

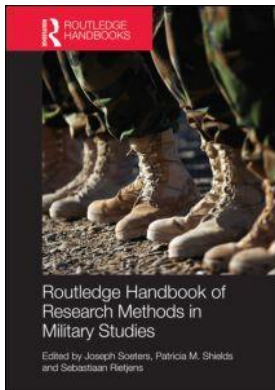
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### **Visual Communication Research and War**

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## VISUAL COMMUNICATION RESEARCH AND WAR

*Michael Griffin*

**M. Griffin and J. Lee (1995) “Picturing the Gulf War: Constructing images of war in *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News and World Report*”, *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 72(4): 813–825.**

“Picturing the Gulf War” attempts to account for the visual representation of war as a potentially independent and influential component of news coverage of military conflicts. The research was a direct response to media reporting of the 1991 Gulf War, which widely purported to provide ongoing, “live” pictorial coverage of the conflict. During and after the war a great deal of impressionistic commentary presumed that visual images were the driving force in news reporting on the war. Indeed, it was described as a “living room war” for readers and audiences. Yet, no systematic research actually charted the nature, frequency and role of published or broadcast war visuals. The tendency to treat pictures as direct and uncomplicated reflections of reality with instinctively presumed effects, together with the difficulties of quantifying and measuring analogic visual material, effectively forestalled more systematic analysis.

Griffin and Lee surveyed historical collections of war photography, literature on previous wartime photojournalism, and news coverage of the buildup to the Gulf War to construct a classification system for the analysis of visual representations during the six weeks of open warfare, January–March 1991. Concerned more with patterns of visual representation than the uniqueness of individual images, yet conscious of the difficulty of parsing and counting discrete units in analogic pictorial material, the authors strove to create analytical categories that would simultaneously account for manifest content and forms of visualization. This involved identifying historically established pictorial genres and techniques of visualization in war photography, and utilizing written information on the event contexts of published images. This specifically pictorial content analysis was designed to distinguish such differences as: individual portraits of soldiers vs. pictures of groups of soldiers, file photographs of troops taken outside of combat theaters vs. pictures of troops engaged in combat within war zones, pictures from arms catalogs and defense industry publications vs. photographs of aircraft, missiles, artillery or tanks in actual combat situations, and images that position the viewer

within civilian contexts affected by the war vs. those that assume the perspectives of advancing or defending military personnel.

The authors sorted the entire population of 1,104 visual images published in the newsweeklies *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News and World Report* for the duration and immediate aftermath of “Operation Desert Storm,” issues dated January 21 through March 18, 1991. Beginning with 41 image categories to account for a potentially wide range of pictorial type and visual content, they found that only 6 categories comprised more than half, and 12 categories more than 76 percent, of all published images. Results showed that the pictorial record of the war in US news weeklies was much narrower in scope and content than might have been expected, and that it coalesced around a small number of themes and news narratives concerning the war, including the massing and mobilization of US troops and armaments in the Gulf region, “cataloguing the arsenal,” whose categories comprised 37 percent of all images, and photos of political and military leaders, predominantly pictures of George H.W. Bush, Saddam Hussein, and several US generals. Only 3 percent of the published pictures showed events from actual combat zones.

A significant finding of the study is that many types of visual images presumably associated with war photography – images of ongoing combat, military and civilian casualties, material destruction, the lived experience of soldiers – appeared rarely or not at all in newsmagazine illustrations. This highlights both the inadequacy of thinking of pictures as independent records and the importance of *absence* as a significant factor in studies of representation.

The study is noteworthy for its attempt to develop more systematic methods of specifically visual content analysis, and to move from a traditional descriptive–interpretive focus on individual pictures and picture–makers to an analysis of patterns of visual representation across media. The study has become a common reference point for subsequent research on the visual portrayal of military conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Israel-Hezbollah war in Lebanon.

