A Visually Determined Deutschland: Visual Rhetoric Analysis of German Culture

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A VISUALLY DETERMINED DEUTSCHLAND:
VISUAL RHETORIC ANALYSIS OF GERMAN CULTURE

by

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**Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree**

of

**HONORS IN UNIVERSITY STUDIES
WITH DEPARTMENTAL HONORS**

in

**Communication Studies
in the Department of Languages, Philosophy and Communication Studies**

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Spring 2014

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Abstract

Within the field of Communication Studies, researchers attempt to define culture and often explain it as shared meanings and values among a group of people. Another subsection of Communication Studies includes the study of how images communicate: the field of visual rhetoric. This paper combines concepts from intercultural communication and visual rhetoric in order to better understand German culture. By examining two culturally significant eras of German artwork through the lens of visual rhetoric analysis, this study seeks to better understand German culture and its values. By analyzing the visual communication of historically significant photographs, one can find common meanings and values deemed important by the nation as a whole. The images both depict pre-existing cultural values and can also alter cultural norms through the depiction of values as being desirable or undesirable.

Table of Contents

A Visually Determined Deutschland:

Visual Rhetoric Analysis of German Culture

Historically, social revolutionaries have been able to challenge authority, revolt against perceived oppression and change their societies through the use of art. Art works have also been banned in many countries because of their feared effect on the public. Why are images perceived to be dangerous? How are images able to change society? Because images communicate, persuade and change attitudes.

This study observes two eras of social upheaval in Germany—the generation of '68 and the fall of the Berlin wall—through the analysis of culturally significant images of the periods. These images challenged public thought, transformed attitudes and opened the way for social transformations which altered the nation's history. First, the study presents three frameworks for assessing culture, specifically German culture, creating a portrait of the audience the images interact most with. Next, it argues for the validity of analyzing images for communicative effect. The study then moves to an analysis of two historically significant German images, showing how the communicative messages of the photographs both reflect and perpetuate German culture.

German Culture via Intercultural Communication Studies

There are many perspectives within the field of intercultural communications concerning what the field covers and how to best explain and represent the differences between cultures. Three significant perspectives will be address here and concepts from the various frameworks will be used when analyzing the culture-specific images. For the purpose of this study, only certain cultural dimensions will be specifically addressed as some are based in the interaction process and are therefore nearly impossible to communicate in the static world of images.

Hall (2005) Perspective

Hall (2005) discusses intercultural communication, defining culture as systems "made up of symbols that serve as resources that help us to interact with each other in meaningful ways" (p. 8). These symbols can be words or any communicative act, any action which has the ability to transfer meaning, which can include images. When a group has a shared concept of a symbol's meaning, they are then able to communicate with one another and fulfill social needs. Within a culture, commonly-accepted meanings ascribed to communicative acts give them power.

Hall (2005) argues that culture can be assessed by observing worldviews, values and norms. He describes worldviews as "abstract notions about the way the world is" (p. 31) and states "worldviews operate at an unconscious level, so that we are not even aware that other ways of seeing the world are either possible or legitimate" (Hall, 2005, p. 31). Worldviews are paired in dichotomies and cultures can fall anywhere on a particular worldview continuum. Though there are many possible dichotomies of worldviews, Hall (2005) highlights four which are particularly significant to this visual analysis of culture:

Individualism vs. collectivism. This dichotomy deals with how individuals view themselves. According to Hall (2005), collectivists view themselves "in terms of shared membership in family, occupation, or other group membership," (p. 32) while those ranking high in individualism focus on individual self-interests. Germany leans towards individualism.

Ascription vs. achievement. This distinction describes how people gain esteem and position in society. Ascription-based worldviews view position as being given to a person, not requiring them to have done something for it (Hall, 2005). The view "recognizes that some rights and privileges are rightfully based on things that you personally had no control over" (Hall, 2005, p. 34). On the other hand, "achievement is centered on the idea that one's position in

society is determined by one's efforts" (Hall, 2005, p. 35). Western European nations, including Germany, tend to view the world with an achievement-focused perspective.

Egalitarian vs. hierarchical. Hall (2005) states that the egalitarian view "assumes that every person is just as important as every other person" (p. 37). Contrarily, those with a hierarchical perspective see "every person as important to the extent that they complement each other's roles," (p. 37) and claim a person's authoritative position determines worth (Hall, 2005). Germany ranks low in power distance, indicating the culture leans towards egalitarianism.

Basic nature of humans: good vs. evil. Cultures also differ in how they view the human nature. Some communities think humans are basically good, while others "feel that humans cannot be trusted and that they will take advantage of you given any possibility." (Hall, 2005, p. 40) The meticulous and all-encompassing rules with which the German people create their society lead me to categorize the culture as viewing humans as inherently evil. They believe they need strict rules and enforcement to keep the public in line and acceptable within the society.

The next level of cultural assessment according to Hall (2005) is a culture's values. Values, though influenced by worldviews, are grounded in "beliefs about the way the world should be rather than assumptions about the way the world is" (Hall, 2005, p. 49-50).

The final aspect of Hall's (2005) cultural paradigm is norms. Founded in cultural values and worldviews, norms include "social rules for what certain types of people should or should not do" (Hall, 2005, p. 52). Norms are sets of socially consistent and approved behaviors and are more concrete than values or worldviews.

The distinction between worldviews, values and norms is important in the context of visual analysis because the images will not only reflect worldviews, but make arguments for what should be valued, and what normative behavior should constitute. Finally, cultures are not static, but change and develop over time, as do their worldviews, values and norms.

