

Photography and the construction of family and memory

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Abstract

Photography, since its invention, has played an important role in aiding the construction of family image and family memory while also evoking a certain sense of belonging for the members towards their families. The aim of this chapter is to understand with the aid of ethnographic techniques the constitutive role of photography within family life. Using these techniques, involving in-depth interviewing, participant observation and informal conversations, during the very act of looking at photographs, researchers have a chance to examine how family images and memories are hitherto constructed. Researchers can also look into aspects of photography-induced memory recall through photography. Within this framework, I conducted the fieldwork with five families living in Ankara, Turkey. They were selected as examples of middle and low socioeconomic class families: this enables the researchers to compare different dynamics possibly deriving from social class variations in the family image and memory construction processes. The case study in this research includes the issues of producing photographs, displaying photographs, (re)ordering photographs, using photographs and reshaping or destroying photographs related to families. The analysis shows that photography plays a significant role in family life, and provides a visual way of influencing family image as well as its memory along with the cultural aspects of social class, which co-determine the practices of photography and the way the construction process might commence.

Keywords: photography; family memory; family images; ethnography

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1 Introduction

Apart from an ordinary, domestic or personal image, we can also define a family photo as a constructed image of the family and of its memory. Even though family-produced images resemble each other culturally, family photographs are considered to be a unique medium that addresses the everyday lives of families. Prior to researching family images, I had already familiarized myself with family photography through the works of Jo Spence (1988) and Annette Kuhn (1995). During the period when my family relationships were changing, our family photography practices also showed alterations. Observing those alterations while I was still a part of my family made me wonder what this strong relationship between family and photography was about. Indeed, how was I supposed to define my family through photographic images? These questions might mostly be personal but whenever I look at family photographs there appears to be a difference between my memories and the images themselves. The nuclear family might be a simple notion, something we are ‘just’ in, but it truly remains a highly complex structure. Whether we feel happy with our families or not, when we look at family albums or a single family photo, we are prone to enter a constructed visual family world where many inevitable questions appear: Does photography reshape the family and its memory? Or, simply, what is family? Every family seems to resemble each other when constructing their family images and family memories. Besides, every family also seems to be in conflict with this construction.

According to Julia Hirsch, family photography “describes the family as a state whose ties are rooted in property; the family as a bond of feeling which stems from instinct and passion” (from Marianne Hirsch, 1999, p. xv). Family is not a simple social institution: there are emotional ties connecting its members. Therefore, family photography could not be well understood only as a cultural or a social element. For Jo Spence, these visual representations of family “privilege the nuclear family by naturalizing, romanticizing and idealizing family relationships above all others” (1988, p. 136). In the book of Family Secrets Annette Kuhn states that “the family photographs are about memory and memories: that is about stories of a past, shared (both stories and the past) by a group of people that in the moment of sharing produces itself as a family” (1999, p. 19).

This chapter draws upon family photographs with ethnographical techniques to try and explore the construction of family memory and family image. First of all, I will describe the fieldwork and the methodological approach of this study. Following the subsequent description of the method, I will then focus on elaborating the theoretical framework of the research with respect to current studies in literature. Finally, using a case study, I will analyze data obtained from the fieldwork. This research was based on five families - twen-

ty-one interviewees- who live in Ankara, Turkey. The case study involves issues related to producing photographs, displaying photographs, (re-)ordering photographs, using photographs and reshaping or destroying photographs. The first three issues are camera, frames and albums, and they are to be analyzed as photography practices and instruments of family. The last two issues, in contrast to the question of ‘camera’, are more closely related to the relationships between family and photography.