## Introduction

Visual communication studies are concerned with the specific ways in which visual images, as well as design relationships between visual elements, communicate ideas and emotions. The functions of visual images in communication are still largely unspecified by empirical research. There is some evidence that humans process the simulated visual cues of photography and motion pictures in ways that mimic the processing of natural visual stimuli. There is also counter evidence that apprehending particular types of visual portrayal, such as pictures that use techniques of linear perspective to suggest depth in a two-dimensional picture plane, depends upon exposure to the representational conventions of a specific culture. A long-standing paradigmatic question for visual research has been the degree to which the apprehension of pictures is natural or culturally learned, how much visual images simply reflect the surfaces of the world around us or how much they depend upon a knowledge of cultural systems of signification or *visual languages* (Messaris 1994).

In the illustrative study the authors grapple with the contradictory notions that photographic technologies can deliver a direct experience of warfare, but that the images of conflict we most likely see represent only a limited and conventional view of war (Griffin and Lee 1995). The tendency to equate images with direct experience involves the degree to which images operate on a more immediate and affective level than language, at times prompting more spontaneous and visceral responses from viewers. This is why visual media, and especially virtual 3D

technology can be useful for simulation training. Some research has also shown improvement in subjects ability to recall the detail of stories when accounts are accompanied by visuals (Graber 1990). Other research suggests that images primarily serve to “prime” existing psychological schemata, encouraging rapid closure around preconceived attitudes and beliefs (Domke et al. 2002). This chapter addresses some of the salient concerns and methodological challenges facing visual communication scholars attempting to study visual representation of war. A comprehensive treatment of the myriad perceptual, psychological, cultural, social and political factors shaping the use and function of visual images in our surveillance and understanding of the world remains beyond the scope of this brief essay. Instead the chapter will focus on a few key issues in the study of media images of war.

Visual communication research is inherently concerned with both the ontological and epistemological qualities of visual images: what is the status of visual images as a form of human symbolic communication and what can we know or learn from visuals, especially as opposed to verbal information? These questions often revolve around the tendency to confuse visual images with the things they purport to represent, what is sometimes referred to as the “reflection hypothesis” or “reflective approach” (Hall 1997). Because military conflict is inherently political and emotionally charged, studying images of war foregrounds key aspects of visual research: the concern with distinguishing the abstract and symbolic nature and functions of images from their potential as descriptive records of places and events, and identifying the inevitably rhetorical nature of image selection, construction and juxtaposition.

Because every picture and every visual presentation is the result of a series of choices about where to direct attention, how to approach a subject, how to frame and compose a shot, and how to order and structure chains of images and text, studies of visual communication pose theoretical and methodological challenges at four levels. The first involves the relationship between images and their subject matter – what could be called the mediating process between image-maker (photographer, filmmaker) and subject. This is directly relevant to the uncertain status of pictures as records and/or evidentiary data. The second involves the many layers of institutional filtering through which visual images are produced, selected, ordered, distributed and potentially reproduced for viewer/audiences. Even a cursory look at a photojournalist’s contact sheets (the full set of thumbnail photos from which individual images are selected for printing), or the raw video footage from which a broadcast or online news report is culled, reveals that the images presented to us are inevitably only fragments of a much larger universe of visual experience. The third involves the difficulty in deciphering viewer perceptions, as distinct from the image-objects they encounter. And the fourth concerns the difficulty and complexity of visual analysis and interpretation itself, which has proved a continuing problem for mass media studies and communications research. A particular methodological challenge in this regard has been the difficulty of systematically distinguishing and quantifying visual characteristics and relationships in what are largely analogic and unified visual fields.

In wartime contexts additional factors frequently affect visual representations and their circulation and these must also be considered in analyses of conflict imagery. Such potential complications include the difficult and high-risk conditions for the production of media images; the regulation of access to conflict zones by governments, military organizations, or political groups; the censorship restrictions (both external and self-imposed) that often constrict the circulation of images; the competing institutional interests involved in government-media relations and media marketing; the allegiances and world views (embedded ideology) of those organizations and individuals involved in image making and distribution; the cultivated expectations and demands of audiences and media markets during wartime; and the frequent competition of rival wartime propaganda interests, whether nationalist or counter-nationalist.

