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Looking Two Ways: Mapping the Social Scientific Study of Visual Culture

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INTRODUCTION

Within the past two decades, we have seen a shift in primary preoccupation of the visual social sciences from the production of visual materials (social documentaries, photo essays, ethnographic films/videotapes, PowerPoint presentations, interactive web-sites), often for pedagogical purposes (illustration, classroom teaching) to a focus on explicating alternative ways of looking. Attention to the problematic nature of looking has occupied a number of scholars for a diversity of disciplines, notably Berger's now classic *Ways of Seeing* (1972) to his later book, *About Looking* (1980). These problematics also appear in popular and folk expressions and in the ambiguous significance of visual-oriented cultural materials.

In the following pages I treat 'looking' ('seeing' and 'being seen') as a culturally variable activity, one that is subject to ethnographic inquiry. This approach seems both timely and theoretically necessary. Within

visual anthropology, for example, when cameras have been involved, some have commented on a change 'from site to sight' (Banta and Hinsley, 1986),¹ redirecting our attention from 'objective' and 'realistically accurate' recording of 'what's there' to questions of how one is looking, watching, viewing and seeing, with or without camera technology (or some form of scopic technology).² In tandem, sociologist Michael Ball called our attention some years ago to the shift from the use of pictures to support ethnography to using a solid ethnographic approach to support pictures (Ball and Smith, 1992).

In my emphasis on 'looking' I have sought a way to avoid the frequently cited and reductive coincidence of visual social sciences with a myopic attention to camera-use and picture-making, most notably, the practice of ethnographic film for visual anthropology and documentary photography for visual sociology. But, if these activities are not central, where do they fit? Is there a

convenient way to better integrate the non-verbal with the visual/pictorial realms of behavior? Is there a way of including the study of both 'site' and 'sight'? The answers to these questions suggest an important challenge: namely, to develop a way of organizing the field to be more inclusive, one based on culturally structured ways of looking and seeing, one grounded more on visual culture and less on camera technology, and one that provokes new questions and research opportunities.

Readers of the following pages will hopefully find a fresh model for organizing old information. Two comments from the social sciences offer an initial challenge. In 1995, Chris Jenks stated: 'The modern world is very much a "seen" phenomenon. Sociology, however, itself in many senses the emergent discourse of modernity, has been rather neglectful of addressing cultural ocular conventions and has subsequently become somewhat inarticulate in relation to the visual dimensions of social relations' (1995: 2).³ Within anthropology, David MacDougall feels, 'Anthropology has had no lack of interest in the visual; its problem has always been what to do with it' (1997: 276). In the interests of organizing a practical perspective that afforded a priority to the visual in culture, I have tried to repack standard and accepted topics of study along with classic references in this field of scholarship. My primary objective has been to offer a framework that incorporates the diverse subject matter of visual social sciences, focusing mostly on sociology and anthropology. Organization and convenience of use have been my primary objectives in conjunction with giving some sense of problem that is appropriate and relevant to this field of inquiry, and to understand what has counted as a problem or departure point for inquiry and program of original fieldwork. A related goal of this essay is to help students and newcomers perceive some sense of unity to the field. In these efforts, when someone asks: 'What is visual anthropology?' or 'What is visual sociology?' we might answer: 'A cultural

approach to the study of *how people look* through time and space.'⁴

THE PLACE OF EYEGLASSES, CAMERAS, AND MEDIA

Sooner or later, most of us face the need for eyeglasses. We acknowledge the fact that glasses affect how we appear and how we see. Thus, we find a looking/appearing/seeing industry, one 'focused' on both sides of our looking/seeing framework. The natural deterioration of sight or imperfections of seeing is 'corrected' by applications of scientific knowledge. On the seeing side, we have eye examinations and the careful prescription of lens composition. On the appearance side, we find another kind of sensitivity—best heard when children are prescribed glasses. Glasses can produce an unwanted look (akin to teeth braces), often likened to 'four eyes' or the geek clique at school. Here the fashion industry plays a role as we also find ordinary people facing the choice of external frames or contact lenses (even tinted or clear). Other choices include shape and color of eyeglass lenses and frames—all interests of 'How I Look' in terms of both appearing and seeing.

Similar claims can be made for sunglasses. Within the suggested variety of meanings attributed to *how people look*, consider the simple decision to wear sunglasses and the range of reasons people might prefer to appear with their eyes covered. We know that some people want to enhance their appearance by wearing 'attractive shades' or ostentatiously expensive models, as a fashion statement, to enhance their overall attractive appearance or status, highlighted perhaps when we find people wearing sunglasses in darkened conditions. But motives may be quite different: namely, to conceal some feature of appearance such as hiding emotion or injury such as black eyes. But we must also consider matters central to acts of looking/seeing. Some may treat sunglasses as a form

of protection for ocular health, preventing damage from sunrays, wind, and dust particles. Others want to increase their comfort while in sunny and bright light conditions, to ease difficulties in seeing, to reduce squinting. Still other individuals like the use of darkened lenses to prevent others from knowing what the wearer is observing. This act can be interpreted as imposing a political framework as the wearer can see others but others cannot see the wearer. Cross-culturally, one can imagine the range of potential meanings attached to wearing or not wearing sunglasses in interpersonal communication.

This theme of intervening lenses is extended to attention within visual studies; many believe that the visual social sciences always include some form of camera technology and camera use. This essay makes the point that the eyes and minds come before cameras and lenses.⁵ We are reminded once again of anthropologist Paul Byers saying 'Cameras don't take pictures' (1966). Many now recognize that looking can be affected by a growing range of sight-aids from eyeglasses to telescopes and microscopes to cameras, most recently, embedded in cell phones.

The question, 'How Do People Look?' can be given and taken (asked, interpreted, and answered) in several ways. Importantly, the phrase *how people look* suggests at least two fundamental orientations, one active and one passive. Each orientation is tied to different lines of inquiry, which, in turn, lead to alternative content and questions. These two orientations can and frequently do overlap in the same phrase ('looking good' or 'good looks'), but they can be distinguished along the following lines.

Throughout, there is an important distinction between subjects/objects (that are seen) and subjects/actors (who are doing the seeing; see Table 2.1). Importantly, people can be subjects of inquiry in both columns; we also see that people/things serve as 'objects' in Column A, whereas people/things can be either 'subjects' and/or agents of inquiry in Column B.

Table 2.1 Two dimensions: comparing 'To Look/appear' and 'To Look/see'

| Column (A) HOW PEOPLE APPEAR or 'to be seen' | Column (B) HOW PEOPLE SEE or 'to see' |
|--|---|
| Look meaning: To Appear | Look meaning: To See |
| LOOK as to be-looked-AT | LOOK as to look-AT |
| How to appear to self and to others | How to use eyes to look |
| 'I wish to appear as...' | 'It appears to me...' |
| Selective appearance | Selective perception |
| What people want seen... | What people see as... |
| To be seen | To do the seeing |
| 'I'm lookin' jus' fine' | 'I'm looking at myself' |
| About the OBSERVABLE | About the OBSERVER |
| Worth's 'about culture' | Worth's 'of culture' |

Issues and problems with proposed paradigm

Readers will likely raise one important objection to this proposed focus on *how people look*. When referring to the validity of statements of appearance—the real question becomes: 'According to whom?' I would like to transform this potential liability into an asset by insisting on attention to agency—we must be careful to ask and ascertain who is making the observation, who is doing the seeing. Clearly members of a specific society and observers from outside that society will never see or interpret appearances in the 'same' way, though some social scientists may claim to be accomplishing this objective, or, at least, approaching this goal.

There will always be problems with any attempt to reduce complexity to a simple formulation such as *how people look*. Vision, looking, watching, sight, and seeing are proving to be more complex than most previously thought or currently think. In the first instance, there is a general understanding of differences between the meanings of 'look' and 'see,' not unlike distinctions of brain and mind, sex and gender, disease and illness, information and knowledge, among others, which might even extend to simple nature–culture relationships such as 'the raw and

the cooked.’ Referencing our other senses, we find parallel distinctions to hearing and listening.⁶ Common to the proposed distinction, ‘looking’ is biologically and physiologically based—that is, as images that are formed on a retina, travel an optic nerve, and are processed by a brain. I want to retain a sense of minimal variation across cultures regarding the biological base of looking as mechanical, as a piece of human biology that is shared across the human condition, with minor variation, regardless of location in time and space.⁷

This sense of ‘looking’ might best be called natural. But seeing is not natural, mainly because, as defined, seeing is intimately attached to selective perception and interpretation. All interpretation, like all sensory experience, results from processes of construction. Making meaning from sensory input is a process guided by historic, social, and cultural context, open to change and variation across time and space (Classen, 1993). Following this thinking, there is infinitely more potential variation to ‘How I see’ than ‘How I look.’

