The Visual Basis of Collective Identities

Soc. 573:01  Professor Richard Williams
Fall 2011   rwilliams@sociology.rutgers.edu
Th. 1:10-3:50  Seminar Room
Office Hours: M. 1:00-2:00; Th. 4:00-5:00 and by appointment:
111 Davison Hall

Our concern with collective identities is rooted in discussions of how we come to gain a sense of “self,” a sense of what is ‘normal’ in everyday life. More specifically, the normalizing function of a collective identity serves as a mechanism by which individuals, as identity members, learn how to “normally” engage in inward looking in order to ‘perform the self’ as well as how to observe/judge how others are performing. We will eventually be able to refer to that latter outward looking expectation as the ‘gaze’.

Our concern with visualizing (‘seeing’) is significant in that it calls attention to the role of visual representations in our ability to understand the world around us. The basic idea is that an interrogation of ‘seeing’ is one way of raising the question of how we make meaning in everyday life. In essence, such an interrogation is premised upon the claim that ‘seeing’ is never the ‘truth’ in any absolute sense. Rather, when we ‘see’ we are ‘reading’ the ‘seen’ phenomenon through the framework of a learned ‘language’ (socially determined meanings attached to specific symbols). The ‘truthfulness’ of what we see is therefore related to the framework through which we “see”.

The relationship between the two that we will be working with is based on the premise of ‘collective identities’ as structuring mechanisms and ‘seeing’ as the historically based socio-cultural outcome of the structuring process. Despite the potential usefulness of such a top-down relationship we can also benefit from operating with the supposition that both “seeing” and ‘collective identities’ are ultimately constructed in similar ways. In essence, both are outcomes of social processes of ‘simplification’ and ‘selection’ resulting in the creation of “meaning” as well as the loss of memory about the meaning making process. Both are then ‘taken-for-granted’ and as such are treated by identity members as ‘natural’.

We will specifically be focusing on the ideas that (1) for social actors, the development (socialization; internalizing fixed meanings for symbols), enactment (performance in everyday life) and attempts at changing (social movements; passing; identity transformations) of collective identities are rooted in establishing a common ‘reading’ of symbols among group members about what is ‘normal’ for the self (self-perception) and for others (gaze) and (2) that the visual representations of those processes can be identified and fruitfully analyzed.

Underlying this course is the claim that despite the now commonly accepted notion of ‘social construction’ within the social sciences, we have yet to sufficiently interrogate (1) the social basis of “seeing” and (2) the importance of ‘seeing’ in structuring social behavior. Collective identities, as central to the sociological enterprise, are useful for this interrogation of the prevalence of ‘seeing’ in social behavior.
At the end of this course you will be able to engage in productive research based upon attention to the prevalence yet inconspicuousness of “seeing” as a social act in sociological research and in everyday life.

$ Buy
*On Sakai
**IRIS or JSTOR

Introduction

Week I
1. Collective Identities demand that we “See”

2. Seeing as selection [Seeing as Value Laden]
   “A new visual culture redefines both what it is to see, and what there is to see (Latour: 1990:10).”

Part 1
Framing the Conversation

Week II
Basic Socialization
*Durkheim, E. “Social Facts”
$Mead, G. “Part III: The Self” (pp. 135-200). *Mind, Self and Society*

Week III
Theorizing Seeing/Looking
http://books.google.com/books?id=9nxCzlN67XcC&pg=PA41&lpg=PA41&dq=Bal+dispersing+the+gaze&source=bl&ots=GQIuU4QsU&sig=lZkHP6JnNBwcB67xqBbIu4Ws_E&hl=en&ei=IK5CTv-1Aafg0QHe-aWnCQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CBYQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=Bal%20dispersing%20the%20gaze&f=false


$Goffman, E. “Introduction,” “Performances,” and “The Arts of Impression Management.”

Presentation of Self in Everyday Life


Knowledge and Society. 6 (1-40).


Week IV

Collective Identity Gaze at the “Other” as a Collective Identity

*Bhabha, H. 1983 “The Other Question.” In Baker, F (ed.) *The politics of Theory*


$Said, E. 1978. *Orientalism*


Part II

Collective identities visualized (Frames for Performance and Gazing)

The readings are not designed to be comprehensive of a particular collective identity. My concern in compiling them is with proving us with textual “data” for interrogation from a visual perspective.

