

Icons of war photography

How war photographs are reinforced in collective memory
A study of three historical reference images of war and conflict

by

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Chapter Five

Research findings

5.1 Introduction

660 students, 220 from Spain, 220 from South Africa and 220 from Vietnam have been interviewed about their familiarity with the three selected photographs “the falling soldier”, “children fleeing a napalm strike” and the image of Hector Pieterse, the associated photographers Robert Capa, Nick Ut and Sam Nzima and the corresponding wars in which the pictures were taken: the Spanish Civil War, the Vietnam War and the Soweto uprising during Apartheid. Questionnaires in three different languages (English, Spanish and Vietnamese) have been distributed online, via different social network websites such as *Facebook*, *StudiVZ*, *my language exchange*, in University student discussion forums and via a large number of personal e-mails. Data were collected via an online form and then stored and evaluated in a MySQL database.

In the section “personal data” of the questionnaire, students were classified according to various categories, one of them being gender; concerning their age they were classified into four groups: 18-21; 22-25; 26-29 and over 29. Furthermore, classifications were made regarding the students’ field of study: humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, formal sciences and professions, and applied sciences. Students were furthermore required to name the University they were currently studying at, to make sure they were actually studying in Spain, South Africa or Vietnam.

The general aim of the second section of the questionnaire was to gain an idea about how acquainted students are with the three selected war images, the photographers, and the era the photographs were taken in. The four questions to be answered were as follows:

- Have you seen this photograph before?
- If yes, can you recall where you have seen this photograph?
- Do you know who the photographer of the picture is?
- Do you know where and in which war/conflict the photograph was taken?

In the last part of the questionnaire, students were given the opportunity to leave their e-mail addresses if they were interested in receiving the results of all students questioned. Furthermore, students could get in touch with the author of this paper via e-mail.

5.2 Goals and hypothetical assumptions

There are certain war photographs that have become manifest in collective memory and have reached iconic status; it has been assumed that among them are the three selected war images. The author assumed that among the three selected photographs, the war image of Nick Ut, „children fleeing a napalm strike“, would be the best-known, due to its outstanding aesthetic composition and multiple reproductions worldwide. It was furthermore believed that people who recognise the photograph of Ut would be able to ascribe it to the Vietnam War. However, it was also assumed that the photographer Nick Ut would be rather unfamiliar to respondents. It was believed that the photographer Robert Capa would be well-known internationally and associated with the war image “the falling soldier” due to a number of factors such as the ongoing debate about the picture’s authenticity or the fact that a prize for photography was named after him. It was also expected that the photograph of Sam Nzima depicting Hector Pieterse would be well-known among South African students, but its degree of familiarity was estimated to be far lower with Spanish and Vietnamese students. However, if the photograph was recognised, it was assumed that students would also be aware

that the image originated from the Soweto uprising, which happened during apartheid. Due to the fact that the photographer Sam Nzima did not own the credits to this photograph for such a long time it was believed that he would be relatively unfamiliar.

Overall, it was assumed that students would rather recognise the photograph that was taken in their own country than the two photographs that have been taken elsewhere. Moreover, it was assumed that students studying in the field of humanities, social sciences and familiar fields of study would recognise and know more about the war images than students studying in the field of natural sciences or formal sciences.

5.3 Research sample

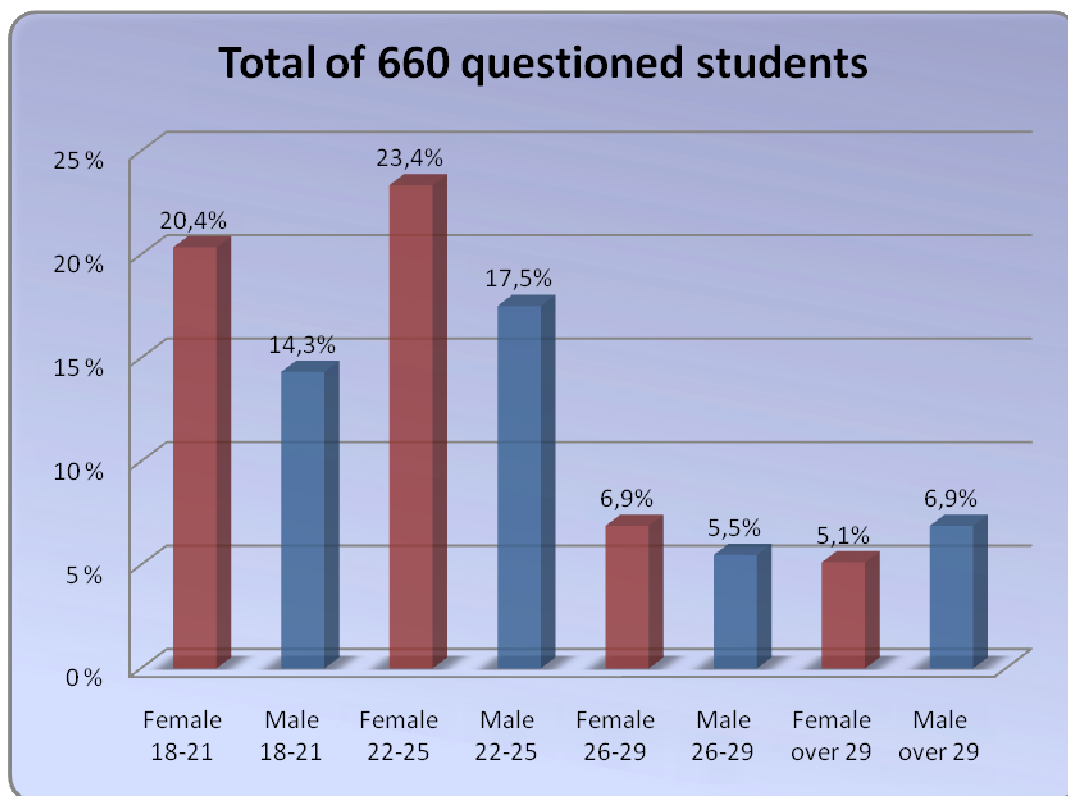


Chart 1. Total of students questioned from Spain, South Africa and Vietnam

Chart 1 illustrates the distribution of female and male students that have been questioned as well as their classification into four age groups (figures are provided in

percentages). Of 660 students in total (220 from each country), 55,8 percent were female and 44,2 percent were male. Furthermore, 34,7 % percent of respondents were aged between 18 and 21, 40,9 % percent of students were aged between 22 and 25, 12,4 percent of students were aged between 26 and 29 and 12 percent of students were aged over 29. It is noticeable that while about twenty percent of 18 to 21-year olds were female, only 14 percent were male. Similar results were found in the age group 22-25, with 23 percent of female students and about 18 percent male respondents. More female students were also found in the age group 26 to 29 although the difference to male respondents was less than 2 percent. However, about 2 percent more male than female students belonged to the age group over 29.

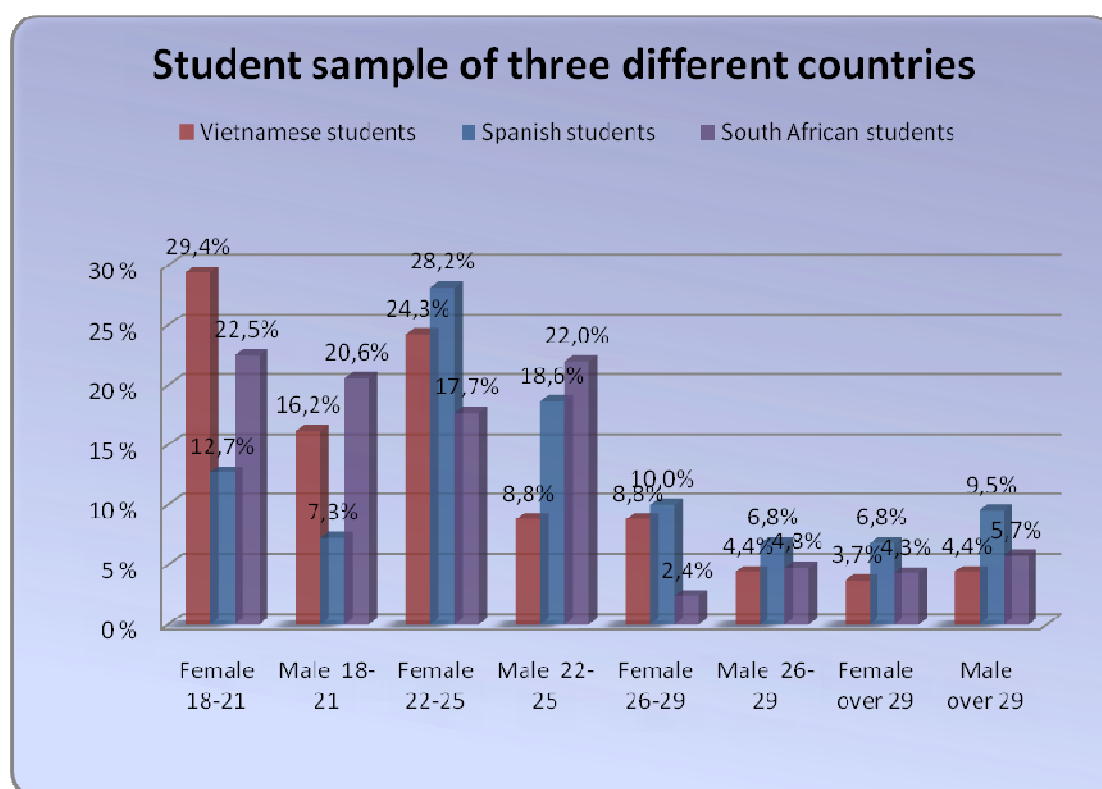


Chart 2. Total of students questioned from Vietnam, Spain and South Africa classified into different age groups and according to gender

Overall, 45,1 percent male student and 54,9 percent female student have been questioned. Regarding the findings of students of all three countries in detail it can be noticed that about 40 percent of Vietnamese students were aged between 18 and 21. Of Spanish

students questioned slightly less than half were aged between 22 and 26, while 28 percent of students this age group were female and about 19 percent were male. Less than half as many Spanish students aged between 18 and 21 responded to the questionnaire.

