. In the case of the Falling Man, there were no less than twenty-seven Argentinian respondents, one in seven of all valid responses, who correctly linked the photo to the attacks of September 11, 2001, but did not perceive a central message in it. They entered responses such as: 'None', 'I do not think so', or bluntly (as one respondent wrote in capitals): 'THERE IS NO MESSAGE'.³⁷⁶ One respondent correctly identified the persecution of Jews in Nazi-Germany as the historical backdrop to the Buchenwald photo, reported a 'strong' emotional impact, and labeled it as an 'important' photo, and then wrote of its central message: 'It's informative'.³⁷⁷

³⁷⁶ Resps. nos. Argentina 99, 25, 154.

In this chapter, the cited respondent numbers corresponds to individual respondents in the twelve country files. Respondent numbers will be cited as: 'Resp. no. [country] [number in country file]'.
NB: Responses throughout this chapter were sometimes edited to correct spelling mistakes or enhance coherence. (The questionnaire format prompted some respondents to write in abbreviated or shorthand form.)

³⁷⁷ Resp. no. Arg. 86. 'Strong' impact here means that the respondent rated the emotional impact (1-5) as 4.

Although the frequency of these answers was remarkable, Argentinians usually did read various 'central messages' in the photographs shown to them. In their answers, the word 'despair' was used with remarkable frequency. It was used by Argentinians sixty-one times, and read in all six photographs in this part of the survey, but especially in The Falling Man photograph. Argentinians connected the message of 'despair' to this photo fifty-one times. As central message of The Falling Man, 'despair' often stood alone, describing in one word what Argentinian respondents read in the picture, sometimes in capitals or with exclamation mark. In other responses, the 'despair' was specified as 'despair before what happened', 'before the unexpected', 'before unbearable suffering', or 'in the economy'.³⁷⁸

Surprising is that over two thirds of Argentinian respondents (69 percent) correctly identified the Twin Towers attack of September 11, 2001 as the historical backdrop to the Falling Man picture. This percentage is high compared to other countries, but also much higher than the 49 percent of Argentinian respondents who indicated at Question 22 that they had seen this picture before. Apparently many Argentinian respondents truthfully answered they had not seen the photograph before, but could deduce from the photograph's content the historical setting. Also notable is that many respondents correctly identified the historical setting of the photograph and read a 'central message' in it, but still answered 'No' or 'I don't know' to Question 33, which asked whether they considered the photograph to be important or not.

Argentinian responses also differ from other countries in their frequent reference to social injustice. The Vulture and Child photograph, for instance, visualized for one respondent 'the global shame of rich governments, for not wanting to solve wars and famines'; for another it showed what 'corrupt and evil governments are capable of doing without caring about the suffering of their people'.³⁷⁹ Others read the photograph as a testament to 'social inequality', and perceived the 'bad distribution of wealth' as the cause, 'one of the major problems of capitalism'.³⁸⁰ To respondents, it shows hunger in countries that 'rich countries looted' or that suffer from 'the dishonor of the powerful'.³⁸¹ (Though the same point has been made before, it is interesting to note that none of these respondents, or indeed any Argentinian respondent, correctly named the Sudan famine of 1993 as the associated historical event, and instead read this as a photograph depicting 'Famine in Africa', or variations on that answer.)

One respondent describes the Vulture and Child photograph not only as a reflection of the injustice of famine in Africa, but as a metaphor for life in general. 'The scavenger

³⁷⁸ Resps. nos. Arg. 125, 106, 85, 61.

³⁷⁹ Resp. no. Arg. 201, 101.

³⁸⁰ Resps. nos. Arg. 106 and 197; 107.

³⁸¹ Resps. nos. Arg. 161, 195.

bird waiting for the child to die' is indicative of 'many situations in life', when 'scavengers [are] waiting to take advantage of others at any price'.³⁸² The same theme of injustice, and the callousness of the powerful or governments, is also at times connected to other photographs in the selection.

A last observation that can be made about the Argentinian answers to the open questions in this survey, is that they are often poetic and eloquent. 'It shows the demons of the human being', writes one respondent of the Buchenwald photo. 'The physical miseries of the oppressed as a demonstration of the miseries of the soul of the oppressor', is what one respondent reads in the Abu Ghraib photo. Of one photo, a respondent writes: 'I see this and I think: where is God?'³⁸³

4.1.2. Brazil – *'The misery suffered by millions in contrast to the luxury, vanity and greed of others'*

Brazilian answers to the open questions in the survey were often a joy to read: they were often quite lengthy, poetic, and diverse. Where replies in other countries might read 'oppression' or 'hunger', Brazilian respondents would be more likely to write something like: 'the desire of a generation that the oppressive regime was broken', or 'great social inequality, child malnutrition and neglect'.³⁸⁴

This does not mean that the answers of Brazilian respondents were necessarily more metaphorical than those of respondents in other countries, but rather more artfully phrased. This was evident in answers to the Buchenwald photograph. Although many Brazilians correctly identified the historical event during which the photo was taken, many answered with quite descriptive answers when asked about the photograph's central message ('The forced submission of people who were in concentration camps', one respondent wrote, for example; 'I think it describes what the accommodation were of prisoners of concentration camps who were not immediately killed', wrote another.). Alternatively, the explained the photographs' message as explanatory of the cruel intentions of the nazi's: 'the lack of importance given to life, just for a racial difference', one respondent offered; 'The central message I see is the lack of humanity; of love of a fellow man, cowardice', commented another.³⁸⁵

But when Brazilian respondents did see metaphorical messages in a photograph, the apparent Brazilian inclination to long and well-worded answers produced some quite poetic answers. Of the central message of the Buchenwald photo, one respondent

³⁸² Resp. no. Arg. 101.

³⁸³ Resps. nos. Arg. 69, 81, 184.

³⁸⁴ Resps. nos. Brazil 151, 167.

³⁸⁵ Resps. nos. Brazil 83, 107, 150, 21.

wrote: 'The inhumanity to human beings that regardless of their class, culture, religion, ultimately regardless of anything, we have to respect all life'.³⁸⁶ 'The message of the Abu Ghraib photo was, according to another respondent: 'Man again appears without love, without a heart, and that God is found to judge his neighbor without first judging himself'.³⁸⁷

One respondent read in the Tank Man photograph 'Courage, fearlessness before the strongest enemy'.³⁸⁸ One respondent, on the Napalm Girl photo: 'War for power, destroying lives and spreading terror and in citizens who just want to live in peace'.³⁸⁹ Another, about the Vulture and Child photograph: 'The misery that is suffered by millions around the world in contrast to the luxury, vanity and greed of other nations'.³⁹⁰ A personal favorite, on the same photograph: 'When the primitive human being, still lacking social assistance, because of local and collective conditions, contrasts with other human beings beyond this photo, with superfluous luxury, power, money and lust'.³⁹¹ And this anthology is by no means complete.

Generally speaking, Brazilian interpretations of the 'central message' of the photographs in this survey were less moralistic than among respondents in other countries. For instance, the phrase 'horror of war', that was used so frequently by respondents from other countries in this survey in connection to several photographs, was only used four times by Brazilians. The phrase 'never again', that one in six German respondents used to describe the meaning of the Buchenwald photo, only featured among all Brazilian answers once. Among Brazilian respondents, in short, it was less common to interpret photographs of historical events as a moral lesson for mankind, than as a commentary on the world's woes.

The fact that the answers from Brazilian respondents rarely used certain phrases and answers that were common among respondents from other countries, also illustrates another aspect of Brazilian survey answers: their diversity and variation. 'Standard' interpretations of photographs, that are shared by many different respondents, were rare among Brazilian entries in the survey. The ones that do emerge are interesting. Firstly, Brazilians very often read 'despair' or 'desperation' in various photographs. The two words were used by Brazilian respondents eighty-eight times. And their use covers a spectrum of different photographs, whether the Napalm Girl or Falling Man photos, or the Buchenwald or Vulture and Child photos. Brazilian respondents often read this emotion in photographs, and use it in describing the photograph's central message. They

³⁸⁶ Resp. no. Brazil 76.

³⁸⁷ Resp. no. Brazil 21.

³⁸⁸ Resp. no. Brazil 103.

³⁸⁹ Resp. no. Brazil 164.

³⁹⁰ Resp. no. Brazil 185.

³⁹¹ Resp. no. Brazil 99.

are apparently inclined to identify with the person in a photograph that is the victim of some form of injustice, to imagine their emotions, and to see these emotions as a photographs' message. This is a different approach to 'reading' the message of photographs than the common interpretation of the message of photographs as a moral guideline for the viewer and the world at large.

Secondly, like Argentinians, Brazilian respondents often interpreted the Vulture and Child photographs as a condemnation of social and economic inequality. 'It shows the poverty and hunger world inequality produces', one person writes; 'the misery of inequality between humans', suggested another.³⁹² The frequency of this answer (including variations that do not use the word "inequality", such as 'few have much, and many have nothing') is interesting, in light of Brazil's own socio-economic inequality, one of the highest in the world.³⁹³

Other observations about Brazilian responses to the open questions in the survey relate to the factuality of answers, the plurality of 'central messages' that many Brazilian respondents perceive in photographs, and the occurrence of a few answers and interpretations that do not feature in other countries.

The first of these observations, about the factuality of the way Brazilian respondent 'read' the central message of photographs, can be illustrated by looking at interpretations of the Abu Ghraib and Buchenwald photos. The historical setting of the Abu Ghraib photograph was identified correctly by six Brazilian respondents. A complete listing of their answers is as follows: 'execution', 'it's a civil rights attack', 'torture, oppression', 'human torture', 'trivialization of life', 'POWs'.³⁹⁴ All these answers, one could say, are factually correct, but only 'trivialization of life' is a somewhat more metaphorical reading of the photographs' message. Not one answer reads the photo as having a truly deeper meaning beyond the depiction of a factual situation.

This facet of Brazilian answers is more noticeable in the case of the Buchenwald photo, which prompts many respondents around the world to provide a moral and metaphorical reading of the photographs' message. In contrast, Brazilian respondents who correctly identify the historical occasion of this photo provide answers that, in general, are more literal in interpretation. 'It shows the Nazi torture of the Jews', one respondent writes, 'the massacre of the Jews during Nazism', writes another; 'Holocaust was a real and very sad episode in the history of mankind', a third comments.³⁹⁵ This line of interpretation of historical photographs is different from the 'victim's emotion'-centered interpretation that was described above. But likewise, it offers a contrast to the moral interpretation of photographs' central messages.

³⁹² Resps. nos. Brazil 113, 100.

³⁹³ Resp. no. Brazil 95.

³⁹⁴ Resps. nos. Brazil 75, 96, 103, 106, 125, 170.

³⁹⁵ Resps. nos. Brazil 69, 74, 96.

The second aspect mentioned here, the plurality of 'central messages' that many Brazilian respondents perceive in photographs, can be found throughout the survey. Although single-worded or short, singular answers are common in Brazil, just as in other countries, it is noticeable how often Brazilian respondents read more 'central messages' in a photo than just one. 'Misery... hungry... fear... pain...', is the central message of the Vulture and Child photograph to one respondent, 'misery, injustice, inequality', to another, 'hunger, misery, neglect, lack of care', to a third.³⁹⁶ Of the Buchenwald photo, one respondent writes: 'The central image I see is the lack of humanity; of love toward our fellow man; cowardice'.³⁹⁷ One respondent reads so many messages in a photo that he writes: 'hundred explanations'.³⁹⁸

A last observation concerns the occurrence of a few answers and interpretations that do not feature at all, or very rarely, in other countries. One is the occurrence of a word that was mentioned in the previous paragraph, namely the word 'love'. Brazilian respondents used it nine times. Usually, the word was used to decry a 'lack of love towards other people'. But the phrase was also used on its own: for example, the 'central message' of the Napalm Girl photo as 'Lack of love'.³⁹⁹

The use of references to religion and God were also more common in Brazil than elsewhere, usually in the form of an appeal that we 'need God in our hearts', but also once as a derisive comment on 'the absurdity of religions'.⁴⁰⁰ Mentioned just a few times, but nonetheless remarkable, was an interpretation of the Abu Ghraib photo as an execution. 'Crime does not pay', was the photo's central message, according to one respondent.⁴⁰¹

The historical setting of the Tank Man photograph was identified correctly by 34 Brazilians, but the 'power of one man'-interpretation, which was common in other countries, did not feature often among Brazilian answers.⁴⁰² More often, Brazilian respondents read the central message of the photo as 'resistance to oppression'; 'courage in trying to contain the troops', 'the thirst for changes in society', 'fight for freedom' or 'Man in hero act stands before a battalion, to express his indignation'.⁴⁰³ In other words: answers that do ascribe heroism to this man, but without the hope or expectation that this will yield results.

Although the relevance is not quite clear, since it just occurred three times, it is interesting to note that where respondents in other countries sometimes thought that

³⁹⁶ Resps. nos. Brazil 156, 144, 150.

³⁹⁷ Resp. no. Brazil 21.

³⁹⁸ Resp. no. Brazil 117, of the Vulture and Child photograph.

³⁹⁹ Resp. no. Brazil 90.

⁴⁰⁰ Resps. nos. Brazil 21, 57.

⁴⁰¹ Resp. no. Brazil 44.

⁴⁰² An example where it did feature was Resp. no. Brazil 78, 'One man who was able to stop an Armada'.

⁴⁰³ Resps. nos. Brazil 61, 75, 74, 86, 76.

Russia or North Korea were the site for this show of force with tanks, three Brazilian respondents link the photo to the United States. One of these speculates that the photo depicts the ‘American invasion of Israel?’.⁴⁰⁴ Another mention of a fictional US invasion occurs elsewhere. One Brazilian respondents thinks that the Napalm Girl photo shows an ‘American attack with NAPALM on the Venezuelan civilian population’.⁴⁰⁵

4.1.3 China – ‘The awakened people yearn for freedom’

The answers of Chinese respondents were not as long, or as poetic, as those from their Brazilian counterparts. They often supplied single-word answers, or short, sometimes almost cryptic answers such as ‘edge of death’, or ‘harsh conditions’. Chinese respondents tended to answer ‘No’, ‘unclear’ ‘do not know’ more often than respondents from other countries to questions about the photographs’ central message. And like the Brazilians, they usually did not perceive a ‘moral lesson’ in photographs, but would rather supply a statement of fact (‘hunger’) or a verdict (‘cruel’ or ‘very tragic’).

In the Chinese answers, of particular interest were responses about the historical setting of the Tank Man photograph and its central message – an event that is still highly sensitive in China today. Most Chinese respondents answered that they did not recognize the historical event during which the photo was taken, with answers like ‘can not remember’, ‘not sure’ or ‘do not know’. Some placed the event elsewhere – North Korea, the Soviet Union, Iran and Iraq all featured. One respondent thought the photograph depicted a ‘Xinjiang terrorist incident’.⁴⁰⁶ Fourteen Chinese respondents thought the photo depicted the Chinese National Day Parade, with some approving comments such as ‘Showing the Chinese military forces is inspiring’.⁴⁰⁷

But thirty-five Chinese respondents did recognize the Tiananmen Protests of 1989 and its subsequent breakup by the Chinese military – 17.5 percent of all valid answers, or almost one in six. Some respondents supplied vague or evasive answers to the question of the photographs’ message. ‘Ugh’, is all one respondent wrote; ‘Difficult to describe’, wrote another, and one respondent answered: ‘Not suitable to say’.⁴⁰⁸

Some respondents were critical of the protests. One respondent was mild in his criticism, in an unusually long response. ‘I believe it is understandable that the masses chose the way of resistance for freedom’, he or she wrote. ‘However, for the overall situation, the procession has affected the situation in the country and caused the

⁴⁰⁴ Resp. no. Brazil 136.

⁴⁰⁵ Resp. no. Brazil 189. Capitals in original answer.

⁴⁰⁶ Resp. no. China 11.

⁴⁰⁷ Resp. no. China 117.

⁴⁰⁸ Resps. nos. China 140, 138, 205.

situation to be unstable. Ultimately, it affects the stability of the country and the stable life of the people. I believe that the measures taken by the leaders after the incident are still correct. Happiness does not have to be destroyed and re-established, one can believe in its persistence.⁴⁰⁹

Another respondent was much harsher in his or her assessment, and wrote: 'Comrades of the People's Liberation Army have maintained great restraint! The same time in Egypt is completely different! The so-called democratic fighters who attempt to subvert China are all national separatists!'⁴¹⁰ But if this is the official 'reading' of the Tank Man photograph, it has not established firm footing among the Chinese, because this respondent was the only Chinese respondent to answer along these lines.

Most respondents who correctly identified this photo as taken during the crackdown on June 4, 1989 on the protests in Tianenmen Square in Beijing, read the central message of this photograph as one of sympathy for the defeated demonstrators and their cause. Some interpretations are simple. 'Democracy and autocracy', one respondent writes, 'revolt' and 'resistance' are two other reactions.⁴¹¹ 'Courage', 'Ugh...' and 'sad', are other responses.⁴¹² Other responses are longer, and more explicit in their support. 'Democracy fighters fight against power', reads one interpretation; 'The hardships of democracy', another.⁴¹³ 'The means of repression were too strong', is the photograph's message, according to one respondent.⁴¹⁴ 'Civilian resistance to military oppression', suggests another.⁴¹⁵

And some respondents supplied long answers, commenting harshly on the Chinese regime. 'For their interests, those in power used that power on unarmed people, used not only mental control, but also physical destruction', wrote one respondent.⁴¹⁶ Another used almost revolutionary rhetoric: 'Those who pursue freedom and democracy do not succumb to the strong force of the Communist Party! Pay tribute to the fighters standing in front of the tank!'⁴¹⁷ And so the comments go on. 'A totalitarian regime uses the state machinery to suppress civilians, and the people have the courage to resist', one respondent writes.⁴¹⁸ Another writes that 'the awakened people yearn

⁴⁰⁹ Resp. no. China 146.

