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Abstract

In this essay I address how photographs function across different realms of popular experience. Tracking assumptions about the use of photographs in religion, art, advertising, law, politics, and journalism, I argue that the easy transportability of the photograph and claims to its indexical force hide its role in blurring the realms that constitute popular experience. Such blurring takes place even when the experience involved might have real consequences for the body politic, creating a need to better consider how photographs function differently in the various contexts that put them to use.

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Images travel well. Like those pieces of apparel that we slip into our luggage for the unpredictable events of lengthy journeys, images are thought to adapt readily to the various domains in which they travel. But an image in the courtroom is radically different from an image in an art gallery, and the easy transportability of images coaxes us not to consider those differences. In this essay I address some of the ways in which a particular kind of image—photography—functions differently in the various realms of popular experience in which it is found. I argue that the photograph's transportability hides its role in blurring the realms that constitute popular experience. Moreover, such blurring takes place even when the experience involved might have real consequences for the body politic.

Longstanding assumptions about images have established that they work as analogic rather than digital means of relay. Thought to play to the affect rather than the intellect and thought to operate independent of language, images provide arbitrary, composite, schematic, conventionalized, and simplified representations of the world (Barthes, 1977; Sekula, 1984). Images display varying degrees of iconicity, indexicality, and syntactic indeterminacy (Messaris, 1997). All images record a point of view, although they may borrow from different premises and rhetoric in shaping a given depiction. In this regard, they are a valuable, but highly patterned, vehicle of relay.

Two revolutions in the production of images—the ascent of the printed image in the 15th and 16th centuries and the rise of the photograph (and related developments of film and television) in the 19th and 20th centuries—changed the appearance of images. In both cases, black and white gave way to color, privately viewed images became more public, images came to be more easily repeated, and the sharing of images became more workable (Burke, 2001; Ivins, 1953). Against these two temporal nodes, broader developments in image culture generated various possibilities through which images could take shape, and today they comprise a range of forms, from sculpture and artifacts to paintings and film. Observers have not agreed which aspects of images deserve study, and their debates oscillate between the

positivists, who believe that images convey reliable information about the external world, and the structuralists, who assert that they do not. The latter group focuses attention on the picture itself, its internal organization, the relations between its parts and between this picture

and others in the same genre, while the positivists attempt to peer through the picture to glimpse the reality beyond it. (Burke, 2001, p. 184).

Neither side of the debates provides the whole continuum of how best to understand images, but the premises of each can and should be used to augment the other.

Different kinds of images work in different ways. As a particular kind of image, the photograph draws from indexicality and denotation—the power to capture reality as "it is"—to a greater degree than do other types of images. It is "a record of things seen," an analogue of reality (Berger, 1972). Shaped by "the sense that it is a realist medium," photography has always been understood through its "precise, mechanical and impersonal rendering of the appearance of objects" (Slater, 1995, p. 220). This is not to say that photography operates through realism alone. Rather, photography works also through a connotative force. Connected with symbolism, generalizeability, and universality, photographs are assumed capable of invoking broad symbolic systems that draw on certain meanings for the visual representations that are displayed. This means that photographs work by twinning denotative and connotative forces, by which the ability to depict the world as "it is" is matched with the capacity to couch what is being depicted in a symbolic frame that helps us recognize the image as consonant with broader understandings of the world (Barthes, 1977; Hall, 1974).

Through this tension between denotation and connotation, the photograph represents the world via various traits that establish its singularity: its reduction of the world into miniature size, its supposed "flatness," its size and shape, its traditional sidestepping of color, and its fixation on a single moment in time (Clarke, 1997). Widely hailed as a democratic medium—for its focus on the everyday and the popular, its ease and low cost of operation, and its accessibility (Marien, 1997)—it makes sense that photographs would emerge as an important and wide-ranging tool of the public domain.

