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Introduction

Images, Methodologies, and Generating Social Knowledge

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Images convey. This simple and perhaps unequivocal statement becomes much more complex with the addition of a few short words. How do images convey? What do images convey? To whom? In answering these questions, what was originally a simple declarative statement becomes a position; a stance concerning the ways to think about and think with images.

Consider a brief series of images. While on a research trip to Tanzania, I made two visits to a growing, urban Pentecostal church. After one service, I walked out and crouched down to take several photographs of the relatively new church façade. Taking two shots in quick succession as people milled about the entrance, I barely realized that a child had wandered into the bottom of the frame and posed, unsmiling. As I pulled the camera back, the boy approached and smiled broadly, striking different poses in what I took to be anticipation of a few more shots. The camera instantly allowed an easy although limited rapport, and I dutifully took another shot of the boy from closer range, showing him the feedback display seconds after the digital "shutter" clicked. I had not intended these photographs to be part of my data for a project on faith-based nongovernmental organizations in East Africa, but this series of three unexpected photographs pricked my curiosity about the role of images in research and their function as communication in general.[1]

I returned to the images often and asked myself what they conveyed. Did the image of a child posed in front of the church building differ from the image of the structure alone? In other words, what was conveyed in the photograph of the façade alone and what was conveyed with the addition of this boy? What types of relationships might be inferred or imagined between the church and the boy? Was the child's stance fearful? Authoritative? Protective? I realized that based only on the photographs, there is no clear answer to these questions; all the images provide is the most basic empirical description of the physical objects captured by a digital chip at the moment I depressed the button: "a church" and "a boy." Of course, from my work with this community, I knew more about this particular church and this particular boy, information I could bring into my reading and interpretation of these images. But without such ethnographic data, others would bring alternative positions, experiences, and educated assumptions to their reading. A missionary might perceive the saving grace of the church; a historian might point out the persistence, opportunities, and oppressions of colonial Christianity; a sociologist might look at the institutional influence of religion as a powerful socialization agent in the child's development—and all of these views raise interesting speculative questions to pursue.

Beyond the "situatedness" of the reader and his or her assumptions, I wanted to know if these perspectives were in some way internal to the composition of the images. Even if they were not, my composition certainly allowed for internal references to trigger various interpretations of the photograph. For example, when I turned to the third shot of the boy playfully posing for his close-up, I had to ask again what difference resided in this image? My composition changed. I could no longer determine that the structure behind the boy was a church, had I not been the one to take the shot or had it not been sequenced along with the other two photographs. What if this smiling face was similarly composed against the wider profile of the church and framed with the white cross gleaming overhead? What different message might that image convey? If these three photographs—taken within three minutes and three feet of each other—have the potential to tell—at the very least—three different stories, then what purpose could photography serve as an empirical or even descriptive tool? When extracted from this one example, these are the questions that provide the impetus of this book. The following chapters ask: How is it that visual representations convey, and how might we appropriate this in ways that construct knowledge and meaning in the social and academic world?

To a certain degree, visual representation is already a staple of the behavioral sciences. Professional journals publish diagrams condensing research into pie charts and line graphs, which we interpret, for example, as indicators

of socioeconomic demographics, gender achievement in standardized test-ing, or the intersection of age, race, and religious participation in civic life. We have come to accept and even expect such visual representations as sig-nifiers of complex calculations, backed by a methodological rigor that is offered (perhaps more often required) as a staple within most social scien-tific curricula. We are trained to decipher particular kinds of visual represen-tations in order to be scholars in our respective fields.

On the other hand, until recently, what we most often think of as visual imagery—photographs and more recently video and virtual images—functioned as illustration. I use the past tense confidently, if not somewhat optimistically, given the changes in the status of the image in academic fields over the past decade. Admittedly, anthropology has carried the mantle of visual analysis throughout its disciplinary tenure; however, the chapters pre-sented in this book indicate that visual or image-based research is reemerg-ing with significant untapped potential and vigor across a broader scope of disciplines. It is in this spirit that the current collection was compiled. Each of the chapters incorporates the image in slightly different ways and across remarkably different issues. Yet, what remains consistent is that images are not merely appendages to the research but rather inseparable components to learning about our social worlds. The selected chapters in this book strike vivid and highly accessible connections between the everyday world that we take in through our eyes and the cognitive, analytic framework that we apply through our scholarship and pass along in our teaching.

In this opening chapter, I will lay out the guiding structure of this collec-tion and offer some different ways to access the text. My hope is that read-ers will find one or more of these pieces resonating with their own projects in some way, either methodologically or substantively. More than that, I hope these chapters as a whole spark conversations concerning the "hows" and the "whys" of incorporating images into various research agendas and, in doing so, prompt us to rethink what images tell us about the image maker, the viewer, the way in which images are shared and talked about, and the entire academic process of generating credible social knowledge.

