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# PHOTOGRAPHY: A COMMUNICATION TOOL

by

Holly B. Ballenger

Under the Direction of Melanie Davenport

## Abstract

There are limited resources available for art teachers wishing to implement a photography curriculum that focus on social justice. Since the camera is a highly effective communicative tool, students should be encouraged to vocalize their understanding of how to better society through visual images. This research highlights the significance of photography and its ability to change the manner in which people view the world. The culminating product of this research is a downloadable PDF that features both contemporary and historical artists and organizations that have used photography to express social justice. The aim of this research is to promote photography to administrators, supporters, local communities, and students. Art teachers are encouraged to use the advocacy resource provided to promote social justice in their photography program.

INDEX WORDS: Photography, Art education, Visual communication, Art advocacy, Photography advocacy, Social justice

PHOTOGRAPHY: A COMMUNICATION TOOL

by

HOLLY B. BALLENGER

A Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Art Education

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2014

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2014

PHOTOGRAPHY: A COMMUNICATION TOOL

by

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Georgia State University

May 2014

## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my loving parents, Sandra Kay and William Paul Ballenger. They have supported me relentlessly my entire life. Without them I would have never had the courage or the heart to pursue art. They have blessed me in so many ways throughout every aspect of my life. They have supported me through the thick and the thin, the joyful and the stressful, the disciplined and the playful. They selflessly supported my desire to create, be active, and learn. They are eclectic beings, always marching to the tune of their unique drum; therefore, they instilled upon me at an early age the value of imagination and idiosyncrasy. They helped me develop an imaginative, unique mind.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

*“Photography is my language; I only speak with my eyes. The camera is my passionate pen, light is my infinite ink, and film is my paper” (Khanfar, 2013, p. 31).*

#### *Purpose of Study*

Photography is a universal tool to communicate. The purpose of this study is to investigate photography’s communicative powers and discuss the need to advocate for photography as a viable artistic medium. Throughout this research I explored how photography powerfully communicates artistically that which words cannot convey. This photographic study derives its gusto from artists who have communicated leitmotifs of social justice. Although many around the world use the tool, there ought to be more advocates out there promoting the significance of photography as a valid art form. As Berger (1974) argued, “Certainly the vast majority of people do not consider photography an art, even whilst they practice, enjoy, use and value it” (cited in Trachtenberg, 1980, p. 291). While photography is widely used as a tool to communicate, there seem to be limited advocacy resources available for artists and educators in general and specifically those geared towards using photography for social change.

#### *A Contemporary and Historical Study*

This study focused upon photography advocacy as it examined a variety of historical and contemporary artists and organizations that have used their photographic compositions to communicate powerful messages of justice, love,

integrity, and desired changes to the world. As past and present artists have used photographs to change the world, I therefore placed myself in a continuum of artists working for social change. The purpose of this study was to illuminate the works of such great social activists and to focus on photography's characteristics, which make it such a significant medium of communication.

My guiding questions include:

1. How have exemplary artists used photography to express their ideas and create awareness in others?
2. How can I develop a useful advocacy resource for teachers wishing to incorporate the study of photography and social change into their curriculum?

Photography is a tool that helps people communicate to others what they find beautiful and important in daily life. It allows an individual the ability to communicate small moments in time when particular emotions or moods are felt. The artist can communicate expressions such as joy, sorrow, humility, or wonder. The artist can change the way they personally perceive the world and promote change in the way others see. This research is designed to embrace the social activism already occurring and to use it as inspiration for other people to take action and communicate their own heart and voice to an audience.

### *Enhancing Resources*

There are limited art advocacy resources available to teachers that specifically focus on photography and social change. For example, the National Art Education Association (NAEA) does not have any resources on their website that are

specifically tailored to photography advocacy. Nor do they provide any data indicating which advocacy tools are the most influential or popular. With regards to art advocacy, NAEA's (2013) website did emphasize the importance of creating a network and keeping supporters, state legislators, and local communities engaged. Therefore, teachers need to stay abreast of ways to sustain a network of support for their program; showcasing the viewpoints of students and their ability to inspire change towards the betterment of society is one strong method.

### *Emphasizing the Importance of Photography Education*

Many people lack the understanding of how to properly use the tools of photography to visually communicate ideas. Approaching photography with an artist's eye differs from taking a snapshot. Anyone can capture a snapshot. The moment the tool is at the eye of an artist one begins to see and perceive the world a bit differently, but many do not understand this importance. My goal is to emphasize the significance of uniquely seeing and perceiving, which can result in effective communication. Professional photographers often say the main thing they aim to capture is the mood, and everything else is detail. Photographer Khanfar (2013) reported that through photography "we continue to find answers to questions we mostly ignore, learn the rhythms of nature and rituals of man" (p.31). There needs to be a mingling of technology and human discourse, along with values and experiences. However, this mingling cannot be achieved unless the artist understands technique and composition; hence, it ought to be taught in school and art studios. Typically a snapshot is an unplanned rough capture of light to document an experience or scene. On the other hand, a photograph shot with artistic merit

consists of a well composed, planned, and technically exposed form. The positive news is that today's society is inundated with beneficial tools to capture images. Yet, many people are not empowered with the essential knowledge to create dynamic compositions or the familiarity required to manipulate the tools in a modus that effectively articulates their ideas.

I focused on the impact of the medium because it is extensively used. People of all ages, races, genders, and ethnicities can participate in this medium.

Photographers have used their images to uncover injustices in society, condemn wars, and unveil the dignity of humankind. I am attending to the issue of social change, as I believe that images communicate what is happening in society.

Photography's unique characteristics, to be elaborated on later in this research, set itself up to become society's principal visual tool. I believe the purpose of a camera is to enable artists see the world from a different vantage point. Correspondingly, social justice involves the act of learning to see things from a different point of view.

#### *Increasing Advocacy for Personal and Social Implications*

Personally, photography has always fascinated me because I can create an image that speaks more to my emotions and communicates more effectively than my words could ever express. Images intrigue me. Images inspire me. Images promote critical thinking within me. I have been intrigued by these questions: What can photography do that words or other artistic mediums cannot do? How have artists used and manipulated a specific technical tool to effectively convey a meaning? While this study is not a comprehensive comparison of one medium of communication to another in any regard, it is a way to focus on the ways an artistic

tool can be useful in today's society. The purpose of this research is not how to teach students technique and composition but rather how to advocate for photography and the positive implications it can have on individuals and society. When artists first began using photography, reliant on its immediacy, audiences were able to view empirical information without other's moral or social biases. The world was able to see many social issues in clear light for the first time. So, my purpose was to show how these two vital things could be used in tandem for the betterment of society.

I am an advocate for social change. The community in which I teach heavily focuses its time and resources towards social justice and bettering society. This school desires to inspire its student population with an introspective, yet global outlook. Teachers strive to instill an attitude of hope, trust, integrity, peace, and love within their students. There is a school requirement that each student participate in service, denoted by a certain amount of time volunteering within local communities. Our school hosts many non-profit organizations and social activists throughout the year. Frequently, various activists share their philosophies and aspirations in our school wide assemblies. The goal is to raise awareness through meaningful compositions. Typically, students are very eager to support a good cause, as they desire to better the world. I have also observed within my student body that the more students are in contact with non-profit organizations, missions, volunteering, and social activists, the more likely they are to become leaders and social activists. The school where I teach also sends students around the world; they campaign for love and justice. Students are given many opportunities to see the world outside of

their home environment. As one experiences another culture or another population different from their own, they begin to see how big the world is. It is not just about them. Rather, life is about forming relationships within local and global communities, to help others and to encourage one another on in positive methods. Those opportunities that go beyond the traditional classroom allow students the ability to contemplate justice, and perhaps they see that the world is not a fair place and that there are others in need of help and support.

I would like to use the arts as a method of helping society. The benefits are four-fold. First, photography is therapeutic in and of itself. Second, photography helps the artist process the world in which they live, perhaps seeing the world in a new light. Third, the artwork produced from such righteous intentions has the power to eloquently and poignantly articulate justice. Fourth, this communication can yield positive change in humanity. The purpose of this study was to articulate the power that photographs can have in changing society and to emphasize the potential change that can occur when teachers equip their students with a just view of the world through the lens of their camera.

#### *Need for the Study*

I perceived a need for this study because there seems to be few art advocacy resources that specifically support photography--a tool that enables poignant expression--and how it can promote significant social change. Since the dawn of photography in the early 1800s, people have been able to see things for themselves rather than solely relying on verbal or written accounts from other people. New technological advancements that enable the artist to capture light have all merely



been a part of a broader evolution of the image as a visual communicator. I intend to create an advocacy tool that teachers can use to promote photography in their program to help students learn to see things from a new point of view. Photography is a very popular course in school when it is offered. More students ought to have the opportunity to vocalize the change they wish to see in the world through the lens of a camera. As social activist Mahatma Gandhi said, "You must be the change you want to see in the world" (Edberg, 2013). The need is for teachers to influence students' interests and social change through images.

#### *Meeting the Needs of Educational Standards*

As an art educator, I think this information will be valuable in helping students discover how to successfully utilize a tool that enables their own seeing and communicating. Not only is it a tool to affect their understanding of the world but also how they might impart wisdom to others. I think that students seek momentous ways they can contribute to the world. Photography is one approach that stirs, excites and thrills them. Consequently, teachers need to advocate for its use in the classroom. Teaching social justice themes in a photography curriculum would fulfill the national visual arts standards. For example, national standard, VA1C.2, states, "Students conceive and create works of visual art that demonstrate an understanding of how the communication of their ideas relates to the media, techniques, and processes they use" (National Art Education Association, 1994, p.22). The national content standard, VA1C.4, does not mention photography specifically but it reads: "Students initiate, define, and solve challenging visual arts problems independently using intellectual skills such as analysis, synthesis, and

evaluation” (National Art Education Association, 1994, p.22). The kind of curriculum I suggested teachers implement via my advocacy document would allow students to use their intellectual skills in an effective way that communicates confidence and sensitivity. Since students would gain real world experience and engage in meaningful, authentic learning by enabling their abilities to see.

Georgia’s state standards for the arts do not reference photography in the high school visual art standards (Georgia Department of Education, 2009). There is but only a brief mention of photography in the middle school level. Standard VA7PR.1 explains that students should understand and apply media and techniques with good care. Standard VA7PR.1.C states that a student “Explores various techniques/processes as well as the properties of art materials in preparation for art making (e.g., drawing, painting, mixed-media, printmaking, sculpture, digital art, fiber arts, ceramics, photography, technology based art works, graphic design)” (Georgia Department of Education, 2009, p.56). Although the national and state standards do not address the medium of photography extensively, they do state that the processes and skills that are learned through photography are fundamental to student’s cognitive growth and beneficial in helping students become real-world problem solvers.

#### *Need to Communicate and Express*

In my professional experiences, I have seen deep longings in students to create positive change in a world that needs help. Educators should help facilitate those passions and inclinations by providing a constructive, effective outlet for students to vocalize what they see in the world, which will promote critical thinking

and perhaps even action among students.

“The strength and passion people possess to tirelessly fight to build power for the many, and to challenge those who believe and advocate power for the few, can be transformational” (Grufferty, 2012). Activism implies an action. Writer and activist Grufferty (2012) explained that activism and politics go hand-in-hand. Grufferty said “in the UK, there is an ongoing debate in the student movement about whether [social change] should be achieved by way of a revolution, or by public policy change”. Students need to learn tactics for advocating like successfully engaging with power structures in politics so that a victory for greater good can be attained”. As Grufferty explained, social media and online communities are good resources:

We need to develop a series of tactics that our community can use to work effectively to secure social change in their own interests. Yes, this might mean taking part in physical demonstrations, but it’s also about social media, new types of engagement, new compacts, and a new dynamism. The tactics of the 1970s don’t work in today’s politics and with today’s youth. That is why we have seen an increase in flash mob campaigning and in online activism, and there is more of this to come. (Grufferty, 2012)

Research on today’s youth has shown young adults to be a caring generation, as Grufferty (2012) demonstrated through her first hand experiences with students in social activism. The author additionally mentioned the importance of teaching new leaders. The curriculum I would like to suggest to art teachers would utilize their photography department to grant students the ability to become social leaders and

train them to become effective activists. It is important to remember that teachers should be receptive to a wide gamut of activist issues that may arise because each person is a unique individual with distinctive concerns and passions.

