

# THE ROLE OF PHOTOGRAPHY IN PERU'S TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION PROCESS

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## ABSTRACT

Using the methods of semi-structured personal interviews and a posttest-only experiment, this study examined the creation and effects of *Yuyanapaq*, a photography project initiated by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Peru. The interviews revealed how the *Yuyanapaq* project came to be and how it was put together. When selecting photographs, the curators had two goals in mind: reconstructing the chronology of the conflict as well as communicating the suffering of the victims. The quantitative results indicate that the exhibit is having the desired effects. A posttest-only experiment (n=109) measured the effects of viewing the photographs on four variables of reconciliation: truth, forgiveness, trust in government and resentment. The study found that viewing the photographs increased respondents' confidence that they understood the truth about the conflict, but did not have any effect on their levels of trust in government or resentment. For those people who experienced traumatic events, viewing the photographs helped them to forgive. In contrast, respondents who did not experience traumatic events forgave less after seeing the pictures. Drawing from conflict theory, the study explores the role that photography could play in the reconciliation process on both national and personal level.