Guiding Themes

Although this is a book about methods and each chapter provides clear examples and concise explications of methodological approaches, this is not a conventional methodological handbook. There are few step-by-step guide-lines. Methodologies are highly contingent on epistemological positions, populations, researcher interests, rapport, and confidentiality, among a host

of other concerns. Each chapter discusses in detail its author's uniquely tailored methodology, but extending these methodologies to other projects requires each reader/researcher to hone his or her own craft accordingly. With this in mind, each author instead describes and reflects on the situated way he or she uses images for particular purposes and notes the potentials and pitfalls that images provide in building or extending research questions. Connecting these differences are three main themes or threads that run through each chapter: epistemological concerns, methodology, and theoretical or substantive contributions. Each of these three terms can seem overly abstract, and admittedly, they are often used in very circuitous ways. For this collection, I use these three themes as practical points to engage, question, and reflect on the visual research process within and across chapters.

Epistemology

Instead of a "how to" compilation of visual methods or an exploration of substantive findings alone, this text is an interactive epistemological odyssey engaging the authors, the readers, and various disciplines. Epistemology, for our purposes, asks several broad questions. How is it that we come to know what we know, and what are the underlying assumptions of this pursuit? In other words, what is our process of inquiry? What are our disciplinary, sub-disciplinary, and personal expectations about what information is valid for what purposes? Moving the image both figuratively and literally into social scientific research has epistemological implications that raise widely applicable questions of validity, subjectivity, and rapport. Questions such as these are not new; they have a long intellectual history of prodding researchers and image makers since the advent of photography. That history is examined more deeply elsewhere, but let me spend some time to trace a sketch that loosely contextualizes the contours of the subsequent chapters.

Perhaps not too surprisingly, the camera and positivism emerged together (Berger & Mohr, 1982). Both photographic technology and philosophical framework stem from the aligned notions that the truth can be discerned empirically from objective facts observed in the world and that systematic documentation of these facts can lead to the harnessing of certain social processes and outcomes. The camera held promise as a valued tool for the strict empirical construction of knowledge in Western science, a promise that was embraced for medical, philanthropic, and legal advances and claims (Tagg, 1993). For example, in the United States, the camera served quite well for those hoping to reveal emergent social patterns during the shifts toward urbanization and industrialization. Paging through Jacob Riis's (1890) *How the Other Half Lives* over a century after its publication confirms this early

role of photography as an influential vehicle for social critique. Riis's images of orphans and of alcohol dens illustrate the advances and applications of new technology (including rudimentary flash photography) as well as the social conscience with which the camera could be used.

In a similar social vein, Lewis Hine was a pioneer of visual social science who earned a graduate degree in sociology from Columbia University while freelancing for the National Child Labor Committee. Hine focused his developing sociological lens on the social and economic disparities of the industrial city (as well as multiple other projects, such as child labor and immigration), using Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, as one particular case study. Sociologically informed, Hine's aim was to promote a rational, public dialogue about these inequities that would encourage social change. However, even given Hine's integration of sociological perspectives, the empirical promise of photography was relatively short-lived for the social sciences. With the exception of visual anthropology, the epistemological direction of the social sciences by mid-century became unhooked from the use of visual tools as valid modes of analytic inquiry.

Within 20th-century social sciences, epistemological assumptions regarding what constitutes valid research agendas fell along two main divisions or avenues of inquiry: qualitative and quantitative. Although the two are by no means mutually exclusive, qualitative approaches were and are based on the assumption that close, often intimate connections to the lived experiences of a particular phenomenon—gender socialization in junior high school or the effects of global technology on national identity in rural India, for example—produce the clearest and most informed understanding of the topic, whereas quantitative approaches fundamentally assume that the most reliable indicator of a phenomenon is represented through systematic analysis of large representative samples of a population about whom one is curious. Visual data receded as quantitative methodologies refined surveys and questionnaires that tracked the demographic and social shifts of the 20th century and as Robert Park's qualitatively oriented Chicago School perfected a notably text-based or verbal approach to exploring lived experiences through sociology (Platt, 1996).

Broader changes in the social location of photography may have also contributed to this shift away from mainstream social science epistemologies. By mid-century, photographs increasingly were held under the auspices of the state and within the walls of the museum. The special photographic division of Roosevelt's Farm Security Administration (FSA), headed by Roy Stryker, became one of the most influential and enduring legacies of the New Deal. The images from this program exist in our collective memories as the face of the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression; they simultaneously conjure the

desperation and resilience of the everyday American experience. We might forget, however, that from its inception, the photography of the FSA was critiqued as a politically motivated campaign to sustain support for New Deal policies by conjuring just such responses. This critique persisted—although motivated by different political agendas—when the division was transferred over to the Office of War Information in 1942, at which time it patriotically and unabashedly documented the country's mobilization for war.

Years later during the boom following World War II, the anthropological role of photographs merged with mainstream culture in the Museum of Modern Art's *The Family of Man* exhibit. Edward Steichen (1955), a champion of the aesthetic and artistic designation of photography, conceived of the exhibit as one that would present the "gamut of human relations," ultimately revealing our universal connections. It proved to be the most heavily attended exhibit of photography of its time, drawing capacity crowds throughout the United States before moving on to 69 venues in 37 other countries (Sandeen, 1995).