The important change I am suggesting hinges on our use of the word ‘look.’ I say this because I initially want to exaggerate a direct connection between ‘looking’ and ‘appearing.’ When we do this, we can emphasize that questions of *how people look*, as in ‘how people appear,’ are socially and culturally variable and thus amenable to ethnographic study. Clearly, there will be problems regarding look/appearance, especially when assuming some static existence. Importantly, there will always be situational and contextual complexity. People do not always appear/look the same under all personal and social circumstances. For instance, issues of clothing—what to wear (or not to wear) in different locations, at different events, and with different people—can be problematic and subject to a code-switching perspective (to be discussed shortly). Sub-cultural, generational, and age-grade variables always come into play, making it very important to carefully formulate specific questions or problems.

As a final introductory problem, using the verb ‘look’ to mean ‘appear’ and ‘see’ is not shared across all languages: while I have started with English, confusion may arise in other languages. In turn, some readers will undoubtedly dismiss the details of this proposed look–see distinction as playing with semantics, and, at times, as trying to be cute and little more. Semantics will always be a problem when trying to integrate vernacular and specialized uses of language. But little is to be gained in semantic confusion. My effort in these pages is to promote a clearly organized framework for clarification in an academic area that suffers from lack of a cohesive and articulated approach.

For the remainder of this chapter, I want to address the question of what subject matter is being organized and do so by accomplishing two tasks:

- 1 I want to present some indication of the kinds of specific questions and problems that naturally fall into each of these orientations in conjunction with the directions they take us. We will see that each of these two categorical orientations may contain sub-categories of content, topics, and paths of inquiry.
- 2 I will explore how this orientation works by referencing published studies and offering specific examples of questions and studies in science and society.

AMPLIFYING THE FIRST DIMENSION—APPEARANCE

In the Column A of Table 2.1, How People Look means ‘How these people appear.’ The appearance connotation of *how people look* can easily be heard in colloquial phrases, and we may speak of several clusters of ‘look-related’ comments, such as ‘Ain’t I lookin’ jus’ fine?’ ‘They looked sick after that cheap shrimp dinner!’ among many others. Certain critical comments, that could be either positive or negative, are evoked here, including ‘Did you see how she looked?’ or ‘Why did he want to look like that?’ Or we might want

to include common advertising mantras, from 'Change your looks in minutes!' to 'Look better—Lose 30 ugly pounds in 30 days!' I would speculate that aesthetic dimensions apply to appearance in all societies, meaning that all have preferences for good and bad looks.

I also acknowledge that appearances can include negative judgments. Looking can include questions about being morally and politically correct or incorrect that accompany questions of 'How will I/this look?' and 'How will I be seen/judged.' This dimension refers to controversial questions of 'witnessing' and becomes evident in such phrases as 'I don't want to be seen as someone who....' or not wanting to be judged for a flawed personal decision who decides to 'look the other way.'

Common household mirrors may play a large part in personal appearance, as when people monitor 'how they look' before leaving home (or, as discussed later, before having a picture 'taken') or, more generally, when appearing in front of others for impressions and potential comment ('first impressions count'... 'the look makes the man,' etc.). A woman's habit of carrying a compact mirror also serves this need. One is reminded here of Charles Cooley's classic and influential comments about a 'looking-glass':

A social self ... might be called the reflected or looking-glass self.... A self-idea of this sort seems to have three principal elements: the imagination of our appearance to the other person; the imagination of his judgment of that appearance, and some sort of self-feeling, such as pride or mortification. (1922: 152)

Image consciousness is particularly important during adolescent years, when 'looking good' is a key social marker. Later in life, in the US, staying fit with the help of exercise machines and wall-sized mirrors is another familiar example. Issues and questions of 'presentation of self' (Goffman, 1959) and personal image management come to mind.

Anthropologists and sociologists have continually been drawn to the pictorial

recording of people's appearances; results have served their ethnographic reports, and, in turn, their respective constructions of credibility. In his essay, 'The Visual in Anthropology,' David MacDougall reminds us of how some anthropologists at the turn of the century brought indigenous exotic-appearing peoples to museums and expositions, on lecture tours precisely to let people see what they looked like (1997: 276). Currently, we continue to see the public's interest in how indigenous people look; this is clearly evident in postcard photography when native people are photographed for popular consumption and sold at tourist locations.

Specific topics and applications

We have said that the first orientation (A), of *how people look* focuses on dimensions of 'how members of specific groups of people appear to themselves and to others.' In very fundamental ways, immediate and obvious attention is paid to factors of physical appearance, including body size, body shape, and skin color.⁸ We must also ask: What do people do with (or to) themselves, their bodies or parts of their bodies, to appear in certain modified ways?

Central to questions of appearance is how people mediate questions of genetically structured or culturally favored *body size and shape*. Laura Miller (2006), drawing upon the work of Anthony Giddens, reminds us that 'modernity works a change from birth-determined identity to self-fashioned identity' (Miller, 2006: 11). Cultural preferences for body size become relevant alongside medically prescribed body weights, for example body mass index (BMI).⁹ Some are temporary, while others are meant to be permanent; some are medically designated as healthful, others become seen as harmful, even life-threatening. Manipulations include the assistance of multi-billion dollar industries devoted to a broad range of diets and special diet tablets, alongside the use of

Botox, collagen, fat injections or various implants and various forms of elective cosmetic surgery—liposuction procedures, breast enhancement and reduction, tummy tucks, and the like.

Observations of *body color*, both as given and changed, are relevant. As expected, we find considerable variation among any population, reinforcing the importance of refraining from simple generalizations.¹⁰ In some contemporary societies, Japan for instance, many adult females continue to protect themselves and potential color change from sun exposure by using umbrellas in public settings. In comparison, we see a tendency for some of the younger population to seek a tanned or otherwise darkened skin complexion. In general, we find major industries devoted to offering clients a host of temporary ‘skin’ coloring adjustments, meaning a broad range of face and body cosmetics.

This large category of body alterations includes both permanent changes as well as more temporary changes. The topic of body aesthetics has been gaining scholarly interest, sometimes focused on modifying the appearance of body hair. Robinson’s attention to ‘Fashion in Shaving and the Trimming of the Beard’ (1976) provides us with one example. We also include such topics as eyelid surgery, facial and body hair removal, and nipple bleaching (Miller, 2006). In this classification, permanent patterns of body alteration would include teeth-filings and patterned extractions. More common would be various customs of body-piercing and corporeal scarification. For example, studies of small and localized versus full-back or full-body tattoos would be appropriate, all of which produce immediate visual impressions. Schwartz’s 2006 paper, ‘Native American Tattoos: Identity and Spirituality in Contemporary America’ helps us in this category.

Studies of *how people look* attract interest to details of facial and body habits, patterns of make-up, body painting, different hair-styles, including facial hair and pubic hair

(crotch, venus-line shaping), hair coloration, eyebrow shaping, finger/toe-nail paintings and decoration as they might differ for young and old men and women. Needless to say, there is considerable cross-cultural variation; the diversity of cultural practices and systems of meaning accompanying such practices are amenable to ethnographic study.

Personal appearance often includes categories of what we might call ‘*add-ons*’ and ‘*carry-ons*’ or body adornments and attachments. For the former, most obvious would be sartorial choices and codes—articles of clothing that people elect to wear according to social norms, traditions, personal choices based on such variables as location, event, place, and time. We are reminded of such phrases as ‘First appearances are the most important,’ balanced by ‘First appearances can be deceiving’ as a version of ‘Don’t judge a book by its cover.’