Yet not all photographs are the same. In Sturken and Cartwright's (2001) words, "images are not free" (p. 189). As Tagg (1988) argued, the history of photography "has no unity. It is a flickering across a field of institutional spaces" (p. 63). In fact, one of the most powerful aspects of photography is its flexibility in supporting the aims of different modes of experience. Using indexicality or referential force as a springboard, photographs operate by activating connotative meanings that are most effectively suited to the contexts into which they travel. Photographs display a chameleon-like effect, by which they take on the attributes of their destinations as they move onward. This is not a new notion. As Tagg (1992) established long ago:

What we must ask is not: What do these photographs authenticate? But: How were they articulated in and how did they articulate an argument? Whose was this argument? How was it validated? Who spoke it? To whom? Under what conditions? To what ends? With what effects? In other words, not: What do these albums re-cord, re-flect. Re-present? but: What did they do? (p. 103-104)

All of this is a long way of saying that images work differently in the contexts that put them to work. They adopt and adapt to the attributes of the domain into which they are imported, and

they do so by putting indexicality into the service of the different aims and meanings that are relevant to each domain. It is worth considering each of these domains in turn.

PHOTOGRAPHS AND RELIGION

Of all domains of popular experience, religion was among the first to establish a reliance on images. The power of images was seen to be both negative and positive: On the one hand, a distrust of images was reflected in both the Second Commandment and its prohibition of idolatry and the iconoclastic conflicts of the Byzantine Empire during the 8th and 9th centuries, when sculptures and paintings were systematically destroyed. On the other hand, a reverence for images was displayed in the earliest days of the Catholic Church, when a cult of images was set in place. Images and image practices were both elaborated and revered: people bowed before images and kissed them or paid homage; when insulted, images were said to respond by crying or bleeding (Belting, 1994). In some circles, pictures were denigrated, said to be the Bible of the illiterate. In others, they were praised, and, when added to Christian religious texts, seen as a way of helping readers in the task of devotional visualization (Burke, 2001; Freedberg, 1989). Although the cult of images—largely related to icons and relics—was set asunder by the Reformation, the emphasis on things visual and on the allusive power of images was nonetheless established as a relevant part of religious experience. Martin Luther was said to have encouraged the use of images in the form of woodcuts "for the sake of children and the simple folk [who were] more easily moved to "recall sacred history by pictures and images than through mere words of doctrines" (Scribner, 1995, p. 244). In Judaism and Islam, where images of human figures were prohibited and hearing was valued over seeing (Kochan, 1997), artistic representations nonetheless adorned both synagogue interiors and various religious documents, such as marriage contracts (Ketubot) and Passover (Haggadot; Sivan, 2002), although they tended not to include human figures. Injunctions intermittently prohibited against representing Buddha because it was thought to be irreverent. Said to fulfill aims related to "creating the experience of the sacred," images in religious contexts came to be used for "reasons of indoctrination, as objects of culture, as enablers of meditation and as weapons in controversies," thus giving shape to collective religious experience (Burke, 2001, p. 47). It is no surprise, then, that contemporary visual culture retains its hold on popular religious experience of all denominations. Religious images have tended to be formalistic, reverent, modest, and highly patterned. Loosely stated, different kinds of images have come to the forefront of different religions. Painting has remained important to Christianity, calligraphy to Islam, landscape gardens to Buddhism, and architecture to Judaism (Slater, 1995). Through diverse visual forms, images have come to be thought of as carriers of religious devotion, appraised and evaluated for their capacity to facilitate its establishment and maintenance. Equally important, popular religious images—such as living-room paintings of Christ—have naturalized religious ideas, making them into self-evident dimensions of collective life (Morgan, 1998).

Against this rich history of religious visual culture, photographs were late arrivals. And yet, since the camera's popularization in the mid-1800s, photography has appeared in diverse religious settings. Within years of the camera's invention, so-called "photographic miracles" were already being recorded by members of the Catholic Church (Apolito, 1998). During the 19th century, an interest in spirit photography and spirit materializations, in which white markings on

photographs and other techniques involving imprints from dead people were seen as evidence of a spirit's presence, enhanced photography's relevance for religious devotees (Coates, 1911/1973). Such photographs included images said to exhibit bizarre behavior when viewed, those that depicted supernatural occurrences, and those believed to have been created by a divine source; often said to contain prophetic information, these images played a critical role in Christianity (Pagliaroli, 2004).

