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Circulation of Protest Photography

Lateness, Liveness and Objectivity in Newspapers and Social Media

INTRODUCTION

From the moment reproduction technologies were advanced enough to print photographs relatively quickly after they were shot, photos were used to illustrate news stories in newspapers and other media. Photographs are often perceived to be a reliable source as they depict what happened in front of the lens, provided the picture was not edited afterwards (Sekula, "Dismantling Modernism" 862). From the late 1960s onwards however, postmodernists started to question the objectivity of images, as a photographer has the possibility to choose what to show and what to leave out (861), which reached a new stage in the 1990s with the increasing availability of image editing software. Images are also influenced by the context the photograph is shown in (Price 90). Photographers for newspapers and other news outlets were expected to take photos that were as objective as possible (Lum 222). They would go to protests and document what they saw in photos which were later used as a visual representation accompanying the text of news articles. There was quite some time between the picture being taken and the circulation of the images, as the pictures had to be selected and distributed to news-agents before being used as an illustration in an article (Gervais 78).

Nowadays, three decades later, the circulation of images goes much faster, as photos and videos taken during protests are often not made by professional photographers but by protesters that take the images with their phones and can immediately post them online. The lateness made place for liveness in social media, creating a shift from events being constructed after the event (Roberts 290) to an immediate discourse on the various internet platforms, changing the idea of what is perceived to be authentic (Zappavigna 273). This leads to the pictures being less objective as the personal perspective of the protester assumes a more important role. Furthermore, social media became a way to share and distribute information around the world. The use of algorithms in social media results in the

polarisation of people as users mostly see content similar to the ones they have already interacted with (Gausen et al. 2), leading to a changed distribution and perception of photographs.

In this thesis the research question “How can we understand the construction of photographic objectivity in printed newspapers in the 1990s and the images circulated in present day social media?” will be answered. The terms objectivity, lateness, and liveness will be used to discuss this complex issue.

Literature Review

To gain knowledge on the subject, several sources were used that will be discussed in more depth in the Theoretical Framework. To get more in-depth knowledge about documentary photography, Martha Rosler’s “In, Around and Afterthought (On Documentary Photography)” (1993) and Derrick Price’s “Surveyors and Surveyed: Photography Out and About” (2015) were consulted. Rosler explores photography focusing on street photographic practices of the poor, discussing the tension between photographer and photographed, especially issues of privacy, exploitation and truthfulness of images. On the other hand, Derrick Price mostly focusses on the definition and difference between documentary and photojournalism, exploring these concepts in the context of war photography. He sheds more light on how photography can be used to document historical events and the role of newspapers in spreading information about these events, as well as discussing authenticity and the digital age.

Allan Sekula wrote more about the objectivity of photography. In “Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary (Notes on the Politics of Representation)” (1978) he wrote about the different ways photography is perceived, as subjective art and objective truth. For documentary photography this brings an extra tension, as the photographs are expected to

document an objective truth. Sekula explored this tension between art and fact, and the role of ideologies in interpreting images further in “The Traffic in Photographs” (1981). He does this by discussing views of modernist thinkers and pitting them against views on photography by postmodernists. Joel Snyder and Neil Walsh Allen also added to this discussion by going into more detail about the differences between art and photography. In “Photography, Vision, and Representation” (1975) they furthermore focus on the material aspects of photography and the camera, and in what way these influence how the picture looks.

Another important concept is lateness and how an event is constructed in the memory of society, which John Roberts discussed in “Photography after the Photograph: Event, Archive, and the Non-Symbolic” (2009). He also discusses that images of an event play an important role as a violent image of a protest constructs a vastly different view of an event in public memory than a peaceful image, exercising spontaneous and hidden power over the moment (Roberts 283). Lastly, the concept of violence of photography and issues of ownership are worked out in Ariella Azoulay’s “The Civil Contract of Photography” (2008).

Methodology

Pictures are a very broad concept, and there are a lot of different ways photography is perceived. Even in documentary photography there has been a vast evolution of how images should be handled and which pictures are up to the standards of news-photography. To get a better image of how pictures have been perceived and analysed, a context analysis will be done. Afterwards this theory will be used to perform a visual analysis of images from a newspaper and social media.

Two periods were chosen where imagery is used and viewed in vastly different ways. To narrow the scope, articles from *The New York Times* will be used as a case study to illustrate the theoretical concepts such as objectivity and framing in newspaper articles. *The*

New York Times was chosen as it is one of the largest newspapers in the United States, that both reaches and reports on events spanning the whole country. Furthermore, they have an online archive dating back to 1851. The articles from *The New York Times* will be compared to the way photography is used in protest posts on social media, specifically Instagram. On social media users are able to share any image or thought they might have, and the line between fiction and fact has been blurred. Furthermore, the concept of time has started to play a different role in social media as images can be streamed live to anywhere in the world. On Instagram these live stories can be viewed by anyone or any follower, depending on the settings. It furthermore is more focused on images, as there needs to be a visual to be able to post something, other than X. On the other hand, one cannot share any links and it is less common than on Facebook to repost something on your feed. Therefore, the content on Instagram has to be made, or at least uploaded, by the admin of an account. Newspapers from the 90s will be compared to present-day social media, as these are, in the specific decades, the most used media to spread and gain information about protests.

Protests around abortion rights will be used as a case study. In the United States abortion rights are an important sociological and political issue that have heated the public opinion since the 1960s and led to frequent protests from the pro-choice and pro-life groups. Furthermore, the two decades studied saw a rise in conservatism and with it a deterioration of the situation of women regarding their right to get an abortion in the United States. The resulting protests, both against and for abortion, have been covered through these two media outlets.