In other words, the production of media images, and therefore their study and analysis, are affected by all of the same social, political, economic and institutional factors that shape journalism and historical documentation in general. But because the realm of the visual carries an assumption of immediate apprehension and impact, and therefore the power to influence public opinion, special attention is often devoted to filtering and controlling the output of images from war zones.

Photo technologies have also played a crucial role in military surveillance and targeting, producing millions of items of visual information over hundreds of conflicts. In addition, as early as World War I soldiers began to carry personal cameras, producing copious records of daily military life. Yet those images of war that have been publicly circulated, the pictures that potentially influence public perceptions of what war looks like, represent only those pictures culled through multiple layers of filtering and compression. As Taylor (1991) documents in his book *War Photography: Realism in the British Press*, millions of wartime photographs from World War I, World War II and other twentieth-century conflicts are preserved in British national archives, but those pictures featured in the British press have focused heavily on stereotypes of family life and patriotism at home. Taylor writes:

These stereotypes enable a national history to be seen and learned. This history is not solely conserved as “heritage”: it is actively produced, turned into fiction and presented as the thing itself. It is simulated in replicas, or re-enactments, and massively represented in photographic realism.

(1991: 165)

In public representations of Britain’s wars, Taylor notes, “The disturbing effects of shocking photographs remained a hypothetical question because there was none to be seen” (1991: 112).

The emotional emphasis of picture making encourages the search for the emotional moments of war. Historical, geographical and political specificity is abandoned for icons of nationalist fervor and heroism, or more universal human experiences of suffering and sacrifice. This tendency to reduce images of war to iconic rhetorical statements has produced a legendary tradition of war photography but has diminished the value of wartime imagery as social and historical information (Griffin 1999). What we can potentially learn about war through the study of pictures remains an open question in social research, for visual imagery has been systematically analyzed only in the technical fields of military engineering, surveillance and tactics.

### Why study images of war?

The fact that media images of warfare and military conflict often contain highly charged content, content thick with the potential for impending violence, destruction, or death, which is moreover connected to feelings of solidarity, nationalism, partisanship, or antagonism towards a defined enemy, means that wartime images are likely to have a strong attraction for viewers and more likely than routine news images to provoke strong emotions. This makes the production and publication of wartime images a high stakes enterprise. Images with such emotional potential, also seem to have greater potential to influence public perceptions, and affect levels of public support for government policies and military actions.

Two levels of analysis are relevant when studying images of war: (1) the individual picture or film sequence with its potential psychological impact on viewers, and (2) patterns of visual representation across sustained photographic, film or news production. Individual images often

draw attention for their dramatic capacity to evoke a powerful sense of a particular event or incident, yet may tell us little about the sustained picturing of war, or our enduring representations of nation, social identity and conflict. The powerful impact of any one image may owe precisely to its rarity, its disruption of the routine flow of media imagery and consequent thwarting of expectations. Sustained patterns of visual representation, on the other hand, suggest a continuing process of image production and cultural representation, revealing underlying social influences on picture production and diffusion. So an important task for visual analysis is to detect and describe the range and types of images characteristic of fictional and non-fictional portrayals of war, and to attempt to explain the influences of history, culture and media practice on the range and types of pictorial material presented to the public.

### Analyzing Persian Gulf War images

The example study found that pictorial coverage of the war converged around a narrow range of picture types, dominated by images of U.S. military deployment and “backstage” preparation (Griffin and Lee 1995). The US government and military, like other governments throughout history, tried to regulate and manage the images of the war circulated to the public. In the case of the Gulf War various media outlets were given access to the war zone through a “pool system” in which journalists assigned to travel with military units shared information with pools of fellow reporters. This system resulted in photo coverage of the war that was dominated by a category we named “cataloguing the arsenal.” These were pictures of various U.S. military weaponry – missiles, rockets, fighter jets, artillery, “smart bombs,” tanks and other armored vehicles – often created and filed during the period of military mobilization prior to the war itself, and sometimes reproduced from arms catalogs and weapons industry brochures. The second most frequent category of published pictures comprised photographs of “U.S. troops” in various stages of deployment and preparation but not in combat. Together, these two categories of imagery accounted for 37 percent of all pictures published in the U.S. newsmagazines.