Since then, there has been a steady stream of social commentary within the walls of the museum. Suspicious of co-optation by governmental programs or the editorial constraints of photojournalism, the Riises and Hines of the second half of the 20th century voiced their critiques through stunning content and equally stunning aesthetics in galleries, coffee-table books, and now websites. Over the same period that documentary photographers were weaving compelling narratives laden with social institutional implications about the family, poverty, unemployment, urban problems, drug abuse, or religion, photographs in art galleries were losing much of their policy punch and nearly all of their utility within the social sciences (Becker, 1974). The ideological malleability of images by the state and the sentimentality of images such as in *The Family of Man*—not to mention ubiquitous family photo albums—were at odds with the modern march of social scientific rigor in the academy at mid-century, and an epistemological wariness still challenges the validity of images as data today.

Still later in the 20th century, critical documentary image-work in photography and increasingly video moved forward again as television and image-based technologies proliferated. Media studies reemerged from its Frankfurt School roots as the analytic arena for understanding the impact of images on society, producing a vibrant yet bounded discourse. This disciplinary shift toward media studies moved the focus onto institutional carriers and producers of images and audience responses. Findings were aimed as much at the industry as at the academy—a changed agenda from using images as data or as methodologies for exploring the social world. Yet, the critical connection between image and society enabled and continues to

spark productive collaborations within certain pockets of the social sciences. By the late 20th century, photographic criticism, epistemological debate, and sociological implications (broadly used) emerged in the work of authors as varied as Susan Sontag, Roland Barthes, and Jean Baudrillard.

The social and academic position of photography sheds some light on the disciplinary shifts with regard to images. At the core of these relationships are epistemological assumptions about subjectivity versus objective empiricism. For both conventional and image-based projects, this continuum poses perennial challenges for the social sciences and requires us to stake out a position for or within qualitative, quantitative, or combined approaches to research. When considering images, the line between subjectivist and objectivist-realist assumptions—that images capture something "real" and that images are constructions—is continually moving. Indeed, images often ask us to hold both positions simultaneously to greater or lesser degrees. Roland Barthes (1981), for example, championed the deeply personal, emotional intimacies with which we relate to certain photographs while simultaneously asserting what he believed was the unquestionable realist basis of photography; photographs demand that we accept that "this has been." The connection between subjectivity and realism is instructive for social scientific analysis. Rather than demanding only an objective reading, images also elicit various subjectivities from our participants that—instead of being bracketed away—can be probed and analyzed.

Just as subjectivity and realism interact in the space between the image and the viewer, the same occurs between the producer of the image and the subject or content. We may select in time and space what we want to capture, but the mechanical operation of the camera will document all that is before it in that moment. In other words, the camera is susceptible to the selectivity of the operator, but it is not selective once the shutter is opened (Collier & Collier, 1986).

As images reemerge as data within the social sciences, we must acknowledge the empirical components of the image while embracing the compelling challenges and opportunities of subjectivity and the potential emotional impact of making and reading images. Yes, cameras crop, adjust for lighting, and create moods in their captured environments; increasingly, they zoom and pan. And yes, questions regarding the selection of content within the frame, close-ups or wide angles, and a slew of technical considerations in general (digital versus analog, black and white versus color, SLR versus automatic) should be of significant interest as we address the epistemological concerns related to visual data. However, neither the camera's capacity to affect what is captured or the ways that images can be used by other social institutions such as museums or the state should rule out the camera as a

research tool for other disciplines. Images need not—in fact, should not—be considered the province of one discipline or held to one set of readings. This is especially true in an era after the so-called cultural turn, when we no longer assume the pure objectivity of unbiased academic research and allow for or even expect transparent subjective reflexivity in many projects. In fact, the same questions of selection and technique that we pose about cameras have already been asked and answered regarding our epistemological assumptions about nonvisual approaches to research. We select which questionnaire items to contrast with others in our regression models. We select, for example, the interactions of gender with religious-based voluntarism rather than (or in combination with) socioeconomic status. We choose certain interview fragments over others to bring to life our ethnographies. We selectively reconstruct the setting of an inner-city elementary school by describing as much or as little from our fieldnotes as we believe is needed to evoke our situated observation or to lend support to our arguments. In narratives, we verbally zoom and pan, taking the reader down one path chosen from among many others. Visual approaches to understanding and inquiring about aspects of the social world need not fall outside the parameters set by the epistemological assumptions and rigors regarding how we collect valuable information. In fact, many times, they already fit snugly within them.