Structure

I will answer my research question by starting with an introduction and a discussion of theoretical concepts such as objectivity, lateness and framing as well as a discussion on

photography as art and the violation by photography. The second chapter will be about the circulation of protest photography in *The New York Times* in the 1990s and how the theoretical concepts such as framing influenced the reading of certain images. This chapter will also discuss how images in these articles may influence the reader's standpoint regarding abortion. Afterwards the discussion will continue with the circulation on social media. In the third chapter the use of protest photography and its circulation in social media and newspaper articles will be set against one another. This chapter will focus on concepts of liveness and lateness, discussing the change in which images are considered to be authentic, followed by a recap in the conclusion.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Objectivity in Photography

Photography can serve different means. The ability to have access to a two-dimensional copy of any event or moment that occurred results in photography being used for scientific purposes. Photography allowed the ability to capture every little detail and revisit the particular scene and moment in time. This use of photographs, however, is based on the assumption that photography can be viewed as an objective and scientific medium, that does not have a connection to social and cultural interventions (Lum 219). Photography is also seen as art, which does not require an objective representation of reality. These two ideas of the same medium conflict with each other, thereby creating tension (Price 90). In the modernist society of the previous century the idea of positivism was that the camera neutralises all the political and social ideas the photographer has by only showing exactly what is in front of the camera (Sekula, "Dismantling Modernism" 862). It was believed that "[p]hotography overcame subjectivity ... by *automatism*, by removing the human agent from the act of production." (qtd. in Snyder and Allen 145) Therefore, photography is often seen as non-symbolic, as not conveying any information other than the visible facts on the image, and does not need to be conceptualised and interpreted, as it will speak for itself (144). A lot of modernists believed that pictures could be a universal way of communication, as nearly everyone (regardless of language and culture) can see an image and understand what it depicts (Sekula, "The Traffic" 19). Looking at a photograph from a scientific perspective creates a distance between the overall image and its subject (Roberts 284). In some cases, this is wanted but at other times, such as for protesters, political and social matters play an important role, which they want to see reflected in the images shown in the media. The reality in the images, however, often shows how we want to see reality, (deliberately) ignoring the knowledge of image manipulation (Lum 216).

Photography shows more than only what is on the pictures, as the viewer interprets whatever they see on it (Lum 214). Photographers make conscious and/or unconscious choices in the framing of a photograph, thereby also showing their own intentions, and political and social opinions (Sekula, "Dismantling Modernism" 864). An example of this is protest photography. The framing of an image, i.e. what is on the image and what is left out, focuses the viewers' attention and can already change the perspective of the viewer (Snow 124). How colours, forms, and objects are distributed on the image can lead the eye and change the way certain elements are foregrounded. Sometimes these specific framings are intentional, but at other times photographers do not necessarily think consciously about the framing before shooting the image, but nevertheless influence the images' focus (Lum 221). Most protest photography is very much focused on binary oppositions: good vs. bad, offender vs. offended (Fahlenbrach 249), with the most popular type of protest photography displaying the contrast between the protesters and the police (Opel 328). How a protest is displayed and the (political) perspective of the image depends heavily on which 'side' the photographer stands. When a photo is taken from the protesting crowd towards a wall of police, the police is usually depicted as a dangerous and unsympathetic wall. This display of power is sometimes enhanced by one (often minority) person who defies the force. The police can, however, also be depicted as a protective force. By choosing one specific image the opinion of a viewer can be influenced (Fahlenbrach 245). The first, for instance, evokes more sympathy for the protesters while the latter stresses the importance of the police in protecting society (Opel 328). This way one photograph can shape the view of the public about a protest (Price 83).

How we read protest photos is not universally given, as it is context-dependent (Sekula, "The Traffic" 23). Depending on the background of a viewer and the contextualisation and framing of the image, the meaning and interpretation changes (Lum

222). It is not only important to consider where the picture is shown, but also the text and other images surrounding the photograph (Sekula, "The Traffic" 16). An object in and off itself usually does not have a meaning attached to it and needs the context to become meaningful (Snow 125). The text in an article and the caption of an image can lead the viewer's eye to focus on certain aspects, but also surrounding images can have such an effect (Rosler 308). This enables an editor to subtly guide the reader to make sure that they follow the intended interpretation of an image (Gervais 101). In some cases, the text accompanying an image can be written in such a way that, depending on the text, a completely different story is told by the photograph (Lum 218). This way the image is not only an objective display of reality anymore, but gets a meaning that lies beyond the photograph and with the viewer (Sekula, "Dismantling Modernism" 866). The combination of the background information and the image creates a story based on facts (874). While the images themselves are objective, the contextualisation and background of the viewer make them subjective through the reading of the images (Price 78). It keeps the reading and interpretation open to whoever looks at the photograph, thereby mixing objective and subjective aspects and making them coexist.

The supposed objectivity of an image is also strongly linked to the dominant ideology of the time, which already subconsciously leads to a specific reading of an image (Roberts 293). Once the photo is associated with a certain interpretation, this interpretation will stay connected to the photograph (283), thereby creating a story surrounding a historical event. Afterwards the photos, and their respective reading, are how an event is constituted and remembered in the collective memory of the people. It is, however, often forgotten that politics play a role while creating a narrative of an event, which is left aside when history has become a fact one cannot second guess (Rosler 317). Moreover, aesthetics change over time, as well as choices on how to represent an event (317).

Photography as Art

It is remarkable that people switch from believing the realism of an image and not believing it (Sekula, "The Traffic" 15). This has to do with the fact that photography is used in several different ways, depending on the context. On the one hand photography is used to convey 'facts'. It emphasises the news, where the images are intended to give a realistic impression of what happened at a certain event. Photographic images are also used in science and medical examinations to capture and show what medical professionals found or saw (Price 77). In some cases, cameras and lenses are needed so that we can see things we would not otherwise be able to see with our human eyes, such as roentgen images (Snyder and Allen 159). These uses of photography assume and expect realism of the image (146). On the other hand, photography is perceived as an art form and an artistic expression of the photographer, or artist in this case (144). For these images realism is not necessarily important or a given. With editing techniques, or changed settings such as a very long shutter speed, effects can be created that give the image aspects of surrealism, but even though we know this, we often still believe the image to be truthful (Price 93). A viewer decides for every image separately whether they see it is a reproduction of reality or an artwork. The variability of photographs to be art and truth makes it easier to push a certain worldview, as the images might be perceived as mere documentations of reality (Sekula, "The Traffic" 20). As stated above, the surroundings and context of the photograph plays an important role in how we decide this. When a picture is shown in the context of a news-article it is expected and perceived to give an authentic reflection of reality, whereas a picture in a museum will be viewed as an artwork (15). Photographs can also move from being a reflection from the real to an artwork and vice versa. It mostly happens when an iconic image ends up in art-contexts such as museums, where the image is taken out of its original context into a relatively neutral one of art (Rosler 306). In these situations, the focus of the image changes from the social background to the

artistic choices of the photographer (Sekula, "Dismantling Modernism" 864). The photos are often seen to be at either the artistic or truthful end of the spectrum, ignoring that these two aspects can coexist in a single frame (865).