⁴¹⁰ Resp. no. China 125.

⁴¹¹ Resps. nos. China 121, 79, 201.

⁴¹² Resps. nos. China 206, 140, 139.

⁴¹³ Resp. no. China 50, 182.

⁴¹⁴ Resp. no. China 161.

⁴¹⁵ Resp. no. China 141.

⁴¹⁶ Resp. no. China 38.

⁴¹⁷ Resp. no. China 78.

⁴¹⁸ Resp. no. China 103.

for freedom'.⁴¹⁹ And a last quote from this category, a respondent who understands the photograph to mean: 'Democracy, make your own voice, be brave'.⁴²⁰

The aim of this survey was to determine whether Chinese respondents interpret the central message of the Tank Man and other photographs differently as respondents from other countries, not to sample Chinese attitudes toward the Tiananmen protests and crackdown. But answers to this question have done both. They have demonstrated that almost one in six Chinese respondents correctly link the Tank Man photograph to the Tiananmen protests (or are willing to provide that answer in an online survey), and that most of them interpret it as supportive of resistance against the Chinese government and/or of a movement for freedom and democracy. This, of course, is different from the 'the power of an individual'-interpretation that is observed in many other countries. To most Chinese respondents who correctly linked the photograph to the Tiananmen protests, the photo is not a general statement of a man against an army, but is about *their* protesters against *their* national army.

Chinese responses about the Tank Man photograph are of course the most interesting ones to come out of the Chinese part of the survey. But Chinese respondents were asked many more questions, and they warrant an analysis as well. As mentioned at the start of this paragraph, Chinese interpretations of the photographs' central message were often short and declaratory. This can be best seen in their answers about the central message of the Falling Man photo. These are often words such as 'terror', 'sad', 'terrorist attacks', or 'sad'. One respondent supplied a 42-word description of the 9-11 attacks, and then suggested as central message: 'terrorist'.⁴²¹

The historical setting of the Buchenwald photo was correctly identified more frequently by Chinese respondents (90 times, versus 50 times for the Falling Man), but interpretations of its message were likewise often short and declaratory. 'Inhuman' was the most common interpretation, with other common answers being words like 'massacre', 'cruel' or 'oppression' – rather more expressions of what the photograph depicts than what it symbolizes. Longer explanations often were similar in this respect – featuring answers such as 'living conditions are very bad', 'not the dignity and freedom of life', or 'German fascist crimes against Jews'.⁴²²

Chinese answers were more revealing in the case of the Napalm Girl. Not all answers were factually correct. The photo was ascribed to the German invasion of Poland, and the wars in Afghanistan, Korea, Iraq, and Syria. Six Chinese respondents thought this photo was taken during the Japanese invasion of China in the 1930s and 1940s. Comments on Japan are not very friendly. 'Japanese devils into China', one respondent

⁴¹⁹ Resp. no. China 152.

⁴²⁰ Resp. no. China 107.

⁴²¹ Resp. no. China 81.

⁴²² Resps. nos. China 51, 9, 103.

writes.⁴²³ ‘Damn small Japan’, wrote another, while a third combined the two in ‘little devils’.⁴²⁴

But relatively many Chinese respondents correctly identified the Vietnam War as the historical backdrop to this photo – seventy-seven respondents, or close to forty percent of valid answers, were correct in this. This is not surprising in light of the fact that China in this war aided its neighbor North Vietnam against the United States. Still, just two respondents supplied an anti-American sentiment in their reading of this photograph. Typically, answers to this question decried the cruelty of war, or the high toll children always need to pay for it.

Anti-American sentiments can be observed a few times in Chinese answers about the Abu Ghraib photograph. Chinese respondents correctly identified the photo thirteen times. One respondent, who also wrote that the US ‘burned the little girl in Vietnam’, commented that the Abu Ghraib photo highlights ‘the United States’ double standards on human rights’, while another respondent observed that the ‘United States advertises human rights, but racial discrimination is still there.’⁴²⁵

No less than five Chinese respondents, lastly, correctly identified Sudan as the country where the famine depicted in the Vulture and Child photograph took place – not many, but many more than most countries. The vast majority sees ‘Africa’ as the historical occasion. As with other photos, simple and short readings such as ‘helpless’, ‘poor’, or ‘hunger’ are typical Chinese answers about the photographs’ message, though occasionally the answer is a more poetical observation: ‘life is fragile’.⁴²⁶

4.1.4 Germany – ‘Soviet Panzer in the DDR’

Germany may be a country with a rich tradition in philosophy and poetry, but answers of German respondents to the open questions were typically descriptive and to the point. As in other countries, the single word ‘No’ was the most common answer of German respondents to questions about whether they perceived a ‘central message’ in the photographs shown to them, with ‘Yes’ coming in second. Many other answers also consisted of single words to describe the photographs’ meaning.

Many answers about the central message of photographs are also remarkably understated. For example: the photograph of the Vulture and Child, that had the highest emotional impact upon respondents around the world (see previous chapter), symbolizes to one German respondent: ‘These people need help, food and drink’. Many others offer simply: ‘Famine in Africa’. One respondent understands the message of the

⁴²³ Resp. no. China 151.

⁴²⁴ Resps. nos. China 201, 124.

⁴²⁵ Resps. nos. China 138, 146.

⁴²⁶ Resp. no. China 183

Napalm Girl photograph to be ‘Frightened children’, a second understands it as ‘Girls’, while another (who thought the photo was taken in Hiroshima) reads it as ‘Atomic war should be avoided’. Understated and descriptive responses like these, as answers about the photographs’ central meaning, can be found throughout the German reactions.⁴²⁷

Perhaps of particular interest are German answers about the Buchenwald photo, in light of the central place that the Holocaust occupies in German historical memory. One hundred sixty-four Germans, or 72 percent of valid answers, correctly identified the Second World War as the event in history during which the photo was taken.⁴²⁸ This may be relatively high compared to other countries, but might also be seen as rather low. In a country where the Second World War plays such a big role in historical memory, and whose Nazi regime was responsible for the war and the depicted concentration camp, apparently over a quarter of people do not link the Buchenwald photograph to the Second World War.

This number is also surprising in light of the fact that only eighty Germans (36 percent) indicated at Question 6 that they had seen this photo before. In other words, almost three in every four German respondents could correctly connect this picture to its historical setting, which is double as many as those who actually recognized it. Apparently, the visual content and form of the Buchenwald photograph inform many Germans that this photo must have been taken during the Second World War and depicts the effects of the Holocaust – they recognize the general content and quality of the photograph, even if they don’t recognize the photograph itself. This finding supports the hypothesis, offered by Barbie Zelizer and other scholars, that ‘Holocaust photographs’ have become a generic genre of readily recognizable photographs with a general and collective meaning, only loosely connected to individual locations, dates and names.⁴²⁹

With regards to the interpretation of the Buchenwald photo’s central message, German answers did not significantly differ from those in other countries. The most common interpretation, entered 38 times, was ‘Never again’, or a variation upon that phrase with the same meaning. Almost as many Germans (36) read ‘No’ message in the photo, or answered that they ‘didn’t know’. Another response that was often offered (23 times) was that the photo is ‘merely’ descriptive, and does not have a deeper message. ‘It wants to show the circumstances of WW2’, answered one respondent; ‘It describes the inhumane conditions in a concentration camp’, answered another.⁴³⁰

⁴²⁷ Resps. nos. Ger. 45, 158 (for example), 35, 66.

⁴²⁸ If respondents left all open questions empty or only entered random, nonsensical numbers and letters, their answers were considered invalid.

⁴²⁹ See the previous chapter for a discussion of other findings that support this claim.

⁴³⁰ Resps. nos. Ger. 178, 231.

One surprising aspect of German responses is the frequent recurrence of anti-American sentiment. Twelve German respondents, one in twenty, made explicitly anti-American comments in their descriptions of the central messages of the photos shown to them. Especially the Abu Ghraib photograph elicits interpretations that are very sceptical of Americans and the United States, but the Napalm Girl and even the Falling Man photos as well.

The central message of the Abu Ghraib photograph, that depicts the abuse of an Iraqi prisoner by American soldiers, is the 'contempt for people and ice-cold ruthlessness of the *Amis*', one respondent thinks.⁴³¹ 'Also the Americans go crazy if they have power', another respondent writes; 'also the USA is inhuman', offers another. The photo illustrates 'that one cannot trust the USA as a world power. Megalomania, to which Hitler was also subjected', comments one respondent. Or, in the words of another respondent: 'To the USA, human rights only matter in their own country'.⁴³²

The central message of the Napalm Girl photo drew similarly critical interpretations. 'Also the Americans are mass murderers and war criminals', one respondent offered; 'The Americans go crazy if they have power', another. The photograph throws up a question, one viewer thinks: 'What business do the Americans have in Vietnam with their chemical weapons anyway?'⁴³³

Although these critical interpretations can perhaps be expected with the Abu Ghraib and Napalm Girl photos, they also surface when German respondents describe the central message of the Falling Man photo – in the United States usually widely interpreted as a condemnation of terrorism and a celebration of human courage in the face of it. To some German respondents, the Falling Man illustrates American attempts to hide American involvement in the 9/11 attacks. One is convinced that 'the USA had their own pilots fly into the buildings to blame Bin Laden', and reads in the photo an attempt to convince the world that 'All people are bad, except the Americans'. To another respondent, the photo states: 'Yeah everyone should believe that it wasn't the *Amis* themselves'.⁴³⁴

Of course, many answers about the Buchenwald photo mentioned the fact that this took place in Germany itself. 'Horror from Germany', is the photograph's core message, one respondent writes. 'The Germans are terrible people', writes another.⁴³⁵

But a few other answers also reflected German history in another way. This was particularly true concerning the historic setting of the Tank Man photograph. One

⁴³¹ 'Amis' is a German abbreviation of 'Americans'. The quote is in delightful German: 'Menschenverachtung und eiskalte rücksichtslosigkeit der amis'. Resp. no. Ger. 173.

⁴³² Resps. nos. Ger. 157, 136, 184, 188.

⁴³³ Resps. Nos. Ger. 137, 157, 153.

⁴³⁴ Resps. nos. Ger. 213 (two quotes), 122.

⁴³⁵ Resps. nos. Ger. 43, 213.

respondent suspected that the photograph captured the '13. August construction of the [Berlin] Wall'. Another offered 'Soviet Panzer in the DDR' as the historic event, while others suggested 'Panzer in Prague'. One German response suggested the occasion was '17. June in Berlin' – a reference to the 1953 protests in East Berlin, that were brutally struck down by the Red Army and East German Volkspolizei.⁴³⁶

4.1.5 Great Britain – 'If one person stands tall it can change the whole course of history'

British answers to the open questions were distinctive in a few ways. Firstly, some answers displayed a dry humour that one would be tempted to call typically British. 'I don't know, I still haven't seen this picture since you asked me two minutes ago', one respondent wrote, for example.⁴³⁷

Secondly, compared to other countries, British answers about the photographs' central message were often less metaphorical and more down-to-earth. Asked about the Buchenwald photo, one respondent (who correctly identified 'Holocaust' as the corresponding historical event) offered as the photograph's central message: 'Poor conditions and cruelty'. Another respondent's answer, regarding the central message of the Napalm Girl photo: 'Children are affected by war'. Another respondent, on the central message of the Abu Ghraib photo: 'People tortured in Iraq'. One respondent, on the Falling Man photo: 'People jumped rather than burn to death'.⁴³⁸

A third aspect that stands out, is that British respondents surprisingly often use the exact same phrase to describe the central message that photographs. This is the case, firstly, with regards to the Buchenwald photograph. As stated above, many interpretations of this photograph's central message are 'down-to-earth'. Another typical interpretation of this photo reads it as a warning from history: 'We should always remember', or 'learn from mistakes'.⁴³⁹ A third often-read interpretation of this photograph views it as an exposé of how cruel humans can be towards each other. Twenty-four British respondents read the photo as a warning of human cruelty and inhumanity. Seven of those use the exact same phrase: 'Man's inhumanity to man'.⁴⁴⁰

The same resemblance of individual answers can be seen among interpretations of the Tank Man photograph. Twenty-six British respondents read the photo as a comment on the power of a single person, in standing up to the powerful. 'One person can make a change', is the theme of many answers. Often, respondents use simply that phrase to

⁴³⁶ Resps. nos. Ger. 183, 68, 229.

⁴³⁷ Resp. no. GB 44. This answer was corrected for spelling; the original answer was: 'dont know i still havnt seen this picture since you asked me 2 mins ago'.

⁴³⁸ Resps. nos. GB 237, 227, 234, 191.

⁴³⁹ Resps. nos. GB 205, 178.

⁴⁴⁰ Resps. nos. GB 69, 65, 67, 115, 195, 209, 236.

describe that reading of the photograph, but the same interpretation can be read in many variations. 'One man's will is stronger than an army of machines', replies one respondent. 'If one person stands tall it can change the whole course of history', writes another.⁴⁴¹

A few other things were remarkable about British responses to the open questions in the survey. One is that in case of the Falling Man and Buchenwald photos, the number of people who had recognized the photos was lower than the number of people who correctly identified the historical event during which they were taken. Two-thirds of British respondents (155 of 236 valid answers) correctly answered that the Falling Man photo was taken on September 11, 2001, after the terrorist attacks in New York. Yet 53 percent of the same respondents had earlier indicated that they recognized the picture.

In the case of the Buchenwald photo, the difference is very large. Close to 70 percent of British respondents (162 of 236 valid answers) correctly identified the historical event during which the photo was taken.⁴⁴² Yet only 32 percent of them had recognized the photo, when asked earlier in the survey. Apparently, a large majority of British respondents could correctly date this picture during the Second World War, although not even half of these respondents actually recognized it. This same result was found in Germany (see previous paragraph), adding support for the hypothesis that 'Holocaust photographs' have become a generic genre, only loosely connected to actual locations, dates and names.⁴⁴³

Also distinctive for British respondents' answers is the high frequency of two incorrect answers about the historical event connected to a photograph. One in ten British respondents (23 of 236 valid answers) thought the Napalm Girl was running from the American atomic bomb attack on Hiroshima. And though four British respondents correctly answer 'Sudan' as the country where the Vulture and Child photograph was taken, eighteen respondents offer 'Ethiopia' as the location. The answer of one respondent offers a clue as to why so many British respondents thought of Ethiopia: 'I think it was the Ethiopian famine in the 1980s made famous by the "feed the World" song' – undoubtedly referring to "Do They Know It's Christmas?" by Band Aid.⁴⁴⁴

More striking than these incorrect answers is the high frequency of a correct answer. No less than 37 British respondents correctly identified the historical event during which the the Abu Ghraib photograph was taken – the highest of all countries in this

⁴⁴¹ Resps. nos. GB 94, 233.

⁴⁴² Answers such as 'World War 2', 'Auschwitz', 'Jewish camps', and variations were regarded as correct.

⁴⁴³ See the previous chapter for a discussion of other findings that support this claim.

⁴⁴⁴ Resp. no. GB 55.

survey. Of these 37 respondents, five actually used the name 'Abu Ghraib' (or misspellings) in their answer. No other country came even close to these numbers. Of course, Great Britain was the only American ally to truly share a fighting role with the United States in this conflict, and the war created sharp division in British society. Apparently, this has translated to high recognition and high knowledge of the conflict among the British public.

In light of this, British answers of the Abu Ghraib photographs' central message are interesting. Most respondents who correctly identified this photo interpreted its message as 'torture', either in a matter-of-fact way (by stating its message as 'People tortured in Iraq', or a variation) or as an explicit rejection of it. 'Torture is wrong', one respondent reads in the Abu Ghraib photograph. 'Do not humiliate people even if they are your enemy', another one writes.⁴⁴⁵

And to other British respondents who correctly connected the photo to the Iraq War, the Abu Ghraib photograph is a visual rejection of American or western countries' moral superiority. 'US is just as corrupt as the regimes it pretends to depose', is the Abu Ghraib photograph's central message to one respondent. 'This is America's idea of justice', another respondent suggests as its message.⁴⁴⁶ 'The West occupying and killing innocents. These are our so called 'heroes'', offers one respondent. Another respondent reads in the photograph: 'How the peace loving nations are no better than their enemies'.⁴⁴⁷

4.1.6 India – 'I think the child in this picture is left alone just because she may be a girl child'

Survey results from India were harder to analyze than those in most countries. Indian respondents correctly identified the historical occasion of the photographs in the survey just 91 times, much lower than in any other country. (In neighboring China, for instance, just the Buchenwald photograph alone was correctly identified as many times.) From the interpretations of respondents who correctly identified the historical setting of these photos, it was often hard to distinguish clear patterns or features that seemed typical of Indian answers. The same was true for interpretations of respondents who did not identify the historical setting of these photos correctly.

Indian respondents, in general, did try to provide meaningful answers, but because the variation between them was so high, an analysis was often difficult. The historical event during which the Napalm Girl photograph was taken, for instance, was identified by Indian respondents not only as the Vietnam War, but also as the India-Pakistan War,

⁴⁴⁵ Resps. nos. GB 235, 64, 66

⁴⁴⁶ Resps. nos. GB 199, 188.