2 Looking at the family photographs as an ethnographic technique

According to Patricia Holland, the photographs themselves play a role in confirming and challenging the identity and history of their users. Then, she goes on to distinguish between the users and readers of photography (2008, p. 117): “Users of personal pictures have access to the world in which they make sense; readers must translate those private meanings into a more public realm” (Holland, 2008, p. 118). The concept of a *reader* of a photographic image becomes clearer when we also take into account the concepts of Roland Barthes, namely, the *studium* and *punctum* (2000). For Barthes, *studium* means that the spectator of a photographic image is involved within its cultural context, while *punctum* is a piercing moment derived subjectively from the photographic image by its viewer (2000). The representation of family and family memory through photography in a cultural context is always possible; yet, given the perspective from within the family construct itself, there also appears to be some degree of impossibility regarding family representation. Therefore, in this fieldwork, I also paid attention to the interviewer’s *punctum* moments while they were talking about their family photographs. The reason for this is my assumption that the *punctum* moment would emphasize the notion of being a family, possibly being observable through family members’ communication. To make this clear, I can refer to John Bernardes’ suggestion of a simple yet bright formula: “Ask people to show you their family albums and provide a commentary. Pay attention to explanations of family relationships and events” (2002, p. 91). Photography looks like a silent medium but when the photographs are shown, and when they are provoked into being recalled, they can produce meanings. That is to say they can regenerate meanings within such a family construct again and again. Following the general consensus that a difference exists between the analysts interpreting photography and the users of photography interpreting photos themselves, I preferred to do fieldwork focusing on the latter, namely, the family members. With the aid of ethnographic techniques, researchers can understand how family memory and family image are constructed, and how the family members remember such constructions

through photography. In the article entitled *Interpreting Family Photography as a Pictorial Communication*, Richard Chalfen (1998) emphasizes that family interviews hold significant importance as:

They surface personal meanings that family members attach to their own photographs- the ideas they interpret as significant in their own photographs. In short, the construction process continues. We get a first hand view of how people make meanings with and from pictures, and how the construction process is indebted to the knowledge that viewers bring to the making of their interpretations. Information gathered on 'local knowledge' from 'the native's point of view' and the 'beholder's share' clearly makes a difference- 'outsiders' would never get it (1998, p. 204 – emphasis removed).

On the other hand, a very important point which I had to keep in mind throughout the whole fieldwork was the notion of the presentation of self in everyday lives, as had been discussed by Erving Goffman: “when the individual presents himself before others, his performance will tend to incorporate and exemplify the officially accredited values of the society, more so, in fact, than does his behaviour as a whole” (1956, p. 23). Within this context we could think that family members may show the performance of an ideal family image during a researcher’s fieldwork observation. These arguments can also be considered valid for the construction of a family image, yet we should not forget that family memory as a concept can still continue to be worked upon during the fieldwork. Annette Kuhn argues in her article entitled *Photography and Cultural Memory: A Methodological Exploration* that:

Personal and family photographs figure importantly in cultural memory, and memory work with photographs offers a particularly productive route to understanding the social and cultural uses and instrumentalities of memory. (2007, p. 285).

I conducted the fieldwork for this research during April, May, November and December in 2013. Drawing on ethnographic methods, I used in-depth interviews, participant observation and informal conversation methods to gather data, which were analyzed using qualitative methods to better understand how family members were relating to the photographs and reinterpreting such photographs to construct their family images. Within the scope of this research plan I conducted the fieldwork with five families. Participants were not restricted by their age. For comparison purposes, though, I chose families for this case study with respect to their social class differences, as social class is an important dynamic that affects the process of construction (Bourdieu, 1984). Motivations for constructing the past and being an ideal family appear to show variations amongst different social classes. Also, accessibility to photographic instruments varies from middle class family contexts to low class family contexts.

I have used anonymized names for the families that participated in the research, to protect their privacy: the middle class family names are Ardiç, Kayın and Sedir; and the lower class family names are Meşe and Defne. I preferred interviewing family members in their houses as I assumed that an atmosphere like that would probably make it easier to access family memories.

