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Publication Date

2018

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

Making Pictures: Framing the Photographer in News Image Production

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy

in

Communication

by

Tara-Lynne Pixley

Committee in charge:

Professor Zeinabu Davis, Chair
Professor Daniel C. Hallin, Co-Chair
Professor Angela Booker
Professor Brian Goldfarb
Professor Sara Clarke Kaplan

2018

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The Dissertation of Tara-Lynne Pixley is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

Co-chair

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University of California San Diego
2018

DEDICATION

In recognition of the three incredible women on my committee whose exceptional and indomitable presence in academia has made a PhD and academic career feel possible for me to achieve: Zeinabu Davis, Angela Booker and Sara Clarke Kaplan.

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Cynthia Duncanson. As a black woman immigrant to America from the African diaspora, she is one of the least valued members of American society but has survived, thrived and been an exemplar for me and countless others in how to navigate this world. Without her, my education and the work that has come from it would not be possible.

I further dedicate this dissertation to Judith-Ann Johnson, Sheila “Kitty” Walters, Sharon Chappelle and every black woman who helped raise or educate me and whose example made me who I strive to be today and tomorrow.

Finally, I dedicate this dissertation to Collin Chappelle for his tireless dedication to my dreams and for being a better father to our two children than I ever thought possible.

EPIGRAPH

Quis custodiet ipsos custodet?
(Who will guard the guardians?)

Juvenal

Vision is always a question of the power to see.

Donna Haraway

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge all of the guidance, advice and knowledge of my entire committee: Angela Booker, Zeinabu Davis, Brian Goldfarb, Daniel C. Hallin and Sara Clarke Kaplan. Without your support, care and examples of academic excellence, I would not be the scholar I am now and that I hope to become.

Thank you to Haydee Smith for being my closest friend, confidante and partner throughout all of the highs and lows these six years. You believed in me when few others did and I will never forget that.

Thank you to Haydee, Christina Aushana and Yelena Gluzman for being my first examples of what academic scholarship should and could be and for helping me survive our first year of the PhD program. Thank you to those three, as well as Celia Symons, Kelsey Tupper, Sara Solaimaini, Matthew Dewey, Andy Rice, Reece Peck, Katie Simpson, Alex Dube, Riley Taitingfong, Nur Duru, Jahmese Fort, Jessica Blanton, Mel Viperman-Cohen, Kim Clark and many others for being an incredible community of colleagues and friends in graduate school.

Thank you to Collin Chappelle for your loving support, patience and for always having my back. Thank you to Brynne and Cayden Chappelle for understanding that Mommy had to work and not holding it against me (too much). Thank you to Cynthia Duncanson, Mark Pixley, Judith-Ann Johnson, Monique Duncanson, Ryan Collins, and Sharon and Fred Chappelle for all of your material support. It takes a village to raise children and to write a dissertation. Thank you for making both possible.

Chapter Four uses a portion of previously published work from a Nieman Reports article. Pixley, Tara. The dissertation author was the sole researcher and author of this material.

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Major Field: Communication

Studies in Journalism, TV & Film Studies, Critical Race Theory, Feminist Studies,
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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Making Pictures: Framing the Photographer in News Image Production

by

Tara-Lynne Pixley

Doctor of Philosophy in Communication

University of California San Diego, 2018

Professor Zeinabu Davis, Chair
Professor Daniel C. Hallin, Co-Chair

This dissertation unpacks the professional practices and conceptual underpinnings of photojournalism in contemporary news media production. By viewing such imagery as both a product of capital and a necessity of the democratic social order, I address the problematic and generative assumptions/consumptions/functions of the documentary photograph with an eye toward a reassessment of the news image industry from capture to caption.

Central to my argument is my consideration of photojournalism as a “scopic regime,” due to the practice's particular mode of envisioning disempowered subjects through a framework that symbolically eliminates the photographer/subject power structure. Using the dual lenses of visual culture and documentary theory, I will clarify the parallel relationships of visioning and witnessing as elemental to the production of photojournalistic reality. Intertwined with this foundational ideal of journalistic imagery are other infrequently analyzed relationships specific

to the production of the presumed photographic real: visibility to truth, camera to photographer, subject to audience. I further argue the camera (in documentary photography specifically) is a tool of erasure that produces a scopic regime through its disembodiment of the photographer's gaze — as I claim it is partially the photojournalistic camera that allows for a conceptual laundering of the photographer's subjectivity into objectivity — and that it is this key moment of the photographer's disappearing act where the envisioned reality of the subject becomes suspect.

This research argues that news images are worlding — integral to constructing the social imaginary on a global scale — and, as such, both the product, producer and process must be subject to analysis in order to unpack the problems and opportunities within/behind/before/beyond the frame. In the absence of such a thorough intersectional critique, the news image remains one of the most powerful modes of instantiating disempowerment in the contemporary media field.

INTRODUCTION: From a History of Visual Colonization

I learned the craft of photojournalism in the slowly blooming oppressive heat of a New Orleans May. Only three months before Hurricane Katrina would horrifyingly underscore the need for a national conversation on the value of contemporary black lives in America, I was attending the *New York Times* Student Journalism Institute for two weeks. A small group of aspiring journalists from historically black colleges across the country had been invited to learn from several staffers, including veteran photojournalist and *Times* photo editor Jose Lopez. It was he who helped us hatch our story ideas and sent us out the door to the culturally and socially complex world of New Orleans, wide open for our journalistic imagining and capture. “Go make pictures,” he would say every time: an invitation to adventure as much as an invocation to understand ourselves as practitioners of an artform and adherents to a professional ethos that gave us authority and access.

Each time he said this, it struck me as odd that we were simultaneously being instructed to “make” something, even as we were taught how to capture the candid, identify newsworthy moments and never ever set up a shot. What was the difference then, I wondered, between “taking photos” and “making pictures”? What made my hands — holding a mid-level digital SLR with its interchangeable lenses — more worthy of producing images of the world that others should see and accept as true than anyone else wielding their convenience store point-and-shoot? Was it my use of advanced camera technology that made me a photojournalist? Was it my sheer desire to make images that mattered and informed the public? Was it my laminated *New York Times* badge that afforded me entree to spaces typically closed to the general public? The admonishment to “make photos” marked me as a particular kind of photographer, with a relationship to my subjects and their stories that should be steeped in an ethos of creativity as

much as it was framed by a journalistic ideology of witnessing and documenting the real. It was this idea that settled deep in me and continued to inspire philosophizing on the practice of documentary photography for years to come. However, there is one specific experience from my time as a student journalist in New Orleans that most laid the groundwork for the ideas central to this dissertation.

Nearing the end of a day spent scouring the city for slices of life to capture, I walked into a neighborhood that appeared occupied by primarily black residents. An unaccompanied toddler ran up to me, seemingly curious about my camera. She was barefoot in the street, her braided hair disheveled, her well-used shirt torn and only a pull-up diaper adorned her bottom half. I snapped a photograph of her as she looked up at me with earnest, unsuspecting eyes, yet, when I asked for her name or to speak to her parents, she ran off without a word. I never showed the photo to my editor or my fellow students because, later, I realized I was ashamed I'd even taken it. Since I had nothing to produce a sufficient caption, I understood the image lacked journalistic merit without requisite contextualizing information. It also was not an especially good photo as the child hadn't been doing anything of note. Yet, something entirely different bothered me about it. I wondered what exactly inspired me to photograph this child. What ideas about representing poverty and blackness circulated so deeply in my psyche that this was the first photo I felt compelled to "make"? What right had I to take photos of this person in this neighborhood almost certainly steeped in a history of struggle due to American anti-black sentiment and settler colonial logic that I had no prior knowledge of and no intention of sticking around long enough to understand?

A few short months later, when images of NOLA residents fighting for survival in a post-Katrina city were plastered across every national newspaper, I read captions that identified the

black hurricane victims as criminal looters and the white hurricane victims as merely survivors who looted to live. I saw the way in which news media produces black and brown Americans as always already at fault for whatever ills befall us. I recognized myself as complicit in that paradigm as a journalist whose techniques, ethics and practical knowledge didn't include reflexive consideration of such problematic representation. I understand now the photo of that child was inspired by centuries of anti-black rhetoric rendered visual and based on the premise that such imagery was desirable, lauded, awarded in photojournalism. Ten years passed, however, between making that image and my education in journalism studies which allowed me to now recognize those "tacit little theories" (Gitlin 6) that undergird news media frames and so often signal histories of visual culture around black bodies.

While it was the experience of daily photographic and journalistic work during that student intensive which jump started my professional career as a visual journalist, it was the questioning of media production practices that ultimately led me to a career in researching and teaching journalism. This dissertation is a rumination on those queries of what it means to make photos in service of witnessing and truth-telling. Each chapter addresses and expounds upon a separate revelation I had on my path toward identifying problems inherent to visual journalism production: from its emphasis on an impossible, objective real that eliminates photographer subjectivity; to the pitfalls of foregrounding news photo consumers over news photo subjects; to its traditional structures of accumulated cultural and economic capital that privilege homogenous visions of the world's population and similarly instills imperialistic views; and, finally, to its inaccessibility as a profession for the very underrepresented populations most often featured in visual journalism.

Vision, intent, presence, power, consumption and representation — these are the building blocks of images that purport to document our world. As such, these are also the central concepts and building blocks of this dissertation which draws on journalism studies, critical race theory, visual culture, feminist theory, production studies, and political economy to interrogate problematics of the visual journalism profession and identify potential ways forward. I incorporate content analysis, visual culture analysis of particular news images, critical participant action research and autoethnography, pulling from my fifteen years of professional work experience as a journalist across eight newsrooms in four states.

Clarifying the terminology used throughout this dissertation is integral to understanding the project itself. Photojournalism and documentary photography differ in circulation, contextualization and clients. One is a journalist using photography as a form of communicating ideas to news audiences, the latter is a photographer using the genre or style of documentation to make a visual argument. Photojournalists make a document, a record that should be as devoid of personal opinion as possible. Documentary photographers can make an argument with their images and frequently do. Though I will occasionally use the phrase “documentary photography” throughout the text, it’s important to acknowledge that these chapters are a study of photojournalism specifically — a profession that is housed primarily in news production and its requisite structures. Documentary photography is a form of photography that is not necessarily bounded by journalistic ethics and ideals, does not always work in tandem with other symbol handlers such as editors, and is often presented in spaces outside of news organizations such as galleries, nongovernmental organization materials, photo books, etc. Key to my analysis of photojournalism is a recognition of its adherence to both photography as a technique and a practice and to journalism as an industry and a practice. Similarly, the phrase “visual

journalism” expands to include the moving image produced in service to news media publication, often alongside still photojournalism. As this has become an increasingly necessary part of the photojournalist’s job, I will frequently nod to visual journalism throughout the text, indicating inclusion of moving images when I use that phrasing. This is not meant to include broadcast videographers or documentary filmmakers, whose industries and practices — though very much parallel to photojournalism — are not taken up in this text. Both are, however, often reviewed and critiqued by various scholars (Entman & Rojecki 2000; Sanders 2010; Aufderheide 2012).

Further, though war imagery and discussion of its impact makes several appearances throughout this dissertation, the concerns at the core of visual journalism production that I address are intended to be applied across all of news imagery. The power and importance of quotidian life visualized and circulated for public consumption will be central to my argument in Chapter Four; the Chapter Two discussion of photojournalism controversies highlights images taken in conflict zones but also considers work on an American neighborhood and in the aftermath of a natural disaster. Scholars interested in documentary photography have primarily focused their attention explicitly on the war photograph, its connection to memory, trauma, politics, its social implications and potential promise (Kuhn & McCallister, 2006; Zelizer, 2010; Bresheeth, 2006; Van Leeuwen & Jaworksi, 2002; Azoulay, 2008; Linfield, 2011). I interrogate the production of still images in the service of journalism that is salient whether addressing news photos of Rwandan genocide, Black Lives Matter protesters or a portrait of a presidential candidate — all images that have graced the cover of newspapers, newsmagazines and online news publications. The applied vision and intent behind photojournalism is paramount in interpreting the power written into the presence of a photographer at a newsworthy scene and

their connected ability to circulate a particular representation of that scene, which is then commodified and consumed by a larger public under the auspice of objective eyewitness account. These are the stakes of my project and the foundation of my inquiry.

Central to my discussion of intent and subjectivity in the making of news photography is considering whether journalism itself is a profession or an ideology, and how that might specifically relate to photojournalistic production practices. Mark Deuze consolidated decades of theorizing within journalism studies about the nature of journalism to argue it is an ideology rather than a profession (Deuze 2005). Other journalism scholars have recently addressed photojournalists' increased acknowledgement that individual subjectivity does operate in their professional approach, despite attempts to uphold the objectivity norm (Mäenpää 101). That assertion, however, is later aligned with the mechanical objectivity of the camera and the continued adherence to professional ethics. The recognition that subjectivity exists in professional photojournalistic practice doesn't go far enough to understand how implicit bias functions at the individual level that then becomes institutionalized; and to discern that at least some of journalism's core tenets are inherently imperialistic and exclusionary.

In attempting to address whether journalism is a profession some theorists identified it as a "semi-profession" due to its inability to exclude amateurs from the field entirely (Nygren & Degtereva & Pavlikova 2010: 115). This is a concerning way to describe and define what constitutes a profession, particularly as it relates to the idea of "amateur" and a hierarchy of validity and (in)accessibility implicit to this statement. As a person officially trained in the journalism profession, with multiple degrees conferred upon me that validate my claim to professionalization, I am quite familiar with this sentiment both in higher education and newsrooms. As a journalist working during the digitalization turn, I am also exceedingly familiar

with the stark panic of feeling amateur photographers/photography would/could (and absolutely did in a few newsrooms¹) eliminate or make irrelevant professional photojournalism. However, no profession should be primarily defined by who can be kept out of it, nor should its continued relevance be predicated on and sustained by that exclusion. If journalism's objectives are to inform a democratic electorate and maintain ethical provision of a public service, then exclusion and derision toward any aspect of the populace would be in utter opposition to such aims. Further, this suggests a potential tie between citizen journalism (as an inclusion of amateurs) and the exclusion of the poor and minoritized from journalism (as both a profession and the potential to produce user-generated content). As this dissertation will argue, access to the photojournalism profession for nonwhites and the economically disadvantaged is particularly restricted, even woven into the fabric of professionalizing practices. But a divisive, if not contentious, relationship between audience/public and producer/journalist is consistent to a core element of the ideologies that loosely define journalistic practice. The tenets of objectivity and eyewitnessing both imply a standing-back-from approach taken in documenting society, which is in opposition to rhetorics of inclusion and diversity (Deuze 456). Social beings and social structures are ever-evolving, complex entities rooted in historical precedence that requires integrated, multiperspectival approaches to even remotely consider, much less capture, their entirety. Not only does journalism fail at recognizing this as requisite to news media production, it fails to recognize itself as a social institution constructed in the same way. This becomes most apparent when analyzing news photography practices in concert with discussions of photography more generally.

¹ The Associated Press. "Chicago Sun-Times Lays Off All Its Full-Time Photographers." NYTimes.com. 31 May 2013. Accessed 25 April 2018.

Since its inception, photography has often been articulated as an objective device of documentation, in art history, aesthetic study and the social imagination. Chemistry and technology fixed the camera's eye as beyond reproach. Alternately, it has been conceptualized as an art form wherein the auteur photographer constructs worlds, viewpoints and aesthetic ephemera within images, writing a particular story in light with camera as wielded pencil. In this dissertation, I address what I see as an interfacing of these two discourses on photography, wherein the photographic production masquerading as and believed to be impartial, objective documentation of lived experiences is in fact the construction of worlds and viewpoints. In this paradigm, the photographer as subjective creator and storyteller is subsumed by the photograph as referent and document. Ariella Azoulay gives an excellent recounting of the evolving discourses on photography, pointing to somewhat recent scholarly recognition of the camera "as an object that creates powerful forms of commotion and communion" (Azoulay 15). While it's true that art historians and visual culture critics have become inclined to analyze photographs as products, unfolding "events" not constrained by original content or contexts, commodities and communicative devices, the discourse on photographic production remains mostly unchanged, unreflexive and uninterrogated within the institution of photojournalism itself². These photographers and their viewing public are not well-versed in Azoulay's reimagining of the civil contract via explication of a political ontology of the image (Azoulay 2008 & 2012) anymore than they are conversant in media sociologist Michael Schudson's articulation of journalism's objectivity norm which makes plain its predisposition to malfunction (Schudson 2001). A critical theory approach to work done in the journalism profession is rarely taught in journalism school

² With increasing exceptions, as Chapter Four will discuss at length.

classrooms³, not engendered in the newsroom, and rarely (if ever) discussed at length in other news media professional spaces such as conferences and award organizations.

Academia recognizes and writes extensively on the long history of visualizing black and brown bodies as inhuman Others in order to validate oppression, slavery and colonial rule, but contemporary visual journalism does not interrogate its place in that history. To unpack the possibilities of new photographic imaginaries, we must first deeply understand photography's relationship to racialized visual rhetoric and pathologizing bodies to make possible their subjugation — ideas parsed out by myriad scholars over the last three decades. (Edwards 1992; Maxwell 2000; Morris-Reich 2013; Riggs "Ethnic Notions"; Smith 2004; Wallis 1995)⁴

However, much scholarly work that seeks to specifically theorize the contemporary use of visual rhetoric to subject certain bodies to violence, dehumanization and containment, rarely address documentary images at length. Rather, there is emphasis on the insidious individual and cumulative effects produced by narrative film and television, fashion and beauty imagery, and advertising. Each of these comes with a somewhat inherent nod to its framing as a created fiction with the intent to either entertain or entice. In texts dedicated to theorizing vehicles for social (de)constructions of various identities, such as *Contested Images: Women of Color in Popular Culture*, actual documentary photographs are not a part of the discussion that thoroughly takes up advertising, film, music and beauty imagery (García 2012). There appears to be a peculiar line drawn between the daily influx of images we are encouraged to be critical or suspicious of and those we are less inclined to challenge as inculcatory. Though news media receives plenty of criticism for being a corporate project and failing to attend to key social narratives, the news

³ Further, when a critical assessment of news media production is included in journalism education, such efforts are often met with disdain and pushback. See Kate Wright's "Reality Without Scare Quotes: Developing the Case for Critical Realism in Journalism Education."

⁴ This is by no means an exhaustive list of scholars and writers working in this arena of study.

photographs that contextualize the world visually seem to only draw critique if overt manipulations of the scene or the image are discovered. Perhaps there is an arbitrary line drawn between the potentiality for negative effects and ideological inculturation that puts so-called popular culture imagery on one side and news media imagery on the other. I would argue that line is significantly blurred in the current media landscape that mixes shopping, advertising, and beauty imagery alongside photojournalism and broadcast news, film and television still images for consumption as memes, gifs and Instagram, Snapchat and Pinterest posts. Such demarcations will very soon be erased, if they ever even existed.

Without a thorough understanding of the representational stakes at play in documentary imagery, news media often replicates such problematic visual rhetoric as it focuses in on particular communities. This becomes especially important in the online media environment where hundreds of thousands of news photographs are circulated daily across a variety of platforms. The visual framing of Black Lives Matter protesters, Latin American immigrants, international refugee “crises” and similar issues are frequently photographed in updated versions of photography’s historical past. Visual colonization continues on the front pages of newspapers, magazines and beyond to websites and social media, where millions of viewers consume imagery that reifies over and over the idea that certain bodies are lesser than, to be conquered, imprisoned or marked for death at the hands of the state. This is the overarching issue that must ultimately be addressed from within and outside the news photography industry, but my dissertation begins by framing the processes and ideologies which undergird the work of photojournalism. Viewing this style of imagery as both a product of capital and a necessity of the democratic social order, I address problematic and generative assumptions/functions of the

documentary photograph with an eye toward reassessment of the news image industry from capture to caption.

The first chapter clarifies the parallel relationships of witnessing (being materially present at the scene) and visioning (ideological interpretation of particular scenes) as elemental to the production of photojournalistic reality. I further argue the documentary camera is a tool of erasure that produces a “scopic regime” via disembodiment of the photographer’s gaze, as I claim it is partially the camera that allows for a conceptual laundering of the photographer’s subjectivity into objectivity.

The second chapter reviews three controversies within the photojournalism industry, arguing they are especially generative for thinking through the problematic binary of photographer absence and presence. Using these moments of ethical mishap, I address issues of intent and the disconnect that occurs when the mystified labor of the photojournalist is made apparent.

Chapter Three presents the particulars and peculiarities of global photojournalism awards, identifying the unfortunate homogeneity behind and in front of the lens through a content analysis of Photographer of the Year International and World Press Photo Awards over seventeen years.

The final chapter considers the continued lack of racial and gender diversity in newsrooms, identifying the socioeconomic circumstances that create this absence, what dire consequences the issue has on news photography specifically and, finally, analyzing the work of organizations currently seeking to address the lack of diverse perspectives in photojournalism.

While much ado is made about the problem of low minority numbers in the newsroom, an assessment of the flaws in journalistic ideology and practices that institutionalize exclusion is

required to actually address and alter that trajectory. This project attempts to begin that work. By unpacking the various concepts and structures at play that enshrine photojournalism from productive critique and delimit a diverse array of perspectives and experiences among photojournalists and photo editors, I offer a roadmap to intervention.

CHAPTER 1:

(dis)Embodied Vision in Photojournalism's Eyewitness Ideal

Susan Sontag begins her acclaimed rumination on photography with Plato's Cave, a centuries-old allegory that questions the nature of truth, representation, visibility and the fallibility of individual experience. (Sontag 1977) The schema of the Cave, where the realm of ideas and the “real” is in conflict with the shadowy appearance of visual truth, is a metaphor of lasting significance in many fields, but is particularly salient for philosophizing documentary photography. To take and then to show an image presented as a document of true events and real people is to hold the power of representation, of knowledge. Further, this action inherently references the ability to see and to capture what is seen paired with the photographer's ability to access the site/circumstances witnessed.

In a monograph that presented various life works of the “witnesses in our time,”⁵ Kerry Tremain thoughtfully countered critiques of the documentary profession, weaving his argument around an ideology of the eyewitness as hero. “To remedy a problem, they reasoned, we must first see it.” (Light 5) The “they” being documentary photographers and the “problem” being anything that could be witnessed for a world of citizens unable to see as these purportedly courageous and selfless photographers could. In his imagining, the being-there and seeing was the tool of truth-telling that could engineer change. His rumination on the necessity of documentary work concludes by saying, “‘We’ve got pictures,’ they told us. ‘We were there.’” (Light 11) In his (as in many others’) conception of news production, seeing is knowing in the mind of the photographer and, therefore, seeing is believing in the mind of the viewer. This fragile trust is predicated on a purity of photographic intent, made easier to accept as the camera

⁵ Kerry Tremain wrote the introduction for *Witness In Our Time: Working Lives of Documentary Photographers*, where he addresses the various complications and criticisms documentary work faces.

— a shiny technology granted a stamp of absolute objectivity for its mechanized sight — is the mediator between photographers and whatever truth they purport to show. Here is the crux of visual documentary production's swirling inconsistencies, wherein the photographer's subjective being-there-ness is countered and presumably subsumed by the camera's mechanical objectivity. This chapter will assess the complexity inherent to the uneasy relationship between embodied eyewitness and disembodied photographer, a problematic relationship I argue is requisite for visual documentary to retain its aura of verity. Further, I will address the parallel relationships of envisioning and witnessing as elemental to the production of reality, with the photojournalistic camera functioning as a tool of erasure in this paradigm.

1. Envisioning

"To photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed. It means putting oneself into a certain relation to the world that feels like knowledge — and, therefore, like power." — Susan Sontag

Strokes of a realist painter's brush across canvas signal the presence of the artist. The artist is visible, always, through small insinuations of self— the colors, ridges, patterns, points, the many pains taken to depict light just-so. There is a contract between viewer and artist: appreciate the craftwork, acknowledge the hand behind the scene. This is inversely so with the documentary photograph. Rather, the photographer takes the greatest care to make herself invisible. The contract between photojournalist and viewer is one of plausible deniability wrapped in tautology: forget that I am here, so I can show you reality. Ideological erasure of the artist from the image is a requirement for the documentary photograph to achieve its status of unfettered truth. The image must then occupy a peculiar space between materializing the testimony of the eyewitness

and mystifying the method of its production. This is a false consciousness shared by the photographer and the viewer. Foundational to visual documentary is an idealization of photographic intent — the presence of objective eyes focusing a journalistic lens is paramount to producing the real. Yet, intrinsic to the documentary contract is that the truth of a place, the factual representation of a moment, is produced by an eyewitness devoid of subjectivity. Therein, an impossibly oppositional requirement is written into the documentary photograph — presence at the moment of capture, absence in the later consumption. A later chapter delves specifically into the selection and circulation of photojournalism, as well as analysis of media consumers’ relationship to the images they view within the context of news. Here, I first complicate the conceptual work occurring before the image is made material and during image capture that produces the dichotomous relationship of presence/absence. Intertwined with this foundational equation of photojournalism are other infrequently analyzed relationships specific to the production of the photographic real — visibility’s connection to truth and the camera’s relationship to the photographer. The former analogous relation is most central to photojournalistic intent and envisioning.

1.1 Visuality : Truth

Primacy of vision and its ideological partner, the equivalence of light to knowledge, has so thoroughly suffused social thought it has been likened to a cultural trope. (Jay 1993) So intricately twined are these ideas, that “omniscience” has come to mean all-seeing and all-knowing interchangeably. Theorists in various fields have taken up this ocularcentrism, what Donna Haraway termed “persistence of vision,” (Haraway 678) in contemporary scholarship, but it is the idea of vision as a controlling force, an “apparatus of power” that is particularly useful in

thinking through its relation to photojournalism. With such sociohistorically defined linkages between seeing and knowing, sight becomes foundational to a discussion of visual documentary as the knowledge production of truth.⁶ In this paradigm, to see the war-torn country, the starving youth, or sign-waving masses is to know the reality of death, hunger, and dissent. Here, vision is tied to an experiential imperative, the being-there-ness that foregrounds the eyewitness position, itself an integral aspect of truth-telling. When vision — as a superior, disembodied, objective power — meets witness — as an embodied presence of authority who projects this sight elsewhere under the auspices of a duty to inform — godlike omniscience seems a fitting descriptor for this powerful positionality of truth-making. Certainly an individual photographer can't be/see everywhere/everything. However, photographers are integral to an industry that employs thousands of eyes to look at the world and project those views to news media consumers. These constructed views result in consumer access to a perceived global vision that implies "omniscience" for viewers. It is these eyewitness accounts, projected for mass consumption under the conceptual heading of truth-telling and reality, that I aim to unpack.