⁴⁴⁷ Resp. no. GB 177, 175.

the Sri Lankan civil war, a 'tsunami' (three times), the atomic bomb attack on Hiroshima, wars in China and Korea, the Second World War, the 'attack of the Americans on Pearl Harbor', the 'US-French War', and the 'Volcanic eruption from Mt. Fiji'.⁴⁴⁸

Likewise, the Tank Man photograph was not only identified as taken during the Tiananmen Square protests in Beijing, 1989, but also as taken in the United States (seven times), during celebrations in India or Pakistan, in Japan, during the Russian Revolution and during the Cuban missile crisis. The Buchenwald photo was once situated during the French Revolution. This high variation of answers, and low general recognition of the correct historical settings of the photographs, made it difficult to draw meaningful conclusions. Or it may be that, judging by the results from this survey, India might be culturally more detached than other countries from a global visual culture. But such a hypothesis would need more research and evidence.

Interesting, in light of the generally low recognition of photographs, is that two Indian respondents correctly identified the historical occasion of all six photographs – the only two respondents in all surveyed countries to do so. Striking – and puzzling – is that both these very well informed respondents read 'no message' in five of those six photographs. The first of these respondents provides a 21-word answer explaining the occasion of the Falling Man photo and a 26-word answer about that of the Tank Man photo, but reads 'no message' in both of them. He or she only reads a message in the Abu Ghraib photo: 'Very bad to abuse prisoners of war in this way'.⁴⁴⁹

The other very well informed Indian respondent simply answers 'no' to five questions about the photographs' central message, and then writes of the Napalm Girl photograph: 'themes of war, racism, immigration, political turmoil, repression, poverty, and international relations through the lens of family and particularly through the eyes and everyday lives of women'.⁴⁵⁰ A reading so profound and well-phrased that many researchers of photography – including myself – would not be able to produce it.

There are, however, some general remarks that can be made about Indian answers, and there are some peculiarities about Indian answers that are worth noting. Generally speaking, Indian respondents were prone to provide literal or practical interpretations of the various photographs' central message, and not read a moral guideline or an emotional appeal in them. Typical answers to the question of the message of the Vulture and Child photograph, for example, were single words such as 'hunger' or 'poverty', or short statements such as 'please feed the poor', 'it shows the gap between wealthier and poor countries', or 'there must not be such [a thing] as third world countries'.⁴⁵¹ Answers to the Napalm Girl photograph would typically read something like 'non

⁴⁴⁸ Direct quotes from Resps. nos. India 81, 18, 129.

⁴⁴⁹ Resp. no. India 11.

⁴⁵⁰ Resp. no. India 64.

⁴⁵¹ Direct quotes from Resps. nos. India 28, 22, 128.

violence should be mandatory in all countries' or 'evil effects of war'.⁴⁵² The emotional and personal reading of photographs that can be observed in other countries is less prevalent in India.

Of interest not specifically to India, but to visual culture in general, are a few interesting answers to two other photographs. Three Indian respondents, who did not recognize the historical setting of the Abu Ghraib photograph, did reflect about its visual analogy to Jesus on the cross. 'Crucifixion', one respondent comments, 'Jesus towards cross', writes another, and 'god jesus', a third.⁴⁵³ It is interesting that these respondents did not recognize the photo itself, but did point out the visual analogy that, according to various analyses, gives this photo its visual power.

Also interesting is that three other Indian respondents did not identify the Sudan famine of 1994 as the historical setting of the Vulture and Child photograph, but did remember something about the photographer who made the photograph, and his tragic story. One respondent only supplies the photographer's name – 'Kevin Carter'. Two other respondents write more about the story. 'This photograph got a good prize, but soon photographer committed suicide, due to guilt', writes one respondent. And another: 'A baby dying for no food, a vulture is waiting for the baby to die. The photographer commits suicide after getting award for best photography.'⁴⁵⁴ These facts are indeed true. It is an interesting clue as to how photographs work to store and trigger stories in our minds, that these respondents can recall these facts, while they do not recall the facts that the photo depicts. Or one could draw a more cynical conclusion – that the story of guilt and suicide of a photographer attunes us more than the story of an African child, struggling to survive a famine in very dire circumstances.

Less important than these finding, but interesting to note, are some answers that would not likely feature in some other countries. One is that three Indian respondents image the Buchenwald photo, showing emaciated prisoners, to be situated in a 'pak jail' – a prison in Pakistan.⁴⁵⁵ Four respondents think the prisoners are 'freedom fighters' – one of these four explicitly refers to the 'Freedom movement of India'.⁴⁵⁶ A fifth respondent thought this photo was taken during the 'British moment'.⁴⁵⁷ Yet another respondent thinks the Falling Man photo was taken 'during the british rule'.⁴⁵⁸

Indian realities also seem to influence one answer, which is not typical for India but reflective of some grim realities in some regions of the country. Asked about the central message of the Vulture and Child photograph, one respondent writes: 'I think the child

⁴⁵² Resps. nos. India 9, 24.

⁴⁵³ Resps. nos. India 52, 53, 165.

⁴⁵⁴ Resps. nos. India 174, 123, 105.

⁴⁵⁵ Resps. nos. India 41, 43, 51.

⁴⁵⁶ Resp. no. India 169.

⁴⁵⁷ Resp. no. India 171.

⁴⁵⁸ Resp. no. India 61.

in this picture is left alone just because the child is too black or may have an internal disease or she may be a girl child. We should not do that.⁴⁵⁹

4.1.7 Italy – *‘With death as an almost physical presence, looming over innocence’*

While British and German responses to the open questions in the survey were often matter-of-fact and descriptive, the Italian respondents often answered in ornate and elaborate prose, and more often ascribed metaphorical meaning to the photographs in question. The other country for which this was true was Argentina – an interesting correspondence, since the two countries are often said to have many cultural similarities. In this survey, they also had the highest emotional impact and assessment of importance scores (see Chapter 4). A qualitative analysis of Italian answers showed that they were, on average, not only the most emotionally impacted by the photographs in the survey, and were most likely to find them important, but that they also recognized the historical occasion of these photographs the most times. Italians, one could argue, are on average the most visually literate people of all the countries surveyed in this study.

Italian responses were not so much different in the interpretation of the central message of the photographs, but rather in the often attractive prose in which they were versed. ‘War is an ugly beast ... especially for the weakest’, one respondent wrote (including punctuation marks). In the Vulture and Child photograph, one respondent read ‘the infinite sadness of this world, made of so much wealth and poverty’. Another perceives ‘death as an almost physical presence, looming over innocence’. A third reads in the photograph ‘the infinite sadness of this world’.⁴⁶⁰

Regularly, Italian responses to the open questions were quite long, often branching off into different thoughts in complex sentences. Some respondents even supplied very long answers to describe the historical event during which the photographs were taken. One respondent used seventy-seven words to describe the Tiananmen Square demonstrations in Beijing, 1989, and eighty-eight to describe the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse in Baghdad, 2003. Another respondent described at length the setting of a photograph he or she didn’t recognize: ‘I do not remember the event’, he or she wrote. ‘However, it indicates the state of misery and hunger in which multinationals and governments have reduced Africa.’⁴⁶¹

Italian respondents offered descriptive interpretation of photographs – that they primarily ‘show the conditions’ of a certain historical event, rather than having a moral

⁴⁵⁹ Resp. no. India 153.

⁴⁶⁰ Resps. nos. Italy 30, 65, 209.

⁴⁶¹ Resps. nos. Italy 41, 44

or emotional message – markedly less than respondents in some other countries that were surveyed. This type of interpretation of the photographs’ central message did now and then feature in Italian answers, but not very often.

Italian respondents also often interpreted certain photos to say something about mankind, rather than about particular people, groups or nations. This last line of answering was not entirely absent. ‘Also the United States are responsible for barbarities’, one respondent for instance writes.⁴⁶² But much more prevalent were answers that read photos as a moral, visual parable for all people. This was especially visible in answers about the central message of the Vulture and Child photograph. ‘Perhaps we should take an examination of conscience and help these children, without keeping everything for ourselves’, one respondent wrote. Another thought it displayed ‘The shame of mankind’.⁴⁶³

Noticeable was also how some photos prompted some Italian respondents to empathize with people in the photo, and imagine their thoughts and emotions, sometimes in long, complex answers. One respondent imagines that the Falling Man is ‘A man who seeks salvation, knowing full well that he has no hope, but lets himself be lost in the void’.⁴⁶⁴ Another respondent wrote the following lines: ‘Never forget to love, to laugh and live as if it were the last day ... I wonder if that man, as he fell, if that was what he thought, how much he had sacrificed for ambition and success ... and now?’⁴⁶⁵

Another distinctive aspect of Italian answers was how often they were correct. The Italian respondent’s knowledge of history and the photographic documents made of historic events was really quite striking. In four of the six photographs, Italian respondents who correctly identified the historical event during which the photo was taken outnumbered those who did not. In the case of the Napalm Girl photograph, this majority was slim, but the margin was wider for the Tank Man, although this was a lesser-recognized photo. The Falling Man photo was correctly connected to the attacks of 9/11, 2001 by a two-to-one majority of Italians – higher than among Americans.⁴⁶⁶

In the case of the Buchenwald photo, the Italian respondent’s accuracy was even more remarkable. No less than 191 Italians correctly identified the Second World War as the event in history during which the photo was taken, and 14 gave a wrong answer –

⁴⁶² Resp. no. Italy 157

⁴⁶³ Resps. nos. Italy 138, 28.

⁴⁶⁴ Resp. no. Italy 128

⁴⁶⁵ Resp. no. Italy 41.

⁴⁶⁶ The number of correct vs. incorrect answers was 97-94 (Napalm Girl photo), 96-83 (Tank Man photo), and 122-59 (Falling Man photo). (That these numbers add up to a different total, is due to the fact that several Italians dropped out of the survey during this stage of open answers.)

implying that only one in fifteen Italians did not correctly identify the historical setting of this photograph.⁴⁶⁷

Of course, many answers were still wrong. An often-recurring wrong answer was 'Hiroshima' as the historical stage of the Napalm Girl photograph.⁴⁶⁸ The answer was given a notable twenty-four times. Another respondent located the photograph on Iwo Jima, a third at Fukushima. Also worth mentioning was one wrong answer to the historical occasion of the Tank Man photograph: 'The battle of El Alamein'.⁴⁶⁹

4.1.8 Japan – 'To fall into loneliness and isolation in the desert called the city'

As described in the previous chapter, Japanese respondents had by far the lowest 'importance scores' of all groups, meaning that on average they rated the 'importance' of the six selected photographs much lower (on a scale of 1 to 5) than respondents from other countries. This was not because, comparatively, Japanese respondents knew little about the photographs they were rating. Indeed, in analyzing the Japanese answers to the open questions in the survey, it is surprising to find that the Japanese respondents, on average, were quite good at identifying the historical event during which the photos were taken. Yet they comparatively often perceived 'no message' in these photos, even if they correctly identified when and where they were taken.

Almost no respondents in the world could correctly identify the Vulture and Child photograph and relatively few correctly identified the Abu Ghraib photo (respondents often made a guess concerning the latter and usually provided variations upon 'Famine in Africa' for the former). But among 216 Japanese respondents (filtered, valid answers), nine correctly identified Iraq as the location of the Abu Ghraib photograph and two mentioned 'Abu Ghraib'. Two Japanese respondents, moreover, correctly identified 'Sudan' as the location of the Vulture and Child picture, while another correctly recalled the dark story behind to this photograph. 'This photograph became famous', this respondent wrote, 'but the photographer seems to have committed suicide after receiving public criticism'.⁴⁷⁰

Japanese respondents were relatively well informed about the other photographs in the survey as well. The Buchenwald photo was correctly identified by 93 respondents, or

⁴⁶⁷ As noted in previous paragraphs, answers such as 'Holocaust' and 'nazi camps' were counted as correct.

⁴⁶⁸ Or similar answer indicating the atomic bomb attack by the United States on that Japanese city in 1945.

⁴⁶⁹ Resps. nos. Italy 76, 14, 179.

⁴⁷⁰ Respondents nos. Japan 9 and 190; respondent no. Japan 63.

43 percent of valid answers.⁴⁷¹ The Vietnam War was correctly identified as the historical backdrop to the Napalm Girl photo by 97 respondents, or 45 percent. The historical event tied to the Tank Man photo was correctly identified by seventy-one Japanese respondents, with the word 'Tiananmen' specifically mentioned by sixty-four of them – two in every seven.

Japanese respondents who correctly identified the historical event tied to the photographs in the survey, generally did read various 'central messages' in these photos. As a general impression, they were often more concise and less abstract and transcendental than answers in some other countries, with single words like 'hunger', 'terrorism', or 'misery' as typical 'messages' that Japanese respondents perceived in various photographs.

Moreover, as mentioned above, a striking aspect of Japanese answers was the high occurrence of respondents who correctly identified the historical event associated with a photograph, but still did not read a 'central message' in the image. Just to give a few examples: one respondent correctly identified '9/11' as the historical event connected to the Falling Man photo, but read 'nothing special' in it. Another suggested 'Jewish massacre in Germany' as the event connected to the Buchenwald photo and then replied to the question whether he read a 'central message' in it: 'Not particularly'. A third correctly answered 'Vietnam War' for the Napalm Girl, then suggested 'No' about a central message.⁴⁷² This is by no means an exhaustive list.

It is clear that in Japan, respondents who have knowledge of the content of a photograph did not necessarily read a central message in it. The Buchenwald photo underlines this point, though it also supports the general conclusion (which will be elaborated upon in paragraph 4.2) that people who correctly identify the historical setting of a photograph usually perceive a central message in it. In the case of the Buchenwald photo, eighty-two Japanese respondents (almost two in each five), perceive 'No message' in it (or variations of this answer). These include ten Japanese respondents who correctly identified its historical backdrop. Eighty-three Japanese respondents both correctly identified the historical setting of the photograph, and read a central message in it. A last interesting observation about the Buchenwald photo is that Japanese respondents often read less dramatic central messages in it than, for instance, European respondents. Typical answers to the question of the Buchenwald photograph's central message include 'antiwar', 'racism', 'human rights violations', 'abuse of the Jews', and 'inhumane'. That the combination of a correct historical assessment and reading 'no message' in a photograph occurs relatively often in Japan, raises interesting general questions about

⁴⁷¹ Answers such as 'World War 2', 'Auschwitz', 'Jewish camps', and variations were regarded as correct.

⁴⁷² Respondent nos. Japan 17, 119, 184.

how people perceive the central message of photographs, and how this is connected to culture and knowledge. More specifically, it also raises questions about how Japanese people ‘read’ photographs. More research, built upon more photos and more questions, could yield interesting answers about these questions.

The Falling Man photograph also makes for an interesting case study. As with the Buchenwald photo, many Japanese respondents correctly identified the historical event when the Falling Man photo was taken, but read ‘nothing special’ in it.⁴⁷³ But more striking is how often Japanese respondents read something else in the photograph – something entirely disconnected from the actual event.

‘Difficulty in finding employment’, is the motive behind this man’s fall, one respondent writes. ‘Resistance to society’, someone else suggests. ‘Protest by suicide’, proposes a third.⁴⁷⁴ The word ‘suicide’ is mentioned by Japanese respondents thirty-one times. Clearly, many Japanese respondents associate the Falling Man with a falling man – and associate someone falling off a high building with pressures to work hard and succeed, and suicide as a way out or a form of protest against it. ‘To fall into loneliness and isolation in the desert called the city’, one respondents poetically writes, part of a particularly long answer that tries to capture the imagined state of mind of the falling man in the photograph.⁴⁷⁵

Interesting as well are Japanese reactions to the Tank Man photograph. In another photograph taken in eastern Asia, the Napalm Girl, Japanese respondents often read quite general condemnations of war. ‘Misery of war’, ‘war is a tragedy’, and ‘damage of war’ are typical ‘central messages’ that Japanese respondents read in the photo – including those who correctly identify the Vietnam War as the corresponding historical event.⁴⁷⁶ But in the case of the Tank Man, the associations were more specific – namely, associations to China.

To be sure, not all Japanese respondents connected this photo to China. An honorable mention goes to North Korea: seven Japanese respondents actually thought this photo captured a North Korean military parade; ‘Stupid as usual’, as one respondent added.⁴⁷⁷ But the (correct) associations to China were more numerous, and they often touched upon themes of Chinese oppression or threat. To a few respondents this photo symbolized ‘democratization of China’, or the importance of that, but more interpreted

⁴⁷³ Or variations on that answer.

⁴⁷⁴ Respondents nos. Japan 44, 81, 39

⁴⁷⁵ Resp. no. Japan 239

⁴⁷⁶ Some interesting answers to this question included: ‘Chinese soldiers trying to catch slaves’ (Resp. no. Japan 34) and ‘Japanese civilians chased by US military in World War II’ (Resp. no. Japan 120).

⁴⁷⁷ Resp. no. Ja71.

it to show ‘the evil dictatorship by the Chinese communist party’ or the ‘Chinese government’s politics of fear’.⁴⁷⁸ One respondent interpreted the photograph’s central message as: ‘China is scary’.⁴⁷⁹

An analysis of Japanese respondents’ answers yields some interesting insights about the connection between (correct) knowledge of a photographs’ content and both its emotional impact upon viewers, and its viewers’ opinion about its importance. Consider Figure 4.1, a line chart of Japanese answers to two questions about the Buchenwald photo.