Variouly connected to the role of belief and devotion in enhancing collective experience, images continue to have relevance in contemporary religious settings. Certain Buddhist healing therapies have employed Kirlian photography to promote healing through a display of bodily disturbances in the electromagnetic field. In Japan, vernacular photographs are central in establishing Buddhist pet cemeteries (Chalfen, 2003), and temples are regularly adorned by personal photographs deposited to bring good fortune to their bearers. In Catholicism, a continued focus on so-called "miraculous photographs" and other faith-inspired photographic "apparitions said to record paranormal phenomena and produce picture miracles has been seen as a means of generating faith" (Apolito, 1998; Wojcik, 1996). Photography has not only been shown to encourage New Age pilgrimages to momentous natural sites, such as mountains and unusual rock formations, but "it is doubtful whether New Age nature religion could have emerged ... were it not for the now-ubiquitous image of the whole earth as seen from space" (Ivakhiv, 2003, p. 98). Only in Judaism and Islam does the injunction against creating graven images prohibit the display of photographs in religious venues, where the artist's responsibility "is not to imitate creation — that leads to idolatry, which is making the dynamic world static and then worshipping it, but rather to create new worlds" (Alexenberg, 1986, p. 18).

In a manner extending across all modes of visual representation, then, the photograph works in religious settings. Its indexicality has helped strengthen and focus devotion and signal collective religious and sacred experience. But it has been the photograph's connotative force—its capacity to symbolize the larger world as a place that values divinity, belief, worship, and some notion of a supernatural power—that has facilitated its use as part of popular religious experience.

PHOTOGRAPHS AND ART

Although the image's recognition as art draws from the earliest days of artistic display, it developed primarily during both the Renaissance and the Reformation. Not only did Protestant reformers during the Reformation seek to upset the cult of images as developed by the Catholic Church, but art was set up as a domain with a different kind of value for the bourgeois private markets of Europe, with its appreciation established on the basis of formalized aesthetic criteria. Images turned from religious content to portraits, mythical images, and secular, often sexual themes (Belting, 1994).

Thus was established a visual high ground, by which images came to be associated with an elevated set of characteristics related to their intrinsic worth. Here, the notion of "art for art's sake" played on the premise that images in art could exist in private and public settings, which over time came to include galleries, exhibits, and museums, simply for the sake of being seen. Alternative modes for appraising art developed, which varied by time period, school of interpretation, and other modes of evaluation. Despite the fact that images in art had much to do

with functions other than aesthetic appreciation—commerce and the establishment of market value for art work was one example (i.e., Warchol, 1995)—their formal, aesthetic traits continued to be seen as the crux of discussions about art and visual representation.

Photographs have coexisted uneasily with this premise in their recognition as works of art. Scharf (1979), for instance, recounted the complications involved in regarding photography as having the kind of formalistic traits prevalent among other types of artistic visual works. Historically, photographs became part of art through an attempt "to skirt objections of the medium's inartistic verisimilitude" (Marien, 1997, p. 87). Trying to advance the faculty of imagination more than that of imitation, art photographers at first consciously blended theater, printmaking, and painting with photography, posing and staging their objects more often than not. And yet, photographers using nude models in photographs during the mid-1800s were roundly critiqued, suggesting that the quandary of how to accommodate indexicality had no ready resolution:

On the one hand, practitioners of the medium were urged to stick to images of observable reality. On the other hand, the literalness of photography's delineation of observable reality denied the medium credit for originality and prevented it from being considered a fine art. (Marien, 1997, p. 88)

An ambivalence over the indexical traits of the photograph did not abate over time, and as photography became a more recognized mode of visual representation, those interested in its accommodation as art responded to its association with realism in diverse ways. Formalists like Clement Greenberg (1986) lamented that "photography is the most transparent of the art mediums ... [rendering] it difficult to make the photograph transcend its almost inevitable function as document, and act as a work of art as well" (p. 60); whereas John Szarkowski (1966) argued for a medium-specific understanding of the photograph that showed how artificial and conventionalized indexicality was. Other less formalistic critics, such as John Tagg (1988), Victor Burgin (1982), and Allan Sekula (1984), argued that photography's association with realism placed it outside of the aesthetic realm for social, contextual reasons. In Pierre Bourdieu's 1965/1990 words, "properly aesthetic consideration is entirely alien to photographic practice" (p. 59), with "the realization of the j. artistic intention ... particularly difficult in photography, because it is only with difficulty that photographic practice can escape the functions to which it owes its existence" (p. 71).