Hofstede & Hofstede (2005) Perspective

Hofstede & Hofstede (2005) assert that "every person carries within him-or herself patterns of thinking, feeling, and potentially acting that were learned throughout their lifetime," (p. 22) and claim that "a customary term for such mental software is culture" (p. 3). They establish, similarly to Hall (2005), that there are "manifestations of culture at different levels of depth" (p. 6). Hofstede & Hofstede (2005) however have differently defined layers of culture, with symbols representing the most superficial manifestation and heroes, rituals, and values being more deeply imbedded in the culture.

Within Hofstede & Hofstede's (2005) framework, "the core of culture… is formed by values," defining values as the "broad tendencies to prefer certain states of affairs over others" (p. 8). Culture change can be fast and easily apparent within the outer three cultural layers, but Hofstede & Hofstede (2005) claim "there is no evidence that the values of present-day generations from different countries are converging" (p. 12), arguing that practices may change, but underlying values are more stable.

Hofstede & Hofstede (2005) suggest there are common "human problems" in respect to the concept of self, others and society, and argue the way cultures address these problems gives them their differences. These differences they term cultural dimensions. Like Hall (2005), Hofstede & Hofstede (2005) define cultural dimensions in dichotomies. They include a cultural index in their 2010 research numerically ranking countries in the different dimensions on a scale from 0 (low) to 100 (high).

Low vs. high power distance. Hofstede & Hofstede (2005) define power distance as "the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally" (p. 46). Germany ranks low in power distance with a score of 35 on the dimension index, which means subordinates are not

considerably dependent on those in higher power (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2010). Hofstede & Hofstede (2005) also claim low power distance levels generally manifest in Germanic language-speaking cultures, which they believe stems from their "barbaric" anti-Roman past.

Individualism vs. collectivism. Hofstede & Hofstede (2005) define individualistic societies as those "in which the ties between individuals are loose" (p. 76) and include "everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family" (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, p. 76). Collectivist societies are oppositely those "in which people from birth onward are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people's lifetimes continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty" (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, p. 76). Germany ranks moderately high in individualism scoring 67 (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2010).

Masculine vs. feminine. This dimension juxtaposes "the desirability of assertive behavior against the desirability of modest behavior" (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, p. 116). Hofstede & Hofstede (2005) explains that in masculine societies, "emotional gender roles are clearly distinct: Men are supposed to be assertive, tough, and focused on material success, whereas women are supposed to be more modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life" (p. 120). They go on to explain that in feminine societies, "emotional gender roles overlap: both men and women are supposed to be modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life" (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, p. 120). Germany also scored moderately high as a masculine culture with a score of 66 (Hofstede, 2010).

High vs. low uncertainty avoidance. Also deemed tolerance vs. intolerance of ambiguity, Hofstede & Hofstede (2005) define uncertainty avoidance as "the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations" (p. 167). Germany scored a relatively high 65 on this dimension, meaning Germans tend to avoid uncertainty

(Hofstede & Hofstede, 2011), and Hofstede & Hofstede (2005) cite German punctuality as an example of uncertainty avoidance.

Hofstede & Hofstede (2005) recognize that national boundaries do not directly translate into cultural boundaries, and highlight significant distinct regional and individual variations to cultural norms. However, they believe nationally shared experiences somewhat justify drawing cultural conclusions within national borders. Some of these include countries having a common dominant national language, shared mass media, a national education system, army and political system. They concede using national distinctions for classification "should be used with care," (p. 19) but suggest "it is often the only feasible criterion for classification" (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, p. 19). This analysis will take a similar approach as it observes cultural distinctions.

Nees (2000) Perspective

Nees (2000) says there are themes within a culture which define it and believes "only when you understand the central cultural themes of any given culture can you accurately interpret and understand its inhabitants' behavior, communication, and way of life" (Nees, 2000, p. 35). He uses German historical background to not only present the cultural, but also to postulate reasons for and origins of certain cultural qualities.

Theme of Order. Nees (2000) notes that cleanliness and orderliness pervade Germany and argues the theme of "Ordnung" or order can be seen in the public's strict adherence to schedules and deadlines, the country's explicit rules and regulations, even in the systematic care of their cars. He says "punctuality is a virtue" (p. 36) and regulations are seen "as a way of ensuring a society that is concerned not only with individual rights but also with the common good and the social contract" (Nees, 2000, p. 38). He also argues these rules "give them a feeling of security as well as a strong sense of what is right and wrong" (Nees, 2000, p. 39). Nees (2000)

indicates the younger generation is not as focused on order and attributes it to "Wertewandel" or changing values. This change is true of various traditional German values will be discussed more in the context of the analysis of the generation of '68.

Theme of Thoroughness. Nees (2000) notes the Germans have a reputation for being perfectionists and attributes it to the quality of "Gründligkeit" or thoroughness. Germans tend to have detailed and exhaustive rules, which correlate with the theme of order.

Theme of Insecurity. Nees (2000) observes that "Germans appear inordinately insecure and seem to worry much more than necessary about crises or emergencies that may never occur" (p. 40). He believes Germans use "Ordnung" to alleviate insecurity as "chaos causes anxiety and insecurity and is a continual threat to order" (Nees, 2000, p. 40). He says this insecurity is due to historical injury such as losing savings twice in a century due to inflation. Nees (2000) also notes that rational nature leads to fear of the emotional, irrational side of personality (p. 42).

Insider vs. Outsider. Germans also strongly distinguish between insiders and outsiders, with insiders "belong(ing) to a group with which a German identifies" (Nees, 2000, p. 45).

Manifestations of Themes in Communication. Dovetailing with the theme of clarity, Germans have a "strong emphasis on explicit verbal communication" (Nees, 2000, p. 62). To compartmentalize and maintain order and clarity, social communication boundaries are strong, preventing uncertainty and ambiguity. Germans maintain social distance through the use of the du/Sie distinction (informal vs. formal "you") and conflict is also "avoided by maintaining formality and social distance" (Nees, 2000, p. 63). Germans also use the communication practice of "Sachlichkeit" or objective language use characterized by leaving out any personal references and being as unemotional and "matter-of fact" as possible (Nees, 2000). According to Nees (2000), "direct attacks on the content of a person's communication are common, but attacks on the person are avoided by keeping the discussion impersonal and objective" (p. 63).