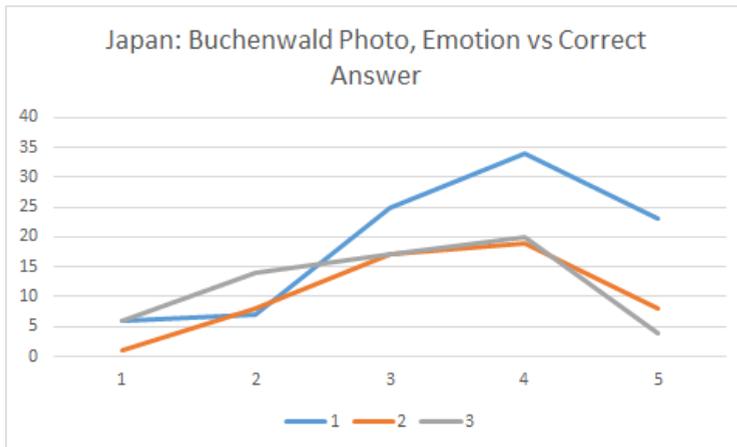


Figure 4.1 Line chart of Japanese answers to Question 26 (‘During which event in history do you think this picture was taken?’) versus answers to Question 27 (‘How strong is the emotional impact of this picture on you?’). Vertical axis represents number of respondents, horizontal axis represents answer to Q27, 1 to 5. Answers to Q26 are drawn as continuous lines, and represent 1 (Correct), 2 (Incorrect), or 3 (‘I don’t know’).⁴⁸⁰

As Figure 4.1 makes clear, among Japanese people who correctly identified the historical episode during which the Buchenwald photo was taken, those who rate its emotional impact as 4 or 5 far outnumber those who rate it as 1 or 2. Among those who incorrectly identify the historical event, the number who rate the impact as 3 is about as high as those who rate it as 4, and the number of those who rate it as 2 is about as high as those who rate it as 5. The photo clearly had the lowest average emotional

⁴⁷⁸ Direct citations from resps. nos. Ja123, 201, 14

⁴⁷⁹ Resp. no. 187

⁴⁸⁰ Counted as ‘correct’ were ‘Second World War’, abbreviations and variations on that term; ‘Auschwitz’ and misspellings of that name; variations on ‘concentration camp’ and variations on ‘Nazi Germany’.

impact among those who answered that they 'dont know' when this photo was taken. Among that group of respondents, answer no. 5 ('very strong impact') was the least chosen option.

These findings suggest a connection between correct knowledge of a photograph's content and the emotional impact of it on a viewer. Figure 4.2 suggests a similar connection between that knowledge and the importance a viewer attributes to a photograph.

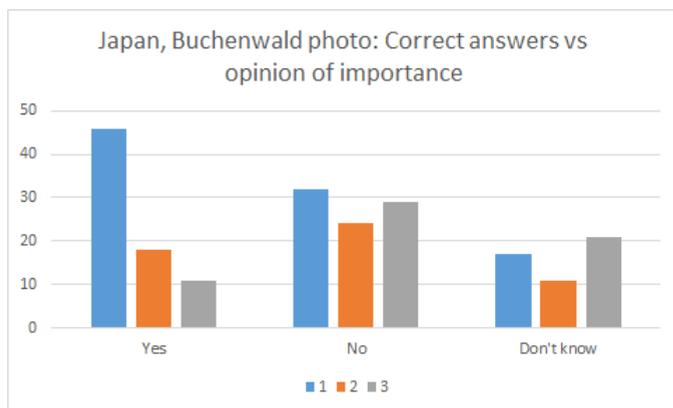


Figure 4.2 Crosstab of Japanese answers to Question 26 ('During which event in history do you think this picture was taken?') and Question 29 ('In your opinion, is this an important photograph?'). Vertical axis represents number of respondents, horizontal axis represents answers to Question 29. Blue bars represent Japanese respondents who correctly attributed the Buchenwald to the Holocaust or the Second World War, orange bars those who answered incorrectly, grey bars those who answered 'I don't know'.

If one looks at the blue bars in the graph (respondents who correctly identified the historical event during which the Buchenwald was taken), one notices how this group of respondents far outnumbers the others in the left columns: respondents who consider the Buchenwald photo to be an 'important' photo. In the other columns, the numerical difference with the other two groups is small. If one looks at the orange and grey bars, one notices that they are highest in the center columns: this means that among Japanese respondents who either incorrectly identified the historical setting of the Buchenwald photo or answered that they 'didn't know', the most common answer to the question whether they considered the photo to be 'important' was 'No'. As with emotional impact (Figure 4.1), these findings suggest a connection between (correct) knowledge of a photograph's content and a viewer's estimation of its importance. More research will be needed to arrive at more about these subjects.

4.1.9 The Netherlands – ‘Now these people really had a right to complain’

Dutch respondents were remarkably accurate in naming the historical occasion during which several photos in the survey were taken. The historical setting of two photographs was correctly described by two thirds or more of all respondents, a third photo by almost half. But this abundance in knowledge did not always translate into engaged comments about these photographs’ central message. Dutch respondents used dramatic words relatively sparingly, compared to respondents in some other countries. They did sometimes supply answers that were emotionally engaged, but more typical were answers which suggested that a photograph’s central meaning was a straightforward moral directive, or alternatively, ‘to show the conditions’ during the historical event in question. Thus the message of the Napalm Girl photograph was ‘civilian casualties’, that of the Tank Man ‘man with groceries stands in front of tanks as protest’, that of the Vulture and Child ‘dying child’, according to various respondents.⁴⁸¹ The photograph whose historical setting was most often correctly identified by Dutch respondents, was the Buchenwald photo. A remarkable 154 Dutch respondents, 71 percent of all valid answers, offered the Second World War (or similar answers) as the event in history during which the photo was taken. Most of these respondents chose one of two types of ‘central messages’ that can be read in this photo. The first is normative. About a third of these respondents read the message of this photograph to be: ‘This should never happen again’, or a variation of this phrase. Some respondents add emotional impetus to the ‘never again’ phrase by writing it in capitals or adding exclamation marks.

Another large group of respondents read the message as descriptive. ‘This photo shows the bad living conditions of the jews in the concentration camps’, one respondent states matter-of-factly, and many Dutch respondents ‘read’ the photograph in a similar way.⁴⁸² Other answers about the photo’s message regularly included ‘No’. One respondent was prompted by the photo to break into an angry condemnation, although hardly of the fallibility of man: ‘Now these people really had a right to complain’, this respondent wrote. ‘That they’re poor and hungry, not the people who complain now about not having any money while having a nice house with everything in it and their nice cell phone and fat cars in front of their door.’⁴⁸³

A second photograph whose historical setting was correctly described by a large majority of Dutch respondents, was the Falling Man – 145 times, or 67 percent of all valid responses. Unlike in the case of the Buchenwald photo, there were not two

⁴⁸¹ Resps. nos. Netherlands 198, 58, 202

⁴⁸² Resp. no. Netherlands 66

⁴⁸³ Resp. no. Netherlands 33

'typical' explanations among Dutch respondents of the Falling Man photographs' central message. To begin with, not everyone read a message in the photo, including those who correctly named the September 11, 2001 attacks as the historical occasion. 'Hard to put a message on this', one respondent wrote, while many other offer 'no' or 'do not know'.⁴⁸⁴ Among the majority that did read a message in the photograph, 'desperation' and 'people were hopeless' were common themes. 'Never again' also featured a few times here. 'Terrible', 'panic' or 'terrorism' were other messages that were named a few times.

Some Dutch respondents were emotionally engaged with the topic, writing for instance: 'Can't put into words that so many innocents were killed like that'.⁴⁸⁵ But a more common type of 'message' that Dutch respondents read in the photo, was descriptive. 'This was just a dramatic photo that has no message but shows what a terrible thing terrorism is', states one respondent. 'No message, it looks like one of the people who jumped from the burning twin towers', another one writes. 'That you would rather smack into smithereens than burn alive', a third observes.⁴⁸⁶

The historical setting of the Napalm Girl photo was also more often described correctly by Dutch respondents than in other countries: a hundred times. Dutch interpretations of the photo were usually emphatic, though generally in calm wording. 'How terrible it was for the people', writes one respondent, 'war in which children are the victim is never good', writes another.⁴⁸⁷ Descriptive interpretations of the photo's message, such as '[shows] what went on, what it was like in that country', were also common.⁴⁸⁸

Not only the Buchenwald and the Falling Man photos, whose historical setting are well recognized in many countries, were correctly identified in the Netherlands. The Abu Ghraib photograph, for instance, is often correctly identified by just a few people in most countries. Dutch respondents link it to the Iraq War a surprising 31 times. Usually, however, they do not read a 'message' in the photograph. The connection to the Ku Klux Klan is also often made in the Netherlands: twelve respondents mention the organizations name or racism against black people. 'Whites always want to be in charge, they think it's a white man's world, despite the fact that there are more people of colour in the world', one respondent writes.⁴⁸⁹

The Tiananmen Square protests in Beijing are named by Dutch respondents as the setting for the Tank Man photograph seventy times. A common answer, not only provided by those who correctly described the historical setting, was analogous to the

⁴⁸⁴ Quote from Resp. no. Netherlands 183

⁴⁸⁵ Resp. no. Netherlands 120

⁴⁸⁶ Resps. nos. Netherlands 92, 185, 184

⁴⁸⁷ Resps. nos. Netherlands 79, 225

⁴⁸⁸ Resp. no. Netherlands 1

⁴⁸⁹ Resp. no. Netherlands 75

message many American scholars read in it: the Tank Man as a testament to the power of the individual against the mighty.⁴⁹⁰ ‘This is how powerful one man can be’, a respondent writes who has ‘no idea’ where and when this photo was taken.⁴⁹¹ Not everyone was convinced it would be of any use: ‘Courageous, but afterwards everything goes about its normal way’.⁴⁹²

In the Dutch survey, we encounter the first, last and only respondent in the world who thought the Vulture and Child photograph shows not a disaster somewhere in Africa but a ‘Famine in an Asian country’.⁴⁹³ This is not a typical answer, however. Of those who provide an answer, about half mention ‘Africa’ as probable location. As with the other photos, many respondents writing that the photo ‘shows how bad the situation is’, although many other respondents interpret the photo as a call to action to help those in need. Or, alternatively, as a rebuke to the Dutch, in the words of one respondent: ‘That we in the Netherlands are a particularly spoiled little people’.⁴⁹⁴

4.1.10 Russia – ‘The power of the Red Army’

Answers in Russia stood out from those in other countries in some interesting ways. Most notably, they differed from those in other countries in the historical event they associated the Buchenwald picture with, in their interpretation of the Napalm Girl and Tank Man photographs, and in their associations with the Abu Ghraib photo.

Although relatively few Russian respondents recognized the Buchenwald photo, a large majority of them both dated the picture correctly and deemed it to be ‘important’. In the country with the lowest average recognition scores of all countries, this picture was recognized by just 15 percent of respondents (see previous chapter). But the quality and content of the photograph must have given the Russian respondents enough clues. Almost two thirds of them (63 percent), correctly name the Second World War (or names and dates to describe the same conflict) as the historical event during which the Buchenwald photo was taken.⁴⁹⁵ And 71 percent classified the Buchenwald photo as ‘important’.⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹⁰ For example: Resps. nos. Netherlands 5, 8, 24, 128, 172, 191, etc.

⁴⁹¹ Resp. no. Netherlands 172

⁴⁹² Resp. no. Netherlands 176

⁴⁹³ Resp. no. Netherlands 88

⁴⁹⁴ Resp. no. Netherlands 118

⁴⁹⁵ Aside from dates, Russians also often used the term ‘Great Patriotic War’.

⁴⁹⁶ This percentage is higher among Russians who correctly date this picture (73 percent), but that number is still lower than the world average of all respondents: 74 percent of all respondents thought the Buchenwald photo was ‘important’.

The photo is often linked to concentration camps – Russian respondents used the term 45 times. Reading through the answers, however (both in Question 26, ‘During which event in history do you think this picture was taken?’, and Question 28, ‘Do you feel that this picture has a central message? If so, how would you describe it?’), it is notable how few references are made to genocide, Jews, or the Holocaust, and how often these answers refer to ‘prisoners’ in a general sense. Taken together, Auschwitz, Buchenwald, Holocaust and Jews, are mentioned eight times. ‘Prisoners’ is used in a general sense ten times, ‘prisoners of war’ three times, and ‘prisoners in concentration camps’ five times. ‘Political prisoners’, ‘convicts’ and ‘criminals’ are also used.⁴⁹⁷ This leaves the impression that many Russians associate the Buchenwald photo with more general atrocities towards civilians and soldiers during the Second World War (which the German army committed on a terrible scale in Russia) rather than with the specific crime of the Holocaust.

This impression is strengthened by an analysis of answers to Question 28, which asked respondents to describe the ‘central message’ of the photograph. The most common description of the photographs’ meaning was ‘Hunger’, or variations and elaborations on starvation. As with other photographs and as in other countries, interpretations of this photograph varied widely, and were often unspecific – ‘War is bad’, ‘horror’, ‘the world is cruel’, etc. But compared to other countries, Russian interpretations of this photo in general seemed more factual and less moralistic, featuring many perceived messages such as ‘Hunger’, as well down-to-earth interpretations such as ‘Camp’, ‘Overcrowding’, or a straightforward: ‘No. This is a statement of fact.’

Furthermore, Russian responses to the Buchenwald photo strengthened the conclusion that people are more likely to think a photograph is ‘important’ if they know during which event it was taken.

Figures 4.3 and 4.4 (Next page). Russian responses to the Buchenwald (left charts) and Napalm Girl (right chart) photos. Left bars in both bar charts represent Russian respondents who answered incorrectly to Question 26/34: During which event in history do you think this picture was taken? Right bars represent those who answered correctly. Green bars represent Russian respondents who answered ‘Yes’ to Question 29/37: In your opinion, is this an important photograph? Blue bars represent those who answered ‘No’ or ‘I’m not sure’. Central and far left bars represent invalid answers.

⁴⁹⁷ Other associations of the Buchenwald photo include the Gulag Archipelago; ‘Stalinist repression’, and camps in the 1930s. (Respectively respondents nos. Rus. 12, 172, 178; no. 5; no. Rus.145

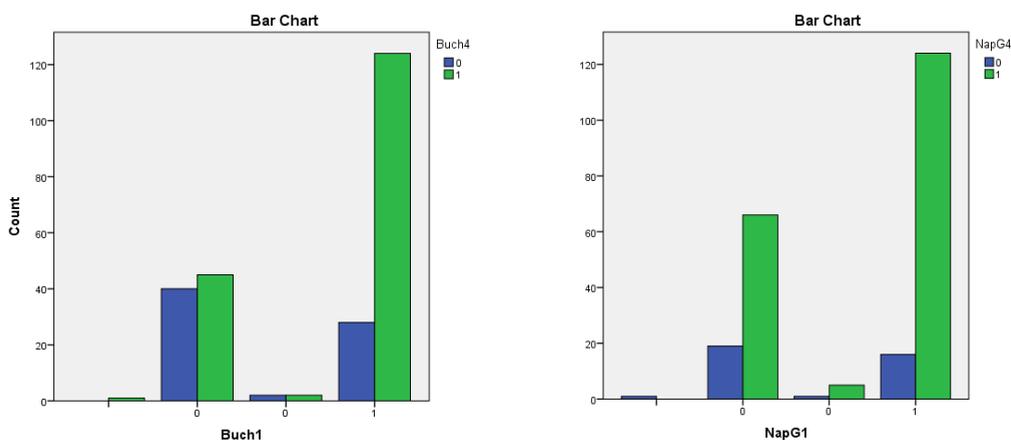


Figure 4.3 shows that Russian respondents who incorrectly identified the historical event during which the Buchenwald photograph was taken, were split about even between respondents who thought this photo was ‘important’ or not. Russian respondents who correctly identified the historical event were much more like to think this photo was ‘important’ than those who did not.⁴⁹⁸

Figure 4.4, the same chart for the Napalm Girl photograph, reinforces this conclusion. As in Figure 4.3, among the Russian respondents who correctly identified the historical event, those who think this photograph is ‘important’ far outnumber those who did not or were unsure. But the difference between the two groups is less distinctive than with the Buchenwald photo, because among respondents who incorrectly identified the historical event, those who thought the photograph is ‘important’ also outnumbered those who did not.⁴⁹⁹

The Napalm Girl is a second photo whose interpretation by Russian respondents yields interesting results. Although (just) 27 percent of them indicated they had seen the photo of the Napalm Girl before – much lower than the world average of 48 percent – 61 percent of Russian respondents correctly named the Vietnam War as the historical

⁴⁹⁸ In numbers: Russian respondents who incorrectly identified the historical event: 45 answered ‘Yes’ to Q29, 40 answered ‘No’ or ‘I’m not sure’; of those who correctly identified the event: 28 answered ‘No’ or ‘I’m not sure’ against 124 who answered ‘Yes’. The central bars were respondents who answered Question 26 and then quit the survey.

⁴⁹⁹ In numbers: Russian respondents who incorrectly identified the historical event: 66 answered ‘Yes’ to Q34, 19 answered ‘No’ or ‘I’m not sure’; of those who correctly identified the event: 16 answered ‘No’ or ‘I’m not sure’ against 124 who answered ‘Yes’.

event during which it was taken, and 6 out of 7 (84 percent) indicated that this is an 'important' photo – higher than the world average.