*Need for a Variety of Photographic Processes in Social Justice*

Social activist T.V. Reed (2014) explained that there are many benefits of “digital activism in terms of speed, geographic reach, and costs of communication.” Reed mentioned the growing use of new digital art medias that are just as effective as traditional grassroots organizing. Reed specifically focused on activism that involves protest, but nonetheless, his arguments are valid for this research on general social justice. Reed explained that one major limitation of new digital activism is the loss of over 70% of people in the world that do not have access to online resources. However, there are other digital medias that are used offline such as posters, brochures, and alternative newspapers (Reed, 2013). New photographic tools such as digital forums and processes require participation and interaction which become key in creating successful digital art advocacy. “In many [protest art] works the artist is a co-producer along with those previously known as the audience. This is not a wholly new development in the arts, but, again, it is one that is enhanced and extended via the possibilities provided by digitizing cultures” (Reed, 2013). The author suggested that online digital advocacy, plus printed digital advocacy, should be used in tandem when fighting for a cause. For this research that means photography should ultimately be showcased in a variety of formats, both digital and printed, if working for an organized issue to impact the widest audience.

### *Need to Understand the Roles of Photography Education*

Prior scholars have stressed that in the traditional sense a person attempting to master the medium of photography must first understand the technical components of a camera. This incorporates understanding the photographic process of capturing light before they can truly begin to embrace and cultivate their creative, artistic skills while composing a composition. However, critics of photography education such as Rubinstein (2009) have stated that the tasks photography educators are committed to, “those of teaching how to make photographs and how to interpret them, never seemed more redundant and obsolete than in the present moment” (2009, p.135). Rubinstein suggested that instead of studying the limitations of photography education the point should be to focus on the “systems of classification, the mechanisms of observation and the economies of projection through which photography is exercised without ever being made the subject of critical inquiry” (p. 136). This author explained that photography education has no place in laboratories, in history class, nor in other academic fields. Rather, “photography education has a different goal which is to educate in the creative uses of the medium, to provide a critical framework for the interpretation of creative images and to further visual literacy” (Rubinstein, 2009, p. 136).

I hope that art educators will be able to use my advocacy tool to help promote photography to their principals and community. The national visual arts standards do not mention anything about photography. Also, the Georgia state standards for art education seldom mention photography, therefore, it seems that photography is not deemed necessarily important in American education.

I want people to understand that the camera becomes an extension of the eye. It is important to continually investigate this tool that acts as an alternate, complex eye, thus functioning as a way to see. Indeed the prototype for the camera's invention was the eye (*"Photography, still,"* 2013, p.1). The way we see and we understand is in our mind through our eyes: our human tool. The camera is simply an extension of that tool to help individuals understand how to see. The act of seeing is a learned process. We can see many things, but how can we change the way we see and look at things? It involves a mind change and an attitude change. What people shoot and what they feel are interconnected to some extent. It stems from the heart and it stirs the soul. A photograph can revolutionize the way someone views the world; it can give viewers new perspectives, and it can communicate something important.

### *Intended Outcomes*

This study focused on the basics of what teachers need to know to advocate photography for social change. During this study I reviewed various types of advocacy resources, such as downloadable PDFs, posters, online galleries, blogs, and talking points. After investigating ways to advocate I created a product to present to teachers that focuses on photography advocacy. This product is intended to help teachers and researchers understand the origins of photography, photography's current technological issues, and ways photography is being used for social change.

Specifically, I was interested in creating an aesthetically appealing downloadable PDF to share with art educators that demonstrates how photography has and can yet potentially change the world. In this study I planned to take an in

depth look at several photographers who capture light and mode in such a way that prompts, inspires, or captivates viewers to see something in a new manner. My strategies involved focusing on artists who have communicated a strong message promoting social change through use of composition, lighting, and mode. I sampled historical and contemporary artists, both iconic and unconventional, who are easy to access, such as: Ansel Adams, Lewis Hine, and Jacob Riis. My strategies included looking at specific works from various artists and briefly analyzing what they have done and the societal implications of their photographic images. I made brief personal analyses of what makes their compositions so exquisite and compelling to the viewers based off my own art education and photographic study.

This study is limited to selected artists and organizations. Therefore, a detailed study and analysis of other images or artists is beyond the scope of this study. The intent was to create a downloadable PDF using Apple's Pages software that highlights the capabilities of a photograph, which feature the selected artists and describes how a few of their images have prompted change. In my final product I included an image of each exemplar artist's work and explain the tools they used to effectively communicate a social problem they have perceived in society. The goal was to produce a document that ranges from four to six pages that can be shared with art education associations, their websites, and other art teachers. I plan on making this knowledge public so it is useful.

Because I found limited advocacy tools for photography, I created a digital advocacy tool to resolve the issue. After studying the history of photography I developed a broader understanding of the positive and negative critiques

photography has undergone since its inception that will enhance my ability to advocate for the medium. Consequently, I began to understand why photography does not appear to be extensively celebrated or embraced in the art world. I found different genres of photography, many various tools used to make images, and a plethora of photographic concepts and compositional elements.

### *Limitations*

In this study I looked for research that indicates whether one advocacy tool is better than another. I found ample ways artists have used photography as a tool to enhance how they see and perceive the world and how they promoted social change whether it is a printed image, a website, or a collection of digital images. The scope of this study does not include an attempt to evaluate images from specific genres or types of photography, such as amateur, professional, blogging, etc. Rather, I looked for the overall benefit of image making. This study directly relates to art education, although it is not a detailed art curriculum. Just like adults, students may use photography to express or communicate how they see the world. I wondered, could students use photography to enhance awareness in society? As I am sure there have been many students using photography to promote change in their cultures, I choose to focus mainly on adults as exemplary models. I do not expect students or teachers to feel that this study requires the photographer to go out into the front lines of disaster or misery to capture images that convey themes of social justice. Instead my longing is to generate awareness of the situations around us on a daily basis. My desire was to equip others with the necessary resources and knowledge needed to enhance the use and awareness of the powerful and prevalent tool.



For the medium of photography to be a fine art, I would think that a strong composition is used to communicate a creative idea. I did not intend to provide teachable methods that help students create strong compositions, as that would be well beyond the scope of this project. Rather I intended to find ways that photography is validated conceptually as a fine art that can influence popular opinion on social issues and then create an advocacy tool for art teachers wishing to enhance photography as part of their curriculum for this purpose. As teachers utilize my resource they will be able to emphasize the importance of photography education, as I expect they will find it very beneficial for student's learning and engagement. Overall I want teachers to have a tool which will help them utilize photography in their classrooms while equipping students with the power to promote social change. I limited the resource to a few exemplary artists.

## LIST OF TERMINOLOGY

Advocacy: the act or process of supporting an idea or a cause

Conventional photography: utilizes film processes and focused on high quality of sharpness and lighting

Fine art: “art (as painting, sculpture, or music) concerned primarily with the creation of beautiful objects or an activity requiring a fine skill” (in *Merriam Webster.com*)

Form: a phenomenon, which under the domination of the mind of man creates emotions, sensations, and ideas (in Trachtenberg, 1980, p.130).

Pictorialism: a movement or technique that features artificial, romantic, even

Photography: “the art or process of producing images by the action of radiant energy and especially light on a sensitive surface (as film or an optical sensor)” (in *Merriam-Webster.com*)

Photojournalism: images that are not edited beyond basic cropping and exposure tweaks which communicate a true story to an audience, often called news photographs, which are intended for a wide audience via mass printing.

Realism: “the theory or practice of fidelity in art and literature to nature or to real life and to accurate representation without idealization” (in *Merriam Webster.com*)

Snapshot photography: a casual photograph usually created by an amateur with a small, basic handheld camera (in *Merriam-Webster.com*)

Somatic Theory: knowledge that is a felt reaction of rightness within an experience (Siegesmund, 2004, p.80)

Vernacular photography: photographs concerned with the ordinary domestic and functional rather than monumental compositions, which comprise a wide array of genres such as *carte de visite*, family snapshots, photographs found in the street, discarded corporate archives, travel and vacation photos, photos of friends, class portraits, identification photographs, photo-booth images, all of which appear unintentionally artistic.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Literature Review

#### *Who is a Photographer?*

The hardest part of taking a picture is seeing. To be a photographer is to be someone who knows how to see and can communicate effectively. It is important to understand who can participate in this medium in order to support a stronger case for photography education advocacy. Describing a photographer reveals multiple definitions and qualities. Khanfar (2013) expressed that “to photograph is simple, but to see is much” (p.30). In Khanfar’s (2013) article *Photography: the language of light* he wrote that photographers are always looking for a visual surprise. A photographer is someone who communicates emotions with intelligence spring from imagination. Photographers can see multiple perspectives at once (Khanfar, 2013). A photographer is someone who goes out to capture the mood.

One must look at the history and the criticism photography has received both positive and negative in order to understand photography’s importance and how it rapidly progressed into a common, everyday medium enjoyed by many. Manzella (1957) believed, despite the criticism, that photography is not a true fine art in the traditional sense because it has captivated the largest audience and lured the most participants across all nations and all cultures, including the widest age discrepancy. Previously, writers have asserted that photography was effective in attracting both boys’ and men’s attention and it still remains a male dominated medium (Manzella, 1957). With regard to gender, photography was one of the first mediums to assert female agency because it allowed possible neutrality (Bear, 2012). Critic Bear

(2012) said, that photography's neutrality was heavily "interrogated and in which the mythologies of femininity and transparency might be consolidated and engaged" (p. 79-80). O'Hagan (2013) said, "photography lent itself to all manner of political and artistic provocation" (paragraph 7). Photography allowed politics to inform the art and the art to inform politics (O'Hagan, 2013). Thus, women too were able to embrace the newer medium, which departed from the shadow of painting's male dominated history. Its ability to excite and expand the creative eye for most people throughout its history documents its validity in today's visual arts culture and its usage on a daily basis by a wide array of people.

Photographers are categorized in several ways. There is the amateur and the professional, the truly artistic and the purely technical, the educated and the uneducated. Stieglitz analyzed photographers in early 1900s. He commented in *Camera Work*, "an amateur is one who works for love" (in Trachtenberg, 1980, p.117). Stieglitz believed that most of the greatest work is being done by people following photography for the love of it rather than for financial reasons. He illuminated the grave misconception that people tend to classify allegedly excellent work as professional, and denote the term amateur to the idea of "immature productions and to excuse atrociously poor photographs" (in Trachtenberg, 1980, p. 117). Although, Stieglitz did argue that even poor images have a degree of attraction to them. The medium of photography has a certain lure because it is quick and comprehensive. Stieglitz defined three different types of photographers: (1) the ignorant, (2) the purely technical, and (3) the artistic. Stieglitz commented on the status of the photographer in the early twentieth century by explaining:

Owing, therefore, to the universal interest in pictures and the almost universal desire to produce them, the placing in the hands of the general public as a means of making pictures with but little labor and requiring less knowledge has of necessity been followed by the production of millions of photographs. It is due to this fatal facility that photography as a picture-making medium has fallen into disrepute in so many quarters; and because there are few people who are not familiar with scores of inferior photographs the popular verdict finds all photographers professionals or "fiends." (Trachtenberg, 1980, p.117)

Stieglitz (1903) continued to vouch for the truly artistic photographer in stating that a casual observer looks at an image and understands that the image is not acquired off hand but that it is a result of a creative instinct paired with years of labor (cited in Trachtenberg, 1980). He explained that the common man does not understand the visual language needed to necessitate an appreciation for the truly artistic photographer.