A historic refusal of the body — stemming at least partially from its position of inferiority in the Greek origins of Platonic vision-obsession — has coincided with vision's imbrication of cognition. Where the eye is correspondent to the mind, the body is devalued and forgotten. What assumptions are written into the term objectivity and what positionality or requirement of sight is insisted upon in this building up of the objective? Ultimately, this way of conceptualizing sight translates to looking at an object from a non-positionality, a lacking position in relation to the object. "Vision from nowhere," as Haraway derisively states (678). That vision is not from nowhere, it is from a mind, a body, a particular place and time in which the body of the

⁶ There is important work that situates various ideas of sight and vision within a disability framework, one that I'm not currently taking up within this dissertation. For scholarship in this area of study, see Rosemary Garland-Thompson's *Staring*, Georgina Kleege's *Sight Unseen*.

documenter occupied the same space (if not always the same reality) of the image subject. Haraway says she “would like to insist on the embodied nature of all vision” (678). This is directly at odds with the typical view of ocularcentrism as synonymous with disembodiment. The perspective of documentary photos is frequently understood as seeing/looking through the “eyes” of the photographer, allowing a viewer to occupy the embodied space of the documenter at the time of the image's taking. Such a perspective must then acknowledge that view initially originates from an unobjective body that is (somehow) later laundered of its subjectivity. I argue it is the camera that allows for this conceptual laundering, operating as it does under the perception of technological neutrality, and that it is this key moment of the photographer’s disembodiment where envisioned reality becomes both subject and suspect.

Intrinsic to the discourse of journalistic visual production is a supposition of the drive to inform rather than persuade⁷, and it is this belief that underscores both the production and reception of the photo document. But what is ultimately being produced through photographs of war, famine, disaster and the myriad human/animal/environmental subjects is scenes of a world immured in chaos that can seemingly only be contained and ordered by outsider eyes and outsider action. This is the unintentional symbolism, the “coded iconic” (Barthes 36) aspects of documentary imagery that the photographers either miss or dismiss, embedded as they are in the purportedly benevolent eyewitness mode. Semiotician Roland Barthes analyzed the commercial image, identifying the signs and symbols within that connoted/denoted meaning to its audience. (1981) He selected advertising as his central focus for dissection because, as he said, it comes from a place of commercial intent, its meaning set a priori. Denotation and connotation are considered, set and purposefully presented in marketing methodology. This is a key point of

⁷ Several scholars including Schudson (2001), Deuze (2005) and Newton (1998) have asserted that the “objectivity norm” is foundational to professional journalistic practice and that journalistic ethics require an emphasis on neutral facts.

departure in analyzing the documentary image, the intent of which is presumed, the symbolism not so carefully constructed. Commercial images are created out of decisions made in boardrooms, tied to jingles and brand mottos, colored, lit and framed purposefully to evoke certain senses that encourage purchase. Documentary images operate in the reverse, their final packaging via captions, edits and publication occurring after the camera has captured its relatively unplanned scene. The apparent resultant social order of the documentary frame is one of mayhem, stilled momentarily by the eyewitness' objective and presumably well-intentioned gaze. This particular form of world envisioning is what can be classified as the photojournalistic "scopic regime,"⁸ (Metz 2001) where the presumption of a journalist's intent as inherently benevolent — a concept I'll take up more in Chapter 2 — overrides the problematic worldviews present in the final product of the documentary frame.

A scopic regime is tied quintessentially to power, just as the connections among sight, omniscience and truth are intertwined with long-held understandings of godly power. Contemplating the scopic regime in modernity, visual culture scholar Martin Jay indicated that even as the religious aspect of this equation has faded, the underpinning ideology that watching plus seeing equates knowing has remained. (Jay 1988) Objectivity and optics retained an intimate relationship. Though his particular discussion of Cartesian perspectivalism and its later critiques centers on art before photography, the systems of thought in question have endured and become foundational to the discourse surrounding visual documentary. The disinterested and distanced Cartesian view Jay references is the primary gaze behind documentary photography, a view inextricably tied to its own certainty of occupying the correct perspective. If this scopic regime — this particular self-righteous way of seeing imbued with its aligned sense of knowing

⁸ This term was coined by Christian Metz in his monograph *Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*: "What defines the specifically cinematic scopic regime is not so much the distance kept, the 'keeping' itself (first figure of the lack, common to all voyeurism) as the absence of the object seen." Metz, 61.

— is the accepted tool for producing reality, then such images are always already saturated with an uneven power dynamic. In this model of unquestioning acceptance of an objective perspective, envisioning the documentary subject becomes a project in removing the subjectivity that exists before and behind the camera.

1.2 Camera : Photographer

As a pervasive technology with an extensive history of critique, the camera has always been a cultural symbol ripe for multiple interpretations. It has been both lauded as a tool most useful for reimagining human activity⁹ with its democratizing capabilities and vilified as the harbinger of art's downfall (Benjamin 2011). What most piques elation and outrage alike is the camera's ability to translate scenes captured by the individual into reproducible frames, easily consumed by the masses. Though certainly not ignored by visual culture scholars, this translation's inherent tensions of power and class seem mostly overlooked by the masses eager to consume such frames. Rather, the camera's ever-increasing accessibility retains a veneer of democratized vision, upheld by its perceived mechanical objectivity.

When French physicist Francois Arago introduced the daguerreotype to France's Chamber of Deputies in 1839, he described the technology with zeal, emphasizing the camera's ability to capture and reproduce individualized experiences.

...the apparatus of M. Daguerre will become an object of continual and indispensable use. It will enable them to note what they see, without having recourse to the hand of another. Every author will in future be able to compose the geographical part of his own work: by stopping awhile before the most

⁹ John Tresch (459) illuminates the rationale of Francois Arago, whose political maneuvering bought the daguerreotype for mass circulation. "Arago introduced photography to the world as a dynamic, aesthetic, and mysterious process; he wove it together with diverse practices for grasping cosmic milieux, and integrated it into political projects reconciling individuality and the needs of the collective, where science served the aim of social renewal."

complicated monument, or the most extensive coup-d'oeil, he will immediately obtain an exact facsimile of them.¹⁰

Arago saw in the daguerreotype a technology that could capture the planets, lightning, all manner of the natural world, for circulation and consumption as revelatory human knowledge. Yet, even in his gleeful embrace of the camera, Arago recognized it as an intermediary tool whose view of the world was complicated by the hands that held it. He differed from scientific colleagues of his time, whose excitement about emerging technologies were tied to their interpretation of the tools as neutral and objective operators. Instead, Arago believed there existed a “deformation” (Tresch 459) between the photographer and the object observed. For him, that so-called deformation produced in the dynamic between camera and photographer helped, rather than hindered, the production of knowledge. Where Arago saw photographic reproducibility as a necessity for the camera to achieve “scientific sociability” (Ibid), Walter Benjamin would bemoan the loss of art’s “aura” for the sake of reproducibility over a century later.

The hands that hold the camera, the eyes that see through the viewfinder: Camera + human results in an organism whose output is mediated reality, the mechanical reproduction of knowledge. Haraway claims the ““eyes”” made available in modern technological sciences shatter an idea of passive vision; these prosthetic devices show us that all eyes, including our own organic ones, are perceptual systems, building in translations and specific *ways* of seeing...” (679) So too does the journalistic camera eye as it melds with the intent of its wielder to produce the photographic real, visualized and presented for mass consumption. The embodied eyes become disembodied vision through the addition of the purportedly objective technology — the camera. Light meets photosensitivity as shutter clicks, aperture blades determine depth. In an

¹⁰ “Bill Presented to the Chamber of Deputies, France, June 15, 1839”

organized swirl of digital utopia, the material stuffs of the chaotic world — blood, tears, dirt — are made into pixels. The camera is infallible, the photographer is erased, the real is constructed. The image then moves through space, crossing before multiple eyes that determine its worth in relation to a story. The photographer frames the image at the scene, then later selects it for movement to the next stage. There is an extensive line of eyes and hands, passing over the photo before it makes its way, finally, to the page or screen for its ultimate and much magnified audience. Therefore, not only is there a body present at the moment of capture, there are *multiple* bodies along the factory line of documentary knowledge production — from shutter click to mouse click. The image is in fact, *never* removed from subjective human interpretation, judgement and curated representation. Yet, the technologies essential to this process stand in for and subsume the human interactions with the image's scene.

Camera technology doesn't have an inherent function. It must be focused, directed and placed by an intelligent operator. Without the human as operator the camera is conceived of as a useless tech: its lens sees nothing, its shutter is static. Without the camera as a tool to extend sight infinitely, the human can only retain a moment in her mind, it can't be reproduced for others to see as she saw. Aligned, omniscience is gained and the "god trick" achieved.¹¹ Sight, mind, science, story = reproducible witnessing. Requisite for this equation is a solid belief in the infallible objectivity of the camera technology itself, combined with a suspension of disbelief akin to theatre's Fourth Wall where we return to that pact between documentary photographer and viewer: you can see reality, so long as you don't see me.

Communication scholar Jenni Mäenpää notes the paradox of photojournalism being simultaneously lauded as objective representation of truth and well-crafted pictures. (Mäenpää

¹¹ Haraway uses this term to describe the ways in which scientific objectivity mimics godlike omniscience, uncritically conflating seeing and knowing in "Persistence of Vision."

96) “Crafted” and “untouched” are impossible bedfellows, yet this is the founding paradigm of photojournalistic work. The ability to ignore the photographer’s presence and remove her subjectivity as a complication of the frame is due to the alignment of the camera’s POV to the photographer’s in documentary photography.¹² In the production of the image, where the eye points the lens follows. In the consumption of the image, where the lens points the eye follows. The photographer is aware of the viewer as his intended audience, he directs his camera accordingly to capture what he thinks the audience needs to know, what catches his interest or appeals aesthetically. Images of war and disaster, conflict and politics, are not made for the recollection of the photographer to be pasted in family photo albums or shared at holidays. They are captured in service to a conceptual mass public, they are documents intended to educate. As such, the public whom he toils to enlighten is always already written into the image. In comparison, the spectator consumes the image and its referent entirely independent of the image producer. Seeing through the lens of the camera, the intended public can push the photographer aside and envision themselves as stepping into the POV of the camera — objective, benevolent, disinterested. Merely witnessing. This is the lie that technology allows, an untruth that all are complicit in: photographer, editor, consumer.

Journalistic images annihilate inherent power relations by enticing viewers to look within the frame rather than without. The world within the image has its own clear and obtuse hierarchies, tragedies, triumphs and various power players which are the subject of the image

¹² It’s important to note that the photojournalistic camera is specifically one with a viewfinder and lenses that adjust depth of field and focus as desired by the photographer. In the case of viewfinderless cameras such as the GoPro, where the “camera-body” is detached from the eye and the field of view can originate from feet, chests, surfboards, skateboards, etc., POV is aligned with the experience of the body in its entirety rather than a singular and purposeful scene set and framed by the photographer’s eye. Since this paper seeks to problematize the ideal of documentary vision as synonymous with the photographic real, the camera I claim is foundational to this ideal is one that produces its image from an intentionally framed scene. Lisa Cartwright and D. Andy Rice’s forthcoming article titled “My Hero: A Media Archaeology of Tiny Viewfinderless Cameras as Technologies of Intrasubjective Action” takes up this opposite framework for producing images and traces both the technology and the ideals integral to its invention.

itself. Yet the photograph, as object, retains its structured power embodied by the photographer and his visual prosthesis, the camera. United, the two claim an altogether unique positionality that is both outside and inside of the subject's world, onlooker and interloper, absent and present. War imagery has long piqued the public interest, offering as it does an intimate view into a world of danger while still allowing viewers to maintain physical distance from that danger.¹³ With such photographs, viewers can put themselves in the position of the lens, can be made to see the subjects as they were seen by the photographer. Viewers can look at the scene presented in any image and not feel pressed to visualize what might lie behind or beyond the image in question. We are given access to photo subjects' lives without incentive to engage in reflexive critique of how we have come by that access. The conceptual laundering that I argue is requisite for viewers to subsume the photographic gaze as they consume the image, is dependent upon the production of this unique positionality. To fully unpack an eventual disappearance of the eyewitness perspective, it's important to consider what structures and ideologies at first constitute that eyewitness ideal, so intricately woven as it is into photojournalism's scopic regime.

2. Witnessing

"In teaching us a new visual code, photographs alter and enlarge our notions of what is worth looking at and what we have a right to observe." — Susan Sontag

Any assessment of the work done by documentarians must engage with the pesky, ever-present notion of objectivity. Visual perception theory, often used to interpret visual media in

¹³ War photography is also the focus of much academic rumination (Bresheeth 2006; Zelizer 2010; Linfield 2011) where scholars take the public's fascination with chaos and catastrophe to task. Other writers, such as Ariella Azoulay in her text *The Civil Contract*, reframe conflict photography as a method for reimagining the politics and ethics of photography itself, moving away from thinking of it as a purely evidential medium.

various academic disciplines, posits that even when we know something we see cannot be true, we still adhere to the verisimilitude of the image. (Newton, 1998) Specifically, it is the “seeing is believing” aphorism realized in scholarly theory. Barthes claimed that “the photograph possesses an evidential force” wherein “the power of authentication exceeds the power of representation.” (Barthes 88) Speaking in the same vein as she reflected on photography’s ability to furnish evidence, Sontag acknowledged that a “photograph passes for incontrovertible proof that a given thing happened. The picture may distort; but there is always a presumption that something exists, or did exist, which is like what’s in the picture.” (Sontag 5) Pulled by the image’s evidential force, even with the understanding that the photograph is a carefully framed (if not constructed) moment, the documentary image retains its aura of realism, of document. If its stance as evidence cannot (and I would say, should not) be entirely set aside, it should instead be deeply investigated, its production and structures clearly outlined. John Tagg ties Barthes’ concept of photography’s evidential force to the documentary image specifically by speaking of it as coming “from the discursive processes that surround, inform and present an image in a particular way (here, journalism with all its embedded ideologies and complex histories).” (Tagg 4) At its root, the objective eyewitness paradigm draws its power from the expectation of truth that photographic realism imbues, itself a product of ocularcentrism. Intrinsic to that paradigm — and its power to reproduce and circulate — is the photojournalist’s sense of purpose and expressed intent as benevolent witness.

Much of current journalism and documentary studies focuses on the fallacious reasoning of the objectivity norm, pointing to both the inability for anyone to achieve complete objectivity and its frequent placement in opposition to bias. However, the work of the professional journalist, particularly that of the visual journalist, is not so simplistically qualified as real

because it is not fake, or objective because it is not biased — a logic of negation. Media scholar Julianne Newton traveled across parts of America, Australia and Brazil interviewing photojournalists and photo editors at a multitude of newspapers, attempting to assess the reach of objectivity within the profession. On this journey of photojournalist ethnography, she compiled varied accounts of what constitutes “visual truth.” (Newton 4) The photographers and editors she spoke with overwhelmingly insisted they held themselves and their colleagues to ethical standards and paramount among these standards was to never “fake” it. Newton quoted one photo editor who said, “The truth is 'no lies.’” (Newton 6) Apparent within such a statement is the suggestion that an image lacking intentional interference from the photographer thereby presents a visual truth, an accurate representation of life as it was at the time of capture. Such sentiment is unsurprising coming from a professional journalist, a controller of content in a field predicated on the belief that its content provides objective truth. Rather, far more complex considerations of journalistic production are required to assess the presence or lack of visual truth. Considerations of potential framing, or the “patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers organize discourse,” (Gitlin 7) leads to a far more thorough analysis of journalism that engages with the producers, the profession and the surrounding systems as readily as it engages with the content.

A valuable tenet of social science is analytical inquiry into how humans organize our experiences and how our subjectivities play into social involvement. Subsequently, frame analysis becomes a particularly salient methodology for conducting media criticism when looking at the producers of media content. Newton utilized this type of analysis in her discussion of the eyewitness self-conception prevalent among photographers, noting, “traditionally in photojournalism, this frame has been manifested in at least two assumptions: that the

photojournalist ‘sees’ accurately, fairly, and objectively, and that the photographer has both the right and the responsibility to do what is necessary to get the picture for the world to see.”

(Newton 4) Yet, this way of thinking about the role of the photojournalist leaves quite a few ethical holes to be filled as the photographer sees fit. A notion of getting the shot by any means necessary for the good of the viewer, contains within it an assumption of the primacy of the audience over the subject. When the photojournalist is most frequently photographing impoverished, disenfranchised and racialized subjects for a middle class Western white audience, the resultant embedded power differential becomes obscured by proclamations of journalists merely adhering to professional expectations under the aegis of neutrality. Furthermore, an emphasis on the camera as an objective tool that directs sight rather than one being directed *by* sight allows for the obfuscation of the image-maker’s subjectivity.

Every image contains within it the tool, the image producer and the structures that allow the photographer and that tool to be in that place, at that time, to capture what ultimately appears in the frame. The documentary photographer, whether working on assignment for a news organization or shooting a personal project, rarely, if ever, arrives to a scene without structural assistance from organizations.¹⁴ As such, there are always at least three “frames” at play in a documentary photograph:

- the way in which the assignment was framed to the photographer by the surrounding structures aligning them with their subject
- what is contained within the borders of the actual image
- the final presentation in situ by way of captions, article, gallery or museum walls and other meaning-making devices.

¹⁴ Whether supported by news organizations, non-governmental organizations, publishers or other fund granting entities, photojournalism is rarely produced without institutional resources.

As democratic citizens we are enmeshed in the disciplinary frame of the photograph whose verity is tied to its name — documentary — purporting within itself to be a document, to therefore be in line with the real and true, the unmitigated. Media scholar Todd Gitlin takes up framing as a lens through which to read journalism specifically, where it operates as a mode of discourse organization by which so-called “symbol handlers” of the verbal and visual can interpret and select information for emphasis or exclusion. Here, media framing is understood as a matter of requisite organizational needs and professional shorthand. Tagg illuminates the historical perspective that has produced (framed) documentary imagery as a viable/reliable method of institutionalized world interpretation. For Tagg, the documentary photographic frame is aligned with the state¹⁵ and history’s compelling tales, each with a particular hold on the collective imagination. In his estimation photography is “the cultural strategy of a particular mode of governance” (Tagg xxxii) that bears both the burden of representation and the “ecstasy of realism.” (Tagg xxxvi) Gitlin uncovers the ways in which the journalism institution produces schemas (frames) that typify complex sociopolitical issues for mass media viewing. The documentary image is framed prior to its conception, during its production and in its consumption. As Tagg claims, “seemingly without relief, the frame casts a long shadow — and we are in it. It is not so easy to step out.” (Tagg xxxvii) The social discourses, the “tacit little theories” that give both purpose and form to frames, are at play in conceptualizing, producing and finally interpreting the eyewitness — itself merely another frame, another way in which to organize the world for palatable consumption.

2.1 Embodied Witnessing

¹⁵ Here, and elsewhere in this paper, “the state” is defined as synonymous with governmental projects of homogenizing standardization, bureaucratic documentation and similar political projects signaled as normalizing government action.

If the ideal of the journalist as present and engaged “eyewitness” is merely a frame, then it is one that plays well into Tagg’s argument of a prefigured documentary form. Whereas Newton’s ethnographic journey captured ways in which photojournalists frame their own actions, the eyewitness ideal is on display — quite literally framed — in philosopher Geraldine Muhlmann’s rumination on journalism as a tool for democracy. She invokes the 1791 painting “le Serment Jeu de Paume,” wherein the writer Marit looks away from the political proceedings occurring inside the room, instead staring outward to the gathered crowd. (Muhlmann 2010) This image represents the idea of the journalist as an embodied interlocutor to power, not merely via pen and camera, but through physical presence at the scene of power’s convergence. This is significant because the journalist’s embodiment is so often ignored, written over or beyond, and then disregarded. Instead, here the journalist is part of the citizen milieu, representing not just an extension of the arm of governmental or corporate money and power, but rather the Everyman. Journalists have access to those people, those rooms; they function as the eyes and ears of a citizenry to which they belong and then report on democratic functions and failures. This relationship, however, is not without its own breakdowns and dubious interventions. The expectation to be the adhesive between unity and conflict in a democracy — as Muhlmann proposes journalists are — is an immense duty bound by competing ideologies fraught with potential slippages. Public trust in journalistic integrity is fragile and the ideal of the eyewitness seems always colored by its potential to overstep. This ever-present mistrust, particularly as it plays out in perceptions of photojournalistic misconduct, allows for a more holistic consideration of what builds up and tears down the ideology surrounding the documentary photographer.

Ideological erasure of the artist from the image is a requirement for the documentary photograph to achieve its status of unfettered truth.¹⁶ In doing so, the image is made to occupy a peculiar space between materializing the testimony of the eyewitness and mystifying the method of its production¹⁷ that relies on a suspension of disbelief shared between photographer and viewer. Additionally, an idealization of photographic intent is foundational to visual documentary's uncritical reception — the ideal of benevolent, unbiased eyes focusing a journalistic lens is paramount to the acceptance of an image's reflection of reality. Accordingly, it's intrinsic to the documentary contract that the truth of a place, the factual representation of a moment, is produced by the contradictory logic of an eyewitness devoid of subjectivity and — by extension — materiality.

3. Conclusion

The photojournalistic double bind, the requirement of being present and absent simultaneously is impossible and yet it is the foundation of news media knowledge production. The primacy of vision, the refusal to pair body and eye of photographer with camera — these things make it so. They are the foundation on which the subjective is laundered and cleaned of its complexity. These liminal spaces, these grey areas between the materiality of the scene/subject and its flattening into photo/object where labor, intent and attendant ideologies are obscured, must instead become part of the production process, a consideration a priori to serious

¹⁶ This should not be confused with an entire material erasure of the artist because, as stated earlier, the inclusion of a photographer credit is standard professional journalism practice. However, including the photographer's name near the image does not alter the scopic regime produced through this power differential of photographer presence/absence that I argue is occurring. Rather, the understanding held by viewers that a witness whose impartiality is written into professional codes is *necessary* to achieve the complex and problematic relationship to the images that I am unpacking.

¹⁷ Drawing upon Marx's alienated labor allows us to think through the mystification of this production process. However, in this paradigm the photographer is complicit with the industry in an intentional mystification of labor and modes of production. It's necessary to do the critical work of distancing the photographer's body from the photograph in order for the final product to retain its rationale of objective vision. See *Marx-Engels Reader*.

photojournalism as integral as that of tonal range. However, any attempt to posit a solution first requires a return to the foundations of journalistic creed. Here, the conception of objectivity rears its unreliable head. If we accept the objectivity norm as wholly fallible, around what can we organize our understanding of journalistic ethics, professionalization and the role of the “eyewitness?”

Documentary photography assumes/pretends/convinces that seeing is knowing. Seeing is believing. Knowing absolves need of faith or belief, because the images scream to us “*I have seen* and because I have seen with the extension of my unbiased camera technology, I can thereby extend that vision to you.” In this framework of thought, the viewer and the photographer are complicit in a mass deception, believing the object or subject is in their view and their view is infinite, expanded across the globe, ingesting lands, skies and human experience. All the world, it seems, can be observed by the viewer via the camera and its point-of-sight origin — the photographer. This is the god trick at play, the impression of being all-seeing that is the equivalent of all-knowing (and thereby all-powerful). This is the message written into the medium of documentary photography: I am god, because I/Eye Witness. Eye and I are one.

To combat this embellished knowledge of the world (most frequently used to depict oppressed, devastated and underprivileged peoples), there can be no separating the photographer from the camera. The two together represent an apparatus of truth-making more so than truth-telling, a distinction of great import — one admittedly tinged by a subjective eye, the other purporting an objective one. Any attempt at presenting the verity of a scene at the point of capture must also nod toward the embodiment of all photographers whether in war zones, climactic disasters, political skirmishes or a busy American sidewalk.

Photographers cannot *not* exist in their documents. They observe from a perspective that is situated in *their* reality, their ethnicity, class, sexuality, gender, their lived and embodied agency that is channeled through the camera and never erased. “Embodiment is significant prosthesis; objectivity cannot be about fixed vision when what counts as an object is precisely what world history turns out to be about” (Haraway 682) So too is culture about the clash of nations, religions, people, environments — the stuffs of which these photos are made.

Documentary images are Worlding, Othering, knowledge producing. Photographic reality cannot be achieved without nods to the camera technology and the photographer’s subjectivity present in every frame. A reflexive photographic practice that acknowledges this impossible relationship of witnessing presence segueing to objective absence is necessary to diminish the questionable scopic regime imbricated in visual journalism. To leave the god trick behind, the photographers and consumers must enter into a new contract, one that understands omniscience is not possible, not even preferable. Seeing does not equal knowing in the way that *living* is knowing and no amount of images can stand in for lived experience. We may desire to see the world in a moment, to comprehend the multitudinous experiences of a place or a person written into the perspective of a single photographer standing in a single spot looking out from her singular perspective. But if we are to achieve any level of photographic reality, we must accept it is only a single snapshot: situated, particular, contingent. That’s all that can be seen from this view.

Media theorists spend much time critiquing the work done through and by journalism, interpreting what is said about society, how sociocultural relationships function through and extend from news media; less time seems spent looking at the processes inherent to news media production, how media producers function as subjects even as they undertake self-described

altruistic and objective work. Circumstances that reveal this production's grey areas, such as the photojournalism controversies detailed in Chapter Two, make apparent that the relationships between audience, subject/object, producer/product and the systems encompassing each are inextricably linked. Further, the question of what motivates the work of photojournalists and how intentionality behind their practice affects its circulation and reception is taken up in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 2:

Reverse Shot: Analyzing Photographer Intent in Photojournalism Controversies

Journalistic images obfuscate inherent power relations by instructing viewers to look within the frame rather than without. The world within the image has its own clear and opaque hierarchies, tragedies, triumphs and various power players which are the subject of the image itself. Yet the photograph, as object, retains its structured power embodied by the photographer and their visual prosthesis, the camera. United, photographer and camera claim an altogether unique positionality that is both outside and inside of the subject's world: onlooker and interloper, absent and present. Such is the complex and questionable role of the heroicized Eyewitness. It is that role, with its amorphous intentionality and resultant potential for transgression, that I aim to unpack in this chapter, by assessing the circumstances at play in the following three photojournalism industry controversies: Fabienne Cherisma's over-photographed death in 2010; Paolo Pellegrin's misleading caption in 2012 and Narcisco Contreras' digital manipulation in 2014.