The culturally variable notion of ‘fashion’ plays a major role in this context. One would also want to examine instances when items of clothing served as indicators of social and political rank. This would include the frequency of people wearing uniforms on an everyday basis, from blue collar support personnel to professional employees, including high fashion, costumes, work outfits, perhaps in settings such as sports fields, schools, the military, but also within contexts of the office, store personnel, hospital staff, various service sectors, and the like. Within a growing literature, anthropologist Fadwa El Guindi’s 1999 study of veils offers a valuable contribution. We also see that as multiculturalism becomes the norm, contentious situations can emerge. I am reminded of ongoing struggles over Muslim school-children wearing scarves or veils (or niqabs) in England¹¹ and women wearing burkas in France.

The absence of clothing should also be considered. Western and Victorian attitudes toward display of the naked human body. Cooley’s (1922) ‘mortification,’ shame and decency, were certainly not dominant

throughout the world. But in many contact situations, Westerners tried to alter some 'traditional' behavior by issuing ordinances about what could and could not be displayed and seen in public.

For the category of *carry-ons* (often called 'accessories'), we could include studies of the appearance and use of jewelry, amulets, fans, canes, handbags, and the like. Other artifacts that accompany on-body dress could also be net bags, tools, weapons, prayer beads among others. And for some in the US, water bottles, and in many cases, cell phones, may have replaced cigarettes.

In any consideration of 'look,' social variables become very important. Common reference points of looking/appearing a certain way are directly connected to the relevance of age grade, gender, marital status, social position, place, etc. To avoid any sense of rigidity or permanence, we must build in notions of situational *code-switching* and dimensions of change both across and within generations. In very simple and obvious terms, we do not always wear the same clothes in all social situations: for example, at home, parties, rituals, ceremonies, work/play and, in some cases, even at different times of the day. Who has not heard or said at some point in time: 'Go change your clothes—we're having company!' Outside the home, such activities as visiting friends, attending special events, and going to work have their own demands; some businesses in Japan, for instance, are now advocating a 'Casual Friday' tradition of dress (Sullivan and Jordan, 1995). Part of socialization includes learning 'when-to-wear-what' as in 'how to look' in different situations. It might be acceptable to dress one way in one setting and totally inappropriate in another (no shorts at the law firm, no swimsuits in the classroom or office, no jeans at the wedding). We are easily reminded of a parent's admonition: 'You're not going out of the house looking like that!'¹² Pattern analysis must always include the variation exhibited by humans to adapt to alternative social circumstances, states of contemporary fashion (Lowe and

Lowe, 1982), as well as individual desires either to fit in or to stand out.

In summary, the visibility of human appearance is tied to themes of 'wrapping the body,' as described by anthropologist Joy Hendry, as just one part of 'wrapping culture' (Hendry, 1993). All tie into culturally constructed nature of beauty ideals, the globalization of beauty technologies and standards, changes in beauty ideology.

Extending appearance: bodies in motion and space

How People Look incorporates other facets of appearance. Attention to appearance makes us consider *how people look* when using their bodies, body parts and limbs to pose, gesture, move, and even dance. We might hear: 'Stand up straight—don't slouch!' or 'You're walking like a baby' or 'Walk with conviction.' Examining patterns of body movements, including facial expressions and full-body gestures, fall into place. Anthropological studies of kinesics (Birdwhistell, 1970) and tacesics (or haptics) come into immediate relevance. Studies that relate posture, gesture, and body movement to work (Lomax, 1972) and to socialization fit well here (Bateson and Mead, 1942) as well as a broad literature on relations of dance movements, styles, and culture (Chakravorty, 2004; Adra, 2005).

Another large area of human appearance and interaction asks: 'How do people use their bodies to structure space as part of interpersonal relationships and communicative environment?' (Hall, 1966). An interesting relationship is found when connecting codes of body-part touching and the use of bodies in space: for example, hand-holding, hands around a partner's waist, what one touches during greeting or departing events. When people become crowded in public spaces—most notable, public transportation and elevators—when individuals often find themselves in body contact with strangers. Another set of situational code-shifts must

take place to maintain a civil and acceptable atmosphere.

By extension: appearance through material culture

Ordinary people of all ages use material culture, their surroundings, belongings, and related possessions to extend their looks as reflections of personal appearance and identity. Frequently we have heard: 'Clean up the house ... we're having company!' 'A tidy [vs messy] desktop signals an organized [vs confused or creative] mind.' For example, the purposeful ordering of domestic space, including various means of shelter and housing, becomes relevant for study. Image-conscious young people, for instance, are fond of establishing an identity by the ways and means they decorate their rooms and zones of personal space. Image management includes looks of 'accessories,' both attached and, in this case, unattached from the human body. Peter Menzel et al.'s *Material World: A Global Family Portrait* (1995) and Adrienne Salinager's *In My Room: Teenagers in the Bedrooms* (1995) provide good examples.

In these ways, we see how extending space to studies of *design and decoration* (sometimes understood as extensions of self and identity) becomes important. Design and decoration of physical space in general can be added to what has been said about constructed appearances, appearances meant to be looked at and appreciated in culturally specific terms. Studies of graffiti and local murals find a place when we realize the image (tag, word, figure, statement, etc.) serves as an extension of self in both time and space, with ample attention to appearance (style, technique, size) and 'looking good.' Thus, various features of the built environment, especially architectural elements, are easily included in this formulation. We should keep in mind that placement of household walls and furniture can either encourage or restrict the ways that inhabitants can look at each other, how audio-verbal

interaction takes place, and how using movable panels (or sliding doors) as walls can effect change. Of visual interest, 'sight-lines' become important to Edward T. Hall's notion of proxemics and interpersonal communication (1966).

A modern and exceedingly popular way of extending appearance *through* space is facilitated by digital imaging and Internet communication. New opportunities for carefully considered construction of preferred appearance have been opened and given new life through Internet home pages and social network sites (SMS), perhaps best seen in Facebook or MySpace.¹³ These audio-visual sites provide us with interesting parallels to the built environment, further extending an individual's or a group's symbolic environment, one that remains amenable to public observation and study.

In summary of How-People-Look in Column A, there are many ways that people may look/appear for others to know them, ways they extend appearance beyond the ways people 'wrap' their bodies through decorations and clothing. We can even add various means of transportation (most notably, a choice of car), but in other circumstances, we could add choice of bicycle, motorcycle, and other modern personal models of wheeled transportation (for example, self-balancing segues) in the future. These choices of extensions become visually significant markers, all of which contribute to a richly composed environment of visual communication.

Finally, I hasten to acknowledge that much of the work of archaeologists—from Paleolithic to historic sites—starts with searches for appearances. In conjunction with everyday living, we want to include a range of visual forms, from Paleolithic cave art and pottery design to contemporary examples of interior and exterior graffiti. What can be learned from the look of material culture (or even 'that which has been thrown away,' including contemporary references to 'garbology'¹⁴) that has survived for contemporary examination? But most archaeologists

are not content to remain with this knowledge of appearances. From the appearance of material culture, they consistently work towards making sound inferences to understand better how a particular group of people lived their lives. Said differently, the primary interests lie in how a specific group of people saw, interpreted, and understood their surroundings and life. Thus, we find one of many connections between how people appear and our second dimension, how people see.

AMPLIFYING THE SECOND DIMENSION—LOOKING AT, SEEING, AND INTERPRETATION

Column B of the How-People-Look paradigm takes us into the second major collection of interests: namely, the category of ‘How members of a specific group of people look at themselves and the world around them.’ Following our earlier formulation, this is the area of how people SEE, which must include *both* ‘vision’ and ‘visuality.’ For our purposes, the former relates to the physical and biological apparatus operating on whatever it is that presents itself before the eye (in other words, the purely physiological side of seeing). In comparison, the latter attends to the culturally determined manner of looking at things, which defines ‘what’ we see and ‘how’ we see it, and includes how people make meanings and interpretations, attributions or inferences (Gross and Worth, 1974). We are asking how they understand their lives, their immediate environment, as well as the everyday lives of ‘others,’ the world around them and, in turn, how they are sometimes prompted to take action. These questions may only surface or become relevant when some form of threat or conflict occurs: for example, ‘They just don’t understand—they don’t see it the same way we do!’ Perhaps one by-product of education is an increased curiosity of both kinds of looking, coupled with increased sympathy for alternative ways of knowing. We shall see shortly

that epistemological and hermeneutic features, as related to questions of world view, play key roles in this orientation. Here we shift attention to the significance of interpreting and understanding appearances: namely, *how* and *what* one looks at.