3 Theoretical framework

In the theoretical part, I will discuss the construct of family memory as being reflected upon through the role of photography. Family photographs do not only allow us to observe records of the past and images of people involved within that past, but also let us take a closer look at the construction of those specific families and their histories. According to Marianne Hirsch, “as photography immobilizes the flow of family life into a series of snapshots, it perpetuates familial myths while seeming merely to record actual moments in family history” (2002, p. 7). How do we understand the construction of family and memory through photography? In this chapter I want to elaborate on the notion of constructing a family concept through the memories associated with it. In addition to this, I also want to question the way the photographic medium plays its role in this very construction process by drawing upon the case study. As was mentioned above, families selected for the fieldwork were representing nuclear families from both the middle-socioeconomic class and lower-socioeconomic (following Bourdieu’s discourse on social class relations influencing construction of family and its memory).

Astri Erll states that “cultural memory studies address the question of how the past is created and recreated within sociocultural context”, and later enquires into the role of family memory in his studies (2011, p. 303). Halbwachs (1992) proposes the term *collective memory*, which can be defined as the memory of an individual being constructed within the context of a social group. In his book *On Collective Memory*, family is perceived to be one aspect of collective memory. Halbwachs thinks that if we conceptualize memory only within the scope of individuality, then we are bound to fail in our understanding of how family memory can be reproduced (1992). After Halbwachs developed the collective memory term as referring to a social context, Jan Assmann suggested considering memory to be situated within a cultural context (2001). Assmann proposed two concepts of memory: *cultural memory* and *communicative memory* (2001). He stated that cultural memory is constructed by customs and rituals; hence this kind of memory appears to be long lasting and as a result cannot disappear easily. Communicative memory, on the other hand, is defined as a comparably limited memory. Cultural memory involves communicative memory yet communicative memory refers only to the near

past: it is primarily perceived within a single generation; and so when that generation fades away, the constructs of that specific type of memory would inevitably be prone to disappear (Assmann, 2001, p. 62). Focusing on the notion of family memory as being examined within the broader field of memory studies, Erll states that:

Family memories belong primarily to the field of communicative memory, with its focus on everyday life, face-to-face interaction, oral communication, and its restricted time span of about three to four generations. However, communicative memory is linked to cultural memory and cannot be separated from the latter's myths (2011, p. 312).

It appears natural to refer to the possibility inherent in the notion of family memory, that past experiences of specific families might very well include different dynamics like separation issues, immigration necessities or traumatic events. Family memory therefore differs from other constructs in some specific ways, while photographic family images tend to resemble each other. According to Erll, “family memory is not simply “there” – it is not a mnemonic content stored in a family archive- but that, instead, versions of the familial past are fabricated collectively, again and again, in situ, through concrete acts of communication and interaction” (2011, p. 313).

To be able to construct the family concept with its inherent past, photography needs to become rather a proof of family memory and of a family image representing belongingness. Thus, creating a family image becomes an important aspect of the construction process while photography itself provides the means for such an endeavor, encompassing different time frames both of past and regarding future. According to Katherine Hoffmann:

Family images may provide some sense of immortality of bloodlines; family images may call up pleasant and/or unpleasant memories or current situations. But there can always be a “journey” to “see a newer world” that may be clearer and richer as a result of having looked at and been moved by images of others and thereby to understand our own individual identities and the families we are a part of or close to (1997, pp. 1-2).

Family memory is reshaped and constructed by the narration emerging from family photographs. Memory is also a practice where family members work with the photographs, collecting them, ordering them and changing them. However, this reconstruction process starts with the production of photographs prior to their narration. Photographs need to be produced through another set of practices, which requires the presence of photographic instruments to engage in photographic production. Owning a camera helps the construction of family and its memory. Memory is one of the most important reasons to own camera equipment of some sort; yet the other side of the coin is related to the income of the household, or, the socioeconomic class. According to Bourdieu, “ownership of a camera is closely related to income which [...] allows us to

consider cameras as pieces of equipment comparable to cars or televisions, and to see the ownership of such a commodity as nothing but the index of a standard living" (1990, p. 14).