Themes of German culture are also manifested in nonverbal communication. Nees (2000) claims "German communication style is marked by more constrained use of both bodily and vocal resources than the American style," (p. 90) and because of this "the private/public distinction… is also very noticeable in the nonverbal communication of Germans" (p. 90). Germans have a closer range of personal distance than individuals in the United States and direct gaze is also vital in German communication and is tied with trustworthiness (Nees, 2000).

As the themes of German culture can be seen manifested in multiple channels of German communication, it can be argued they are interwoven into German visual communication as well.

Understanding German culture through these perspectives, one can analyze the arguments of images and show how they support, reflect, alter and catalyze cultural worldviews, values, themes and behaviors. It is important to understand German worldviews not only to find them reflected in images, but to understand how Germans might perceive the images differently, and therefore be uniquely influenced.

Defense of Visual Rhetoric

This study uses tools and principles from the field of visual rhetoric to complete its study of historically significant German images. Visual rhetoric is "the study of visual imagery within the discipline of rhetoric" (Foss, 2005, p. 141). According to Foss (2005), rhetoric or the study of symbols to communicate is "an ancient term for what now typically is called communication" (p. 141). Verbal and written rhetoric have been studied for thousands of years, however, visual rhetoric is a new field within the study of rhetoric, with the first formal call to include visual images in the study happening in the 1970s (Foss, 2005).

Images, much like verbal and written discourse, have the power to communicate and persuade. Though similar to verbal and written communication, images use a distinct form of rhetoric. They utilize some principles studied in written and verbal rhetoric, while other elements

go beyond the capacities of alternate forms of communication. For example, images utilize the concepts of ethos, pathos and logos in their communication, however because images are spatially-defined, images can also communicate using nonverbal cues that are lost with verbal and written communication. Foss (2005) claims "human experiences that are spatially oriented, nonlinear, multidimensional, and dynamic often can be communicated only through visual imagery or other non-discursive symbols" (p. 143).

Visual rhetoricians argue that "to restrict the study of symbol use only to verbal discourse means studying a miniscule portion of the symbols that affect individuals daily," (Foss, 2005, p. 142) and believe studying visual communication expands one's understanding of communicative symbols in use. Many also argue that in the digital-age culture "images now have the significance for contemporary culture that speeches once did" (Foss, 2005, p. 142).

Not every image is considered rhetoric or "a product individuals create as they use visual symbols for the purpose of communicating" (Foss, 2005, p. 143). To be considered rhetoric within the field of visual communication, an image must perform a symbolic action, involve human intervention and have the presence of an audience, either real or fictitious (Foss, 2005).

To analyze an image, a rhetorician must observe the nature of the image, "explicating the distinguishing features of the visual image both presented and suggested elements," (Foss, 2005, p. 146) for example the principles of space, size, media and shapes. They must then identify suggested elements which are "concepts, ideas, themes, and allusions the viewer is likely to infer from the presented elements" (Foss, 2005, p. 146).

Researchers may also assess the function of the image, attempting to "discover how the image operates for its viewers" (Foss, 2005, p. 146). This addresses not the intended effect, but the produced effect. Visual rhetoricians believe "once an image is created, scholars who adopt a rhetorical perspective on imagery believe, it stands independent of its creator's intention" (Foss,

2005, p. 147). Once a function is assessed, researchers then can evaluate the image for how the image accomplishes its function. These principles and steps will be followed when analyzing the images of this study.

The Generation of '68

Post-WWII Germany was a devastated, rubble nation with an unsteady economy, tattered population and seemingly dismal future. The "Nachkriegsgeneration" or the generation of Germans after the fall of the Nazis worked tirelessly to rebuild Germany, but in doing so, they "swept the issue of the Nazis and the war under the carpet" (Nees, 2000, p. 17). During the time of rebuilding, "only artists, writers, intellectuals, and a few political leaders took issue with Germany's Nazi past" (Nees, 2000, p. 17).

As the country grew stronger and the "Wirtschaftswunder" (economic miracle) took hold, ethical questions concerning the Nazi past intensified. The underlying tensions intensified when the children of the "Nachkriegsgeneration" began to question the involvement of their parents in the war, alleged authoritarianism in the new German government, and the poor living conditions of students. The '68 movement started in universities and snowballed through increased protests, media coverage and the support of other Western nations who bemoaned perceived social injustice.

On June 2, 1967, the pressurized forces detonated as a West Berlin police officer shot and killed the leftist protestor Benno Ohnesorg during a protest against the Shah of Iran in front of the German Opera House. Young Germans saw the act as fascist-motivated and acted accordingly. As a result of Ohnesorg's death, thousands of students rallied behind the leftist cause, pioneering the way for social reform in the form of women's rights and greater democratization, but also opening the path for greater left-wing radicalism including the terrorist activities of the Red Army Faction.

This moment changed German history. Not only the act, but the images as well. With televised broadcasts and greater access to various channels of media, information travelled quicker and more pervasively than ever before. The powerful images of the incident brought about greater persuasion for the leftist cause than merely the story of his death. The images became the icon of a generation, an immortalization of the values for which they fought and died, influencing the perspectives and actions of thousands.

One of the most powerful and well-known images of the incident depicts Ohnesorg's wounded head and limp body being cradled by a visibly infuriated woman. The woman looks sharply to her left at the invisible assailant as she attempts to hold the back of Ohnesorg's head where the bullet had penetrated.