This ongoing debate of who is perceived as a photographer in today's society is significant so that I may help justify students' role as photographer and the need to teach them as such creative entities. When a person decides to utilize a tool to create an image they have thus decided something is worth recording and communicating; therefore, they have become an artist because they have created something unique despite the ability to reproduce or reprint it. An artist is someone who professes and practices an imaginative art. It is important to focus on who can be considered a photography artist since this world is a media rich, visually

inundated society. Yet, while I believe that someone in the act of creating makes them a creator, this act alone does not necessarily correlate with being a good artist or a photograph having a good composition.

### *Communication*

Language is absorbed and read in a host of various methods that are constantly changing. The meanings of words can seem outdated; they reflect the society for which they were produced and intended (Blaagaard, 2013). However, images come as an outside language-one that can leave viewers speechless or empowered, as critics like Blaagaard (2013) explained.

Early twentieth century writers like Marius De Zayas (1913) believed that the artist could use photography as a way to oust conventional photography to communicate a fresh awareness. Pre-digital age, he thought photography was just a way to show material truth while true art presents the viewer with an emotional or intellectual truth. Form is needed to express the spirit of imaginative images or ideas (cited in Trachtenberg, 1980). It is the artistic photographer who covers objectivity within a concept through expression. This concealing of the object with the subject or idea thus illustrates pleasure and knowledge to the viewer. The author seems to have argued that artistic photography must encompass emotion and excitement through form and subject that allows viewers to subjectively view an objective concept. De Zayas (1913) believed that there is a huge difference between photography and artistic photography. By his definition artistic photography expresses a preconceived idea to convey an emotion, whereas photography is the experimental science of form or the “concrete representation of

consummated facts” (cited in Trachtenberg, 1980, p.130). This idea of discord between communicating emotions versus facts has existed for over a century.

Gleason’s (2008) contemporary article on the communicative roles of photography illustrated the problems associated with theorizing photography from fine art and literary viewpoints. “Like other forms of communication, photography is an interaction among people, whether the people are face-to-face or distant”(p.2). The author explained that there are different types of photographs and that in order to understand the importance of photography, distancing photography from its actual use will only obscure matters. Gleason compared works of art from the genres of street and social landscape photography to illustrate that there are different rituals involved in the communication process and that the space of the different forms inhabit overlap. He argued that critical analysis of street and social landscape photography would record different documentary data than the genre of photojournalism. Gleason concluded in his examination of genre images of street and social landscapes that they are responsive styles with coinciding subjects, which “communicate miniature stories about people doing everyday activities that are part of their individual rituals” (2008, p.11).

Today, individual rituals now include sources such as photo books, online photography magazines, and web forums. Gleason approached the study from a communication research approach rather than a visual arts standpoint. The significance of photography’s communicative role is important when teachers are trying to implement photography and social justice because it emphasizes the ability



to share vital stories about the heart of mankind and the conditions of the environment.

### *Dissemination*

As a teacher I am interested in what type of photographic methods and tools are available today to serve as a platform for social change. The immediacy and availability of the medium allow almost anyone to use the tool. No longer is the realm of making an image in the hands of a selected few photographers who owned the special, technical equipment.

Deluca (2006) argued that speed is the importance of photography. “As habits of reception and modes of perception are transformed, our habits of analysis are challenged” (p. 84). Skeptics find it hard to categorize photography as an art form because it is a constantly changing medium: one that thrives on speed, distraction, and glances. It has the power to freeze time or speed time up with its rapid dissemination power. Thus, it can lead to radical social impact. Learning how images are read is a challenge, because it is always changing and biased, especially when there is usually little time to contemplate images in the rapidity of culture.

“With the advent of the collodian process came mass production and dissemination of photographic prints” (*Photography, still,* 2013, p.1). Machinery changed the way people viewed what’s acceptable for observation; the incorporation of intimate daily life became prevalent. Making good images should be taught as a fine art particularly since it is an art form that can be rapidly disseminated to an expansive audience and thus can have significant effects on the way a multitude views the world.

In fact, today millions daily share with others their personal, quirky, passionate view of the world to a wide audience, including strangers. Social media sites such as Flickr, Facebook, Instagram, and blog sites invite others into their personal lives. These tools can be potent ways of disseminating visual ideas to a multitude of viewers. Each image conveys a message to others. This led me back to the importance of understanding theory and conceptual framework as I pondered: is there a difference between snap shot photography and photography as a fine art? I searched for a better understanding of what makes a photograph “good” and what is photography’s place in society. To reiterate, images are apart of every facet of daily life now including: advertisements, commercials, science, industry, art making, education, Internet, news, and politics. Data is currently growing at a rapid rate and exponentially expanding year to year. People are relying on visual communication more and more every day. Photographs, videos, diagrams, and animation are fundamental to the process of disseminating knowledge. I have seen the rapid increase of students and adults’ participation in the image making process in recent years because most people are equipped with some sort of photographic tool whether a digital single lens reflex, a point and shot, or a camera phone.

### *Composition*

The significance of teaching individuals basic design principles looms large, as we live in a world that heavily relies on visual works to communicate. Art educators need to recognize the power within the photographic medium’s ability to rapidly and massively disseminate and advocate for good compositions and effective communication. As critics have assessed the merit of contemporary visuals,

skilled human designers produce the best visual works. Agrawala and Berthouzoz's (2011) study on effective design principles for communication declares, "design principles connect the visual design of a visualization with the viewer's perception and cognition of the underlying information the [image] is meant to convey" (p. 60).

In the anonymous essay *Is Photography a New Art?* the author expressed the illogical ongoing dispute that has beset the world since the birth of the medium as to whether photography is or is not an "art." The author asserted that it should not be compared to other mediums but rather to the essential principle in art: composition.

And what does creation by the brain, and bringing into existence by the hands, mean? It means only one thing- composing. Man cannot truly create; but he can stick things together in such a way as to elude to into the belief that he has created; and it is this esthetic quality of composition which all the fine arts must possess, but is the only one which they must possess in common. (Trachtenberg, 1980, p. 136)

There is a proven need to lead the eye in an aesthetically logical way throughout the picture plane. To create a composition the artist delivers a series of facts whose certainty is merely reliant upon their special juxtaposition (cited in Trachtenberg, 1980). Each element and principle of design is composed as a symbol in a way to express something to the senses. This anonymous author concluded by stating that even poets use systematic symbols and scientific conceptions in their art. A photographic composition is arranged by ordering the impersonal concepts with the right balance of mathematical facts, thus photography is an arrangement of scientific and mathematical symbols that is no more pictorial than music or

conversation. It holds its own as an independent art (cited in Trachtenberg, 1980). If the composition of a photograph is strong and it is effective at communicating ideas then it is more likely to capture the attention of the viewer and perhaps even stir the emotions of the audience. Thus, if social change is the focus, it might lead viewers to connect with the concept and even foster actions of positive change.

### *Change*

Man Ray (1934) wrote in *The Age of Light* that, “race and class, like styles, then become irrelevant, while the emotion of the human individual becomes universal” (p.167). The common desire of man is to progress forward. “All progress results from an intense individual desire to improve the immediate present, from an all-conscious sense of material insufficiency. In this exalted state, material action imposes itself and takes the form of revolution in one form or another” (cited in Trachtenberg, 1980, p.167). Photographers can illuminate darkness and stir our depths. As Ray wrote, “but in a world of intended meaning, to the development that creates an image whose strangeness and reality stirs our subconscious to its inmost depths, the awakening of desire is the first step to participation and experience” (cited in Trachtenberg, 1980, p.167). These ideas promote confidence, which is fundamental for change. Ray believed the eye must teach itself to see confidence without bias or limitation. Therefore, viewers and artists must see beyond the parameters of the tool and the objectivity of an image. Meaning, viewers must have a mind of their own and participate in seeing a photograph to find their own meaning of an objective image.

### *An Everyday Tool*

Photography is inherently a social practice, a forum for change. Author Andrew Cox wrote about understanding information practices within photography. Cox (2013) explained that social practices engage in information processes like seeing and working with new information. He linked personal photography to communicating information of everyday life. The character of the practice (photography) shapes the nature of an information activity. Cox expressed that social practices involve seeking, sharing, creating, and managing information. Cox identified several practices within photography to illustrate how people share and communicate messages in unique ways.

### *Influencing Social Reform*

Sociologist Szto (2008) wrote that “Although the literature on the history of photography is extensive, few have examined photography’s social welfare role,” the ability to promote social change (p.92). Photography has huge persuasive and propagandistic characteristics in a documentary approach. Szto (2008) examined the works of Paul Kellogg, Lewis Hine, and Roy Stryker of the Farm Security Administration (FSA). He argued that it was not one image that changed social welfare provision but rather a culmination of many photographs. Before the photochemical process there was no way to “write with light” in accuracy (Szto, 2008, p.93). Not only did photographers want to take images, they wanted to disseminate their images and communicate to the world what they were able to see. Prior to the late 1800s people had to rely on text to understand what was happening around the world. But, photography made public that which was visible. Newspaper

and journals began blending text and images together to create a powerful witness. Artists, such as Jacob Riis, began investigating the poor and the disenfranchised with the development of new photographic instruments. Tucker (2012) said, “the Danish American police reporter and photographer Jacob Riis was among the first photographers to use flash photography in his and others’ efforts to investigate (and ultimately to campaign against the metropolitan presence of) the immigrant poor” (p.14). Riis used the new photographic tools of his time to poignantly communicate a strong message of social justice to political figures and citizens.

Institutional and legislative leaders picked up on the images and social problems that began to be talked about after images were created and viewed; people began to conceptualize social problems and injustices based on more empirical data rather than the character of moral, religious, or hearsay (Szto, 2008). Documentation of the social settings was purely reliant on the immediacy factor of photography. Szto expressed the views of filmmaker Grierson (1898-1972) who believed film was to “educate and persuade” others about social issues so his films (moving pictures) created images of blatant authenticity; however, it should not be objective because it is personal” (p.95-96). Orvell (2012) expressed that defining human character through the camera is an absolute yet illusory power. Orvell (2012) said, “For the photographer, the moral and aesthetic challenge is to fairly represent a subject’s identity, character, or state of being, using a single moment in time” (p.10).

### *A Wide, Diverse Group*

Photography does not have to rely on words but rather on the immediate reality of an image. For instance, Paul Kellogg was an editor of the Journal *The Survey*, which was a pioneer of social work awareness. His aim was to be an investigator and interpreter of the objective conditions of life and labor, trying to improve the situations (Szto, 2008, p. 98). He used government photographs to influence public opinion while the public took notice. Works from photographer Lewis Hine were on the forefront of public and social attention. Artists like Lewis Hine were interested in the social aspect of photography and even considered themselves as social workers in an aesthetic theory (Szto, 2008). Hine believed that photography is the best way to influence social reform.

All kinds of people are utilizing photography to advocate for social inequity and discrimination, not just men. Males, females, children, adolescents, adults, seniors, people of color, people of multi-cultures, professionals, amateurs, and students are all creating photographic compositions. Exemplary female photographers like Dorothea Lange, made huge strides in social justice advocacy. Dorothea Lange was famous for her work in the early twentieth century with government agencies of the Farm Security Administration and the Resettlement Administration. Lange's photojournalist work during the Great Depression and post Pearl Harbor helped facilitate the necessary conversations needed to promote change for citizens in America. Her works are said to have conveyed the feelings of the victims as well as document the facts and crimes. About Lange's work, according to the Library of Congress (n.d.), "To capture the spirit of the camps, Lange created

images that frequently juxtapose signs of human courage and dignity with physical evidence of the indignities of incarceration.”

There were agencies in America that sought out artists like Dorothea Lange to capture the brutalities of the human condition. The Works Progress Administration (WPA) was founded in the 1930s to create economic aid to those citizens who were struggling during the Great Depression (Work Projects Administration, 2013). The Federal Art Project was founded under the WPA and over ten thousand artworks were made for social justice issues (Work Projects Administration, 2013).