Overall, Russian interpretations of this picture's message are more often moralistic and transcendental. 'Horror' or 'The horror of war' is a recurrent interpretation, just as 'the cruelty of war' and interpretations that condemn violence towards and suffering of children. But interpretations are also regularly aimed against the United States. One Russian perceives 'US – the aggressor' as central message, other see 'The crimes of the US military!', or 'Cruelty of the American invaders', while one Russian uses an expletive after 'Yankees' and another describes the photo's central message as 'Yankee go home'.⁵⁰⁰

The Russian experience during the twentieth century also shows through in how Russian respondents date the photo of the Tank Man and interpret its message. Fifteen Russian respondents correctly located this picture on Beijing's Tiananmen Square.⁵⁰¹ But many times as many Russians pinpoint this picture in Moscow. Thirty-three Russian respondents associate this photograph with the attempted 1991 coup d'état, sometimes using just the year to indicate it, but also 'coup', 'putsch' or more elaborate descriptions like 'Moscow, storming of the White House'.⁵⁰² Moreover, forty-two Russian respondents think the photograph depicts a military parade, sometimes specified as 'Victory parade', 'May 9 parade' (when Russia celebrates Germany's surrender in 1945), or 'Parade on Red Square'. Other historical events that Russian respondents suggest for this picture, also reflect their national history, including '20th century American tanks', 'War in Afghanistan', and 'Prague uprising' (twice).

This association of the Tank Man photograph impacts Russian interpretations of its message. Some Russian respondents offer interpretations that are in line with what American scholars read in this picture, for instance 'Fearlessness', 'Freedom of thought', or 'Courage' – all by respondents – all by respondents who correctly identified the historical event depicted in the photograph.⁵⁰³ But more common are completely different readings of this photograph's meaning. When connected to the attempted 1991 coup d'état, interpretations might read 'Seizure of power', 'We are not afraid of tanks', or 'People power'.⁵⁰⁴ When connected to a May 9 parade, interpretations usually reflect pride, with interpretations such as 'Always ready', 'Power', 'Joy', 'Triumph', 'Victory', or 'The power of the Red Army'.⁵⁰⁵

⁵⁰⁰ Respectively: Respondent nos. Russia 184, 102, 63, 24, 167. References to Americans, the US, Yankees, or 'bourgeois' were also made in other comments.

⁵⁰¹ Included are related answers, that correctly state the year or country (or both).

⁵⁰² Resp. no. Russia 19

⁵⁰³ Respondent nos. Russia 230, 233, 74.

⁵⁰⁴ Resps. nos. Russia 79, 211, 164.

⁵⁰⁵ Resps. nos. Rus. 238, 227, 73, 53, 45, 195

A last photograph whose Russian interpretations was interesting to analyze, was the Abu Ghraib photograph. Hardly any Russian respondents correctly identified the historical event during which the photograph was taken – only three – and the majority of respondents answered ‘I don’t know’, both in response to Question 46, about the historical event, and in response to Question 48, about its perceived message. But the associations of the other respondents with the photograph are sometimes revealing. The second most frequent answer (after ‘I don’t know’) to Question 46 linked this photograph with the Ku Klux Klan. The racist organization in the United States was mentioned nineteen times, while (American) racism was mentioned five times. One respondent answered, when asked about the historical event depicted in the photograph: ‘Well, apparently another persecution of blacks in the United States’⁵⁰⁶ One other respondent who singles out the United States, though for a different reason, thinks this photograph depicts ‘Bullying in the US Army’. Its central message, to him or her: ‘Hazing not only in Russia’.⁵⁰⁷

4.1.11 Turkey – ‘I can confront your strong weapons with my human heart’

Turkish answers to the open survey questions formed an interesting category, since Turkey was the only predominantly muslim country to be sampled, and the only one in the Middle East. But these qualities did not translate into answers that differed from other countries in obvious ways. Turkish respondents often interpreted the message of photographs in the survey as short and descriptive or straightforward moral messages, much as people in other countries. When Turkish respondents did put their pen to paper for longer answers, they were often emotionally and handsomely worded. As in other countries, Turkish respondents correctly identified the historical occasion of the Buchenwald photo most often, 86 times, or 42 percent of valid answers. Interpretations of this photo were often along the lines of ‘hunger and misery’ or ‘massacre’, or more nondescript, such as ‘captivity’ or ‘a difficult situation’.⁵⁰⁸ Antisemitism might be prevalent in the Middle East, but in Turkish interpretations of the Buchenwald photo, not a trace of it could be found (which is not true for all countries in this survey). Many answers decried the Holocaust. ‘The moment mankind ends’, one respondent wrote, ‘the greatest tragedy of recent history’, wrote another, while one respondent described it as ‘a shame on humanity’.⁵⁰⁹

⁵⁰⁶ Resp. no. Rus. 242

⁵⁰⁷ Resp. no. Rus. 184

⁵⁰⁸ Last two quotes from Resps. nos. Turkey 110, 113

⁵⁰⁹ Resp. no. Turkey 6, 5

Interpretations of the Falling Man photo yielded less interesting results, though it did yield some artfully worded answers. The attacks of September 11, 2001 (which, curiously, was dated by Turkish respondents more often as September 12th) were to one respondent 'A painful manifestation of humanity's complexity of perception and judgement from time to time'. 'Humanity is dealing with empty things and destroying each other', observed another.⁵¹⁰

The same poetic inclination could be found in interpretations of the Tank Man photo. The photo was not recognized as much as in other countries, just fourteen times. Suggestions of other historical occasions included the Arab Spring, the war in Afghanistan, Iraq, North Korea, and the Russian invasion in Poland. A common theme in answers, also among people who did not recognize the Tiananmen protests, was the necessity to protest. 'One should stand upright against the things that one believes to be untrue', comments one respondent. 'People cannot be silenced', observes another.⁵¹¹ One respondent (who didn't recognize the historical setting) offered a wordplay about the Tank Man: 'A man who is against the plan'.⁵¹²

Two Turkish respondents assumed the photo to be of a military *coup d'état*, a prevalent feature of Turkish political history. One interesting interpretation of the photo, in light of this, is the following: 'The army is always bigger than the state'.⁵¹³ And lastly, an interpretation of the Tank Man photograph that is beautifully crafted: 'I can confront your very strong weapons with my human heart. Or you take away everything and destroy me too'.⁵¹⁴

The Napalm Girl photograph yielded interpretations that were akin to other countries, maintaining that the photo showed 'the bad side of war', or that 'the greatest loss in wars is children'.⁵¹⁵ More interesting were some anti-American interpretations. 'The country that killed muslims', one respondent provides, asked the historical occasion of the photo. Of the photograph's message, one respondent writes 'fuck usa'. Another respondent (who thought the photo depicted the atomic bombing of Hiroshima) thought it the photo shows the 'brutal face of imperialist and fascist ideology'. A respondent who did offer the Vietnam War as historical backdrop, remarked that the photo shows the 'fascist direction of American imperialism'.⁵¹⁶

Answers about the Abu Ghraib photograph also sometimes displayed anti-American sentiment, although the recognition of the photo was too low (eight times) to draw any straightforward conclusions. 'Torture' was often mentioned as central message, both

⁵¹⁰ Resps. nos. Turkey 5, 12

⁵¹¹ Resps. nos. Turkey 13, 30

⁵¹² Resp. no. Turkey 12

⁵¹³ Resp. no. Turkey 118

⁵¹⁴ Resp. no. Turkey 75

⁵¹⁵ Resps. nos. Turkey 172, 79

⁵¹⁶ Resps. nos. Turkey 81, 85, 160, 39

by Turkish respondents who did and who did not correctly identify the historical occasion. Four respondents linked the photo to the Ku Klux Klan, sometimes remarking about the racist character of the United States. (Of course, the connection to the KKK is incorrect, but the recurring association with it, also in other countries, testifies to the strength of the KKK symbolism.) And the same interpretation was given by two respondents who did answer that this photo was taken in the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. Also for them, the photo signaled 'racism' and 'racist society'.⁵¹⁷

The last photo in the survey, the Vulture and Child, did not yield interesting results in the sense that a majority of Turkish respondents thought the historical backdrop to this photo was 'famine in Africa' (or variations) and that none knew the famine took place in Sudan in 1993. Interpretations were often 'hunger and poverty', or on the continuing scourge of famine. 'The status of Africa', one respondent wrote, while others deplored the fact that situations like these still exist.⁵¹⁸ While these interpretations did not differ from respondents in other countries, one other aspect of Turkish answers definitely was. No less than ten respondents knew some aspect of the story of photographer Kevin Carter, who killed himself after receiving a Pulitzer Prize for this photo. The image of the photographer who committed suicide', one respondent wrote. Another was more blunt: 'Bastard Carter'.⁵¹⁹

4.12 The United States – 'One person can stand up to the MAN'

Answers of United States' respondents form an interesting category: because of the global reach of American culture, because of the dominance of US journalism networks in news photography distribution, and because of the fact that the photos that were most recognized by global audiences were made by US-based photographers in relation to US-related historical events (see chapter 4). In light of these perspectives, it is interesting that, as a general rule: 1. In their answers about three photographs that were taken during US-related historical events (the Falling Man, Napalm Girl and Abu Ghraib photos), the answers of US respondents did not stand out from other countries in the knowledge of respondents about these events and in emotional connection to these photographs, but were usually quite similar; 2. US respondents rarely related the 'central message' of these photographs to United States history or culture; 3. Their answers usually described the 'central messages' in photographs in quite general and unspecific terms – or saw no 'central message' at all.

⁵¹⁷ Resps. nos. Turkey 84, 198

⁵¹⁸ Resp. no. Turkey 203

⁵¹⁹ Resps. nos. 95, 85

The first point, that US respondents' answers do not display a more detailed knowledge of and connection to US-related events than those from other parts of the world, immediately needs qualification. It is evident in answers to the Falling Man and Napalm Girl photos, but less so in the case of the Abu Ghraib photograph. The attacks of September 11, 2001, were correctly identified as the event during which the Falling Man photo was taken by 55 percent of US respondents. This is not necessarily a low number, but in several other countries this number was higher. (This number was around two thirds, for example, in Italy, Great Britain, and Argentina.⁵²⁰) The Vietnam War was correctly identified as the historical event connected to the Napalm Girl photograph by 46 percent of the American respondents in this survey – around the same percentage as among Japanese respondents, for example, and much lower than among Russian respondents.

In the case of the Abu Ghraib photograph, the conclusion is less straightforward. The number of US respondents who connect the photo to the Iraq War and Abu Ghraib (or variations upon these answers) is 30, or 14 percent. This is relatively high as compared to other countries (only in Great Britain did more people attribute this photograph correctly to the Iraq War), although whether a percentage of 14 is actually 'high', in relation to a photo taken during a recent US war, can be open to debate.

The Abu Ghraib photograph generated some interesting responses in the United States. Although the number of US respondents who connected the Abu Ghraib photo to the Iraq War was relatively high, another association many US respondents made was interesting in light of US history – namely race-related violence. Ten US respondents included the term 'KKK' in their answers about this photo; four speculated that the photograph relates to 'the civil rights movement'. ('Slavery', incidently, also featured in four answers about the Buchenwald photograph, and in one about the Vulture and Child photograph – apparently a ready association among US respondents when confronted with photographs of suffering.) Three US respondents linked the Abu Ghraib photograph not to the US invasion of Iraq and its aftermath, but to Saddam Hussein's rule. 'Torture during saddom husseins era', one respondent replied.⁵²¹

US respondents who correctly identified the photograph, diverged in interesting ways in their interpretation of the photograph. Among this group, the most common perception of the central message was the word 'torture' or an elaboration upon that word (noted 11 times). Some went further. 'We aren't the only ones attacked, we are the attackers as well', one US respondent wrote.⁵²² 'The U.S. is better than this', another commented.⁵²³ But there were also US respondents who read a diametrically

⁵²⁰ Responses such as '9/11' or 'Twin Towers' were counted as correct.

⁵²¹ Resp. no. US 165

⁵²² Resp. no. US 74

⁵²³ Resp. no. US 105

different message in the photo. ‘This is not torture’, was the photographs central message to one respondent.⁵²⁴ Another read it not as a condemnation, but as an explicit endorsement of torture by US army personnel: ‘It reminds me it’s OK for THE UNITED STATES of AMERICA to torture brutal Muslims and Arabs’, this respondent wrote.⁵²⁵

While the Abu Ghraib photo generated several responses that interpreted the photo as a political statement about violent actions done to or by the United States, that was much less true of two other photos that in academic literature have often been read in such a way – both photos much more widely recognized among US respondents than the Abu Ghraib photo. As noted, the Falling Man photo was dated correctly connected to the 9/11 attacks by 55 percent of US respondents, but few Americans read a deeper message in it. ‘In a strange, eerie way, the picture has a sense of peacefulness, or maybe calmness’, one respondent, who correctly identified the photo, wrote of its central message – something quite similar to the (academic) interpretations of this photo that we have encountered in Chapter 3: interpretations that describe this serenity and read it as an act of defiance against the attackers.⁵²⁶ Another respondent wrote about the importance of the 9/11 attacks in history, and commented that ‘it was a time of terrorism, which has made America stronger today.’⁵²⁷

But these thoughtful comments were exceptions. Many US respondents who correctly identified the Falling Man photo offered ‘I don’t know’, or one of its many variations, as central message. Another very common category of answers was descriptive: ‘Shows what really happened at an individual level to those affected by 9-11’, is an example of this type of answer – largely or entirely devoid of political or metaphorical content.⁵²⁸ That this type of answer and the ‘I don’t know’s’ were so common among US citizens who correctly identified the historical setting of the Falling Man photo, is surprising. The same is true for the Napalm Girl photo, the most widely recognized photo taken during the Vietnam War. Given that this war has played such an important role in US (political) culture, one can be surprised by the blandness of many answers about its central message. The US respondents who correctly connected the Napalm Girl photograph to the Vietnam War overwhelmingly read the photo as a general warning of the horrors of war, not as a political comment concerning the United States. Only one of all US respondents saw in the photo a condemnation of the US: ‘cruelty of our own soldiers’ was the photographs’ central message according to one respondent. The only other respondent to link the photo’s central message to the US, read a very

⁵²⁴ Resp. no. US 109

⁵²⁵ Resp. no. US 139. Capitals in original answer.

⁵²⁶ Resp. no. US 83

⁵²⁷ Resp. no. US 76

⁵²⁸ Resp. no. US 156

different message in it: ‘Don’t fuck with America!’⁵²⁹ All other respondents either read no central message in the photo or – more often – read something very general in it. Typical answers were ‘Civilans getting killed’, ‘The children suffered during this war’, or ‘the horrors of war on children’.⁵³⁰ Others merely offered answers such as ‘Sad’, ‘War’, ‘Cruelty’, or the cliché from the Vietnam War era: ‘War is hell’.⁵³¹ This is certainly remarkable, given the scar that the Vietnam War has left – or is claimed to have left – in the public culture of the United States.

As described above, US respondents’ answers about photographs that concerned US history were quite comparable to the answers of respondents in other countries. The same is true for their answers concerning the other photographs. The Buchenwald photo, for instance, was very well recognized (73 percent of US respondents correctly connected it to the Second World War or similar answers), but answers about the photographs’ central message were often non-specific and non-metaphorical. As with other photographs, many US respondents answered that they were ‘not sure’ about the photographs’ meaning, or answered that they perceived no message in it – including many who correctly linked this photo to the Second World War. Alternatively, many offered general messages such as ‘Man can be horrible’, ‘human suffering’ or ‘inhumanity’.⁵³²

Answers for the Vulture and Child photograph were similar in this respect. ‘This is starvation’, was the photographs’ central message to one respondent, and many others wrote similar answers.⁵³³ As in other countries, virtually no US respondent correctly placed this situation in Sudan – only one respondent did. Instead, many US respondents read this photo as a comment of the general situation in Africa. ‘Anytime in Africa’, is the ‘event in history’ that one respondent connected the photo to; ‘How people in Africa are starving’, is what another respondent read in the photo.⁵³⁴ And they were by no means alone: 47 US respondents, or one fifth of all valid US answers, connected the photo to the continent rather than to a specific historical situation. One respondent even explicitly objected to connecting this image to a specific ‘event in history’. ‘Not an event’, this respondent wrote.⁵³⁵

US respondents’ interpretation of the Tank Man did seem to differ from respondents in other countries. Interestingly, many US respondents interpreted the Tank Man photo as a tribute to the courage of the individual against the powerful, even if they did not

⁵²⁹ Resps. nos. US 209, 139

⁵³⁰ Resps. nos. US 15, 95 143

⁵³¹ Resps. nos. US 65, 111, 110, 27

⁵³² Resps. nos. US 129, 184, 194

⁵³³ Resp. no. US 91.

⁵³⁴ Resps. nos. US 7, 60

⁵³⁵ Resp. no. US 162

correctly connect it to Beijing's Tiananmen Square protests of 1989. In fact, most Americans did not correctly attribute this picture. One US respondent thought this photograph was taken during Operation Desert Storm, another thought the photo was taken during the invasion of Iraq, and thought the Tank Man was 'Someone trying to stop the military invasion'.⁵³⁶

But the incorrect associations of the Tank Man photo often did not impede the interpretation of this photograph along the same lines as its interpretation in academic writings (see Chapter 3). 'It shows how powerful one person can actually be if they don't just stand on the side lines', a respondent wrote who correctly linked the photo to Tiananmen Square. 'Standing up for what's right', or 'Stand up to oppression' was a common theme among people who correctly identified when this photo was taken.⁵³⁷ Another respondent who did recognize the historical setting of the photo offered the same interpretation, in different idiom: 'One person can stand up to the MAN'.⁵³⁸

As stated, recognition of the historical event did not prove to be a prerequisite for this reading of the photograph. The same interpretation was offered by another respondent who had 'no clue' when and where this photo was taken, by another who simply offered 'don't know' when asked about the event in history.⁵³⁹ 'Standing up for peace regardless of consequences', is what one respondent read in the photograph, although he had 'No idea' when it was taken.⁵⁴⁰

⁵³⁶ Resps. nos. US 117, 89

⁵³⁷ This quote: Resp. no. US 212, 225

⁵³⁸ Resp. no. US 3. Capitals in original answer.