The ambivalence over indexicality forced repeated crossings of the line between those who valued it and those who did not. Critics voiced on the one hand an appreciation from the turn of the 20th century for photography's singular traits as realistic art, with work by photographers like Alfred Steiglitz and Laszlo Moholy-Nagy establishing photography as an art to be taken seriously. On the other hand, an insistence on photography's medium-specific traits that was connected with a decline in photographic formalism (i.e., Solomon-Godeau, 1991) facilitated the development of more conceptually driven art photography and eventually enabled postmodern photographers like Cindy Sherman and Barbara Kruger to use photography in critiquing social institutions. >. In more contemporary times, the relation between art and photography has moved markedly in the direction of valuing the latter: Certain observers argue that it is no longer possible to conceive of art without accounting for its relation to photography (Crary, 1990;

Krauss, 1985). Others maintain that a renewed regard for indexicality remains the most effective way to understand photographic art (Roberts, 1998).

Making photography part of art, then, has generated wide-ranging responses to the notion of indexicality that have not really resolved the problems it raised. Seen initially and over time as an obstruction to originality, it has become both a ground through which art photographers could create a different kind of aesthetic form and a first step toward authenticating the prism of reality as an entry into the art world. At the same time, the varying degrees to which indexicality has been seen as natural, rather than conventionalized and artificial, suggests that photography has provided only a stepping-stone into a domain that looks far more to connotation, symbolism, and meaning than to a delineation of the world in any sort of precise, realistic fashion.

PHOTOGRAPHS AND ADVERTISING

The images of advertising have always been regarded as tools of persuasion. Although commercial images were around in some form since at least the mid-1700s, the rise of the poster in the 1800s created the possibility to mount large colored lithographs in public spaces. Paris of the 1800s and early 1900s was riddled with such displays, which advertised services and goods as wide-ranging as bicycles, dance halls, and kerosene for lamps across the city (Burke, 2001). From the mid-1800s onward, advertisers began to use a repertoire of visual practices—decorative display type, engraved images of products, and illustrations that progressively took over the space available from the printed word—and the public's attention was increasingly captured through visual rather than textual strategies. Photography complicated the picture by using indexicality to persuade more effectively. As photography became a more popular and familiar medium of visual display, there was an accompanying thrust to accommodate what was largely perceived as a divide between polemical and factual images and, by extension, between illustrations and photographs. Emboldened with their factual status, advertisers saw the value in using persuasive photographs in their advertising columns, even if they were misleading and retouched (Craig, 1992, 1999). Indexicality, in this regard, provided a stepping stone for creating consumer desire. As Craig (1999) commented,

Anything anyone desired became fodder for advertisements. In that sense, they were not about products but about readers and readers' desires...meant to be a dramatic scene that implored readers to change. They attempted to persuade people to enter into an imaginary world where human needs were fulfilled through the purchase of goods. (pp. 52-53)

The strategizing regarding the indexical force of the photograph facilitated the development of sophisticated advertising conventions. By the 20th century, an emphasis on so-called subliminal techniques of persuasion used psychology to drive public interest in consumer products. Contemporary images came to play three roles in the advertising world—eliciting emotions by simulating the appearance of real persons or objects, serving as proof that something happened, and establishing a link between the thing being sold and some other image—and advertisers relied on all three strategies to persuade in both explicit and implicit ways (Messaris, 1997). Prospective consumers were assured that they would receive the "real thing" if they bought. As Messaris argued, advertising "benefits from the indexicality of photography whenever a product's appeal is at least partly visual — a condition that covers a lot

of territory" (p. 135). "Having the truth on one's side [is] a valuable commodity in a competitive market" (Craig, 1999, p. 50).