Following the aftermath of the 2010 Haitian earthquake¹⁸, international photojournalism contests paid homage to the deluge of documentary photography on the subject by giving awards to images that came out of it. Two images that won awards¹⁹ were taken of one scene in

¹⁸ In January of 2010, Port-au-Prince, Haiti was the site of a 7.0 magnitude earthquake that affected 3 million people on the small island nation. In the aftermath of the natural disaster, many journalists from Western news organizations flocked to the city, explaining the media onslaught by citing Haiti's proximity to America, relatively cheap travel and a history of the Haitian government working with journalists. As several hundred writers, photographers and video journalists converged on Haiti along with NGOs and international aid personnel, images from the country poured into media outlets constantly. In the weeks of media saturation that followed, it was noted several times that various scenes of the aftermath had been photographed from multiple viewpoints, indicating the presence of many journalists in the same place at the same time. Photo industry internet chatter buzzed with disdain, addressing the sheer number of assigned and independent photographers spending extended time in Port-au-Prince, but mostly subsided as the news cycle moved on. (Witty, NYTimes.com)

¹⁹ See Figures 4 and 5, pp 54.

particular: the slain body of fifteen-year-old Fabienne Cherisma laying in a Haitian street as “looters”²⁰ passed her by. Together, these photos elicited concern from the photojournalism community regarding the sheer quantity of journalists that had flocked to cover Haiti’s catastrophic tragedy and begged questions about the ethics of taking such an image. Then, the emergence of a third photo²¹ that depicted several more photographers — all of their cameras focused on Cherisma’s corpse — shifted rumblings of disdain to outrage.

A 2012 project in Rochester, New York by Magnum photographer Paolo Pellegrin became the subject of extensive criticism when it was discovered that caption info on one of his series’ award-winning images misrepresented several key elements in the photo. The photograph in question depicted a gun-wielding man who was not a resident of Rochester’s historically black Crescent neighborhood — the subject of Pellegrin’s project — despite the image’s inclusion in a series purporting to be entirely of that area. Further, the photo subject was asked by Pellegrin to take a portrait with his gun, creating the circumstances captured in the contested image. By including that particular photo in his series, Pellegrin implied the threat of gun violence and attached that threat to the Crescent neighborhood, despite the fact that the image’s contents were mostly fabricated.

In 2014, it was reported that lauded Associated Press (AP) photojournalist Narciso Contreras had digitally altered an image of Syrian rebel fighters to remove a camera from the frame. (AP.org) His remarks on the rationale behind this action underscore a complicated relationship between documentary camera, photographer and audience. Further, the resultant

²⁰ I use scare quotes here in order to acknowledge the problematic rendering of black bodies as photographically captured in the act of looting, whereas white bodies are often captioned as “surviving” or “foraging” when photographed in identical situations. Since several of the discussions around the circumstances of Cherisma’s death mention “looting,” I feel it’s necessary to underscore this as potentially problematic. There is no certainty that Cherisma was looting, only that she was carrying various items of unknown origin in the midst of a catastrophe.

²¹ See Figure 6, pp 55

controversy rehearsed questions of what can be considered “reality” in documentary photography and what ethical standards are essential to the production of such imagery.

These ethical quandaries in photojournalism arose in disparate circumstances, addressing locations separated by thousands of miles and images made by different photographers. Yet the three controversies converge at the point of foundational ideologies that produced a Syrian rebel fighter, an impoverished New York neighborhood and a deceased Haitian teenager as particular kinds of objects/subjects — objectified by the camera, subjected to scrutiny — through photojournalistic production. The photos in question are particularly generative for thinking through concepts introduced in Chapter 1 such as the binary of photographer absence/presence and documentary photography as a potential scopic regime.

In the preceding chapter, I argued that the idealized standard of “bearing witness” in photojournalism is built on the foundation of vision’s primacy, producing a scopic regime that enshrouds the documentary image’s mode of production. In this chapter, I argue that emphasis on photojournalism’s presumed benevolent intent rather than recognition of individual subjectivity of photographers allows for oversteps and problematic interventions into and surrounding the subjects of documentary photography. This is particularly apparent in the photojournalism controversies introduced above, where banal manifestations of typical photojournalistic procedure are seen as professional misconduct when met with atypical scrutiny.

Through a careful analysis of Narciso Contreras’ image before and after his digital manipulation and of industry commentary about the altered photo, this chapter will address the complexity apparent in the uneasy relationship between the embodied eyewitness and the disembodied photographer, a complicated pairing I have claimed is requisite for visual documentary to retain its aura of verity. A similar analysis of the three photographs of Fabienne

Charisma will unravel what ideologies of conduct and duty underscore the capture of the photographic real. A review of the circumstances surrounding Magnum's "helicopter journalism"²² into Rochester, NY addresses the use of such tactics in documentary photography and analyzes Pellegrin's missteps as emblematic of the problems underlying "parachute reporting." Whereas much of the internal industry conversation around these three controversies emphasized problematic or lacking journalistic ethics, I see them as primarily indicative of the limits inherent to understanding photojournalistic production through the lens of purported objectivity. Wherever there is a photojournalist, there is a subject both behind and in front of the camera. The subjectivity of the photographer is paramount to understanding what they produce and, in the case of the controversies discussed in this chapter, what can go wrong.

1. Paved With Good Intentions

In the English translation of the Latin *docere*, to document is "to teach," to attest evidence, to prove. In its name lies its objective: a purposeful action which then complicates the possibility of purported objectivity. Given this definition of "to document," if one proclaims to be documenting, it is done so with an intention to act as a conveyor of knowledge. As such, those who document engage quite intentionally in knowledge production, though to what end and for what audience shifts as frequently as the subjects documented. The question I will take up through analysis of these controversial photographs, however, is not one of results but one of intentionality and purpose. If "teaching" or "showing" (phrasing truer to the concept of visual documentary) is inherent to documentary work, then there is an intended student and it is these

²² A phrase first popularized by Danny Schechter in 2006 that describes journalism which is graphic and engaging but "totally inadequate to the task of helping us understand what is happening on the ground in the catastrophe that has struck the region."

two — the student and teacher — who are active agents in obtaining and consuming knowledge, while the “subject” is most often passively taught, dissected, illustrated and described.²³ In this paradigm, the subject is made consumable for the “student” or, more accurately here, the news audience. What processes and practices of news image production that foreground the photographer as provider of information and news audience as consumer of that information might also limit or eliminate the agency of photographic subjects? Intent is critical to understanding this question, as the main object at issue is the ideology that founds the photographer’s actions in producing particular images of selected subjects.

In Catherine Lutz and Jane Collins’ ethnographic rendering of *National Geographic* magazine, they also identified intentionality as a key component in understanding the work of news photographers. The authors utilize Wendy Griswold’s sociological assessment of intentionality’s oversimplification, saying there are two modes within which it is usually considered:

- Subjectivity: An emphasis on the agent's individual psychology or consciousness, where the agent is seeking to achieve a particular goal. However, the agent may be uncertain of what they aim to say and this places internality beyond an ability to account for social functions.
- Hegemonic: Where intentionality is seen as "repressing and shaping popular consciousness, without attention to the multiple and ambiguous characteristics of cultural objects themselves" (Lutz & Collins 53).

Griswold argues that intentionality is neither "personal nor idiosyncratic, nor hegemonic and univocal" (Griswold 2) Instead she says it can be broken into "charges" and "briefs" where an artist or agent is given a context within which to work on a specific project, while also pulling from the overall modes of working required for their particular art. In the case of most news

²³ I offer “most often” as a qualifier here to acknowledge the occasional documentary photography work done in collaboration with subjects, wherein those who occupy the photographic frame are knowingly and willingly engaged in the project of conveying particular types of information about themselves to a future audience. This type of collaboration, however, is fraught with the potential for stepping outside the confines of photojournalistic professional standards that insist on objective non-interference. As such, it is outside the particular paradigm I attempt to unpack in this chapter.

photography, photojournalists are selected for their specific photographic style (portraiture, environmental issues, animal photography, etc.) and then given charges by their picture editors that require a set place, set time and specific aim. These constraints define how the story will be told, but it is up to the photographer to realize the images in a way true to their individual artistry or form.

Despite photographers being encouraged to be creative, they are guided from the beginning. Additionally, the selection process after they've submitted their images to editors leads to framing beyond their possible intention. I would argue this indicates that both subjectivity and a hegemonic social order are at play in the production of visual stories and that this process is representative of news organizations' approach to photojournalism more generally. This discussion of intentionality is useful for interpreting methodologies of visual journalism that embolden photographers to insinuate themselves into the lives and locations they photograph — necessary for them to do their jobs effectively. Yet, I argue it is this same prefigured sense of working and witnessing for the public good that can ultimately create ruptures in journalistic ethics. Photojournalism risks such slippages where photographers foreground their intentions of educating and informing the populace — assuming rights of access to and interpretation of subjects in their professional practice — rather than recognizing their presence and individual subjectivity as a potential complication of the frame and its surrounding story. Such was the case when Narciso Contreras' good intentions of documenting and making public the atrocities of the Syrian war were in conflict with the materiality that having a photographic presence at the scene produced.

2. Object(ing) Absence

Taking up Contreras' two photos of the same field in different frames, through the conceptual intersectionality of cultural studies, art history and critical theory inherent to a visual culture analysis, allows a deep unpacking of the discourses that motivated both frames. As Jussi Parikka noted, critical cultural theory investigates the body as an object/site of "modern biopolitical governance, as gendered, ethnic, lived agency" (Parikka 22) Extending this to a visual culture critique situates the image as a product of lived, embodied agency. The use of photo analysis in this framework is to identify such agency, to determine its slippages and possibilities. If visual culture can account for what lies outside and surrounds the image before and after its inception, incorporating a semiotic approach will account for what lies within. Through this, I will analyze the connotative/denotative aspects of the frame pertinent to this discussion of manufactured photographic reality and its power of knowledge production.

Key to one of the photo controversies I engage with is the technology in use. Adobe Photoshop is itself a tool of removal and addition, ripe for an analysis of new media applications that change the shape and form of curated, represented reality. This is not the framework I take up here, however. Instead this dissection of the images in question will focus on how the camera in the frame and the camera taking the photograph operated as opposite technologies of inclusion and erasure/subjectivity and objectivity. The complex dichotomy of photographer presence/absence — what I previously argued establishes photojournalism's "scopic regime" — becomes undeniably apparent in the case of Contreras' altered imagery, where his professional crusade for representations of reality collided with camera and retouching technology as well as public perceptions of the journalistic gaze. In Contreras' image of a Syrian fighter, it is technology that twice pulls the lever of objectivity, formalizing two lies — that of the camera's

replacement of the photographer and then the computer's removal of the camera. One is accepted while the other is denied.

Freelance documentary photographer Narciso Contreras is first presented as a hero when experts in the field describe his 2012 work on the Syrian War as the best images coming out of the conflict over that period. Time Magazine's Lightbox photo blog featured Contreras for "his commitment and distinct vision to covering the bloodshed of an intractable war" (Bicker 2010). He even won a Pulitzer Prize for his earlier coverage of the conflict. Along with the emphasis on "vision" specifically, these professional accomplishments underscore his embodied connection to the images: the Pulitzer Prize did not award a non-entity, the images are not themselves worthy of praise that ignores Contreras' being there to take them. In fact, the author of the Lightbox blog also claimed "what makes Contreras's work in Syria even more astonishing is the fact that he has, in a sense, come out of nowhere to emerge as the one photographer whose work will likely be seen as the photographic record of the conflict" (Bicker 2010).

Contreras is, purportedly, the Associated Press' prime eyewitness of the conflict as his images are beautiful and, more importantly for this discussion of photographic subjectivity, he is known for putting himself in exceptional danger to acquire the most intense and heart-wrenching scenes. His credit accompanies each image, he is interviewed on his experiences in the battlefield, about why he takes photos in certain ways, how he came to his craft, what inspires him — all questions asked of a living, breathing man present at the site of each image that is later held up as exemplary. Contreras, the 37 year-old Mexican man, is clearly the vision, the eye, the body behind these award-worthy photographs. There is a distinct emphasis on the necessity of his presence, the work he's doing and its importance, bringing his view of the historic and violent battles back to the eyes and minds of those who cannot be there. It becomes apparent

through such a framing of Contreras prior to his controversy that the more bodily harm a photographer risks, the more he is praised for his bravery and selflessness. The very being-thereness of the work, being where others dare not/cannot be is part of what makes the images thoroughly imbued with the photographic real and what allows for an unquestioning mystification of the production process.

Examining two other images of the Syrian conflict from this photographer that were not part of the later controversy, photographic reality becomes questionable in the context of the photographer's presence. In Figures 1 and 2, a sense of loneliness and waiting is what gives the photos their particular "punctum" (Barthes 25) what Barthes termed the touching aspect that produces a direct connection between the photographic subject and viewer.



FIGURE 1: An image of a Syrian fighter by Narciso Contreras



FIGURE 2: An image of a Syrian fighter by Narciso Contreras

With the soldier's back and face turned from the camera, gun cocked and camel-shaded clothing pulled tight against sandy winds, both images imply vast spaces and interminable waiting — the life of soldiers fighting a desert war. (Figure 2) However impressively and artistically honed, the impression these photos give, their implication of a viewer's proximity to this stranger and an ability to experience the lonely terrain, is actually a carefully crafted untruth. The fact that we can see the fighter on his rocky lookout is because he was *not* alone. Narciso Contreras, award-winning AP photographer, *was there*. And so he must be, as it is his being-there that wins those awards, that garners such high-profile assignments, that makes his images attain such heights of the photographic real.

I point to these images to underscore the production of knowledge about the world through the lens of photojournalism. The view we see through the window offered is an individual human, experiencing difficulty and war, certainly; hunger, sorrow and cold, possibly. Viewers

can put themselves in the position of the lens, can be made to see the subject as he was seen by the revered eyewitness. Viewers can look out that window — as this is the scene that matters, this is the knowledge to be consumed and understood — and not feel pressed to turn around and see what lies behind. Seeing (what is in front of you) is believing. Believing what is seen becomes knowing that Syrian fighter and, by extrapolation, knowing his war, knowing his experience. Through the witness' eyes, we can envision and presume to know a world we, in truth, have never seen. This is the apex of the scopic regime, wrought through an idealistic persistence of vision. This is witnessing and visioning as an apparatus of power.

Narciso Contreras was at first applauded and regaled for his presence, for being there at the scene of terror, violence, death. Then, Contreras was fired, derided, hated for his attempt to not exist within the image, to remove himself and shroud the presence of other visual journalists. On Sept. 29, 2013, Contreras was photographing a Syrian opposition fighter in conjunction with an AP video journalist, when they all took cover from shots fired nearby. In the moment the image at right was taken, the videographer's camera was situated directly beside the subject's hand, prominently displayed in the frame that Contreras purportedly snapped in a hurry. What prompted the particular composing and lighting of this frame can only be conjectured, but what is apparent is that the presence of the photographers was immortalized in the image that resulted from that moment.

Several months later, Contreras admitted to an AP editor that he had altered the photo in post-processing (Figure 3), removing the videographer's camera from the frame. In a 2014 interview with the *New York Times*' Lens blog, he described the circumstances as such, "From the beginning I was conscious of the camera in the frame, but it was difficult to move to make a picture. I wanted to get all the tension from the frame. When I was processing the image I

thought it would detract viewers from the essence of the situation. I thought about whether it was correct to remove the camera from the frame, for some time. But I removed it.” (Estrin NYTimes.com)



FIGURE 3: A diptych of the same image of a Syrian fighter, one with digital manipulations and one without

There are two things to consider of especial import in this situation: the ideologies of the photojournalistic profession that led Contreras to remove an item and the ethics of the profession that prompted him to report his choice. It is the presence of both that mark this image as unique and primed for the argument taken up in this chapter. In the National Press Photographer Association's Code of Ethics, two of the 10 primary ethical guidelines seem most salient to consider the ethical quandary in which Contreras found himself.

1. While photographing subjects do not intentionally contribute to, alter, or seek to alter or influence events.
2. Editing should maintain the integrity of the photographic images' content and context. Do not manipulate images or add or alter sound in any way that can mislead viewers or misrepresent subjects. (NPPA.com)

In the first, photographers are admonished to avoid inserting themselves into an image in any way, presumably either materially or conceptually. This particular ethic is especially complex and unclear, as the moment a camera enters an environment, there is an alteration of events. The presence of both photographer and camera is can only be called intentional, since the desire to photographically capture a scene necessitates such presence and it is this exact intention which motivates documentary photography. When Contreras claimed he saw the camera's presence in his image as indicative of altering the frame, he was not wrong in his assessment that this was counter to the desired intention of news photography. However, the removal of the camera from the frame was in direct violation of the next professional standard: to avoid manipulation of images that might mislead the audience or misrepresent the subject matter. The very impossibility of adhering to both of these ethical tenets at the same time is highlighted by Contreras' camera-in-frame. Without the camera in frame, the image itself was impossible and yet was always already altered by the presence of two photographers and at least two cameras. With the camera in the frame, the environment and the news story was altered significantly. At

issue is not the photographer's adherence to the already faulty ethical norms. Rather, the very concept of what can be considered truth and reality is ever in motion at the intersecting point of photographic sight, photographic capture and audience consumption.

At every point in Contreras' controversial case, the camera operated as a symbol of reality. What changed as the image went through various stages of curation was whether its reality was accepted or denied. The promise/premise of a documentary photo is that it represents reality to the best of its ability. It rarely gives away the struggle to capture light in dark spaces, to thoughtfully place complementary colors at opposite angles, or to strategically compose a story of minimal elements while under mortar fire. Rather, it trumpets the haphazard, the unintentional, the happy accident. It is no less a ruse than any other spectacle, just that it is photographic Theater of the Real, performing gathered truths for a rapt audience. The photographer must embrace this ruse as much as the viewer, as Contreras clearly did. Not only was it necessary to remove the symbol of photographic presence to get the photo closer to the truth, as indicated by his self-assessment of the incident, it was also necessary to make the frame more appealing and less "distracting." A camera influenced the reality of the scene at three separate points in this case: physically, as the camera was a very real and constitutive aspect of the Syrian soldier's world in the documented moment; conceptually, as Contreras composed in camera what aspect of the scene best depicted the story and therefore belonged in frame; and artistically, as Contreras later deemed the camera a distracting element slated for removal.

Within Barthes semiotics of photography, a "noncoded iconic" (Barthes 154) interpretation of the unaltered image is man with gun in a rock-laden environment crouching near a camera. Applying a deeper analysis through a culturally and historically informed lens, a spectator can interpret the coded iconic meaning as Arabic rebel fighter (the lack of a soldier's uniform

coupled with the signifying religious head wrap inspires this loaded assessment), actively engaged in some form of combat while being photographed. The gun and garb outline a story of war and violence while the camera connotes the to-be-looked-at-ness of the scene, its presence insinuating the offscreen presence of a photographer which then draws significant attention to the obvious presence of the scene as merely a photographed representation produced by a bystander with the help of a technological device. The camera lays bare the obfuscated, complicating the usually ignored Fourth Wall by materializing the previously abstracted photographer and making him part of the scene. In the altered image, the photographer disappears with the camera leaving a scene that presumes to show the photographic real minus key aspects of the Syrian fighter's reality where both cameras and photographers figured heavily in the landscape. Effectively, the first image embodies the photographer(s), thereby presenting a scene more in line with the subject's reality, though still taken from the POV of the photojournalist. Whereas the second image, in the tradition of typical documentary photo production, presents a scene laundered of photographic bodies (human and camera alike) and missing a key component of the subject's life at the moment of capture. Together, these assessments of the two images underscore the photographic tradition of accurate reality representation as woefully lacking.

Contreras was fired following this controversy because he ran afoul of the industry's most stringent rule not to alter images, a rule put in place to retain photographic reality in journalistic images. Ironically, he altered the image under the impression that the presence of a camera in the frame *was* an alteration of photographic reality. His pressurized and beleaguered assessment of the image under deadline interpreted the camera as a physical object that took away from the truth of the scene, something that could only serve as a distraction for viewers. His later

assessment of the altered image led him to conclude the alteration violated journalistic ethics, which call for preserving verity in images. Here, the scopic regime is at work. An edict to attain and retain photographic reality (which the absentee photographer is essential to) stalls at the point where vision fails to signify truth as it cannot look from the photographer's POV *and* acknowledge him as part of the scene.

The ironic complexity of photojournalism's present/absent binary was not entirely disregarded by the professional photography community or others following the Contreras developments. In the commentary on the article that revealed the controversy over the Syria images, conflicting viewpoints addressed similar issues as the ones broached in this chapter. I've provided a selection of quotes taken from the 66 comments posted (at the time of this writing) in response to the Lens blog about Contreras' firing, to situate the discussion within the community of people who take/consume/think about documentary images.²⁴

"News Flash: ALL photographs are human constructions." — ImageMaker²⁵

"So we lose one of our few glimpses into a crucial conflict that is being violently played out largely without civilized scrutiny because he photoshoped (sic) another man's video camera out of the image? Makes no sense. Adding in smoke (as cited above), or altering an image for effect or to press home an agenda is one thing. This - removing a distracting element in the photo perhaps -is quite another."
— maryam

"I like better the original photograph with the video camera in place. The altered photo is just a fighter taking cover....nothing special. The presence of the video camera gives you pause....whose camera, was there another photographer there, did he have to drop the camera to take cover himself, etc. ? There was a story in the presence of the video camera. It reminds you of the very presence of the photographer. He altered the photo to make it look more stock and in doing so made it less real, less interesting and less thought provoking. Ironic to me."
— Don

²⁴ All quotes are from Jim Estrin's "Truth and Consequences" article on the LENS blog.

²⁵ The attribution used for these quotes is taken from the commenters' own form of self-identification on the Lens blog forum.

These viewpoints illustrate a variety of protestations that acknowledge documentary's scopopic regime, express a desire for its unveiling or consider this alteration an infraction of far less importance than the key witnessing work Contreras was doing in Syria. Others not evidenced here vehemently decried the altered image as indicative of a broken contract between photographer and viewer. Taking the two Lens blog posts on Contreras in consideration together presents a concerning picture. In the first article, Contreras' work was highlighted for being exceptional, for achieving outstanding witnessing during a dangerous and devastating civil war. In the second article, Contreras is criticized and attacked for subverting the trust in his profession, the sanctity of photojournalistic reality and he is ousted from his long-held position with the Associated Press. It's also reported in the second article that the AP chose to comb through every image Contreras had ever submitted to determine other potential fraudulent images and finally purged every one of his images from the AP system except the photo listed in this chapter as Figure 3. That photo remained, perhaps to serve as evidence of the AP's integrity and willingness to maintain transparency in such matters of controversy. These actions indicate that when forced to confront the alteration of the frame, its conceptual purity tainted, everything in the frame becomes questionable by virtue of this affected portion. Contreras' blunder with one image of the Syrian conflict called every image of his career into question.

If the atrocities of war and catastrophe are invalidated when a single photo is proven inauthentic, when we can't trust what we see, it undoes the good work photojournalism is doing of forcing us to see. In *Cruel Radiance* Susie Linfield emphatically questions the photography critic canon's apparent disdain for images, documentary in particular, and insists on such images as imbued with the potentiality for change if viewers can be moved to action rather than instinctively looking away in horror. (Linfield 2010) Her ideas are often grounded in the same

equation of seeing to knowing with which I took theoretical issue in the preceding chapter. Yet, I offer her argument to redeem the social justice intent that undergirds many journalistic practices. Although the problematic standard of obscuring production methods in order to foreground a restricted truth cannot continue without a healthy dose of reflexivity, Linfield's text makes apparent the value of these mediated images. There absolutely is value in shining a light on war crimes, political malfeasance, environmental disasters and all manner of atrocities that occur globally. These stories should be told, with care and attendance to the myriad sociohistorical elements that animate them. The next example of contested imagery in the aftermath of Haiti's catastrophic earthquake underscores Linfield's pertinent queries: "What is wrong with revealing such suffering: what is right with hiding it? Why is the teller, rather than the tale, considered obscene - and in any case, aren't some of the world's obscenities worthy of our attention?" (Linfield 41)

3. Subject(ed) Presence

The story of Fabienne Cherisma's death by stray police bullet received attention when published shortly after Cherisma's Jan. 19 death in a Jan. 2010 issue of *The Guardian* newspaper (Carroll, TheGuardian.org). At that time, her death was written up as symbolic of the chaos and horror of post-earthquake Haiti, her body one among thousands but this one felled by human hands instead of "natural" causes. (Brooke, "Photographing Fabienne") In the year following Haiti's travesty, two images depicting the slain Cherisma were awarded high honors in separate photojournalism contests to two different photographers. Luca Oleniuk won the National Newspaper Awards in Canada (Figure 4) while Paul Hensen's image won Picture of the Year in Sweden (Figure 5). As word of the awarded images' duplicate nature made rounds in the

journalism industry, the antagonistic internet chatter about media response to Haiti's devastation picked up again. When a third image taken at the scene of Cherisma's death began circulating the blogosphere, the buzz became a roar. Nathan Weber's image (Figure 6) of at least seven photojournalists snapping shots of Cherisma while huddled in a crowd touched off a controversy that called into question the ethics of all images depicting Cherisma's lifeless body.



FIGURE 4: Luca Oleniuk's image of Cherisma Fabienne's slain form won the 2011 National Newspaper Awards in Canada.



FIGURE 5: Paul Hensen's image of Cherisma Fabienne won 2011 Picture of the Year in Sweden.



FIGURE 6: Nathan Weber's photograph of photographers huddled around Cherisma Fabienne's body

Discussions surrounding the images of Cherisma and her cadre of photographers were framed by accusations of unethical journalism from inception, however, the addition of the third image appeared to incite disgust tinged with uncertainty. None of the photographers present had broken any professional rules or even done anything out of the ordinary. Yet the idea that it might be an industry norm for a group of conflict photojournalists to gather within feet of a dead teenager, snapping away, was appalling and unsettling. Together, these images projected a much-sundered image of the photojournalist. Rather than the heroic, wandering eyewitness to tragedy who risks personal danger so that the homebound masses may experience such “realities”, this trio of photographs suggested an unglamorous professional more akin to an ambulance-chaser than to a Good Samaritan.

A visual forensics investigation done by a photo blogger attempting to determine how many journalists were together on the scene, indicated at least fifteen photographers captured Cherisma’s body at that site. The implications of this are many. Primarily this amassing of photographers at the corpse of a dead teenager implies the highly visual nature of the scenario. Cherisma’s pink skirt and argyle sweater offered a compelling visual and conceptual contrast to the blue sky above her and the blood-stained picture frames below her. The positioning of her body among destroyed concrete and near a busy walkway, from which several looters entered the frame, offered contextualizing details that enhanced the drama of death and human suffering. Considering the prevailing compositions featured from the dozen or more photographers at the scene, it is worth noting the adherence to a wide angle lens which gives the in-image impression of the photographers having been much further away than they apparently were. Furthermore, this wide-angle depiction allows for other Haitians to enter the frame, presumably carrying the results of their looting labor. It seems reasonable to intuit that the journalists understood

including the seemingly disaffected passersby would rouse deep-seated discomfort in the photo audience. A picture of several adults passing by a young girl's gunned-down body implies lack of action taken - in opposition to the ideal of the Good Samaritan - and it is partially this framing of the girl in relation to those who experience her at the scene that gives the images particular gravity.