We must mention **Jo Spence** and **Annette Kuhn** here again, who are pioneer writers interpreting the notion of family autobiographical memory with respect to family photography. With the help of personal images, these writers deconstructed family memory as well as family image in order to question family as a construct within the sociocultural context. Jo Spence suggested that "we could [...] [consider] family as an ideological sign system" (1998, p. 136). Kuhn also stated that "family photographs are quite often deployed (shown, talked about) in series: pictures get displayed one after another, their selection or ordering as meaningful as the pictures themselves. The whole, the series, constructs a family story in some respects like a classical narrative" (1995, p. 17). Photographs play a part in the naturalization and replication of the ideology of family (Bull, 2010, p. 89). According to Hirsch, photographs "locate themselves precisely in the space of contradiction between the myth of the ideal family and the lived reality of family life" (2002, p. 8). Similarly, **Gillian Rose** argues that "family photograph is an image that has to look like a family photo but also has to be treated like one" (2010, p. 23).

Within the sociocultural context, family images appear to get repeated again and again for many years. Looking through the internal dynamics of the family, we can also see that family members tend to pay attention to continuing their idealized family image both for their own and their society's unity. Therefore, we can state that family images initiate the construction of family memory and family memory, in turn, selects the images to reconstruct itself in an ideal way. Ideal family images and family memories are not fixed entities, though: family memory can be reshaped in visual space with the help of photographs depicting marriage, separation, birth or death of family members. In these conditions family photography would be considered to have gained an important function for the reconstruction process. For instance, the death of a family member affects the family household in a way to make it more likely for them to display the photo of that person within their house. Another example might be when a separation occurs within a family. Family members might prefer to remove the photographs of the one who left; hence the member would then be termed as 'of the past'. In these and various other similar ways, family memory and ideal familial image might be reconstructed in visual space again. **Steven Edwards** informs us of the steps regarding the relationship between memory and photography:

Firstly, it seems that memory emerges when the image is used in a particular social network in this case, a family gathering. Memory connects the image or 'sparks' from it: 'Who is this?' Secondly, these narratives are not unstructured. It is worth observing that while it is

usually men who take family pictures, women typically act as the gatekeepers of family memory. Thirdly what is omitted from this collection is as important to these structured memories as what is included (2006, p. 122).

Through this theoretical framework, we can state that (1) family memory as a communicative memory becomes structured as the family members remember it. (2) Cultural photography practices and usages of family as a construct might be restructured within this memory framework. Finally, (3) social class plays an important role in the photography practices and how photographs are used in both economic and cultural ways.

4 Family memory in the five Ankara families

Now I will provide an analysis of data obtained from the fieldwork. Following the fieldwork I categorized data with respect to the constitutive role photography has had for both family members and their family memories. “*If one instrument helped construct and perpetuate the ideology which links the notion of universal humanity to the idea of familiarity, it is the camera and its by-products, the photographic image and the family album*” (Hirsch, 2002, p. 48). To better understand the more apparent aspects of the construction process, I drew upon (1) families’ photography practices and their photographic instruments. First of all it is possible that *producing photographs*, supported by camera ownership, initiates the (re)construction of family image and its memory by supporting the recollection of their past. Secondly, *displaying photographs* in the living room of families’ households can demonstrate the way in which each family presents its family memory and family image. Thirdly, another important practice related mostly to the construction of family image and its memory, appears to be the *ordering and reordering of photographs in photography albums that support creating a shared family past*.

Talking with the family members about their memory and about being a family through their photography reveals important details regarding (2) the families’ attitudes towards the photographs. As was mentioned in the method section above, *punctum* moments appeared during the interview and showed how the family members were sometimes drawn apart from the constructed family narration. Hence, one other, fourth, aspect of the construction is *using photographs* to narrate the family image and its memory. *Analyses using photographs also show the importance of referring back to a family image as a way of remembering the family’s ‘good’ past* and supporting the projection of its continuity into the future. Surely, we consider the fact that families have a chance to reconstruct their memories and family images through their visual space as well as through the re-ordering and re-selecting of their photographs. The fifth and last component of the analysis then is to be about the

reshaping and destroying of photographs by removing one's image from the photographs, or burning and throwing away the photographs that are unwanted images of the past.