Some of the most powerful historical representations of streets and the people traversing them have been those served up by photographers. From photography's very beginning around 1838, as new camera technologies transformed lively public thoroughfares into open-air studios, photographs engendered diverse views of the city from artists, photojournalists, pedestrians, engineers, and advertisers. (Tucker, 2012, p.7)

Government agencies recognized this power and hired photographers to visually communicate in an expressive, authentic manner, the realities of life. Contemporary photographer, Zoe Strauss, captured the working-class and the harsh realities of late capitalism with a glimmer of love (Orvell, 2012, p.10). Strauss's work helps explain why the artistic work of a photographer is different from a snapshot. Orvell (2012) said,

Taking a picture of someone is not an innocent act. Rather, it is a record of a relationship between the photographer and the subject, a relationship that is inherently unequal because only one person has the machine that will fix the image of the other, along with the power, after



the act of photographing, to place that image on display for others to see.  
(Orvell, 2012, p.11)

Orvell (2012) explained that taking a photograph artistically encompasses a wide range of choices: how will the subject be made to look, how much power will the photographer cede to the subject, will the subject be exploited or respected, and what will be done with the image after it is taken? Photographing social issues creates a tension between many ethical and aesthetic questions. Many social justice photographers, like Strauss, are focused on depicting scenes empathetically; thereby their works yield a profound emotional resonance.

#### *Photojournalism and Fine Art Photography*

There are several classifications of photographers. There are those who aim to purely capture form and an aesthetic appeal and then there are those who seek to convey a message or record an event. Regarding photojournalists, Alton (2007) stated that photojournalism records moments in time and it seeks to change the way people perceive the world. Alton said that, "Like all journalists, photographers are on the whole driven by the desire to tell people the truth, as quickly as possible" (2007, p. 38). He asked how people sift through all of the images that are digitally taken since, "We are saturated in images every day, and it takes extraordinary skill to shine through" (Alton, 2007, p.39). As part of a photojournalist association, Troy (2010) explained that photojournalism excludes set-up images. The author defined a set-up shot as: "something that probably would not have occurred had a photographer not been present" (p. 37). Also, a photojournalistic image reflects a real story, therefore, stories that are made up are not considered photojournalist work. Photographic manipulation is also deemed inappropriate for photojournalistic works. Troy (2010) stated,

“Photojournalists are limited to simple corrections that bring the subject back to what was seen when the photo was taken” (p. 37). Troy represented the Photographic Society of America. They believe that any digital manipulating techniques “well beyond the accepted darkroom practices of cropping or lightening and darkening” are not accepted for photojournalistic works (p.37). To an extent, photojournalism requires a high degree of ethical honesty.

National Geographic photographers have iconic status as some of the world’s finest photojournalists. Draper (2013) wrote that National Geographic photographers all have a conscience. They opt not to venture into the manipulated image; rather they spend time and care getting to know what they need to share with the world before they shoot. They believe that a photograph is given, not taken, and they have a hunger for what is uncertain. Photojournalists also have a large capacity for potential unhappiness as they often work in less than ideal circumstances to position themselves for the perfect perspectives (Draper, 2013). Draper argued National Geographic workers use the camera as a tool to bring back images that communicate a story. The photojournalistic images document and transport the viewer to a different world. If they are really successful, they alter perceptions and promote change. There is a collaboration that takes place in the images of a National Geographic photographer: two souls on either side of the process, the viewer and the photojournalist (Draper, 2013).

The attributes listed above set a photojournalistic work apart from any other type of fine art photography. Other types of fine art photography can still record and document. They can promote change and challenge the way people perceive the world. However, they might be manipulated, staged, or have deliberately manipulated compositions before the final version is attained. It is not to say that photojournalism is

not fine art. However, there are certain characteristics that are necessary in order to call an image a photojournalistic work. This study emphasizes many artists who work as photojournalists. However, photography for social justice does not necessitate work in the raw or immediate. Photography for social justice can include staged, pre-determined, and manipulated processes.

#### *Awareness and Empowerment*

Others, such as Ozanne, Moscato, and Kunkel (2013) explained that photography is used as a way to see an unseen world: to document social issues and to raise public awareness and inspire action. Their article *Transformative Photography* presented the notion that participant photography can be used as a method for systematic data gathering that allows people to be more expressive and independent than with words or drawings.

To determine photography's impact on certain social sectors, researchers have also studied particular populations, such as marginalized and disenfranchised groups, those who have been historically, economically, or socially alienated. Photography can be a means of empowering these groups by enabling them to express their ideas in a powerful, visually skilled way (Ozanne, Moscato, & Kunkel, 2013). These researchers found that people who used photography were able to express their interests, concerns, and perspectives with tangible ownership over the images. Regarding the capacity and power of the disenfranchised to take action, Booth and Booth (2003) believed photography can shift "control over the means for documenting lives from the powerful to the powerless, the expert to the layperson, the professional to the client, the bureaucrat to the citizen, the observer to the

observed” (cited in Ozanne, Moscato, & Kunkel, 2013, p.50). This study of social change concluded that photography allowed substantial positive individual outcomes while giving people a voice and empowerment. Photography can be a type of awareness as well as therapy.

#### *A Powerful Tool for Active Engagement*

Photography has changed the world in which each human operates. It has provided opportunities to see the world in a new light. Photography can be a tool for social change: personal and global. Photographers are now offered a vast array of tools that can help them express, create, and vocalize their ideas. The understanding of photography is constantly evolving. New technologies challenge the nature of the medium altogether while at the same time broadening its use and impact. I believe that meaningfully utilizing photography as a tool can enhance overall active learning and understanding and enhance community, environmental, and civic engagement.

#### *An Eye for Change*

Medina’s (2009) article *Art Education: Empowering Social Change* expressed the sad reality that students rarely create art with any real personal relevance and are often discouraged from making anything of meaning. Medina believed in a Somatic Theory approach that emphasizes the importance of the experiential memory that is accompanied with feelings and emotions. The author argued that imagination and significant learning does not just happen in the mind, rather it involves a process of doing. She argued that, “a disembodied experience is emotionless” and that without a somatic approach to our experiences, one will lose the visceral understanding of how experiential memory shapes and forms the

viewpoints of us and of others” (Medina, 2009, p. 58). Medina provided a framework for art education communities that would create personal inspiration and an aspiration for social change. She believed that “we must be capable of imagining things as we want them to be before we can see ourselves as agents of change. If students cannot develop their imagination, they cannot envision their own power to create and recreate the world” (Medina, 2009, p. 58).

Specifically, Medina implemented an arts program that promotes influential changes in students’ consciousness within an urban education setting. There is a typical ‘banking’ approach in education that relies on the past daily rituals of life, which does not prompt students to see any opening for change. Rather students are forced into an impersonal, authoritatively administered routine. Medina argued that an art education program cognizant of students as potential change agents can override the challenges presented in the typical antiquated teaching methods.

Darts (2006) argued that students have the ability to promote social change through art when they are personally invested in a topic as they are more engaged in the learning process. Darts cited Greene (2001) in his pedagogical theory: “creation does not imply making something out of nothing. It has to do with reshaping, renewing the materials at hand, very often the materials of our own lives, our experiences, our memories” (Darts, 2006, p. 7). Darts implemented a curriculum for contemporary issues and the visual arts that rebelled against how he had been taught to teach. His art curriculum focused on sparking student interest in making meaningful change. Darts argued that very few art educators are embracing the pedagogy of “informed, creative, and mindful human beings” (Darts, 2006, p.10).

Conceptual ideas are often negated while artistic technique and mastery of skills are at the forefront. He stated, "Concentrating on the production of meaning alongside the production of artistic objects seems imperative if we as art educators are to help our students successfully negotiate the challenges of living in a rapidly transforming and globalizing world" (Darts, 2006, p.11). This is the same concept Rubinstein (2009) argued for in advocating for photography education. Rubinstein (2009) believed if approached conceptually rather than technologically, digital photography could stake a place in the center of culture that is so reliant on manipulation, copying, and reproduction (p.135).

Researchers of social change like Dewhurst (2010) examined the characteristics of social pedagogies. Dewhurst debunked the assumptions of the term social justice.

While people often assume that social justice art education must be based on controversial or overtly political issues (i.e. race, violence, discrimination, etc.), this is not always the case. Rather as long as the process of making art offers participants a way to construct knowledge, critically analyze an idea, and take action in the world, then they are engaged in a practice of social justice art-making. (Dewhurst, 2010, p. 8)

Dewhurst explained that artists around the world are using art, such as photographs or paintings, to question and challenge the existing injustices and inequities in the world. In order to fully understand the artworks of social justice, the author argued, art educators should define the work that they do. Art teachers ought to define what constitutes activism and societal change while emphasizing the importance of the

art-making process. She asserted, “Art that is created to challenge or change injustices must be allowed to leave the confines of the room in which it was made in order to reach the intended impacts of the artist” (Dewhurst, 2010, p.12). Dewhurst (2010) believed that art education for social justice is a way of teaching that seeks freedom for all humans.

Since photography can present issues that need to leave the confines of the classroom, teachers ought to be equipped with resources about how and why there is a need to teach for social change so that they may empower students to disseminate such significant messages in the hopes of bettering society. Since artists can reach a huge number of people, art teachers should help their students tap into that audience. I believed it would be valuable for teachers to have a document that emphasizes how exemplary artists have sought to better society through their images.

#### *Why We Need Photography*

“Visual messages become an individual form of aesthetic wealth that enriches our daily lives, which cannot be conveyed in words without great loss” (Scharfstein, 2009, p.6). Art philosopher Scharfstein (2009) believed our curious brains interpret the world’s symbols around us. The brain needs curiosity to probe the world around it and the curiosity needs the imagination as a platform to explore and recall.

Imagination, in turn, needs art, or, rather, takes the form of art, in order to make its imagined possibilities less fugitive, more tangible, and more accessible to exploration. If, lacking art, our imaginations would not cumulate or have art’s tangible bodies to explore and recall, it would be harder for us

to keep our interest alive by entertaining ourselves with any of art's many forms. (Scharfstein, 2009, p.1)

Scharfstein explained that without art and the imagination humans would be much sadder, duller versions of themselves. We all have a need and a hunger to create.

“Art is the instrument we use in order to give virtual presence to everything that interests us but is not effectively present enough to overcome the restlessness of an imagination too idle for its own comfort” (Scharfstein, 2009, p. 3).

A person needs to create so that they can either make something new or renew an idea while exercising a skill that is itself exhilarating. Scharfstein (2009) believed that when the experience results in very successful art making, it in turn culminates in the makers' feeling of astonishment and gratitude. The author explained the need for art: making, contemplation, possessing and repossessing (visiting artworks again or remembering the process). People put worth into their artwork as it enriches and extends us. Scharfstein (2009) said, “the worth of the art we have assures us of our own worth; but along with the art we acquire sensitivity to something other than ourselves; the messages that it conveys” (p.6). The author also expressed the ongoing debate as to what is art. He concluded that within different cultures there are diverse definitions so he aimed at describing common similarities for a new aesthetics that was inclusive to all cultures. Specifically, he asserted that the “photograph is a very powerful thing that speaks across cultures and generations to remind us all of how we carry, and have carried, ourselves in this world” (Ketchum, 2013, p. 59).



### *Evolving Photographic Education*

Photography can create change. Likewise, photography education must change too. Rubinstein (2009) believed if photography education embraces the digital moment utilizing a conceptual approach rather than a purely technical one, then, digital photography can be placed in the middle of today's visual culture, which is so fixated on reproduction, multiplication, and copying. Because the digital images are composed of software algorithms, the context and meaning are changed with every arrangement of the file (Rubinstein, 2009). What this means for art teachers is unclear; however, the author believes photography education can make a stronger argument if it asks people to think about what overall education would be without photographs, rather than focusing solely on what is the purpose of photographic education (Rubinstein, 2009). Education would be visually and emotionally lacking without photography among its resources and collections.