(Ullsteinbild, 1967)

Image Analysis of Ohnesorg's Death

This portion of the study focuses on the communicative and persuasive effect of the aforementioned image of Ohnesorg's death, and then uses the analysis to show the image's reflection of and influence within German culture. Along with Foss's (2005) prescriptions for image analysis, the distinguishing features of the visual image will be discussed along with an

identification of "suggested elements," which the viewer can infer from the distinguishing features. Finally, the cultural implications of the image will be taken into account.

The relationship between the image viewer and represented participants (i.e. - people or objects within the image) is greatly influenced by interactive dimensions of the image such as gaze and spatial positioning. This is because these elements correlate with human concepts of nonverbal communication and take on the meanings of nonverbal actions accordingly (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

An "image wants something from the viewers—wants them to do something," (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 118). That desire in the image of Ohnesorg's death is communicated through the woman's gaze. Her gaze in the image is indirect, meaning "the viewer's role is that of an invisible onlooker" (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 118). The invisible line created by the woman's piercing stare directs the focus of the audience outside the frame of the picture to the unseen source of her hatred. According to Bang (2000), "the rectangular frame of the picture forms a separate world inside itself," (p. 62) however, when a represented participant breaks through the frame of an image, such as the woman's gaze, attention directs outside the image, causing viewers to become more directly a part of the situation because they, too, reside in the world outside of the image. Diagonal lines also create visual movement, and the sloping position of Ohnesorg's body encourages the eyes of the viewer to look from left to right, amplifying the effect of the woman's gaze towards the figures in authority. The image wants the viewer to have their attention drawn to the receiving end of the woman's gaze and apply the same impassioned assessment to the source of her anger. Though her gaze is not direct, which is the most powerful and inviting form of gaze, it still has significant power as it involves the viewer in the situation by breaking the frame.

Direct frontal angle, which is exhibited in this image, is characterized by a parallel line created by the represented participants of an image and the image's bottom frame. Frontal angle signifies direct addressed and again invites the viewer into the world of the image. The strong frontal line of the image provides a central focus point within the image, further solidifying the connection between viewer and represented participants through that point of focus. The central represented participant in this image is the woman and her spatial connection to Ohnesorg's body. The viewer's relationship to the woman, created by gaze and spatial positioning, brings them into her world and that relationship is amplified by central position of his figure.

When interacting in social relationships we regulate the distance we keep from one another, creating invisible boundaries. The closer one is to a person relationally, the narrower the physical distance between the two when interacting (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). This image is shot at close medium distance indicating the viewer is out of reach of close personal distance, and as a result, full intimacy. The direct angle and close distance at which we are observing the woman in combination with the indirect address creates an uncomfortable paradox—we are in her world without invitation, observing a private moment at a near-public distance.

The vertical angle of an image gives it a subjective perspective and assigns power relationships (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). The higher the vertical angle (i.e. – viewer looking down on represented participants), the greater the power of the viewer, whereas a low vertical angle gives those in the image power over the viewer. The viewer becomes subjected to the depicted point of view, unable to alter the relationship.

In this image, the viewer is at an angled position of power; however this particular power distinction is only part of the total power in play. Though the viewer is above the woman, her strong, sharp stance, close proximity and direct frontal angle give her a greater cumulated power. The violation of relational expectation with the woman below overpowering the viewer above

also creates visual interest and strengthens the argument concerning where her anger is directed—those with power and authority. This contradiction also creates tension in the audience and a desire to resolve the strain, which can be done only by complying with the arguments presented, to view the abusive authority with equal distain.

The shape and placement of elements in an image play a key communicative role. The shape created by the woman intersecting with the immobile figure of Ohnesorg is the main focus of the image as it occupies the center of the picture and is the largest figure (Bang, 2000). Ohnesorg's body takes up the bottom half of a picture which "feels more threatened, heavier, sadder, or constrained (Bang, 2000, p. 56), marking his death as heavy and tragic. As the woman's body lifts upward towards the top of the image, it gives her increased potential energy to act as her body has farther to "fall." This adds to her influential force in the image. Ohnesorg's horizontal, gravity-enacted body provides a stable base for the woman's energetic vertical figure, which is "rebelling against gravity" (Bang, 2000, p. 44). According to Bang (2000), overlapping objects pierce or violate the space of one another, joining them together as a single unit. By becoming conjoined, Ohnesorg has given his used potential energy to the woman's kinetic frame. He has pierced her space and is now a part of her; the living have taken on the visual energy and the vendetta of the dead.

Color also has strong effect in visual communication. Though the image is only black-and-white, the solid dark clothing of the woman figure grabs the attention of the audience and magnifies her actions as the central figure. According to Bang (2000), "black often symbolizes the unknown and all our fears associated with the unknown" (p. 24). The center of the image with the two represented participants is the lightest part of the image, fading to darkness around the edges of the image, creating an "inside vs. outside," "light vs. dark," "us vs. them" mentality. The darkness of the shapes in the photograph, heightened by its nighttime exposure, adds to the

uncertainty of the event. The absence of color also draws our attention to the other elements of the image, magnifying their effect.

Within images, "wide space can create tension between the divided objects, but so can a sliver of space." (Bang, 2000, p. 89) The woman is far away from the enemy, but the viewer is unable to determine how far since they are beyond the borders of the image, creating ample tension and possibility for action and movement. This, too, creates visual interest and involves the audience in the image, causing them to empathize with the represented figure, who is under immense strain.