Not immediately apparent within photographs of Cherisma, however, was the relationship of the photographer(s) to her corpse. Certainly, it is clear that a photographer was present — the being-thereness is again requisite for these images to exist and for each to hold such power. Within the frame of the eyewitness ideal, the photojournalists are doing their job effectively by producing beautiful and stirring imagery at the site of tragedy. Yet, that idea is only ideal when the photographer is not contextualized as a voyeuristic presence capitalizing on scenes of death and devastation. Once the photographers are revealed as subjects themselves — captured within the borders of another image — the eyewitness frame loses its hold, slips, and gives way to a scene that depicts a similarly horrific disaffected bystander non-response to Cherisma's tragic death. The first two photographs shocked us by showing the apparent ease with which people could walk past a corpse. In the third image, the agents of disaffected action within range of a child's corpse are no longer fellow Haitians burdened with the weight of Cherisma's same tragedy. Rather, it is a huddle of Western journalists who perform their idealized and professionalized duty in the shadow of death.

Weber's image allows for a more holistic view, allowing viewers to see that just outside the frame multiple cameras attached to journalists are making pictures within feet of the body. The discussion elicited by Weber's depiction of photojournalists capturing Cherisma took place primarily among photographers, and was most readily captured by photography blogs and the

comments sections corresponding to the blogs posted on the topic.²⁶ An assessment of the issues raised in these arenas identifies two primary concerns, mainly a question of whether Cherisma's body should have been photographed at all, and somewhat secondarily, a complaint regarding the amount of photographers at the scene. The two images of this event that were honored by the photojournalism awarding entities simultaneously incited controversy and accolades for the same reason: both photographers having done an exceptional job at displaying misery. It is worth noting that such awards do not merely applaud the images themselves, instead they bring attention, assignments and frequently, by extension, financial gain to the photographers. This is important if we are to consider the ways in which the image is representative of the photographer as much as it is representative of the subject, both in its production and consumption. As the venerable eyewitness, the photojournalist is given access to events and scenes running the gamut of human misery, while simultaneously absolved of expectations to act.

Physical presence in those spaces is perceived as always already generative action; experiences mediated through journalistic tools, then extended to the citizenry as eyewitness accounts, are offered as the intervention most necessary to bring about change. Such is the case on display at the site of Cherisma's body. The photographers purportedly gathered there when gunshots were fired, drawn to what was deemed likely to be a scene of contention between looters and police. Several photojournalists stated that throughout their tenure in Haiti they felt as though their mere presence at certain scenes caused violence to lessen or dissipate. (Estrin, "Truth and Consequences") Operating under such a logic paired with the ever-present desire to get "the shot" — whether economically or altruistically motivated — it's unsurprising that multiple photographers were drawn to the site where a teenager was gunned down by police.

²⁶ Zhang, Michael. "Debate Over Fabienne Cherisma Photos Rekindled After Award Given." Petapixel.com. 29 March, 2011. Web. 19 March, 2014.

Then, acting within the allowances of the eyewitness frame, the photojournalists made explicit images of a dead body, some following along as the child was found and then carried through the streets in her father's arms. By the definition of the eyewitness, the photographers were merely engaging in the necessity of journalistic tasks — however grim — doing “what is necessary to get the picture for the world to see.” (Newton 5)

First interpreted as award-winning, and thereby representative of exceptional photojournalistic heroism, the images of Cherisma are from this vantage point viewed as the sum of only what is contained within the frame. The frame's modes of production and the organizational systems that led to the photograph's existence are not on display and are therefore mystified. The images did not misrepresent the situation through their collective images, nor were the photographers shown to have interfered in the scene or with the body, yet the images' ethics were questioned once the group of photographers amassed at the scene were made visible to their viewing public. Once the exterior circumstances of the image production is unveiled, the original perception of the photograph(er) as heroic and fitting snugly within perceived objectivity norms of journalism is overridden. The photojournalist is no longer obfuscated by the power of the image's conceptual framework and, once made visible, the image cannot be interpreted outside the involvement of a third party. The impression of an uninterrupted connection between subject and audience is understood as a lie and the resultant outcry is perhaps indicative of the discomfort experienced by the realization that the viewer is complicit in their viewing at the point of capture, along with the photojournalist.

A sort of cognitive dissonance occurs for the viewer when confronted by the slippage created betwixt the expectation of powerful photojournalism and the means by which such images are made. Despite the outrage it inspired, Weber's image is certainly not an unlikely

scene, a one-off created out of unique circumstances. However rare this particular depiction might be, the actuality of multiple photojournalists gathered at the site of human horror is a commonality of war, conflict and disaster photography on scales both large and small. The only thing uncommon about the sight Weber gives us, is that it was made available for us to see. In contrast, the controversy surrounding Narciso Contreras' altered image of the Syrian fighter hinged on the viewer's inability to see what had truly been there. Central to each of the ethical dilemmas analyzed thus far is the idea of when the photojournalist can acceptably exist within his frame, either physically or conceptually. My third and final example of perceived photojournalistic malfeasance appears to be a more straightforward case of ethically questionable misrepresentation of a subject. However, a deeper analysis of the decisions leading to the frame in question point to a larger problem of documentary photography production practices that can best be placed under the header of "parachute journalism."

4. Imag(in)ing The Crescent

In April of 2012, ten photographers from Magnum, an international photo collective and agency arrived in Rochester, New York with the intention of photographing multiple sites and stories of the city. Rochester was the prototype for the new project, titled "House of Pictures" and conceived with the intent of creating a photographic archive of American cities. Over two weeks, the collective of photographers followed theme-centric stories of their choosing throughout the city, assisted by photojournalism students from the local Rochester Institute of Technology — one of whom would become central to the criticisms Pellegrin's images later drew — and in partnership with several Rochester-based institutions. (Magnum, RIT.edu)

Some Rochester citizens were critical of the overall project, pointing to the photographers' lack of research and contextual analysis on the city. (Johnson, "Parachuting Into Rochester") Yet, it is one particular image from this photographic exercise in "archiving" that elicited intense scrutiny after receiving awards in multiple categories from two international photojournalism contests. Critics of the image called into question its representation of the subject, the accuracy of its captioning and the logic of the individual photo's inclusion in the larger series. (Shaw, "When Reality Isn't Dramatic Enough") Once analyzed through its evolving trajectory of meaning — as a singular image, as part of a series and larger project and then as an object that becomes inseparable from its description — Pellegrin's contested image is emblematic of ruptures in the benevolent eyewitness ideal foundational to photojournalism. I claim it is moments of dissonance in documentary photography such as this one that reveal inconsistencies, ever-present but often invisible, in photographer intent versus representational reality of photojournalistic production.



FIGURE 7: Paolo Pellegrin's portrait of RIT graduate student Shane Keller

To deepen an analysis of the contested image it is imperative to consider who made these images of The Crescent and for what purpose, to what end. As an internationally acclaimed and highly sought photographer, Paolo Pellegrin's choice to photograph Shane Keller, the subject holding the rifle in Figure 7, in this particular way resulted in a response that might not have occurred were Pellegrin not the author of the photo. Though thinking in the vein of auteur theory is currently unpopular in visual culture, it seems significant to consider who made these images of The Crescent and for what purpose, to what end. As an internationally acclaimed and highly sought photographer, Paolo Pellegrin's choice to photograph the subject in this particular way resulted in a specific response that perhaps might not have occurred were Pellegrin not the author of the photograph. Further, a thorough visual analysis of the photograph in question (Figure 7) is necessary to unpack the collisions of intent and representation undergirding Pellegrin's and Magnum's projects.

Considered without the exterior meaning with which its original publication and accompanying text later imbues it, the image's interiority is this: A high-contrast black and white digital photograph of a young man in an apparent underground area, holding a gun and appearing in transit to some unknown location. An emphasis on the heavy shadows and streams of contrasting bright light places the image in the style of a high-key, film noir aesthetic while the appearance of having captured an unguarded, interim moment implies the documentary genre. These are the formal elements of the image without the contextual interpretation later analyses will afford it. The series this image is a part of, titled "The Crescent," was broadly a look at a Rochester neighborhood of the same name, focusing on the area's drug-related violence and the resultant heavily policed criminal element. Undertaken by Italian Magnum photographer Paolo Pellegrin, the choice to focus on this specific neighborhood and the issues presented in his series,

was reportedly all of his own volition, unguided by an assigning agent or external impetus. “The Crescent” is one series of many taken by the ten photographers participating in the “House of Pictures” umbrella project, conceived primarily as a personal project done in tandem with peer photographers and, as such, was not initially commissioned by an organization external to Magnum. Purportedly, its planned presentation was a final box of one thousand images, 100 from each photographer, and a social media and website rollout of the images with accompanying images and text from Rochester citizens, garnered by calls made from the project’s Flickr site. Magnum established a presence on Flickr, Facebook, Tumblr and Twitter, covering the internet’s offerings of visual presentation platforms from nearly every angle available at the time. Though this was not made explicit by Magnum photographers or the agency itself, photo industry commentators professed House of Cards to be an intervention into the future of assignment photography as well as photographic publishing and its integration with social media. (Haggart, “Watch an Assignment Unfold Live) To what degree this was successful is unclear, possibly overshadowed by what certainly did occur following those two weeks spent in Rochester — this one photograph opened a large internet-based discussion on the nature of photojournalistic ethics, the potentially problematic relationship of an individual image to the series in which it is made to belong and the burden of accompanying texts to accurately reflect what they describe.

Highly charged sociopolitical considerations underscored the project long before the actual imaging of Rochester was underway. When Magnum’s photographers selected this specific city as a site, they indicated that this choice was based on what the city represented about America and how Rochester figured heavily in the country’s photographic history. One of the project’s organizers, Magnum photographer Alec Soth, outlined Magnum’s reasoning and

equated creating a photographic archive with ideas of economic transition, implying an obvious link between the two. “Archives are about preserving history. So it made sense to work in a place that was in economic transition. So we started thinking about Northeast industrial cities. Initially we thought about Detroit, but it has already been so well covered by photographers. So we began thinking about other areas and Rochester came up. Given the demise of Kodak, the idea of a photographic archive in this place where so much photographic history was born made a lot of sense.” (Johnson, TheNewYorker.com) Though the link between archives and “economic transition” (poverty) he invokes is tenuous at best, what *is* made clear by this statement is Magnum’s apparent desire to achieve novelty, capture economic hardship and have American industry as the physical landscape for the project’s conceptual framework. Magnum’s pronouncement that it would achieve a “photographic archive” of Rochester specifically implies that the history of this particular area should be preserved. Perhaps unintentionally this leads to another, less obvious implication — that economic transition has great potential for visual capture and such images are sought by the documentary photographers of Magnum. Within this is a doubly-emphasized power differential, namely that Rochester’s citizens — despite being so heavily involved in photographic history and being the site of a top photojournalism school — could not create an archive from within, and that Magnum is free to come and go within this space, unaffected by the economic decline inherent to the images it hopes to make.

Soth admits the project is organized around defining pre-contextualizations of Rochester, and yet it is presented as a neutral engagement to archive an area. Once constrained by the photographers’ expectations of particular imagery awaiting them, coupled with their descending on a disenfranchised town for an exercise that appears primarily about personal interest in the town, the project was anything but neutral. It would appear rather explicit from the city options

— all areas plagued by closed corporations and in rapid economic decline — that the House of Pictures series was envisioned from its inception as an exercise in “archiving” decrepitude, decline and the difficult lives of Rochester’s citizens. This is unsurprising, as such environments make for stunning photography in skilled hands such as that of Pellegrin and his Magnum colleagues. Yet the talent with which these photographers wielded their cameras is subsumed by the questionable approach to their subject, belying their purported benevolence and the stated purpose of the archive.

Looking at Pellegrin’s final photographic selections from his Crescent series through Gillian Rose’s “compositional interpretation,” or paying attention to the image’s “compositional modality” (Rose 51), allows for an overview of what a photograph presents from within the frame, rather than who created it for whom or what purpose. Each of the ten photographers selected their own place and subject within Rochester to “archive” over the two weeks, that would then become part of the larger House of Pictures umbrella project. There are twelve images in the series titled “The Crescent” and awarded Second Place in General News by World Press Photo, all presumably taken within the limits of the five-neighborhood cluster of the same name. Alternately called the “Crescent of Poverty” and the “Fatal Crescent,” the area is known for its deadly violence, child poverty (it’s seventh in the nation for this) and the highest infant mortality rate in New York.²⁷ These three things are highlighted extensively in Pellegrin’s black and white images that utilize layered reflections, dutch angles and high contrast that eliminates the features of many subjects within various frames. His decision to use black and white possibly points to a desire to eliminate distracting colored elements, but ultimately mirrors the fraught relationship between the white Crescent cops and the black Crescent residents. The dutch angles, or tilted horizon, used across most of the twelve compositions invoke a complex and confusing

²⁷ EileenF, [RokWiki.org](https://www.RokWiki.org)

world gone awry, somewhat unrecognizable and disturbing to viewers. The images run the gamut of stereotypical impoverished community depictions — police arrests of black male Crescent citizens, a funeral of a high school football player, blood-spattered walls, a young white man bearing heavy artillery and a rifle (the main image in question) and several images of children appearing mournful. There is a clear heavy emphasis on black males caught by, fleeing from or in custody of police forces, with all but one of the images of black men in the series depicting them in street scenes. In contrast, the two images of non-police whites are shown in apparent home environments.

In her text *Visual Methodologies*, Gillian Rose nods to Haraway's discussion of the hidden auteur resulting in patriarchy's inscription on cultural products, which begs the question of what other worldviews become embedded in an image at inception due to its author's subjectivities (Rose 26) — the query that animates much of this dissertation. In his defense of the Crescent series published by the National Press Photographers Association, Pellegrin stated that he found the situations he witnessed to be shocking and therefore in need of photographing. (Winslow, "Paolo Pellegrin Responds") As a white male European entering a poor and primarily black urban American neighborhood, there were significant experiential and perceptive clashes almost certain to occur. The images of the Crescent that Pellegrin produced reflected his shock and cognitive dissonance as much as it reflected the neighborhood, therefore a thorough analysis of the image in question requires a consideration of the auteur. Rose speaks to the production of the image and its technological, social and compositional aspects as being imperative for holistic critique. (Rose 2012) Each of these originates with the author — his use of a digital camera, the Canon 5D Mark III, to photograph the series, his choice of location and subjects and his use of

high key light on black and white photos in the series, his decision to photograph the neighborhood in relation to the police force and to highlight its issues of violence.

As mentioned above, Pellegrin embarked on this series with a digital camera that photographs in color with the option to turn photographs black and white in post-processing, so the image of Keller, as well as others in the series, were likely shot first in color. The heavy use of contrast is not natural to digital photographic capture, so was also a dual result of post-processing the images and selection of lighting within the field. The photographer's decision to render his scenes of the Crescent in greyscale instead of presenting the color present in the environment intertwines with the metaphorical interplay of good/bad represented by the series' emphasis on law enforcement and criminality. The unnaturally high contrast worked into the images renders many of the black subjects' faces nearly unseeable as the details of darker skin disappear into shadows. Here the technological maneuvering of light adjustments in camera and post-processing software produce images that set the scene of a world lacking nuance, devoid of color and vibrancy, a place where black faces are made into shadowy unknowable figures and white faces pop out of the frame, imbued with the brightness of being the highlight in a field of contrast.

Looking at the portrait in question (Figure 7), rather than the series as a whole, it is these exact manipulations of contrast in conjunction with the stark lighting present in the underground scene that endows the image with a large degree of its power. The subject, Keller, appears to be in motion, headed to an unknown destination with gun in hand and a round of bullets indicative of a battle ahead. With minimal other contextual clues, the vision of gun-wielding Keller caught by the stark glare of headlights in an austere underground area evokes an emotional response, the potential for violence. The image walks a line between Barthes' studium and punctum —

intertwining heavily coded symbols with a simplicity of form intended to elicit intense responses, “pricking” and disturbing the viewer to a frenzy of passion. (Barthes 26-27) The interplay of light and shadow underscores the theatricality of the moment, while the subject’s capture in mid-stride, perhaps even mid-sentence, adds to the snapshot sense of portraying reality. In the image, Keller becomes a frozen symbol of white youth in the Crescent, either protecting against or participating in the violence depicted elsewhere in the series. Framed by the uneven angles of the unfinished ceiling, he appears a part of the Crescent’s troubled landscape established in the preceding images, while also appearing apart from it as one of the few subjects pictured alone. Within the frame and outside the series as a whole, the picture gives little away, relying on evoking a feeling over establishing information. Herein lies the murky area on which the image is later critiqued: that void of context leaves room for interpretations that draw on stereotypes firmly entrenched within the series’ theme, the compositions and the technological processes the images have undergone. Instead of relying on compositional artistry, Pellegrin wove a sense of dread and uncertainty, offering no clear motivation for the character depicted.

Rochester resident and RIT professor Jim Johnson presents an alternate critique of the House of Pictures project. In his blog titled “(Notes) On Politics, Theory and Photography” he accuses the photographic series — and by extension the photographers — of missing a deeper consideration of how Rochester arrived at its particular highly-photographable set of circumstances, or, perhaps what is more important, how the current trajectory might be altered. (Johnson, “Parachuting Into Rochester”) His argument is similar to mine in that Johnson calls for the photographers who “parachuted in” to Rochester to recognize and interrogate the sociopolitical contexts within which Rochester residents live, work and struggle. The images Magnum produced merely seek to depict the current state of things, without acknowledging or

attempting to represent what has caused the city's blight and left its communities of color in abject poverty. Later discussion of the Shane Keller image, The Crescent photo essay and the House of Pictures archive project seems to largely ignore this particular issue of lacking context. Contrastingly, in Pellegrin's rebuttal to accusations of unethical journalism he bristles at the derision of professors and photojournalists, insisting he interpreted what he saw and heard from police officers and the community members in his own way, then accused the Rochester "elites" of being close-mouthed about what was really going on in the community. Pellegrin lumps his detractors in with those Rochester residents whom he envisions as having failed to portray or openly discuss the city's multitudinous dire situations. (Winslow, "Paolo Pellegrin Responds") As an outsider to the community with its very situated experiential knowledge of the historical causal relationships, the state with its political particulars and the country itself with very situated history of racialized class tensions, Pellegrin's profession of being "shocked" by what he saw is evident in his imagery that neglects a more holistic presentation of the situation he purports to photograph more accurately than those who live within the community. Pellegrin defends his choice of Shane Keller's inclusion in the series on the Crescent by pointing to the truth of gun-owning Keller's proximity to city violence. Though Pellegrin hints at potential inequities and connections inherent to such a relationship, he neglects to broach the subject of what it might mean for this photograph of a young white male journalism student at the local private university to be included in a series of images predominantly displaying poor black members of the Crescent community — a historically disenfranchised area with deeply entrenched class stratification.

The intentioned imaging of Rochester by Magnum was from the outset also an imagining — of what the city was and should be, of what freelance photojournalism is and could be, what

role the photographer can and does play. The resultant re-imagining of all three arenas begins in Pellegrin's photographic project but evolves over the complex trajectory of editorial publication and international accolades that become critical analysis by photographic peers across internet platforms, call-and-response volleys of interpretation, accusation and illumination. From archive of urban America to award-winning photojournalistic enterprise (twice-awarded): The photograph travels conceptually and physically through time and placement, morphing as its perception is altered and becoming symbolic of many things that are radically at odds. Finally, it settles into the position it will likely heretofore always occupy of highly-contested symbol of photojournalistic ethics, internet critique mechanisms, dubious documentary photography award standards and difficult interpretative relationship of image to text.

Sontag states "there is an aggression implicit in every use of the camera" (Sontag 175) This is certainly evident in the very idea of ten people entering a space with which they have no prior physical, material or cultural connection to undergo an archival project. These world-traveling, well-lauded elites used photographic technology as the mediating tool between themselves and Rochester's impoverished and criminalized citizens to produce a canon of imagery unrequested by their subjects, an archive of their ability to view, consume, capture and process the very residents of The Crescent. It is an aggressive act, however well-intentioned it may be, and the resultant controversy only serves to highlight the possibility of photojournalism's slippery slope from benevolent depiction to misguided destruction.

5. Conclusion

"News, then, like bread or sausage, is something people make." — Michael Schudson²⁸

²⁸ Michael Schudson, *The Sociology of News* (New York: Norton, 2003), 4

Thinking with the framework of visual perception theory in mind is particularly salient when considering audience response to photojournalism. It is possible the combined expectation of photographs to relay absolute fact and for journalism to be absolutely objective creates a black and white space where shades of grey are indecipherable. In the photograph of Fabienne Cherisma, the apparent ease with which photojournalists could exist within chaos and perform the function of Western eyes without reserve colored all of news production as a grey area. In Contreras' quandary of whether to retain the truth of the scene (camera in-frame) or alter the image to project a version of events more true to the ideal of the objective/absent photographer, what counted as "real" became the contested liminal space. At every point, Pellegrin's subjectivity as a European, a white man, an educated and worldly photojournalist was integral to the images he was producing. In every click of the shutter, he wrote his worldview into his vision of The Crescent. With every step away from that moment of capture, his vision transitioned from individual to universal.

Journalism scholar Michael Schudson professes news to be an everyday object — equating it to food so that the correlation between consumption can be unmistakable. In his succinct verbiage, "make" can be taken both in the sense of "to create" and in the sense of "to produce for consumption." This is the uneasy crux on which visual journalism hinges, situated as it is at the converging points of creating art from reality to be interpreted for the masses and its presentation in the form of a packaged product for sale. The photographs of Cherisma called into question the ideal of the heroic, lone photojournalist, wading through catastrophe with little concern for their own well-being, driven only by the desire to bring visions of misery to those who might be capable of relieving it. Rather, Weber's photo highlighted the arguably unnecessary presence of multiple networked, professionalized journalists in the act of performing a job, thereby

insinuating images of death and destruction as a commodity to be sold. The dissonance such a sight incurs can be attributed to many things, among them misinterpretations of the photojournalist role and lack of clarity surrounding the processes by which news media is produced and disseminated. I would argue this occurs both within and without the photojournalistic field.

It can be said that the photographs analyzed here were both “real” photos of the Syrian fighter during the Syrian conflict, as seen by Narciso Contreras. Cultural theorist John Tagg admonishes us “not [to] look to some ‘magic of the medium’ but to the conscious and unconscious processes, the practices and institutions through which the photograph can incite a phantasy, take on meaning and exercise an effect. What is real is not just the material item but also the discursive system of which the image it bears is part” (Tagg, *Burden of Representation*, 4). He also nods to Foucault, saying that photographic technology heralded new forms of power to be yielded as it introduced a new form of knowledge production. Meaning, and who can produce it, has always been central to individual and institutionalized power. The introduction of the image to society was not unmarred by such a relationship, nor is it any less so now as we are deeply engaged with ever-evolving photographic technology. Furthermore, each offered photographic reality in myriad ways — as an exceptional example of the photojournalistic aesthetic, as a testament to what even minimal use of retouching technology can do and as a raw depiction of news media ethics. As such, it produced knowledge of journalism’s professional standards and the capabilities of image editing software. Real it certainly was, at least in these situated ways. Did it, however, achieve its purported original intent of accurately depicting the moment in the Syrian conflict, in the pictured subject’s life? Given the extenuating

circumstances attached to the story of this image, it might seem an odd choice to question its ability to portray reality.

Many of Contreras' detractors, including his former employer the AP, erred on the side of it being an unethical, intentional fallacy. But I argue it is not different than most images of its kind — created under false pretenses that are also best intentions, produced for audience-consumers that are neither as forgiving or as media literate as journalists might hope. It is emblematic of a system that is always subject to complexities in conflict with intent, resulting in frequently compromised products. A system rarely exposed as such, predicated as it is on the shared suspension of disbelief that allows a particular type of power and knowledge to circulate, encouraging the scopic regime I claim is deeply ingrained in documentary photography.

In her international trek through newsrooms, Newton came across a photojournalist whose definition of visual truth was markedly different than the dichotomous fake vs. real sentiment expressed elsewhere. The photographer claimed visual truth was undefinable because “nothing is true.” The focus on a subject, he said, comes from point of view and photojournalists are only telling one piece of the truth. For him, the ethical component of photojournalism did not lie in achieving the objectivity norm, rather it was that the images act as gadfly. “I want to engage and enrage and annoy and enlighten...I want them to not be able to not notice.” (Newton, 8) An imperative consideration for the images presented here is that discussion of their ethical nature primarily took place within the photojournalist community. As the questions arose from the photographs being deemed award-winning, criticism was primarily taken up by those who pay attention to such awards — not the general readership of newspapers or news media organizations. Therefore, these important ruminations on the standards of visual journalistic practice and methods of production were broached by those who are most intimately familiar

with the same. Effectively, such conversations occurred in a vacuum where the visual media literate were afforded a period of navel-gazing and then were able to return to the business of making pictures, the effect on which that period of reflexivity might have had is unquantifiable. If the conversation on ethics of visual representation and the modes of production that surround it are to result in action, the figure of the photojournalist must remain unveiled, becoming an object as visible to the public it purports to serve as the subjects it aims to capture. The visual journalists themselves must be made something the audience will “not be able to not notice.”

The controversies discussed in this chapter primarily arose from spotlights cast on the images in question by their receipt of prestigious photo awards. In the following chapter, I analyze those awards that yearly define and refine what counts as quality photojournalism in order to consider what standards are set and limits met in this aspect of the news photography profession.

CHAPTER 3:

Global Image in the Western Mind: A Content Analysis of News Photography Awards

Chimamanda Adichie was 19 years old when she left Nigeria for the United States to enroll in Drexel University. Her new American college roommate assumed Adichie's background meant she wouldn't be able to speak English well (it's Nigeria's official language) and that she'd have a plethora of "tribal music" (Adichie's favorite music at the time was Mariah Carey). "Her default position toward me, as an African, was a kind of patronizing, well-meaning pity. My roommate had a single story of Africa: a single story of catastrophe. In this single story, there was no possibility of Africans being similar to her in any way," she said, recalling the experience years later for a 2009 TED Talk. Adichie points to a well-rehearsed problem of stereotyping distant lands — an issue she attributes to narratives of Western literature that often stigmatize non-Western people as impoverished and pitiable. Her framing of the "single story" touted the ability of passive entertainment to contribute to gross misrepresentations, a concept discussed ad nauseum over the last century in public and academic writings on film, television, and literature. This practice, however, exceeds the realm of entertainment. Scan the majority of international documentary photography and a similar story emerges: one told from a primarily singular visual perspective rooted in a Westernized point of view. That imagery which casts black and brown bodies the world over in a particular context is not without its historical precedent. Rather, the aesthetic of contemporary documentary portraiture and reportage photography frequently pulls from a centuries-old framework of pathologizing, criminalizing and homogenizing non-white, non-Western people and places.