By contrast, types of imagery that we would expect to be prominent in news coverage of the war – military casualties, damage and destruction from bombing or shelling, wartime effects on civilian life in Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, or the U.S., pictures of Iraqi troops or Iraqi prisoners of war – were largely absent from the pictorial coverage.<sup>1</sup> Surprising at the time, 97 percent of the newsmagazine images were made in non-combat situations, providing empirical support for anecdotal impressions that the media had presented a sanitized view of the war. A photograph such as “American Soldier Grieving for Comrade” by David Turnley ([www.corbisimages.com/stock-photo/rights-managed/TL001241/american-soldier-grieving-for-comrade](http://www.corbisimages.com/stock-photo/rights-managed/TL001241/american-soldier-grieving-for-comrade)) won photojournalism prizes months after the conclusion of the Gulf War for its presentation of a powerfully gripping instance of wartime suffering and empathy, but such a photo was a rare exception amid the routine images published weekly from the Gulf. While a tradition of humanistic photography is often associated with the work of twentieth-century magazine photojournalism and documentary film – evoking “universal human emotions,” in “decisive moments,” with “powerful individual vision,” according to the founders of Magnum photo agency – in contemporary practice the individual image cannot be separated from the flow of texts and presentational contexts in which audiences encounter them (Rose 2012).

The Gulf War study taught this lesson well. Picture captions, acknowledgements and other textual information provided crucial analytical information. The research unit of analysis was almost never the picture alone, but rather the image-text. It quickly became clear that methods of analysis needed to account for contextual information to distinguish between photos of American tanks in the Kuwaiti desert and pictures of similar tanks in the Mojave Desert of

California. The entire history of visual communication, in fiction, non-fiction, and propaganda, is filled with decontextualized uses of imagery to create strategic juxtapositions and manipulated impressions. Precisely because of the realism and emotional connection promised by visual images, identifying the sources and contexts of images are as important as analyzing their content and presentational form.

### **The challenge of accounting for both the iconic and the routine in images of war**

It is a methodological challenge to attempt to account for the culturally resonant and enduring characteristics of individual images and at the same time chart the quotidian landscape of war representation within any given cultural/historical context or media system. The humanistic tradition of twentieth-century photography emphasizes the power of single images and has created for each war certain icons in the public record and imagination (Hariman and Lucaites 2007). The desire to establish such iconic images is explicitly recognized by journalists themselves, as when, in the early days of the 2003 invasion of Iraq, a CBS news reader exclaimed, “the search is on for the one great image that will define the battle of Iraq” (quoted in Hariman and Lucaites 2007: 291). To evaluate the cultural resonance and impact of individual images requires the interpretive analysis of historical, cultural and rhetorical studies (Zellizer 2004). But most of the research in visual communication studies concerns patterns of cultural and professional practice in media production. In this regard, a growing body of research has appeared since the 1991 Gulf War that attempts to systematically gauge the range and foci of war-related visual representations.

### **Methods of visual analysis in communication studies**

#### ***Manifest content analysis***

To understand why we get the steady diet of war images that we do, and why many other types of revealing and informative images remain unseen, we need to view war images as the result of institutionalized media production that is influenced by business interests, government management, and political persuasion. The most common approach to tracking this image production involves traditional methods of content analysis: counting the frequency with which particular features of visual portrayal appear in mediated accounts of world events. The strength of this method is its consistency and reliability. Observers can consistently agree on the presence or absence of discrete visual features – the appearance of an identifiable figure, perhaps, or the inclusion within the pictorial frame of a particular social role, character type, object, shape, color, or symbol. Such discretely identifiable features can be counted to document the frequency of their occurrence. The key methodological issues in content analysis are: (1) the conceptualization and definition of coding categories – do content categories account for factors that validly index research concerns and questions (construct validity)? and (2) inter-coder reliability – to what degree do different independent coders agree in their identification of pertinent features of content? If different coders independently and consistently identify a pertinent feature of pictorial display, then one can claim the occurrence of that feature with a certain degree of confidence.