Furthermore, we do not only make a distinction between art and reality, but some images that we perceive as real, have aspects that are different to how we would see it with our own eyes. We, for instance, learn to interpret images in certain ways so that we can decide when an image is out of focus and when a blur is created through movement of the object (Azoulay 113). Joel Snyder and Neil Walsh Allen used photographs of galloping horses as examples to explain this phenomenon. When looking at a horse that gallops, we do not literally see how the legs of the horse move, but when an image with a high shutter speed is taken of the galloping horse we get a snapshot of the movement. In this example we, as a viewer, understand that this is how we would see the movement of the horses' legs if we were able to slow down the movement and see it in such detail with our own eyes (Snyder & Allen 156). If, however, the same image was taken with a longer shutter speed resulting the horse looking like a blur on the image, we can identify that the blur is surreal. We know a horse does not transform into a blur when it moves from one point to the next (157).

Circulation of Protest Photography

The editing of a photograph always takes some time, which leaves a time-gap between the protest and the circulation of the image, and makes "photography of the event, *after-the-event*" (Roberts 289). In addition, images go through a lot of changes before reaching the audience through media such as newspapers (Gervais 78). In "Photography after the Photo" John Roberts writes that photography is always after-the-event as there is no so-called singular event. He says that the singular event is constructed after the event happened by the selection of visual material that represents, in this case, the protest (289). This

inevitable lateness is the first step of reconstructing the protest (290). Furthermore, the construction of these events does not lie with the people living through the event, but rather people around the world seeing the pictures (Azoulay 104). Photos change the truth and become the subject instead of an image of the subject (Lum 215). This lateness, however, makes the link between the social experience of the protest and the photo weaker, which influences the perceived realness of the image (Roberts 293). In protests nowadays this notion of lateness and how it changes the perceived realness is used by the protesters.

During protests, people move around, and scenes change quickly and unpredictably. Photographers have to move very quickly and take a lot of images to get the right photos. Of all these images only a few will eventually be used when the best pictures are chosen and edited postproduction, leaving quite some room for an image to be more subjective than merely objectively showing what happened (Sekula, "Dismantling Modernism" 864). The, often single, picture is only one image of a whole day of protests, and might not represent the majority of the day correctly. It may also portray an incomplete moment that was "lifted from the context of time" (qtd. in Snyder and Allen 146). In addition, a lot of photographers started to edit their photos, to either remove disturbing elements in the picture, to add and dramatize the image, or make small changes in colour or light so that the image looks livelier (Lum 215). This creates a sort of illusion of reality in a similar way a painting does, as the artist changes the images to get closer to what they believe to be reality (Roberts 289). These images, on the long run, can change how someone remembers an event (Price 94). The choices made about which photographs are used in the media to represent the protest influences how people view the protest (Roberts 286).

Important for the choice of images is often how much profit can be made with the story (Roberts 286). Images of violence and brutality usually have more impact on the readers, and people are more inclined to click on an article if it has some sort of dramatic

aspect (Fahlenbrach 248). The documentary photographs used are often more unsettling than the text, an impact the sensationalism of journalism often seeks (Rosler 304/306). As we live in a capitalist society, the amount of money an article produces is essential and therefore the spectacular or violent stories (and photos) are more often broadcasted than the more peaceful ones (Opel 327). The focus on economic aspects in the news leads to clickbait articles instead of a more neutral approach. This way news about protests is often focused on police brutality and dramatic scenes to get an emotional response from the viewer rather than what the protest was actually about (Fahlenbrach 244).

Protesters rely heavily on media coverage to spread their ideas and values. Without it, protesters would not be able to reach as many people and get as much attention as they need to actually change something (Opel 326). Not all images circulate the same amount (Brunet 14). In recent years, protesters, as well as the police, have reacted to the role of photos during protests in their own way. Some activists (mostly climate activists) changed their way of protests to deliberately create images that look very aesthetic on photos (Opel 329). This way the activists could lead the photographers to take pictures that also incorporate the cause why they protested. This gave newspapers aesthetically pleasing and often quite dramatic photos, but at the same time did make the reason for the protests very clear to the readers. On the other hand, the police started using techniques that are harder to be captured in images. They want to keep protests against, and bad press for the police as low as possible, and by using other techniques their brutality is not as visible on images. The use of teargas, for instance, looks less brutal than a truncheon, which leads to less footage of the protests (329). So protesters and police are in a constant struggle about the media coverage and come up with new ways of capturing or deflecting the media's attention and to obtain images that reflect their cause and not the view of the opposing party.

Violation by Photography

With every type of photography where people are depicted the problem of privacy arises. A photograph is a snapshot of a situation, which can show a person in a very intimate or embarrassing moment. By taking a picture of this moment it is perceived to become more real than when it just happened, as it is not just a memory anymore, but can be revisited time and time again (Rosler 303). When people consent to their picture being taken and broadcasted, it is no problem, but it can become problematic when unflattering or uncomfortable pictures are used on social media or in other ways to blackmail the person on the picture (Azoulay 101). Even if everyone consents, “the violence is inherent in the instrumentalization of the photographed person in order to produce an image of him” (Azoulay 99). People can get hostile as they have the feeling that their privacy is not respected by a photographer, and are not asked if they consent to being photographed (Rosler 306).