Bobick and Dicindio (2012) summarized various art education research that proved successful art advocacy should focus on the intrinsic value of the arts and how the arts will benefit individuals and society alike. Bobick and Dicindio (2012) reference the McCarthy et al (2004) case study which indicated that "what draws people to the arts is the 'expectation that encountering a work of art can be a rewarding experience, one that offers them pleasure and emotional stimulation and meaning' (McCarthy et al, 2004, p. 37). Also, "giving individuals a chance to interact with art will help people to understand the intrinsic value of art" (Bobick & Dicindio, 2012, p. 22). Similarly, Booth (2013) believes "learning can be transformed into understanding only with intrinsic motivation" (p.25). Bobick and Dicindio (2012)

said art educators must play an active role in order for art advocacy to work successfully by creating individual experiences for looking at and making art. Booth (2013) argues that art teachers could create yearners, those who desire to make tasks of greater value out of any assignment or life circumstance.

Photography is a science and an art form combined. Critics like Pettersson (2011) have deduced that “explanations of the phenomenological characteristics of photography are rare” (p.185). Although the acceptance of photography as a fine art has been questioned, it stands to be one of the most useful, revolutionary, and widely accepted media to this day. Photographer Ketchum said, “as the world grows more digital and thinking travels at new speeds through social networks, a lot of information will be transferred across language boundaries through visual imagers without any word-craft ” (Ketchum, 2013, p. 59). There will be an ever-increasing need for this visual language as social networks feed on it.

### *Summary*

In conclusion, this review has focused on major conceptual issues in photography, the power photographs can have in promoting societal change, and why people need to be taught photography. To strengthen my knowledge beyond this study I have personally researched and contemplated concepts and theories within photography to enrich my personal understanding of historical and contemporary issues within photography. These studies can be found on my developing Photography Advocacy website, <http://hollybb.wix.com/hphoto>, in addition to the advocacy document that has been the focus of this research. This document illuminates how certain artists and groups have used photography as a

tool to advocate a cause and create awareness. The resource is intended to serve as a tool for educators. In the next chapter I will describe my process and product.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Methodology

In this thesis project I intended to advocate for photography as a powerful means to communicate and promote social change. The scope of this study focused on the following essential questions:

1. What can artist exemplars teach us about photography for social change?

To answer this question, I have investigated the works of various photographic artists and their impact on social movements. I included historical and contemporary photographic concepts and tools ranging from analog processes to digital revolutions that have altered the way people use and understand photography. As photography is a readily available medium used all over the world, utilized by all kinds of people, for a multitude of purposes, it is important to demonstrate how and why it is used to communicate strong messages and emotions to others.

In order to create a useful advocacy tool for teachers of photography interested in social justice, I examined documents related to arts advocacy that might serve as exemplars, and I investigated artists and images to identify exemplary illustrations of the power of photography to document, protest, and address issues in society. Historically, how have artists used the medium to express their ideas and open the eyes of others? I intended to discuss a few historical artists who used analog processes such as Lewis Hine, Ansel Adams, and Jacob Riis. This showed that from the early beginnings of photography people have been utilizing the tool to promote social change. I also included contemporary artists who have

used digital photographic processes such as Katharina Mouratidi and Luc Delahaye. Many contemporary photographers are tapping into Instagram, Facebook, blogging, Flickr, and online galleries to disseminate their images to the mass public for social purposes. I looked at photography clubs and organizations whose amateur artists work collaboratively, implementing newer technologies or utilizing gallery spaces to reach their audiences such as *Child Labor and the Global Village: Photography for Social Change*. I noted non-profit organizations that use Instagram to promote social change and awareness through a compilation of various artists' images. This study also focused on social media tools like websites that feature photographs as their primary source of communication; for example, organizations like *Collective Lens*, which use photographic images to express a need for change. After investigating these exemplar artists, compiling all of the data, and viewing many of their images, I learned that photographers are utilizing a plethora of different photographic tools to clearly articulate needs among mankind.

2. How can I develop a useful advocacy resource for teachers wishing to incorporate the study of photography and social change into their curriculum?

To answer this question I sought out examples of advocacy resources for art teachers and investigate one popular site's advocacy resources. I analyzed successful features of advocacy resources and then I developed an advocacy resource for art teachers emphasizing photography and social change. I intended to contact the National Art Educators Association about their advocacy resources and utilize their website for information regarding successful art advocacy. Then, I planed on creating a downloadable PDF document to share with other art teachers.

There are several organizations that advocate for photography as a profession or as an educational tool, such as the Professional Photographers of America, which is an organization devoted to promoting adult photographic education. Their website has information for photographers trying to enhance their knowledge of photography. Their site has links to articles that involve photography advocacy for artist's rights.

The Society for Photographic Education is another group devoted to promoting photographic education in the United States. They offer membership that includes programs, services, and publications that enhances a broader understanding of the medium. They provide a journal to their members entitled *Exposure*, which includes a range of photographic discussions.

There are some groups that are already active in achieving my desired dream for this research. For example, organizations such as *Critical Exposure* are currently promoting photography and social justice in tandem. Their goal is to create youth empowerment, public engagement and social change. However, no resource specific to teaching photography for social change currently seems to exist for an audience of art teachers. I felt that a downloadable PDF will put a valuable resource into the hands of teachers who can then share it with administrators, parents, students, and other stakeholders as needed.

My process for producing a pamphlet included utilizing Apple's Pages software to create a visually appealing, well-designed document of four to six pages. I had to seek permission from some of the selected artists to utilize their images in

my pamphlet. This necessitated me calling and emailing the organizations or photographers to seek permission to utilize their copyrighted material.

The literature review enhanced my own personal understanding of the revolutionary impact photography has had as an artistic tool. In my literature review I discussed many people's skepticism of photography as it continually adapts to societal changes. This has helped me gain insight as well as illuminate potential counter arguments this study may face. I advocated for the need to teach photography as a fine art because it can oftentimes communicate more poignantly and effectively than words because it touches human emotions.

Potential biases include that I am already an art education advocate and teacher and I love to take photographs. Because there are so many ways that people are utilizing photographic processes today, this study, in any appropriate manner, could not possibly address the breadth of possibilities. I have highlighted and focused on a few historical artists, a few contemporary artists, and a sampling of new social practices that have presented ideas promoting change. The selection of artists and images will be based on relevance, not personal favorites.

Since photographic equipment is so popular, it is important to focus on the implications these tools can have in art education. I believe that photography can empower students to change the way others see the world. This thesis project will demonstrate how adults are using photographic processes to enhance public awareness of pressing issues. The nature of this research does not detail examples of students work. Rather, it will showcase what adults and professionals have done as exemplars for students in this art advocacy resource. My intention was not to

compare photography to other art mediums or to state that one is better than another. I also have not devaluated the written word or other communicative tools; but I believe that a vast majority of human interaction and knowledge dissemination occurs through photographic images, therefore it warrants elevation and analysis.

My overall hypothesis was that people around the world are relying heavily on photographic tools to promote their visions and emotions through compelling compositions. In my research beyond the scope of this study I have found that contemporary aesthetics are different from the traditional rules of composition because the tools have drastically changed. People ought to be equipped with foundational knowledge of traditional and contemporary photographic techniques and compositional design to ensure that they powerfully communicate their intended message, hence making it a fine art. I have included this information in my photography advocacy website (<http://hollybb.wix.com/hphoto>). By researching, analyzing, and evaluating various artists' and organizations' images, within a wide array of photographic tools, I hope to advocate for photography as a crucial vehicle for change. I believe that photography should be taught in school because it is an awe-inspiring, influential, and emotional language of the twenty first century. This advocacy tool will promote real-world applications of art and art education.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### Results

#### *Advocacy*

There are a multitude of fundamental life lessons photography can teach. Eisner (2002) argued that art teaches crucial life lessons. I believe that photography is a tool that will enable students to effectively communicate their ideas while promoting critical thinking. This study highlights a few of Eisner's critical life lessons learned through the arts, specifically through the lens of photography, such as:

- (1) The arts celebrate multiple perspectives. One of their large lessons is that there are many ways to see and interpret the world.
- (2) The arts teach students that small differences can have large effects. The arts traffic in subtleties.
- (3) The arts teach students to think through and within a material. All art forms employ some means through which images become real.
- (4) The arts help children learn to say what cannot be said. When children are invited to disclose what a work of art helps them feel, they must reach into their poetic capacities to find the words that will do the job.
- (5) The arts enable us to have experience we can have from no other source and through such experience to discover the range and variety of what we are capable of feeling.
- (6) The arts' position in the school curriculum symbolizes to the young what adults believe is important. (Eisner, 2002, p. 79-92)

I support art education because it provides a necessary solution. The arts help people see and understand the world around them. Art education for social justice contributes to all of these qualities as Eisner (2002) expressed. It reiterates Ketchum's (2013) expression, the power belonging to photography is that it speaks across cultures and generations as it illustrates how we carry ourselves in the world, both past and present. Booth (2013) advocated that "creating something out of yourself- and having the courage to offer it to others in the belief that it's valuable and will be received as such- is the essence of responsible citizenship" (p. 26). By participating in the arts, people are more likely to practice good citizenship, thus being a member in a community (Booth, 2013). Being cognizant of how we carry ourselves in society, our citizenship, and our role in society is very valuable and can be enlightened through the process of creating images.

People can use photography to advocate for things they find meaningful as they promote a vision or concept of change to others through a universal language. Teaching students how to use the tool effectively will help them reach their full potential as they express their unique ideas. There can be radical change within the minds of students if they are taught how to see the world through the lens of a camera pointed towards bettering society. Therefore, I would like to see more art resources available to educators and artists that emphasize the importance of bettering the environment and living situations around us.

There are many global artists that are fighting for social justice. Also, there appear to be a few educational programs that feature social justice through the lens of the camera; however, there did not appear to be many resources available for

teachers who are interested in incorporating social justice issues in their photography classroom. With the invention of new photographic technologies, there are many different methods people are using to communicate their visual message. So, there are several ways to incorporate social justice into the photography classroom whether through darkroom developing, digital processes, digital manipulation, social media, blogging, Instagram, online galleries, or traditional exhibitions. In the following sections I will highlight those who have already raised awareness for social justice issues through photography.

### *Process*

To begin my project, I selected a variety of artists and organizations whose information was readily available on the Internet. I decided to select a few historical photographers to show that people have continuously used the medium as a voice to advocate for social justice. Communication occurred when artists used film cameras and darkroom processes as a vehicle for their ideas. I immediately found Lewis Hine and Jacob Riis when researching film artists. I considered researching renowned photographers, such as Ansel Adams, who have been huge advocates for photography plus environmental or social advocates; however, I decided to feature artists who might be less known to the general public. Ansel Adams has always been a favorite of mine because he advocated for photography in such incredible ways and his images captured the vast beauty of America; he believed that America's natural beauty needed to be preserved; therefore, he was a efficacious advocate for environmental issues as he utilized his camera to communicate with the citizens and leaders of the country. Ansel Adams seemed too renown for this particular study.

While Lewis Hine's work is also very popular, his work with the TVA and other government agencies was so radical in the realm of social work that he ought to be taught in educational settings. Social justice in photography is not a new concept.

I sought out artists who made their photographic career about bringing justice to society, such as Katharina Mouratidi and Luc Delahaye. Both of these artists had an extensive collection of their works on their websites. I browsed the Internet to find successful organizations that were making large impacts in social justice. *PROOF* and *National Geographic* both came up immediately. I also highlighted collective groups of artists working together to advocate for social justice, such as: *Collective Lens*, *PhotoSensitive*, and *Child Labor and the Global Village*. They are worth featuring because they show that there are communicative tools being used online that allow people to share their views of the world in a visual community forum. I discovered educational organizations that were already using photography and social justice together, such as *Critical Exposure*. There are several nonprofit organizations that are trying to provide a forum for young people to express themselves through photography. I also sought out artists who are utilizing social media and contemporary photographic tools like Instagram and Flickr. I came across John Stanmeyer's blog and website that featured Instagram photos he took while traveling the globe, documenting the harsh living circumstances around the world.