Regarding the South African sample of students, it can be noticed that about 43 percent of respondents were aged between 18 and 21 while another 40 percent of students were aged between 22 and 25. Regarding the South African sample of students the percentage-wise distribution of female and male students among the different age groups is fairly well balanced. However, in the group of 26 to 29 year-olds only half as many female as male students have been questioned. Percentage-wise differences between female and male were far smaller regarding the Spanish sample than those of the Vietnamese and the Spanish sample.

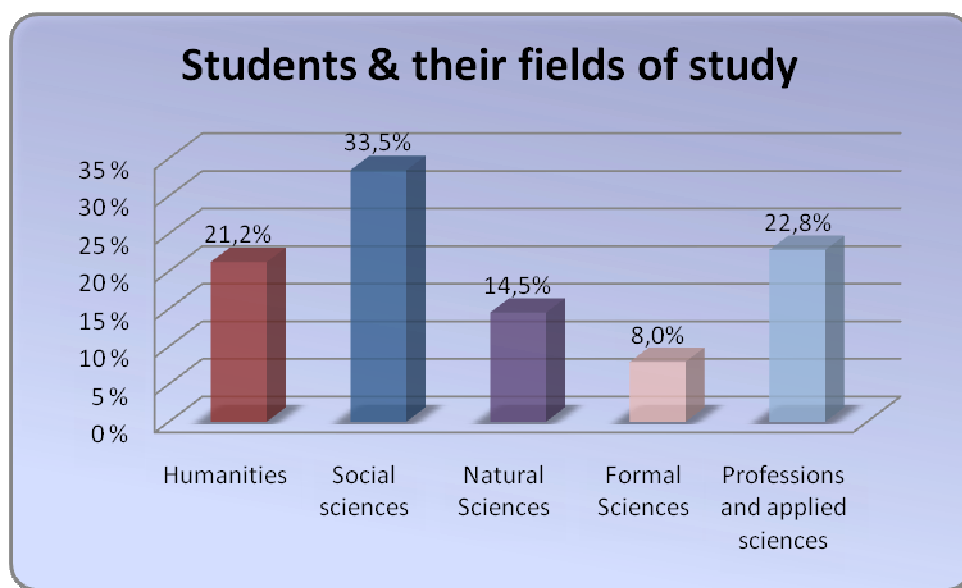


Chart 3. Total of students questioned classified according to their field of study

Chart 3 outlines the different fields of study of the respondents. One third of students were studying in the field of social sciences. About 21 percent of students were studying in the field of humanities and only slightly more respondents were studying in the field of professions and applied sciences. About 15 percent of students were studying in the field of

natural sciences and the least percentage of students, about 8 percent, were studying in the field of formal sciences.

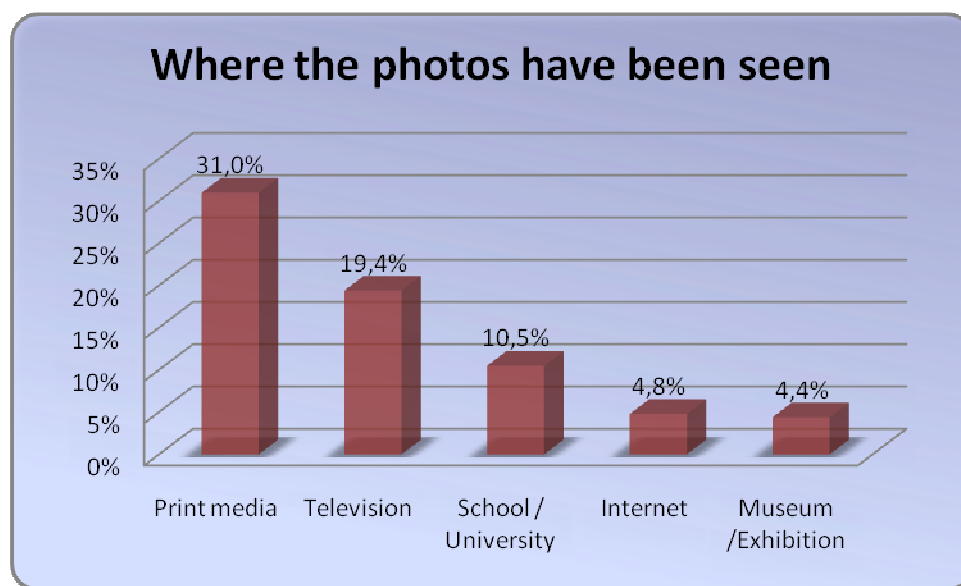


Chart 4. Findings reporting where the photographs have been seen

Students were asked to report where they had seen the photographs. About 70 percent of students that reported their familiarity with an image of war were able to say where they had come across the photographs. Of these, 31 percent of students reported that they had seen the photographs in some print media like newspapers, history books or magazines. Nearly one fifth of students reported that they had noticed the photographs on television while, for example, watching documentaries. Another eleven percent of students reported that they had seen the pictures at school, at university or in some other kind of educational course. Slightly above four percent of students reported that they had come across the photographs in a museum and nearly five percent of respondents stated that they had seen the selected images on some internet sites.

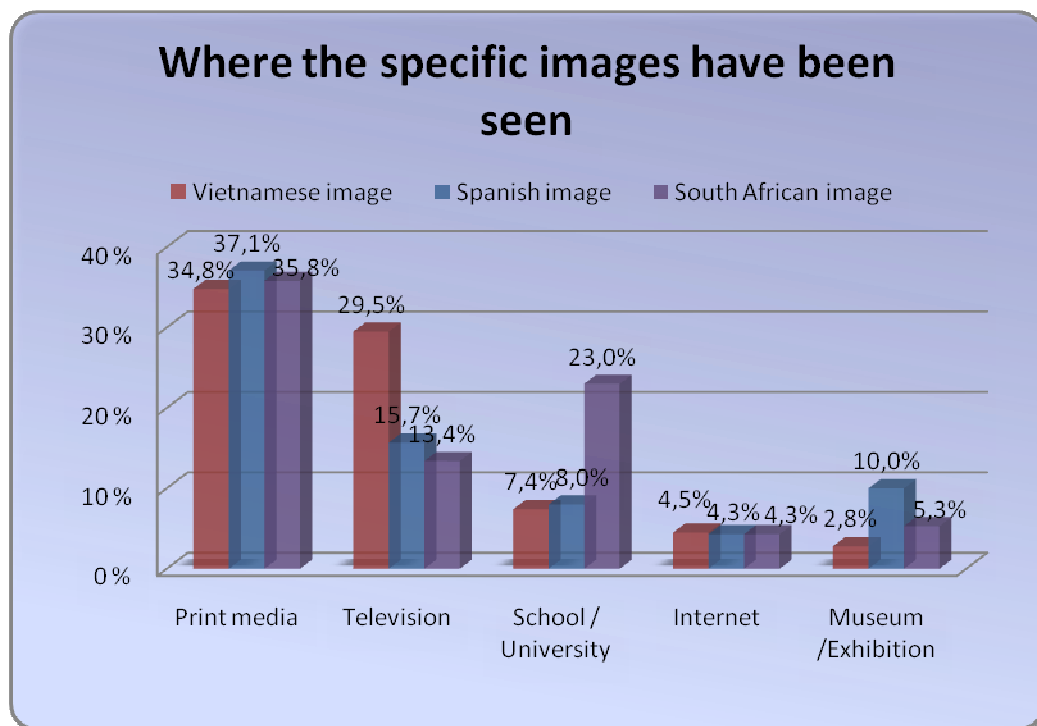


Chart 5. Students' answers reporting where they had come across the specific war images

Regarding these findings in detail it can be said that the percentage of students reporting that they had come across the specific images in any print media turns out to be about the same with all three photographs. This is furthermore the case when the answer “the internet” is at the center of focus. It is surprising that about 30 percent of students reported that they had come across the Vietnamese image via television while the other two images had only been seen on television by about half as many students. It was moreover striking that nearly one fourth of students that were familiar with the South African image reported that they had seen the photograph at school or university, while only 8 percent of students came across the Spanish image at school and about 7 percent had seen the Vietnamese image at school or university. These findings might suggest that while in South Africa the Soweto uprising and apartheid have become an issue to be taught and discussed at school or at university, it might be the case that the Vietnamese war is not rated as an issue to be taught at school these days and students are therefore not confronted with such images at educational

institutions. It does not come unforeseen that not many students did come across the image by Robert Capa at school, because although it has become a reference image for the Spanish Civil War, it does not record a news event of obvious importance, such as the other two images. However, the fact that this image depicting death in war as a heroic and tragic event has achieved iconic status is supported by the fact that 10 percent of students came across the photograph in a museum. It was, however, not foreseen that only 5 percent of students had seen the South African image in a museum. It was rather assumed that far more students would have seen the image at the Hector Pieterse museum.