A picture also has the power to position the one who is photographed as the Other, and objectifying them (Sekula, “The Traffic” 16). In documentary practices there is a strong drive to take pictures of the powerless to stimulate the ones in power to attain social change (Price 106), thereby, however, stealing a moment from the powerless to serve the powerful (Rosler 315). Protest photography leans on this practice and shows how people fight for their own causes. It is being used to shed light on a social cause, using pictures to broadcast what the people are already fighting for themselves.

Photographing people can, however, also be seen as stealing an intimate moment from the person photographed (Sekula, “Dismantling Modernism” 865). In a perceived unobserved moment people often act freer than when they notice a camera pointing at them. In documentary photography, pictures are often made of people in a vulnerable situation (865).

Due to the sensationalism of the media, photographers are more inclined to take pictures that shock the audience (Rosler 304). If a photograph of a person becomes prominent, it can travel around the whole world, creating a new story surrounding the image (315). The person on the image gets a story woven around them that has nothing to do with the real person, and maybe also does not display how the person perceived the situation, but nevertheless becomes a symbol for the event (315). The people on the photograph usually do not gain anything from the image, and often also did not give consent. Regardless how often they are shown, and how iconic they have become, the only one who is connected to the photograph by name is the photographer (315). Ariella Azoulay has argued that pictures do not belong to a photographer and, more importantly, that images do not transform “into an object of private property” (98), as photography is always an encounter between at least two people, so there is not one obvious owner (98-99). People on the photo are often not named, creating a power structure between the photographer and the photographed, where the photographer has the power over a moment in the life of the photographed (Sekula, “The Traffic” 15).

MEDIA COVERAGE OF ABORTION PROTESTS

With the rise of newspapers, they became a place to shape public political opinions (Fahlenbrach 248). Photography also arose as a form of communication (Sekula, “The Traffic” 16), and the possibility to print photographs furthermore made the written stories livelier and reach more readers (Tanner 138). In newspapers and social media current events are narrated and illustrated (Price 80). Newspapers and their editors also give voice to and seek to validate their own truths (80). Media furthermore gives individuals or groups the possibility to share their opinions and information with a wider audience, giving movements the possibility to grow in numbers (Opel 326), and push people to take action for social changes (Price 79). In the 1990s and in the present day two opposing movements fight for and against the right of abortion, both trying to influence the law.

Newspapers

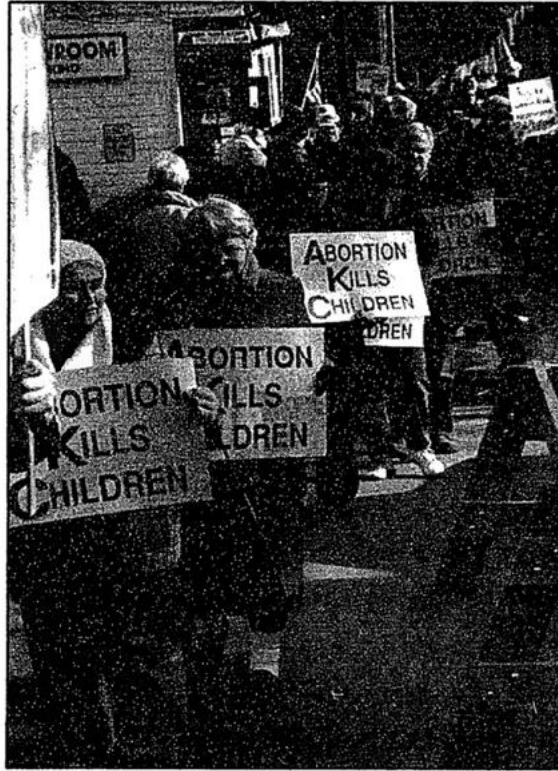
In the 1990s the debate around abortion intensified, leading to protests on both sides. The pro-choice movement protested for the legalisation of abortion and abortion clinics, while the pro-life movement protesters argued for the right to live for unborn babies. Both these protests happened all around the United States and were covered by *The New York Times*.

Anti-Abortion Protests

Most anti-abortion protests were held in front of abortion clinics. This way the protesters were able to cut off access to the clinics, and directly protest against the institution they disagreed with, as well as addressing the women who tried to get an abortion, and making them feel ashamed of themselves. The protests were mostly led by an organisation called Operation Rescue, who wanted to rescue the unborn babies. The images featured in articles on these protests can be broadly put into four categories. The first shows protesters

with banners declaring slogans such as “Abortion Kills Children” (figure 1). This particular slogan is repeated over and over again on Joyce Dopkeen’s picture forming a repetition or mirroring effect in the image. The framing of the photo underlines this by creating a diagonal line of light squares declaring the sentence held by people over a relatively dark background (Melvin 10).

A second theme, which is most often prevalent in pro-life protest photography, is of praying protesters. This can either be in a church, on a square, or in front of abortion clinics. These pictures show people looking downwards (Figure 2). In a christian context this pose speaks for itself, but otherwise it may not necessarily be obvious that these people are praying, therefore needing the context of the surrounding text as explanation (“Abortion Protest” A13, Rosler 308). This particular image, furthermore, shows only two people in a medium shot which reduces the complexity of the protest and makes it more personal. Their facial expression and body language are easier to read than an image with masses of people (Fahlenbrach 248). Some images are more obviously religiously tinted showing imagery often associated with christianity (figure 3). On the 23rd of Januari 1995 a picture of praying people holding religious artefacts is featured. The way the people are distributed on the image reminds the viewer of a funeral with the woman on the left wearing a long coat reminiscent of a priest cloak, which is strengthened by the cards she holds. She also echoes the shape of a cross in her static form. On the right a sitting woman is holding a baby in a white coat, which underlines the connection to the fact that this child was not aborted. Between the two adults kneels a woman reading a prayer from a sheet of paper, again creating a vertical line in the composition. The grassy ground in front of the women makes it look like they are facing a grave instead of the abortion clinic (Dillon B4). This image and the surrounding text creates a frame as to how the anti-abortion protests should be read as the image alone does not have a meaning attached to it (Tanner 138).