By saying this, I do not want to overemphasize a subjective defense. There are empirical benefits of the mechanical and digital workings of the camera that we may still accept epistemologically, even given this caveat. William Henry Fox Talbot (1844/1969), the founder of paper-process photography, was immediately attuned to this mechanical operation and wrote in *The Pencil of Nature,* "It frequently happens, moreover—and this is one of the charms of photography—that the operator himself [sic] discovers on examination, perhaps long afterwards, that he has depicted many things he had no notion of at the time" (notes to Plate XIII). Talbot's observation, indeed the very title of his book, suggests the empirical sense in which the camera was imagined at its origins. While the photographer carefully sets up the shot, the camera captures more than the photographer's eye can take in. Thinking about visual data through the surprise of discovery holds potential in a range of research agendas today. The empirical projects in this collection suggest that employing images in our methodologies often reveals surprising new knowledge that we as scholars, students, and researchers may not have recognized through conventional means.

Unexpected discovery might be interpreted through a strict empirical epistemology of what actually existed at that moment when the shutter was depressed—cars in a parking lot provide a quantifiable estimate of the

socioeconomic standing of a local congregation but, when used later in a project on spatial demographics, might reveal the percentage of cars from each state in a tri-state region. Strict empiricism emphasizes "indexicality" or the one-to-one relationship between the image produced by the camera and the object in the social world. On the other hand, the grounded theory approach of qualitative empiricism is easily amenable to the potential of discovery when, as with fieldnotes, patterns emerge in our interpretation of details that we did not know existed (or did not think were meaningful) when we clicked the shutter—the seating arrangements and proximity of family members while at church over the course of a year might mark the internal relationship struggles that the husband and wife experienced but tried to keep private until their ultimate divorce. In this instance, the camera captures something that the photographer/researcher was unable to see without the interpretative collaboration of participants. In the realm of research, these surprises are as much an outcome of our methods as they are the outcome of discovery, as Talbot suggested so many years ago.

While I argue that images have great flexibility within our disciplines, the chapters that follow have a qualitative bent. Even so, the chapters are varied and do not suggest one global epistemology for images. In this spirit, these projects reflect many epistemologies already at play across and within disciplines. Incorporating images into these assumptions strengthens, amends, challenges, advances, and if nothing else, makes us think about our epistemological bases. In short, images help us to ask what we know about the social world and how we know it.

As is evident by now, discussions about epistemology and discussions about methodology continually collapse upon each other. These are two sides of the spinning coin of social inquiry. Epistemological assumptions affect the types of methods that we choose, just as the methods that we use— their strengths and their limitations—act on our ways of thinking about the way we generate valid social knowledge. Given this dialectic relationship between epistemology and methods, this collection is rooted in a practical or pragmatic epistemology. Howard Becker (1996) suggests something similar for qualitative approaches to social science in general. From a pragmatic epistemology, we allow each case or each topic to shape our epistemological assumptions. We even expect changes in those assumptions as a project moves forward. The same may be applied to visual research. Images will trigger different insights depending on the different questions that we ask of them (Becker, 1986; Suchar, 1989). Knowles and Sweetman (2004) suggest a pragmatic realism as a working stance that brackets definitive definitions of images and enables bounded research within various disciplines. The combination of these two stances works best for me. Pragmatic epistemology

provides variation in assumptions but steers clear from holding the realism of the image as a unifying constant across projects. In other words, the epistemological assumptions in these chapters work well for the topics and questions at hand yet should not be read as fixed truths about the way to construct research agendas on these or other topics.

Methodology

Methodology, as I will use it here, is distinct from epistemology. Methodology considers the innovative ways in which researchers employ visual tools and techniques in the field to generate rapport and gather data. Although distinct, methods are always related to epistemological assumptions even if they do not always follow directly from a particular epistemological base. Jon Wagner suggests in Chapter 2 that at times methods and epistemology are tightly synchronized while at others they are loosely associated. The pragmatic epistemology that I suggest allows for a wide array and combination of epistemological assumptions and methodologies. Because of this, certain approaches in the chapters that follow will be immediately recognizable. Often, techniques are appropriated from established methodological traditions. At other times, newly emergent tactics are employed. Most often, these two paths intertwine in ways that draw on conventional means while pushing the boundaries to best use the image-based methodological tools. Across the types of approaches used, methodologies also vary from explicit empirical uses of documentation—a realist position—to storytelling approaches built on sequences of images—a narrative position—to integrative techniques that incorporate interviews or participants' own photographs and points of view—a reflexive position. These positions refer to commonly debated social scientific methodological assumptions rather than to the epistemological assumptions surrounding photography or images alone. Like methodological techniques, methodological positions often intertwine, although many researchers implicitly privilege one position over others.

Following the strict empirical assumptions of visual research, images are direct representations of the field once we have left. If we extend the example of church parking lots used earlier, care would be taken to frame the image so that a particular field was captured; if subsequent images were taken, the identical camera position would recapture the same field and allow for comparative analyses of correlating data. Collier and Collier (1986), in their classic *Visual Anthropology*, outline methods for recording the public landscape as well as creating a cultural inventory of private spaces. Drawing on the empirical/realist tradition of images for data collection, the Colliers remind us that the camera, as opposed to the researcher's

eye, is relatively indefatigable and precise, and the image traces captured on film (or now digitally) are not susceptible to the fading memory to which even the most astute researcher is vulnerable. In other words, when we leave the field, we are no longer dependent on the few notes we could scribble while there or our recall, which is often filtered by our original research questions or the acknowledged and unacknowledged assumptions that we carry with us. We now have additional data—limited, of course, by the way we framed each shot, the focus and lighting, and the number of images we captured. Although these data are equally susceptible to filters and assumptions, the camera, as Talbot promises, will also capture data that we may not have been attuned to but can access later.