4.1 Families' photography practices and their photographic instruments

Each member of the families that participated in this research experienced different technical and cultural periods of photography. Data obtained shows that producing photographs, underlines the importance of owning a camera and is crucial to a family's self-image. According to Marianne Hirsch, since the invention of Kodak, the camera "has become the family's primary instrument of self-knowledge and self-representation" (1999, p. xvi). The camera assumes a central role in constructing the family and its memory. Kodak's invention "was bringing a revolution in ways we were perceiving the immediate domestic world, and in redefining who had the right to record that world" (Holland, 2008, p. 115). Following this statement, we could argue that owning a camera gives the right to the owner-family to visually reconstruct their family world and their family memory.

Every family that participated in this research project had a digital camera. Owning a camera has expanded the utility of family photography; we can say that families have become more independent with a camera since they are no longer dependent on a photographer to create their visual media. In this way, the subjectivity of constructing their memory and images has since substantially increased. Memory is one of the most important reasons to have a camera; yet, one important factor could be the family's financial means. Lower-class families were less able to buy a camera; however, this situation did not reduce the importance of photography for them even though it significantly altered the practices by which they could produce their family photographs.

In addition to this, *displaying photographs* is the observable photography practice that refers to the framed photo(s) situated within family households. According to Drazin and Froelich, "a framed picture on the wall has been marked out as having a very visible personal value" (2007, p. 62). For these authors, this is the way that memory is materialized, as it is rearranged in space (2007, p. 64). There also were frames in houses I visited and in particular, frames were situated in the living rooms. One important aspect of the living room is that such a place regularly becomes a (semi-)public space, as visitors come by. Frames on the walls within a family household are related to the underlying idea of family memory. It should also be noted that participants involved in this research were especially sensitive to framing those photographs which had significant value in relation to their family memories, such as the photographs that remembered a deceased member of the family, or

that expressed respect towards another. The exact nature of the value showed variation between families of different socioeconomic backgrounds, though. For example, participants with lower-class families displayed photo frames out of the feeling of respect towards a passed away family member; while, on the other hand, participants of middle background families preferred to frame photographs of their children or grandchildren, demonstrating disinclination towards displaying the passed away members' photographs:

Father: We do not keep the photographs outside... When I see them, I remember old days. I do not want to remember some things. They do not disturb me but when I see photographs of my parents, I enter into deep thoughts... (Ardic Family)

Mother: Whenever I feel like it, I sit down and open the family albums and look at them for hours. I watch them... I live those moments... If they stand there (on the wall) I never look at them! I really do not look! It is more effective when you miss. For example; there were some moments a picture on the wall seems like it is not able to affect you anymore. You are accustomed... (Kayın Family)

Interview data emphasize that remembering can sometimes become significantly sorrowful for the family. Below is an example of such an observation. It refers to the display of the framed photo of a recently passed away family member:

Child: We would hang them on the wall after a month. This is our tradition. They were removed from the wall after a year, maybe. After that these questions appeared: Did we forget? Does he think that we forgot? Does he feel it still? (Mese Family)

If a family is not constructed in the traditional cultural sense and, hence, when its members do not especially focus on memories involving their parents, they tend to restrict their photo frames to the display of their nuclear family members. Middle class families in the research project prefer to display frames that particularly emphasize the present time. In lower class family households, on the other hand, mainly the photographs of the couple's parents were displayed. Framed photos are significant instruments and practices in the construction of the family image and family memory; and socioeconomic class differences can influence whose images are to be framed and displayed in the household.