5.4 Findings of Nick Ut's "children fleeing a napalm strike"

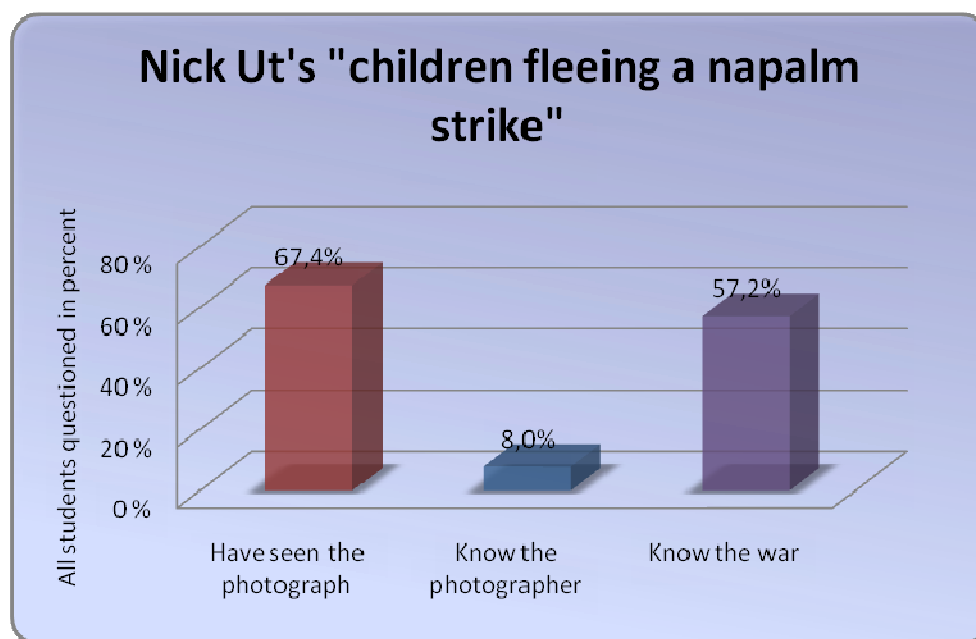


Chart 6. Findings of all students questioned on Nick Ut's photograph "children fleeing a napalm strike"

About two thirds of all students being questioned responded that they had seen the iconic photograph of Nick Ut before, which indicates a high awareness level of the image. The fact that 57 percent of respondents were aware that this image was taken during the Vietnam War suggests that this image has come to represent a whole era; and in particular it

has come to represent the Vietnam War. It was not surprising that the photographer Nick Ut was only recognised by 8 percent of the students questioned, since the image “children fleeing a napalm strike” remains to be the only widely known photograph of Ut and the photographer backed out of war photography and is now working as a paparazzo.

5.5 Findings on Robert Capa's “falling soldier”

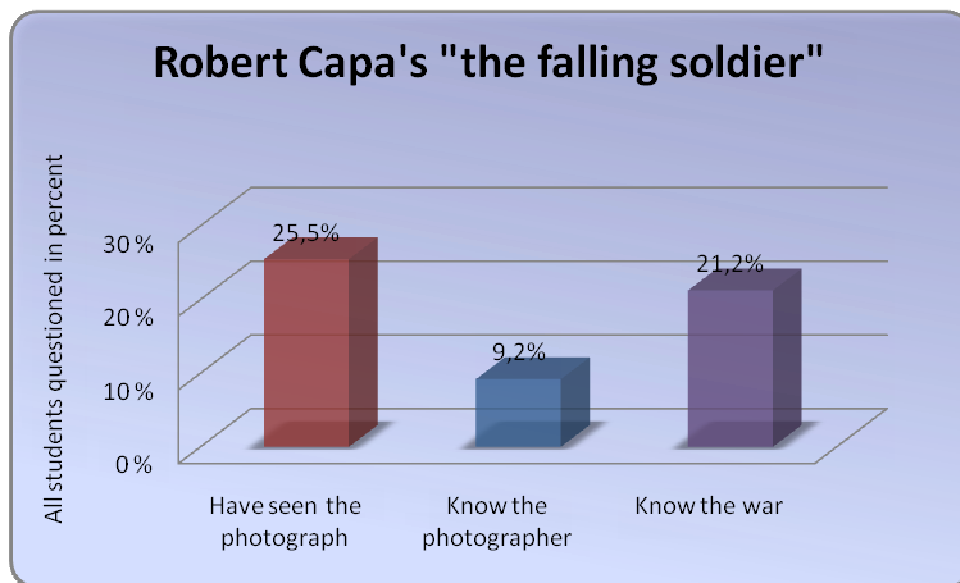


Chart 7. Findings of all students questioned on Robert Capa's photograph “the falling soldier”

It was found that about 26 percent of respondents were familiar with the iconic photograph of Robert Capa and about 21 percent were able to recall that the photograph was taken during the Spanish Civil War. Similar to Ut's photograph it can be argued that due to the fact that about 83 percent of all students that had seen the image before could assign it to the specific war this picture has come to represent the Spanish Civil War. 9 percent of students could identify the photographer Robert Capa. Although this might not seem as if Capa's name is widely recognised, it has to be noticed that of all students stating to have seen the photograph, nearly 36 percent were able to name the right photographer. In this perspective it can be argued that Robert Capa is frequently credited with the image “the

falling soldier”, which can be interpreted as an indicator of a high degree of popularity of the war photographer.

5.6 Findings on Sam Nzima’s photograph of Hector Pieterse

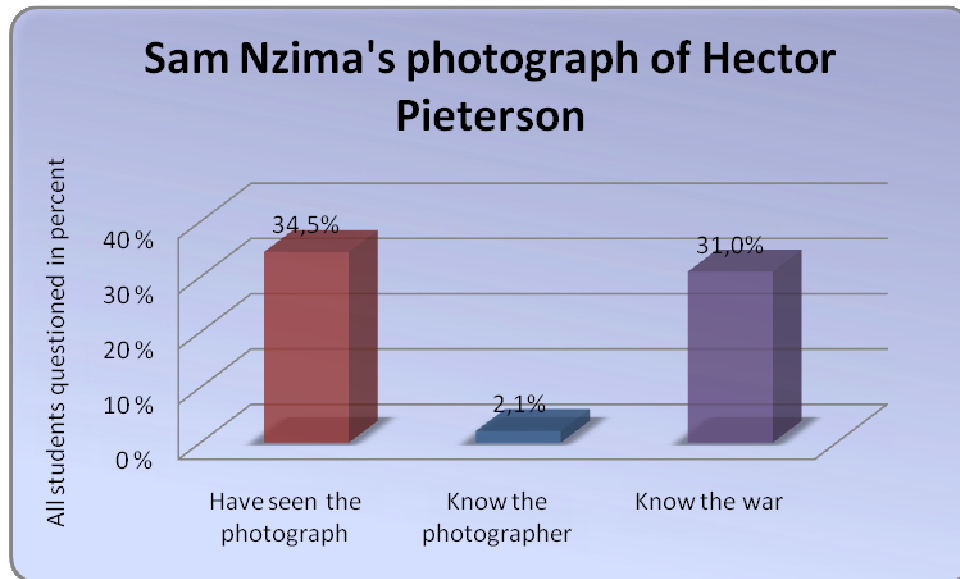


Chart 8. Findings of all students questioned on Sam Nzima’s photograph of Hector Pieterse

Slightly more than one third of all students were familiar with the photograph depicting Hector Pieterse and 31 percent of students knew that the photograph was taken during the Soweto uprising, in apartheid South Africa. Some students could even tell the exact date when the photograph was taken. Because nearly 90 percent of all students that recognised the photograph could also name the conflict it can, once again, be argued that this iconic image symbolises all the horror and brutality of apartheid. The fact that only about 2 percent of students were familiar with the name of the photographer, Sam Nzima, was not unforeseen either. One reason explaining Nzima’s low acquaintance level could be that he was given the copyright for the photograph as late as 1999. Furthermore, Nzima left photography after the Soweto uprisings and no other photographs by him have ever been published.