Objects in a photograph not only depict realistic occurrences, but also can have "strong associations that allow them to stand for something they represent" (Birdsell & Groarke, 1996, p. 105). Given the historical context of the image, Ohnesorg is not only a murdered man; he represents a generation of young Germans who believed they should not be controlled by a fascist government. The image also has strong biblical connotations as Ohnesorg appears to be offered, with dignity and peace, as a sacrifice for the cause of his people, a perfect slaughtered lamb with a weeping Mary over his body. This depiction brings with it the connotations of Christ's innocence and purity, marking Ohnesorg as an undeserving victim of brutality. Birdsell & Groarke (1996) argue that "we are able to communicate effectively with images because we share... a common vocabulary of symbols that can be used to make convenient references" (p. 105). This reference is apparent in this symbolism of the image. The represented figures are not themselves; they are a symbol for a movement, for a divided Germany.

Images are also powerful communicative tools because they "visually demonstrate the human consequences of the violent acts in question" (Birdsell & Groarke, 1996, p. 109). Birdsell & Groarke (1996) argue "images present situations with much greater impact than mere words do, and thus can convey human pain, suffering, and loss effectively and forcefully" (p. 109). This

observation is true in the case of this image. The impact of this photograph was wide-reaching and profound, resulting in changes to the values and worldviews of a generation of Germans.

Cultural Implications

The overall meaning of the image, especially created by the position and strength of the woman's gaze, challenges hierarchical power structures. Though Hofstede & Hofstede (2005) argue that Germans tend to have an egalitarian-centered view stemming from their tribal past, the culture also has feudal-system roots and experienced and a wave of extreme authoritarianism during the Nazi period, which made the culture more hierarchical in nature. The percolating tensions in Berlin against perceived oppressive authority in the 1960s boiled over with the death of Ohnesorg at the hands of a state official and set in motion changes to the hierarchical underpinnings of the country. The arguments from the image of Ohnesorg's death add validity and weight to an egalitarian view, and defined the values of the generation of '68 as more egalitarian than previous generations of Germans.

With challenging the hierarchical system, the woman's gaze also challenged the German culture's set social boundaries defined by Nees (2000). By rejecting the power of a "high angled" authority, and penetrating the social boundaries through a strong front-angled stance and direct address to the authority figure, the image promotes classlessness and a more "du"-addressing culture. This informal address between students and members of the movement became the norm, encouraging social equality. This cultural change occurred because the image communicated to the audience that it was acceptable and necessary to break through these social boundaries, as the woman's gaze breaks through the boundaries of the image to expose unjust authority.

The image argues for the validity of low power distance as it represents the woman's assertion of power above those in authority in a positive and commanding light. As the audience

is invited into the world of the woman, the image argues that the viewer, too, should reject unequally distributed power. This era of social unrest led to the cultural questioning of power and authority, which is encapsulated in and catalyzed by this image.

The threat to the safety of the citizens is looming in the darkness, ambiguously outside of the frame of the image and away from the light exposure of the center figures. According to Bang (2000), darkness "often symbolizes the unknown, and all our fears associated with the unknown" (p. 24). The threat is not only the threat of a shooter, but the ambiguity of an oppressive social system in which they are captured. This portrayal of the darkness and unknown as a threat to public safety supports the cultural value of uncertainty avoidance. It is also this uncertainty tied with authority which bolsters the cultural theme insecurity.

This ambiguity also argues for a re-ordering of social mores, to bring the social structure into a new, more reliable order. Germans use "Ordnung" or order to alleviate uncertainty and insecurity. The image presents a new way to order in a way that is much less threatening, a structure of low power distance and egalitarianism, promoting those cultural values.

German culture views the basic nature of humans as being evil; in other words, they "feel that humans cannot be trusted" (Hall, 2005, p. 40). The breach of trust illustrated in this image by the rash actions of enforcement officials encroaching unethically upon the innocent citizen reinforces this cultural factor.

Through the powerful approach of the woman's gaze, the image also celebrates, rather than discourages the woman's assertive behavior, promoting the masculine values of society as discussed by Hofstede & Hofstede (2005). It is through the portrayal of powerful woman in images during the generation of '68, which led to greater assertion of women's rights. Through the positive depiction of assertive behavior against abusive power sources, human rights advocacy was also advanced.

The students are used as symbols for a broader social dialogue—Ohnesorg is a symbol of the civilian slaughtered by an oppressive authority. This symbolism used in the image was recognized by the German people. When a group or a culture has a shared concept of a symbol's meaning, they are then able to communicate with one another using the symbol and create new commonly-accepted meanings as a result. Because the German generation of 1968 shared a system of meanings, including the symbols within the image of Ohnesorg's death, the image was able to communicate the previously discussed values and argue for changing of values, altering public opinion and decisions about how to govern the nation's future.

As a result of this period, Nees (2000) says that German life has changed in many ways. He believes two of the most important changes "relate to education and child raising" (Nees, 2000, p. 18-19). Nees (2000) argues that "having a rigid class structure and raising children to obey all authority were major factors in the Nazi takeover" and because of this, "many Germans became convinced that radical changes in educational structures and child-raising practices would be the best antidote to prevent a resurgence of fascism" (p. 19). The generation of '68 shied away from strict obedience to authority, instead promoting egalitarianism and lower power distance within the society. These attitude changes within German society also promoted the value of individualistic thought, moving away from collective social norms and thoughts for determining behavior. Nees (2000) says that as a result of the movement, "children were to be given the opportunity to grow up "freer," without being forcibly pressed into following what were considered outdated or unreasonable social conventions" (p. 19).

According to Nees (2000), the concepts of order and cleanliness that were "dear to the traditional German heart" (p. 21) were a direct target of attack for students of the time, as order represented conventional thought and was contaminated with connotations of authoritarianism. As a result of the changing values within the culture, there was a wave of educational reform in

the 1970s which "opened the previously elitist school system to more children from the working classes," (Nees, 2000, p. 19) resulting in a more egalitarian German community. Nees (2000) says that as a result of changes in child rearing and education, the generation after the reforms of the sixties was "less nationalistic, more democratic, and better informed than previous generations," (p. 20) permanently altering the norms of German culture.