Taken at this stage alone, these explicitly empirical methodological suggestions for constructing typologies and creating indexical markers of public and private social landscapes are deeply linked to realist assumptions. Yet most often, visual research such as the richly detailed analyses that the Colliers craft is simultaneously tied to a narrative methodological position, in which images are more than the sum of their material traces. Rather, they gain meaning and depth from their use and placement in relation to each other. Images as data can be used to construct visual stories that become the building blocks of an argument. The narrative turn in the Colliers' methodology is based on systematic methods of review in which the researchers comb through images until patterns become evident. From these patterns, images are rearranged and a more narrow focus is applied that addresses and compares particular instances of this pattern. These patterns can turn into new methodologies or at least new directions for the guiding questions under consideration. Returning to the field, we may take more focused images that highlight these emerging patterns. Shooting scripts, like interview questions, are works in progress that may shift over the span of a project as new insights reveal themselves and as narratives congeal (Suchar, 1989). Within these designs, the images remain rooted in a realist methodological position, even as the methods attempt to convey visual narratives of the field. However, narrative methodological positions can be constructed using a reflexive base assumption as well.

Reflexive epistemologies of visual research hold that the meaning of the images resides most significantly in the ways that participants interpret those images, rather than as some inherent property of the images themselves. Doug Harper's (1987; see also, Harper, 2002) *Working Knowledge* illustrates this reflexive approach well by using photo elicitation. In photo elicitation methodology, images are used as part of the interview protocol (Collier & Collier, 1986). In conjunction with or as an alternative to conversational questions, participants are asked open-ended questions about a

photograph. Prompting a participant with "tell me about this photograph," for example, shifts the locus of meaning away from empirically objective representations of objects or interactions. Instead, images gain significance through the way that participants engage and interpret them. Auto-driven photo elicitation takes this method one step further by removing the researcher from the image-making process altogether. Auto-driven photo elicitation can be relatively broad in focus, by asking participants to photograph or video anything they want about their life, or quite narrow, by giving them a set of specific questions to answer with their images.

The reflexive methodological position allows for the greatest malleability of conventional approaches. In fact, some suggest that unique configurations of each individual project require correspondingly new or tailor-made methods. Sarah Pink (2001), in her careful explanation of visual ethnography, argues that images cannot, or more particularly should not, fit into the already existing methodologies of the social sciences. Rather, we must develop new methodologies for this new analytic tool and data source, which will fit new ways to think in and about various social worlds. Pink's perspective is seductive for ethnographic research, and I agree that visual research requires closer methodological and theoretical attention to developing the unique grammar of images, both as data and more broadly as guiding points in everyday life. This book is one step in sparking such a discussion, but it does not attempt to accomplish that feat alone. Yet, this collection does not advocate for one methodology or propose another but rather suggests that visual methods work well in combination with others. Images and videos add an additional layer of data from which a critical reader may triangulate between statistical data, theoretical or conceptual argumentation, and the subjectively interpreted lived experience of the participants. Doing so challenges our methodologies and invigorates our inquiries.

Substantive/Theoretical Contributions

Finally, this book articulates the unique substantive findings that visual methods produce. In addition to epistemological concerns and innovative methodologies, the case studies below highlight new knowledge that might have gone unnoticed had these methods not been employed. This collection highlights new ways of thinking about a topic and new ways of understanding how our participants think about the world. By theoretical contributions, I do not mean the relatively narrow metatheoretical discourse regarding the construction of photographic or video meanings—although this may be part of the contribution—but rather the potential to think differently about the topic that we set out to investigate. Visual research reveals new insights

that our conventional methodologies can miss. Such insights occur frequently in reflexive approaches when images open up internal worlds and interpretations of our participants regarding issues that we might not otherwise think to probe. More generally, the methodological contributions of deepening rapport can unlock what otherwise might be closed off. Steven J. Gold makes particular note of this in Chapter 6. Of course, we have to acknowledge that these benefits come with consequences. Whereas certain doors may be open, others may be closed. Whereas some issues may be tapped by images, other issues may go unnoticed. The camera may invoke rapport in one situation and shut it down in another. In addition to generating substantive findings, communicating these contributions of visual research, as Stephen Papson, Robert Goldman, and Noah Kersey do in Chapter 12, requires nimble translation and a challenging search for a suitable—and acceptable—home.

Outline of Chapters

The collection is loosely clustered around four sections. Chapters 2 and 3 deal with conceptual aspects of photography. Chapters 4 and 5 look at archival research. The middle of the collection—Chapters 6 through 9—consists of four various approaches to using still cameras directly in empirical research. Finally, the book concludes with three chapters that offer new directions beyond the still image.