Joyce Dopkeen/The New York Times

Anti-abortion protesters at the Women's Medical Pavilion in Dobbs Ferry. Police arrested 170 demonstrators.

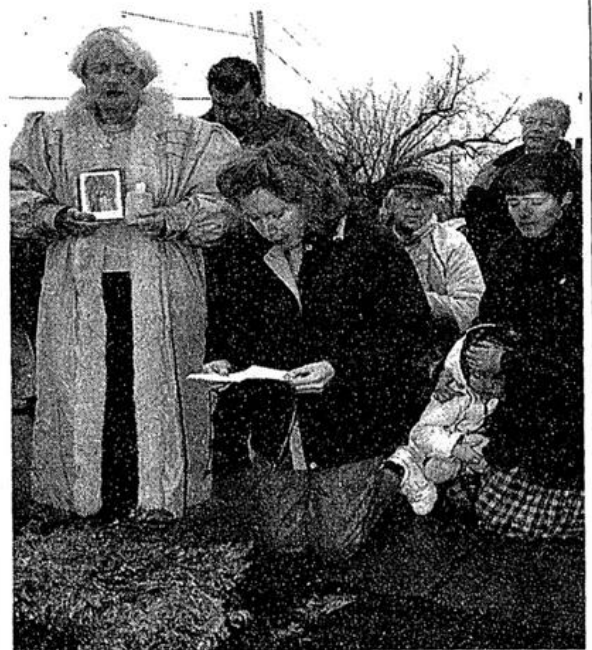
Figure 1: Joyce Dopkeen, "Anti-abortion protesters at the Women's Medical Pavilion in Dobbs Ferry". In "After Abortion Protest, Complaints of leniency", The New York Times, on February 10, 1991 by Tessa Melvin.



Associated Press

Anti-abortion protesters praying yesterday behind barricades that were set up outside an abortion clinic in Wichita, Kan.

Figure 2: Two people praying at an anti-abortion protest. In "Abortion Protest Brings Jail Term", The New York Times, on August 13, 1991.



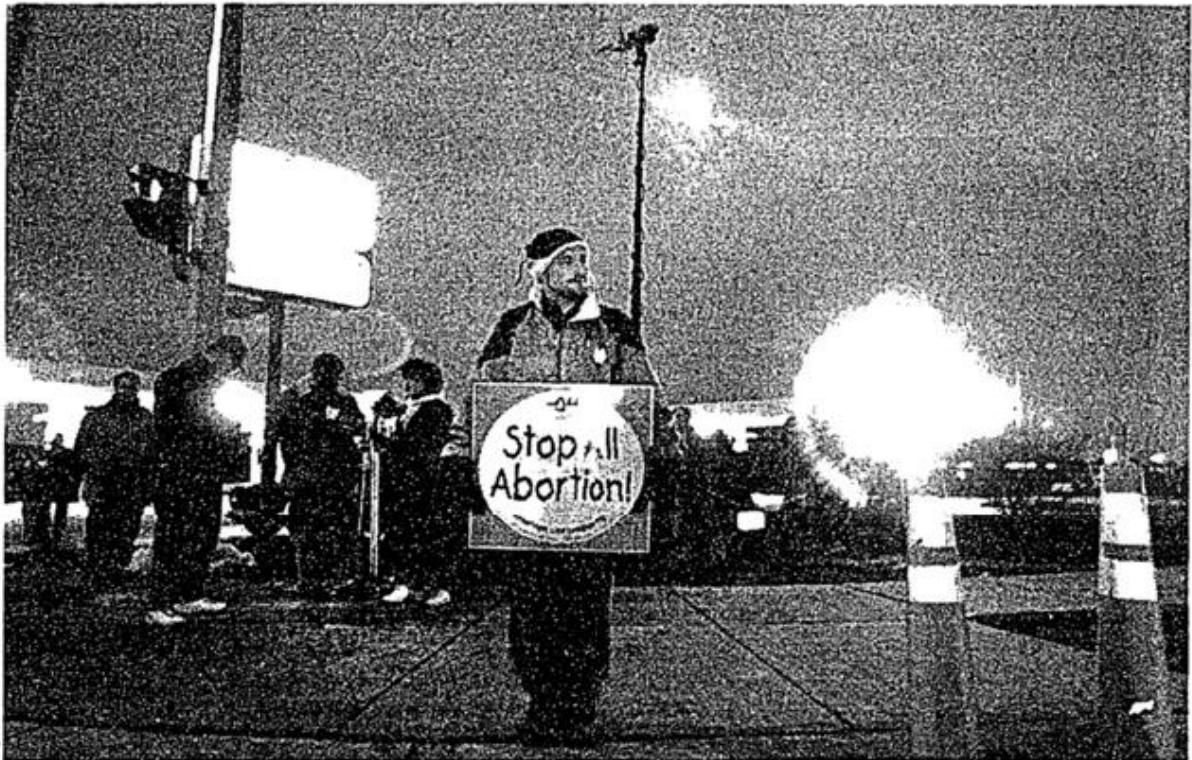
Associated Press

Abortion opponents kneeling in prayer yesterday after they laid a wreath in front of the Women's Medical Center in Cranston, R.I.

Figure 3: Anti-abortion protesters praying in front of the Women's Medical Centre in Cranston, R.I. In "Amid Speeches and Protests, Abortion-Right Battle Shifts to New York", The New York Times, on January 23, 1995 by Sam Dillon.