5.7 Comparison/Discussion of findings on all three photographs

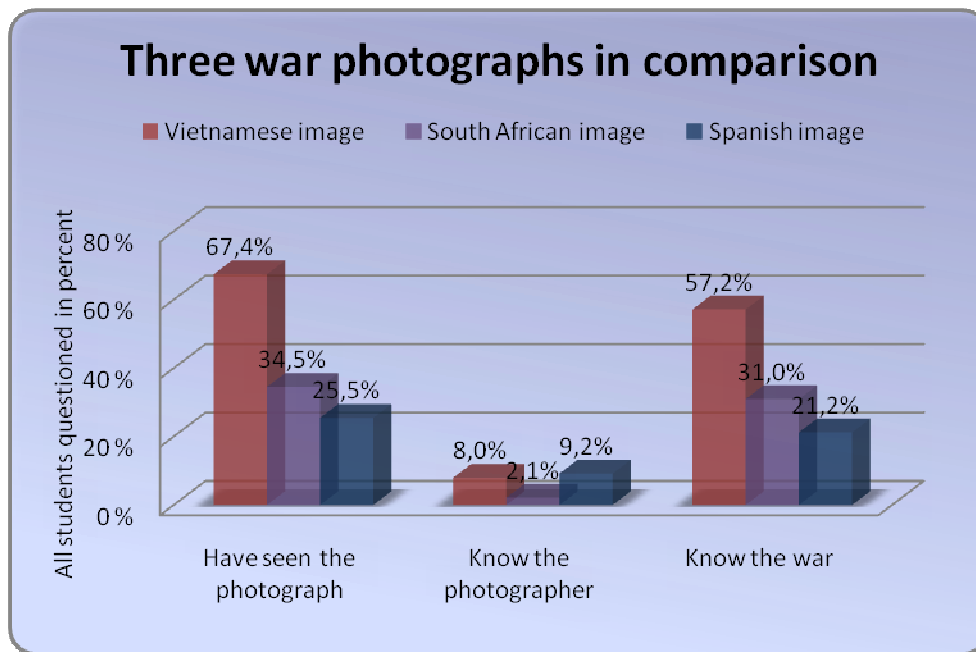


Chart 9. Sam Nzima's photograph of Hector Pieterse, Nick Ut's image "children fleeing a napalm strike" and Robert Capa's image "the falling soldier" in comparison

Chart 9 outlines the degree of familiarity of the three selected icons of war photography, the photographers and the wars in which the images were taken. Overall, it was found that the names of the photographers remain rather unknown to a majority of respondents. However, the photographer that seems to have received the highest degree of familiarity is Robert Capa. With over two thirds of student reporting that they have seen the photograph of Nick Ut "children fleeing a napalm strike", the image achieved the highest awareness level. The fact that not even one third of students recognised "the falling soldier" was unforeseen, as it was believed that this photograph was widely known around the world. Generally, it can be noticed that there exists a correlation between the number of students that have seen the photographs and the number of students that could associate the photographs with the correct wars with all three war photographs. While about 90 percent of student recognising Sam Nzima's photograph were aware of the conflict in which the image

originated, about 83 percent of students recognising Robert Capa's photograph and 85 percent of respondents identifying Nick Ut's photograph could point out the correct wars. These results support Greslé's (2006:13) assumption that there are certain photographs that have achieved iconic status, photographs that represent an event or an emotion. In this case, it can be argued that due to the findings depicted in Chart 9 the three chosen photographs are historical reference images of the war or conflict in which they were taken.

5.8 Gender, age-group and field of study

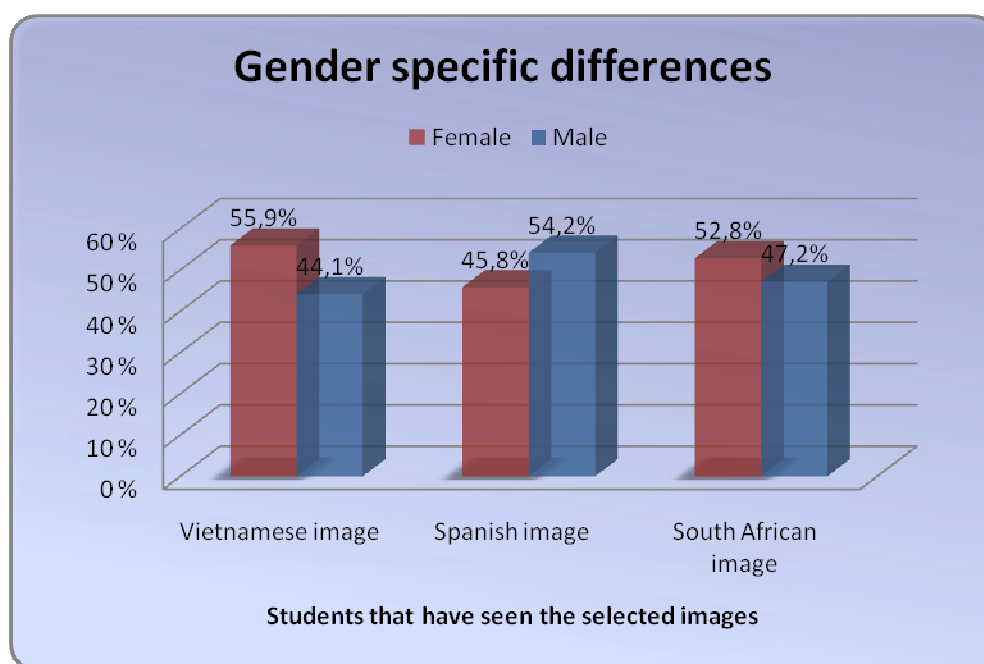


Chart 10. Gender specific findings on all students questioned

Regarding gender specific differences among students that were familiar the photographs it is worth noting that while the South African and the Vietnamese image were generally better-known by female respondents this was not the case regarding the Spanish image “the falling soldier”. In fact male respondents were rather familiar with the Spanish image to nearly the same percentage as female students were rather acquainted with the Vietnamese and the South African image.

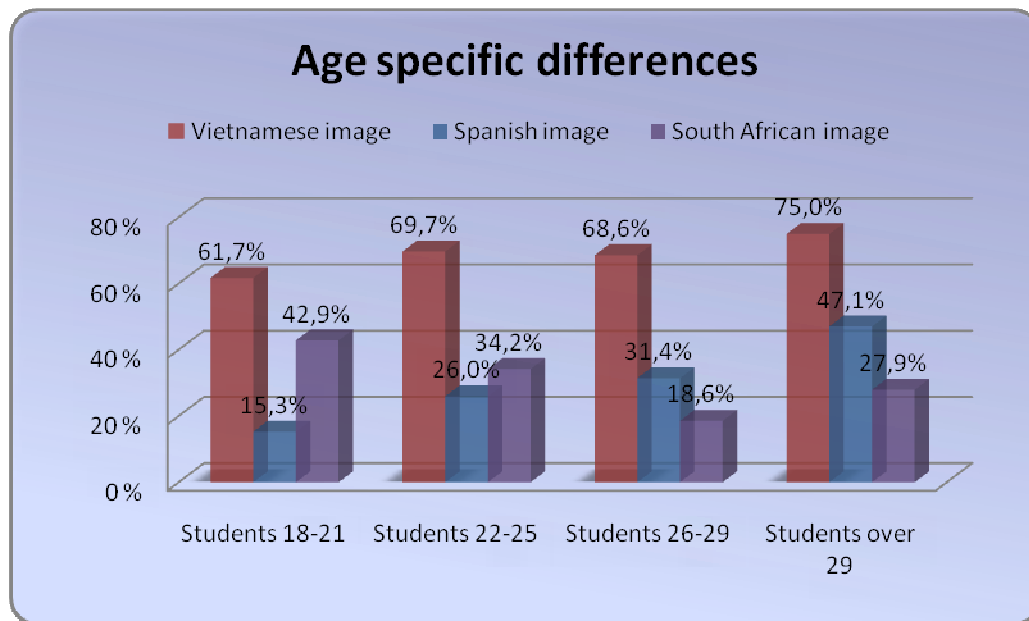


Chart 11. Age specific findings of all students questioned

Regarding the four different age groups the findings show some interesting variety. It should be noted that the students aged over 29 showed the highest degree of familiarity concerning the Vietnamese and the Spanish image. The awareness level regarding the Spanish image, with nearly half of all students aged over 29 being familiar with the photograph, was far higher than the familiarity of younger respondents. It is striking that the degree of familiarity concerning Robert Capa's photograph is increasing the older the students are, with 15 percent of 18 to 21-year-olds being acquainted with the image up to 47 percent of all students over 29 years. Focussing on the South African image, it is to be noticed that students of the youngest group of age show the highest level of familiarity with the image, with about 43 percent, while 34 percent of students aged between 22 and 25 are acquainted with the image whereas not even 20 percent of students aged between 26 and 29 reported to have seen the photograph. However, the oldest group of students showed a higher awareness level of the South African image (28 percent) than students aged between 26 and 29.