Week V

Gender


*Negrin, L. 2008. Appearance and Identity,” “Feminism and Fashion,” “Cosmetics and the
Female Body,” and “The Postmodern Gender Carnival.” In her Appearance and Identity: Fashioning the Body in Postmodernity


**Week VI**

**Sexuality**


$Foucault, M. 1990. “Parts, I and 2”. The History of Sexuality (I)


**Week VII**

**The Criminal**


$Finn, J. 2009. Capturing the Criminal Image: From Mug Shot to Surveillance Society


**Week VIII**

**Disability**


**Week IX**

**Illness/Health**

**Bell, S. 2011. “Claiming justice: Knowing mental illness in the public art of Anna Schuleit's 'Habeas Corpus' and 'Bloom'.” Health (London) 15: 313.**

*Diedrich, L. 2007. “Patients and Biopower: Ideas, Experience, and Affect,” and “Politicizing Patienthood: Ideas, Experience, and Affect.” In Treatments: Language, Politics, and the Culture of Illness*

*Horowitz, A. 2002. Creating Mental Illness [Selected chapters]*


*James, A. and Hockey, J. 2007. Embodying Health Identities [Selected chapters]*

**Week X**

**Trauma based Collective Identity**

*Alexander, J. “Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma.” In Alexander, J. (et al., eds.) 2004. Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*


Canada - Hidden from History - Voices of the Canadian Holocaust

Listen to online mp3 audio files of the voices of residential school survivors and their accounts of murder, electro-shock experiments, involuntary sterilizations and other atrocities.


**Week XI**

**National Identity**

*Adams, L. “What is Culture? Schemas and Spectacles in Uzbekistan” scholarworks.iu.edu/journals/index.php/aeer/article/viewFile/674/767*


Cerulo, K. 1996. Identity Designs: The Sights and Sounds of a Nation [Selected Chapters]*


Zerubavel, Y. 1994. Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition [Selected Chapters]*
Week XII

Class
Salgado. S. Workers.
http://www.photoeye.com/bookstore/citation.cfm?catalog=AP291&i=&i2=&CFID=20892542&CFTOKEN=36371328 (Illustration of the selling of ‘Workers’
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5X76jieUgTQ&feature=related (Documentary Part 1)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QOUvijLDBym8&feature=related (Documentary Part 2)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u0VqE8VH2RQ&feature=related (Documentary Part 3)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MCtCN1NnmXI&feature=related (Documentary Part 4)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4KwZ_GI9-Es&feature=related (Documentary Part 5)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kQKt9zEqMZk&feature=related (Documentary Part 6)
Salgado display http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VC0hw0M6oQw

Week XIII

Race/Ethnicity
Part III Concluding
Frame breaking: Schema Failure

Week XIV
Visual aspects of Social Change: Collective identities in transition
[Selected Chapters]
Queen’s University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada
**Foldy, E., L. Goldman and S. Ospina. 2008. “Sensegiving and the role of cognitive shifts in
the work of leadership.” The Leadership Quarterly. 19 (514-529).
Review of Sociology 27:283-305.
*Rorty, R. 1999 [1989]. “Part I: Contingency.” In his Contingency, Irony and Solidarity
Women’s Liberation.” In Reger, J. et al., (eds.) Identity Work in Social Movements

Grading

Class participation [10% of grade]
Weekly responses to readings posted to Sakai [10% of grade]
Four short essays (approx. 4 pages) [60% of grade]

Four short essays (approx. 4 pages) [60% of grade]

Week 3 Week 7 Week 10 Week 14

Last longer essay (10-15 pages) [20% of grade] Dec. 19th
Using data from a visual archive with attention to how related social movement is an attempt at
visually changing the social value of identity elements. To what extent is that attempt being
made consciously? To what extent do social movement leaders demonstrate awareness of the
visual significance (PERFORMANCE, self-perception; how should I act, look; “make-up”) of
collective identity cohesion? How do social movements provide collective identity members
with ways of perceiving (GAZE at) non-identity members?

Links to some major visual archives are in the Resource/Archives section of the course site on
SAKAI.

Readings to Buy
Finn, J. 2009. Capturing the Criminal Image: From Mug Shot to Surveillance Society
Foucault, M. 1990. The History of Sexuality (I)
Mead, G. “Part III: The Self” (pp. 135-200). Mind, Self and Society