Jon Wagner takes on the supposed divide between image makers in the social sciences and image makers as documentarians in Chapter 2. Wagner neatly encapsulates this perceived tension by suggesting that academics view documentarians as overly concerned with aesthetics while documentarians view academics as too reliant on theory-driven protocols. In unraveling this presumed tangle of disciplinary claims, Wagner asks, what makes an image credible or empirical and with whom do these decisions reside. Wagner answers these questions through historical grounding and detailed case studies that reveal epistemological similarities between these approaches and the analytical and theoretical benefits of critically reading across them.

In the third chapter, Barry M. Goldstein, a practicing photographer with a background in the medical sciences, explores through personal reflection and epistemological argument the extensive subjectivities that are bound up socially, culturally, politically, and technologically in photographs. Goldstein's title is a conscious barb intended to cut through much of the ambivalence of photographic discourse. Rather than starting from the premise that all photographs contain elements of truth, Goldstein argues that

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acknowledging the opposite makes us better readers and creators of images. This chapter combines methodological concerns such as social context and rapport with the often unacknowledged biases of framing, lighting, shutter speed, and even the quasi-sacred photographic dictum of the "decisive moment." Much more "decided" than decisive, all images must be understood not only by the image maker's decision process but also by the interface with the viewer.

Missionary societies of the 19th and early 20th century were meticulous record keepers of European and American colonial expansion. Photography provided a novel and efficient technology for documenting the work of mission societies, the powerful political and economic actors with whom they came in contact, and the daily and ceremonial life at the junctures of cultures. Today, digital scans of these extensive archives are increasingly available through collaborations between mission societies, scholars, and research institutions, reinvigorating a new analysis of these visual artifacts and the intricate power dynamics bound up within them. In Chapter 4, Jon Miller explores comparative/historical methodology and vividly represents the academic potential for reconsidering this data. Miller invites us—visually and conceptually—to consider potential interpretations of these archival images and to actively create our own questions about the images located in the Internet Mission Photography Archive.

In 1964, President Lyndon Johnson declared a "war on poverty," sparking policy shifts and legislation, many of which remain in certain form today. Perhaps not as well remembered was the cultural shift that Johnson also hoped to produce, in part by recruiting advisers to select photographs representing the human face of government. Erina Duganne excavates the Johnson archive in Chapter 5, tracing this short-lived project and assessing the change that was hoped for and the complications that ultimately undermined its potential. Duganne illustrates that the images and text found in the archive reveal only partial answers to her questions. Instead, Duganne suggests that we must critically consider the conflicting, underlying, and often unexamined aesthetic idiosyncrasies that influenced the multiple ways that photography was evaluated and used. By doing so, Duganne raises interesting concerns regarding the historical role and the continued assumptions of photography.

The next four chapters explicitly represent the methodological benefits and constraints of using photography as part of a broader research agenda and the new insights that can be gained from visual empirical work. Departing from the early anthropological use of cameras to illustrate a concept or a set of relationships that the researcher had already identified as relevant (Ball & Smith, 1992), these chapters reference John Collier's

metaphorically rich call to employ photography as a "can opener" for deeper reflection and discussion within the interview process (Collier & Collier, 1986, p. 25). Eliciting responses through images brings the "subject" into the research process as an interpreter or even an active collaborator, rather than as a passive object of study. Steven J. Gold begins this discussion in Chapter 6 by reflecting on his years of experience researching immigrant communities in the United States. Throughout this career, photography has influenced his work in different ways and at different times. The breadth of Gold's work provides a long view of this type of qualitative approach, noting the strengths and weaknesses of the camera in the field. What is interesting about Gold's chapter is the way he reveals the manifest and latent effects of the camera in uncovering patterns of ethnic labor or gender relations within his communities of study. At times, as a result of the visual needs of the camera, Gold goes behind the scenes to document labor practices *in situ* rather than simply interviewing significant contacts in isolated office spaces. Similarly, the way that individuals respond to the camera unintentionally indicates gender patterns (both public and private) that pervade these communities. What's more, images at times contradict narrative interviews and thus provide an additional research node from which to interpret or triangulate findings.

In Chapter 7, Marisol Clark-Ibáñez thoroughly details photo elicitation as a methodological technique that circumvents elements of the researcher/subject divide. Her work among school-age children in south Los Angeles is richly substantiated and sympathetically illustrated. Clark-Ibáñez lays out the steps by which to conduct auto-driven photo elicitation research, a process in which the participants in the study capture images that are subjectively salient to their own lived experiences. One of the benefits of such an approach is the "a-ha" moment that can arise as the participants reveal segments of their lives unknown to the researcher. Clark-Ibáñez highlights the difference between her outsider eye and the children's insider view with refreshing honesty and insight. Balancing theory and on-the-ground experience, Clark-Ibáñez suggests that bringing the subject into the research as an active participant reduces the voyeurism of older models of visual research that allowed "us" to view "them" (Banks & Morphy, 1997; Lutz & Collins, 1993).