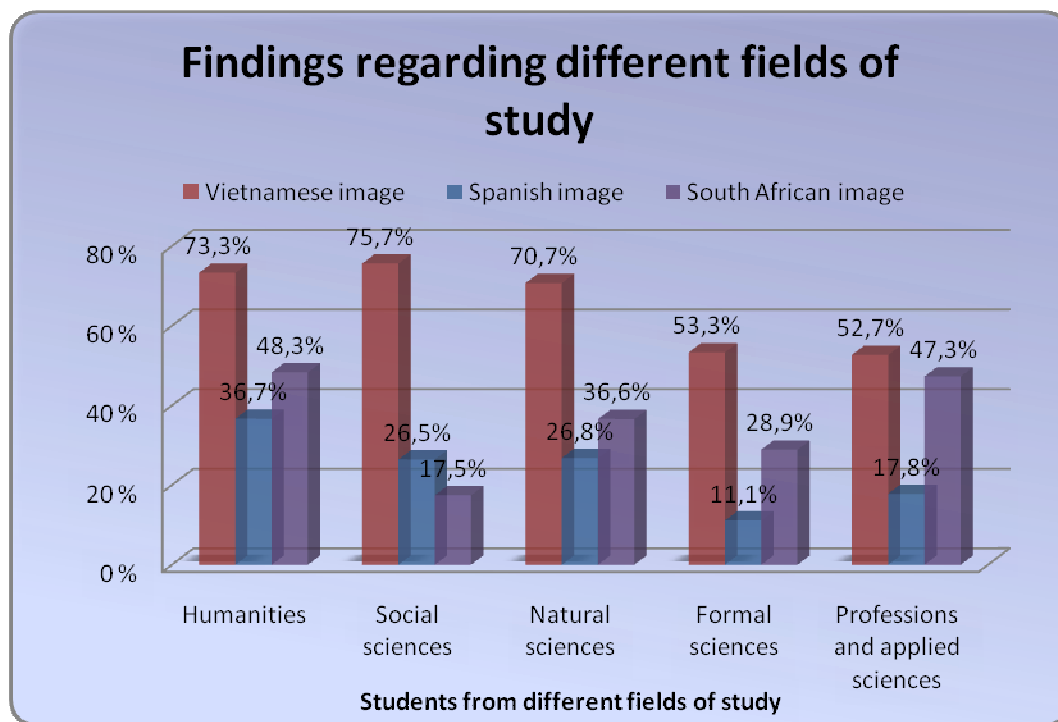


Chart 12. Findings on all students questioned regarding their fields of study

Findings regarding students from different fields of study suggest that the image “children fleeing from napalm” is rather known by students studying in the fields of humanities and social sciences followed by students studying natural sciences compared to students from the fields of formal sciences and professions and applied sciences. Similar findings apply regarding the Spanish image. When the South African image is at the center of focus it can be said respondents studying in the fields of humanities and professions and applied sciences both recognised the image to almost the same percentage (47 and 48 percent). About 37 percent of student studying in the field of natural sciences were familiar with the South African image, followed with 29 percent of students studying in the fields of formal sciences and 18 percent of students studying in the field of social sciences.

5.9 Findings on South African students

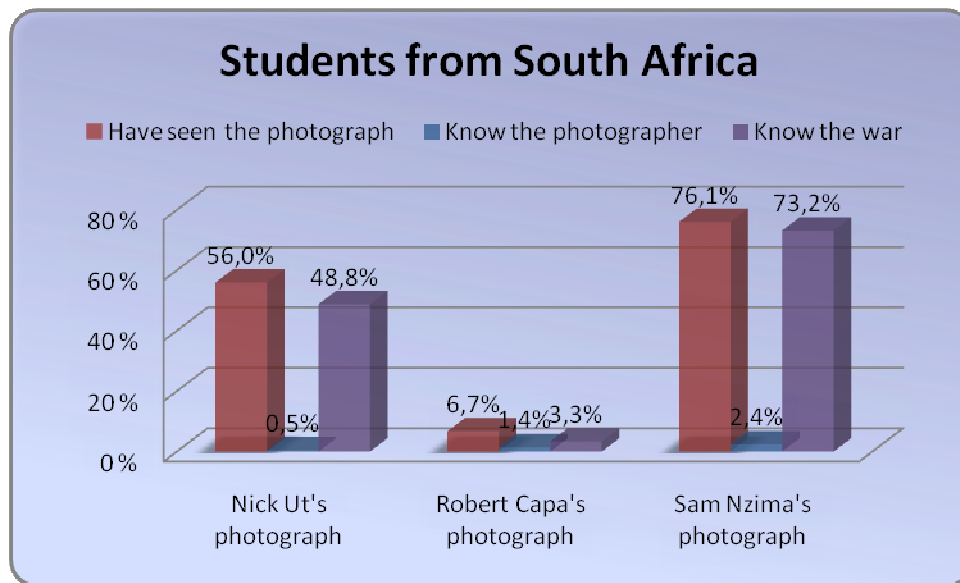


Chart 13. Findings on South African students

When the responses of South African students are at the center of focus, it can be noticed that more than three quarters of students being questioned recognised the image of Hector Pieterse. Nearly as many students could identify the correct conflict in which the image was taken. However, it is also striking that the photographer of the possibly most famous South African war image is not known by a great majority of students; only about 2 percent of students identified Sam Nzima as the correct photographer.

It is interesting to note that more than half of all South African respondents were acquainted with the photograph of the Vietnam War and were able to identify the war. Robert Capa's photograph evidently did not reach a high awareness level among South African students, with only about 7 percent of students reporting their familiarity with the image.

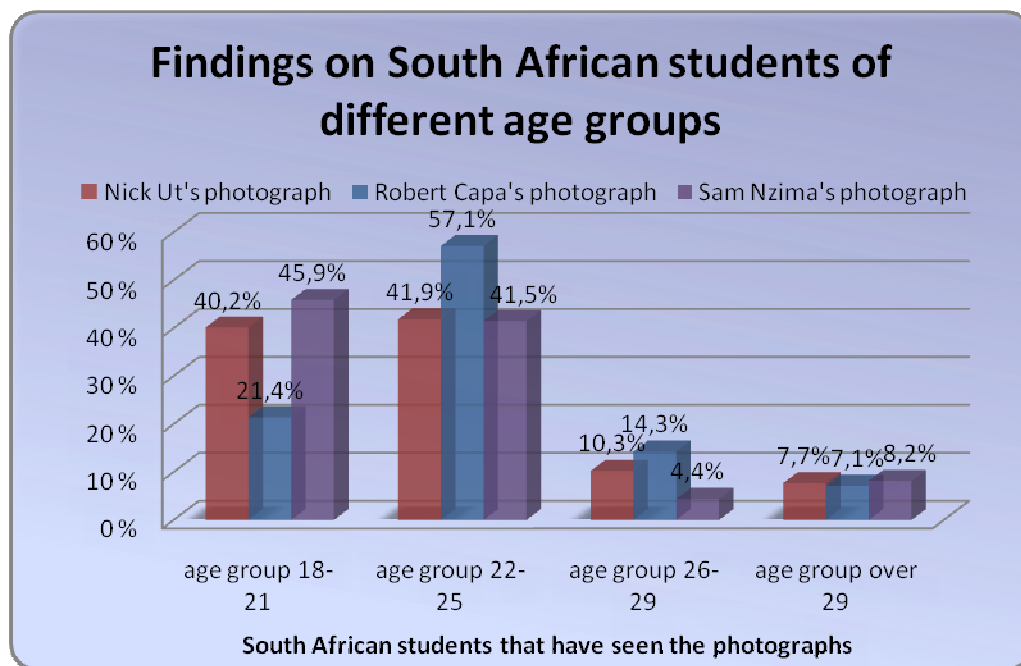


Chart 14. Findings on South African students of different age groups

Regarding the findings on South African students of different age groups the degree of familiarity of Robert Capa's photograph among the different age groups is striking. Of South African students that reported their acquaintance with the Capa image, 57 percent were aged between 22 and 25, which is about 15 percent higher than the percentage of students of the same age group being familiar with Nick Ut's or Sam Nzima's image. Furthermore, only 21 percent of students that being familiar with the photograph were aged between 18 and 21 which is about half the percentage of students of the same age group reporting their acquaintance with the other two photographs. Moreover, the degree of familiarity regarding Capa's image among students aged between 26 and 29 years was about two thirds higher than that of Nzima's image and about one third higher than that of Ut's image.