Another notable aspect of anti-abortion protest photos is the frequency men are featured as prominent subjects. On April 20, 1999, for instance, a single man started an impromptu protest in the Buffalo Suburbs. The picture shows a single man in the middle of the image holding a sign reading “Stop All Abortion!” (figure 4). Except for the man, no one else is participating in the protest. The man with the sign is relatively small on the frame, which increases the feeling of the loneliness and insignificance of the protest. The subheading subsequently informs the reader that “[p]olice and [m]edia [o]utnumber [d]emonstrators” (Chen B5). Juxtaposing the images and text creates a strong story (Price 80). The choice of portraying the protest in this way informs the reader on first glance how small and unimportant the protest was. This is even more literally portrayed in an article from 1992 where the caption of the image alludes that Operation Rescue “may no longer be able to shape the national debate over abortion” (Manegold 27, Rosler 308). The caption tells the reader what they have to see or read from the image (Brunet 28). The image itself shows a standing monk from the front holding a cross, surrounded by men with their back turned to the camera (figure 5). The gazes of the men are turned in such a way that the eye of the viewer follows their line directly to the monk in the centre, creating a strong connection between christianity and anti-abortion sentiments.

As most of the protests against abortion were held in front of clinics carrying out these procedures, police were often stationed in front of the clinics. The stationing of police in these areas led, as depicted in *The New York Times*, to generally portraying (heavily) armed police as a protecting force rather than the enemy. Depicting the police in articles about anti-abortion protests evokes a negative perception of the anti-abortion protesters in a subtle way (Opel 328). The images are also quite aestheticized depicting strong lines, which the police however break with a relaxed posture underlining the likability of the police. Even though a truthful representation is often perceived to be important, the aesthetics are even



Chang W. Lee/The New York Times

At a busy intersection in Amherst, N.Y., a Buffalo suburb, an abortion opponent began protesting around 6 A.M. yesterday. Later, about 50 more protesters gathered, including some supporters of abortion rights.

Figure 4: Chang W. Lee, Anti-abortion protester started protesting in Amherst, N.Y.. In "Abortion Protests Continue Peacefully", The New York Times, on April 20, 1999 by David W. Chen.



Steve Berman for The New York Times

After its defeat in Buffalo last May, Operation Rescue's showing in New York suggested that the group may no longer be able to shape the national debate over abortion. Anti-abortion protesters prayed last week outside the Inter-Continental Hotel.

Figure 5: Steve Brennan, Anti-abortion protesters praying outside the Inter-Continental Hotel. In "Abortion Foes See Tactics Backfire in New York", The New York Times, on July 19, 1992 by Catherine S. Manegold.



Associated Press

Twelve U.S. marshals protecting the gate of Women's Health Care Services in Wichita, Kan., as the Justice Department joined a lawsuit by protesters who have blocked patients' access to the abortion clinic.

Figure 6: "Twelve U.S. marshals protecting the gate of Women's Health Care Service in Wichita, Kan. ". In "U.S. Backs Wichita Abortion Protesters", The New York Times, on August 7, 1991.



Associated Press

On the eve of the 22d anniversary of the Supreme Court decision establishing a right to abortion, security around many clinics has been increased in response to threats and violence. In Washington, a couple walks to a Planned Parenthood clinic under police guard.

Figure 7: A couple walks to a Planned Parenthood clinic under police guard in Washington. In "Abortion Rights Are Called Threatened by Violence", The New York Times, on January 22, 1995 by Sara Rimer.

more important to an audience (Sekula, “Dismantling Modernism” 864). On August 7, 1991, an image in *The New York Times* showed a group of U.S. marshals in front of the Women’s Health Care Service. The long dark shadows in front of the marshals adds to the feeling that they are a strong protective entity for the clinic behind them (Figure 6). A second image in an article titled “Abortion Rights Are Called Threatened by Violence” shows two rows of police framing and protecting a couple walking towards the entrance of a clinic (figure 7). The framing in these images plays an important role as a different framing would not convey the same message (Snyder and Allen 151).

Pro-Choice vs. Pro-Life

On the other hand, *The New York Times* also covered pro-choice protests. While they were less often featured, they did get more space on the page and also often spanned more than one page (Witt A1, B8). There is often more media coverage for protests that go against the status quo (Opel 328). The images in these articles usually showed peaceful protests of huge crowds assembled to protest for their beliefs. They often carry a large banner up front with people holding smaller banners farther back in the crowds with slogans supporting abortion (figure 8). These images create a stark contrast with the mostly Christian tinted images of the pro-life protests, both in the framing and in the number of protesters displayed (figure 8). Pitching the two protests against each other creates a strong argument in the visual images used in *The New York Times* arguing for abortion rights. The typical images of huge crowds of protesters fighting for abortion rights are set against smaller crowds against abortion (figure 9). The way these images are used and contextualised by the text, caption, and titles shows how the newspaper handles the images (Gervais 95).



Abortion-rights demonstrators marching in Washington to proclaim that they oppose any rollback in women's rights to legal abortions. Paul Hosefros/The New York Times

chatting for a short while with the Rev. Jesse Jackson, who Mr. Brown has indicated he would like to have as his Vice Presidential running mate.

As in the past, the march was overwhelmingly white, although leaders made an effort to encourage members of minority groups to attend. Black and Hispanic women use publicly financed clinics at a higher rate than white women. Such centers are the most affected by Government restrictions on abortion counseling and financing.

"I'm not disturbed that there aren't a lot of women of color in this crowd," said Eleanor Holmes Norton, the District of Columbia's non-voting delegate to the House of Representatives and former head of the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Ms. Norton, who is black, *wasn't in the front line of the rally.*

"Unless it is a black or black-related march, blacks don't go to these events in large numbers," said Ms. Norton. "But I know that black women are pro-choice. Black women use abortion at twice the rate of white women. And frankly I give the middle-class white women here a lot of credit. This is truly a case of a strong identification with the abortion issue and a recognition that erosion of those rights, even if they don't directly affect you, will eventually..."



Surrounded by abortion-rights supporters, Anna Garduna of Mexico, an abortion foe, expressed her view. Debra Dipeso for The New York Times

Figure 9: Excerpt from "Huge Crowd Backs Right to Abortion in Capital March", The New York Times, on April 6, 1992 by Karen de Witt. Top image: Paul Hosefros, "Abortion-rights demonstrators marching in Washington". Bottom: Debra Dipeso, "Surrounded by abortion-rights supporters, Anna Garduna of Mexico, an abortion foe, expresses her view".