Alongside presumptions of its truth-value, however, the connotative force of the photograph underscored much of its visual power. As Robert Sobieszek (1988) demonstrated, in their evolution from straight product images to today's elaborated and sophisticated visual messages, advertising photographs have both reflected the climate of the time while creating new representational parameters. Such power extends across the wide realm of contemporary advertising photography (Frosh, 2003). Although they were not often part of the explicit rhetoric about how advertisements were supposed to work, attributes of imagination, desire, and fantasy piggybacked on the photograph's fundamentally indexical function. In Sturken and Cartwright's (2001) words, photographs have remained a central part of "commodity culture and of consumer societies dependent upon the constant production and consumption of goods in order to function ... [because] they always carry with them the connotation of photographic truth yet are also a primary source of fantasy" (pp. 189, 209).

Indexicality, then, has set the stage for advertising doing its work more effectively but in ways that have had little to do with indexicality itself. The suggestion of indexicality has been more important in advertising than an adherence to its actual attributes. Instead, the indexicality of photographs in advertising has been used as a way to address the strategic goals of establishing consumer desire and fantasy.

PHOTOGRAPHS AND LAW

A connection between images and law draws from the idea that seeing is relevant to the workings of the courtroom and other legal settings. Frances Yates (1978) was instrumental in demonstrating how memory played on the capacity to visualize objects through mnemonic schemes, and her work was significant for its invocation of longstanding notions of rhetoric in explaining how objects could be brought into the courtroom and other public settings so as to help individuals remember testimony.

Within the legal context, the indexicality of images played a central role in establishing the relevance of visual representation, regardless of the mode of visuality used. From the earliest days of the legal system, courtroom drawings, fingerprints, and wanted posters have lent visual shape to the legal process. The ability to reconstruct identities, scenes, and actions as part of legal procedure established visual representation as a relevant mode of addressing the truth-value of a given legal proceeding. As the media of visual representation became increasingly common in other modes of public experience, visual representation worked its way into the heart of legal process.

With the introduction of photography, indexicality came even more to the foreground of considerations about the legal role to be played by images. Photographs had great value as evidence, setting up a regime of photographic truth through the legal system (i.e., Freund, 1936/1979). As Tagg (1988) established, the rhetoric of photography in law (as well as in the associated fields of medicine and social welfare) was that of "precision, measurement, calculation and proof, separating out its objects of knowledge, shunning emotional appeal and

dramatization, and hanging its status on technical rules and protocols whose institutionalization had to be negotiated" (p. 11).

It was thus no surprise that a different side to the relation between photographs and law emerged in regard to surveillance. Visuality asserted itself through a regime of control—what Martin Jay (1988) labeled a "scopic regime" that dated to the rise of scientific rationality during the Renaissance—and included the practices of "surveillance, record, training, discipline and reform" (Tagg, 1988, p. 9). j. Other observers warned of the deleterious effects of such broad observation:

Foucault (1977) lamented the institutional eye of the Panopticon, whereas Crary (1990) used the evolution of institutional observation as a prism through which to discuss photography's impact on different modes of artistic representation.

The relation among photographs, visual surveillance, and the practice of law enforcement was older and more central than might be initially understood from their targeting by contemporary observers. As early as the 1840s, portraits were included in French police records as part of their personal files on major criminal suspects (Burke, 2001). As documentary photography developed, police organizations appropriated the camera as a mode of collecting evidence, both about criminals, crime scenes, and victims. Part of this had to do with a large-scale interest in social reform, which "sought to educate a middle class public with images which made visible those areas of their society where injustice and poverty abounded" (Clark, 1997, p. 147). At the same time, photography came to be seen as a mode of enforcing authority on potentially disruptive sectors of society. By the late 20th century, youth became one of the most frequented photographic targets in this regard, and even its development as a subculture was formed as a stylistic response to the reality of continually being watched (Hebdige, 1988). In more contemporary times, the ideas of accommodating a "big brother" mode of surveillance, of fighting crime with closed-circuit cameras, and of relying on identity cards with photographic identification, have all become commonplace in diverse locations, although concerns over the diminished truth-value suggested by digital photographs have raised questions over their efficacy as legal tools (Gross, Katz, & Ruby, 2003).

The indexicality of the photograph, then, has made special sense for the legal domain. But this has been relevant insofar as its truth-value could be used to uphold legal procedures related to the provision of testimony, the prevention of crime, the enactment of surveillance and social control. Broadly speaking, the indexicality of the photography has made it possible for the legal domain to craft collective experience through an institutional rubric of power, authority, and visibility.