As influential argumentation takes place through visual communication within a culture, the meaning of the communication alters. Because the meaning of an image is tied to its cultural symbolism, the repercussions of the visual dialogue extend to the culture. Visual communication, therefore, changes culture. Hart & Daughton (2005) argue that images depicting revolt against authority "became synecdoches for a rebellious generation" (p. 191) during the 1960s. The image of Ohnesorg's death is one of these images; it was a symbol of and catalyst for a generational movement. The arguments advanced by the image of Ohnesorg's death became the springboard for a revolutionized social system during the generation of '68 and subsequent generations.

The Fall of a Wall

After World War II, Germany was divided into four sections, each occupied by one of the Allied Forces: France, Great Britain, the United States and Soviet Union. The capital city of Berlin, too, was divided into four respective regions of occupation. The French, British and American subdivisions came to be known as West Germany, while the soviet-occupied region was deemed East Germany.

Tensions developed between the "western" powers and the Soviet Union, because of differences in ideology with the East condemning what they saw as a capitalist, fascist West and West combatting the "communist" East. Many Germans emigrated from the Deutsche Demokratische Republik (East Germany) westward, depleting the work force and causing

anxiety for soviet command concerning the future of the region. Because of these growing

tensions, the soviet forces began to consider border control measures. On August 12, 1961,

chairman of the DDR state council Walter Ulbricht issued the order to erect the Berlin wall. By

the next morning, the border to West Berlin was closed and the wall had begun to be erected.

The DDR claimed the wall was built to protect the population under soviet control against the

fascism of the West, but it came to be seen by the population of West Germany and many in East

Germany as a barrier to freedom and a symbol of authoritative oppression. Because of the

swiftness of the barrier's erection and the inability of easterners to travel west, families were

separated for decades. It was a symbol of the Cold War's Iron Curtain and a tangible

manifestation of the invisible barrier between "eastern" and "western" mentalities.

The wall was reinforced and maintained for decades as the Cold War waged on. It is

projected that 5,000 people attempted to cross the border from 1961 to 1989, with an estimated

136 casualties (Die Gedenkstätte Berliner Mauer, 2009). In the late 1980s social tensions on both

sides of the wall increased and by the summer of 1989, there were increasing legal and illegal

exoduses of DDR citizens to West Germany (Nees, 2000). By autumn 1989, "large street

protests began occurring, first in Leipzig and then elsewhere," (Nees, 2000, p. 21) and East

Germany seemed "powerless to prevent the demonstrations, which were growing in size and

frequency" (p. 22). On November 9, 1989, the government of the DDR announced that all

citizens could visit West Germany. The wall had cracked and tumbled as thousands fled to the

wall checkpoints, demanding entrance to the West. The atmosphere with the fall of the wall was

at first joyous, and led the way to German reunification the next year.

As with the image of Ohnesorg's death, it was not only the fall of the wall, but how it

was portrayed to the public and the iconic images of its demise which changed attitudes, argued

for certain values, and altered German culture as a result. A set of iconic images that have made

a major impact in defining the meaning of the fall of the Berlin wall are a pair of photographs by Jean-Claude Coutausse. The first image depicts a man "riding" a large piece of the wall as it falls into a crowd of enraptured supporters, with East Berlin military officials at attention atop the standing portion of the wall. The second image depicts a group of soldiers behind the now-open portion of the wall, standing erect as the wall is collapsing and the people on the other side of the wall, closest to the viewer of the image, unsystematically move about.

The situation took place in the heart of Berlin near the Brandenburger Tor, a historic symbol of European unity and peace. While there are many images of the fall of the Berlin wall, these photographs are particularly significant because they have been viewed by thousands, particularly those in Western Europe and the United States via the British Broadcasting System and other news mediums. The photographs helped to culturally define the nation in a time of adaptation and guide it towards reunification. They also not only show the euphoria of the time, but highlight significant German cultural values in play, which will hereafter be discussed.

(Coutausse, 1989)

Image Analyses of the Fall of the Berlin Wall

Images have connotative meanings or meanings which are "less explicit" and have "more culturally specific associations" (Sturken & Cartwright, 2009, p. 20). Connotative meanings "are informed by the cultural and historical contexts of the image and its viewers' lived, felt

knowledge of those circumstances" (Sturken & Cartwright, 2009, p. 20). At the time these photographs were taken and disseminated, the people of both East and West Germany had strong connotations associated with East German soldiers. The western public knew these soldiers through media, which depicted the officers shooting at and brutally killing East German defectors. East Germans knew of their strictness and callousness through first-hand experience. As a result of these connotations, the soldiers were seen as the epitome of a corrupt, authoritative state. These connotations set the groundwork for the arguments made in these images. Wherever the officers are depicted, they are not only a group of individuals, but also a symbol of power, authority, regulation and stoicism. How they are represented is how the author of the image is arguing reality is and should be viewed, how the East German officials and German public should be seen.

When making a visual argument, artists and authors may "speak in the guise of someone else" (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 116). Through angle, positioning and gaze, the photographer of these images "speaks" from the point of view of a West Berliner, giving himself credibility to make arguments from that angle. The soldiers in both images are viewed at an oblique angle, arguing that they are a part of a world other than one's own (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). The soldiers are also at a "public distance" from both the photographer and the other West German citizens, and are therefore depicted as "strangers" according to Kress & van Leeuwen (2006). The represented participants also are engaging in an indirect gaze with the photographer, making him a natural, quiet observer, accepted in the situation. These arguments mark the soldiers as "others" and solidify the author's position as a West German citizen, bringing with it "western" perceptions of the East German world. The images are subjective with this point of view and are not, therefore, representing an objective truth. This allows the author to make arguments concerning his point of view.