After deciding which artists and organizations to feature in my advocacy document I completed all of the research on the Internet. I scoured through art education books and art journals. I used Galileo to find all of the applicable journals,

eBooks, and articles about photography and social justice. First, I compiled all of my data in a Word document; then, I began to create a document in Pages, an Apple software program. I arranged and rearranged the information in order to have the document flow in a visually appealing manner. I added one intriguing and captivating photographic work from each exemplar I featured in the resource. In order to use each of the images I had to contact each organization or artist. This took weeks to complete, as it was very hard to reach people either by email or phone.

The next section features the information that is available on the advocacy resource tool I created. The following data has slightly more information than the document itself because I tried to keep the resource tool as concise as possible for readers who intend to implement social justice in their photography class. The document includes information about: the artist or organization, an example of their work, short definitions about advocacy, communication, social justice, and art education, a resource guide, and practical ways teachers can use the document. Overall, the document is six pages long (see Appendix A for the resource guide). I included the following definitions along with a few short captions about photographic need within education:

Advocacy: the act or process of supporting an idea or a cause.

Art education: Today's society is inundated with photographic tools, so this resource is intended to provide information to encourage communication about social justice through photographic tools. The purpose of this study is to highlight how others have used the tool in a significant way

to promote social change through powerful imagery. Here are some exemplar artists who have used photography for social justice.

Change: to give a different position, course, or direction to another.

Communication: photography is a communicative tool that artists use to vocalize to others what they find interesting and significant in life.

Photography: the artful process of producing images by the action of capturing the light on a sensitive surface.

Social justice: a state of promoting the common good; egalitarianism; justice in the distribution of wealth, power, privileges, opportunities, and status within society.

Why Photography: The moment the tool is at the eye people begin to see and think differently. The camera becomes a tool to help people communicate effectively in a visual language, which can be more powerful than words. Photographers aim to capture a mood and a feeling and then communicate that with their viewers. The camera is a highly effective tool because it can be used all over the world.

Communication: Photography is a communicative tool that artists use to vocalize to others what they find interesting and significant in life. The photograph can have many possible meanings, which depend on the viewer, the audience, and the context in which it is seen. People can learn much about the world through photographs. The individual and culture work in tandem because culture is the individual's way of seeing and understanding the world.

#### How to use this resource:

- Share ideas with your administration, parents, community, and potential benefactors to encourage community support for your program and projects.
- Use exemplar artists and organizations in your classroom with students to get them thinking and aware of social justice works already in place.
- Send out requests for sponsorship to support your program.
- Connect with exemplar artists or organizations.
- Contact local charities or government agencies to find out about how your classroom and your students can get involved.
- Use resources listed below as a starting point for your lessons.
- Discuss photography and social justice as a class. Have your class formulate a list of possible areas that they perceive to be in need of change both locally and globally.

#### Teaching photography:

- How do photographs convey meaning?
- What role can photographs play in revealing injustice?
- How can photography help people to take action against injustice?
- How do viewers add to the construction of the meanings of these images?
- Have students create a body of photographic work that features a social justice issue that they personally are interested in. Students

could exhibit their artwork in the school, local coffee houses, other public establishments, or gallery spaces around town.

Here is the research I collected on the exemplar artists:

### *PhotoSensitive*

Beginning in 1990, this nonprofit collective of photographers set out to show how photography could help social justice. Each photographer uses the camera to make social commentaries, to tell stories, and to create awareness and action within viewers. The collective group encourages their photographers to get to know the subjects and then to create their best works; as a result, the images will do the work and capture the audiences' attention and feelings (*Braille=Equality*, 2013).

For example, the image of hands on braille captured by Bernard Weil (see Figure A) was used to promote equality for the blind. The exhibit focused on showcasing braille as a revolutionary tool for the blind. Audiences experience a feeling while viewing the image that will hopefully promote advocacy for braille. *PhotoSensitive* images are often printed in annual reports and brochures after the exhibition is over. The images are intended to capture an audience and make a lasting impression in advocacy for social justice.

### *Critical Exposure*

*Critical Exposure* is a nonprofit organization that aims to empower young people to promote social and educational reform. Their vision is to use the power of photography as a voice to communicate the need for real change as a member of a democratic society. They focus on:

- Youth empowerment



- Real change
- Public engagement

For example, twenty-year-old Pamela captured images of Washington, DC that advocated for the Weed and Seed project. The topic of her images is gentrification and housing. The artist captured decrepit housing situations that the city neglected. Her image (see Figure B) depicts a building where the ceilings were caving in, where someone was shot, and so forth. The building was not a safe dwelling for Pamela's beloved ones. Her aim was to promote the need for societal change that would enhance the living situations of city dwellers.

### *John Stanmeyer*

Stanmeyer, a professional photojournalist, used social media and Instagram to share his images with the world. He created photographic work for *National Geographic* as he traversed the globe in hope of shining light on issues that need reform. Stanmeyer believed that it is not about the camera. Rather it is what one does with the camera tool in regards to communication.

Stanmeyer used newer technologies to reach the masses of a worldwide audience. He wrote a blog that incorporated his travel tales and his photographic works (<http://stanmeyer.com/blog/>). Many of his images are from his Instagram account. In fact he even wrote one of his journal entries on Instagram and it's potential as a tool to be either a fading fad or a cultural staple. His writings on his blog also showcase images of him working with his computer and digital equipment in remote third world villages. It created an interesting juxtaposition for viewers to behold. Stanmeyer also used his forum both written and photographic to discuss

very technical processes he applied to his images. He explained on his website that he utilized a multitude of processes including Facebook, Instagram, blogs, and printed images (<http://www.stanmeyer.com/>). He wanted his audience to see and understand the entire photographic process that he engaged in while traveling and documenting social justice.

Stanmeyer's (2012) image *60,000 Sudanese refugees seek safety in Yida* taken in South Sudan only twenty kilometers from the border with Sudan emphasized the enormity of the situation at hand by using a bird's eye perspective.

*Marcus Bleasdale*

Marcus Bleasdale (2013) believed, "It's not the individual photograph, it's what you do with it, and who you engage with it, that makes it powerful" (Proof, 2013).

For example, Marcus Bleasdale's (2005) image (see Figure D), *A boy loves the feel of a shower at a care center for homeless children in Kinshasa, capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Thousands of children wander the city's streets, their families destroyed by warfare, AIDS, and poverty* was part of an extensive body of work he created for *National Geographic*.

As a professional photojournalist his goal was to work with advocacy groups to grow strong campaigns that create real world change (Chen, 2013). Financiers, government policymakers, and technology manufacturers have utilized his unflinching images to promote social justice and awareness. The photographer believed that he cannot stop wars and civil unrest but he could help provide the communicative tool or path to discuss social justice issues. His printed work and

website have been heavily used in political forums such as the Senate, Congress, and The United Nations to discuss human rights and war (Chen, 2013).

### *Katharina Mouratidi*

Katharina Mouratidi, a contemporary professional photographer, traveled the world seeking to illuminate global conditions that need change.

For example, the image of the man in the water cleaning up after an oil spill is from her collection of images that showcase a city in resistance to oil drilling. Her series highlights the ill effects that oil drilling have on rural, remote villages. She allows viewers to glimpse the lifestyle of the people living in the village.

### *Jacob Riis*

Jacob Riis was an influential social documentary photographer and photojournalist who focused on the plight of the poor, which later influenced “muckraking” photojournalism. Riis illuminated the environmental conditions of the poor. As a Denmark immigrant in the 1800s, Riis experienced New York’s hard, unwelcoming streets upon his arrival. Through his images he helped divided the poor into two categories: the deserving (children and women) and the undeserving (criminals and unemployed). He intended on alleviating the poor living situations by presenting his images to the middle and upper classes. He wrote *How the Other Half Lives* (Riis, 1890). He helped create change in the city by getting the president on board with his vision. Dangerous areas were replaced with parks and playgrounds Newhall, B. (1937).

### *Luc Delahaye*

Luc Delahaye, a French contemporary photographer, photographed the

“ordinary” as he traversed the world. He has been recognized for his coverage of war. He presented viewers with a different perspective on social issues that viewers typically do not experience in the news or find on the Internet. He was interested in the long-term repercussions of world events that go beyond the popular news.

Delahaye’s image, *The Registration of Internally Displaced People in Eastern Chad* from May 27, 2006, (see Figure G) highlights a group of displaced refugee women waiting to sign up for aid. The angle is unique and intimate. He used large and medium format cameras to capture his visions and perceptions. The J. Paul Getty Trust (2007) featured the work of Luc Delahaye on their website (*Recent History: Photographs by Luc Delahaye, 2007*). The website explained that Delahaye’s images depart from traditional documentary-style photography (<http://www.getty.edu>). He has also combined images from one event to create a more provoking and compelling emotional response. He used the camera to prompt viewers to consider the relationship between information, viewer, art, and history. Delahaye often printed his images on a large scale to place the viewer in similar proportion to the human subject matter making them face-to-face.

*Child Labor and the Global Village: Photography for Social Change*

*Child Labor and the Global Village: Photography for Social Change* is a collective of eleven photographers whose goal is to move people emotionally and to motivate people to action through viewing their photographs about child workers. The collective body of work travels around the world visiting places like Congress, schools and universities. The organization wants to bring child labor to the attention of citizens to inspire compassion and because many of the future workers will come

from developing countries where they have been injured or harmed at an early age.

For example, Gigi Cohen's striking image (see Figure H) of a young girl in a Haitian house conjures emotions in the viewer through the use of value. Cohen wanted to raise awareness about the individuals: who they are and what they need. Cohen made the viewer aware of the line between work and child labor: that which harms or exploits them (*Haiti-domestic service*, n.d.).

### *Lewis Hine*

Lewis Hine began photographing immigrants at Ellis Island in the early 1900s. He also documented the child labor industry in America. He used his images to advocate against child labor. Hine became a leading social reformer as he worked for various magazines and organizations that fought for social justice. His photographs focused on the human work conditions such as steelmaking and modern construction. Some of his most significant photographic work was for the TVA and the WPA National Research Project (Work Projects Administration, 2013).

The image (see Figure I) is an example of the grueling work industry was requiring of man during the time. Through his images, Hine was able to expose the gruesome, daunting, even dangerous workmen and children were being forced into. Social change was a result of his powerful photographic voice.

### *Collective Lens*

A nonprofit organization, *Collective Lens* promotes awareness of important social issues through pictures and social media. It hosts a public forum where any photographer can upload their work to the Internet with the intent of creating awareness. Photographers from other non-profit organizations can display their

images on the website to help promote awareness of their cause. Anyone can upload images to the Internet. The intent is to spread the word and inspire others to get involved. Members and their audience can observe images in the forum, educate themselves on current social issues, and discover ways to get involved.

*Collective Lens* website also provides advocacy resources to teachers who want to incorporate social justice into their classrooms. *Collective Lens* website stated the following to teachers:

“Have your students visit organizations in your community. With a photojournalistic viewpoint, students can learn about important issues in their community, and then spread that knowledge to others with their photos. For example, students could get involved with and photograph one of the following topics:

homeless organizations and shelters

a local environmental issue

homes for the elderly

community gardens

youth programs

or any cause or issue that's important to them.”

(In the classroom, 2010)

*Collective Lens* gave succinct mention to curriculum possibilities like creating a photo essay or hosting a gallery in a public space for students to display their images and advocate for their cause. The website also called for teachers to contact the organization if they are teaching social activism in their classrooms so that they

may feature their student's work on the *Collective Lens* blog site (In the classroom, 2010).

An example of the work posted on the public sight is "Water with Hope" (see Figure J). This is an image captured on October 7, 2010 by Shaun Boyte who uploaded his image to the *Collective Lens* website in an attempt to advocate a needing refugee community. The website does not say how many hits the sight has received but viewers can search for specific topics or themes of activism on the website. This is a great resource for teachers and social activists because the website features an organization page that lists hundreds of organizations they have featured in the past. *Collective Lens's* Internet site also provides a brief synopsis of each charity or cause as well as providing Internet links to each organizations website.