However, methods of manifest content analysis are limited in their capacity to describe or index many potentially significant components of visual representation, especially those involving complex or interrelated characteristics of the visual field. These might involve technical

aspects of visual presentation, such as framing and composition, camera distance, angle or movement, lighting effects, color filtering, or other special effects – factors that fundamentally shape the portrayal of pictured subject matter, but in ways that only technically trained experts may easily recognize. They might involve cultural conventions of portrayal and symbolism (i.e. iconography), the recognition of which requires training in fields such as anthropology or art history; or displays of social space, posture or behavior readily apparent only to those trained to study kinesics and social communication. It may simply be that the interrelationship of multiple elements within an analogic pictorial field is too complex to disentangle and classify in terms of separate, discrete elements.

In the simplest example, one could count the frequency with which particular recognizable figures, such as Afghani soldiers, appear in a specified universe of wartime news images. However, the mere frequency of their appearance in news images would reveal nothing about *the ways* in which they are pictured, whether they are shown in a way that suggests professionalism and competence, or hesitance and discomfort, whether they are shown working collectively with fellow soldiers or individually in isolation, whether patrolling Afghani villages in a cooperative and protective manner, or confronting civilians as authoritarian figures (perhaps from a low camera angle?). In other words, a sufficient visual analysis may well require much more than an analysis of manifest content alone.

### ***Iconographic/semiotic analysis***

The fields of art history and film studies have contributed valuable models of analysis for visual scholars. In art history the practice of iconography and iconology has heavily influenced visual analysis since the early decades of the twentieth century (Panofsky 1939). Iconography refers to the “mapping” of patterns of symbols and motifs within specific cultural systems of image making and visual representation. A prime example is the mapping of the system for representing religious figures and saints in European Christian art. For those conversant with this medieval and renaissance system of visual communication the identities of particular figures represented in painting, printmaking, sculpture or stained glass is readily apparent. St. Jerome can be recognized by his portrayal with books and scrolls of scripture in Hebrew and Greek (which he is diligently translating to Latin), and by the frequent placement of a lion at his feet. St. Peter routinely wears a tunic and robe of specific colors, the “keys to heaven” hanging at his waist. Similarly, military history paintings in the European tradition portray military leaders with unmistakable signs of their identity in dress, emblems and gesture – Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, George Washington, Napoleon, the Duke of Wellington – and places them in the composition of the frame in a manner that clearly distinguishes them from lower ranking figures. Indeed, the study of iconography has shown us that the world of visual representation is dominated by a finite set of pictorial genres, limited styles of depiction, and specific practices of visual symbolism. To think that patterns of visual representation will simply be driven by patterns of content is to remain ignorant of the history of picture making.

However, identifying significant visual motifs, visual figures of speech (especially metonyms and metaphors) and/or “visual quotations” may require an advanced level of knowledge and experience in art history, cinema studies, the history of graphic design, or related cultural systems of expression. For example, many news photographs of the sick or injured, including fallen or wounded soldiers, frame the victim in the arms of a comrade or loved one in a pose that mimics traditional Christian *Pieta* paintings and sculptures. In fact, several World Press Photo and Pulitzer Prize winning photographs over the years have made use of long-standing conventions of portrayal drawn from religious art. Recognizing the recurrence of such representational conventions may require iconological



training and the ability to conduct historical and contextual analyses that reveal patterns of expressive form as well as content. Similarly, the recognition of “visual quotes” (Masters et al. 1991), or conventionalized “video packages” in television news, necessitates a familiarity with news production practices, current public affairs, and the history of representational forms.

