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Photography and photographers are shaping the way people see and understand the world. It is through their imagery and contexts which this powerful media has influenced the way people think and act. This study is about exploring the social science behind the way society views and responds to photography. It also challenges the idea that as technology and communication changes, so does the way cultures receive and process the information.

Photography plays a large role in visual communications, which is the reason why it is important to understand the role photography has in the way it influences our society. Lewis Hine (a sociologist and photographer) once said, "If I could tell the story in words, I would not need to lug a camera around." A strong statement which artist Jordan Matter, photographer and author of "Dancers Among Us," has embraced.

Lewis' and Matter's work has influenced the study of imagery and has helped shape the understanding of the influences it can have on society - such as the way photos are being viewed in today's day. For example, most of today's work has moved away from printed media and into the digital world. With newer technology being available, digital format is what most people use. This drastic alteration has made one of the biggest changes to the world of photography to date. In 1878, Kodak changed film photography by introducing its new film process allowing for photos to be printed faster. However, Kodak did not stop there...in 1991, they once again transformed the way photos would be taken, and mass-produced, by introducing one of the first commercially sold digital cameras. This technology was not cheap, nor was it small, yet, as the price of digital cameras started to go down, so did the size of the camera.

Nowadays, most digital cameras are small enough to fit in our pocket or are simply on our phones. Over the years they have also become more cost effective allowing for more and more people to have access to this ever growing medium. This has caused the newest social phenomenon, which is the viewing and sharing of images instantly. In addition, this has allowed the exchange of new ideas and ways of thinking of photography. No longer does anyone have to wait to see the photo that was just taken because viewing the photos happens right after the

photo is snapped and, shortly after, can be shared online, too. With the introduction of social media, the process of displaying photos has exploded! The act of sharing photos has driven a new wave of photographers and it has also facilitated having one's work seen. Now, anyone can show their work to friends, family and/or the whole world just by uploading the work onto the internet.

For instance, there are multiple sites that anyone can share their work on such as: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Flickr, just to name a few. By having the Internet as an avenue of sharing photos, it opens up the possibilities of reaching an endless audience. Now, just by going online anyone can see images that help shape the way they think and act. No longer is picking up a newspaper or going to the museum of modern art the only way of seeing what is new and important in the world.

However, this adjustment in the way Photography is viewed does not come without responsibility. As a photographer, one needs to have an active role in social responsibility. Understanding that the photo they share can, and most likely will, have some kind of social impact meaning that the photographer is aware that every image can affect the way someone sees the world. Where their work ends up is now more important than ever. With distribution of photos only limited by the viewer's interest, it is important that the photographers' work tell a story. Especially since the work that is put out can have an immediate effect on anyone that sees it. As a matter of fact, everything from a photo of a fresh stemming coffee cup to a newsworthy photo of an important event will have an effect on someone somewhere. Again, this is why it is important to understand how our society is reacting to the images they see.

For example, with so many people sharing photos and viewing photos, it can be argued that our society can be (or has become) desensitized to violence or other important acts. This is because so many people now have the ability to place these types of images up online for everyone to see. Historically, mass media has been heavily influenced by photographs. Generally speaking, journalists have used documentary style photographs to help grab the viewers' attention by using their photos with captions.

In today's world, this style of photography has changed from exploring significant and relevant historical events to the exploration of everyone's day-to-day lives. Others, meanwhile, have placed offensive material online, distorting the way we see and understand our world.

Because a vast majority of people have a camera in their hand nowadays, it has made them a part of this ever growing field. For example, these new age shutterbugs carry anything from their camera phone, pocket camera to the newer DSLR to capture the moments. They document and share everything online - from what they eat for lunch, to a quick Instagram about their trip to the beach. Others have even gone out of their way to cover violence to spread awareness, forever changing the way traditional photography is taken and viewed by the public.

This new style of shooting has opened the door to a new advancement in the way photos are viewed. This advancement has put photography at the forefront of the news and social media reinforcing photography as a tool to help shape the world we live in.

Exploring what made this so popular will open the door to understanding the ever changing social norms and the changes in society over the last 20 years. This study will give a better understanding on how photography can help change and mold the way a society thinks.

As a photographer, this exploration crosses the boundaries of self-social awareness and connections to the viewer by making images that captures the essence of any event. In addition, this study is socially media driven. For instance, finding out how photos can influence the way someone thinks or feels can be classified as a viral photo (which is a type of photo that everyone is talking about or sharing.) This study is also heavily reliant on posting the work up on the internet which allows for the work to be reached by as many people as possible. The importance of the work being shared online on different outlets is as important as the work itself. Some of the work will be captioned while other work well not be captioned, allowing the context to speak for itself and for the viewer to make his/her own opinion.