A related and important domain of visual research attends to the ways and means that the physiology of perception can create optical illusions and ‘mis-perceptions’ of ‘what’s there’ (Goodman, 1978). Studies here provide another reference point for understanding that things ‘are not always what they appear to be.’ In later pages, we will need to connect the physics of a camera’s optical system to a human’s physiology of perception to gain a better feeling for how, on occasion, ‘pictures can lie’ and when questions of ‘camera truth’ or the truth qualities of photographs come into serious contention. Complexities of camera-assisted visual communication become apparent when we acknowledge the integration of propensities and limitations of physiology, the visual options afforded by a camera’s optical system all in conjunction with socio-cultural framing that directs images to predispositions, ongoing interests, curiosities, and concerns.

The duality of ‘seeing’ in conjunction with ‘being seen’ should come as no surprise to anthropologists and sociologists and represents no dramatic departure from familiar thinking. Anthropologists, as part of their fieldwork, have always sought to describe the people they study in conjunction with their surroundings—with and without photographic illustration. But equally important is the acknowledged intention to know how various peoples think about, interpret, make meaning, and understand their own lives and society—in short, their culture. This brief delineation is more complex than initially ‘meets the eye,’ so additional discussion is needed.¹⁵

On the level of the individual, we may be speaking of selective perception—what one attends to might be expressed in such comments as: ‘You have to know what to look

for!’ or ‘You were not picking up the right signs, but I know he likes you.’ Or, in the context of interpersonal arguments, one might hear: ‘You don’t understand—you’ve got to look at it my way.’ More to the point, we might even hear the admonishment, ‘You may be looking, but you are *not* seeing!’ Individuals and groups of people may be more used to looking for/at or attending to some features of a scene, event, or person than another group of people. Thus, the notion of selective perception—as a version of ‘how I/we looked’—is very much a matter of scale.

Anthropologists have continually worked on the notion of understanding life and the world ‘through the native’s point of view,’ gaining insights on world view and related metaphors. As in my previous references to the language-culture insights of Alan Dundes (1972), many ocular metaphors fit here quite well, including ‘Seeing is believing’ and ‘Do you see what I mean?’¹⁶ Other examples will be incorporated shortly.

General principles of ethnocentrism and cultural relativity speak to this issue: namely, that there are many ways of seeing the ‘same’ thing, none necessarily better or worse than others (an ethically corrupt notion according to some conservative thinking). The task has been to somehow discover and describe preferred ways of seeing and understanding the world. Indeed much of anthropological education and training has been so directed: that is, to allow for and appreciate alternative ways of seeing. The Whorfian hypothesis, efforts in ethno-science as well as cognition studies find a place here.

Finally, we must consider the ways people don’t look—we need to add what people should not look at, should not see—to the previously mentioned ideas of how people should not appear in private or public. Erving Goffman cited examples of purposeful avoidance of looking as ‘civil inattention’ (Goffman, 1966), which, in turn, has connections with animal habits of direct and indirect gazes. Children are instructed not to look in the eyes of particular animals as a deterrent

to the animal sensing a harmful threat and reaction.

Patterns of appropriate seeing may also be guided by age-graded prohibitions on subject matter (no violent films/TV for children, no pornography for pre-teens) or age/gender-specific rules, such as when only the male elders of a specific society can view certain ritual or religiously significant artifacts. Questions of the sanctioning agency come into view: namely, the government, national film boards (responsible for feature film ratings), libraries, computer and server filters, and parental control among others.

Micro-categories of observation

It is convenient to divide relevant examples into micro- and macro-categories. Central to the former is a literal meaning of looking at: that is, the variety of normative ways that people use their eyes ‘to look at’ surroundings, people, and things. These interests may extend from someone saying, ‘Keep your eyes open,’ ‘Just watch where you’re going!,’ to ‘I just knew something was very wrong—Did you see the way he looked at me?,’ to an admonition of ‘Look at me when I am speaking to you!,’ to the much more subtle senses of knowing when your conversational partner intends to interrupt your comment(s) or offer you a chance to speak.

Relevant research focuses on how patterns of looking, gazing, and staring are intimately related to linguistic activities, especially in studies of turn-taking as part of conversational analysis (Cook, 1977; Argyle, 1978). We find a significant niche for examinations of patterns of eye movement (Duchowski, 2003),¹⁷ the culturally structured habits of ‘eye behavior’ or what to do with one’s eyes (avoidances, aversions) in different situations and circumstances. Studies here include the uses of glances, winks (vs blinks or tics), glimpses, double-takes, stares, and all sorts of gazes (Seppanen, 2006). As a list of ‘General Rules’ for what is informally termed, ‘the language of the eyes,’ Hattersley (1971)

offers the following intuitively derived list of recommendations:¹⁸

- 1 Never look at anyone more than absolutely necessary.
- 2 Be particularly careful to avoid looking at strangers.
- 3 When you are actually looking at someone, avoid thinking about it. Otherwise, he [sic] will become aware that he is being looked at by someone aware of doing it; and the relationship will become very strained.
- 4 When someone is telling you a lie, be very careful not to let your eyes inform him he is detected.
- 5 When two people are looking directly into each other's eyes, the more courteous one always breaks eye contact first.
- 6 If you have been looking at someone while listening to him, and suddenly find yourself looking through him, either bring your attention back to him or if he has noticed, apologize for momentarily being distracted from his conversation.
- 7 When you are looking at someone and he does something you think he would prefer were invisible—rubs his nose, blinks away a tear, twitches, etc.—allow the 'blind look' to come into your eyes as an indication that you respect his feelings by not seeing what he has done.
- 8 If you are telling someone a lie, and you know that he is aware it is a lie, do not look him directly in the eye, for that would make you a monstrous liar rather than an ordinary liar.
- 9 When looking at someone, take great care to omit the 'you are being judged' expression from your eyes. That is, always keep your expression neutral.
- 10 If you look into someone's eyes and discover that he is suffering from some kind of acute distress, do not allow your eyes to reveal your discovery to him (Hattersley, 1971: 84).

Hattersley also suggests that there are rules for women as well as men and different social relationships may take on their own special rules. He notes these rules can serve as a means of survival as well as one of the social graces. But less is said about the importance of cross-cultural variations. Goffman would have a different take on how these instances would relate to 'interaction ritual' (Goffman, 1982).

Patterns emerge when asking people to list the times when they have been told or they have said: 'Don't look!' and when people sense a need to avert their eyes to prevent looking. In one explicit example, one might find the admonition: 'For Your Eyes Only' written on private office folders. Selective looking becomes relevant and, again, includes examples of being aware of a scene and purposefully not looking; car drivers, for instance, may elect not to look at another driver competing for the same traffic lane, thus becoming 'non-accountable' for any altercation or even accident that might occur. Car drivers are also likely to be attracted to the tragedies of accidents: 'Everyone knows that what slows down highway traffic going past a horrendous car crash is not only curiosity. It is also, for many, the wish to see something gruesome' (Sontag, 1977: 95–96). Another example of selective seeing involves public men's rooms. In several countries, people can see vertical urinals in public settings, either unused or being used when passing by a men's room. But the norm is not to look in, not to purposefully seek out views of men using a urinal. Here we have a clear case of what can happen in comparison to what does happen.

Parents in the US will instruct their children not to stare at people's infirmities or at disabled people, or cover their eyes to scenes of overt sexuality or extreme violence. The subject of prohibited looking at people, things, or activities is not often discussed. But James Elkins cites certain patterns of avoidances in a chapter entitled 'Just Looking' (1996), where he states¹⁹: 'There is a provocative theory... proposed by surrealist Georges Bataille. He said that there are three things that cannot be seen, even though they might be right in front of our eyes: the sun, genitals, and death' (Elkins, 1996: 103). Elkins then proceeds to examine the reality and implications of this assertion.