⁵³⁹ Resps. nos. US 123, 118, 125

⁵⁴⁰ Resp. no. US 172

4.2 The Global Visual Memory Survey: A Comprehensive Qualitative Analysis

The first half of this chapter featured country analyses about respondents' answers to the open questions in the survey, regarding the historical setting of selected photos and their central message. The analysis of these results by country yielded interesting results, parallels and differences, but some of the most important findings have not even been described, remaining implicit and unnamed between the lines of other conclusions. In the next paragraph, I will describe these and their implications, summarize some conclusions that have been reached in the previous paragraphs, and suggest categories that we can use to distinguish different ways of interpreting the central message of photographs of events in history.

4.2.1 *Photographs of history have meaning to almost everyone*

This conclusion may seem self-evident, but it actually is quite significant. Of all people sampled worldwide, just forty read 'no message' in all six selected photographs (which is different, incidentally, than 'I don't know'), and only five of those respondents (four Indian and one Russian respondent) answered in addition that they found all six selected photos 'not important'.⁵⁴¹ That is a tiny fraction of all people who completed the survey. If one were to accept this as an indication for how people worldwide think about photographs of events in history, it means that photographs of historical events have meaning, or *can* have meaning, to almost everyone.

One Russian respondent wrote, about the Abu Ghraib photograph: 'I do not know when and by whom this picture was made, so to me this picture does not say anything'.⁵⁴² This explicit rejection of personal meaning of a photograph was very rare among answers to the survey questions. To be sure, 'No' was surely the single most common answer to the question 'Do you feel that this picture has a central message? If so; how would you describe it?' But an integral, global qualitative analysis of the photography survey would need to start with an acknowledgement that the vast majority of respondents provided meaningful reactions to the questions asked of them about various photographs, and that many went far beyond the minimally required answer to provide lengthy, insightful, sometimes engaged or even emotional responses. The fact that so few people indicated that they did not read any message in the six selected photos, and found not one of them important, and that so many people

⁵⁴¹ These were: Resp. no. Russia 144, Resps. nos. India 33, 35, 37, 39

⁵⁴² Resp. no. Russia 114

supplied meaningful answers and indicated that they found one or more of those photographs important, means exactly that: that most people see meaning and value in a photograph of history, if asked to look at them.

In line with this observation is another, somewhat self-serving conclusion, that is warranted by the results of this study: people's recognition and interpretation of photographs can successfully be sampled using online research tools.

When I started this study, it was uncertain how serious respondents in countries all over the world would be in their answers, when asked to fill in a survey, distributed to them by an online survey sampling company. A qualitative analysis of answers provided by these respondents must be that as a general rule, people provided meaningful answers. In every country, several respondents would leave all spaces blank or fill them with 'askldhfklnsjh' and variations. But these answers, that I discarded as invalid, usually numbered around ten per country, so 4-5 percent of all answers.

I want to thank all respondents who have provided meaningful answers, and I believe they have helped academic research on photography and history. This method of research is new, as applied to the interpretation and recognition of photographs, and to visual memory in large groups of people. I hope other researchers will follow up on this study and move the study of photography and collective visual memory forward.

4.2.2 Interpretation of photographs is very diverse

This conclusion too may also not strike everyone as significant, but its implications are. Many people inside and outside academia believe that photographs can have a powerful effect on people's views and on society at large (see Chapter 3 for examples). But if one reads through a large sample of interpretations of various photographs of history, as the one featured in this study, it becomes obvious that such an effect can never be unambiguous and identical to everyone.

This becomes most obvious if one encounters the same exact phrase, even if just containing a few words, in people's interpretations of a certain photographs' central message. Exactly because this is so rare, it highlights that the variation in answers is tremendous. Much of this depends on choice of words. 'Hunger in Africa' and 'African famine' might be phrased differently, but represent a similar interpretation of a photograph. Still, choice of words matters. Subtle differences in wording might represent negligible differences in interpretation, but might also indicate more important differences, for example concerning the specificity or generality of the message people perceive in a photograph.

It is therefore worth pointing out the diversity in individual interpretations. This strong variation in how people choose to phrase the message they perceive in photos, indicates

a diversity in individual perceptions of photographs. People who summarize ‘what a photo essentially says’, or declare what ‘the message of a photograph’ is, both in academia and outside, should be aware of the fact that interpretation of photographs is an individual and personal affair, with major, minor and subtle differences between people, and shy away from too definitive declarations. Visual analyses of photographs should always acknowledge this and be cautious in their claims about the essence of an image.

This caution should extend to claims about the power of photography. Photographs can undeniably have power, as the overview in Chapter 3 indicates, as well as the thousands of respondents in the survey who indicated that they thought various photographs were ‘important’. But the diversity of interpretations of the photographs in this survey also suggest that this power is not linear and singular, as it impacts people in different ways.

4.2.3 Themes in the interpretation of historical photographs

Having made these points about the diversity of interpretations among the sampled respondents in various countries, it must also be noted that general themes in interpretation do exist. Themes, in this sense, are similar and kindred ideas that can be expressed in different ways but share a broad general idea in the interpretation of a photograph.

Among the photographs whose historical setting was most often described correctly by respondents worldwide, the Buchenwald photo and the Napalm Girl, such general themes were obvious, but they could also be seen in the answers about photographs that were correctly attributed (much) less. With regards to the Buchenwald photo, general themes that featured in many answers worldwide were the idea that such crimes against humanity and what led to them should never happen again; that this photo documented the conditions as they were in German concentration camps during the Second World War; that it shows something awful about humanity in general, and that it is an abomination. Concerning the Napalm Girl photograph, general themes were, for example, that civilians become victims of war; that suffering of children is terrible; that the photo communicates despair; and that the powerful are cruel.

Such common themes may overlap with one another, can only be described in general terms, and are by definition imperfect summaries of many different opinions. They can be discerned in the answers concerning all six photos. Moreover, they can be discerned not only among people who correctly identified the historical setting of a photograph (i.e. people that know something about the photograph or can deduce it from visual information contained in it) but also among people who answered incorrectly or who indicated that they didn’t know.

The Vulture and Child photograph illustrates that many people can read a photograph in a way that shares common themes, even when none of the people involved have any specific knowledge of the photo in question. Common themes such as ‘a shame for humanity’, ‘we waste too much food’, or ‘inequality’ run across countries, across national boundaries and across generations, while only a handful of people among all those sampled could relate this photo to the famine in Sudan in 1993 (or to the story of Kevin Carter). With the Abu Ghraib photo, also not well recognized, we can see the same phenomenon, though less clear-cut as with the Vulture and Child photograph. The reasons why people interpret photographs the way they do, and why they share similar themes in their interpretation with others, even when they do not have knowledge of the photo itself, are a fascinating subject – albeit beyond the scope of this study.

4.2.4 Ways of seeing – Different ways of understanding a historical photographs’ meaning

An attentive reader might have noticed that the examples of common themes in the interpretation of historical photographs that are given above, do not only indicate differences in focus and sensitivity. They also indicate fundamentally different ways of understanding a photograph’s message and meaning; different ways of seeing, one could say.

Take four descriptions of the central message of the Vulture and Child photograph: as ‘that there is hunger over there’; as ‘wasting of food should be strictly prohibited’, as ‘despair’, or as ‘we should all be ashamed’.⁵⁴³ These interpretations do not just differ in their central idea, but also in character. These answers represent four different approaches to interpret a photograph’s message. These different approaches can be found among answers in all countries, concerning all photographs. Based on my reading of these answers, I discern five main categories of interpretation:

1. Documentary. Many people interpret the central message of historical photographs in line with their function as documents, and view the information they provide about events, circumstances and material conditions of the past as these photographs’ central message.
2. Practical directive. This reading of historical photographs interprets these photographs as providing a practical guideline for behavior in the present.
3. Emotional appeal. Many people imagine the emotions of people in the historical photographs, and view this emotion, or the appeal they perceive in it to the viewer, as the central message of these photos.

⁵⁴³ Quoted from: Resps. nos. Netherlands 1, India 9, Turkey 21, Italy 4

4. Moral judgment. This understanding of historical photographs interprets them as moral parables, that pass judgment on larger groups of people, such as specific countries, the powerful, or all of mankind.
5. Categorical. Many respondents view certain historical photographs as representative of certain ideas, practices or conditions, such as 'racism', 'terrorism' or 'hunger', and view the category which the photograph represents to them as its central message.

These are archetypes, and not all answers fit in them. Some answers contain aspects of both. Often, respondents offered different types of interpretations for the six photographs they were asked to interpret. Sometimes they provided answers that contained more than one interpretation, and these could be interpretations that would fall in different categories.

Still, it is worth to note these different categories, because they go beyond differences of interpretation of photographs. They indicate that photographs have a different type of meaning for different people, and that their message may be read in fundamentally different ways.

A host of academic writing is devoted to what certain photographs essentially mean and what they communicate to the viewer. But from an analysis of answers in this survey, it is clear that the 'central message' of photographs means something different to different people. Indeed, the inclination of many people in various parts of the world, is to understand 'message' in a different way than what it usually is understood to be in cultural and visual studies.

Rather than an emotional or moral layer behind the documentary information of a photograph, 'message' to many people is something more factual and categorical. In diverse countries like Brazil, Germany, and Great Britain, more people were inclined to interpret 'message' in a more factual and documentary way than many scholars would, more as a statement of fact or representative of a category in China, or rather as a practical directive, in India. Scholars in history and visual studies should be aware of this.

4.2.5 Specificity & Generic images

The survey of the recognition and interpretation of historical photographs asked respondents if they knew 'during which event in history' specific photographs were taken. Answers across countries to these questions suggest that photographs are prone to lose their specificity in historical memory.

This was clearest in the case of the Vulture and Child photograph, taken during the Sudanese famine in 1993. This is, admittedly, a historical event that would not feature

in many history books or history overviews, but the correct identification of this famine – just ... times among close to three thousand respondents – is quite low. In contrast, the times this the event was identified as a generic ‘famine in Africa’ was exponentially higher. This blending together in historical memory of photographs of specific events in Africa to one generic ‘famine in Africa’ is precisely what various authors have decried.⁵⁴⁴ In this survey, we see the mechanism at work: the Vulture and Child loses its specific link to a certain location and time, or even to a broader event in history.

One could argue that answers about the Buchenwald photo demonstrate the same phenomenon, but the evidence here is less clear-cut. The blending of photographs taken in 1945 in various internment, work and extermination camps in Germany and Poland into one generic category of ‘Holocaust photography’ was similarly decried as in the case of famines in Africa.⁵⁴⁵ And indeed, the word ‘Buchenwald’ was mentioned even less than ‘Sudan’ by the global audience audited for this survey: just .. times. But since the liberation of Buchenwald was part of wider events in history (the Second World War, the Holocaust, nazi period in Germany), and the question did not ask for specificity, the fact that ‘Buchenwald’ was mentioned so few times in this survey does not prove that the photo has lost its specificity in collective memory – although many answers do suggest that this is the case.

On the subject of specificity and generic images, the Vulture and Child photograph is interesting in more than one way. In *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Susan Sontag wrote: ‘The problem is not that people remember through photographs but that they remember only the photograph’.⁵⁴⁶ In the case of the Vulture and Child photograph, a strange version of this mechanism can be seen. Significantly more respondents knew (parts of) the story of the maker of this photograph than basic facts about the historical event that the photograph represents.

It is a curious observation, but apparently the story photographs are supposed to tell can be cannibalized by that of their maker. Of course, in survey answers the knowledge of the story of Kevin Carter was itself overshadowed by the generic qualities many

⁵⁴⁴ See for instance: David Campbell, ‘Salgado and the Sahel. Documentary photography and the imaging of famine’, in: Francois Debrix en Cindy Weber (eds.), *Rituals of Mediation. International Politics and Social Meaning* (Minneapolis 2003) 69-96; David Campbell, ‘The Iconography of Famine’, in: Geoffrey Batchen, Mick Gidley, Nancy K. Miller en Jay Prosser (eds.), *Picturing Atrocity. Photography in Crisis* (Londen 2012) 79-92; K. Manzo, ‘Imaging Humanitarianism. NGO Identity and the Iconography of Childhood’, *Antipode*, 40 (2008) 4, 632-657; Susan D. Moeller, *Compassion fatigue. How the media sell disease, famine, war, and death* (New York 1999).

⁵⁴⁵ For example in: Marianne Hirsch, ‘Surviving images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory’, in: Barbie Zelizer (ed.), *Visual Culture and the Holocaust* (Londen 2001); Barbie Zelizer, ‘From the Image of Record to the Image of Memory. Holocaust Photography, Then and Now’, in Bonnie Brennen en Hardt, *Picturing the Past* (Urbana 1999)

⁵⁴⁶ Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York 2003) 89

people discerned in the photograph. The number of people who interpreted the photo as representing 'a' famine in Africa was much larger than those who knew Kevin Carter's story.

4.2.6 National histories and political convictions influence people's reading of photographs

Regularly, respondents answered questions about the historic setting of the photographs in question in ways that showed traces of their country's national history. Especially the Tank Man photograph sparked a wide range of speculative answers, ranging from El Alamein (Italy) to Soviet tanks in the DDR (Germany). These (mis)perceived historical settings translated into respondents' interpretations of the message of historical photographs.

Additional examples came from Japan and China. Respondents from both countries both provided derogatory or suspicious remarks about the other country, and both in questions about the historical circumstances of photographs and their central message, this mutual distrust could be seen.

This phenomenon, of what could be considered 'contamination' of the interpretation of photographs by pre-existing knowledge about history, should not come as a surprise. People bring many preconceptions and convictions into their interpretation of photographs, and their ideas and convictions about history are among those. Nonetheless, the fact that this so clearly arises from the answers in this survey, should serve as another warning against linear and singular interpretation of photographs. Photographs of history (may) mean different things to people in different countries, if only because of the national experience they carry within them. This reality should always be a part of the visual analysis of photographs of historical events.

The same holds true for political convictions. Although fewer answers showed obvious traces of people's political preferences than of people's national histories, it is clear that politics sometimes influenced interpretation. Answers about the message of the Abu Ghraib photograph in the United States, for example, showed the divisions over the Iraq War that still live in that country. This division of minds extended from the question whether the photographs' message was 'torture' or 'not torture', to explicitly political statements; with 'We aren't the only ones attacked, we are the attackers as well' against 'it's OK for the United States of America to torture brutal Muslims and Arabs'.⁵⁴⁷ In other countries there were sometimes traces of politics in the interpretation of photographs as well. In the Netherlands, for example, one respondent answered that the message of the Falling Man photo, taken after the attacks on September 11, 2001 in

⁵⁴⁷ Resps. nos. US 74, 139

New York, was 'those f**ing muslims (sorry)', and paragraph 4.1 has many similar examples.⁵⁴⁸

Anti-Americanism was a recurring theme, not running in high numbers, but nonetheless visible in various countries, most notably Germany, Russia and Turkey. In one sense, this is not surprising in light of the fact that two of the six selected photographs that were shown to respondents depicted US-related cruelty (the Abu Ghraib and Napalm Girl photographs). But one photograph that was taken when mass murder was committed on Americans (the Falling Man photo) also saw anti-American comments. These answers serve as a reminder that political views influence people's interpretation of a photograph's central message – something that should be taken into account by researchers of photography and history.

4.2.7 No connection between knowledge of a photo and its emotional impact, or the assessment of its importance

In paragraphs 4.1.8 and 4.1.10, the qualitative analyses of survey answers in Japan and Russia, graphs were included that showed that Japanese and Russian respondents who correctly identified the Buchenwald and Napalm Girl photographs were more likely to assess these photos as 'important'. These are important clues, but they are not substantiated if one looks at numbers for all photographs and for all countries.

In Chapter 3 of this study, the following tables were included:

Photograph	Average emotional response score
Buchenwald	3.85
Falling Man	3.50
Napalm Girl	4.14
Tank Man	3.19
Vulture and Child	4.18
Abu Ghraib	2.96

⁵⁴⁸ Resps. nos. Netherlands 66, Germany 158

Photo	% Importance
Buchenwald	74.1
Falling Man	48.9
Napalm Girl	80.7
Tank Man	53.6
Vulture/Child	78.8
Abu Ghraib	33.2

Figure 4.5: Average emotional response score, and Figure 4.6: Average Importance Score. Figure 4.5 shows the average score of all respondents worldwide when asked to rate the emotional impact of the photos in question on a scale of 1 to 5. Figure 4.6 shows the percentage of all respondents worldwide who answered ‘Yes’, when asked if they considered the photographs in question ‘important’.

It is clear from both tables that the Napalm Girl and Vulture and Child photographs had both the highest average emotional impact, and were considered ‘important’ by the most people. The average emotional impact score among respondents worldwide was higher than 4 on a scale of 1 to 5, and in both cases around 80 percent of respondents answered that they considered the photograph to be ‘important’. These scores apparently have no connection whatsoever to knowledge of the photographs in question.

The number of respondents who correctly linked the Napalm Girl photo to the Vietnam War was exponentially larger than those who correctly linked the Vulture and Child photograph to the Sudanese famine of 1993, which many people interpreted as an image of ‘an’ African famine. Yet the emotional impact of the photograph and, more surprisingly, the percentage of people who considered the photo ‘important’, appear to be unconnected to this.