PHOTOGRAPHS AND POLITICS

A reliance on images has been intertwined with the political domain for as long as images have been in existence. In that the establishment of political life depends in part on the capacity to establish recognizable parameters around what is politically appropriate or workable for members of a given collective, the capacity to visualize, and not just imagine, aspects of the political domain has been crafted through images of all sorts. Statues of rulers were one of the oldest forms of visible public authority. During the late Middle Ages and onward, the public display of images of primarily secular rulers competed with the popularity of the religious cult of

images. Once hung in Versailles, "portraits of King Louis XIV of France were supposed to be treated with as much respect as if the king himself were in the room [and] viewers were not allowed to turn their backs on the images" (Burke, 2001, p. 59).

In different kinds of political regimes, images have invoked alternative responses, many of a more subtle nature. Linked loosely with a reliance on the visual domain to effect persuasion, authority, and control for political purposes, images offered ways to make abstract concepts visible and understandable (Edelman, 1971; Walzer, 1967). The visualization of political concepts that went beyond everyday life— notions of monarchy, democracy, and government, to name a few— was central to the workings of political and governmental authority. Images came to be used to stimulate "public debate, demystify power and encourage the involvement of ordinary people with affairs of state" (Burke, 2001, p. 79). Edward Nast's cartoons of Boss Tweed, for example, played a key role in establishing political consensus during the Progressive Era; although they were exaggerated and largely unrealistic, they were instrumental because they helped the public visualize what political leaders looked like (Leonard, 1986).

One of the most frequently addressed aspects of images and politics has been the study of propaganda. Krakauer (1947), for instance, detailed the ways in which cinematic images pushed certain understandings of the political domain on Germans during the years preceding the ascendance of National Socialism, which facilitated the Nazi rise to power. In later years, photographic images played a key role in facilitating a widely scoped consensus against the horrors of Nazi Germany (Zelizer, 1998). From events as wide-ranging as the birth of the American Republic, the Armenian Genocide, the Spanish Civil War, and the aftermath of the terror attacks of September 11, 2001, a wide variety of regimes depended on images— drawings, engravings, editorial cartoons, political posters, and photographs—to consolidate certain widely shared understandings of their actions in the public sphere.

As with other domains of experience, photographs became valuable in the political realm largely for their linkage with indexicality. By drawing on indexicality to serve as a guarantor of authenticity of a politician, candidate, issue, or problem (Messaris, 1997), photographs came to be seen by all involved parties—those being represented and those pushing the representations— as potentially powerful channels of public sentiment. The possibility of such a guarantee at times worked to photography's disadvantage, as in the wide-ranging responses by politicians intent on controlling the truth-value implied by images in the political domain (Levi Strauss, 2003). Photographs served to represent aspired or imagined dimensions of political reality, including socioeconomic conditions, the impact of political policies or regimes, and the vagaries of electoral process. They also were used to motivate collective response to problems or issues in need of public attention: One prime example was the photographic documentation of the Depression by the Farms Security Administration, which used the photograph's indexicality to record the economic ravages of the era (Finnegan, 2003).

At the same time, photographers—particularly photojournalists—have often seen their craft as having political import. David Levi Strauss (2003), for instance, detailed the intricate interweaving of aesthetics and indexicality that was needed for photographers to draw attention to the realities that they documented. Photographers like Sabastio Selgado and Susan Meiselas situated themselves in a trajectory that continued from the early documentary

photographers, that was motivated by a fervent desire to channel contemporary political realities into more desired forms.

Discussions of photographic images in politics also have focused on the implications of visual deception, by which an extensive history of practices of staging, editing, selectivity, mislabeling, and alteration undercut the image's indexical power (Messaris, 1997; Mitchell, 1992). Jamieson (1993), for instance, documented the ways in which images of politicians during political debates pushed certain interpretations of the campaign over others.

The role of indexicality in the intersection linking photography and politics has thus been connected with the capacity to secure collective support and ensure the workability of political power. Linked with persuasion, the truth-value of photographs has here been appreciated insofar as that truth-value could facilitate the relay of political messages. The larger meanings against which indexicality could be set in place have thus been as important as indexicality in the workings of photographs in the political domain.