In summary, it is probably the case that every society and culture has a latently realized set of norms for eye-use (how-to-look) for appropriate, preferred and, by contrast,

incorrect ways of looking at people, things, and activities. It follows that we covertly recognize outsiders by slight variations of these norms—‘Did you see the way they were looking at us?’ ‘That type of staring might be okay in New York but it’s not here!’ And after the fact, one might hear—‘He just wouldn’t stop staring at your boobs!’ or ‘I could tell there was something wrong just by the way he looked at us!’²⁰

Macro-categories of observation

As stated earlier, our organization of *how people look* should include an array of macro-categories of looking/seeing. We may include the formal teaching of ‘looking skills’—though that term or title will be unfamiliar. By ‘looking skills’ I call attention to efforts to teach which semiotic features ‘should’ be looked at, paid attention to, and appreciated in the effort to identify or learn something, to make the ‘correct’ reading or interpretation of a visual item or scene. In practical applications, we find education needed to develop skills for ‘reading’ an X-ray, a weather map, military reconnaissance images (even specialized graphs and charts), all of which are forms of ‘visual literacy.’²¹

In the description of a recent book, entitled *Skilled Visions*, one that stresses ethnographic methods as a way to learn ‘constructions of local knowledge,’ we read: ‘Most arguments for a rediscovery of the body and the senses hinge on a critique of “visualism” in our globalized, technified society. This approach has led to a lack of actual research on the processes of visual “enskillment”’ (Grasseni, 2007: publisher’s description). In addition, much of art appreciation falls into this category. At the heart of this interest is the tutored development (even management) of ways of looking, producing a ‘critical viewing’ of a visually mediated form, and a developed talent for seeing ‘what’s really there’ or, even better, seeing as much as possible. Here we find purposeful and explicit training in developing the ‘proper’ way of

seeing an art piece on the way to making a competent interpretation. These tutored skills are easily extended to the larger context of the built environment, perhaps best illustrated by architectural efforts—another example of an expanded notion of visual literacy.²²

This area now extends from fine arts to popular culture—to courses in critical viewing of mass media, including, but not limited to, ways ‘to read’ advertisements, feature films,²³ and television programming as well as to critical assessments of Internet information. We must also consider examples from non-media everyday life such as knowing to look for a green light while driving as well as going to an unfamiliar sports event for the first time (for example, the game of cricket for Americans), where we might hear such frustrations as, ‘I just don’t know what to look at yet!’ Other selective ways of seeing include learning to interpret X-rays, MRI results, microscope slides, or aerial reconnaissance photographs, among other pictorial examples.²⁴

Another macro-category focuses on *tourism*. Arguably, tourism is a visual phenomenon as we observe people using sight to see sites. Most travelers have a curiosity for ‘how local people look,’ how ‘others’ live, and what a particular location in the world looks like. Increasingly more attention is being given to relationships of tourism and visual culture in international conferences and publications.²⁵ Other scholars have documented the ways local residents have prepared themselves and their surroundings to be looked at by tourists, knowing that a ‘good showing’ will attract more interest and income. Dean MacCannell’s (1976) look at ‘staged authenticity’ specifically his reformulation of Goffman’s front and back stages for tourism are important contributions.

In tandem, and once again, we are increasingly drawn to questions of how local populations see their own lives. Thus, we would also want to include studies of how local people see outsiders and visitors, be they classified as missionaries, development

specialists, art dealers, medical personnel, filmmakers or anthropologists, or as increasingly popular, tourists. Valene Smith's *Hosts and Guests* (1989) provides many relevant examples. Connections to behavior and material culture are again seen in carefully considered transformations for touristic visitation, including reorganizing art forms (including 'airport art'), dances, food, and clothing, among others. Nelson Graburn's book *Ethnic and Tourist Arts: Cultural Expressions from the Fourth World* (1976) is particularly useful for important examples.

Another macro-category of relevance appears in contemporary scholarship devoted to the broad area of media—'reception studies.' Here attention is directed towards what people look at and how they interpret what they see in various visually mediated forms, regardless of knowledge of the best or 'schooled' way of appreciating such information and communication. Researchers want to know what is 'actually' going on versus what 'should' be happening. For further clarification we need to move to the next layer of *how people look*: namely, when camera technology is involved, our next series of topics.

Finally, we would include the attention anthropologists have traditionally given to questions of world view and related metaphors for the diversity of ways that diverse peoples see and understand the world(s) they inhabit, including, of course, metaphysical aspects of before-and-after life. In this way, we find a comfortable way of integrating topics of religion and spirit domains, including problematic ghost-visibility, along with questions of ideology and inevitable connections to epistemology, revealed in such statements as 'Seeing is believing,' as mentioned earlier.

I have more than implied that issues of looking/seeing are at the heart of the How People Look model for organizing the visual social sciences. While this enterprise cannot be limited to the use of camera technology, it certainly cannot eliminate it either. Hence, attention now turns more comfortably to the

incorporation of 'aids to looking,' including scopic technologies, in the interests of extending human looking and seeing.

ADDING CAMERAS TO ASSIST LOOKING/SEEING

The general thinking is that pictorial renditions of appearance serve as evidence of 'having been there,' as personal witness, a basis for backing a sound argument.²⁶ Thus, the use of cameras can make many valuable contributions—some certainly more critically sound than others. Sociologist Howard Becker offers a convenient way of linking two kinds of looking by suggesting we may want to ask different kinds of questions when thinking about photography. He describes this difference in the following way:

The question we ask may be very simple and descriptive: What does Yosemite look like? What does the Republican candidate for President look like? How did our family and friends look in 1957? Sometimes the questions are historical or cultural: How did people take pictures in 1905? How do they take them in Yorubaland? (Becker, 1986: 293)

In short, we have the distinction between how people appear and how people see, but, now, with the addition of camera use. Thus, we can now continue this distinction by adding forms of technology such as eyeglasses and cameras.

Two anecdotes, focused on the theme of 'She didn't look herself,' introduce the problematic addition of cameras to learning more about *how people look*.

It was Aunt Bea's 90th birthday party and lots of people brought food to help celebrate. They also brought cameras to take pictures—a natural thing to do I guess. But, you know, I had known her for almost 50 of her 90 years and something was wrong. We all knew Bea was losing her eyesight and she looked a little strange.... I just didn't want to take her photograph because she didn't look herself. (Anonymous, 2004)

Last year, the funeral parlor director said we could take photographs of my grandmother in her

coffin, but only after official viewing hours. And my two cousins did just that. But I didn't feel like taking her picture because she didn't look herself. (Anonymous, 2005, personal communication)

These comments beg for a 're-focusing' or re-positioning of cameras in the How People Look framework. When previously considering the content of Column A (the appearance emphasis), I stressed versatility and change; however, no mention was made of changes in appearance that might be made when people explicitly know that their pictures are about to be taken. In professional contexts, we have the employment of make-up artists, costume specialists, and set designers, among others, for these purposes. But what corresponds to this luxury for ordinary people in everyday life, if anything? To demonstrate the reality of this question, I have frequently asked students to consider the following: 'When in the course of a life-time do people find themselves in front of an operating camera?' In other words, what does the 'on-camera presentation of life' look like? Does the anticipation of photography act as a change agent in *how people look* for the camera?²⁷ As a generalization, most people do something to or for themselves, again, 'to look good' in a family photograph. I will give an additional reference to home media shortly.

SOCIAL SCIENCE CAMERA USE FOR LOOKING AND SEEING

This proposed look/see paradigm can be understood as a means of de-centering ethnographic photography and film/video. Regardless, it is time to re-incorporate camera-related practices and images in general into the proposed perspective. One natural connection is to relate acts of seeing to models of showing (display and exhibition). As a logical extension of questions about 'looking at' we can add problematic issues surrounding the use of camera technology in the aid of looking, producing, and

communicating pictorial data. Here we find a convenient home for all that has been discussed about ethnographic photography, film, and video. Even such non-technological methods of sketching, drawing, and painting should be included (though not discussed here: see Christova-Slavcheva, 1996, as just one example).²⁸

Following our look/see designations and organization, cameras are used to help us see and later show what we (as observers) are looking at, or, better, the way things look to us. Justifications for camera use are many. Cameras extend sociological and anthropological looking at people, things, activities, and events in several important ways. These range from creating documents to bring visual renditions home from the field for additional study, to allowing us to see things that we cannot register as part of unaided everyday looking: for example, from telescopes and microscopes to telephoto and macro lenses and high-speed cameras. Early animal and human locomotion studies by Étienne-Jules Marey (1992) and Eadweard Muybridge (1979) and later by Ray Birdwhistell (1970), among others, amply demonstrated how cameras extend our abilities to see, show, and illustrate findings in a variety of exhibition contexts with different motivations in mind.