5.10 Findings on Spanish students

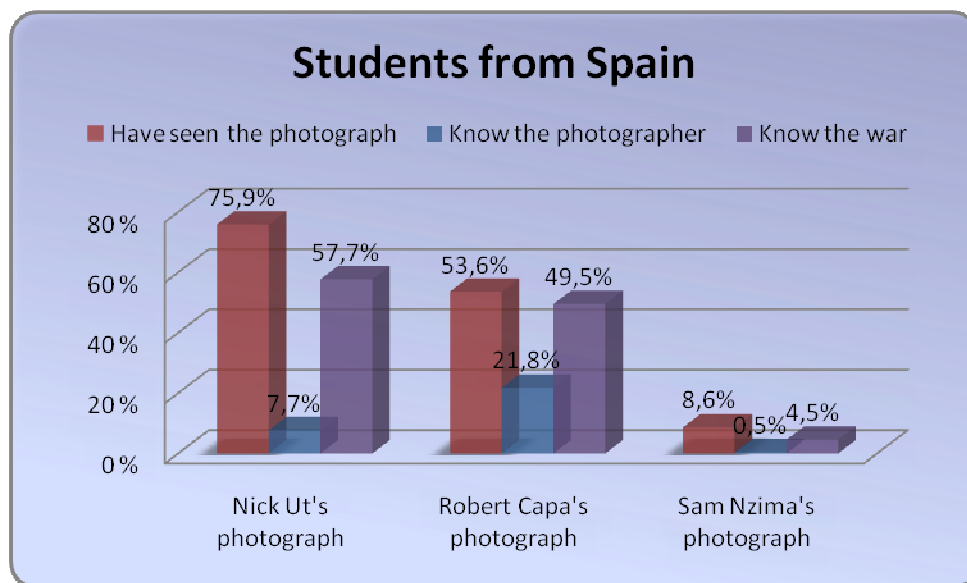


Chart 15. Findings on Spanish students

The most surprising result is the fact that according to the findings depicted in Chart 15 more than three quarters of Spanish respondents were familiar with the photograph “children fleeing from napalm”. This percentage is in accordance with South African students recognising the South African image and it exceeds the number of Vietnamese students being familiar with the Vietnamese photograph. The fact that Spanish students were familiar with the Vietnamese photograph supports the assumption of a high international awareness level of the image.

Regarding Robert Capa’s photograph “the falling soldier”, it can be said that about half of all Spanish students recognised the photograph and were able to identify the exact war. Although this number is lower than expected, it has to be noticed that about 36 percent of all Spanish students being acquainted with Capa’s photograph could identify the correct photographer.

Sam Nzima’s photograph of Hector Pieterse was relatively unknown among Spanish students, with less than 10 percent reporting their familiarity with the image.

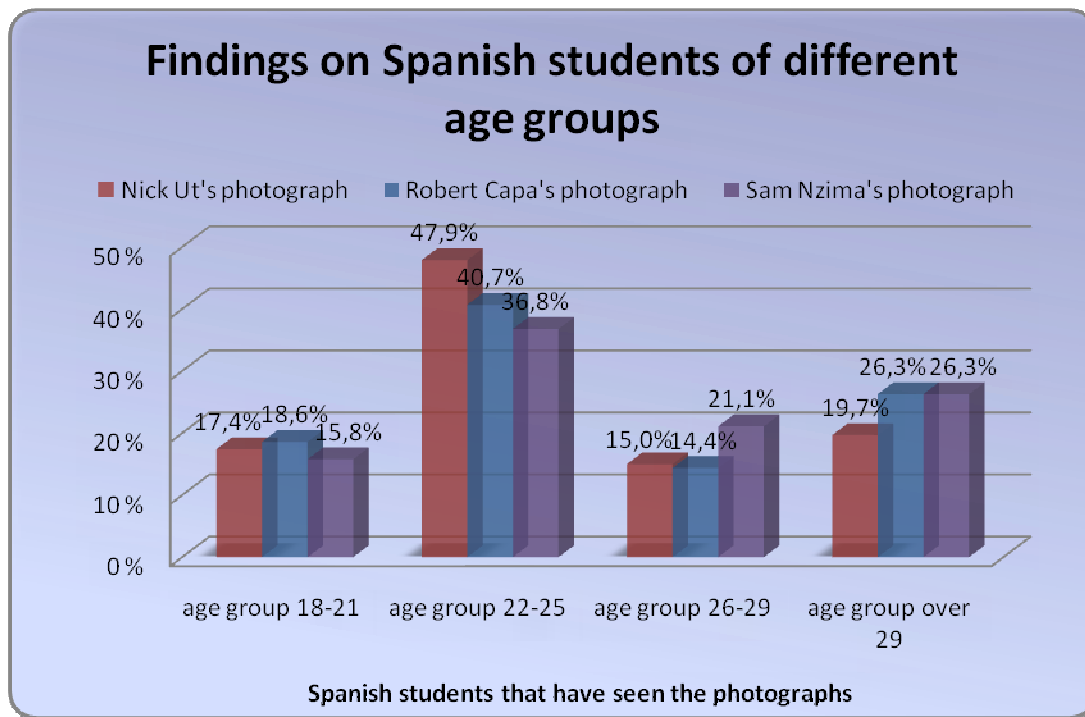


Chart 16. Findings on Spanish students of different age groups

Regarding the findings on Spanish student of different age groups on the three different images no striking differences can be noticed. It is noticeable that the of the students being familiar with the photograph “children fleeing a napalm strike” nearly half belonged to the age group 18 to 21. However, more than 40 percent of the same age group were familiar with Robert Capa’s image and about 37 percent had come across Sam Nzima’s photograph. Overall, findings rather indicate that there is a general level of knowledge among students of the different age groups that is reflected in the results.

5.11 Findings on Vietnamese students

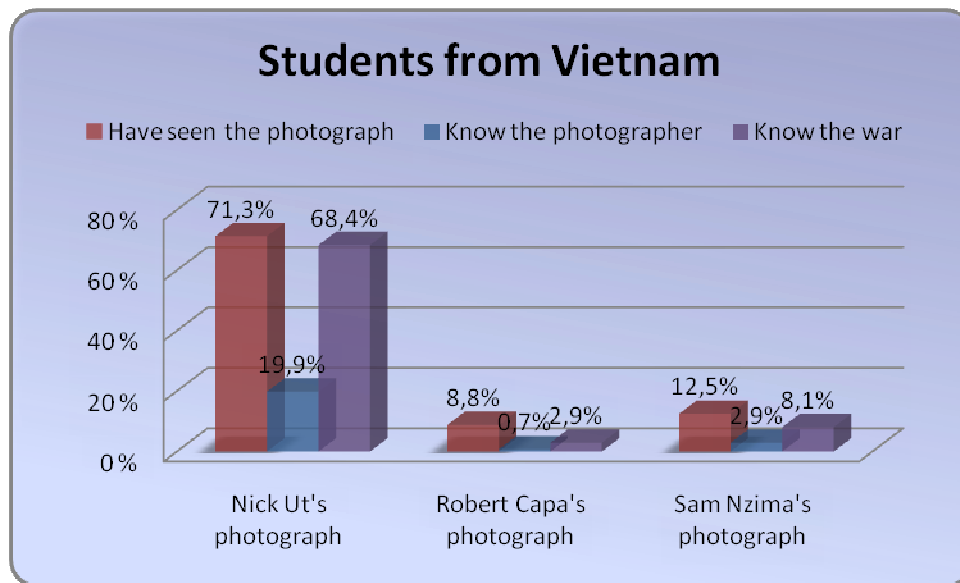


Chart 17. Findings on Vietnamese students

Regarding the responses of Vietnamese students it can be noticed that nearly three quarters of respondents were acquainted with Nick Ut's photograph and of these most students were able to point out the correct war. Of the respondents being familiar with Ut's photograph, about 20 percent could also name the correct photographer. However, it is striking that, overall, Vietnamese students were not familiar with Capa's or Nzima's image. Less than 10 percent of students reported to have seen "the falling soldier" before, and only 3 percent of students were able to associate the image with the Spanish Civil War, and less than one percent of Vietnamese students were able to identify Robert Capa as the photographer. Nzima's photograph seems to be slightly better known among Vietnamese students, with about 13 percent reporting their familiarity with the image and about 8 percent being aware of the correct war. With about 3 percent of students reporting their familiarity with the photographer Nzima, it might seem as if he is not well-known among Vietnamese students. However, regarding the percentage of students that had seen Nzima's image before it can be

said that about 23 percent recognised the photographer, which indicates a high degree of popularity.