Jeffrey Samuels's Chapter 8 offers an insightful counterpoint to Clark-Ibáñez's portrait of inner-city youth. Samuels conducted extensive fieldwork within a Sri Lankan community of monks, asking questions about the aesthetic attractions leading to ordination and the ways these are transformed or reinforced as the young teen novitiates age. In his more recent trips to Sri Lanka, Samuels put cameras in the hands of the monks and asked them to

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take photographs of often-abstract spiritual precepts or to simply take photographs of something that "attracted their heart." The results are compelling. Samuels neatly articulates the arc in his own thinking about his research as he reviews the photographs taken by these young monks. The revelations continue as he elicits detailed and sometimes unanticipated responses during photo-driven interviews. But in addition, Samuels meticulously extracts the marked differences between the trip in which he provided a shooting script and the trip in which he allowed greater range in the choice of subject matter. His reflections raise fascinating and sensitive questions that are situated at the core of visual work.

In Chapter 9, Emmanuel David brings to life the residual evidence of political protest, social control, and local resistance through the visually evocative remnants of public art and ad hoc symbolic communication. Focusing on political posters, graffiti, and the ongoing attempts by police and others to remove these, David notes the visual aspect of public discourse and the symbolic struggles being waged over defining public space. In doing so, David's insights illustrate the everyday potential of local visual methodologies to generate theoretically compelling stories and critical assessments of the often taken-for-granted world around us.

The final three chapters in this volume push the boundaries of visual research. Although their authors have very different research agendas, these chapters suggest that our knowledge about the social world is in part constrained by the ways in which we are able to present, discuss, critique, and improve on that knowledge. New forms of visual technology and visual documentation require new forms of presentation and dissemination. As with other forms of data, visual data are influenced by the methodological approaches, ideological assumptions, and technological apparatuses used to capture them. Put succinctly, the imprint of the approach affects the outcome of the image.

Ruth Holliday addresses precisely this concern in Chapter 10, arguing that newer forms of video research, in the form of auto-driven video diaries or "confessionals," allow for greater flexibility and control among subjects in tailoring their reflexive presentation. Holliday's queer video methodology encourages the gray areas in which identities, selves, and sexualities are played with and performed. Holliday couches the empirical outcomes of this methodology in an extensive theoretical framework. Beyond the benefits for research designs, Holliday raises the prescient point that text-based disciplines are not able to adequately engage this video format without condensing it into a conventional text-based narrative. And yet it is precisely the presentation of the moving image that Holliday suggests will provide informed critiques and an open scholarly dialogue in the future.

In Chapter 11, Yolanda Hernandez-Albujar, constrained by the dynamics of her field of research, pushes against the conventional parameters of visual methods. Hernandez-Albujar explores the emotional complexities of migrant mothers working as domestic servants in the heart of Rome. Some mothers have their children with them whereas others make agonizing decisions to leave their children behind. Hernandez-Albujar argues that as a ubiquitous form of contemporary life, video has the potential to unlock reflexive and emotional responses from viewers in a way that text-based analysis cannot. However, Hernandez-Albujar's participants, many of whom were undocumented workers, were unwilling to be videotaped. Rather than forgoing the contributions that she believed video can evoke, Hernandez-Albujar's experiments with mixing the symbolic and metaphoric images of filmmaking with analytic inquiries of the social sciences. Her approach prods debates at the core of visual methodologies regarding constructed images, epistemological assumptions, and theoretical claims on social knowledge.

Stephen Papson, Robert Goldman, and Noah Kersey conclude this collection by posing a similar future-looking challenge—in their case, the epistemology of hypermedia. This team has compiled an extensive website of commercial advertising images of global capital. Publishing findings on the Web allows for vivid representations of advertising, including streaming videos, and has imaginative pedagogical applications. At the same time, virtual analyses present a variety of perplexing new questions that the conventional author need not consider. For example, Chapter 12 makes us consider the role of aesthetics for the virtual reader. How can the author attempt to direct or control the nonlinear navigation of the user/reader's surfing style? What happens to television commercials when they are remediated on the Web? And who peer-reviews a website in ways that are recognizable and valued within the academy? Such questions may be ahead of most of our curves at this point, but they clearly represent one imminent direction for our disciplines. After years of hypertext writing and website design, Papson, Goldman, and Kersey ambivalently pull back from a Web-only approach and suggest that mixed formats will serve well as a bridge to the pending but not yet secured digital future.

Reading Across Chapters

Although this book can be read in ways that attempt to amalgamate perspectives and methodological approaches into a grand toolkit, a stronger tack is to read these perspectives against each other and against the grain of their own internal positions. Contributors were selected with the hope of sparking

internal conversations across the chapters. For example, Wagner's discussion (in Chapter 2) of the credibility of images among social scientists and documentary photographers is neatly balanced with a reflective piece by Goldstein (in Chapter 3), a professional photographer who operates outside the traditional bounds of academic social inquiry. Miller's historical-comparative methodology of missionary organizations (in Chapter 4) details an overarching argument for the utility of archival research, while Duganne (in Chapter 5) presents the findings of just such an archival project.