But the significance of cameras is not limited to pictures taken by social scientists. As expected there are many sub-divisions of visual/pictorial examples, some based initially on simple distinctions of who is using these cameras. How do we integrate the results of professional camera use, or images made by native/indigenous members of specific societies? In short, who is doing the observing, and who is looking at whom? (see Michaels, 1982; Pack, 2006).

Ethnographic (sociological and anthropological) filmmakers attempt to show what one society looks like to members of another society.²⁹ Traditionally, this has meant Western lenses looking at non-Western life, as something that 'we' do to 'others' (Banks and Morphy, 1997). Most will agree there is

no one satisfactory definition of ethnographic photography or ethnographic film, and some have gone so far as to advise us that this is not even a productive question. Arguments continue regarding the most effective way(s) to use cameras to look at people—from observational, participatory, reflective/reflexive camera techniques to versions of ‘cinéma réalité’ to the ethically challenged, hidden-camera model of recording ‘real life.’³⁰

Other authors, most notable, Howard Becker (1974, 1981) have made meaningful connections between sociological themes and the work of documentary and fine art photographers, sensing an overlap in ways of seeing and reporting appearances, and, in turn, asking what each might be offering or contributing to the other. Becker asks how some representatives of sociologists and photographers work towards similar goals through different means. In Japan, the work of George Hashiguchi (1988) has been interpreted as containing a visual sociological perspective (Chalfen, 2005) much as others have accorded August Sander for his portraits during the Weimar Republic. George Hashiguchi’s work seems to give a fine example of ‘when art which is aimed at exploring society ... might just as well be social science information’ (Becker, 1981: 10–11).³¹

Simply put, using a camera is just one way to augment seeing and showing appearances discovered in the field. Camera-generated photographs and films answer important questions (problematically at times) for many observers at a distance. The visual recording of *how people look* has been the pictorial capital of such magazines as *National Geographic* (NG), as we all recognize, the very popular magazine used for the longest time by ordinary people for vicarious travel and ‘accidental’ ethnography. This is an important example; while NG photography has been abundantly admired, the use and interpretation of NG images has often been uncritical—a kind of what-you-see-is-what-you-get. But recently some authors have drawn scholarly attention to details of this ‘camera-look’ and the intentionally

structured results of this way of looking and reporting human scenery (Lutz and Collins, 1991; O’Barr, 1994).

An important avenue of thinking here relies on the treatment of visual genres as cultural documents. The approach titled *The Study of Culture at a Distance* (Mead and Métraux, 1954) included the conceptualization of feature films as cultural documents (Weakland, 2003) and reported on the results of examining German, French, Italian, Chinese, and Indian feature films as well as the results of Hollywood productions (Powdermaker, 1950). Weakland’s ‘Themes in Chinese Communist Films’ (1966) and Bateson’s ‘An Analysis of the Nazi Film Hitlerjunge Quex’ (1954) are good examples. Similar questions of looking/seeing can be addressed to other popular, even daily, published photographs. For example, what are *visual journalists* (photo-journalists) doing as they report on and show us a highly selective (yet claimed to be objective) version of the world? How do cameras contribute to a belief system that allows people to believe they know how things look and how things might be changing? Related studies have examined the formulaic ways and organizational constraints used by visual journalists and their editors that predetermine how culturally different people will ‘look’ the same (Hagaman, 1993). Other research may investigate the versions of society and culture produced by professionals as seen in newspaper and magazine advertisements (Goffman, 1976; O’Barr, 1994; Grady, 2007), advertising campaigns based on posters, or a broad range of televisual communication such as everyday mass media.³²

Recent introductions of new media via satellite communication systems make this all the more relevant as these mediated forms contribute a global perspective to local media. For instance, how are members of one society seeing and interpreting a film made by another society? The notions of multiple readings suggested by Stuart Hall (1973, 1997) and the important notion of ‘unintended audiences’ (Jhala, 1994) also become

relevant, fostering notions of dominant, realist, negotiated, and aberrant readings. Examples of studies include interpretations made by different groups of people looking at the 'same' feature film or television program (Katz and Liebes, 1994).³³

Studying the indigenous view as ways of seeing

We have seen a growing scholarly interest in 'indigenous media,' where people show how they are seeing themselves and their lives or what they are seeing with the aid of cameras (Ginsburg, 1991).³⁴ Four models predominate:

- 1 Instances when researchers have provided subjects with cameras and minimal technological instruction.
- 2 Cases when scholars have examined the process and results of people making various kinds of media on their own initiative.
- 3 Projects where image/photo elicitation interviewing is the key to gaining indigenous perspective, points of view, and ways of seeing.
- 4 Examples of people making their own films to express their wishes and needs for change based on how they see their own problematic life circumstances.

In the first model, several visual anthropologists and visual sociologists have introduced still or motion picture cameras to their subjects to learn how 'others' look at their own lives and see the world around them.³⁵ In turn, we have new information on how these people want to make images to show to themselves and to 'us' (Michaels, 1991; Turner, 1991). In the case of *Through Navajo Eyes* (and many similarly titled works), we see an attempt to learn if patterned ways of using cameras and constructing films are connected to other means of expression (folk tales, myths) and communicative codes (linguistics) (Chalfen, 1992; Worth et al., 1997).³⁶ The second approach to indigenous media directly demonstrates how the two *how-people-look* dimensions overlap.

Relevant cases include Michaels' paper, 'How to Look at Us Looking at the Yanomami Looking at Us' (1982), Sprague's 'Yoruba Photographers: How the Yoruba See the Themselves' (1978), and Pack's 'How They See Me vs How I See Them: The Ethnographic Self and the Personal Self' (2006). In the third model, subjects are interviewed as they look at images they make for their own purposes or in response to an investigator's questions and prompts. Research participants are asked to discuss their motives, expectations, and the meanings they attach to the pictures. Work in art therapy and 'phototherapy' (Furman, 1990; Weiser, 1993) and discussions of photo elicitation methodology and techniques (Harper, 2002) can be located here. The fourth model, which emphasizes another activist approach, includes multiple applications of Photovoice (Wang et al., 1996; Wang and Burris, 1997) for changing community health practices.

As a specialized interest in young people and youth media, a growing number of sociologists and anthropologists have sought a better understanding of how adolescents see and understand their own lives (Chalfen, 1981; Stokrocki, 1994; Cavin, 2000 among others). And most recently, we are seeing an applied direction, where, for instance, chronically ill patients are offered video cameras and asked: 'How do you see your own medical condition?' to teach their health personnel 'what it means to live with a particular illness' (Rich and Chalfen, 1999; Chalfen and Rich, 2004). Objectives focus on enhancing patient-doctor communication, having young patients take more charge of their own illnesses, and enabling physicians to improve treatment plans after studying such visual reports.

Home media

Finally, we find an interesting combination or convergence of the dualism underlying this essay: namely, 'seeing' and 'being seen' in what has been referred to as 'home media'

(Chalfen, 1987, 1991). In most parts of the world, though certainly not all, ordinary people have been making pictures of themselves as part of family photography and everyday life. When asked why so many ordinary people appreciate this model of photography, we are likely to hear: 'I like to make albums of our family photographs to see *how we looked*' or 'We wanted to remember *what we looked like*' or 'We wanted to see what they [parents, grandparents, distant relatives] *looked like* when they were young.' Here we find ideas and expressions directly in line with Column A of the How People Look paradigm. These pictures can be considered as extensions of appearance—that is, as pictorial statements of 'how they look.' As a result, patterns of 'preferred appearance' can be seen.

Two points become relevant. First, we can revert to earlier comments on extending personal choice of 'how to look' via appearance: for example, choices of surrounding artifacts including selection of clothing, car, home, decorations, and the like. The same can be said for the choice of our personal photographs and the ways we use them to decorate personal spaces, including different household rooms as well as work (business offices, cubicles) and recreation spaces (playrooms, lockers). Earlier comments on extensions into cyberspace via social network sites illustrate further the ways that private and public imagery are overlapping, when distinctions are becoming blurred. Here we accord a special attention to photographs of people, specifically because of the multi-dimensional qualities and meanings attached to appearance.