These images use the visual principles of power, using angling, diagonal lines, and positioning to make arguments concerning the power of the officers and public. As in the image of Ohnesorg's death, the images use vertical angle to make power arguments. The first image depicts the officers at a high angle, looking down upon the masses. This establishes them in a place of high authority; however, they also are much smaller than the mass of people in the lower half of the picture, and according to Bang (2000), "the larger an object is in a picture, the stronger it feels" (p. 72). The crowd is bigger and feels more powerful than the participants in a set position of authority high above. This juxtaposition and violation of visual expectation—those in a formal position of power are overcome visually by the close-up civilians—shows the challenging of authority that is taking place during the tearing down of the wall and establishes the public as being more powerful than those in official power positions.

With the second image, vertical angle is also used to challenge authority. When represented participants are portrayed at eye level, they are seen to be equal in power (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). The author has established himself as a West German citizen and by making the vertical angle equal or at eye level with the soldiers in the distance, he asserts that the public have risen up to meet the challenge of authority. Those in the crowd have become equals to those in authoritative positions, perhaps even slightly looking down upon them, once again challenging their authority through the perspective with which the viewer is seeing the situation.

The power of the authoritative officers is also challenged through the use of diagonal lines. Diagonal lines are dynamic and "give a feeling of movement or tension to the picture" (Bang, 2000, p. 22). We attribute the laws of gravity to images, and diagonals are considered unstable in terms of gravity because they do not have a solid base and can fall, or are in the process of falling, causing movement (Bang, 2000). Diagonals also are interactive as they encourage our eyes to move from one point on an image to another (Bang, 2000).

In the first image, the diagonal lines created by the man atop the falling wall and the piece of extricated wall generate a falling motion within the image, visually articulating that a change is occurring. The man is on top of the wall, in a position of power over it. He is thereby in the process of conquering what the wall represents, decades of authority and oppression. The diagonal line of the wall also actively intersects the horizontal, authoritative lineup of officers, further supporting the claim of the civilians conquering of authority. According to Bang (2000), "flat, horizontal shapes give us a sense of stability" (p. 42). The relatively horizontal line created by the officers argues for their purpose—they are seemingly unmovable, fixed and commanding, reinforcing connotations of their authoritarian nature. However, the moving diagonal of change and conquering created by the falling wall and its rider pierces the horizontal line of authoritarian power, thereby attacking their authority. The citizens have penetrated their forces and seized control; the soldiers' power has been overcome by the wall of their making. This penetration takes place in the center of the image, making it the main point of interest and central argument of the piece (Bang, 2000).

Diagonals can also "give the impression of opening up space or leading… forward" (Bang, 2000, p. 22). This is true in the context of the second image. Bang (2000) says that in cultures where individuals read left to right, they also read images and diagonals left to right, defining how the motion of a diagonal line is interpreted. In the second image, the diagonal of the wall is positioned away from the focal point of the image, shooting upward towards the right, giving it a sense of ascension. Because the line originates at the officers, it implies that the soldiers, and East Germans by extension, have the opportunity to grow and ascend because of the falling wall. They are being released from a visual and metaphoric cage, and are now free to extend and rise to new heights of societal standard.

The center of an image can be used in a number of ways, but "whatever we do with the center, our eyes are drawn to it and our feelings are strongly affected by it" (Bang, 2000, p. 64). The first image uses the center to highlight the break in authority caused by the fall of the wall; the center of the second image is used to show the break between right and left of the image. The left side of the image represents the past of the wall and of German society, with the graffiti-laden barrier still intact. The right represents the potential future of the society, marked by the ascending diagonal line. The break between the two portions is the center of the image, highlighting the importance of the transition between the two ideologies and marking the historical significance of the act taking place.

As with the use of the image center as a focal point, other positions within an image have communicative significance. The top half of an image is a "stronger tactical position" (p. 54) than other parts of the image because the participants in the top half are able to look down upon the other image participants (Bang, 2000). Elements which are high up, though more powerful, also have farther to fall. In the first image, the soldiers are in a strong position of power tactically as they occupy the top half of the image. However, the falling portion of their defenses, their wall, releases the potential energy with which their power had been sustained, making their position vulnerable.

Image components which are in the lower half of the image are in contrast "more grounded… more attached to the earth and less mobile" (Bang, 2000, p. 56). As a result of this stability, they are less likely to move or be knocked down. The public in both images, but particularly the first, are depicted in a low position within the frame, arguing for their firmness in resolve and immovability as a developing force, growing from below.

Both images by Jean-Claude Coutausse portray the East Berlin officials in the position of "other" to make arguments concerning how they should be regarded by West Germans.

According to Bang (2000), the use of depth in an image determines closeness vs. distance and therefore intimacy vs. otherness. The more distance between the represented participant and the viewer, the less connection and sympathy the viewer has with them (Bang, 2000). Both images observe the East German officials at far public distance, indicating they are to be regarded as strangers not to be sympathized with. Bang (2000) argues "a sense of depth in space is created by placing the bases of progressively smaller/thinner/lighter objects gradually higher on the page," (p. 87) and suggests "the effect is stronger if, as the objects recede, the spaces between them decrease in a regular geometric progression" (p. 87). This concept of depth is shown in the first image's depiction of the soldiers, solidifying their position as progressively more irrelevant and "other".

The second image uses color and change and image style to distinguish between the "inner" and "outer" groups. The "inner" world of the image, the West Berlin side of the wall from where the viewer is observing, is marked by various colors and textures distinguishable even in the black and white display of the image, including rambunctious graffiti marks on the wall, and diverse public apparel. In contrast, the "outer" world, East Germany as seen through the opening in the wall, is monotone gray, uniform and industrialized. The opening of the wall is a collision of two worlds, two sets of ideas, lifestyles and values.