Photographs traverse the globe, landing in laps as newspaper front pages, changing hands as well-worn magazines, emailed across networks that span thousands of miles in a millisecond.

More specifically, the documentary photograph makes its way from war-ravaged vistas and the famished faces of refugee camps to the waiting rooms of doctor's offices via *Time* magazine and the white walls of New York art galleries. The photojournalist and her camera travel afar, with the intent that others may see what lies beyond those offices and those walls. This is not an uncommon occurrence, nor is it infrequently analyzed. Heralded, reviled, suspected, accosted — multitudinous responses abound to the camera-wielding figure brandishing objectivity like an irrefutable badge of honor and access. This chapter takes up international documentary photography awards — a rarely discussed but pertinent aspect of the journalism industry that keeps those photographers and their images circulating. Analyzing images in situ must account for what is in front of and behind the lens — both the subject pictured and the picture's producer. As these photographs reach into homes, framed by claims to objectivity, reality, and promises of world understanding, such claims must be made to stand multiple tests of validity. In this chapter, I present the results from an analysis of 17 years of award-winning photojournalism that spans nearly two decades of wars, natural and manmade disasters, political upheaval and radical change in photographic technology. The awards provide a set of individual images that have been voted, named and widely accepted in the documentary photography community as the best images of each year, the photos most representative of the claims integral to the work of photojournalism. As such, these award-winning images are purportedly the standard by which this photographic industry can (and should) be measured. It is within this conceptual framework that my project takes up the award-winning photojournalism image as an ideal sampling unit for analysis of photojournalistic verisimilitude.

The content analysis project is partially inspired by the statement — frequently bandied about newsrooms, classrooms and communities of photojournalists in my personal experience

within those spaces— that to win top international awards in the industry, one must photograph impoverished brown bodies experiencing disaster, war or famine. Though this is often said as an off-handed and admittedly generalizing dig not intended to be taken as fact, it is difficult to ignore the consistency with which those particular themes appear in the awarding images from year to year. My interest in analyzing this data set comes from a desire to determine how much validity, if any, there is in that popular rationale. Furthermore, a cursory glance around the photo departments of American newsrooms and at the lists of photojournalists/documentary photographers claiming membership in the highest echelons of collectives, publications and agencies will reveal a population skewed decisively to the white, male and Western. The foundational question of this project is, if these images represent the height of photojournalism and the most accurate view of the human experience from year to year, who is taking these pictures and what do they actually depict?

In 2015 and 2016, World Press Photo (WPP) released State of News Photography Reports that highlighted an often overlooked problem in the photojournalism industry: a lack of equity and inclusivity amongst those who work behind the documentary camera. Based on an extensive survey of nearly 2000 news photographers from around the globe, the reports included the dismal statistic that only 15% of the photographers were female. Though a troublingly unequal division of nationalities among news photographers was mentioned, no statistics on the photographers' racial identities were included in the WPP Reports. The absence of race as a query in World Press Photo's otherwise-extensive survey is unsurprising, given that the dearth of working female photojournalists is a problem more widely acknowledged than the lack of racial diversity among photojournalists and photo editors. The recent launch of women-focused photography organizations and wide-ranging discussions around female representation in the

industry reflects this trend, something I will discuss at length in Chapter 4. However, what the WPP Reports and similar inner-industry conversations barely skim — or often skirt entirely — is the racial component to a lack of diversity behind news photography. This is another troubling aspect of the visual journalism business, similar to gender disparity, that is deeply felt by some and deeply ignored by too many others. The way print news photographers represent minoritized bodies and reproduce problematic racial ideologies has avoided extensive analysis and critique within the field of journalism and media studies scholarship.

Given that referent as a paradigm within which I undertook this analytical project, I suspected to find that winning images of the two most prestigious international photojournalism contests in the Photo of the Year and General News categories would primarily depict non-white, non-Western bodies in dire peril whether due to war, illness or disaster. Robert Entman and Andrew Rojecki said of American news that "at the most general level the color pattern of the news conveys a sense that America is essentially a society of White people with minorities ... as adjunct members who mainly cause trouble or need help." (Entman & Rojecki, 63) The international photojournalism industry appears to achieve an opposite but equally oppressive racialized and gendered stratum, operating at the global level to cast non-Western people and lands as Other, immured in chaos, defined by catastrophe. Due to the hypotheses outlined above, the images were coded for data on both photographer and subject. I identified the gender, race/ethnicity and nationality of each, as well as the themes present and the stylistic elements in each image. The ratio of male to female photographers and subjects, the most prevalent themes overall and the breakdown of race among subjects and photographers were of particular interest to me. Ultimately, the data presented a narrative of consistent hegemony behind news cameras. However, to arrive at certain conclusions required a great deal of conjecture and problematic

assumptions that will be discussed in the methodology section of this chapter.

1. Methodology

In the last fifteen years, the industry of photojournalism has experienced radical changes due to rapidly evolving camera technology and shrinking print news readership. Because of this, analyzing images published in newspapers, magazines and other news organizations in recent years seemed likely to have skewed data that would reflect those changes rather than reflecting historically consistent issues of representation. Photojournalism awards, however, have remained relatively consistent in their categories, amount of awards and appear to have maintained a lauded position in the industry for their ability to identify and highlight both photographers and images of import in the field. As such, I selected photo contests as an ideal space for analysis that could potentially offer insight to what images are privileged, what photographers are awarded and how these two things might relate to one another and to the industry of news photography in general. It is important to acknowledge, however, that the images receiving these awards are not typically representative of the kind of photojournalism that appears in local and regional news publications. Photos displayed on the front and interior pages of daily newspapers like the San Diego *Union Tribune* or *Times of India* would rarely, if ever, be the photos entered into and awarded in these news photography contests.

Selecting the contests on which to hinge this analysis was not of particular difficulty. The World Press Photo Awards (WPP) is one of the most respected international documentary photography organizations. Selected images from the winners travel as a gallery exhibit to various locations around the world each year. The organization has a category that boldly defines **the** Photo of the Year, which few other similar contests do. Many select Photographer of the

Year, based on a considerable breadth of focused work or an overall portfolio, but WPP deems one image from all the entries to be the defining story/moment/image of the year. The Amsterdam, Netherlands-based nonprofit organization that was founded in 1955 claims it “exists to inspire understanding of the world through quality photojournalism.” (WorldPressPhoto.org) The other awarding organization analyzed, Photojournalist Of the Year International (POYi.org), began as a photographic contest in 1944 in Columbia, Missouri on the University of Missouri campus — one of America’s most respected institutions of journalism education. POYi’s stated purpose was, “to pay tribute to those press photographers and newspapers which, despite tremendous war-time difficulties, are doing a splendid job; to provide an opportunity for photographers of the nation to meet in open competition; and to compile and preserve...a collection of the best in current, home-front press pictures.” (Ibid) The guiding principle “show truth with a camera,” was established in 1943 and the organization still conceptualizes itself within this framework. (POYi.org) Though based in America, POYi invites and receives international entries, a key component for consideration in this content analysis. Using each organization’s considerable online archive, I was able to view the winning photographs from the years 2000-2016, along with the caption information for necessary contextualization. I selected the year 2000 as a starting point for this study because this was the first year that Photographer of the Year became POYi²⁹, adding its international component that invited entries from outside the USA. This was also the year that many news organizations began their move to digital photography, signaling a shift across all of photojournalism.

Despite POYi’s inclusion of “International” in its title and mission, I did notice more American photographers winning POYi awards and more European photographers winning WPP

²⁹ The POYi 2001 Contest is the year that the organization opened to an international field of entrants. However, that contest reviewed images from the year 2000, so, though the contest is titled 2001, the images themselves that I analyze began from the year 2000 for both contests.

awards. It's difficult to identify what might cause this skewing in one direction of nationality or another. It's likely indicative of a correlation between who enters what contest based on its popularity within the region each awarding organization exists. I was not able to establish a method for determining what factors might affect this particular data point in this preliminary study. If given access to awards submission information from the awarding organizations in future, I would be able to account for and equalize this trend in the larger data set.

Though there are several categories of awards given out by both organizations each year, I selected the categories used for sampling based on two criteria. Most importantly, the category had to be awarded to a single image rather than for a portfolio or photo story. This was necessary to keep the sampling units manageable and comparable across the many variables for theme and shot style. Secondly, the category needed to reflect the sentiment of the image's importance as a notable representation of the state of the world for that year and as an exemplary photojournalistic product. These two tenets are key to the hypothesis underscoring this analysis.

The coding units recorded for each photograph/item were as follows:

- Gender of the subject(s) represented in the image
- Gender of the photographer
- Race/Ethnicity of the subject(s) represented in the image
- Race of the photographer
- Nationality or region of the subject(s) represented in the image
- Nationality of the photographer
- If the image was black and white or color
- If the image was shot from above, below or straight on in relation to the subject(s)
- If the image was a close-up, medium or wide shot

- If **death** was represented either explicitly or implicitly in the frame
- If natural or manmade **disaster** was represented either explicitly or implicitly in the frame
- If politicians or **political** unrest was represented either explicitly or implicitly in the frame
- If **war** was represented either explicitly or implicitly in the frame
- If **poverty** was represented either explicitly or implicitly in the frame
- If **illness** was represented either explicitly or implicitly in the frame
- If there was either partial or full **nudity** in the frame
- If **children** were significant within the frame
- If **incarceration** was represented either explicitly or implicitly in the frame
- If **refugees** were represented either explicitly or implicitly in the frame

The rationale for these units of analysis was to determine the prevalence of certain thematic schemas as well as stylistic elements, and to then consider any potential relationships therein to the gendered and racialized identities of either the subjects or photographers for each image. Additionally, these variables were constructed to determine if there is statistical significance in the genders, ethnicities and nationalities represented across the producers and subjects of the winning images. Coding units for photographer, subject and stylistic data were primarily nominal variables, whereas photographic themes were ordinal variables, coded as “explicit,” “implicit” or “absent.” If an image depicted a dead body its theme was coded as 1 for explicit death. If an image depicted a living subject moments before his (unpictured) execution, that was coded as 2 for implicit death. The same was true for all other thematic categories, except for nudity, which was coded for full, partial or no nudity.

1.2 Issues

Multiple concerns arose in the process of determining award categories for my sampling units. Primarily this was due to categories changing over time in the POYi contest and the difficulty of selecting categories from each organization that were conceptually similar enough to afford reasonable comparison. For example, WPP has a clear Photo of the Year category that is the overall winner of each year's contest. As an individual image singled out for both its newsworthiness and stellar photojournalistic example, it's an obvious choice for the purposes of this project. POYi has a Photographer of the Year category that awards the photographer for his portfolio and prolific documentary production for that year, rather than identifying a single image. Single images **were** typical to specialty categories such as Portrait, Pictorial, Sports Illustration, etc. Central to this content analysis, however, was working with a selection of images that were/could be deemed as a/the defining visual of the year's major news story. To achieve a balanced data set across both organizations, it was necessary to include both the newspaper and magazine General News awardees from the POYi contest. This resulted in POYi having two images for several of the years in my sample, specifically 2001-2007. In 2008, there was a radical shift in award categories at POYi as the contest began reflecting the proliferation of multimedia in documentary photography. The year 2009 did not have a suitable sampling unit, as there was no news-focused category that awarded honors to a single image.

Additionally, the breadth of awarding categories for each organization made the selection of which category to code for somewhat problematic. Certainly, an analysis of **all** categories from both organizations for a decade or more would be ideal to accumulate a data set more prone to resulting in statistically significant results. Such an undertaking, however, would require considerably more time and resources than was possible at this time. Further work in this arena

of analytic inquiry should begin by including multiple categories for each year and identifying trends overall as well as specific to each category. Ultimately, I focused on two categories for each contest. I analyzed WPP's Photo of the Year and the First Place winner in its General News category which remained consistent across all the years in my data set. For POYi, I reviewed the First Place winners of whichever two categories highlighting General News or Issues content that the contest selected to award that year³⁰. I selected the General News category for analysis over Spot News because if Spot News highlights those events that are of unexpected and immediate newsworthiness i.e. environmental disasters, bombings, catastrophes that large scale affect lives and livelihoods, then General news better portrays what stories photographers seek out and emphasize outside the confines of the 24-hour news cycle. These seem to more clearly define the parameters of what world events journalists individually and journalism as a collective entity imbue with import and believe necessary for consumption by their/its global audiences. Photo of the Year was an excellent category for analysis as it inherently states the chosen image is the most important or best photo taken of the story tasked with representing the previous year's news zeitgeist. The Photo of the Year winner is selected from the first place single image winners of each category whether Contemporary Issues, General News, Spot News, People, etc. I coded for every year's Photo of the Year winner and General News category winner. If there was ever a year where POTY was selected from the First Place General News category, I only included one image for that year.

Far more problematic than selecting award categories to code was defining racial/ethnic categories for both the photographers and subjects of the images. From a logistical standpoint, determining the race of the pictured was often difficult due to obscured features or lack of

³⁰ There are a few years where POYi awarded an "Issues" category for Newspaper and Magazine instead of "General News." There is also a year that the category was just titled "General News." I made these differences clear in the coding, but the charts and data themselves don't differentiate between these categories.

caption information detailing or insinuating race/ethnicity. "Unclear" was used somewhat frequently in coding for this variable. Most concerning was the theoretical implications of coding for the race variables, as race is ultimately an ever-shifting mode of identification based primarily in the social imaginary, defined according to a multitude of particularities such as region, religion, socioeconomic standing, historical and cultural parameters. A large part of this project's purpose is to problematize the production of race I hypothesize is occurring in imaging/imagining the so-called Third World, especially as photographed by Westerners. As such, extensive reflexivity on the method by which I identify what counts as race and how to code for race of individuals was imperative. During my attempt to categorize the races represented in front of and behind the camera, it was particularly interesting (and incredibly frustrating) to think through how I, and my potential audiences, interpret racial difference. Aside from the inherent irony of such work, it speaks to the intricate relationship between critiques of socially constructed hegemonic narratives and academic knowledge production that ultimately foregrounds and reifies the worldviews it claims to explicate/deride. Despite the pertinence of such concerns, defining ethnicity in some way was still requisite for this project and races were coded as follows:

- White
- Black
- Northern Asian [inc. Japan/China]
- Southern Asian [inc. Pacific Islands/India]
- Hispanic or Latinx
- Native/Indigenous
- Middle Eastern or Arabic

- o Mixed Race
- o Unclear

These racial categories map on to a Westernized and far more simplistic conception of race than many of the photographers and subjects would likely attribute to themselves. For example, Brazilian and other Latin American photographers were often coded as merely “Hispanic/Latinx” individuals, whereas in their culture a far more complexly defined array of races and ethnicities might potentially place them in a far different category. Similarly, determining how to group nationalities was of particular difficulty as I tried to be politically and culturally sensitive to the multitude of issues that can arise in identity politics. Israel and Palestine can’t realistically be categorized as the same nationality or race, despite geographic proximity. India is part of the Asian continent, but is so radically different in its ethnic, cultural, historical and political makeup from the nearby Asian countries of China and Japan as to warrant inclusion in a separate category. After reviewing several images, it became apparent that an Eastern European photographer and subject category should be included as there was a trend toward images of Eastern European subjects winning the awards but few photographs of Western or Northern Europe. This is significant given my hypothesis around who photographs whom and who wins awards for such work. Therefore, various considerations were necessary to divide regions into the following categories:

- o North America
- o Northern and Western Europe
- o Middle East [inc. Palestine]
- o Northern Asia

- Southern Asian [inc. Pacific Islands/India]
- Africa
- Caribbean
- South/Central America
- Australia
- Russia
- Israel
- Eastern Europe
- Unclear

Finally, this data can only be considered after acknowledging that the images used in my sample are the result of many levels of prior selection that cannot be determined in the parameters of this project or possibly at all. The photos were chosen by judges who selected from an unknown/unseen pool of thousands of images, in turn selected for entry in the contests by the photographers, again from an unknown pool of images. Prior to that, the photographers were either assigned to shoot those images as part of a news story or themselves deigned an event newsworthy enough to produce work on it for personal interests. Those are all key moments of selection and choice that can't be written into this analysis, but that certainly are integral to potential readings of the project's results. The next section attempts to contextualize the awarding process given information readily available on the organizations' websites, but both awarding organizations declined further comment on what animates their decision-making processes.

1.3 Eye on the World

While the emphasis of this content analysis appears to be on the content of the images selected as award-worthy and the photographers who take those photos, behind all of that are the gatekeepers who decide what photographs are worthy both in content and form. These are the secondary eyes on the world, the people who review the thousands of pictures entered by thousands of photographers from hundreds of countries³¹ and decide what stories have the most value, what images ought be circulated globally as THE Photograph of the Year. To understand the makeup of these contests and the decisions made therein, I reviewed the judging methodology for World Press Photo's 2018 Photo Contest. Though the winners of the 2018 contest have yet to be announced at the time of this writing, the judging protocols and judges themselves were described in detail. In contrast, POYi had barely any jury protocol listed on its site, though the organization does list the identity and brief professional biographies of each jury member. Both contests have separate juries for each category and for the purposes of this analysis, I focus on the makeup of the News Division jury for POYi 2018 and the News & Documentary jury for WPP 2018 to exemplify the contests' typical judging procedures.

WPP's News and Documentary jury consisted of five members in the 2018 contest year: Magdalena Herrera of France, Director of Photography for Geo France; Zohra Bensemra of Algeria, Chief Photographer of NW Africa Reuters; Jon Jones of the United Kingdom, an independent photography editor and curator; Alice Martins of Brazil, photojournalist; Laurence Tan of Singapore, Assignment Editor at Getty Images. Judging occurs in several rounds over a three-week period each January. WPP describes its criteria for judging entries as "a combination of news values, journalistic standards, and the photographer's creativity and visual skills. In the

³¹ The statistics on the contest entries for the WPP 2018 Contest as reported by the World Press Photo Contest site were 73,044 pictures entered by 4,548 photographers from 125 countries (<https://www.worldpressphoto.org/collection/context/photo/2018>)

case of stories and long-term projects, the edit of the material submitted is also taken into account.” (WorldPressPhoto.org, 2018) Entries are anonymized and jurors are required to acknowledge any potential conflicts of interest but cannot recuse themselves from judging at any point in the process. There is a General jury that consists of seven members and is made up of the chairs of each specialized jury, plus three new members. This General jury selects the Photograph of the Year and its chair is always the News and Documentary jury Chair. In its own words, “the World Press Photo of the Year honors the photographer whose visual creativity and skills made a picture that captures or represents an event or issue of great journalistic importance in that year. It has come to be regarded as the most prestigious international award for photojournalism in the world.” (WorldPressPhoto.org, 2018)

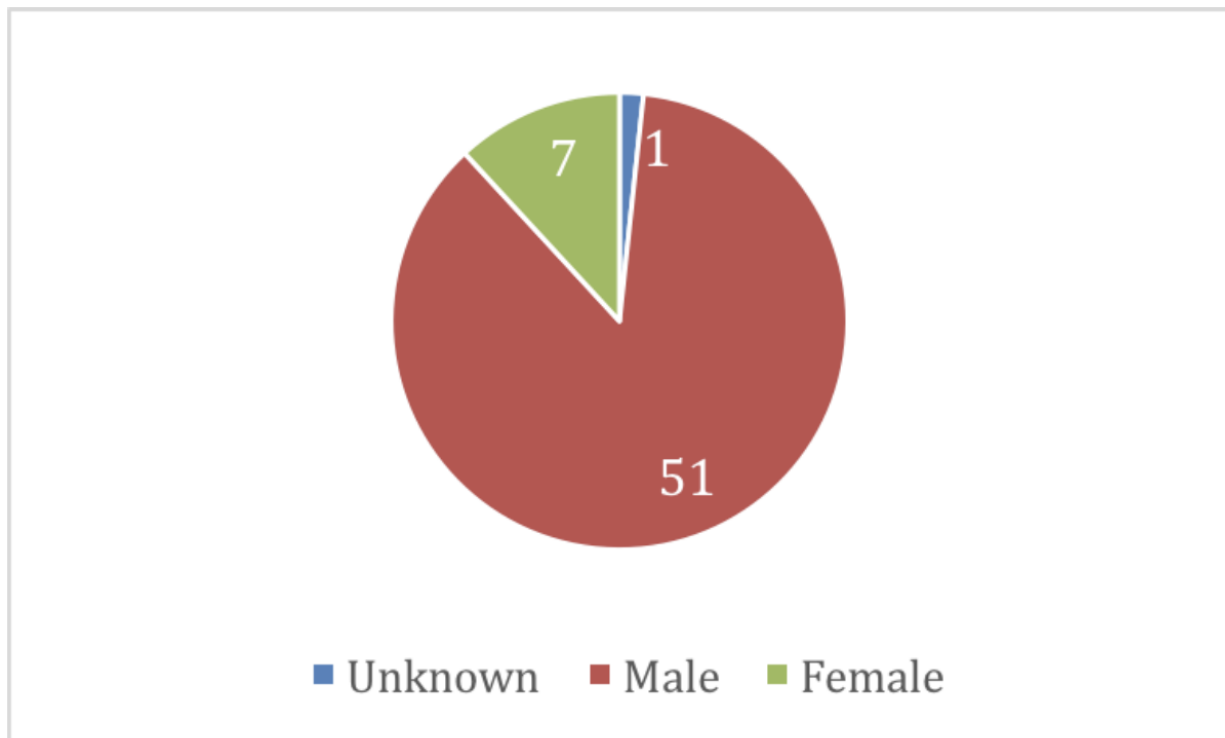
While WPP makes a clear effort to pull its jurors from a variety of photographic institutions and news organizations around the world, POYi’s jurors appear to be primarily American. In 2018, the News Division jury consisted of Dave LaBelle, a photographer, author and lecturer who has worked in various newsrooms across the US for over 20 years; Francine Orr, a staff photographer at the Los Angeles Times; Rick Loomis, a former staff photographer at the Los Angeles Times who is now an NYC-based freelance photographer; and C.W. Griffin, a retired former Miami Herald photojournalist (notably the only black juror on either of the News category jury’s across both contests). POYi also has a three-week judging period that takes place in the first couple months of every year.

2. Results

Given the complexity of identifying photographer and subjects’ race and ethnicity as acknowledged in the Methodology section, there is ample reason to proceed cautiously with

stating the significance of my findings. However, even allowing for the particular concerns inherent to this project, there are multiple trends illuminated that warrant thorough consideration of the resultant implications and that appear to support my base hypothesis of global photojournalism's primarily white, Western, male viewpoint.

GRAPH 1: A chart displaying the gender representation of photographers among the photographs analyzed.

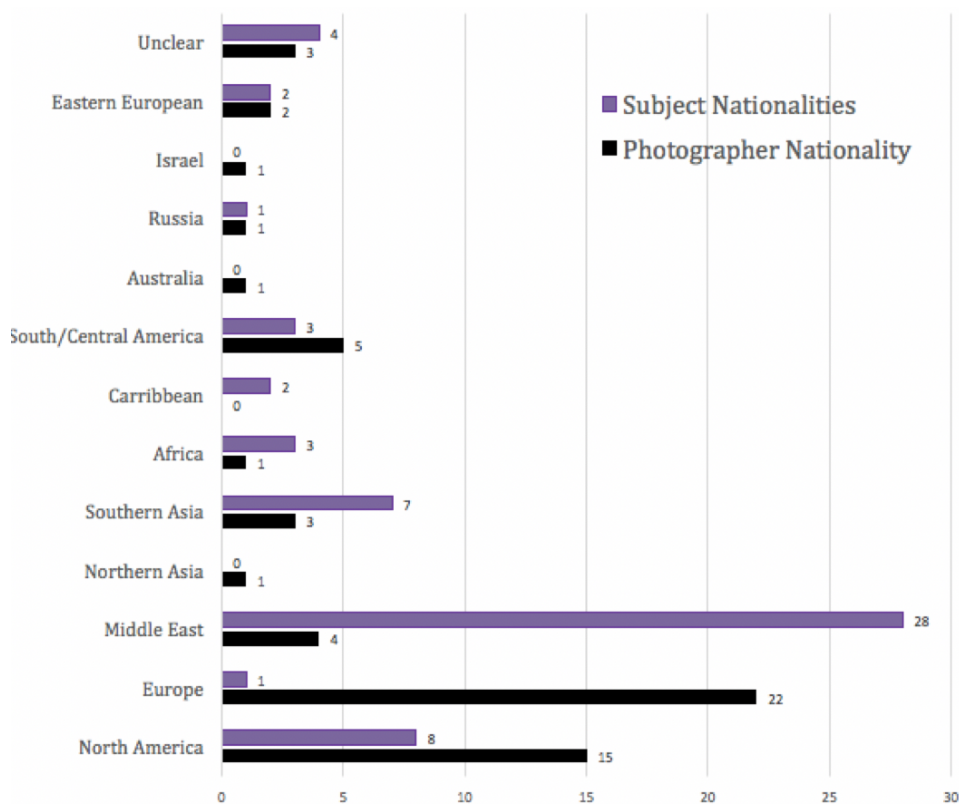


Of the 59 photographs in the sample set, 51 photographers were male, 7 were female and 1 was gender unknown, as evidenced in the chart above (Graph 1). Even accounting for the small size of the data under review, these statistics are of considerable significance. These numbers indicate that 86% of the images awarded highest honors for photojournalistic quality, integrity and newsworthiness in the last 17 years across two of the most respected contests were taken by men. Whether this is typical of the industry as a whole would require a much more

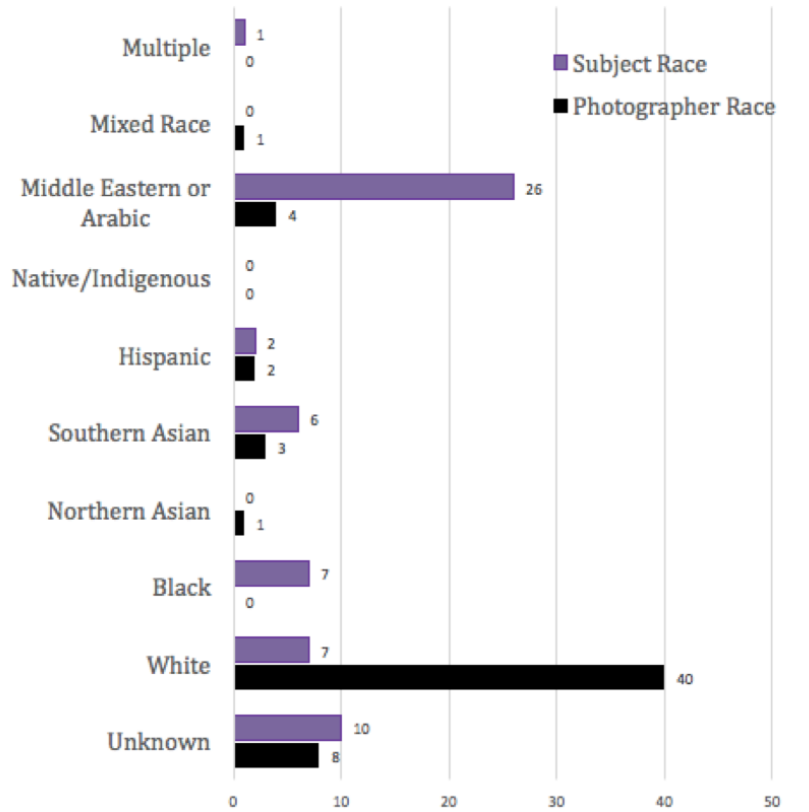
extensive accrual of data, but what it says of the images in this analysis is clear: the most lauded and viewed images of the human experience are overwhelmingly taken from a male perspective

The gender gap in photojournalism first became very visible and difficult to avoid acknowledging after World Press Photo’s 2015 State of News Photography Report, where 85% of the thousand plus contest entrants surveyed were men. Since those results were made public, there’s been a clear uptick in resources and emphasis placed on closing or at least addressing the gender gap. Race, ethnicity and the shadow of Western imperialism in photojournalism remains much less discussed and addressed within the industry. However, my research suggests an even more glaring disparity exists in the race and nationality of news photographers than gender. g

GRAPH 2: A chart displaying the representation of photographer nationality among the photographs analyzed.