Second, family albums and collections of snapshots, slides, home movies, and home videos chronicle selective renditions of *how people looked* in the past. But these collections of pictures can be considered and valued in another way, when we jump to the second dimension (Column B): namely, how these people 'looked at' their lives with cameras; patterns of preferred ways of seeing can be found.³⁷ Thus, we find norms for

presenting a way of life to people who are using norms to look at that life with a camera. Hence, the notion of 'snapshot versions of life' (Chalfen, 1987, 1988) encourages us to ask:

- What kinds of stories are told by photograph albums?
- What defines these pictorial narratives?
- Can we find a way to understand how culture is wrapped in album covers and expressed on album pages?

Finally, paralleling previous comments on not-looking (as in 'Don't look!'), we find regulations for not looking-with-cameras as part of everyday picture-taking. Public signs indicating 'No Photography Allowed' are just one explicit indicator of such restrictions. However, given the new influx of digital camera and camera phones, there are many more instances that leave it up to 'good judgment' and 'common sense' as to what is allowed and forbidden, thus fostering change and ambiguity on how to look-with-cameras.³⁸

CONCLUSIONS AND CLOSING THOUGHTS

Clearly, problems associated with the dualism of *how people look*, of 'being seen' and 'seeing,' of looking and seeing take center stage in the foregoing discussion. We easily find a growing scholarly attention to problematic domains of looking and being looked at (seen). From a talk given by Deirdre Mulligan in 2007, we read: 'Camera and video technology are changing who we watch, what we watch, when we are watched, and redefining the purposes for which we watch'³⁹ (Mulligan, 2007). In all parts of the world people are addressing panopticon problems and questioning what it means to be able to observe ('look at') people, scenes, events, activities with a camera and, in turn, what it means to be 'looked at' or seen with a camera. Just as social scientists have asked

critical questions about ‘the right to write,’ so we have questions and even contentious debates about the rights, legalities, and ethics of both ‘looking’ and ‘being looked at’ or being an observer and being-observed by cameras in private or public spaces. Daily news in the US contains many problematic examples: we read of questionable uses of camera surveillance in banks, schools, on streets (including traffic violations), in newspaper stands, and in dressing rooms, among others. Camera-phone users are causing a parallel list of ethical and legal problems. There is every reason to believe that debate and argument about surveillance problems will increase. New attention to ‘sousveillance’⁴⁰ adds significantly as the quantity and quality of camera phones increase. Again, context matters: Who is doing the photography, and under what conditions with what motivations, goals, outcomes in mind? More to the point, How will the images be used? How will they be ‘shown and looked at’ by others? In turn, is there adequate discussion and training in the social sciences to make meaningful contributions to this discourse?

The foregoing discussion suggests the usefulness of adopting a *how people look* framework. The visual social sciences are less about camera use and more about looking and seeing, watching, and being observed. At the heart of both kinds of looking—appearing (or ‘being seen’) and seeing—is the role of culture contributing to the patterns and dynamics of the kinds of visual communication that lie at the heart of this paradigm.

While avoiding a camera-centric position for understanding visual culture and visual studies, we should acknowledge the multi-layered value of photographs of people within the *how people look* framework. Pictures of people should be considered as a special category of artifact. The machine/mechanical qualities of camera apparatus have the ability to provide data for both sides of our looking divide—that is, to crystallize two kinds of record: namely, appearance and gaze. We may

underestimate the cultural importance and value of how photographs provide us with two models of representation, both of which are highlighted in the dualism of ‘being seen’ and ‘seeing.’ ‘Beyond commodification itself, there’s something about the mimesis of a camera as a mechanical eye that is combined—in the production of a photograph—with a “record” or “representation” of both sides of “how we looked”’ (Jon Wagner, personal communication, 2009).

At the same time, these statements offer many problems with visibility and visibility—especially with regard to the status of first-person looking, with or without cameras. In many ways, this proposed orientation suggests more questions than answers. The legal system is struggling more than ever with the notion and value of ‘eye-witness accounts,’ that different ‘eyes’ witnessing the ‘same’ event offer different, often conflicting, written or spoken accounts. Realizations now abound that something gets in the way of a consensus about the accurate verbal articulation of what was there to be seen. More credence is given to the statement: ‘It all depends how you look at it.’

At the beginning of this essay, I stressed the need to integrate interests, activities, and studies within the visual social sciences. In promotion materials for a new book series, Series Editor Marguerite Helmers stated:

The previously unquestioned hegemony of verbal text is being challenged by what W. J. T. Mitchell labels the “pictorial turn” (Picture Theory)—a recognition of the importance and ubiquity of images in the dissemination and reception of information, ideas, and opinions—processes that lie at the heart of all rhetorical practices, social movements, and cultural institutions. In the past decade, many scholars have called for collaborative ventures, in essence for disciplining of the study of visual information into a new field, variously labeled visual rhetoric, visual culture studies, or “image studies”. This proposed new field would bring together the work currently being accomplished by scholars in a wide variety of disciplines, including art theory, anthropology, rhetoric, cultural studies, psychology, and media studies.⁴¹ (Helmers, 2003)

One attempt to facilitate an organization of visual culture studies is the heart of this essay. A framework has been suggested to better understand complexity from simplicity, by using the phrase, *how people look*. Equal parts of attention are placed on the scholarly examination of *how* life appears, what appears, *what* is seen, and *how* life is seen. Future efforts will have to judge the merits and hopefully offer amendments.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am particularly grateful to the anonymous critical readers of earlier drafts of this paper. I was provided with many valuable insights that prodded me to think more about broader implications of this proposed framework.

NOTES

1 In an introductory essay for this edition, Margaret Blackman states: "From Site to Sight" is about the "culture of imaging". Visually and in words it explores the changing patterns of belief and behavior brought to making, viewing and understanding photographic images within the context of anthropology' (Blackman, 1986: 11 in Banta and Hinsley, 1986).

2 This difference has a resemblance to how communication scholar Sol Worth (1981) identified visual recordings 'about culture' versus 'of culture.'

3 I am grateful to colleague Doug Harper (2000) for this observation, which appeared as an endnote for his paper.

4 It should be clear that this phrase is meant to be inclusive, allowing attention to: how they look, how we look, and how I look.

5 Perhaps the strongest statement regarding this revision comes from Australia in the form of an introductory textbook entitled, *Researching the Visual* (Emmison and Smith, 2000).

6 Parallel claims can be made for other senses, but we struggle for the appropriate vocabulary to express the differences. For example, 'how people feel' can be broken into how one feels (hot/cold, healthy/sickly, happy/sad) and one 'feels' in the sense of how one touches people or objects (eyes open/closed, with tongue, or finger, hand/foot, etc.).

Linguistic problems are particularly apparent when we want to discuss 'how people taste.'

7 This position is well aligned with the vision–visuality distinction made by Luc Pauwels who understands '... "visuality" or the culturally determined manner of looking at things, which defines "what" we see and "how" we see it. "Vision" differs from "visuality" in that it concerns a rather universal experience of looking on the basis of physical characteristics of the visual organ in relation to whatever it is that presents itself before the eye (in other words, the purely physiological side of seeing). Visuality, on the other hand, refers to the cultural codes that are applied in interpreting, and which thus turn the looking, the creating of images and their use or discussion, into a cultural activity' (2008: 82). Jon Wagner also offers a helpful clarification of such terms as 'visible,' 'visual,' and 'visualized' (2006).

8 Many studies within the history of physical (or biological) anthropology become immediately relevant. Efforts to map the heterogeneity of the human form, changes through time, determining links with older forms as well as knowing connections between genotypes and phenotypes are well-established topics of study, I hasten to add a common fascination with controversial efforts to show us what early hominids and Paleolithic humans 'looked like.'

9 Body-lengthening or shortening practices are much less known, with the exception of several bone-extending experiments in Chinese surgery (see 'Chinese turn to bone stretching to get taller' [Online]. Available from: <http://www.local6.com/news/4574140/detail.html> [Accessed 20 November 2008]. Another example was 'Limb Lengthening' from the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgery [Online]. Available from: http://www.orthoinfo.org/fact/thr_report.cfm?Thread_ID=310&topcategory=General [No longer accessible].