The same phenomenon can be seen at the ‘low end’ of the two tables. The Abu Ghraib and Tank Man photographs score lowest, both on average emotional impact and on percentage of respondents who consider the photos to be important. Yet their recognition differs significantly: people who correctly identified the historical setting of the Tank Man photograph outnumbered those who correctly identified that of the Abu Ghraib photo 10 to 1.

It is an intuitive conclusion that emotional impact of a photograph is unconnected to knowledge of the circumstances under which it was taken. If emotional impact is

triggered by qualities of the image itself, it is only logical that knowledge of a photograph's historical circumstances does not significantly impact its emotional force. That conclusion is supported by the findings in this study.

That things might be more complicated, however, is suggested by the high score of the Buchenwald photo. Some respondents who didn't recognize its historical backdrop remarked that the photograph showed 'skinny men' or some kind of jail, and were not impressed (judging from their answers) with the photographs' importance, central message or emotional impact. Comments from respondents who didn't recognize the historical occasion of the Napalm Girl or Vulture and Child photographs, rarely if ever provided such indifferent remarks. And indeed it would be hard to argue that the visual and emotional power of the Buchenwald photo, if viewed without knowledge of its context, would be comparable to that of the Napalm Girl or Vulture and Child photographs. It would be an interesting subject for further study how emotional impact of photographs is impacted by (supposed) knowledge of what they portray.

The second conclusion that can be drawn from comparing Figures 3.19 and 3.21 with answers about the photographs' historical settings, is less intuitive: that there is no correlation between recognition of a photograph's historical circumstances and assessment of its importance. One would assume that knowledge of a photo would enlarge the chance that someone would find the photo important. That this is not always the case, is clear when one compares the percentage of respondents who correctly identified the various photographs' historical settings with average assessments of their importance.

As mentioned above, in the case of the Napalm Girl and especially the Vulture and Child photographs there are many more people who think these photos are important than who correctly identify their historical settings. And the disconnect can also be seen (though less dramatically) in relevant numbers concerning the Falling Man and Tank Man photographs. The Tank Man photograph is considered to be important by more people, though fewer people correctly identified its historical setting.

Comparing both tables, one could be tempted to conclude that respondents' assessment of the emotional impact of a photograph is linked to their assessment of the photographs' importance. But while that seems to be the case for some photographs, it is untrue for the Abu Ghraib photograph. The emotional impact score for that photograph might be low relative to other photographs, but it is actually very high compared to the respondents' average assessment of its importance. In short, these numbers do not offer a straightforward conclusion about a link between emotional impact and assessment of importance.

4.2.8 Perceiving a message in photograph is connected to emotional impact

When we cross out a connection between knowledge of a photographs' historical circumstances and its emotional impact on people or their assessment of the photographs' importance, it can still be the case that there is a connection between either emotional impact or assessment of importance, and the perception of a message in a photograph. Put differently: people who know nothing of the historical circumstances of a photograph, but still read a message in it, might rate the emotional impact of a photograph higher, or might more readily assess it as important.

To test this, I determined for three different photographs whether respondents read a message in it or not. For all photographs in the open question section of the survey, I contrasted their combined count of perceived messages against their average in emotional impact scores and combined assessments of their importance.

All countries combined produced about 2600 valid and filtered answers to each open question in the survey. Of the roughly 2600 answers about the 'central message' of the Buchenwald photograph, 545 could be counted as 'no message'. This implies that almost eighty percent of respondents thought the Buchenwald photo had a central message.⁵⁴⁹ This percentage compares quite well to the number of respondents who thought the Buchenwald photo was important (74.1 percent) and to the average emotional impact score (3.85, which as a percentage of 5, the highest possible score, is 77).

I did the same calculation for all other five photographs. In the Falling Man photograph, around 67 percent of respondents perceived a central message. In the Napalm Girl photo roughly 85 percent. For the Tank Man photograph this rough estimate was 71 percent, 85 percent for the Vulture and Child photograph and around 55 percent for the Abu Ghraib photograph. The results are illustrated in the graph below.

⁵⁴⁹ These numbers were gathered using keyword searches that were checked for mistakes: an imprecise method. They were intended to serve as rough indication, not as exact numbers. Answers such as 'DK' and 'no' were counted as 'no message', answers such as '.' or ';kljadfklj' were considered invalid and were not counted.

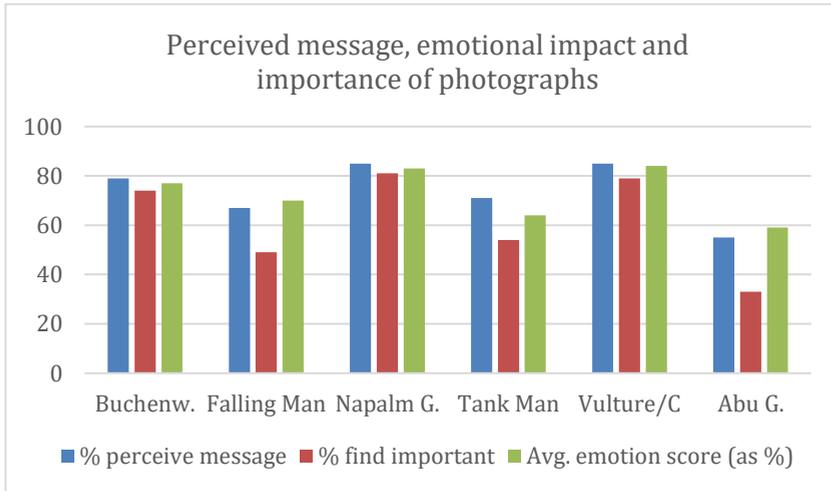


Figure 4.7 Perceived message, emotional impact and importance of photographs in the survey. Blue lines represent percentage of respondents who perceived a certain message in a photograph; red lines represent the number of respondents (in all countries combined) who thought the photograph was important; green lines represent the average emotional impact score, re-calculated as percentage points.

As can be seen in Figure 4.5, average assessment of importance is always lower than both average emotional impact and percentage of respondents who perceived a message in the image. The difference is pronounced in the case of the Falling Man, Tank Man and especially the Abu Ghraib photo. However, average emotional impact and the percentage of respondents who read a message in these photographs correspond very well, for all six photographs. There appears to be a clear connection between emotional impact and perception of message. Though further research should underwrite this, these results suggest that if a historic photograph has an emotional impact upon someone, that person is likely to think that the photo has a central message; and vice versa.

4.2.9 Iconic and Historical Photographs: No fake news

Among the many thousands of answers regarding the historical setting and central message of the photographs in this survey, very few indicated that respondents considered the photographs to be doctored or faked, or to represent false narratives. These answers were there, for instance concerning the Falling Man photo, but they represented just a fraction of answers.

Of course, this survey was concluded in 2014, before controversies about ‘fake news’ started to attract attention, and before the term became a common word in news and politics in many countries. Still, controversies about the truthfulness of various impactful photographs have continued to exist at least since the 1930s, and conspiracy theories are no product of the last few years.

So it is worth noting that as a general rule, respondents surveyed in this study have taken the photographs presented to them as truthful representations of past events, and have reacted to them accordingly. Since this study was set up to be representative of the general populations in the surveyed countries, and the countries were deliberately chosen in different geographic and cultural regions of the world, this study suggests that around the world trust in the truthfulness of iconic and historical photographs remains high.

4.2.10 Cultural fault lines in the interpretation of photographs

A comparison of answers in various countries to the open questions, especially those regarding the central message of photographs, does not lead to the conclusion that cultures and countries are radically different in their interpretation of photographs, but rather that different viewpoints and ways of seeing (as described in paragraph 4.2.4) co-exist in a different mix and with different emphasis in different countries. There is no ‘western way’ of interpreting the Falling Man photo or ‘Global South’ interpretation of the Vulture and Child. I was curious, at the start of my research, to see if such patterns of interpretation could be found, but they are not there – at least I haven’t found them during my analysis of the relevant answers.

It is, however, possible to see differences in the way interpretations are phrased. Very broadly speaking, answers in Brazil, Argentina and Italy were more often long and rich style and wording. In West-European countries (Germany, The Netherlands and Great Britain) and Asia the wording was, contrasted with that of the Latin American countries and Italy, more sober.

The different ‘ways of seeing’, as described in paragraph 4.2.4, could be distinguished in all countries. There were some subtle differences that could be discerned, such as the relatively high occurrence of the ‘documentary’ way of interpreting photographs in Brazil, Germany and Great Britain, or the frequent occurrence of the ‘categorical’ interpretation in China and Japan. But these variations were not so pronounced that they warrant any definite conclusions. Cultural fault lines in the interpretation of photographs, if they exist at all, are more blurry, subtle and relative than the term suggests.

Conclusion

As I described in the Preface, this study started with my fascination with the idea that I carry in my mind images of certain events in history that I only know from photographs, and that I share these visual memories with millions of people in countries all over the world. Using definitions from Maurice Halbwachs and Jan Assmann, I stated that such images are part of cultural memory. Using definitions from Annette Kuhn, Alan Trachtenberg, Gerhard Paul and others, I described photographs as 'cultural vehicles', that represent historical narratives, and that can function as 'agents of memory' to people in various groups. Combining these definitions, I offered the hypothesis that a global visual memory exists, and that well-known photographs of events in history are a part of it.

Reviewing literature on iconic and well-known historical photographs, I discussed several analytical concepts that shed light on their characteristics and their function in society. But I also noted that many claims about these photographs are not backed up by research, including claims about the fame and recognition of such photographs among general publics, and I discussed critically the methodology used to establish statements about iconic photographs in studies by Lucaites, Hariman, Kleppe, Perlmutter, and others.

To provide data to review claims made in academic literature on iconic and historical photographs, and to test my hypothesis that a global visual memory exists that includes well-known photographs of events in history, I devised an internet survey. An internet research agency then ran that survey among a controlled respondent group in twelve countries. With that survey, I sought to answer several questions. The most important was whether I could find evidence of a global visual memory: of the existence of certain photographs of historical events that are recognized by audiences in very different countries across the world. Based on the findings in this study, that question can be answered succinctly: yes.

The internet survey clearly indicates that there are iconic and historical photographs that are widely recognized worldwide. Which photographs we should regard, based on these survey results, as part of a global visual memory, is an arbitrary decision. Three photographs certainly belong to it, each one recognized by more than two thirds of all respondents in the survey: Neil Armstrong's photograph of Buzz Aldrin standing on the moon (1969), Carmen Taylor's photograph of the 9/11 attacks in New York (2001), and Alberto Korda's portrait of Che Guevara (1960). If we would count photographs that are recognized by a majority of respondents, then also Joe Rosenthal's photograph of the raising of the flag of the United States on Iwo Jima (1945) would be part of those select images.

Two photographs just miss that 50-percent mark: Jeff Widener's 'Tank Man' photograph on Tiananmen Square, Beijing (1989), and Nick Ut's 'Napalm Girl' photograph of Kim Phuc in Vietnam (1972). If we were to be 'lenient' in the case of these last two photographs, then the outcomes of this survey indicate that these six photographs are part of a global visual memory. But more important than the question which photographs we should regard as being part of it, is the conclusion that this internet survey has indeed found evidence of the existence of a global visual memory, that includes iconic and historical photographs.

This conclusion is a positive outcome of my study and also an exciting one, in the sense that we now have evidence that indicates that the idea that millions, even billions of people share identical visual memories in their minds is true. Similarly interesting conclusions were generated from the additional questions about six selected photographs. We can also conclude from an overview of global averages of answers to these questions that most people worldwide regard certain photographs of events in history as important, and are touched by them emotionally (although they do not necessarily regard the same photographs as important, and are not touched emotionally by the same photographs or to the same degree). Of course, this is a limited study with a small number of photographs that respondents were asked about, but of all six photographs shown to respondents in the second part of the survey, four were considered 'important' by a majority of respondents, and the average emotional response to them was often high and always higher than fifty percent.⁵⁵⁰

Not all photographs, obviously, but there are clearly photographs that many people in different countries all over the world assess as 'important'. The six photographs (..) mthe general assessment of their importance among a general group of respondents is quite high, with scores under fifty percent as the exception.

Other conclusions than this main finding were drawn from a statistical analysis of survey results. One result, which I didn't anticipate, was that the two most recognized images could be regarded as 'hard news' photographs, and that many images that are considered iconic in academic literature, but have much more symbolic meaning, are recognized much less often than one would expect from this literature. This should serve as a warning that iconic status in academic literature – which, concerning this subject, is dominated by contributions in English, often written in the United States – does not equal a photograph's high recognition among an international audience. And it should warn us against the possibility that writers, curators and academics collectively

⁵⁵⁰ Based on a conversion of average emotional response scores to percentages. E.g. an average emotional response score of 4.1 on a scale of 1 to 5 is equal to a percentage of 82.

amplifying interest in certain photographs, that retain an iconic status although their recognition among a general audience can be quite low.

Other statistical findings include the conclusion that newer iconic and historical photographs are not necessarily recognized more often than older ones, and that the recognition of historic and iconic photographs is generally similar across generational lines, although some generational differences seem to exist (for instance concerning photographs of the Vietnam War). The recognition of the iconic and historical photographs in this survey was remarkably low in Japan and Russia, but I did not find clearly different recognition patterns between regions of the world.

That said, one finding that is important for future researchers of photography is that both Asia and the United States trended away most often from global recognition patterns – which should caution US scholars against equating fame of a particular image with worldwide recognition. Another interesting finding, concerning regional differences, was that I did find some photographs whose recognition was much higher in the Global South than in the North, most notably Kevin Carter's photograph of a vulture and child in Sudan (1993).

National differences often proved more pronounced than regional ones. Argentinian, Italian and Brazilian respondents recognized, on average, the most photographs. They also reported the highest emotional impact of six selected photographs in the second part of the survey, and they also most often considered these photos 'important'. Japanese respondents, by contrast, classified these photos as 'important' much less often than people from other countries. Political views did not turn out to be correlated with photograph recognition, nor was gender.

One aspect of this study that I was looking forward to was an analysis and comparison of answers that respondents in each of the twelve countries supplied to open questions in the second part of the survey. This resulted in many interesting country analyses, which displayed national differences in priorities, history, engagement, passion, style of answering and use of language. More striking however, and more important, were conclusions that could be drawn not from differences, but from similarities in answers. One important conclusion was that among all respondents, I found five different ways of understanding a photograph's meaning. Reading a photograph as a moral judgment or as an emotional appeal, which is done in many case studies of iconic and historical photographs, are just two ways of 'reading' a photo that I encountered among answers in this survey – an important reminder to scholars of photography. Just as prevalent were other ways to interpret the central message of a photograph: as a practical directive, as representative of a certain categories, or as documentary. These five different ways of reading a photographs could be found among respondents from all

countries. A 'western' way of reading photographs, or other cultural distinction, did not present itself in this study.

Other conclusions that I drew from analyzing the answers to open question in the survey, was that most people see meaning and significance in photographs of events in history if asked to look at them; but that interpretation is very diverse, and that similarities in interpretation can only be described in very general terms. Also, answers in my survey underscore the concern that authors such as David Campbell and Susan Moeller have about how images of 'famine in Africa' can become generic to a general audience, or identical worries by authors such as Marianne Hirsch and Barbie Zelizer about the generality of 'Holocaust photographs'.

Another finding was that if people have correct knowledge of what a photograph depicts, that does not noticeably impact their emotional response to the photograph, or whether they judge the photo to be important. I did find an apparent correlation between the emotional impact that a photograph has upon viewers, and the likelihood that they perceive a central message in it. And finally, I also found that people with extreme right political views both recognize the most photographs in this survey and report the highest emotional response to them – although especially concerning the last aspect, the difference with others is very small.

Among the outcomes in the twelve qualitative country analyses, among the most interesting findings was that in China, Jeff Widener's *Tank Man* photograph of a lone protester on Beijing's Tiananmen Square (1989) is well-known, and the photograph is widely interpreted as expressing support for the defeated demonstrators and their cause.

One general conclusion was that the interpretation of photographs of events in history is regularly influenced by the national history of the country where respondents live. This reality should always be a part of the visual analysis of photographs of historical events.

These findings enhance our understanding of iconic and historical photographs: our understanding of the recognition of individual photographs, of differences between countries, regions, and demographic groups; and our understanding of how people 'read' a photograph and what they read in it. It is also evident that all these subjects need more research.

This survey has proven that the use of internet sampling to research the recognition and interpretation of photographs yields very usable results, but the use of more photographs, of larger sampling groups and the inclusion of more countries, the inclusion of more (detailed) questions about content, message and perceived function, and a refinement or adjustment of the selection methodology of photographs, would all improve the understanding of these photographs and what they mean beyond the conclusions that I have reached in this study.

I hope that other researchers will use internet surveys in the way I have done to improve our knowledge of iconic and historical photographs further, perhaps take inspiration from research methods I have used and improve them where they are flawed. I also hope that this study has carried over some of the fascination I have with the subject of iconic and historical photographs, and the way they work in cultural memory.

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Appendix. The Global Visual Memory Survey

The internet survey started with the following pages:

Photograph Recognition

Introduction

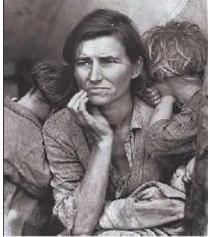
You are about to take part in a global survey on photograph recognition. This survey is part of a research project at Ulmstrat University.