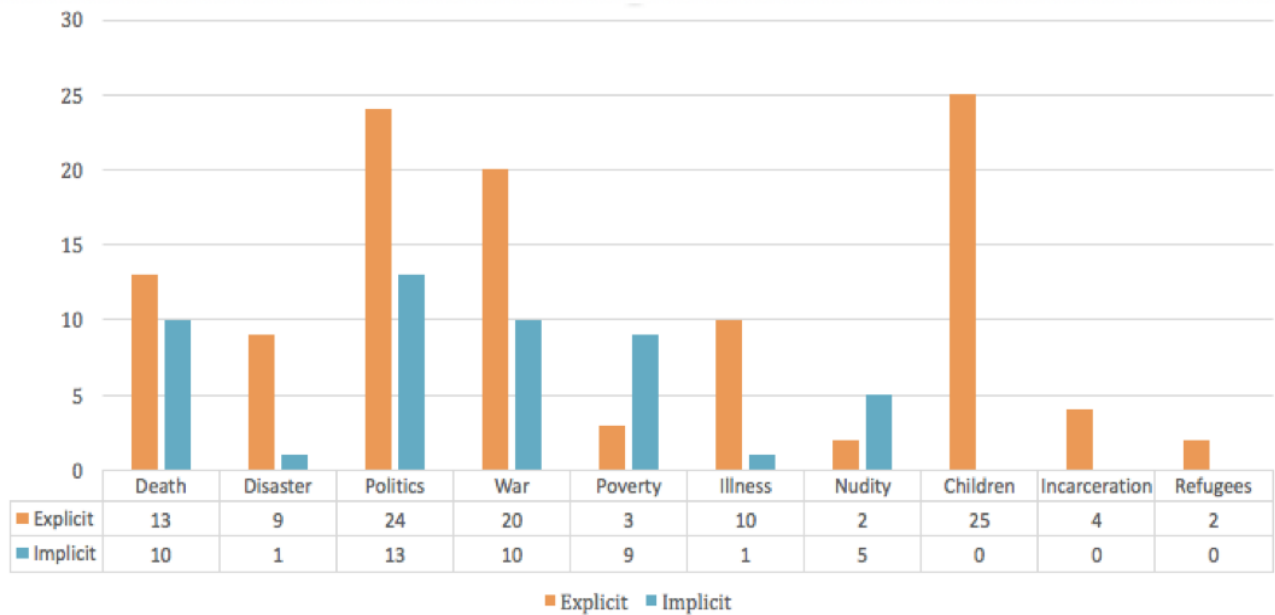


GRAPH 3: A chart displaying the representation of photographer race among the photographs analyzed.



Cross-referencing the numbers represented in **Graphs 2 and 3** makes it clear that the photographers winning awards across both organizations are primarily white Americans and Europeans. Furthermore, award-winning images overwhelmingly depict Middle Eastern nations and people. Whether this is due to more photographers from this group entering the contests, photographing the kinds of subjects that are most likely to win or being more likely to take award-winning images, cannot be determined from this data set. Regardless of what factors conspire to arrive at this result, if these images labeled as the world’s best photographs are assumed to be objective views of humanity, those views are heavily white, male and Western. This would seem to result in a worldview ultimately lacking in multiperspectival nuance, given its homogenous origins.

GRAPH 4: A chart depicting the breakdown of certain themes’ prevalence in photographs analyzed.

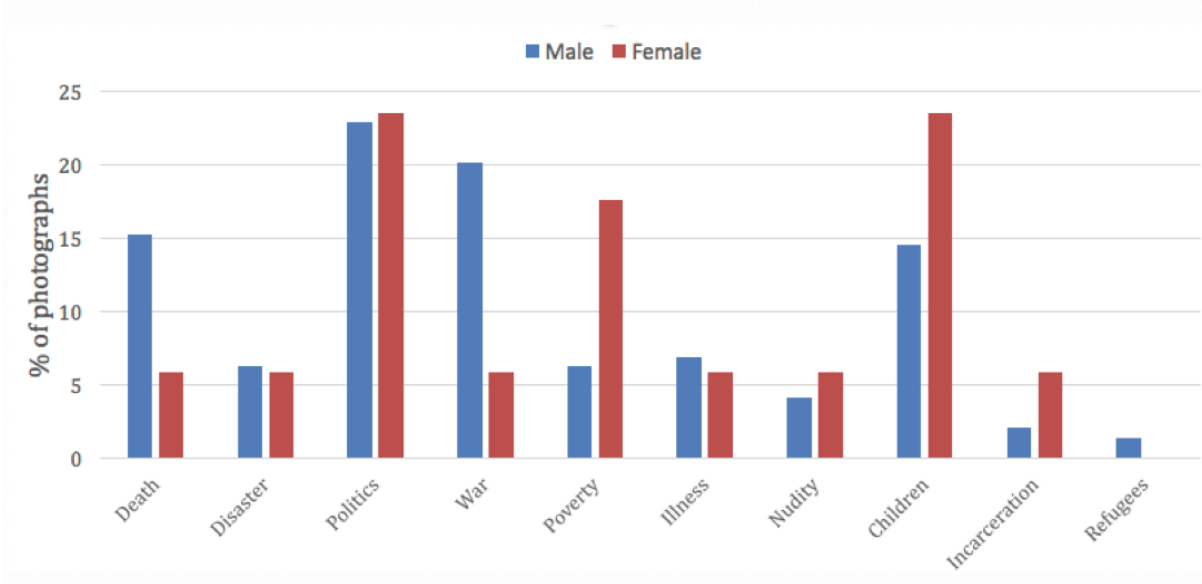


The breakdown of themes in (Graph 4) indicates war and politics are the most prevalent themes across all 59 images, where both explicit and implicit instances are combined. Across this selection of photos, children are featured nearly half the time. This is again a difficult assessment given that it is unclear if judges are more likely to award photographs depicting children and those surrounding political events/people, or if photographs are more likely to be taken or entered into the contest that feature these themes. The result is the same in that the majority of images defining the global moment for each year is skewed toward political events and underscores children as victims, survivors or focal points in some way.

Taking the gender breakdown a step further, I cross-tabulated the presence of particular themes in the images by the gender of the photographer to ascertain if any other trends became apparent. In the chart below (Graph 5), it appears that male photojournalists were far more likely

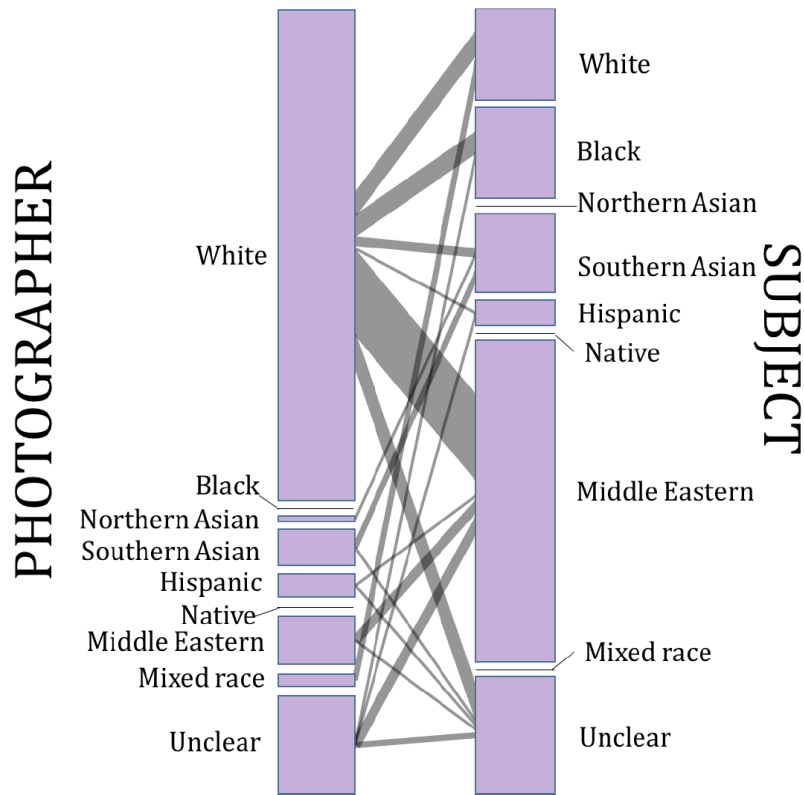
to have taken photos where war was explicitly or implicitly thematically present, whereas female photojournalists were more likely to have taken images depicting poverty. Men were also almost three times as likely to include death explicitly in their images and women more frequently had images of children than male photographers.

GRAPH 5: A chart depicting the breakdown of certain themes found in the images by photographer gender.



The last chart below adds an element to the photographer-by-subject racial breakdown, showing a visualized approximation of how often each race of photographer photographed each race of subject. The width of the gray lines connecting across this chart indicate how frequently one type of photographer had certain races present in their images. The purple blocks reflect how many of each type of photographer and subject were identified in this content analysis, restating the previous findings on photographer-subject race in a new way.

GRAPH 6: A chart depicting the breakdown of photographer race in relation to the race of subjects photographed.



3. Analysis

One of the most significant findings of this content analysis was the fact that in the past seventeen years of these contests, not a single black photographer from any country was awarded highest honors in the categories included for the purposes of this analysis. There are multiple reasons that could be cited for this particular absence. There's the wild card of which people feel emboldened to enter the awards or, importantly, what people have access to photograph the kind of stories that get recognized, which is of absolute significance and will be discussed later in this chapter. Regardless of those variables that could not be sufficiently addressed in this study, the concern lingers of a radically skewed worldview that is rarely challenged by the eye or

perspectives of blacks, latinx, women and other under-represented groups worldwide. What becomes startlingly clear is that images portraying people and events in Western countries do not appear to warrant photojournalistic recognition (or are, for whatever reason, not included in the pool of images considered for said recognition) and that photographers not from the Westernized world rarely have images awarded highest photojournalistic honors. Ultimately, this leads to a schema of images that portray disaster, devastation and poverty as particular to only certain parts of the world and as pictured primarily by people not from those parts.

The 59 photographs in this sampling also represent a complex system of editors, journalists, judges and audiences where intent, artistry and the ever-present flow of hegemonic ideals intertwine inextricably. The similarities across these two organizations and the global network of news and reportage organizations whose work they pull from is that each purports to present accurate, fair and objective representations of non-Western peoples and countries for Western audiences, without problematizing that process or aspiring to reflexive acknowledgement of photojournalistic intentionality's pitfalls.

Even in assessing the juries of these contests prior to completing analysis of the awards themselves, a picture begins to emerge that frames a hierarchy of views on the world and replicates the internal news organization framework of gatekeeping by visual editors. In the case of the POYi, only Americans determine what is internationally significant. In both contests, only those deemed valid and lauded professional visual journalists are asked to jury the contests. If the images are meant for a public audience to educate the world's populous about its fellow humans, why shouldn't members of the news audience be invited to participate in identifying and awarding the photographs that depict the most important news stories of our time? Particularly in this period of ubiquitous "citizen journalism" that more often than not takes the form of images

and video, those from outside the professional journalism industry might provide unique and important perspectives not represented within. Further, if we take seriously the results of this analysis and WPP's own reports on the status of professional photojournalism — each underscoring a hegemonic viewpoint from which most awarded and highly-circulated documentary photography are taken — then diversifying that viewpoint with an invite to non-professional perspectives is advisable, if not absolutely necessary.

While the stories the photographs themselves tell is inherently key to thinking through the potential internal issues of international news photography, of equal importance is considering how the contests and their requisite awards function within the industry. Most forms of photographic production carry with them the requisite need for possession of or access to advanced camera and computer technology³². This fact already connects the people making documentary images to a certain amount of economic capital necessary for producing those photographs. Added to that base requirement is the consideration that most of the images analyzed in this study are produced by photographers who have traveled far outside of their home countries in order to capture the stories that receive worldwide recognition. According to World Press Photo, “all nominated photographers of the photo contest receive: Inclusion in the World Press Photo year-long exhibition, which travels to 45 countries and is seen by more than 4 million people each year; Inclusion in the annual collectible yearbook, available in multiple languages with a worldwide distribution of more than 30,000; Invitation, return airfare, and hotel accommodation for the annual networking event, the World Press Photo Festival, in Amsterdam; and a diploma and Golden Eye Award, presented at the annual Awards Ceremony during the World Press Photo Festival in Amsterdam.” (WorldPressPhoto.org, 2018) The WPP Photo of the

³² Certain forms of art photography can utilize everyday objects to create photographic impressions such as pinhole photography. These are not common in documentary photography practice generally and rarely, if ever, used in deadline-driven news photography production.

Year Award carries a cash prize of 10,000 euros, as well as return airfare and hotel accommodation for travel to Amsterdam during the World Press Photo Festival. The winner also receives a selection of camera equipment provided by Canon, one of the most respected and subsequently most expensive camera equipment companies. This indicates that photographers who win this contest are financially and materially awarded for their work that already required extensive economic capital to produce. Though it is true that many of the photographers who win are showcasing work that was financially supported by news organizations such as Associated Press, Getty Reportage, Agence France-Presse, etc. or documentary photography grant funding entities such as the Alexia Foundation, there is still a certain amount of financial start-up required of individual photographers inherent to each of these awarded photo projects.

This same line of thinking about what material reality is required to produce the stories on display in these contests is a recognition of the capital acquired early on in many lauded photojournalists' careers. A key award I did not review as part of the larger content analysis is America's Hearst student photojournalism awards. This program is significant because it highlights the early access to resources within the industry that builds the social capital necessary for a successful career as a documentary photographer. Winners of the Hearst receive a National Geographic internship that allows photographers to travel internationally via funding from the magazine and work on stories outside America. Past Hearst winners' have found extensive professional success in the journalism industry, garnering high profile assignments from international news organizations and grants, likely in no small part due to their work photographed abroad under NatGeo's purview.

4. Conclusion

As mentioned throughout this chapter, there are a multitude of variables at play in the production and levels of selection that lead to the prizing of images and requisite circulation/publication. The results of my analysis could point to a proliferation of white American men in the photojournalism field in general, or it could underscore a lack of female entrants to photo contests for reasons undefined by this project. Furthermore, it could speak to the assigning practices of photo editors as skewed toward males or whites or Westerners, or to the inaccessibility of the documentary photography field for certain races, classes and nationalities due to socioeconomic disadvantages. Professional camera equipment and travel to foreign lands are, after all, quite expensive. The specificities of who applies to photojournalism contests, who is awarded photojournalistic assignments and who can become photojournalists is written implicitly into the findings on display here, but is not quantified by my samples and therefore cannot be qualified by this project. So, what can be concluded from these findings? Even after taking into consideration the problematic categories and undergirding information that this project cannot account for currently, there are several statements that can be made from the results of this content analysis. First, regardless of how the award-winning images came to be thus they are just that — award-winning. This positions each image in my sample set as indicative of the perceived best in photojournalism and as exemplary of the journalistic ideal. Since journalists claim objectivity and the position of the eyewitness as central tenets of their job, and these award-winning photos are raised up as the standard for the global industry of photojournalists to ascribe to, we can extrapolate the image content as representative of an encouraged and accepted worldview within the photojournalistic community. Also, we can potentially ascertain the makeup of the award winners as representative of the global

photojournalistic community to some extent. Herein lies the key concern highlighted by my findings: If these images are intended for a global audience with the assertion that what is depicted within is a true, objective and accurate representation of the human experience on an international scale, but the photographers primarily present the white, male, Western perspective, then the world is viewing itself through hegemonic, self-interested eyes.

The future of this project lies in attempting to address the more problematic assumptions of this analysis by acquiring more images for coding and comparison from the awarding organizations. By reviewing the images that did **not** win in the awarding categories coded for here, I will be able to ascertain which themes are most likely to be awarded and confirm whether there are more white, American male photographers that enter or if that group is merely more likely to win. I would also like to select other award categories from the past 15 years to code for in an attempt to determine if there are other awards women, nonwhites or non-Westerners are more likely to win. This would include a content analysis of the first through third prize winners of the POYi Reportage category along with the WPP People, Contemporary Issues and Spot News divisions. In this iteration of the study, I focused on individual photographs for simplicity and clarity, but a future version would analyze the themes present and countries depicted in the long term projects awarded across both contests. Future directions would also include analyzing any potential pipeline between the Hearst, College POYi and other high-profile awards such as the POYi and WPP. I also intend to analyze the award-winning work of photojournalism contests outside the WPP and POYi that provide similar international recognition, career support and financial prizes.

In light of a very recent influx of women-focused grants and photo awards for women/non-gender binary, people of color, photographers local to the countries whose stories

they portray and other underrepresented identities in visual journalism, these might be worth analyzing to determine what differences or similarities can be found between such photographer identity-specific awards and the more traditional, general awards.

In Chapter 4, I will take up the concerns raised in this project and consider the implications of a Westernized, whitewashed, masculinist worldview as presented by the organizations whose motives are stated as “a record of more than half a century of human history.” The results of this analysis belie such grand proclamations, instead underscoring the denial of a multitude of experiences and complexities existing on the world stage that ultimately presents photojournalistic truth as simultaneously infallible and wholly homogenized. The findings of this content analysis make visible the pressing reality of concerns expressed by individuals and organizations who want to diversify the visual journalist pool of professionals and de-colonize the industry’s practices.

CHAPTER 4: A Critical Re-Visioning of Representational Praxis in News Photography

A tall man — handgun tucked in his waistband and face wrapped in a shirt leaving only his eyes visible — stares back at the journalists staring down at him. He is in the act of looting a Ferguson, MO gas station during protests of Michael Brown's shooting by police, and a small team of newsmagazine editors is in the act of assessing that moment's newsworthiness. It is Monday, August 29, 2014, publication day for the international newsmagazine where I am a freelance photo editor, and my colleagues and I are huddled together around a computer monitor, surveying sets of images. It's time to select four photos — each deemed representative of the week's most important news stories. We've reached consensus that Ferguson must be among those stories. However, which shot will serve as the paradigmatic image of civil unrest remains under discussion. Next up for consideration is a shot of several Ferguson protesters in the rain, their mouths open mid-yell and hands stretched high above their heads in the "Hands Up, Don't Shoot" position. Despite the emotional pull of the second image, several editors express preference for the first photo because of the subject's intensely direct gaze. The editor who selected that particular frame from the photo wires agrees, insisting the shot of the men in the gas station deserves a place in the featured four.

Haltingly and with great trepidation, I disagree. Sets of quizzical eyes turn to face me, the lone woman in the group, and the only black person on the small news staff. I make a case for the second image, asking, "Do we really want to make a statement to the world that the most important thing happening in Ferguson right now is looting?" I point out that the selected photo will run as a double truck in the magazine's first pages and remain on stands for a week from that Friday, visually cementing our stance on the events transpiring in Ferguson for nearly two weeks from this day. I pressed on: "Are we comfortable minimizing this developing protest about

the treatment of blacks in America to a story about a small contingency of violent looters?” Further, the first image of the looter exemplifies the kind of stereotypical depictions of black Americans as criminal and suspect still so prevalent in news media. Thankfully, with almost immediate unanimous agreement, the crew of discerning editors selected the second image of rain-soaked protesters and moved onto the next set of news images: photographs documenting the Ebola crisis in West Africa.³³

Scenes like this one — in which a cadre of mostly white male photo editors discuss which images will make that day’s web or print publication — are not uncommon. Throughout my 14 years spent working in seven different newsrooms, I witnessed a dearth of diverse perspectives, both among those photographing news images and those selecting images for publication. My personal experiences are not unique, as evidenced by the World Press Photo Reports and news photography awards content analysis discussed in the previous chapter.

There is immense power in the production, curation and circulation of photography and oversight of that representational power has remained in particular hands since its inception. When Francois Arago presented his new photographic technology for mass consumption in 1839, like most new technologies of the time, it was envisioned as a tool for white men to have power over and harness their experiences of the world (Tresch 2010). So it was. So it is. The camera retains its capacity to unearth injustices, document atrocities and unveil the world to diverse audiences, yet it remains a tool for those with the power to wield it. Further, the space of documentary photography as a highly-regulated profession binds it within practices and structures that determine what is published, when, where and for what target audiences. Ethnographies documenting and describing professional photojournalism spaces have often drawn attention to the complex representational systems at play in bringing each image to

³³ This anecdote was originally published in a May 2017 *Nieman Reports* article.

publication. (Gursel 2016; Lutz & Collins 1998)

Whereas scholarship on the social impact of circulating conflict photography (Zelizer 2010; Linfield 2010) and implicit racial bias written into broadcast imagery (Dixon 2017; Entman & Rojecki 2007) has been taken up rigorously, the potential for implicit bias in daily news imagery and its requisite effects on the social realm are infrequently addressed. While photographs that grace the pages and websites of American news media are filled with images of black and brown people whose struggles for racial equality and civil rights are constant media fodder, those behind the images rarely share similar identities and experiences. When photographers in the field and photo editors in the newsroom are primarily white, male, Western and from a particular socioeconomic status, news images will reflect that singular perspective. This should be of grave concern both for those making and publishing news photography and for those who consume it. Discussions around photographic representations of so-called “underdeveloped” nations or war photography ultimately miss underscoring the insidious anti-blackness of more everyday imagery. In the vein of scholars like Simone Browne (2015) and Nicholas Mirzoeff (2011, 2014), for whom the conditions of blackness are tied to a long history of visual practices instantiated by American chattel slavery, this chapter considers how people of color are visually arrested by the frame of the photographer’s lens. In doing so, I discuss the social effects that emerge when black and brown bodies literally enter the news frame. I argue it is this bombardment of quotidian imagery that translates to a consistently negative visual narrative from which American conceptions of blackness are constituted or reified. Quotidian imagery has been in service to producing a racialized system of codifying and denigrating blackness through practices that, for example, cast images of black masculinity as deviant or violent (Sexton 2009), as revealed by the ethnographic encounter at *Newsweek* that opens this

section. Photojournalism has long reproduced this modality of seeing and representing black and brown bodies/lives. Therefore, understanding how the images that frame our daily lives are produced, as well as what is produced out of them, is as important as analyzing our relationship to conflict photography and visualized violence.

The previous chapter presented the issue of consistently homogeneous perspectives and subjectivities behind the documentary camera. This chapter moves toward an ameliorative methodology, presenting case studies of contemporary interventions into photography's diversity problem from organizations such as Everyday Africa and Women Photograph. Utilizing the network theory of power to understand inequity in photojournalism, I perform participation action research to present my own collaborative efforts to intervene in the prevailing racial narratives of professional photojournalism as an investment in diversifying photography has taken hold of the industry. Further, I situate racial Othering in documentary photography as historical and ongoing, drawing attention to the work of the quotidian in visual representations of blackness as central to this discussion. I argue it is this emphasis on the everyday black experience through the eyes of those that live it — beyond the confines of typical criminalizing/pathologizing narratives — that produces a necessary re-visioning of black lives.

1. Methodology

The experience I described in the introduction to this chapter was the first moment in my photojournalism career where I recognized value in having a theory-infused approach to the production of images in the newsroom. Admittedly, I was in a unique situation, working as both a freelance photo editor and PhD candidate. My livelihood was, therefore, mostly unaffected by whether or not my supervisors reacted poorly to the attempted intervention into stereotypical

imagining of Ferguson protesters. That freedom from fear of reprisal allowed me to be more frank in my critiques than I had ever been in a newsroom prior to that moment. That intervention shifted my research toward its current direction of melding visual culture theory and visual journalism praxis. As I set out to understand the various limitations to diverse perspectives in journalism production and opportunities for addressing photojournalism's problematic Othering, I found many individuals and organizations doing similar work. This chapter highlights those organizations' attempts to change the industry and those whom I have come to call collaborators and colleagues as we now build structures and initiatives together. I occupy a somewhat unusual position in academic knowledge production wherein I am an active, working member of the community and industry I research. As such, I have adopted critical participatory action research as the primary methodology through which my research is realized.

The research on and perspectives from leaders of interventionist photo organizations I will present in this chapter were gathered during a 2016 visiting fellowship at Harvard University's Nieman Foundation for Journalism. Over that ten-week period, I conducted multiple interviews with individual minority photo editors, journalists, and heads of visual journalism-focused organizations to understand what is at stake in an industry responsible for the mass production of racialized images, and what possible futures exist as we think toward alternative representations of blackness. As I became acquainted with these individuals and their activist practices, I saw opportunities for collaboration and potential uses of social science research within these spaces to assist in achieving institutional change within photojournalism. Over the course of 2017, I co-founded two initiatives alongside collaborators from different photo organizations to diversify visual journalism, and am currently running a global survey of professional visual journalism industry practices. My work with these organizations integrating

academic knowledge production and social change actions aligns with the framework of critical participatory action research. Though I do not claim to provide an exhaustive account of the body of literature associated with this methodology here, the following section offers a point of orientation for this project into the vast disciplinary mode known as Participatory Action Research (PAR).