### *PROOF*

In 2006 Leora Khan along with a group of internationally acclaimed photographers, journalists, and activists. *PROOF's* mission is to promote peace building and to prevent genocide around the world. They create visual documentary presentations using images to communicate a message of sustainable peace to armed and warring nations. Their main focus is on post-conflict regions. *PROOF* desires to contribute to the research and the scholarship of the social issues. The images they capture are used as part of the educational tools they create to dispense to local and international communities. They aim to share stories of untold courage and to document the injustice and abuse in the post-conflict regions (*PROOF*, 2013).

*PROOF* hosts many exhibitions, conferences, workshops, and benefit auctions to raise awareness in the community. They partner with many nonprofit social justice organizations around the world to promote their sustainable peace idea.

The brutality of war effects all, young and old people alike. *PROOF* created a book “Children Soldiers” to illustrate the profound costly consequences of child soldiers. The image (see Figure K) captured of the young boy riding in a jeep during a funeral of a martyr, escorted with armed militia, communicates a strong message of corruption and violence. Through the use of a strong composition, technical skills, and emotions the *PROOF* artist advocates for an end to child soldiers. Children are losing their innocence, youth, and their lives.

In conclusion to my process, I added about twenty links to various resources online that include topics of social justice, photography resources, and art advocacy. Once I completed the document in Pages I converted it to a PDF so that it can be easily disseminated to others.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### Reflections and Implications

Looking at the history of photography has enriched my learning as a photography teacher. The information I have studied has greatly enhanced my overall understanding of communicating visually. This in-depth look at photography has changed my ability to align my knowledge, beliefs, intents, and desires to others' beliefs and knowledge about photography. Studying the significance of photography and its theory has made me an even stronger advocate for this art form.

From this extensive research about photography I broadened my knowledge about the unique characteristics photography offers the world. I learned that photography is distinctive in: its instantaneity, its ability to rapidly disseminate, its capability to depict realism, its universality, and its prevalent practice. I thoroughly enjoyed focusing on major conceptual issues in photography and seeing how the techniques of photography are rapidly evolving. It is important for teachers to stay abreast of the divergent theories and current practices associated with photography. There are many current tools and technological resources available today that students might engage with as they strive towards vocalizing their ideas to local or global communities.

As I studied the ongoing debate about the validity of photography my desire to advocate for photography grew stronger. Photography is a radical tool that can empower people to make change. The camera, like the paintbrush, is solely a tool. A tool needs to be used properly in order to serve a significant purpose. The camera is a tool that helps people communicate visually what they find noteworthy in their

life. Students and adults need to be taught how to use this tool and how to create dynamic compositions in order to produce their most engaging, profound, and moving works.

As stated before, the brain needs curiosity to probe the world around it. We have all been given the gift of curiosity and an allotment of creative talent. The imagination needs a platform to explore, express, and recall. Scharfstein (2009) expressed that the results of very successful art making culminates in the makers feeling of astonishment and gratitude. When people have a creative platform to successfully communicate that which words cannot express, they enhance their state of being too. The returns of a social justice photography curriculum are a win-win situation. The photographer benefits from contemplating and processing their thoughts and beliefs; the community profits from powerful, thought provoking, and action-spawning works.

Photography has mesmerized worldwide masses, young and old alike. Its allure often rests in its immediacy and its ability to depict realism. Since the camera can be used anywhere and any time it is an advantageous, fun, and portable tool. With the explosion of mobile phone cameras in the past decade, this tool is becoming more accessible to a wider range of people; people who previously might not have engaged in photography because they lacked the tool now have the potential to create images. Now, not only does the capability lie with professional photographers, previously the only people with fancy equipment; but, people of all ages and artistic experience can practice the art.

As an art educator, I feel that my research about why people need to be taught photography has deepened my dedication to my career. It has provided further validation for what art teachers do in their classroom. This study has also brought attention to the capabilities of students in terms of seeing society and acting as beacons of light to their communities. There is potential for many organizations and schools to effectively teach awareness through photography, as seen in the exemplary work of *Critical Exposure*.

Teachers can and should teach students how to promote social justice issues. Teachers can model the idea of empathy, grace, justice, and peace to their students. Educators can encourage students to create a better society, as they become a prototype of care through their own personal actions and beliefs about social justice. If teachers take time in class to focus their curriculum units on social justice then the students will conceivably see the importance and significance of active advocacy. Most likely they will perceive the teacher as an activist for positive change. Art teachers can further affect their students' outlook in the world by helping them understand that they themselves can make a difference in someone else's life, just as exemplary artists have done. By allowing students to learn about other artists whose works thematically feature social justice then students may have a better cognitive understanding of their own potential. We learn best by example; a teacher can be a good pioneer and effective leader for social activism. The scope of my advocacy document has focused on a wide gamut of social justice issues. The images presented in my photography advocacy tool portray issues cover braille equality, starvation, child soldiers, poor housing situations, and more. This

document was intended to show that there are many things people can advocate for regarding the betterment of civilization and the environment. Teachers can give students the opportunity to perceive, observe, ponder, and discover significance in their life and within the lives of others by allowing them to share their perspective of life through images.

As demonstrated through the works of the artists I included in my advocacy resource, photographs can have a major impact on society. These sources of inspiration and exposés of sheer passion are encouraging to me as an art teacher and as a citizen of mankind. It has been emboldening to receive this education on how people are utilizing their photographic tools to promote awareness concerning societal problems. It has been heartening to see people using art to better society, shed light on the condition of mankind and the environment, and possess the desire for others to have lives more fulfilling.

What can I learn from these exemplary artists? I have learned that pictures can be more impactful than words. I have learned that photography is a great vessel that students and adults can utilize it to vocalize what they deem important in society. I have researched a group of artists who apply different photographic processes and tools to promote social justice. Whether film, digital, digital manipulations, Instagram, online forums and galleries, or blogs, all of these tools are a means for the dissemination of important beliefs, meanings, and ideas. I am not a pioneer for social justice, just part of a greater movement fighting for those in need.

I hope that art educators and other teachers use my advocacy resource to spawn on students' interest and their own potential to create life long change. I hope

that teachers and other leaders will recognize the importance of students' voices, as they can possess beautiful hearts aching for justice and mercy. Therefore, it is important to teach students at an early age how to be aware and cognizant of what is happening around them, the things that are occurring both inside and outside of their bubble.

I hope to publish my advocacy tool through the National Art Educators Association's website so that teachers can easily access and download the resource. In the meantime I have decided to expand my own website with valuable information for photography advocacy in order to provide art teachers with resources to use in their classroom. I used an online Wix ([www.wix.com](http://www.wix.com)) template to create an aesthetically pleasing website that is easily accessible to anyone with an Internet connection. While there are a few resources available I would like to see more comprehensive sites or resources that focus specifically on photography and social justice. I hope that this document will be downloaded frequently and fill that gap. My hope is that it will provide an easy platform for teachers who are interested in teaching social justice in their art classroom. The document provides basic avenues for discussion and student engagement, which in turn will hopefully yield positive discussions and actions. My dream is for the thoughts, discussions, and conversations that occur the classroom due to the implementation of this curriculum idea will produce a wake of positive motions. Obviously this document alone cannot change the world but I hope educators see the dynamic potential in their students and that they place more value in teaching themes of righteousness, justice, and love. The goal is to educate, inspire, and encourage the new generation

to leverage art for the betterment of society and to spread awareness of social sufferings in the world.

I intend to feature these exemplary artists in my own photography classroom. The school where I am currently employed places great emphasis on global missions and volunteer work; therefore, there is a natural fit for this kind of curriculum to exist. Students at my school are already active advocates for bettering society. It is amazing to see the implementation of a good ethics program at work in my school. It would be even better for them to express their yearnings in a visual message that they could share more easily, widely, and expressively to local and global communities. Therefore, I think that a social justice photography curriculum will be well received by my student body, as they already possess a deep hunger to help others. We already have the resources and tools necessary to implement such a program. Having exemplary artists to examine will hopefully inspire students to take action and photograph the world around them in significant ways.

#### *Implications for further research*

This research was designed to increase the use of photography as a means to communicate social justice. While I have tried to provide a wide scope, there is further research that needs to be done on these exemplary artists. Potential projects could include creating a detailed photographic curriculum for the middle school, high school, or college level photography class. I would recommend further research in the newer photographic processes such as: camera phones, Instagram, social media sites, and digital manipulation. As indicated in my literature review, technologies are rapidly changing. They are also rapidly changing how we

understand and perceive the world, even how we interact in the world. With the nature of photography continually changing I must ask: how do changes in the tools and methodology of photography lead to further broad, social change? Additional research beyond the scope of this study should focus on: what is the relationship of photography's invention and technological advances to social and educational change?

If a teacher implemented a curriculum focused on social justice, it would be best to allow students to choose their advocacy theme as they shoot their images and create their story. Or, teachers could have the class decide on one theme and have students work within that theme to guide them as they enter into the concept of helping others. I suggest future research ought to focus on topics of social justice that interest students the most. I recommend an implementation of curriculum into a school's photography program that interacts and collaborates with a local organization; the more hands on the students can get, the better the project will go. Students could contact a preferred local organization and build a partnership with them. Regardless of where students live and what is going on in their local communities, students can still explore photography for social justice using metaphorical representations or staging photographs to make it an artistic social justice expression. Then, one could specifically assess the engagement level of students and follow the changes that hopefully occur from the implementation of a social justice project or curriculum. Research could include: the change within students' engagement in photography class, students' engagement in society, students' passion to use the arts to express themselves, the positive results within

the community that follow the project, and the viewer's responses to the images. Because of the limited scope of this research I could not focus on the results of such an endeavor. But, I will continue to research and develop my photography curriculum to enhance student's ability to communicate and to promote social justice in my classroom. I have started to engage my own photography students in a social justice minded curriculum and it has been interesting to see their cognitive abilities to think deeply and their ability to articulate a desire for change and awareness for issues of significance.

In conclusion, this research is the beginning of a lifetime work for me as a social activist. This study has broadened my desire to express and communicate the importance pictures have in society.



## APPENDIX A



Figure A. Bernard Weil, *Braille=equality*, n.d.



Figure B. Pamela, *The truth behind closed doors*, Washington D.C., Weed and Seed program, 2013.



*Figure C. John Stanmeyer, The grave of Hassan Kako, 13, being covered with dirt by family members in the Yida refugee camp in South Sudan. Hassan died of acute malaria, which is spreading among the 60,000 Sudanese refugees now that rainy season has arrived, Sudan, 2012.*



Figure D. Marcus Bleasdale, *A boy loves the feel of a shower at a care center for homeless children in Kinshasa, capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo*. Thousands of children wander the city's streets, their families destroyed by warfare, AIDS, and poverty, Republic of Congo, 2005.



Figure E. Karharina Mouratidi, *Sarayaku- a village in resistance to oil drilling*, Ecuador, n.d.



*Figure F. Jacob Riis, Bandit's Roost, New York, 1888.*



*Figure G. Luc Delahaye, Registration of Internally Displaced People in Eastern Chad, negative, May 27, 2006; print, 2007.*



Figure H. Gigi Cohen, *Haiti- domestic service*, The Photo Project, n.d



Figure I. Lewis Hine, *Powerhouse mechanic working on steam pump*, courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration, 1920.



*Figure J. Shaun Boyte. Water with hope. October 7, 2010.*



*Figure K. Jan Grarup/Noor, Young Fatah members at the funeral of a martyr*  
*Young Fatah members at the funeral of a martyr from the City Inn front. The children*  
*learn the political views of the adults from an early age. Sep/Nov 2002.*

## APPENDIX B

Photography Advocacy

# PHOTOGRAPHY AND SOCIAL CHANGE

## A Communicative Tool

Designed by: Holly Ballenger

### Art Education

Today's society is inundated with photographic tools, so this resource is intended to provide information to encourage communication about social justice through photographic tools. Here are some exemplar artists who have used photography for social justice.