Semiotic analysis is likewise grounded in the cultural analysis of signs and symbols, but emphasizes to an even greater extent the operation of individual images within a structure and grammar of cultural systems of representation and meaning. With its roots in structural linguistics, semiotics treats the visual as language-like, with images acting like words, phrases, or units of language within a larger discourse of representation. Like studies of iconography, this moves the study of visual imagery away from the idea of a one-to-one correspondence between pictures and things and toward the study of images as units within syntactical chains of image/concepts and meaning. A news photograph of a U.S. tank rumbling along a highway past groups of people walking along the side of the road coalesces meanings from the relationship of this photograph to other pictures of tanks and armored vehicles identified as part of a U.S. expeditionary force headed across the southern part of Iraq toward the capital of Baghdad. Such photos joined numerous news images during the Iraq invasion that repeated the visual motif of troops and armored vehicles crossing the desert, accompanied by captions, headlines and news text narrating the story of the “Road to Baghdad,” “Halfway to Baghdad,” “Closing In,” and the fall of Saddam – with the headline “Free” superimposed over photographs of US Marines toppling the statue of Saddam Hussein in Firdos Square.<sup>2</sup> A semiotic analysis of this photograph will recognize the syntactical and narrative context linking this individual image to other images, visual motifs, and preexisting cultural patterns of representation.

### ***Framing analysis***

A related and overlapping approach originating in research on social perceptions, public opinion research and political communication is *framing analysis*. The term *framing* itself comes from the original idea that the picture frame shapes the composition of an image and determines the point of view of the spectator. As Burgin writes in *Thinking Photography*, “the frame” of the photograph organizes the objects depicted within “into a coherence,” emphasizing to the viewer that this way of seeing the subject is “important” (1982: 146). The frame determines what will be included within the limits of the picture, and perhaps even more importantly what will be left out. In his provocative book on combat journalism Knightly writes, “although in most cases the camera does not lie directly, it can lie brilliantly by omission” (2004: 14). The social anthropologist Erving Goffman, in his seminal work on gendered displays in advertising, showed how the graphic space of the picture frame has routinely been used to establish particular visual hierarchies among figures and other elements in advertising images, strongly supporting traditional notions of gendered social behavior and relationships (1979).

Interestingly, the concept of framing was adapted from its concrete application to pictures and developed by social scientists as a metaphor for the delimiting, organizing, and emphasizing of political ideas and social issues in news, rhetoric, and political communication, before once again being applied in visual framing analysis to the specific role of visual images in shaping social and political discourse. Tuchman first adopted the metaphor for news analysis, comparing news frames to window frames, limiting “what may be seen” (1978: 209). Soon after, Gitlin elaborated the notion of “media frames.” He wrote, “Media frames are persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse whether verbal or visual” (1980: 7). Entman (1993) revisited the concept in his analyses of the specific role of “news frames” in the control

and projection of dominant issues and political discourse, defining framing as the selection of certain aspects of reality to “make them more salient in a communicating text in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” (1993: 52). Messaris and Abraham point to the special power of visual images as seemingly natural reflections of the world to frame and strengthen “the commonsensical claims of ideology” (2001: 220), a notion Griffin applies to the analysis of war images from Afghanistan and Iraq (Griffin 2004).

Similarly, Parry (2010) demonstrates how news photographs from the 2006 Israel-Lebanon war published in two newspapers effectively framed the conflict differently, producing a different impression of the scale and severity of destruction, and of culpability on each side. Parry’s work provides a new model for comprehensive visual analysis through her elaboration of multiple levels of coding that include analysis of compositional elements, editorial selection, placement and verbal framing of photographs. But Parry warns, “There is a danger of becoming too removed from the original images via over-fragmentation of the photographic details” in analysis, losing a sense of a photograph’s “emotional pull” or overall “significance” (2010: 82). She recommends, “Findings for detailed content and framing analysis (should) therefore be supplemented with more qualitative ‘stylistic’ methods of analysis” (2010: 82).