Joe Negro, left, a counterdemonstrator, exchanging opinions with Fritzie Kaiser yesterday at the rally. The New York Times/Michael Segar

Figure 10: Michael Segar, "a counter demonstrator exchanging opinions with Fritzie Kaiser". In "Thousands March in Support of Abortion Rights", The New York Times, on April 10, 1989 by Robin Toner.

Social Media

Nowadays social media is often used to share information and reach likeminded people (Zappavigna 271). These platforms are especially suited for the latter as they use an algorithm that mostly shows content similar to the one the user has already interacted with (Gramelsberger 43). This means that if someone interacts with a lot of content or creators about women's rights and abortion, they will automatically get more content along these lines. It, however, also means that only this side will be featured in their feed (43), making users oblivious to other opinions and worldviews. In the long run this leads to the polarisation of society (Gausen et al. 3). As people do not really get confronted with other people's opinions it becomes harder to be aware of them. In the case of abortion debates pro-choice protesters might say that anti-abortion protesters are against women's rights (@womenphotographershistory), even though these two are not synonymous and are not necessarily believed by the same group. Opinions and views might be mixed together to create a view one group believes of the other group, without actually speaking with them. These views may become more extreme and homogenised than is actually the case (Gausen et al. 4). This is in contrast with *The New York Times*, where both pro- and anti-abortion protests were reported on.

Social media, specifically Instagram, is a place where the life of people is put into the public sphere (Zappavigna 271). As it becomes a sort of extension of one's identity (Gramelsberger 44), there are numerous ways of sharing information about socio-political opinions and protests to bring the attention of followers to certain issues (Price 79). They, however, always combine image and text to reach users as easily as possible (Zappavigna 273). On a quite small scale one can share posts by others on one's personal account. Here one could also share stories and posts while being at, or shortly after, the event, giving the feeling that the viewer could be there with the creator (283). A more public account could

reach more people. Artists, for instance, could repost, but also share (their own) art about these issues urging people to join a protest or cause (@lauraklinke_art). On the largest scale there are accounts specifically made to inform followers about specific topics, such as abortion or women's rights. These accounts create posts about the political opinions and causes they fight for. Often there is a mix of information about events such as protests, a reflection afterwards with images from the protest, and posts that give information. This could either be a historical account or definitions and explanations. The main focus of these large accounts is to reach as many people as possible and convince people of their case (Rosler 321).

Most announcements of abortion protests and abortion rights are done via accounts that advocate for women's rights in general. They do not focus on one specific aspect, rather choosing to campaign for as many as possible (figure 10). The administrators often choose to focus on what is currently at the front of peoples' minds. It could be either a new law or discussion brought up by what a senate said, but also a historically important day for a certain movement such as an anniversary (@womensmarch). By discussing so many different social movements, accounts are able to grow quicker, as there are more people the account speaks to. One example is @humankindist on Instagram which mostly shows series of images focusing on one theme, mostly abortion and sexual assault, with relatively short captions. Most pictures show people holding banners, either in a crowd or a solitary figure with their sign (@humankindist, #PROCHOICE). The slogans used have changed from the newspapers in the 1990s and now usually read "If you're against abortion don't have one" (figure 11) and "My body, My choice." (figure 12). In other cases, these pictures are alternated with tweets from, for instance, the National Women's Law Center, to give more context and using a source that has more credibility (@humankindist "Not sorry!"). These images do not necessarily have to be from the same protest, or photographer.



Figure 10: @risenresistnyc on Instagram, January 10, 2024.



Figure 11: Pro-choice protest sign reading “If you’re against abortion don’t have one”. @humankindist on Instagram. Post from April 23, 2023.



Figure 12: Pro-choice protest, with one sign reading “My Body, My Choice.” @humankindist on Instagram. Post from April 23, 2023

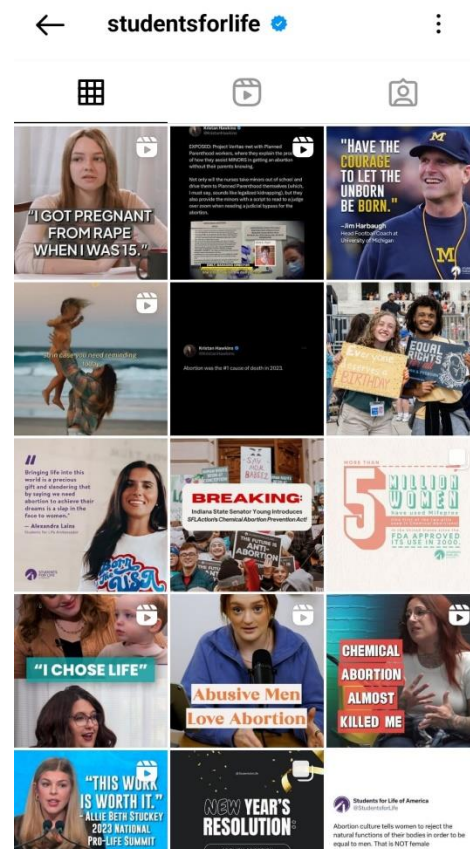


Figure 13: @studentsforlife on Instagram, January 10, 2024.

In these photo's the banners with their text are most prominent and important, putting the convincing aspect at the forefront of the accounts.

On the other hand, anti-abortion movements on Instagram are mostly represented on accounts specifically to argue and protest against abortion (figure 13). Therefore, these accounts have a more direct approach and create more content besides protest photography, such as memes, reels and short emotional stories on why abortion should be prohibited. It also leaves more room to advertise marches (@marchforlife). The photos shared from protests themselves are very similar to the ones of pro-life protests. This is in contrast to the articles in *The New York Times*, as both movements represent themselves, rather than be represented by the newspaper (Fahlenbrach 245). The pro-life protesters share their own arguments and photos that underline these sentiments (Opel 327).