### Social Justice

a state of promoting the common good; egalitarianism; justice in the distribution of wealth, power, privileges, opportunities, and status within society

### Photography Advocacy

Advocacy: the act or process of supporting an idea or a cause

Change: to give a different position, course, or direction to another

Photography: the artful process of producing images by the action of capturing light on a sensitive surface



### PhotoSensitive

Image by: Bernard Weil

Beginning in 1990, this nonprofit collective of photographers set out to show how photography could help in the struggle for social justice. Each photographer uses the camera to make social commentaries, to tell stories, and to create awareness and action within viewers. The collective group encourages their photographers to get to know the subjects and then create their best works. Following after, the images will do the work by capturing the audiences' attention and feelings.

For example, the image of hands on braille by Bernard Weil was used to promote equality for the blind. This particular exhibit focused on showcasing braille as a revolutionary tool for the blind. Viewers experience a feeling that will hopefully encourage advocacy for braille. PhotoSensitive images are often printed in annual reports and brochures after the exhibition is over (*Braille = Equality*, 2013). The images are intended to capture an audience and make a lasting impression of advocacy for social justice.

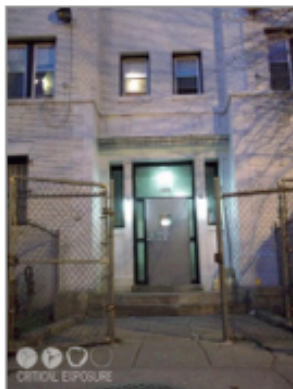
## Critical Exposure

Critical Exposure is a nonprofit organization that aims to equip young people with the ability to create social and educational reform. Their vision is to use the power of photography to communicate the need for real change as a member of a democratic society. They focus on:

- Youth empowerment
- Real change
- Public engagement

For example, twenty-year-old Pamela captured images of Washington, DC that advocated for the Weed and Seed project. The topic is gentrification and housing. The artist captured the decrepit housing situations that the city neglects. In this particular image, someone was shot in this building, ceilings are caving in, and so forth. The building is not safe for her beloved ones to live in. Her aim is to promote societal change that will improve the living situations of the city dwellers (*Gentrification and housing*, 2013).

Image by: Pamela, *The truth behind closed doors*, Washington D.C., Weed and Seed program, 2013



## John Stanmeyer

Stanmeyer, a contemporary photographer, used social media and Instagram to share his images with the world. He did photographic work for National Geographic and traveled the world in hopes of bringing to light issues that need social reconstruction. Stanmeyer believed that it is not about the camera but what one does with the camera tool in regards to communication. This example easily reached a host of viewers through photographic social media tools. It shows the pain associated with disease in developing countries.

Image by: John Stanmeyer, *The grave of Hassan Kako, 13, being covered with dirt by family members in the Yida refugee camp in South Sudan. Hassan died of acute malaria which is spreading among the 60,000 Sudanese refugees now that rainy season has arrived*, 2012



## National Geographic : Marcus Bleasdale



Image by: Marcus Bleasdale, *A boy loves the feel of a shower at a care center for homeless children in Kinshasa, capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Thousands of children wander the city's streets, their families destroyed by warfare, AIDS, and poverty*. 2005

Marcus Bleasdale, a professional photojournalist, who worked with National Geographic. His aim is to work with advocacy groups to grow strong campaigns that create real world change. Financiers, government policymakers, and technology manufacturers have utilized his unflinching images to promote social justice and awareness. The photographer believed that although he can not stop wars and civil unrest but he can help provide the communicative tool to discuss social justice issues (Chen, 2013).



## Photography Advocacy

### Katharina Mouratidi



Katharina Mouratidi, a contemporary professional photographer, traveled the world seeking to illuminate global conditions that need change (Mouratidi, n.d.).

For example, the image of the man in the water cleaning up after an oil spill is from her collection of images that showcase a city in resistance to oil drilling. Her series highlighted the ill effects that oil drilling have on rural, remote villages. She allows viewers to glimpse the lifestyle of the people living in the village.

Image by: Katharina Mouratidi, *Sarayaku - a village in resistance to oil drilling*, Ecuador, n.d.

### Photojournalism

objective photographic images that tell a real story and timely record an event captured a photographer working within a rigid ethical framework; it does not include manipulated images or set-up compositions.

### Jacob Riis

Jacob Riis was an influential social documentary photographer and photojournalist who focused on the plight of the poor, which later influenced "muckraking" photojournalism. Riis illuminated the environmental conditions of the poor. As a Danish immigrant in the 1800s, Riis experienced New York's hard, unwelcoming streets upon his arrival. Through his images, he helped divided the poor into two categories: the deserving (children and women) and the undeserving (criminals and unemployed). He intended on alleviating the poor living situations by presenting his images to the middle and upper classes. He wrote *How the Other Half Lives* (Riis, 1890). He helped create change in the city by getting the president on board with his vision. Dangerous areas were replaced with parks and playgrounds.

Image by: Jacob Riis, *Bandit's Roost*, New York, 1888



### Luc Delahaye

Delahaye, a contemporary photographer, sought to photograph the "ordinary". He was interested in the long-term implications of world events that goes beyond the initial news feed. His images capture a different vantage point than newspapers or news media portray to citizens. (*Recent History: photographs by Luc Delahaye*, 2007). For example, women crowd around an official representative waiting to register for aid at a refugee camp.

Image by: Luc Delahaye, *The Registration of Internally Displaced People in Eastern Chad*, negative, May 27, 2006; print, 2007



### Why Photography?

The moment the tool is at the eye people begin to see and think differently. The camera becomes a tool to help people communicate effectively in a visual language, which can be more powerful than words. Photographers aim to capture a mode and a feeling and then communicate that with their viewers. The camera is a highly effective tool because it can be used all over the world.

### Photography Advocacy

## Collective Lens: Photography for Social Change

A nonprofit organization, Collective Lens promotes awareness of important societal issues through pictures and social media. It hosts a public forum where any photographer can upload their work to the Internet with the intent of creating awareness.

For example, *Water with hope* is an image by Shaun Boyte who uploaded his image to Collective Lens website, advocating for help and hope for refugees Boyte, S. (2010, October 7).

Image by: Shaun Boyte, *Water with hope*, October 7, 2010



## PROOF: Media for Social Justice

In 2006 Leora Khan, along with a group of internationally acclaimed photographers, journalists, and activists. PROOF's mission is to promote peace building and to prevent genocide around the world. They create visual documentary presentations using images to communicate a message of sustainable peace to armed and warring nations.

PROOF hosts many exhibitions, conferences, workshops, and benefit auctions to raise awareness in the community. They partner with many nonprofit social justice organizations around the world to promote their sustainable peace idea.

### Communication

Photography is a communicative tool that artists use to vocalize to others what they find interesting and significant in life. The photograph can have many possible meanings, which depend on the viewer, the audience, and the context in which it is seen. People can learn much about the world through photographs. The individual and culture work in tandem because culture is the individual's way of seeing and understanding the world.

The brutality of war effects all, young and old people alike. PROOF created a book *Children Soldiers* to illustrate the profound costly consequences of child soldiers. The image captured of the young boy riding in a jeep during a funeral of a martyr, escorted with armed militia, communicates a strong message of corruption and violence. Through the use of a strong composition, technical skills, and emotions the PROOF artist advocates for an end to child soldiers. Children are losing their innocence, youth, and their lives (*Child soldiers: forced to be cruel*. 2013).

Image by: Jan Grarup/ Noor, 2002



Photography Advocacy

**Child Labor and the Global Village:  
Photography for Social Change**



Image by: Gigi Cohen, Haiti-domestic service, The Photo Project, n.d.

Child Labor and the Global Village: Photography for Social Change is a collective of 11 photographers who's goal is to move people emotionally and to motivate people to action through viewing their photographs about child workers. The collective body of work travels around the world visiting places like Congress, schools, and universities. The organization wants to bring child labor to the attention of citizens to inspire compassion. Many of the future workers will come from developing countries where they have been injured or harmed at an early age.

Gigi Cohen's striking image of a young girl in a Haitian house conjures emotions in the viewer through the use of value. Cohen wants to raise awareness about the individuals: who they are and what they need. Cohen makes the viewer aware of the line between work and child labor: that which harms or exploits them.

**Lewis Hine**

Lewis Hine began photographing immigrants at Ellis Island in the early 1900s. He also documented the child labor industry in America. He used his images to advocate against child labor. Hine became a leading social reformer as he worked for various magazines and organizations that fought for social justice. His photographs focused on the working conditions in industries such as steelmaking and construction. Some of his most significant photographic work was for the TVA and the WPA National Research Project.

The image below is an example of the grueling work that industry was requiring of men during that time. Through his images, Hine was able to expose the gruesome, daunting, even dangerous work men and children were being forced into. Social change was a result of his powerful photographic voice.

Image by: Lewis Hine, *Power house mechanic working on steam pump*, courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration, 1920



### Photography Advocacy

#### How to use this resource:

- \* Share ideas with your administration, parents, community, and potential benefactors to encourage community support for your program and projects.
- \* Use exemplar artists and organizations in your classroom with students to get them thinking and aware of social justice works already in place.
- \* Send out requests for sponsorship to support your program.
- \* Connect with exemplar artists or organizations.
- \* Contact local charities or government agencies to find out about how your classroom and your students can get involved.
- \* Use resources listed below as a starting point for your lessons.

#### Teaching Photography:

- \* Discuss photography and social justice as a class. Have your class formulate a list of possible areas that they perceive to be in need of change both locally and globally.
  - How do photographs convey meaning?
  - What role can photographs play in revealing injustice?
  - How can photography help people to take action against injustice?
  - How do viewers add to the construction of the meanings of these images?
- \* Have students create a body of photographic work that features a social justice issue that they personally are interested in. Students could exhibit their artwork in the school, local coffee houses, other public establishments, or gallery spaces around town.

## Resources

### Social Justice:

Child Labor Photo Project: <http://www.childlaborphotoproject.org/collections.html>

Collective Lens: <http://www.collectivelens.com/photo/water-hope>

Critical Exposure: <http://www.criticalexposure.org/gallery/photographer/Pamela>

John Stanmeyer: <http://stanmeyers.com/blog/>

Katharina Moutatidi: [http://www.moutatidi.de/en/portfolio/ccuador\\_30.html#photo](http://www.moutatidi.de/en/portfolio/ccuador_30.html#photo)

Lewis Hinc: <http://www.icp.org/mmzcm/exhibitions/lewis-hinc>

Liz Delahay: <http://www.getty.edu/art/exhibitions/delahay/>

National Geographic: <http://proof.nationalgeographic.com/2013/09/14/photography-as-advocacy-origins-of-a-journey/>

PhotoSensitive: <http://www.photosensitive.com/projects>

PROOF: <http://proof.org/child-soldiers/>

### Additional Social Justice resources:

Human Exposure: <http://www.humanexposure.com/index.php>

PhotoVoice: <http://www.photovoice.org/html/ppforadvocacy/ppforadvocacy.pdf>

### Photography Resources:

Focus on Photography: A Curriculum Guide by Cynthia Way: [http://www.icp.org/sites/default/files/exhibition\\_pdf/icp\\_curriculum\\_guide\\_parts.pdf](http://www.icp.org/sites/default/files/exhibition_pdf/icp_curriculum_guide_parts.pdf)

Molly Ballenger: <http://mollyballenger.com/igbets>

International Center of Photography: <http://www.icp.org/school>

Photo Imaging Education Association: <http://picapma.com/cms/>

Professional Photographer Association: <http://www.pppa.com>

Society for Photographic Education: <http://www.spenational.org/>

### Arts Advocacy:

National Art Education Association: <http://www.arteducators.org/>

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