PHOTOGRAPHS AND JOURNALISM

The indexicality of images has played out in compelling ways in journalism, where the image's capacity to be seen as true and accurate has come to uphold journalism's broader role in accounting for the real world. News images were first included as part of journalism during the early days of the printing press, and they expanded over time to include drawings, editorial cartoons, illustrations, and engravings. Visualization was important, given the longstanding drive to anchor the news by events and to reduce complex and complicated public issues to identifiable themes and scenes.

The photograph's incorporation in the news created new ways to cement the power of indexicality (Zelizer, 1995). Connected with the rise of documentary photography during the Depression, photojournalism—often called the "camera with a conscience" (Clarke, 1997, p. 145)—was seen as doing with more veracity what drawings, engravings, and paintings could not do. News images could record, document, and transcribe what was happening in public, beyond the reach of the human eye yet critical for the health of the body politic. An active and complete visualization of public events was thus seen as an integral part of journalism's goal of facilitating an informed public.

By the time of the ascendance of the wirephoto during the 1930s and 1940s, images were able to compete effectively with words in both speed of transfer and economy of relay. Both were capable of being transmitted within the strident temporal and geographic demands through which journalism operated, making them potentially equal contributors to the recording of news. Unlike words, however, the images' linkage with indexicality made them potentially the more powerful contributor, in that their presumed depiction of the world "as is" enhanced journalism's own authority for providing information about the world.

Images did not readily emerge into what some saw as an obvious place for them in news, however. For numerous standards regarding the desired use of news images were never developed. Not only were photojournalists seen as second-class citizens, called "a mechanical

side-line to the serious business of fact-narration, a social inferior" (Time, 1936, p. 20), but news organizations failed to develop a codified and agreed-on use of captions, credits, or even the placement of an image on a page or as part of a lineup. This by definition allowed for a leakage in standards of use, by which the connotation of a photograph became as important as its indexicality: An icon of atrocity stood in for the barbarism of the Holocaust as easily as it came to connote the war in Bosnia half a century later (Zelizer, 1998). In other words, images played to the opposite side of what journalists claimed: Rather than upholding photographic verisimilitude, they offered wide-ranging ways of using the photograph within a variety of contexts and employing a variety of connotative meanings.

Journalistic image-making operated through what Julianne Newton (2001) called "the burden of visual truth." Their incorporation within journalistic displays, such as the printed page, was both conventionalized and subject to the artistic and design-related parameters of the time (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2002). As news images moved across technologies—including film, television, and video—they took on the attributes of the technology at hand. The pictures of cable-driven news, for instance, played to immediacy more so than those of broadcast news (Zelizer, 1992), whereas the journalistic images of the Internet arrived in significant numbers, at great speed, and without extensive editing or fact checking (Gross, Katz, & Ruby, 2003). During the recent bombings in the London transport system, cell phone images provided critical documentation of what was transpiring. Regardless of the imaging technology, the public's need for truth-value tended to rise in times of crisis, and thus journalism displayed a turn to the visual whenever crisis arose (Zelizer, 2004). News in print, on television, and on the Internet displayed more pictures, more prominent pictures, and more memorable pictures than during noncrisis times.

But it was here that the indexicality of the news images has worn thin. Pictures have appeared numerous times, even in the same newspaper or journal. For example, following September 11, 2001, the same pictures reappeared for months after the events (Zelizer, 2002). Following a wide range of crisis-driven events, images have appeared in formulaic and predictable forms, iconic representations linking images of emaciated children with news about famine or scenes of large-scale physical devastation with natural disasters.

As indexical relays, then, news photographs have played a critical role in upholding the status and stature of accurate news recording. However, the claims to photographic verisimilitude that are wrapped within a photograph's use have far outweighed the actual uses to which images are put as part of journalism. Journalism has regularly forced the use of photos in decidedly nonindexical ways, in displays that are repetitive and have little connection with the news stories at their side, in a reliance on formulaic and frequently repeated stock images that are recycled in form and content across disparate news events, and in a gravitation toward memorability as one of the single most decisive attributes at play in a news organization's decision making about photos. All of these factors have lessened the relevance of the indexicality of news photographs, making connotation a critical way of pushing news agendas in strategic ways—even in journalism, which makes claims to indexicality above all else.