In the first part of the survey, you will be shown 25 pictures in random order.

Please answer for each picture if you have seen this picture before.

If you understand which event is depicted in a picture, but you have not seen the specific photograph that is shown, please select 'No'. If you are uncertain, please select 'I'm not sure'.

Photograph Recognition



1. Have you seen this picture before?

Yes

No

I'm not sure

Photograph Recognition



2. Have you seen this picture before?

Yes

No

I'm not sure

Photograph Recognition



3. Have you seen this picture before?

Yes

No

I'm not sure

Identical pages with the question 'Have you seen this picture before?' (as shown above) were put before respondents with the photographs described in Chapter 2.4.

Identical pages like the one below on the top left, were put before respondents with six selected photos (Buchenwald, 1945; Napalm Girl, 1972; Tank Man, 1989; Vulture and child, 1994; 9/11 airplane, 2001; Abu Ghraib, 2003).

Photograph Recognition



46. During which event in history do you think this picture was taken?

47. How strong is the emotional impact of this picture on you?
 Please rate on a scale of 1 (Weak impact) to 5 (Very strong impact)
 1. 2. 3. 4. 5.

48. Do you feel that this picture has a central message? If so; how would you describe it?

49. In your opinion, is this an important photograph?
 Yes
 No
 I'm not sure

Photograph Recognition

50. Thank you for your answers.
 To categorize your answers correctly, please answer a last few questions.

What is your nationality?
 American British Indian
 Other, namely:

51. What is your age?
 18-34 35-49 50 and over

52. What is your occupation?
 Student
 Retired / Unemployed
 Employed
 If employed, occupation:

53. What is your gender?
 Male
 Female

Photograph Recognition

54. How often do you watch, listen or read the news, in newspapers, television, radio and internet?
 Less than once a week
 Once or a few times a week
 Every day

55. What is your primary news source?
 Newspapers
 Television
 Radio
 Internet

56. What is your education level?
 High School / Lower Professional Mid-level Professional Higher Professional / University

57. In your political views, where do you rate yourself on a scale from left to right?
 1 = very left, 2 = left of center, 3 = center, 4 = right of center, 5 = very right
 1 2 3 4 5 I would rather not say

Photograph Recognition

1. 

2. 

3. 

The survey then concluded with the pages shown below.

Photograph Recognition

4



58. Which pictures show people or objects that you recognize? Please select:

Image 1. Image 3. All images
 Image 2. Image 4.

Photograph Recognition

Thank you for taking part in this survey.
Your survey will contribute to our understanding of photography, history, and culture.

If you wish to discuss this survey, the pictures that were selected and their impact, please go to the Facebook page of the Photography Recognition project at Utrecht University:
<http://www.facebook.com/PhotographyRecognition>

Utrecht University, 2013



Curriculum Vitae

Rutger van der Hoeven was born in Amsterdam (June 4, 1974) and grew up in Landsmeer, the Netherlands.⁵⁵¹ He completed secondary education at Montessori Lyceum Amsterdam, and studied History and Political Science at the University of Amsterdam and the University of California, Berkeley (one-year exchange), completing his studies as doctorandus (M.A.) in Modern and Contemporary History in 2000. He worked for four years as a journalist at the foreign news desk of Dutch national daily *Trouw*, editing and analyzing



news from various areas of the world and writing feature stories from Bosnia, South Korea, Vietnam, France, and US states Hawaii, California and Oregon. In 2005, he became foreign editor at Dutch politics-and-arts weekly *De Groene Amsterdammer*, writing analyses from Amsterdam and feature stories from Sweden, Israel, Greece, the United Kingdom, Portugal, the US states California and Vermont, Belgium, Slovakia and Hungary. In 2012-2013, he was the Journalist-in-residence at the Netherlands Institute of Advanced Science (NIAS). He still works as foreign editor at *De Groene Amsterdammer* (part time), and as foreign affairs columnist since 2016.

Van der Hoeven started teaching History at Utrecht University in 2003, in a permanent position as lecturer at the Cultural History department since 2008. He has taught many different courses, including Photography and History, Photography in American History, and Photography and Visual Culture. In 2006 and 2007, he was lecturer in journalism at the University of Applied Sciences, Utrecht (HU). He also taught several courses on Dutch history and culture for foreign exchange students at Utrecht University, and was the University of California Liaison Officer in the Netherlands in 2008/2009. In 2015, he was visiting professor at the History Department of the University of California, Los Angeles.

⁵⁵¹ Photograph by Bob Bronshoff

Summary in Dutch / Samenvatting in het Nederlands

Ruim tachtig jaar geleden begonnen foto's van memorabele gebeurtenissen met grote snelheid over de wereld te reizen. Vliegpijlers vlogen in de jaren dertig van de twintigste eeuw sensationele nieuwsfoto's over de oceaan, en persagentschappen begonnen nieuwsfoto's naar andere continenten te sturen via telegraafverbindingen en radiogolven. Van die foto's bereikten slechts een klein deel een groot publiek. Nog veel minder bleven in circulatie doordat ze steeds opnieuw werden gedrukt en gepubliceerd. Maar de foto's die aanwezig zijn gebleven in media en publieke ruimte vervullen een speciale rol. Ze kunnen de status van visuele iconen krijgen, die het verleden in herinnering roepen of een bepaalde blik op dat verleden.

Gebruik makend van de door Annette Kuhn, Alan Trachtenberg, Gerhard Paul en anderen ontwikkelde theorieën, heb ik zulke foto's in deze studie beschreven als cultural vehicles, die historische narratieven vertegenwoordigen en kunnen dienen als agents of memory voor mensen in verschillende groepen. Op grond van de theorievorming van Maurice Halbwachs, Jan Assmann en anderen heb ik dergelijke bekende foto's kunnen beschrijven als deel van het cultureel geheugen van sociale groepen. Zulke groepen kunnen zeer groot zijn, en in theorie zelfs alle mensen ter wereld omvatten. Zo'n mondiale groep mensen heeft dan een cultureel geheugen dat afbeeldingen bevat die over de hele wereld worden herkend: een 'mondiaal visueel geheugen'.

Omdat sommige foto's sinds de jaren dertig een mondiaal bereik kregen, zouden foto's van historische gebeurtenissen deel kunnen uitmaken van dit mondiaal visueel geheugen. In deze studie ben ik uitgegaan van de hypothese dat er inderdaad een gelimiteerd aantal van dit soort foto's bestaat, en dat er dus ook een mondiaal visueel geheugen bestaat: afbeeldingen die door mensen over de hele wereld worden herkend, waaronder foto's van gebeurtenissen in het verleden.

In de academische literatuur wordt vaak aangenomen dat er foto's bestaan die door een aanzienlijk deel van alle mensen binnen specifieke landen of zelfs in de wereld worden herkend. Deze worden vaak 'iconische foto's' genoemd, en verschillende wetenschappers menen dat zij een belangrijke functie vervullen in de manier waarop mensen het verleden herinneren. Er is echter maar weinig onderzoek gedaan dat controleerbare feiten over de herkenning en interpretatie van deze foto's probeert vast te stellen. Deze studie probeert bij te dragen aan een oplossing daarvoor, met een onderzoek naar de herkenning van 25 foto's die prominent aanwezig zijn in academische debatten over iconische en historische foto's, en een onderzoek naar de interpretatie van een selectie van deze foto's.

De studie begint met een inleiding waarin theoretische begrippen worden gedefinieerd die belangrijk zijn voor dit onderzoek, inclusief de definities van collectief en cultureel geheugen van de hierboven genoemde wetenschappers, en waarin de hypothese wordt

gegeven dat er een mondiaal visueel geheugen bestaat, inclusief foto's van gebeurtenissen in het verleden. Hierna volgt een hoofdstuk dat academische literatuur over iconische en bekende historische foto's bespreekt, evenals academische literatuur over de relatie tussen geschiedenis, herinnering en fotografie. In dit hoofdstuk worden verschillende analytische concepten besproken over de publieke functie van iconische en historische foto's. Ook bespreek ik in dit hoofdstuk de methodologie van academische literatuur over zulke foto's kritisch besproken, en stel ik vast dat veel claims in over de invloed en herkenning van zulke foto's niet afdoende worden onderbouwd door onderzoek.

Om gegevens te genereren die zulke claims kunnen testen, ontwierp ik een onderzoek dat in het tweede hoofdstuk van deze studie wordt geïntroduceerd. Dit onderzoek is gebaseerd op een vragenlijst die door een online onderzoeksbureau is verspreid onder een gecontroleerde onderzoeksgroep van bijna drieduizend respondenten in twaalf landen: Argentinië, Brazilië, China, Duitsland, India, Italië, Japan, Nederland, Rusland, Turkije, het Verenigd Koninkrijk en de Verenigde Staten. De onderzoeksgroep in elk land was geselecteerd om representatief te zijn voor de demografie van de bevolking in hun land wat betreft geslacht, leeftijd en opleidingsniveau. In de vragenlijst werden de respondenten gevraagd om aan te geven welke foto's zij herkenden, en werden zij aanvullende vragen gesteld over de interpretatie en belang van zes specifieke foto's uit de groep van 25. Dit tweede hoofdstuk sluit af met een paragraaf waarin van 25 foto's wordt aangetoond dat zij een prominente plaats innemen in academisch debat over iconische en historische foto's.

Het derde hoofdstuk beschrijft de conclusies van een kwantitatieve analyse van de antwoorden van de respondenten op het boven beschreven internet-onderzoek. Met het onderzoek hoopte ik verschillende vragen te beantwoorden. De belangrijkste was: is er bewijs te vinden dat er foto's bestaan die door zeer veel mensen, verspreid over de hele wereld, worden herkend, en kunnen we hiermee de hypothese onderbouwen dat er een mondiaal visueel geheugen bestaat? Het antwoord hierop is: ja, zulke foto's bestaan, en een mondiaal visueel geheugen dus ook.

Welke foto's we op basis van de onderzoeksresultaten van deze studie moeten beschouwen als deel van dit mondiaal visueel geheugen, is deels een arbitraire beslissing. Drie foto's behoren daar, op basis van deze onderzoeksresultaten, zeker toe, omdat zij door meer dan twee derde van alle respondenten werden herkend. Dit zijn Alberto Korda's portret van Che Guevara (1960), Carmen Taylors foto van een gekaapt vliegtuig dat op het punt staat het World Trade Center in New York te raken (2001) en Neil Armstrongs foto van Buzz Aldrin staand op de maan (1969). Joe Rosenthals foto van mariniers die de vlag van de Verenigde Staten planten op Iwo Jima (1945) wordt door minder dan twee derde, maar door meer dan de helft van alle respondenten herkend. En twee andere foto's werden door bijna de helft van alle respondenten herkend: Nick Uts foto van de Kim Phuc na een bombardement (bekend als 'Napalm Girl', 1972) and Jeff Wideners foto van een demonstrant voor een colonne tanks bij het

Tiananmen Plein in Beijing (1989). Ik stel dat wij deze zes foto's kunnen beschouwen als deel uitmakend van een mondiaal visueel geheugen.

Er waren andere conclusies uit een kwantitatieve analyse van de onderzoeksresultaten te trekken. Zo bleken foto's die een prominente plaats innemen in academisch debat over iconische foto's niet altijd breed te worden herkend door de respondenten van het onderzoek. Dit impliceert dat academici terughoudend moeten zijn om foto's die zij zélf belangrijk en iconisch achten gelijk te stellen aan belangrijk en iconisch onder een algemeen publiek, en belangrijk en iconisch wereldwijd. De 'harde nieuwsfoto's' in de set van 25 werden vaak beter herkend dan foto's met een sterke symbolische lading.

Er waren geen duidelijke verschillen te vinden in de herkenning van de 25 foto's tussen verschillende generaties, tussen mensen met verschillend opleidingsniveau, of tussen mensen in verschillende regio's in de wereld. Nationale verschillen bleken doorgaans groter te zijn dan verschillen tussen regio's zoals westerse landen en niet-westerse landen, en het 'mondiale noorden' en 'mondiale zuiden'. Wel bleek uit de onderzoeksresultaten dat enkele foto's een veel hogere herkenning hadden in het mondiale zuiden dan in het mondiale noorden, met name in het geval van Kevin Carters foto van een uitgehongerd Sudanese kind dat wordt bekeken door een gier (1993). Argentijnse, Italiaanse en Braziliaanse respondenten herkenden gemiddeld de meeste foto's, vonden vaker dan respondenten in andere landen foto's 'belangrijk', en werden gemiddeld genomen ook het sterkst emotioneel geraakt door de geselecteerde foto's. Japanse respondenten beoordeelden de getoonde foto's het minst vaak als 'belangrijk'. De herkenning van de getoonde foto's was gemiddeld genomen het laagst in Japan en Rusland.

De vragenlijst omvatte ook open vragen, waarin respondenten konden aangeven tijdens welke historische gebeurtenis zes geselecteerde foto's volgens hen waren gemaakt, en aangeven of deze foto's een 'centrale boodschap' bevatten – en zo ja, welke. In het vierde hoofdstuk van deze studie worden deze antwoorden kwalitatief geanalyseerd. Die analyse bereikte verschillende conclusies.

Ten eerste wijst een lezing van open antwoorden uit dat mensen uit alle onderzochte landen en in alle demografische groepen betekenis, boodschap en belang zien in deze foto's van gebeurtenissen in het verleden. Zo'n lezing wijst echter ook uit dat de interpretatie van foto's zeer divers is. Niet alleen bleek de boodschap die respondenten in verschillende foto's meenden te lezen zeer divers, maar ook respondenten met een vergelijkbare interpretatie gebruikten maar zelden identieke woorden om de boodschap van een foto te beschrijven. Academische en andere teksten die 'uitleggen' wat de centrale boodschap van een foto is, moeten daarom altijd met terughoudendheid worden gelezen.

Deze kwalitatieve analyse maakte ook duidelijk dat de interpretatie van foto's van historische gebeurtenissen vaak wordt beïnvloed door de nationale geschiedenis van het land waar de beschouwer woont. Dit feit zou altijd deel moeten uitmaken van de visuele analyse van foto's van gebeurtenissen in het verleden. Een interessante bevinding, in dit opzicht, betreft de Chinese respondenten die Jeff Wideners foto van een

eenzame demonstrant bij Tiananmen Plein in Beijing (bekend als 'Tank Man', 1989) correct koppelen aan het moment waarop die foto is genomen (ongeveer een op de zes Chinese respondenten). Zij interpreteren deze foto doorgaans als een die sympathie uitdrukt voor de verdreven demonstranten en de wens voor meer democratie.

Een analyse van de antwoorden op open vragen onderschreef de zorg die sommige auteurs hebben verwoord over het gevaar dat bepaalde foto's door een algemeen publiek worden geïnterpreteerd als generieke, inwisselbare foto's van een bepaald probleem of bepaalde historische gebeurtenis. De zorg van auteurs als David Campbell en Susan Moeller dat een algemeen publiek foto's van 'hongersnood in Afrika' als identiek ziet, wordt onderschreven door een lezing van antwoorden, net als de zorg van auteurs zoals Marianne Hirsch en Barbie Zelizer over de inwisselbaarheid (voor een algemeen publiek) van 'Holocaust foto's'.

Analyse van de antwoorden wees uit dat kennis over een foto maar weinig invloed heeft op de emotionele impact ervan, of het belang dat mensen aan de foto toeschrijven. De antwoorden over de emotionele impact en belang van een foto verschilden niet significant tussen respondenten die een correct en respondenten die een verkeerd antwoord gaven op de vraag tijdens welke historische gebeurtenis een foto was genomen. Er is wel correlatie tussen de emotionele impact en centrale boodschap die mensen in een foto lezen. Hoe sterker de emotionele impact is die mensen ervaren bij het zien van een foto, hoe waarschijnlijker is dat zij er een centrale boodschap in lezen; en vice versa.

Tenslotte bracht de analyse van antwoorden op open vragen naar voren dat interpretaties van iconische en historische foto's doorgaans in te delen zijn in vijf categorieën. Deze vijf basismanieren om de centrale boodschap van een foto te interpreteren zijn:

1. Documentair: de centrale boodschap ligt in de informatie die de foto verschaft over feiten en omstandigheden in het verleden.
2. Praktische richtlijn: de foto geeft een richtlijn voor hoe te handelen in het heden.
3. Emotioneel appèl: de centrale boodschap ligt in de emoties van mensen die in de foto zijn vastgelegd; deze emoties doen een beroep op degene die de foto bekijkt.
4. Moreel oordeel: de centrale boodschap van een foto is een moreel oordeel over bepaalde groepen mensen, zoals naties of 'de machtigen', over bepaalde aandriften in mensen, of over de mensheid in het algemeen.
5. Categorisch: de foto is representatief voor bepaalde ideeën, omstandigheden, of praktijken, zoals 'honger', 'terrorisme' of 'racisme'; de centrale boodschap van een foto ligt in de grotere categorie die de foto representeert.

Deze vijf manieren om de boodschap van een foto te 'lezen' zijn te vinden onder de respondenten in alle onderzochte landen. Er is niet één manier van interpretatie die typisch is voor een land, een regio, of een categorie van landen.

Deze studie heeft willen bijdragen aan onze kennis over iconische en historische foto's en hun publieke functie. Ik hoop dat andere onderzoekers inspiratie opdoen uit de onderzoeksmethoden die ik heb toegepast en ze verbeteren waar ze tekort schieten. Ik hoop ook dat deze studie iets van de fascinatie kan overbrengen die ik heb voor geschiedenis, herinnering en fotografie, en hun onderlinge relatie.