10 For a good overview of what humans do to their skin, see Jablonski (2006): 'We expose it, cover it, paint it, tattoo it, scar it, and pierce it. Our intimate connection with the world, skin protects us while advertising our health, our identity, and our individuality (2006—book description (<http://www.ucpress.edu/book.php?isbn=9780520256248>)).' Skin is also treated 'as a canvas for self-expression, exploring our use of cosmetics, body paint, tattooing, and scarification' (2006—book description (<http://www.ucpress.edu/book.php?isbn=9780520256248>)).

11 The BBC (24 January 2007) reported: 'Parent fights over child's veil—Muslim woman wearing a niqab. The school allows Muslim girls to wear scarves but not niqabs. A parent in England has begun legal action against his daughter's school because it will not allow her to wear a veil which covers most of her face' [Online]. Available from: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/education/6294225.stm [Accessed 20 November 2008].

12 Tragically, extreme consequences have been reported; in one note entitled: 'Makeup, un-Islamic dress bring death' we read: 'There came a bleak announcement Sunday from Basra's police chief: At least 40 women have been killed in Iraq's second largest city this year for "violating Islamic teachings". Sectarian gangs reportedly comb the streets, looking for women wearing nontraditional dress, and scrawl red graffiti warnings reading: "Your makeup and your decision to forgo the headscarf will bring you death"' [Online]. Available from: <http://www.salon.com/mwt/broadsheet/2007/12/10/basra/index.html> [Accessed 20 November 2008].

13 These two are the most popular choices in the USA; Facebook, for example, reports having 350 million active users. See 'Facebook Press Room, Statistics,' 2010 [Online]. Available from: <http://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics> [Accessed 22 January 2010].

14 Garbology is the study of refuse and trash. It is an academic discipline and has a major outpost at the University of Arizona long directed by William Rathje. The project started in 1971, originating from an idea of two students for a class project. It is a major source of information on the nature and changing patterns in modern refuse. Industries wishing to demonstrate that discards originating with their products are (or are not) important in the trash stream are avid followers of this research, as are municipalities wishing to learn whether some parts of the trash they collect has any salable value. See 'Garbology' [Online]. Available from: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Garbology> [Accessed 20 November 2008].

15 Clearly, questions of *How-People-Look* are dramatically complicated, in both of these two orientations. Elkins would be the first to say this is atrociously simplistic, as he does with the phrases: 'The observer looks at an object' and 'just looking' (1996).

16 In comparison, statements like 'Are you blind?' suggest the opposite: that the person cannot recognize or see the obvious, and is therefore inadequate, dumb, and incompetent.

17 See Rolf Nelson's comments in his review (2005).

18 I was surprised to find this intuitively derived list in a book on photography, specifically about discovering yourself through photography.

19 It is important to distinguish between 'cannot look/see,' 'should not look/see,' and 'must not look/see.' Different sets of restriction lie behind each. Again, issues of what one can or cannot do come up against what one should/shouldn't do or what it is that people actually do or don't do as a variation on the ideal and the real.

20 New interest in looking is appearing in diverse locations; the 2nd Workshop on Research in Visual

Culture, scheduled for March 2008, was devoted to 'Visual Attention,' which proposes to situate the aesthetic discussion on the activities of 'seeing' and 'being seen' in a broad cultural context that relocates seeing within an expanded perceptual layout of multiple histories (see: visualculturestudies@gmail.com).

21 One of the most important contributions made by James Elkins is the replacement of 'interpretation' and 'competence' for the problematic term, 'visual literacy.'

22 See Grasseni (2007) for a recent book that speaks directly to related issues of looking skills.

23 See Monaco (1977).

24 See Elkins (2003) for a chapter describing a series of problematic illustrations.

25 Examples include a 2007 conference entitled 'Gazing, Glancing, Glimpsing: Tourists and Tourism in a Visual World' and two references: Urry (2002) and Crouch and Lübbren (2003).

26 Clifford Geertz's book (1988) has several worthy discussions on just this point.

27 One example is provided for having a picture taken by the Registry of Motor Vehicles (Baker, 2008). But restricted behavior also counts. The 2004 guidelines issued by the US State Department permit people to smile for passport and visa pictures but frown on toothy smiles, which apparently are classified as unusual or unnatural expressions. 'The subject's expression should be neutral (non-smiling) with both eyes open, and mouth closed' (Anonymous, 2004). A smile with a closed jaw is allowed but is not preferred,' according to the guidelines. Mark Knapp, an immigration attorney with Reed Smith in Pittsburgh, said: 'You can't make this stuff up, honestly. What is interesting is the idea that you can't smile anymore and that they're rejecting photos. The idea that you can't smile is what most immigration lawyers find absurd.' (Anonymous, 2004) [Online]. Available from: http://www.usatoday.com/travel/news/2004-11-29-visa-smile_x.htm [Accessed 15 August 2010].

28 For just one example of looking at people in a politically charged way, see the controversy surrounding the 2006 publication of 12 Danish cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed. Also see Mitchell's 'Child-Centered? Thinking Critically about Children's Drawings as a Visual Research Method' (2006).

29 Classic references here include Heider (1976) and Loizos (1993), and some of the best thinking and writing about camera strategy is provided by David MacDougall (1997).

30 Several interesting and recent commentaries and analyses of how social scientists have used their cameras include Read (2005), Hammond (2003), Collier (2003), Lakoff (1996), and Ruby (1995) and, for a broader view, see *Navajo and Photography: A Critical History of the Representation of an American People* by James C. Faris (1996).

31 Many photography books have been endorsed and used in social science thinking and writing, including some of my favorites, *Material World* (Menzel et al., 1995), *Suburbia* (Owens, 1973), works by Barbara Norfleet, specifically *Wedding* (1979) and *City Families* by Roslyn Banish (1976), among many others. Norfleet, for instance, has emphasized exposing and exhibiting the ways events like weddings get looked at with cameras and seen in wedding pictures.

32 As an interesting contrast to Goffman's sense of gender advertisements, see 'Male and Female: Gender Performed in Photographs from the George Eastman House Collection' in which Alison Nordström, the Museum's Curator of Photographs and curator of the exhibition, explains, 'Many of the ways we identify and define gender are based on visual clues. They may be such secondary sexual characteristics as facial hair or its lack, or there may be culturally determined elements such as costume, stance, or activities.' [Online]. Available from: http://www.eastmanhouse.org/exhibits/container_78/index.php [Accessed 22 January 2010].

33 The book *Video Night at Kathmandu* by Pico Iyer provides a wonderful anecdotal example of different Asian cultures looking at the 'same' film: namely, *Rambo: First Blood* (1982) starring Sylvester Stallone.

34 'Indigenous' has become another controversial term. The emphasis here is on cameras used by members of local communities: people who have not necessarily been trained in the visual arts but have an interest in visual recording, for themselves or outsiders.

35 A comprehensive critical overview of this work written by the author appears in the Foreword and Afterword of the second edition of the 1972 *Through Navajo Eyes* (Worth et al., 1997).

36 A related effort appears in 'A Paradigm for Looking' (Bellman and Jules-Rosette, 1977).

37 The annual Christmas card photograph, either mailed or now e-mailed, provides an example for extending 'how we looked this year' to a social network of significant others. Reactions range from 'Look how the kids have grown up and changed' to 'What an ostentatious bunch they still are.'

38 Predictably, we find a website devoted to such proscriptions: On 'Strictly No Photography, Photos You Were Not Allowed To Take' posted by Scott Beale on Tuesday, 4 December 2007, we read: 'Strictly No Photography is a photo sharing service for photos that you were not allowed to take.' According to the site, their mission is 'To organize the world's forbidden visual information and make it universally accessible and useful.' [Online]. Available from: <http://laughingsquid.com/strictly-no-photography-photos-you-were-not-allowed-to-take/> [Accessed 22 January 2010].

39 [Online]. Available from: <http://www.brighton.ac.uk/ssm/sympo2007/> [Accessed 20 November 2008].

40 This term is best understood as 'observation from below,' which means, in this context, the use of digital cameras, small camcorders, and now camera phones by ordinary citizens to report newsworthy activities, and in some cases transferring visual information to mass-mediated news agencies and/or police.

41 See the series [Online]. Available from: <http://www.parlorpress.com/visualrhetoric.html> [Accessed 20 November 2008].

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