Beyond the chapters contained within these pages, comparisons should be extended to ongoing and future projects. How are the epistemological assumptions about creating social knowledge in one project applicable to your own? How might these be appropriated or nuanced for the types of questions you want to ask or for the populations you want to consider?

Let me start with the epistemological and methodological considerations first. Earlier, I suggested that reading these chapters should be an interactive epistemological odyssey engaging the authors, the readers, and various disciplinary positions. How might the assumptions embedded within one approach be lifted up and placed down within another context? How would the approach change? What might it reveal? For example, how might Miller's rereading (in Chapter 4) of archival missionary photographs depicting cultural encounters resonate in similar and different ways from Samuels's use of the camera among Sri Lankan monks (in Chapter 8)? What driving assumptions about the role of power or the translation of visuals across cultures can be assessed in each project? Do we assume different or similar meanings when we view images of different eras and from different hands? How do we clarify these distinctions in the questions we ask or the interpretations we make of these texts? What supporting or corroborating data might we seek out as we assess these distinctions? In general, each of these chapters can be juxtaposed to others in asking how we know what we know about the social world.

The overall structure of the book reinforces the clusters of methodological, theoretical/conceptual, and epistemological themes. Grounded in historical arcs, the first four chapters raise explicit theoretical, epistemological, and methodological issues with an eye toward the past as well as the present. On the other end, the final three chapters, while also empirically based, suggest interesting new questions, future directions, and the current limitations of the text-based social scientific research and reporting. These discussions book-end the four contemporary field studies nicely. As such, they raise interesting questions: How are aesthetic assumptions or truths bound up in the process of image making, selecting, and reading? How does Wagner's argument (in Chapter 2) about the construction of credible images, for

example, play out in the documentation of South Central Los Angeles neighborhoods or the political graffiti in New Orleans? How do publishing constraints affect the circulation and readability of image-based projects such as visualizing immigration? What are the benefits and potential limitations of rapidly developing technology, as Gold points out in Chapter 6, for rapport and relationship building? Reading in this direction—from epistemology to empirical research—is productive, but reading in the opposite direction also offers potential insights. How might the fieldwork sharpen or be incorporated into the conceptual arguments? How might photo elicitation with archival images inform photographic use, interpretations, and memory? How will auto-driven projects document the way that certain populations experience hypermedia or advertising?

In addition to the epistemological and methodological considerations of this collection, the book may be read with an eye toward substantive interests or similarities within populations. Gender, for example, is a central concern within the social sciences. Reading across these chapters with that focus uncovers fascinating textures in the ways in which gender is displayed, performed, elicited, and resisted. Wagner, Miller, Hernandez-Albujar, Gold, and Holliday (Chapters 2, 4, 11, 6, and 10, respectively) engage this issue directly, alternating between structures and agency as genders are reproduced across starkly different times, places, and spaces. Through comparisons, we may ask how different methodologies set different parameters regarding what we can know about gender at any given time or in any given place. How might various approaches work similarly or differently if applied in different contexts or within different populations?

Children are another common concern within these projects. Clark-Ibáñez (Chapter 7) and Samuels (Chapter 8) place children at the core of their research, and Wagner (Chapter 2), Holliday (Chapter 10), and even Miller and Duganne (Chapters 4 and 5) at times add to the internal conversation about representations of and by children and teens. What works best for which set of children? How do certain approaches fit with certain populations but not others? How do representations of children function given their setting or when compared to images of adults? What might be alternative approaches to employing visual methods or visual data with children and teens?

Most social scientists who are engaged in fieldwork are concerned about cross-cultural interactions, which must be thoughtfully considered when using visual methods. Miller (Chapter 4) reminds us that the complicated and bumpy terrain of colonial encounters cannot be understood from one point of view alone; rather, cultural contact—often illustrated through photographs—involved circuitous and contradictory patterns of exchange. Samuels renegotiates this carefully in Chapter 8 while Wagner (Chapter 2)

and Papson, Goldman, and Kersey (Chapter 12) unpack the process by which global cultures are documented and circulated.

Other issues crisscross through these chapters including stratification, immigration, and politics. Reading substantively scrapes along the tip of the iceberg for visually thinking through various methodological approaches to the recurring core issues within the social sciences. Rather than providing fixed answers alone, perhaps these examples will generate additional forays into visually exploring gender or childhood development or immigration, forays that will enrich those conversations.

In conclusion, visual research is not objectively better than other methodological approaches. Yet, as our world is increasingly inundated with visual representations that contribute to the meanings that our participants carry around in their heads—through advertisements, television, film, home videos, the Internet, and camera phones—image-based research holds great potential for supplementing other forms of social knowledge that will strengthen, challenge, and contradict the way we understand the social world of ourselves and others. I hope the conversations within this collection work toward that end and that these conversations extend in other projects long after this book is closed.

Note

1. Because I did not consider these as visual data at the time I took the photographs, I did not seek signed consent from the boy's guardians and therefore am unable to reproduce the images here.

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