Action research in social science was at first a move toward solution-focused data collection and action on that data analysis, but researchers were still maintaining distance from those they observed. (Lewin 1951) It then evolved to researchers becoming more involved in the social life they sought to analyze as participant observers. (Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon, 2014) The contemporary mode of critical participatory action research (PAR) centers the knowledge and lived experience of participants in the social structures under analysis; works with the participants in determining solution-oriented interventions/actions; and undermines hierarchical structures of research wherein subjects are objects to be studied and researchers are objective arbiters of scientific knowledge. In the PAR framework, community building and knowledge building are twin objectives. This research paradigm is integral in my approach to understanding and re-framing the production processes of visual journalism. Through interviews, observations and surveying of visual journalism professionals actively in the process of addressing journalism's inequity, I present an industry in a period of previously unknown reflexive praxis. Much of this work is interwoven with autoethnographic observations, as I am a working freelance photojournalist, photo editor and documentary filmmaker alongside my image-making peers. I contend that the intersection of critical social scientific methodologies with lived experience in the profession at issue presents a necessarily holistic approach to understanding photojournalistic production. To understand the potential of that intersection, I first offer an

overview of theories that undergird my thesis of the representational power in what I refer to as the “black photographic quotidian.” I then bring network theories of power to bear upon the photojournalism industry in order to think through possible interventions and alternate modalities of working in news photography that might be useful for addressing existing inequities in visual representations of black and brown subjects. In tandem with these theoretical frameworks, I draw on ethnographic interviews and conversations with photojournalists, editors, and activists I spent time with in the performance of this research.

2. A New Imaginary

The problems of misrepresentation and one-sided depictions of Africa’s nations and people has long been the low-hanging fruit of critiquing photojournalism, yet the related and not at all dissimilar issue of representing black Americans has mostly escaped the same level of attention. Just as young American journalists often ignore their own neighborhoods and flock to tragedy-afflicted foreign nations, so too do American news media tend to emphasize international events and downplay homegrown problems. Nowhere is this more evident than in recent news images of protesters, from the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement against police shootings of unarmed black Americans to the Sioux “Water Protectors” blocking construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline. As more black and brown faces find themselves prominently framed in news photographs, their absence behind the camera strikes a transparent imbalance.

Media critics have often decried the overemphasis on violent black protesters — images that tend to play handily into the ever-present stereotype of blackness that finds its origins in post-slavery propaganda. A predilection to depict black American neighborhoods beset by police violence as themselves a warzone was the case in the newsroom I described earlier, and this

appears to be the case in many a newsroom where critical conversations around these issues do not seem to be occurring at the rate needed to effect change. During an interview with Lewis Diuguid, a black journalist with a storied history at the *Kansas City Star*, he identified this problem as borne of the lack of diverse viewpoints in the newsroom. Speaking specifically to photojournalism, Diuguid noted that part of the industry is “just as bad because photographers tend to aim their cameras at the things that look like them, only aiming their cameras at people of color when it reaffirms the impressions that they already harbor about those people.” Rare is the published image that highlights peaceful black protest en masse. Yet it is precisely these photographs — evincing empathy rather than paternalistic sympathy — that capture the collective imagination.

Accounts of protests further attest to the frequency of less stereotypically-charged moments available. Diuguid recalls his personal experience of Ferguson during the aftermath of Michael Brown’s 2014 shooting as markedly different from impressions given by visual news coverage of the city at the time. “The neighbors up and down West Florissant (Avenue) were cooking food to provide to the protesters,” he tells me, “but when the police from out of town came on the scene they just changed the whole tenor and tone of the protest.” It was those moments of anger, conflict and aggression that primarily made it to the page, not the peaceful co-existence and support of the community rallying around its own.



FIGURE 8: Jonathan Bachman’s image of protester Ieshia Evans

New Orleans-based photojournalist Jonathan Bachman’s viral image of Ieshia Evans (Figure 8) facing off with Baton Rouge police joined a long tradition of the legendary individual photographed at the decisive moment of their solitary stance against a horde of authority. Such moments allow black Americans to be humanized rather than demonized, and a cursory search of newswire photos available for selection from these events indicate moments of solidarity and community are just as readily available as depictions of rage and violence. Bachman is a journalist intimately familiar with the communities he captured as he photographed the unrest in Baton Rouge for Reuters News Agency. On that summer day in 2016, he recognized the power of Evans’ quietly resolute stand against the armored police. Later, a Reuters photo editor had to share that understanding of its potential for impact in order for the photograph to become the

viral sensation it did.

Experiences such as these demand an analysis of the dual-pronged instrumentation of photojournalistic production: the authorial work of the photographer in the field and the authorizing post-production labor of the newsroom photo editor. While I have primarily emphasized the former in previous chapters, it is the figure of the photo editor who, in their role as final arbiter of selected images for publication, wields the power to shape the visual narratives on display. In the personal anecdote that opened this article, I underscored how my perspective as a woman of color photo editor shifted the news magazine's coverage of Ferguson from one of stereotypical looters to a more neutral depiction of the street protests. Ever conscious of how detrimental constant negative news media coverage is to daily black life, I felt compelled to speak to that knowledge which was seemingly not otherwise present in the newsroom. That was just one of many such moments over the course of my career, moments of advocacy necessitated by the unfortunate lack of people of color perspectives in daily news production. I am certainly not alone in this.

Freelance photo editor Nicole Crowder says she has often had to advocate for including women and people of color's diverse perspectives in her news organization's coverage. In an interview with me, she recounted such an experience during the Freddie Gray unrest in Baltimore when she wanted to publish the work of a mostly unknown photographer who had been documenting the streets of Baltimore long before police protests began there. "I suggested that instead of showing the work of one of our staff photographers — who was white — that we show this young black photographer who was in Baltimore ... photographing his city with so much grit and beauty and humanity," Crowder recalled. "I couldn't be settled with the idea that we would feature someone who would parachute into this town and would show the story

through their eyes as an outsider, as opposed to someone who had been on the ground living this experience.” Though she at first received pushback, her section eventually ran the newcomer’s photographs. Crowder cites her identity as a black woman helping her to recognize the importance of intentionally seeking a multitude of visual viewpoints in her career as a photo editor. “It’s imperative for photo editors to look beyond their own familiar roster,” she says. “I’m fortunate that I’ve been able to work with and for colleagues who also believe this and work towards diversity inclusion everyday.” Throughout her time as an editor at the *Washington Post* and now in her position as a photo editor with *National Geographic*, Crowder recognized journalistic value of giving chances to unknown photojournalists of color. Under her watch, an existing knowledge and appreciation of the community a photographer was assigned to photograph was just as — if not more important — than being a well-known name.

Though both Crowder and I had success in swaying our newsroom’s coverage toward more inclusive and less biased visual representations of people of color, the unfortunate truth is there are few women, even fewer people of color, and pathetically few women of color in news photo editor roles. A [2016 American Society of News Editors survey](#) reported that only 13% of newsroom leaders were minorities. Among that already dismally small group, black and Latina women represented 2.2% and 1.45% of news leadership, respectively. Consider that in contrast with the U.S. Census Bureau’s latest stats on America’s racial makeup, which puts black and latino/a citizens at 31% of the population. A concerning picture emerges of a newsforce that does not reflect the reality of the citizenry it covers.

Gordon Parks, one of American history’s few celebrated black photographers, experienced a previously unknown level of recognition and validation in his nineteenth century career as a documentary photographer and portraitist. Parks is frequently quoted as having said,

“I chose my camera as a weapon against all the things I dislike about America: poverty, racism, discrimination” (Parks 2010) Inherent to his statement is the belief that the camera can be a tool for change in the plight of those marginalized, oppressed or forgotten. I have posited that the camera is a tool typically wielded by a white, male hand. What happens when black, queer, female, transgendered and other bodies are wielding this tool? What stories can be told that transgress the typical or radically reform centuries of visual colonization? If the history (unpacked in the introduction to this dissertation) of visualizing black bodies as always already inferior is taken as an intentionally-produced narrative utilized in service of smoothing the pathways to subjugation, equally intentional visual interventions would be necessary to upend those narratives.

Manuell Castells’ network theory of power is useful to think through the possible dynamics required for a critical re-visioning of blackness in the visual media sphere. He posited that social interactions could be understand as networks with power accumulated and circulating via four modes of “social and technological conditions.” (Castells 2011) If we consider the photojournalism industry as its own social network within which power is retained by a select few, my argument for the concerning proliferation of hegemonic visual perspectives can be mapped onto Castells’ conceptions of network theory respectively:

1. Networking Power: The predominance of white, male, Western and privileged socioeconomic statuses operating as the primary global photographic perspective. Another way of framing this is that while those in this particular group are a global minority, their vision becomes the majority as they hold the means of production and therefore retain representational power over all they photographically represent.

2. Network Power: The ability of photographers, photo editors and other photo industry content producers to set the standards by which stories are contextualized, photographed, captioned and published. This means they not only determine what images are identified as quality photographs, they determine how images are collectively viewed and experienced in the social realm.
3. Networked Power: The ability of photo editors and other newsroom leaders specifically to constrict the potentially alternate perspectives of photographers from minoritized backgrounds. When newsroom leadership is even more majority white and male than the photographers who report to them, those who might subvert stereotypical and/or problematic representational Othering are often cowed into not doing so or not speaking out from fear of reprisal.
4. Network-making Power: The ability of newsroom leadership, photo editors and photojournalists to lead mentorship of aspiring and emerging news photographers as well as an ability to transition into journalism education where they can then instill their perspectives as the standard and maintain the passing of journalism institutional power from one hegemonic generation to the next.

Castells identifies what he terms counterpower as “exercised in the network society by fighting to change the programs of specific networks and by the effort to disrupt the switches that reflect dominant interests and replace them with alternative switches between networks.”

(Castells, 2011) In context of the networked power structures outlined above, amassing counterpower in the photojournalism realm would require a shift toward currently minority visual perspectives owning the means of our representational production and disrupting

dominant visual narratives with “alternative switches” in the mass media realm. I take this idea in concert with Mirzoeff’s account of “countervisuality” where the subaltern confronts authority’s narrow views of reality and offers alternate modes of seeing and understanding the subjectivity of oppressed populations. (Mirzoeff 2011) What format, then, should such counterpoint visual narratives take in order to achieve similar levels of widespread discursive power? I argue framing black/queer/female-bodied life in the photographic quotidian and working toward owning the means of our own representation produce those “alternative shifts” in the hegemonic photojournalism network and operate as countervisual practice.

There are a growing number of individuals and organizations in the global photojournalism community who are taking up tasks along these lines and whose efforts toward that end are excellent examples of how turning the lens on our own practices can spur progress. One of these is Everyday Africa (EA), an organization whose mission statement is to create “new generations of storytellers and audiences that recognize the need for multiple perspectives in portraying the cultures that define us.” As one of the first major interventions into photojournalistic inequity, EA has been doing work for years that’s proven vitally important in addressing both the nationality and racial disparities of photojournalists, while also providing countervisualities to prevailing Othering narratives. Additionally, its collaborations with World Press and global assignment platform Blink have produced opportunities for showcasing oft-overlooked talent such as the African Photojournalism Database.

3. Projecting the Everyday

American photojournalist Peter DiCampo and his writer colleague Austin Merrell were on assignment together in March 2012 for an NGO in the Ivory Coast, DiCampo observed a man

in an elevator surrounded by mirrored reflections of multiplied light and was struck by the scene's symmetry. According to him, the moment spoke to the beautiful simplicity of everyday life in the African city of Abidjan and he opted to snap the shot with his smartphone, foregoing the professional cameras slung across his chest. DiCampo says it later struck him this photo was at odds with the stereotypical images of Africa, unfettered as it was by ideas of poverty, war and illness.

“We’re reporting this conflict story but we used our phones to record daily life,” Merrell recalled for me. It was that “sort of negative space around this story we were there to report,” as he describes it, that spurred a new approach to storytelling for the two. After snapping that first shot, he and freelancer colleague Merrill began taking similar cellphone captures in the downtime of their assignments across the African continent. DiCampo and Merrill had unwittingly begun down a path that would lead them across continents, into boardrooms, classrooms and social media fame. At its foundation that journey was borne out of the simple desire to render Africa in shades of grey that the broad strokes of conflict and disaster photography so often miss. DiCampo identifies what incited him to start the project as an issue “of the world and its various cultures and subcultures all being seen by a similar singular lens for a long time.”

Those first images from the duo sought to represent African nations and citizens as both complex and nuanced, entities whose lives were rarely depicted in their entirety by traditional documentary photography. Their Instagram account, titled Everyday Africa (EA), grew in popularity, spurring lengthy conversations around the realities of daily life in Africa and drew the attention of the social media world. “There’s a sort of fascinating debate on how outsiders see a place versus how people who live there see themselves,” says DiCampo about the

Instagram commentary surrounding the Everyday Africa Instagram images. “We're still sort of on this contextualizing, broadening, transcending stereotypes kind of mission.”

Tina Campt urges us to understand the quotidian as “a practice rather than an act/ion ... It is a practice honed by the dispossessed in the struggle to create possibility within the constraints of everyday life” (Campt 4). Whereas Campt's analysis of images is primarily concerned with the relationship between state imagery, the sovereign gaze and methods for reimagining that space, it is her assertion that quotidian practices can “give us access to the affective registers through which ... images enunciate alternate accounts of their subjects” which I find most useful in thinking through Everyday Africa’s ethos as representative of counterpower at play. By emphasizing the everyday lives of African citizens, EA offers alternate modes of understanding places and people who have been historically represented through a singular narrative of catastrophe, such as Kevin Carter’s infamous 1993 *New York Times* image of a starving Sudanese toddler stalked by a carrion bird. Alongside the over-representation of conflict and famine in Africa’s visual history is another tendency toward exoticizing clothing, body scarification and other cultural components that framed African people in opposition to Western culture. In the same text on visibility in Africa, Paul Landau highlighted the use of such imagery as effective “tools of empire” to symbolically mark photographed subjects as “primitive” thereby necessitating colonial rule and Hudita Nura Mustafa posited Senagalese use of personal portraiture as subverting that Western gaze. (Landau 2002) Contemporary photographs of African natives published in magazines, newspapers and marketing materials for non-governmental organizations (such as Red Cross, Doctors Without Borders and other aid-focused entities) continue the centuries-old tradition of image-ing exotic Africa for Western consumption and interpretation. Everyday Africa’s Instagram-based intervention, I argue, is taking Mustafa’s

theorized personal photography as counterpoint to the expanded stage of mass media consumption. In a reversal of the historical trajectory (Western gaze to Western eyes), *Everyday Africa* privileges indigenous perspective and experience, making it available on a global platform. Further, by using Instagram — home of the selfie, meal pics and all manner of quotidian Western life — as the platform to circulate images such as a Ghanaian trumpeter in a funeral procession, a Kaberian man lifting weights in a brickyard and a female boxer training in a Ugandan street these photos become contextualized/normalized in proximity to Western mundanity.

By using the democratic space of social media, *Everyday Africa* enables a home for visual narratives based on the experiences of people local to the African nations depicted. However, the mostly-uncurated space of Instagram also invites unfettered explicitly racist commentary. When *Everyday Africa* took over the *New Yorker* Instagram feed for a week in Feb of 2013, one image was posted that reflected existing stereotypes cropping up in a visual space that's trying to broaden the knowledge of its audience. An image of two African teens sharing an iPhone headset received one comment: "Look at the darkies." While Instagram, as a more recent social media platform, has been less theorized than Twitter, critical scholarship on the networked power of the social media sphere has acknowledged its potentiality to be both idealized/idolized public sphere and home to anonymized attacks. (Fuchs 2014; Sunstein 2017)

Merrell points to this kind of sentiment as the product of social media's anonymity, which allows commenters to say things they really feel. However, he sees it as an opportunity, saying it "allows us to get deeper into the things that constitute those ideas we have about each other. Sometimes it's blissfully ignorant, extremely racist, paternalistic or funny."

Despite the moments of explicit racism inevitably courted by internet anonymity, the

New Yorker's 1.3 million Instagram followers were exposed to images offering alternate viewpoints to the frequently negative depictions of African nations. Images such as Nana Kofi Acquah's shot of young girls taking selfies on a Ghanaian beach, infused with youth's uniquely cavalier attitude as they offer duck-faced pouts to the smartphone camera (Figure 9); Girma Berta's brilliantly colorful shot of a man carefully stepping onto a city bus in Ethiopia (Figure 10); Malin Fezehai's photo of a young woman backlit by windows open to Addis Ababa's rainy morning (Figure 11): These are the moments that have the potential capacity to undermine stereotypes via their simple denial of centuries-old visual rhetoric that has defined the African as colonial, exoticized subject.



FIGURE 9: Nana Kofi Acquah's shot of girls on a Ghanaian beach



FIGURE 10: Girma Berta's photo of a man stepping onto a bus in Ethiopia



FIGURE 11: Malin Fezehai's photo of a woman on a sofa in Addis Ababa

Merrill sums up the influence of EA, saying, “If the only thing appearing in the (*New York Times*) for 15 weeks is ebola, you can go to Everyday Africa and see a different story, told through the understandings of people on the ground and in the spaces they're showing.” In the four years since that first elevator photo started a movement in the social media realm, that recognition of the need to diversify the international pool of photojournalists Merrill and diCampo speak of has spread to more traditional organizations such as World Press Photo.

When David Campbell, Director of Communications & Engagement for World Press Photo, saw the compiled survey data that would become the first State of News Photography Report, he says he knew there was a problem that needed immediate addressing. Only 2% of the photographers who'd entered the 2015 WPP Awards were from the continent of Africa. Only 15% of all entrants were women. Though the organization had already been making strides to improve diversity among photojournalists, the discussion then began about making a pivotal commitment in the WPP. Campbell says the organization's members asked themselves “can we get jurors from these countries? Can we make sure that it's 50/50 male/female?”

These conversations led World Press to produce regional master classes similar to that of the prestigious Joop Swart Master Class, a long-running workshop taught by respected photojournalists to emerging professionals in the field, typically held yearly in Amsterdam at World Press headquarters. By extending workshops to Mexico City and Nairobi among other cities, photographers local to those regions are offered direct access to the knowledge and network the master class provides.

“There's no way to flip a switch and radically alter the industry overnight,” Campbell acknowledged. Rather, it's imperative to keep diversity on the agenda, always promoting it, considering it, connecting people and organizations wherever possible. Exemplifying the work of

connectivity toward that end, Campbell and DiCampo had the idea for a list of African photojournalists that could serve as a database for photo editors the world over to assign African photographers. WPP then partnered with Everyday Africa in 2015 to create the African Photojournalism Database (APJD), now representing hundreds of photographers across the continent. Yagazie Emezi, a Nigerian Everyday Africa contributor and member of the APJD, sees this work as an important step. “For grossly too long, and even until this day, people still have a warped view of Africa,” Emezi says. “Through platforms such as (APJD), a lot more wholesome insight can be given.” Emezi’s photographs are beautiful illustrations of what that insight can be: One image depicts African schoolgirls in a line, green and white uniforms highlighting gorgeous brown skin that glows with the vitality of youth. Intelligent eyes look out from the frame, challenging the photographer and, by extension, the viewer to diminish this young woman to any injurious cliché (Figure 12).



FIGURE 12: Yagazie Emezi’s photo of African schoolgirls

Both EA and APJD maintain pages marketing work from the collectives' photographers on Blink, a platform that connects visual content producers and photo editors looking to hire them. Blink co-Founder Julien Jourdes says his organization is emphasizing photography initiatives that champion diversity. "We love Everyday Africa because they're producing everyday news, they're not exoticizing the people that they photograph," says Jourdes.

Through opportunities like representation on Blink, APJD photographers are getting exposure to assignments and well-deserved recognition previously difficult to achieve. There was no available data on how many photojournalists from APJD and EA are successfully getting assignment work via inclusion on Blink's platform, however, Emezi and many of the APJD photographers sing the praises of the initiative, lauding it as an opportunity to reshape the visual representations that have helped turn an entire continent into a series of over-simplistic stereotypes for centuries. Miora Rajaonary, an APJD photographer and writer, had her images of South Africa highlighted in a 2016 Blink newsletter to potential assigning editors. "In Africa, we still have a lot to explore so photographers, especially local photographers that have a decolonized vision of their environment ... their vision already is very fresh compared to what is currently shown in the media," says Rajaonary.

Though I have presented this case study of Everyday Africa as potentially representative of countervisuality in social media articulations of quotidian black life, the initiative is not without its issues. When I sat down with Everyday Africa co-founder Austin Merrell in November 2016, we met in the luxurious Conde Nast lounge of One World Trade Center's sky-high tower. Surrounded by conflicting views of New York City's gilded Financial District and the 9/11 Memorial, our conversation turned to the power hierarchies at play both in the work EA is doing and journalism in general.

“It’s ok to go to any part of the world and have something to say about it, but the problem is that me and the people in this building have more of the power to do so. Instead we’re trying to transfer some of that power and access to people elsewhere who don’t have that.” Merrell acknowledges the complexities of Everyday Africa being the brainchild of two American white men and says this is a criticism they’ve heard before. “We’re trying to come at this from as many ways as possible, to dig at the roots of our experiences and misconceptions.” As progressive as EA’s work is, it is telling that the interventions of both EA and World Press are still led by Western, white men in photojournalism. The pipeline to owning the modes of representational production need to open far beyond the hegemonic few of historical visual journalism in order to produce sufficient change in the networks of power. While organizations such as World Press open up historically closed-off institutions and offer improved access to their previously inaccessible but imperative resources for photojournalistic professionalization, collectives like Native and Majority World are attempting to affect change on a different level, providing economic capital to non-Western photographers and owning the means to do so. Through these organizations’ creation of economic opportunity outside the standard photojournalism networks, Majority World and Native represent Alternate Networking Power.

4. Majority World’s Native View

Bangladeshi photographer Shahidul Alam is a vocal and frequent critic of the existing power dynamics in international photojournalism. Furious with what he sees as dismissive treatment of photographers from non-Western nations, he says he and his colleagues have repeatedly experienced devaluation from hiring editors, such as assumptions they’re willing to be “paid less, work longer hours, need less notice, and (be) accepting of last-minute confirmation or

cancellation.” At a London fundraising gala in 2005, Alam was again confronted by his belief that non-Western photojournalists are denied the same levels of opportunities and respect afforded to their Western counterparts. The gala included a centerpiece photo exhibit titled “Eight Ways to Change the World” depicting countries from the global South that the development-focused agency purported to be radically changing with its policies. “All the photographs were taken by white Western photographers,” Alam recounts. “Being poor was their primary identity. That there are many other aspects of a person's life seemed to be secondary, or absent. These were people to be pitied and saved. The history of colonization, exploitation, unequal trade terms and racism, were absent in both the images and the text.” Further, Alam says he was told the white, Western photography curator of the exhibit chose not to include photographers local to the global South because he claimed they “did not have the eye.” This line of thinking, essentially that “the sophisticated visual language possessed by the West” (Alam 2007) is out of reach for photographers from the global South limits the entrance of new visual perspectives and indigenous knowledge as it ignores the ill-gotten supremacy of so-called Western visual language.

Alam cuts to the problematic double-bind of separating Western good intentions from imperialistic supposition. “The solution is simple. A local photographer, is likely to be culturally and socially more attuned, linguistically more able, and politically more aware, than a visiting photographer. These are pluses,” Alam says. “They still need to be respected as professionals and given the same 'value' that a Western photographer would be given.”

In response to such concerns, Alam founded a documentary photography agency catering to photojournalists from and living in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East — what he terms the “Majority World.” The collective, itself titled Majority World, acts as both a

professional resource for often overlooked photojournalists and a place where a Western client base can acquire locally-sourced images for publication. Alam recognized the need for such organizations that both provide opportunities for talented photojournalists from all nations and offer imagery coming from varied viewpoints. By responding to this need himself, he created Alternative Networking Power in news photography and is actively working in the countervisual mode. Majority World provides counterpoints to the historical understanding of the colonial and so-called Third World/underdeveloped subject while also establishing new modes of access to a professional photography career for those spurned by the hegemonic photojournalism powers that be. Alam is not alone in seeing and acting on this space of critical lack for photographers native to the lands so-often covered by Western journalists.

David Campbell of World Press Photo says the ability to find and connect with photojournalists in the “Majority World” can be an obstacle to improving diversity among photojournalists. “We know that there's talent [in those countries] but who are they and where are they?” It was questions like these that animated Latin American photo editor Laura Beltrán Villamizar to create a space that attempted to provide an answer. In March of 2016, Villamizar left a curatorial position at World Press to co-found Native Agency, an organization whose mission is to provide more resources and access for photojournalists in Latin America and Africa. Villamizar says it was her experience as a photo editor at the Mexico City Joop Swart that spurred the move. There, she witnessed firsthand the mismatch between the photojournalists’ impressive talents and their lack of access to a client base or the professional resources to market their work effectively. One of her focuses with Native is helping mentor female photojournalists, a project borne out of her own difficulties building a career in the predominantly male photojournalism world.

Like many of her photojournalism peers, Ecuadorian photojournalist Emilia Lloret — a member of Native — personally and professionally feels a desperate need for more diversity in the industry she loves. As a non-Western photojournalist doing work in the nation where she was born, Lloret says it's a constant struggle to get equal access to assignments and recognition within an industry that caters to North American and European photographers. "In order to make photojournalism more diverse and democratized, the major players in the industry should take an honest look at themselves and start advocating for the causes that photojournalism (has always supposedly stood for), like equality and human rights, making the change from the inside out." However, Lloret notes equal access isn't the only difficulty she has faced on the job.

On her first day of work at a major Ecuadorian newspaper, Lloret was scoffed at by a male colleague who told her "a girl won't be able to handle a job like this." Contempt from male peers didn't end there. Throughout her career she has been paid less than male counterparts for doing the same work and fellow news photographers have praised her work by saying it was amazing — "for a woman." This masculinist ideology undergirds much photojournalistic production, where a knowledge of complex technology is requisite and seeds the field for uneducated/unfounded assumptions about women's ability to do photographic work. The World Press Photo State of News Photography Reports' statistics underscore the lopsided representation of women in the photojournalism field, indicating only 15% of news photographers who entered the contest in the last two years were women. (World Press Photo, 2016). However, those stats don't quite tell the complete story. Women have been entering photojournalism at high rates since the 1980s, despite in-newsroom pushback, and now many international news organizations' photo desks are headed by female editors. Yet, women continue to make up a small percentage of representation in international photo awards and assignment work gracing

the front pages of news publications. In 2016, freelance visual journalist Daniella Zalcman decided to address that inequity by creating a space to promote the work of female photographers and publicly shame the photo editors who overwhelmingly hire men over women for photo assignments.