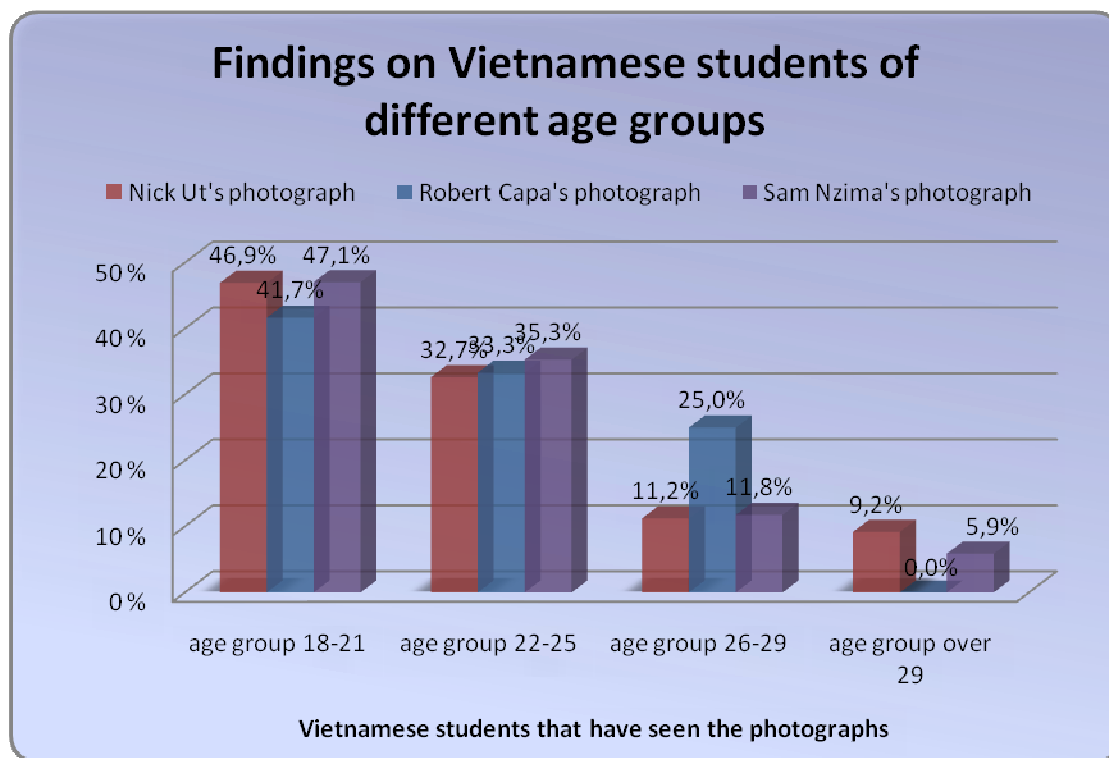


Chart 18. Findings on Vietnamese students of different age groups

Regarding the findings on Vietnamese students of different age groups it is striking that of the students aged over 29 years not one student was familiar with the photographer Capa. The student group aged between 18 and 21 showed the highest percentage, between 42 and 47 percent, of students being familiar with all three photographs. Similarly, of students aged between 22 and 25 students were familiar with the three photographs to a similar percentage; between 32 and 35 percent. It was surprising that of the students that had come across the image one quarter belonged to the age group of 26 to 29-year olds while only 11 percent of the same group were familiar with the Vietnamese image and 12 percent with the South African image.

5.12 Recapitulation and interpretation of findings

In a personal E-mail, Professor Dr. Gerhard Paul (2008), who is a professor of history and didactics at the University of Flensburg, Germany, confirms the selection of the three war photographs in the present study, as they meet the criteria of “global icons”, meaning a high awareness level in very different cultures. Regarding the awareness level of Nick Ut’s photograph “children fleeing a napalm strike”, findings support the hypothetical assumption that this image would be the best-known among students, since about two thirds of all students questioned reported their acquaintance with the image. The fact that the Vietnam photograph was the best-known image among the three chosen pictures, did, according to Paul (2008) not come as a surprise, because it is without doubt the most published of the three images. Findings furthermore support the assumption that students (85 percent) were generally able to ascribe the photograph to the Vietnam War. The supposition of the respondents’ low degree of familiarity with Nick Ut (8 percent) could also be supported. It was especially interesting to note that more than three quarters of Spanish students had seen the Vietnamese photograph before and more than half of all South African students were familiar with the image. These findings suggest a high international awareness level of the photograph. On the basis of the findings it can be asserted that the photograph “children fleeing a napalm strike” is the most widely recognised photograph among the three selected images. However, the fact that a greater number of Spanish students recognised the Vietnamese image rather than the photograph that had been taken in Spain rejects the hypothetical assumption that students would recognise the image that was taken in their own country rather than the two other photographs. Paul (2008) points out that he was surprised by the results in detail, as he would have assumed that the awareness level of the photograph by Robert Capa would be significantly higher. Paul (2008) suggested that the awareness level of this image would be much higher in European countries.

Regarding Robert Capa's photograph "the falling soldier", findings could not fully support the hypothetical assumption of Capa's high degree of popularity, because only about 9 percent of students identified the photographer. However, compared to the acquaintance level of the other two photographers, Nick Ut (8 percent) and Sam Nzima (2,1 percent), Robert Capa remains to be the best-known among students. Moreover, of all Spanish students reporting their familiarity with the image about 36 percent were able to identify Capa. Therefore, it can be said that the photographer Capa has been credited more often with the iconic image "the falling soldier" than the two other photographers with their photographs, which is, at least to some extent, an indicator of his great acquaintance level and the respondents' general ability to associate this iconic image with its photographer. It has been assumed that a great number of students would report their familiarity with the image "the falling soldier", but findings suggest that less than one third of respondents had seen the photograph before. However, of those 27 percent of students 85 percent were able to ascribe the image to the correct war, which indicates the assumption that the war photograph is a historical reference image that represents the Spanish Civil War.

It can, according to Paul (2008) be assumed that the image "the falling soldier" owes rank two concerning its awareness level to the sample of Spanish students, which is an indicator that the image of Sam Nzima is better known in the other countries, Vietnam and Spain. Findings support the hypothetical assumption of a high awareness level of Sam Nzima's photograph depicting Hector Pieterse among South African students. Furthermore, findings support the assumption that in most cases students would be able to associate the image with apartheid and the Soweto uprising (about 90 percent). Although it was believed that the image depicting Hector Pieterse was widely known among South African students, it was also assumed that it would be far less known by students from Vietnam or Spain.

However, findings suggest that the image of Sam Nzima is generally better-known among students than the image of Robert Capa. One reason for the higher awareness level of Nzima's photograph could, according to Paul (2008), be the fact that it is chronologically closer to the chosen sample of students, while the origination of Capa's photograph can be dated further back in time.

According to Paul (2008) it came as a surprise that such a great number of students were able to contextualise all three photographs, meaning their ability to associate the photographs with the correct historical events or wars. One reason for this high percentage of students being aware of the correct wars could, referring to Paul (2008), be the academic sample, which consists of students only.

In this context, Paul (2008) points out that regarding the results it has to be kept in mind that the three chosen countries have one distinctive feature in common, which is the fact that at some point in the past all these countries did not command a free market of pictures, but the freedom of opinion and information was and in some instances still is restricted. According to Paul (2008) it can only be assumed that a similar study in European countries such as Germany, Great Britain or France would probably come up with completely different findings.

Overall, findings suggest that all three images are icons of war photography and have become historical reference images representing a specific war or conflict. However, the respondents' awareness level of Nick Ut's photograph "children fleeing a napalm strike" was exceptionally high and exceeded the author's expectations.

5.13 Summary of chapter five

Although every one of the three selected photographs features specific aesthetic elements that are in their way exceptional, it was found that Nick Ut's photograph "children

fleeing a napalm strike” owes its prominence to a great degree to the outstanding aesthetic composition of the cut version of the image. It was furthermore found that tying in with already known images such as famous paintings, as it was the case with Nick Ut’s photograph and the very well-known painting of Edvard Munch “the scream”, increases the opportunity of photographs to be remembered. Furthermore, the resemblance to other already known and internalised Christian motifs, as it was the case with Ut’s photograph as well as Sam Nzima’s photograph of Hector Pieterse also increases the chance of images to be remembered by a majority of people.

To the author’s surprise, the empirical data showed that Sam Nzima’s photograph depicting Hector Pieterse was better-known than the Spanish image “the falling soldier”. One assumption to explain this finding is supported by Sontag (1980:19), according to whom the degree and quality of emotion that observers can gather in response to war photographs depicting suffering and horror depends on the degree of familiarity of the observers with such images. This means that if an observer or close relatives were involved in the war depicted, the direct proximity of the event increases the photograph’s awareness level for the observer.

Robert Capa’s photograph was taken more than 70 years ago and, according to the findings, is not as well-known as the other two images that were taken in 1976 and 1972 respectively. Although none of the students questioned were directly involved in any of the wars, it was the generation of their parents, their uncles and aunts and information about the Vietnam War and the Soweto uprising during apartheid can still be gained at first hand. This is another factor found, the criterion of direct proximity, which is influencing a photograph’s prominence.

Chapter Six

Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

This chapter calls attention to the conclusions based on research findings of the three selected iconic war photographs that have been made in this thesis. Special attention will be given to recommendations for future research in the field of war photography.

6.2 Icons of war photography and the media

Overall, this thesis is an attempt to make a contribution towards a clarification on the question of whether or not certain war photographs have achieved iconic status and are anchored in collective memory. Three war photographs have been examined from different perspectives, with the general aim to give the best possible description of the circumstances and criteria that made the selected images famous and explain their iconic status. It was important to actually investigate why these images can be and often have been described as icons of war photography in order to gain an understanding of what makes a photograph achieve iconic status.