Another important practice is the (re)ordering of photographs. According to Kuhn, "the family album is one moment in the cultural construction of family" (1995, p. 17). For Hirsch, "a family album includes images on which family members can agree and which tell a shared story" (2002, p. 107). The most structured photographic instrument is the family album as it serves as a visual narration of family memory and demonstrates the idealized family

image. Images of family members are exclusively selected for these series of photographs and related images of the past tend to correspond with the good and ideal past within that family's specific sociocultural context:

Mother: I want them [the photographs] to be arranged. When we look at them, I want to see the images arranged. (Mese Family)

Mother: After the birth of my son, I said that I needed to buy a photography album. I thought I had to buy it immediately and then I began to prepare... I felt this emotion... I did not want to be late (Sedir Family)

Father: Previously, I used to prepare the family albums but now I quit. I got bored. Now it is a waste of time (laughing). Of course they are valuable but everybody takes their images from here (Defne Family)

Daughter: My uncle prepared this album. One day he sat down with my father the whole the day to prepare it... I remember that day... We drank tea... the only thing my uncle wanted was to arrange a family album. A year later, he died (Ardıç Family)

According to this fieldwork, preparing an album appeared to be strongly related to the cultural context of the socioeconomic class in terms of the selection of photo albums and the arrangement of photographs. We can understand, by reflecting upon family albums, that family memory is under reconstruction with regards to the display of, and values attached to, the family photographs from past and/or present.

4.2. The families' relation with the photography

Apart from the above-described photographic practices (and the importance of access to its instruments), families' emotional relationships, their thoughts regarding family photographs and their narratives about being a family are closely related and equally important factors to be taken into account when discussing the construction of family image and memory. Considering these factors, we can deepen our understanding of the construction of family memory and the ideal family image that needs to be constructed, while also taking into account how families prefer to be rooted in their past, projecting their family image into the future. Assmann (2003, p. 36) states that the past can be reconstructed through memory recall and for him, one's remembering always involves emotional relationships, cultural reshaping and a conscious relationship that has links to the past (Assmann, 2003, p. 39). The objects of memory recall are always certain individuals, yet they are dependent on the framework that constructs those memories (Assmann, 2003, p. 40). Both the avoidance of forgetting them and eagerness to continue family memories are the main issues

for the family internal relationships. Thus, *using photographs* to narrate family memories underlines that the relationship between the family and photography is vital to the reconstruction process.

Remembering the past with a certain degree of curiosity and yearning was evident in the fieldwork when families looked at their photo albums. All family members stated that they preferred to reinforce their family relationships with the aid of their family photographs:

Mother: Some memory comes to my mind and then I want to look at the album. When I finally close the album, there is melancholy in me. I think of my age and remember past times (Ardic Family).

Looking at photographs allows for the retrieval of the past and provides memory recall, hence it becomes an important medium for family memory. Photography freezes the moment but that frozen moment reconstructs the very memory with its local time perspective:

Father: pictures are an emotional issue... that is, remembering makes your emotion revive. You catch yourself saying "let's look at the picture". This is what comes to your mind. When you look at the photographs again, you remember the time you were doing those things that the photo shows. (Defne Family).

Family memory is affected by members remembering emotional moments of the past and, again, the family image is the ideal image, the object of these acts of recall. Remembering through photography is important for family unity.

I asked family members whether a family should own a family photograph album. This question was answered in similar ways regardless of the class distinctions amongst families. As I mentioned before, different families of different socioeconomic backgrounds have different chances of obtaining photographic materials; however, they all agreed about the necessity of possessing a family album:

Father: Absolutely! This is not even a valid question! (Ardic Family).

Mother: It is important. Some photographs remind me of bad things that I do not want to remember, but I do not want to forget the beautiful things (Mese Family).

Particular situations might be reflected upon through family photographs. One of the participants tried to describe her emotions of loss after remembering the incident through recalling the event depicted on a photograph. No matter how disturbing emotions might be, she stated that these photographs should always be in their house. The mother of Ardic Family emphasized that these media are

very important, also as they depict the origins of the family, in addition to their procreation. She stated that her daughter is supposed to do the same thing when she creates her own family and she should bring her past to her new family.

Middle class families in this research project showed strong emotionality regarding the reconstruction of their family memories. This observation, on the other hand, had come together with its inherent observational limits. Within the scope of this fieldwork the kind of family memory we mention that involves photography albums is the communicative memory. The father of Defne Family sadly stated that:

Father: I wish we had [photographs]. The past of a family... My father, my mother, my mother in law... I wish we had a photo altogether. But we did not have a chance. Now, we are without them. Our children would take our pictures.