ON THE TRANSPORTABILITY OF PHOTOGRAPHS

Across these various areas of popular experience, photographs travel. In their diverse manifestations, they act as vehicles of religious devotion, as aesthetic relays, as tools of persuasion, fantasy, and desire, as facilitators of surveillance, as enablers of political control and coercion, and as carriers of meaning about public events. In each case, the indexicality of the image creates the ground by which the photograph makes sense in the various domains. But it only creates the ground and not the entire picture. For each domain of experience—religion, art, advertising, law, politics, and journalism—uses indexicality to different ends. That such ends are often antithetical to the others—we need only think of the differences generated by a photograph appearing as art or as journalism—makes the travel of photographic images worth closer attention.

Examples abound as to why the travel of photographs is troublesome. What does it mean when photographs of a 12-year-old Palestinian boy killed in the crossfire between Israeli forces and Palestinian militias adorn mosques? What does it mean when photographs of Abu Ghraib end up in a New York City art gallery, or people leaping to their deaths on September 11, 2001, comprise the raw material of a Chicago art installation that mimics the fall years later? What does it mean when an image of Nazi concentration camp survivors becomes the subject of an advertisement for the Church of Scientology? What does it mean when snapshots of Bosnian atrocities turn up as evidence in a war crimes tribunal about atrocities committed in other distant lands? What does it do to the public sphere when the same image is used to launch public debate and sell matchbox covers?

These cases, which together document the transport of photographs across the domains of religion, art, law, advertising, politics, and journalism, extend on Walter Benjamin's (1977) cautionary note about reproducibility freeing the object from its original identity and making it available for other uses. The alarm sounded by that note, although significantly modified by the changing status of the copy in contemporary culture, deserves pause in conjunction with the travel routes exhibited here.

For each of the cases mentioned here displays a free-wheeling relation with the indexicality of photography. That relation raises questions concerning the mode of popular experience whose rhetoric most directly invokes indexicality—journalism. Why is it that photographs originally etched into journalism are those images that tend to move elsewhere? Does the transport of images suggest that as a public we are no longer able to appropriate news images as provided? Is it easier to engage with an image of the tsunami in an art gallery than when it stares back at us from the cover of a news magazine? Although part of the answer may lie with the distinctions that separate natural from symbolic images, as suggested by Gross (1985), making it easy to transport the former into new contexts, the fact that news images—rather than advertising or legal images—constitute the bedrock of much of the visual transport across popular domains of collective experience suggests that journalistic images' particular version of indexicality may be critically important in ways we have not yet considered. It may also suggest that the appeal of news images goes beyond the news and that their power ultimately lies in the ease with which they can be picked up by other domains.

At the same time, the free-wheeling relations with indexicality that are evidenced here raise broader questions about the uses to which indexicality can be thoughtfully put. Indexicality

provides a bedpost from which the broader symbolic force of depictions takes shape, but it often does so despite rhetorical claims that maintain otherwise. This positions indexicality somewhat like a license to travel, but it is a license that is rarely rechecked once it is issued. The offering of claims to indexicality even when the travel of images undermines indexicality is an issue in need of closer attention. For what is the effect of seeing images move readily into settings that undo the fact that they were recorded at a given point in time and space? Most importantly, what does this do to our functioning as a body politic, a collective that depends on visualization as a way of knowing the world?

Peter Burke (2001, pp. 187-188), in his excellent volume on the uses of images, offered four strategies for considering the image, paraphrased here:

1. To understand the image in terms not of the social world directly but of its own contemporary views of that world.
2. To place the image in a series of contexts, including representational conventions, the interests of those involved, and the intended function of the image.
3. To regard series of images as more reliable than individual images.
4. To read between the lines of what is depicted, using even absences as significant clues to information.

Burke's (2001) strategies point us in the right direction. There is a need to foster a closer look at the ways in which photographs function differently across the domains of popular experience. Doing so forces us to reconsider not only the power of the photograph but also its boundaries in shaping the various settings which fashion our collective life.

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