5. Diversify Photo + Women Photograph

On Feb. 1, 2017, Zalcman launched a website that highlighted the work of more than 400 photographers from nearly 70 different countries (it has since grown to include more than 650 photographers in over 80 countries). At that time, it was primarily a database of names and links to portfolios that belied the oft-claimed inability of photo editors to find women photographers. In its first year, WP has grown into an inner-industry movement where calling out the paltry representation of female photographers behind news image production is a weekly occurrence. Women Photograph's (WP) stated mission is "is to shift the gender makeup of the photojournalism community and ensure that our industry's chief storytellers are as diverse as the communities they hope to represent." Under Zalcman's leadership, however, it stretches the bounds of that more traditional-sounding approach to include social media call-outs of male dominated photo publications in a Twitter-based poll entitled Week in Pictures Gender Breakdown. Each week, Zalcman surveys various international news organizations' Week in Photos online galleries and published front page photos to identify how many were taken by women. In the Feb. 20, 2018 Gender Breakdown list published on Twitter — a little more than a year after the launch of WP — Zalcman noted that of the nine news organizations only three had more than 20% of their images taken by female photographers. The organizations with 0% of images taken by women that week included BuzzFeed News and CNN, with the Washington Post

at 14.3% of female-photographed work. Zalcman, and by extension WP as a recognized brand within the news image industry, has frequently been at the forefront of photo industry controversies that draw attention to underrepresenting female photographic perspectives.

Nikon, one of the main global camera technology companies, was heavily critiqued in September 2017 for publishing a list of 32 Nikon Ambassadors. All 32 photographers selected for the honor were men and the internet's vitriol was swift. Well-known photographers began responding to Nikon's Twitter post that announced the Ambassadors, using the hashtag #everydaysexism and inquiring if the Nikon D850 — the camera this Ambassador campaign was meant to advertise — was for men only. Photo industry news organizations such as Petapixel and FStoppers quickly published stories on the controversy, followed by The Guardian, New York Times, CNN, The Independent and Fast Company. Zalcman joined the social media fray with a 27-point Twitter thread outlining a variety of problematic thinking which she hypothesized undergirds choices like an all-male camera advertising campaign. Her thread received a total of 5,589 likes over its 27 posts. Further, she posted a message directly to NikonUSA saying “Hey @NikonAsia + @NikonUSA — want to make this right? Sponsor the next round of @womenphotograph grants. Let's talk.”

The controversy forced a long-overdue conversation about sexism in photojournalism into the public eye and sparked renewed interest in Zalcman's women photographer database, which racked up several new sponsors in the wake of Nikon's ill-advised ad campaign. The issue of dismal opportunities for female photographers in career-making assignments, photo awards and photo industry recognition has existed for decades. By using social media as a sphere for calling attention to this problem specifically and engaging an intersectional analysis of what produces and maintains this particular inequity, a previously hidden problem is made public.

Female photographers/photo editors and sympathetic male colleagues are given a platform to air grievances, collectively shame corporations/publications and discuss these moments of dissonance in real time. I argue this form of intervention spearheaded by Women Photograph and propped up by social media platforms represents Alternate Networked Power and Network-Making Power in the photojournalism industry. By pointing out the fallacies of the status quo and reigning industry leaders, new standards are being created and circulated publicly. By creating a space for both finding women photographers and supporting their interests in a highly visible and vocal way, Women Photograph has established an alternate paradigm for achieving, maintaining and passing on power within the network of visual journalism.

Another similar intervention into photography's problematic lack of diversity also premiered in 2017. Diversify Photo — a list of hundreds of editorial photographers of color — was planned and produced by photojournalist and photo editor Brent Lewis as a resource for photo editors who claim to be incapable of finding such photographers. Lewis indicates this project came to fruition when he began to recognize how few black photographers were hired for editorial work. He says, “it started to beg the question of why can't editors find black folks? Why can't they find and hire people who aren't the usual suspects?” From that simple query, the idea for a database of minority photographers was born. Like the functionality of the African PhotoJournalism Database and Women Photograph's database, Diversify Photo is a list that features photographers of color (primarily America and Canada-based), offering photo editors a resource to find more than the “usual suspects.”

One of the stumbling blocks to having that breadth of photojournalists with diverse backgrounds is a difficult-to-eliminate class disparity. Those who have access to elite schools, financial security and existing networks in newsrooms are more likely to succeed. Specifically in

photojournalism, those who have the economic capital to purchase camera equipment, keep up with rapidly changing technology and self-fund photo projects abroad are more likely to win recognition and assignments. Though Brent Lewis was awarded a coveted spot at the 2012 Eddie Adams Workshop, he acknowledges the inaccessibility of even that tuition-free training ground for young photojournalists. Despite the program's emphasis on keeping the opportunity tuition-free, the costs surrounding such opportunities can be insurmountable for emerging photojournalists from underprivileged backgrounds. "You have to have the work to even get in, then you have to be able to pay the \$50 entry fee, then you have to be able to afford the rooming cost and the travel cost," says Lewis.

Lewis speaks to the economical capital often requisite for successful photojournalism careers, but there is another aspect of achieving acclaim as a visual journalist frequently overlooked in discussions of accessibility. Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu posited there are always three forms of capital at play in a capitalistic society: economic, cultural and social. The first comes from money or other things immediately convertible into money such as property. Cultural capital is an accumulation of an individual's knowledge, skills and behavior that symbolically demonstrates social status and can potentially be converted into economic capital. Social capital centers the use of social networks which are typically accrued through access to cultural and/or economic capital. (Bourdieu 1986) I use these three forms of capital to map onto a photojournalist's professional trajectory in order to unpack problems of accessibility within the industry.

For many aspiring photojournalists, a camera is necessary as early as high school in order to produce a portfolio that will gain entree to a visual journalism undergraduate program. An example of this is the admission procedures and photo gear necessities at Ohio University's

School of Visual Communication, one of the most prestigious visual communication programs in the world. The program's faculty includes two-time Official White House Chief Photographer Pete Souza and its students frequently win top honors in the Hearst Photojournalism Awards, the college equivalent to the Pulitzer Prize. While the program's website encourages interested high school students to apply even if they don't have portfolios, the site then goes on to inform potential students of the following photographic equipment stipulations:

“It is highly recommended that all students in the school have their own computer and a portable hard drive with at least 1 TB of data storage for use in completing class assignments. . . . Photojournalism students entering VICO 2390, a photojournalism class (which is taken during the fall semester of one's freshman year), must own or have full-time access to at least one professional-level 35mm DSLR camera, two lenses, and necessary accessories. One lens should have a 28mm or wider focal length (or digital equivalent) with an f/2.8 or faster aperture. The second lens should be a 135mm to 200mm equivalent focal length, also with a f/2.8 or faster aperture. Zoom lenses are also acceptable if they meet the fixed aperture requirement of f/2.8.”

The website goes on to say that students have access to the university's media lab to checkout equipment 24 hours a day, but that all students should have their own camera, accessories and computer by the beginning of their sophomore year. The total market costs for the equipment described above is more than \$5,000³⁴, which does not include a laptop and industry-standard photo editing software that could add at least another thousand dollars to that total. Ohio University has clearly stated the expectation that aspiring photojournalists have several thousand dollars in startup funds merely to learn how to do the job of a news photographer.

While it's not surprising photographers need to purchase camera equipment, a less

³⁴ The costs for equipment were pulled from BHPPhoto & Video, an industry-recognized camera equipment store that has discounted prices. Included in this total is a Canon ESO 6D DSLR camera body, 24-70 mm f2.8L zoom lens, 70-200 mm f2.8L zoom lens, Canon Speedlite 600EX, Canon camera battery, ScanDisk 32 GB memory card and a portable G-Technology 2 TB G-Drive. Prices pulled from www.bhphotovideo.com on Feb. 27, 2018.

apparent financial requirement is the cost of travel for personal photographic projects. In Chapter Three's photo award analysis, I highlighted statistics indicating what projects are most frequently awarded by World Press Photo and POYi. Those statistics support the hypothesis that photojournalists receive accolades for traveling to foreign nations and depicting communities outside of their own. Whereas professional photographers might be sent to do such work using funds from NGOs or editorial publications, aspiring PJs must often produce the photographic projects that prove their abilities using funds of their own.

Once a photographer has completed such long-term photo essays, it is cultural and social capital they will likely accrue. With images of war-torn countries, impoverished communities or other social-issue focused work in hand, photographers can then apply for grants to do more work along those lines, receive respected awards and compete for paid assignments from lauded publications. Those photographers who utilize their economic ability to fund long term projects, pay for professional quality gear and attend respected universities can achieve the stylistic trappings of a pro photographer. Their knowledge, skills and behavior are now aligned with industry standards. The next step in a successful photographic career is entering those projects into respected awards, using that work to apply for grant funding to do the next photo project and/or to clinch high-profile freelance assignments. Once a photographer's name is circulating in awards circles, they're more likely to receive grants and assignments giving them access to institutional networks via mentorship opportunities, like that of the elite Eddie Adams Workshop which Lewis acknowledges was a career jumpstart for him. Essentially photojournalists emerge as relevant in the industry only AFTER they have turned existing economic capital into cultural capital, which then accesses social capital.

These interwoven modalities of accruing capital are written into the work of

photojournalism, but not made apparent as a necessity for a successful career in the industry. For any attempting to become professional news photographers who do not have the requisite economic capital at the outset, achieving the necessary cultural and social capital is a constant uphill battle. For people of color and women, the near absence of photojournalists who look like them is an additional hardship. Social networks that anoint a smooth entrance to the industry are not as readily available for these groups as for their white male counterparts whose embodiment of privilege masquerades as merit and props them up throughout their careers. The connection between race and class is as prevalent in photojournalistic hiring as elsewhere in American society, a connection often underscored in our news coverage but overlooked in our newsrooms. Like so many of the social institutions it reports on, news media itself often reproduces the inequality it tries to expose.

I have outlined how individuals gain power and access through these flows of capital. Imperative to this analysis of potential interventions into industry standards of hegemony is an understanding that collectively these engagements of capital accumulate power in the overall network. Organizations such as Diversify Photo and Women Photograph have used a database format and social media as intervening tools to achieve Alternate Networked Power and Network-making Power in the news photography industry. While World Press Photo, Blink, Everyday Africa, Majority World and Native's efforts to create counterpoints to the monopoly of Western/white photojournalistic viewpoints in global media is promising, the integration of diverse visions among American photojournalism remains mostly stagnant. Two initiatives are entering the fray with strategies that attempt more holistic approaches of countervisuality and a variety of alternative modes in photojournalism's network of power.

6. Reclaiming Authority

In April of 2017, Laura Beltrán Villamizar of Native contacted me saying she was in discussion with Peter DiCampo of Everyday Africa and Shahidul Alam of Majority World spurred by my Feb. 2017 Newsweek article on photojournalism's diversity problem. She said the three of them wanted to “really invest in a full body of research on the topic” of understanding and altering the predominantly white, male, Western perspective in documentary photography. As both a professional visual journalist/photo editor and burgeoning media studies scholar deeply interested in addressing that same problem, I was uniquely positioned to help achieve this research-based goal. Over the course of several months, we brought Daniella Zalcmán of Women Photograph and Brent Lewis of Diversify Photo into the mix and began outlining a plan of action. The first goal was to circulate a survey of professionals working across a variety of positions in visual journalism and to capture a snapshot of the industry that included questions around race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status and potential limits to access within the profession. We hoped to eliminate the boundaries between industry and academy on this particular subject and encourage acknowledgement that journalism and social science research are, or ought to be, twinned forms of knowledge production. At the time, Everyday Africa had recently brought together all of the Everyday Instagram accounts that grew out of their initial foray into publicizing quotidian life of the majority world. The umbrella organization, titled the Everyday Projects, was creating a visual media literacy curriculum aimed at educating youth and underprivileged communities to recognize and interrogate problematic visual representations of race, gender, class and country. As we talked across our varying goals and projects already underway, it occurred to me that what we were collectively striving toward was instituting wide-reaching tactics of Alternate Network-making Power. Through education, mentorship, research

and analysis, and reframing of visual narratives, we built an initiative to understand and interrogate those established structures of power. Via this gathering up of disparate knowledge, industry access and resources we used existing structures of power in concert with new opportunities for photographers previously subjugated by those structures. In so doing, we aimed to intervene in the passing of journalism institutional power from one hegemonic generation to the next. We spoke of it as “decolonizing photography” and titled our decolonizing effort Reclaim Photo.

Once Reclaim launched in August of 2017, our efforts were quickly profiled in the New York Times LENS photo blog, Bloomberg Businessweek and Photo District News Magazine. Though our progress has since been slow as we accumulate responses to the professional visual journalism survey, the sheer proposition of decolonizing photography has appeared to invigorate new and existing discussions/interventions around diversifying perspectives in visual media production. One example of this is the Women of Color in Visual Media Symposium held in Los Angeles on November 2, 2017 that started as a gathering of like minds and begat its own movement.

Ten black, Asian and Latina women working in visual media across America collected in the small front room of LA’s Las Fotos Project, a nonprofit organization that mentors teenage girls using photography. I was invited to the day-long meeting of photographers and filmmakers to speak on Reclaim Photo’s efforts as a sort of resource fair among like-minded individuals. However, as we began sharing our experiences in the industry, the conversation quickly shifted to complaints of having few, if any, mentors that reflected our POC experiences/backgrounds; anecdotes of having our work constantly evaluated, questioned and held to standards our male and white peers were not privy to or being offered lesser rates for assignment works than those

different-bodied peers. Freelance food and editorial photographer Oriana Koren told a story of a Japanese classmate during her master's coursework. She recalled that when a professor showed the work of a Japanese artist in the class, her Japanese classmate cried. "She said she'd never seen any photographers who looked like her shown in a photo class." I relayed my experience of working for six months on a 4,500 word cover story for a journalism trade journal that typically paid \$1/per word and being asked to write it for free. Though that article went on to win a coveted FOLIO B2B Magazine Article of the Year Award, earning recognition for the journal and its attached journalism foundation, I was never paid. I wondered aloud if the same unpaid labor proposition would have been offered (or accepted) by any of my white and/or male colleagues. As we each offered these moments that underscored our vulnerable positions in the photo industry, the climate in the room transitioned from collegial abstract information sharing to collective theorizing on what strategies for affecting real change in visual media production might look like.

Sophia Allison, an experimental documentary filmmaker and freelance editorial photographer, spoke passionately about her recent body of work that incorporates visual representations of afro-futurism as an attempt to "reclaim the self." Documentary filmmaker and photographer Tia Thompson mused that they "know the power of this work." As the day wound down, we outlined preliminary plans for a collective of female-identified and non-gender binary photographers/filmmakers of color that would counter existing hegemonic practices within lens-based media. While we acknowledged the efforts of lauded organizations such as the ones I have profiled in this chapter as case studies of interventionist tactics, we were in collective agreements that databases, surveys and social media-based alternate visual narratives still owned by white men were not enough. We aligned our various ideas for potential projects with three columns

that acted as both demands on the industry and declarations of the power we sought to claim in the visual media profession: Accountability, Accessibility and Authority. Under Accountability was a guidebook on ideas of diversity, equity and inclusion for news media practitioners similar to that of the global journalism industry standard the Associated Press Stylebook; campaigns to call out and boycott problematic individuals and specific instances of sexism, racism, ableism and imperialist approaches in visual media; and publication of survey data and lists of ally editors and organizations. In the Access column, we planned a collection of information on photo/film internships, grants, awards, residencies, mentorship opportunities and resources on how to negotiate rates, access editors and pitch publications that would be available for minoritized photographers and filmmakers. Under Authority, we projected the creation of workshops and consulting structures to train newsrooms, educational programs and organizations on inclusive practices to overhaul established hegemonic structures internally; a yearly conference for marginalized visual media producers and exhibits of photography and film that shifts the visual narrative away from historically negative depictions of women and racial minorities. We called this initiative Authority Collective.

I argue Authority Collective (AC) is an attempt to address all networked power at once by centering an intersectional approach which foregrounds the knowledge and experiences of the media industry's most marginalized producers — women of color. AC seeks to own the means of representational production in visual media (Networking Power); call out hegemonic forces at play and insist on producing new standards in the newsroom that include and encourage highlighting WOC perspectives (Networked Power); utilize diversity style guides as equally important in journalistic practice and offer consultation services on how to articulate and maintain new standards (Network / Network-making Power); provide mentorship and resource

support for WOC to get into the industry and report on/fight back against problematic practices they experience within the professional environment (Network-making / Networked Power). It is attempting to create an inclusive space of visual media production accessible to and engaging the experiences of womyn³⁵ and people of color that holistically affirms our authority. AC's ideological foundation and practical applications represent a collaborative amassing of counterpower and producing countervisualities. As of this writing, the Collective is working toward an official launch and premiere of the initiative in March 2018, so the potential success or effectiveness of such an approach is undetermined.

7. Conclusion

The dual powers that photojournalists and photo editors have as eyewitnesses and curators of knowledge cannot be overstated. We shape the world in our own image: our individual understandings of truth and reality, our personal experiences and backgrounds do play into the scenes we choose to capture, how we frame them and whether we find them deserving of public dissemination. There is so much more to the photographs we take, select and publish than aesthetics and the reality of any individual moment. Rather, each frame captured is a single millisecond in a sociocultural, historical reality that predates subject, photographer and viewer. Each moment framed and the meaning with which it is imbued will outlive all three as well, and most importantly, will become a part of rendering relevance and rationale to that sociocultural fabric. Crowder stated eloquently that “the lens through which you tell the story matters as much as the story itself.”

³⁵ A term meant to be inclusive of those assigned-female-at-birth, trans, non-gender conforming and various other embodiments aligned with the feminine in its multitudinous presentations and experiences.

The eyes and mind behind the camera clearly matter, perhaps more than the photojournalism industry has been willing to or capable of admitting. My quantitative research detailed in Chapter Three has identified a skew toward a hegemonic vision of the world that is consistently reified in daily news imagery, heroicized in yearly award competitions and publicized as the truth of global life. But this is a single story of the multitudinous experiences we could potentially be capturing to have a far more complete understanding of human existence and the frequently invisible social, economic, historical and political threads that bind us across miles, identities and nations. When the world is watching Ferguson/France/Baltimore burning, New Orleans flooding, Haitians/Syrians dying en masse, these moments that make plain the cost of chattel slavery and a colonial context cannot be understood effectively through itself a colonial lens and logics of paternalism or criminalization.

Though photojournalistic production has retained ties to tropic visual narratives that operate as tools of empire and remained a primarily hegemonic visual perspective, there are glimmers of change within the industry, rapidly expanding and intersecting. Initiatives such as the African Photojournalism Database, Majority World, Native Agency, Diversify Photo, Women Photograph and Everyday Africa are resulting in a key shift that have already produced new modes of engagement exemplified by Reclaim Photo and Authority Collective. These are entities and individuals who recognize the importance of diversity behind documentary image production and are actively working to effect change in that direction. Yet, in the examples of Majority World, Native, Women Photograph and Diversify Photo, the question that purportedly animated these organizations' leaders to mobilize was the industry's flippant insistence it could not find local photographers, women or people of color for assignment work. A century-old industry that has no problem producing, finding and retaining the appropriate caliber of white

man declined to expend energy, resources and capital to train and mentor those outside of its existing, hegemonic network. The impetus was on the marginalized communities to scramble for resources, recognition and validation on the international scale. In order to effectively address this issue at the heart of news image production it must first be acknowledged that it is a problem.

There are a multitude of thoughtful, well-considered editorial articles on America's racial tensions being written by various journalists and lauded cultural observers such as Te-Nehisi Coates and Teju Cole. What appears to be an increasingly accepted discussion about race and racism as played out in the general population — a conversation many are eager to fill newspaper opinion pages with — remains obscure where journalism is concerned with itself. Through the professional ethics and practices of objectivity in journalism, we have consistently found ways to humanize most members of American society, from convicted rapists³⁶ to murderous white supremacists³⁷. Depictions of black Americans rarely receive such gregarious treatment in news media, however, whether in images or the written word. We must commit to challenging all prevailing and easy narratives, affirming a desire to do both good, veracious, ethical storytelling *and* to take into consideration a multifaceted perspective we may be entirely unfamiliar with. This originates with the journalists on the ground and continues with the editors making choices in the newsroom.

Around the same time of the discussion surrounding those two Ferguson images, the newsmagazine I spoke of made a frustrating error in judgement regarding visual racial

³⁶ I could reference a multitude of recent examples here, but specifically point to the news media's depiction of Brock Turner, a young white male convicted of rape in court, but described in the news post-conviction as a "star swimmer" and Stanford student. This is in direct contrast to the way news media frequently portrays unarmed black men shot by police officers as criminals. (Lachance, TheIntercept.com)

³⁷ Similarly, convicted murderer Dylan Roof is written about in news media with empathy as the victim of domestic abuse. (Otis, NYDailyNews.com)

representation. It ran a cover photo of a chimpanzee to illustrate its feature story on the West African Ebola crisis of 2014. At every point in the decision-making process for that cover image, the journalists making the decisions were white: the art directors who pitched the idea, then sourced the imagery and the editors who approved it. As soon as I and another minority colleague saw the published cover, we were horrified and frustrated. Had either of us been consulted in the decision-making, we would have pointed out the historical use of monkey imagery to dehumanize black people and strongly advised against that photograph. Instead, the newsmagazine faced accusations of racism and severe criticism in the wake of its monkey cover, and I watched as a newsroom of baffled journalists struggled with the idea that they could be deemed racist. This episode again underscores the necessity of a diverse and inclusive newsroom, where journalists from divergent backgrounds can offer perspectives and insight across the spectrum of news coverage.

Ultimately, photojournalism is a mirror to democratic society, both in its projection of the world by way of storytelling and how the industry itself functions within the larger social landscape. Providing opportunities to minorities and non-Western photojournalists must become a goal of the entire industry. Where the news photo industry fails to address inequities in its ranks, it fails to be a credible contributor to journalism as the “fourth estate”³⁸ and falls prey to the dangers of a single, Eurocentric, story.

Chapter Four uses a portion of previously published work from a *Nieman Reports* article. Pixley, Tara. The dissertation author was the sole researcher and author of this material.

³⁸ The term “fourth estate” comes from the traditional European concept of three estates: clergy, nobility, and commoners. The fourth estate would then be the press. It can also be mapped onto the American concept of the three branches of democratic government: the judiciary, the legislative and the executive. The fourth estate in this paradigm would also be the news media. (Schultz 49)

CONCLUSION: Toward a Feminist Futurity

The ideas discussed in this dissertation are based on a belief that photojournalism affects the way people understand the world and we, as the viewing public and citizens, are primed to accept the information we receive as truthful, accurate and objective. Photography is, however, an inherently subjective art form. Camera mechanics do not actually imbue the craft of image making with more verity than any other processes of visual documentation. By identifying photojournalism as a scopic regime and analyzing controversies within the news photography industry, I have argued that photographer subjectivity is especially key to photojournalistic production but that it is erased from the frame and not considered in news image consumption by audiences. Consequently, intent is integral to understanding what motivates visual journalism production and what slippages might arise in the processes of news image making.

Via content analysis of award-winning news images over seventeen years of Photographer of the Year International and World Press Photo, I drew attention to the dearth of diverse viewpoints behind the photojournalistic camera. The data accumulated in that analysis indicate that a white, Western and male worldview is central to news imagery that circulates globally. Further, I underscored the cultural and economic capital necessary to achieve and maintain a career in visual journalism is often connected to, even predicated on, winning these respected contests with their resultant access to material resources, recognition and opened doors.

News photography as an industry is built on a seemingly unreflexive homogenous perspective and is inherently inaccessible to people from lower socioeconomic statuses, which disproportionately affects the very communities most photographed by news media producers. Connecting this knowledge with my previous argument that photojournalism is a scopic regime

which produces knowledge while subsuming the methods of that production and, as such, maintains discursive, representational power, it becomes apparent a new methodology/modality for seeing and documenting the world is necessary. My final chapter makes plain that many who work in and around the visual journalism industry are recognizing and responding to the need for an intervention into these core issues. I have emphasized countervisuality as a method of approach and resistance and insisted undermining hegemonic vision is possible and must necessarily be an intentional intervention into histories of visual narratives that subjugate and Other.

For journalism to truly be in service to the democratic citizenry, we need to first recognize its alignment with centuries of destructive discursive framing and then identify steps to radically alter the reification of implicit bias existing within those frames. The danger of a single story is that it produces stereotypes and “the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story.” (Adichie 2009)

Photojournalism has since its inception been circulating a singular perspective shared across a huge swath of people stationed and situated internationally whose collective vision constitutes a single story. The perspectives of those most photographed, interviewed, discussed, victimized and vilified — these are the experiences, backgrounds, and worldviews left out of the conversation about themselves. In light of the research presented by this dissertation, the questions to attend to now are how to open up the closed-off avenues of news media professionalization to a body of media producers as diverse as the stories we cover? How to combat centuries of paired visual colonization and ideological racism within the pages of our purportedly neutral news media? I have argued that social media and aligned visual platforms might offer opportunities for intentional interventions into the visualization of minoritized

bodies, communities and places. My call to the documentary photography and photojournalism profession is to take up Donna Haraway's feminist objectivity (Haraway 2002) and Trinh T. Minh-Ha's "speaking nearby" (Minh-Ha 1992) methodology of visual documentation, each embracing the documenter's embodiment in the spaces of visual capture. The possibilities of a feminist documentary ethic and aesthetic might allow for new modalities of representing without reifying problematic ideologies mapped onto non-hegemonic communities. Changes within the visual media industries are imperative and should be a project taken up by those with the power to affect change in the spaces they built in their own image. Such structural and holistic change, however, cannot be realized without interventions from outside the industry as well. We need these initiatives, organizations and social media campaigns that educate, upend and interrogate the normative, the status quo. In so doing, they align with what bell hooks' termed the "oppositional gaze" (hooks 1992), wherein those who are looked at, consumed and contained within that vision turn the gaze back on those who seek to Other and exclude the perspective of the oppressed. I expand hooks' intent here to include numerous other minoritized, devalued and misrepresented populations alongside the black female gaze that rebels against normative white heteropatriarchy. The Chinese worker who captures her daily life in a rice field and shares her truth with thousands of Instagram followers; the black man who films the unwarranted arrest of his fellow black man and uses that visual to highlight and protest police brutality; the Mexican migrant who live records their trek through perilous countries toward an unyielding border wall: these are the amassing eyes turning their gaze on the hegemonic order and forcing others to look with opposition, in rebellion, in resistance. This is public service to democracy. This is the future of visual journalism.

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