Family past is a complicated field for doing ethnography, as there might be some privacy stemming from an underlying family intimacy while talking about their past. Therefore, families sometimes require feeling emotionally safe when facing the researcher. Of course, there could also be some undesired or shameful past memories appearing during the fieldwork. These need special focus on how to commence the research so as not to make families feel anxious, as familial representation would still be continuing during the fieldwork.

During the interviews family histories were discussed as we went through their photographs. I wanted to learn their thoughts concerning their families' past. All of the participants, especially elder ones, were eager to talk about their past and hence family photography could provide them this opportunity. Middle class families showed significant sensitivity regarding their family past and they expected the same emotionality, mainly loyalty feelings, from their children as well. According to these members if there is something wrong about their family it should be kept secret. Lower class nuclear family members in the research project, on the other hand, did not show this restriction. Their family histories also appeared not as strongly constructed as middle class families' histories.

Another issue related to photography is the *reshaping and destroying of photographs*. For instance, divorce can cause a reshaping of the images in affected families. This can be a cultural practice or can be related to members' feelings with their family images. A semiotic perspective draws attention here to reshaping the images as means of legalizing the situation within the context of the family image. In this fieldwork, especially a few photographs drew my attention as they had been cut, and when few other photographs depicted images of an unwanted past or person of family's past, current members tended to mention the reshaping process of their photographs:

Father: Not every picture is put in a family album (Ardıç Family)

During their album display, Kayın Family's mother put away an old photograph from the album. I asked her why she was putting it away. She was silent for a while, as perhaps she did not like to tell me, but then she told me that that photograph belonged to the ex-wife of her son. She was sensitive regarding the new family of her son. She emphasized that there was a past life experience between them and that she just wanted to hide the photograph, not burn or throw away but only to hide it. In Defne Family, they threw away photographs depicting their aunt's husband after a divorce. The mother stated that they felt rather being set free of him.

Reshaping family photography is as important as preparing a family album. This is related to how members of the family take a role in constructing their family memories. Cutting or burning a photograph does not only mean to forget a moment or person, but it also means to construct a new memory. Members of family in this research were not supporting shaping, cutting or burning a photograph, except in particular dramatic cases.

5 Conclusion

In the light of this analysis we could see that photography plays an important role in the construction of the family image and its memory. This is helping to visualize an idealized familial image both for families' feelings of cohesion, and for the broader cultural structures of the related society. As a social document related with structured family lives, framed by social norms, family photography provides information regarding family lives, gender and social class variables. There exists a complex crossroads of public and private spaces of family lives; and the institutionalized family life shows itself to be supported through photography. Photographic media draws upon visual influences to help define the social construct of family. Sociocultural aspects of the family structure support the construction of family memory and its cohesion as a family, with the aid of photography.

Therefore, we can put forth the assumption that being a family is very closely related to owning family photographs. When families draw upon their past, they use good memories to feel rooted. Photography can aid this process. The construction of family image and its memory, as we saw in the case study, requires an idealized family vision. In line with the data obtained from the fieldwork, this diversity of (re)construction practices and usages of photography demonstrate the socioeconomic class differences regarding the role of photography. In spite of these cultural and economic differences, all of the families that participated in this research emphasized the importance of photography. They volunteered to show their good past while were also reluctant to talk about unwanted memories of their past. To conclude, we can say that

in this construction process families have the means to create a family past with the aid of photographic instruments; yet, there also are sensitivities and concerns regarding the reconstruction process of their family memories which motivate them to protect their ideal family images.

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Biography

Şahika Erkonan is a PhD student at the Faculty of Communication in Ankara University. She completed her BA in Linguistics and she took her MA with the thesis entitled “Family Photographs: An Ethnographic Research about the Role of Photography in the Construction of Family Memory and Family Image”. Currently, she has been studying the relation between photography and post-memory. Her research interest includes photography, memory studies and ethnography.

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