Bang (2000) argues that "our eyes search for repetitive patterns, which enable us to make sense out of what we see" and posits "we notice repetition amid confusion, and… we notice a break in repetitive pattern" (p. 78). Both images by Coutausse use patterns and breaks in pattern to highlight concepts of repetition and confusion, order and disorder. There is a strong pattern created by the repeated figures of East German officers in the first image. This pattern stands in stark contrast with the disorder of the West Berlin citizens. The pattern of the officers is disrupted by the diagonal wall. This break in repetitive pattern draws attention to and highlights

the breach in power previously discussed. The pattern created by the soldiers is indicative of

order and authority, the disorder is suggestive of freedom and individuality. In this image, they

stand in opposition to one another, with the disorder piercing and overcoming the orderly

authority, arguing for the paramount significance of freedom.

The dialogue of the images created by the wall and interplay between East German

soldiers and West German citizens highlights the conflict between two worlds of thought, and

visually positions western values as conqueror. Sturken & Cartwright (2009) state that

photographers engage "in the subjective process of choosing, composing, lighting, and framing

scenes," (p. 17) resulting in their ability to persuade audiences concerning a certain view. This

manipulation of image elements allows authors to make arguments through a portrayed

worldview, as is the case with these images. Coutausse shows West German values overcoming

the estranged authoritarian East German way of life, arguing for the validity and superiority of

western culture.

Cultural Implications

The generation of '68 began to use disorder as an attack on systematic authoritarianism

and hierarchy, tempering traditional German values of orderliness and uncertainty avoidance.

The youth and students who played a major role in the dismantling of the Berlin wall were the

children of the generation of '68; they were the result of a reformed, less structured upbringing,

as previously discussed. The new generation carried on the tactic, taught to them by their parents,

of using disorder to fight against perceived unjust authority. The images of the tearing down of

the Berlin wall portray the clash between the ideologies of order and disorder, depicting disorder

and individual freedom as paramount. This victory is celebrated in the perspective put forth in

the images, arguing for the value of freedom and expression over orderliness. German culture is

still typically characterized by a desire for order. However, order as a German value is

considerably more tempered within the culture than before the late 1980s and 1960s. This is a result of challenges to authority during these periods of reform and visual arguments positively depicting the values of individual freedom, expression and disorder.

Like the image of Ohnesorg's death, the images of the fall of the Berlin wall challenge authority, support egalitarian principles and argue for low power distance within society. As previously argued, Coutausse positions the public as being more powerful than those in formal positions of authority by utilizing visual principles of vertical angle, piercing diagonal lines and social distance. By depicting this power upheaval in a celebratory atmosphere, he argues for the legitimacy of challenging authority and demanding low power distance within the society.

In the first image, the power of the public is shown by their large position in the image, growing from the bottom of the frame. This depiction argues for the validity of a grassroots development of power and low power distance between the public and authority. Also, though the first image depicts the soldiers as being in a position of authority through the use high vertical angle and position within the frame, it challenges this authority by establishing the public as having greater power. The public's power "pierces" and overwhelms the formal authority, validating the closure of power distance.

Within the second image, the eye-level perspective with which the soldiers are addressed also argues for an egalitarian worldview, and challenges hierarchical power. In both images, the falling motion of the wall brings the high-positioned authority down to the level of the people, arguing for the validity of dismantling power distance.

Coutausse's first image argues for the values of individualism, achievement-focus, and the pursuit of a masculine society. He depicts a single man riding against the backdrop of regimented, collectivist eastern world. This shows the value of individual effort in overcoming domineering authority and corruption. It highlights individualism as a desirable trait, standing in

blatant contrast to the portrayed undesirable collectivist pattern of the officers. The actions of the man are portrayed as positive and powerful; he is achieving a desirable effect through personal effort, not through cultural ascription. His favorably-portrayed assertive behavior also argues for a masculine-valued society. The second image also depicts the regimented, collective and outdated East Germany opening to the "free" world of individual expression in the west, arguing for the value of individualistic freedom.

The depiction of the "inside" world of West Germany and the "outside," strange domain of eastern influence is powerful because it marks authority, order and collectivism, represented by the East German officers, as foreign principles. Germans attempt to identify with and create an "inside" group of culture (Nees, 2000). By positioning individualism, achievement, masculine culture and egalitarianism as "inside" principles for West Germany, Coutausse argues for the value of these principles within the culture. By doing so, he helped move the culture more radically towards these values as viewers were influenced by the image's values through "inside" group identification.

Coutausse's images of the fall of the Berlin wall advocate for the values of individualism, egalitarianism, low power distance, masculine society and achievement focus, and use group identification to maximize the effect of these principles. The culture of Germany was forever altered by the fall of the Berlin wall, its portrayal to the public, and how the public related to the images of its demise. As the culture came to view the values promoted by Coutausse and other photojournalists as normal and optimal, the society focused more on these principles and values, leading to the current constructs of German culture.

Conclusion

Sturken & Cartwright (2009) argue that "images are an important means through which ideologies are produced and onto which ideologies are projected" (p. 23). How images are

portrayed and the contexts in which they are presented make arguments for what ideas and principles should be valued and which should not. As a result, visual images are "not just a representation of ideologies and power relations but is integral to them" (Sturken & Cartwright, 2009, p. 23). As a result of images' persuasive force, "media's pictures are often precursors to larger societal changes" (Hart & Daughton, 2005, p. 188). These principles are true of the images analyzed in this study.

The images of Ohnesorg's death in the late-1960s and Coutausse's photographs of the fall of the Berlin Wall make strong arguments in favor of and in opposition to certain worldviews through the use of visual communication, consequently strengthening some traditional German values while challenging others. These visual arguments influenced popular thought and attitude in Germany with their distribution, permanently altering the culture.

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