## Conclusion

Studies of visual images that wish to account for more complex combinations of visual features, and still preserve a sense of the unique qualities and significance of the original photographs, are most likely to augment visual content analysis with in-depth formalist, iconographic, semiotic, and stylistic analyses of individual shots or frames. Parry’s attempt to include analyses of gaze, camera angle, picture sourcing and scaling, and image/text relationships provides an encouraging direction for future research. Growing attention to the uniquely visual aspects of late twentieth-century media has also prompted scholars to begin to think about patterns of visualization as a basis for comparing media representation in different types of media, on different platforms, and at different points in time in different cultures and nations (Müller and Griffin 2012). Schwalbe et al. (2008), and Keith et al. (2010) have begun to identify patterns of framing and master narratives in war imagery across different media platforms. Keith et al. (2010) point to the methodological challenges of quantitative content analysis of war images across print, broadcast and online media, but argue for the importance of meeting these challenges because multi-platform exposure “is consistent with many news consumers’ experiences with war coverage” (2010: 94).

The number of scholars attempting to combine multiple levels of visual analysis in research on media images of war continues to grow. Examples include research on the shifting status and presentation of the Abu Ghraib photos as they moved back and forth from the Internet to television to news magazines (Andén-Papadopoulos 2008; Griffin 2011), and work on visual commemorations of the 9/11 attacks (Grittmann and Ammann 2009). Such studies have attempted to design methods of *visual* content analysis that integrate closer attention to specifically visual elements and characteristics (iconographic analyses, attention to visual form and style), with procedures for tracking patterns and frequencies of specific features over representative media samples. Combining methods of analysis from different disciplines may lead to more comprehensive analyses of visual representations in the future.

Meanwhile, applying systematic social research methods to the analysis of visual images will remain a challenge. And the visual representation of human conflict will continue to represent a politically charged and inevitably controversial arena of media practice. Partly this is because visual images themselves are often the source of conflict and not just reflections of it. The

Muhammad cartoon crisis, for example, sparked by the publication of 12 cartoons in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands Posten* in September 2005, joined the Abu Ghraib photographs from the year before as potent instruments of foreign conflict, disseminating “enemy images” through global channels, and setting an agenda for global tensions that pitched the “West” against “the Muslim world” (Müller et al. 2009: 37). Other examples have followed, in the form of cell-phone pictures and online videos as well photographs and cartoons. An increasingly wired world may make visual images and conflict increasingly indivisible.

### Notes

- 1 Regarding a similar absence of images of casualties in TV news coverage see Sean Aday (2005) *The Real War Will Never Get on Television: An Analysis of Casualty Imagery in American Television Coverage of the Iraq War*.
- 2 [www.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://graphics7.nytimes.com/images/2003/04/09/international/09cnd-free.slide1.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.network54.com/Search/view/221692/1049984474/Re%253A%2BWar%2Bon%2BIraq,%2Bpart%2BII.?term%3Dwarehouse%2B%26page%3D2154&h=427&w=650&sz=72&tbnid=Am2d1h-4kykSKM:&tbnh=90&tbnw=137&zoom=1&usg=\\_\\_G2DM9IW\\_G7xalPDgwJCIC1OtE-U=&docid=0UkuqlaLJG6w9M&itg=1&sa=X&ei=bzqmUsL3NoreqAGEsICYBQ&ved=0CHQQ9QEwCg](http://www.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://graphics7.nytimes.com/images/2003/04/09/international/09cnd-free.slide1.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.network54.com/Search/view/221692/1049984474/Re%253A%2BWar%2Bon%2BIraq,%2Bpart%2BII.?term%3Dwarehouse%2B%26page%3D2154&h=427&w=650&sz=72&tbnid=Am2d1h-4kykSKM:&tbnh=90&tbnw=137&zoom=1&usg=__G2DM9IW_G7xalPDgwJCIC1OtE-U=&docid=0UkuqlaLJG6w9M&itg=1&sa=X&ei=bzqmUsL3NoreqAGEsICYBQ&ved=0CHQQ9QEwCg)

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