After the examination of the three selected photographs it is still difficult to single out certain criteria that would automatically make any photograph achieve iconic status. However, it can be said that an outstanding aesthetical composition and formal elements attracting the viewer's attention and especially the contrast of a horrific image depicting suffering with a beautiful pictorial composition and a controversy over this contribute towards the high prominence of a photograph.

As this thesis examined, one important factor contributing towards the achievement of iconic status is that of a public debate. Such a debate took place in the case of Robert Capa's image, with the general aim to clarify the question about the photograph's authenticity. Until today this debate is not fully conclusive, which adds mythical quality to the photograph. Furthermore, due to this ongoing debate and the recent find of suitcases of negatives, the photograph is once again moved to the centre of focus, attracting the media's attention as well as that of an interested public. It can therefore be assumed that after the release of new information regarding the photograph's authenticity, which is to be expected by February next year (2009), results about the degree of familiarity would turn out to be much higher than they are now, especially among Spanish students.

6.3 Conclusions of research findings and arguments

Generally, this thesis reasserted the iconic status of the three selected images of war. It was found that a relatively high number, i.e. over 80 percent, of students interviewed in this thesis, was able to associate the selected war images with the correct wars. These findings strongly suggest that the chosen war images have come to represent specific wars and can therefore be described as historical reference images.

After a thorough examination of the possible circumstances and criteria that make a war photograph achieve iconic status it can be safely assumed that one reason for such a classification is an outstanding aesthetic composition. The cut version of the war photography by Nick Ut "children fleeing a napalm strike" is such an image with an exceptionally aesthetic composition, which is one of the main reasons why this image is iconic.

It was moreover found that tying in with already well-known images such as famous paintings, increases the opportunity of photographs to be remembered. This was

the case with Nick Ut's photograph and the very painting of Edvard Munch "the scream". Findings furthermore suggest that the resemblance to other already known and internalised Christian motifs also increases the chance of images to be remembered by a majority of people. This was the case with Ut's photograph and Nzima's image of Hector Pieterse

It was moreover found that the exact moment the photograph was taken at plays a crucial role. If the image of "the falling soldier" had been taken only a second later, the photograph would most probably be of no importance, depicting a man and a rifle lying on the ground. In the case of the other two images, the Vietnamese and the South African image, the photographers did take more than one photograph of the scene and the images that had been taken only seconds after the iconic images are not remotely as fascinating and meaningful.

Various researchers have conducted research in the field of war photography; most of the studies were of qualitative nature as the general aim was to gain understanding rather than to quantify data. A quantitative study as it has been conducted in this thesis with the aim to clarify how well students are acquainted with the selected images has never been accomplished before. The high explanatory power of research findings can be interpreted as a contribution towards a clarification whether or not the selected images are anchored in collective memory.

In this thesis the concept of a historical reference image has for the first time been underpinned by numerical data, which reaffirmed the justified usage of the term in relation to the war photographs discussed.

6.4 Recommendations for future research

It would be interesting for future studies to examine if findings regarding the awareness level of the photographs differed and to what extent they did so if the research

sample consisted of older people and not merely of students. Furthermore, it would be of interest how well-known the images are in other countries and continents of the world, such as South America, the United States, Australia or northern Europe. It would also be of special interest to re-conduct this study in ten or twenty years' time, as the factor of direct proximity decreases among the younger generations. Since the research sample of this study consisted of students only, it would be of special interest to find out how well acquainted older people are with the selected images. It would then be interesting if significant differences regarding the acquaintance of older people with the selected images in comparison with the student sample exist.

The research study of this thesis could furthermore be used in order to examine other war photographs and gain knowledge about their acquaintance amongst people.

6.5 Summary of chapter six

This chapter discussed conclusions and meaningful findings of this thesis. Although the selected war photographs have often been described as icons of war photography or as historical reference images that came to represent a war or an era and have been committed to collective memory, such statements have never been demonstrated. Apart from research findings in this thesis there does not exist any evidence that the specific photographs are actually recognised by a majority which outlines the significance of this thesis. Therefore, it can be stated that this thesis is a contribution for academics that are engaged with war photographs or icons of photography.

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Appendix

Questionnaire – Icons of war photography in English / Spanish / Vietnamese

Dear fellow students, as I am writing my master thesis in Journalism at the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa, I do depend on your help to complete a short questionnaire. I promise you it won't even take **five minutes of your time!** Please fill out the following questionnaire about war photography to the best of your knowledge as not the right answers but your individual response is of importance.

I would be very thankful if you could forward this survey to as many of your student friends as possible.

Queridos colegas, estoy escribiendo mi tesis de máster en la Universidad de Stellenbosch, Africa del Sur, y necesito su ayuda para completar un cuestionario. Les prometo que no tarda más que 5 minutos de su tiempo para rellenar el cuestionario. Por favor, rellena el cuestionario abajo sobre fotografía de Guerra a mayor conocimiento, si no sabéis la respuesta correcta, su opinión individual es importante.

Estaría muy agradecida si podéis enviar esta consulta a tantos amigos estudiantes que posible.

Xin chào các bạn, mình đang làm 1 bài nghiên cứu về journalism tại trường đại học Stellenbosch, miền nam châu Phi. Mình cần sự giúp đỡ của các bạn để có thể trả lời hoàn thiện một số câu hỏi nhỏ. Mình đảm bảo sẽ không tốn quá 5 phút của các bạn! Cảm ơn vì đã quan tâm và giúp đỡ mình.

Nếu có thể xin các bạn trả lời những câu hỏi sau đây bằng Tiếng Anh để phục vụ việc nghiên cứu dễ dàng hơn, xin cảm ơn các bạn rất nhiều.

Personal data / Data personal:

Fields marked with * are required!

Gender / Sexo:*

Age / Edad:*

Student at the University of / Estudiante de la Universidad:*

Field of study Asignatura / Especialidad: *

Photograph 1:



Have you seen this photograph before?*

Ya has visto esta fotografía?*

Bạn đã nhìn thấy bức ảnh trên bao giờ chưa?*

If yes, can you recall where you have seen this photograph?

Si ya la has visto, de acuerdas, donde la has visto?

Nếu có bạn có thể nhớ nơi đã từng nhìn thấy bức ảnh này không?

Do you know who the photographer of the picture is?

Conoces el fotógrafo de la foto?

Bạn có biết ai đã chụp bức ảnh này không?

Do you know where and during which war/conflict the photograph was taken?

Sabes donde y durante que guerra el fotógrafo ha sacado la imagen?

Bạn có thể cho biết bức ảnh trên được chụp tại đâu và trong thời điểm diễn ra cuộc chiến tranh hay xung đột nào không?

Photograph 2:



Have you seen this photograph before?*

Ya has visto esta fotografía?*

Bạn đã nhìn thấy bức ảnh trên bao giờ chưa?*

If yes, can you recall where you have seen
this photograph?

Si ya la has visto, de acuerdas, donde la has visto?

Nếu có bạn có thể nhớ nơi đã từng nhìn thấy
bức ảnh này không?

Do you know who the photographer
of the picture is?

Conoces el fotógrafo de la foto?

Bạn có biết ai đã chụp bức ảnh này không?

Do you know where and during which
war/conflict the photograph was taken?

Sabes donde y durante que guerra el fotógrafo
ha sacado la imagen?

Bạn có thể cho biết bức ảnh trên được chụp tại
đâu và trong thời điểm diễn ra cuộc chiến tranh
hay xung đột nào không?

Photograph 3:



Have you seen this photograph before?*

Ya has visto esta fotografía?*

Bạn đã nhìn thấy bức ảnh trên bao giờ chưa?*

If yes, can you recall where you have seen this photograph?

Si ya la has visto, de acuerdas, donde la has visto?

Nếu có bạn có thể nhớ nơi đã từng nhìn thấy bức ảnh này không?

Do you know who the photographer of the picture is?

Conoces el fotógrafo de la foto?

Bạn có biết ai đã chụp bức ảnh này không?

Do you know where and during which war/conflict the photograph was taken?

Sabes donde y durante que guerra el fotógrafo ha sacado la imagen?

Bạn có thể cho biết bức ảnh trên được chụp tại đâu và trong thời điểm diễn ra cuộc chiến tranh hay xung đột nào không?

Thank you very much!!!! If you are interested in the results of 900 students contacted, please enter your E-mail address and I will send the data to you as soon as possible.

Muchisimas gracias! Si estas interesado en los resultados de los 900 estudiantes contactados, escribe tu correo electronico y te voy a mandar los datos lo mas pronto possible.

Cám ơn các bạn rất nhiều!!!! Nếu bạn muốn biết kết quả thu thập từ 900 học sinh, hãy để lại địa chỉ email của bạn và tôi sẽ gửi thông tin đến các bạn sớm nhất có thể.

e-mail address:

Please push the submit button to send your data.

Por favor haga clic en el boton “entregar” para enviar tu data.

Hãy nhấn “submit” để gửi kết quả sau khi hoàn thành.

The survey is now complete

Thank you very much for your time and cooperation in completing this questionnaire. Your input is very valuable to this research and your help is greatly appreciated. If there is anything you want to add please feel free to contact [Patricia Gassner](#).