SOCIAL MEDIA AND NEWSPAPERS: A COMPARISON

The representation of abortion protests on Instagram is in contrast with the newspapers from the '90s, which tried to stay as objective as possible and let the reader form their own opinion based on the information given. Pictures on Instagram, on the other hand, are used to try to convince readers of their cause. This is in a longer tradition, where news outlets and mass-media slowly lose their objectivity (Sekula, "Dismantling Modernism" 866). On social media everyone is aware of the fact that the accounts are trying to persuade the reader of a specific opinion, making the wordings and imagery less subtle and give them a feel of being propagandistic (Zappavigna 282). This gives the admins the possibility to use stronger wording. Information on Instagram, moreover, is not fact checked, as everyone is able to post whatever, and whenever they want, which leads to exaggerations and people having to check information for themselves (Gausen et al. 2). This asks more participation on the part of the reader, which is not always done.

Lateness, Liveness and Authenticity

With social media the issues of lateness and liveness also play a prominent role, as there is the possibility to broadcast live to the followers, by either posting photos and videos during protests, or start a live video (Zappavigna 283). People can follow these live videos from their phones regardless of where they are, so they can follow the protests from anywhere in the world. The dematerialisation of images also plays a role in social media, as they are only files or a code that creates a visual image when asked to (Brunet 23), other than printed images which exist in a physical form. The physical image is perceived as more authentic and, in its materiality, creates a stronger connection between viewer and content creator (Zappavigna 273). Therefore, this 'old-fashioned' look is often recreated on Instagram to invoke a feeling of authenticity (273). This evolution also changed which

aspects of an image are seen as important. On social media the virality is perceived as more important than the aesthetics or content of an image (Brunet 12).

The possibility to spread information about a protest while it lasts also created a shift on what is believed to be a truthful image (Rosler 317). When posting during a protest there is not as much time to edit and select images than when someone does it afterwards. The images are connected to the meaning while they are still freezing the moment, as they are broadcasted immediately to an audience (317). It takes away the possibility to interpret an image, and imposes itself on the viewer (Price 107).

With the use of phones anyone could take and share pictures, thereby influencing the viewer, regardless of image quality and photographer background (Price 94). The knowledge that a normal citizen has made the image may imply the images to be more objective and truthful (Fahlenbrach 246), as these citizens are perceived to have less knowledge of how to manipulate an image while shooting, and merely show what they themselves also saw, neglecting any form of deliberate storytelling in the imagery (Price 87). However, they frequently also take the images from their point of view trying to convince viewers of their own opinions. Therefore, these photos are often less objective than the ones found in newspapers taken by professional photographers, who had to try and create images that are both objective and aesthetic. As the two have very different objectives, persuading and informing, the focus of the images shifts.

Privacy

With the arrival of phones and the accessibility of cameras the problem of privacy has gone to another level. At any moment one can be photographed (Roberts 286). Virtually everyone has a phone they use on a daily basis, and wherever one is, someone will be using their phone. Smartphones are used for a large amount of activities from messaging and

calling to playing games, listening to music, and taking pictures and sharing them on social media. It is therefore hard to distinguish what they are used for at a specific moment. With a camera one is immediately aware that it is to take images, so when it is pointed at someone, they know immediately that they are being shot. This is very different from a picture made with a phone, where everyone is able to all of a sudden exercise power over the photographed (283). In addition, the images taken by a smartphone are spread faster and reach a larger audience compared to images taken for newspapers, and it is virtually impossible to protect oneself against the spread or to track down the person that has taken the image. This is especially important as the content, and therefore the photographed person, becomes important when the photographer is unknown (Azoulay 100).

CONCLUSION

Photography has often been described as objective, as it is a reproduction of what is in front of the camera. In this assumption it is, however, neglected that the photographer has an influence on what is on the picture and how the picture will be framed. There are, furthermore, ample means of editing the photo after it has been taken. Audiences also interpret an image depending on their own historical and cultural background and the context of where the photo is shown. Choosing a specific photo, such as a religiously tinted photo in a pro-life protest, influences the reader to connect anti-abortion sentiments with Christianity. The wording of the surrounding text as well as the framing within the image have an important role in this. With the rise of social media and the possibility that everything can be posted, the truth and authenticity has also been defined in a different way. What is true has become harder to delineate as stories are not (per definition) fact checked anymore, so the reader has to be more alert about the possibility of fake news. Here the possibility to edit information, and photos, has constituted a shift in what is believed to be an authentic image. Nowadays 'un-edited' photos, or photos with worse quality are believed to be more authentic, whereas aesthetics were very important previously.

The component of time plays an important role in this. On social media liveness became important, to show exactly what happened at the moment it happened. When posting while a protest is still happening there is hardly any possibility to edit or manipulate the images. Especially with live videos the notion of photography happening after-the-event is virtually absent. Now the discourse regarding a protest or other event does not happen afterwards anymore, but while it is still lasting. Previously, with newspapers, there was an aspect of lateness, as the reporters had to write their news-stories, photographers had to supply their images, and editors had to edit the whole newspaper, which still had to be printed and distributed. Therefore, the discourse only started after the event had already happened.

This changed with social media where anything can be shared at any time with the whole world, with virtually no lapsed time. For future research it would be interesting to determine whether the liveness of Instagram and other social media has influenced newspapers in the present day in regards to image circulation.

Social media tries to reach an audience that is as large as possible so that more people follow their cause. This lead to accounts combining different social movements into one account. The algorithm used on these platforms also changed the form of circulation, as one mainly gets to see posts similar to the ones one already interacted with, creating a polarisation and being oblivious to other opinions. Newspapers, on the other hand, introduced a given point of view in a subtler way, giving the consumer more freedom to actively chose the type of information they would like to be exposed to, rather than being at the mercy of an algorithm. This shows that the emergence of social media has strongly influenced the construction of photographic objectivity, how information about protests is circulated and the role of the imagery therein.

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