Deposited in DRO:

17 March 2014

Version of attached file:

Accepted Version

Peer-review status of attached file:

Peer-reviewed

Citation for published item:

McMurray, R. (2014) 'Encouraging the managerial imagination : ethnography, smart phones and novel ways of seeing.', International journal of work organisation and emotion., 6 (1). pp. 24-39.

Further information on publisher's website:

Publisher's copyright statement:

Additional information:

Title: **Encouraging the managerial imagination: ethnography, smart phones and novel ways of seeing**

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Encouraging the managerial imagination: ethnography, smart phones and novel ways of seeing

Abstract

>This paper invites discussion of the role, potential and limitations of employing the ethnographic lens in undergraduate management teaching as a response to growing concerns over the usefulness of critical management education. Specially, it outlines the case for employing the Smart Phone as a novel channel through to introduce would-be managers to new 'ways of seeing' (Berger, 1972). Describing how this is achieved in practice through the production of photo essays and on-line films, the paper contributes to our understanding of how the apparent freedom afforded by the ethnographic lens to 'see anew' is necessarily constructed through the disciplinary effects of ethics, copyrights and the privileging of a very particular academic audience. The result is a necessarily circumscribed pedagogic space that nonetheless allows room for the doubt, uncertainty, contradiction and experimentation that is essential for more engaged learning and critical managing.*

Key words: CMS, ethnography, film, learning, managing, teaching

Introduction

There is growing concern over the effects of business education as financial crises have engulfed developed western economies and managers are accused of greed, profiteering, mismanagement and reward for failure (Gallos, 2008; Cunliffe & Linstead, 2009; Croft and Binham, 2012; The Economist, 2012). The suspicion is that the lessons offered by business schools have done little to mitigate the problems faced by the wider world (Gabriel, 2009), indeed, we stand accused of producing the graduates who brought the global economy to its knees (Alajoutsijärvi, 2012) as we equipped future leaders with *a priori* categories that are unquestioningly inflicted on the world (Chia, 1999) and manufactured management students bored with the very idea of managing (Vaill, 1983). No wonder some label us academies of the apocalypse (James, 2009).

Such concerns require a response from those of us who comprise the academy. They invite us to look again at the lessons we offer, the interest we elicit and the effects we intend. Examining how photography and film may be used to encourage critically informed management learning, this paper considers how we might achieve that which the best management teaching has always offered, namely, pedagogic spaces that connect faculty and students in the 'imaginative consideration of learning... to construct an intellectual vision of a new world' (Whitehead, 1929, p.93). The paper explores whether the use of an ethnographically informed camera lens can provide management students with new 'ways of seeing' (Berger, 1972) that encourage learners to question, interrogate, investigate, recombine, challenge and problematize the world around them so as to better manage within it. Focusing on the construction of observation, I suggest that the camera lens is an ideal device through which to fire the sociological imagination (Wright-Mills, 1959) in those who are about to embark on a lifelong process of management learning that is designed to engage with the challenges that arise from complex worlds (Gabriel, 2009; Cunliffe and Linstead, 2009). Drawing on examples from my own teaching, I consider the ways in which the production of photo essays and films can engender new ways of seeing (Berger, 1972) that are apt to appeal to a digital generation with little prior experience of managing or organising.

The paper is organised as follows. First a case is made for opening up the sociological imagination of management students through exposure to more ethnographically informed ways of seeing. This necessitates a brief account of the possible benefits and limitations of an ethnographic sensibility before considering how this might be achieved through deployment of the Smart Phone camera. Having considered the use of the ethnographic lens in theory, some examples are offered of its use with students in practice. Focusing on teaching methods and visual products, this section considers the modes and effects of disciplining management students to see more ethnographically. The effect of audience is taken up toward the end of the paper as part of a reflexive account of my own effect on student learning in both political and disciplinary terms (Foucault, 1977/1991). In concluding the paper I consider how the tensions that exist between the desire to give students the intellectual freedom to develop their sociological imagination on the one hand, and the disciplinary control of an assessed educational context on the other, might be reconciled. I start however by drawing connections between the need to excite the sociological imagination in students and the place of a more ethnographic gaze.

Thinking imaginatively ethnographically

There have been renewed calls to excite the sociological imagination (Wright-Mills, 1959) in our management students pursuant to developing the critical and complex thinking required to ensure that managers can cope with and respond to the often unrelenting pace of change in a globalised world (Cunliffe & Linstead, 2009; Duarte, 2009; Gallos, 2008). To possess a sociological imagination is to have 'the capacity to shift from one perspective to another, and in the process to build up an adequate view of a total society and its components' (Wright-Mills, 1959:232). This implies developing within the student the critical faculties required to locate themselves, others and the minutia of everyday life within wider flows of societal, cultural, structural and historical processes so as to consider their relations and affects each upon the other. When such a sensibility is applied to Critical Management Studies(CMS) it suggests a concern with identifying 'structural and economic inequalities, systems of power relations and modes of domination' (Cunliffe and Linstead, 2009:5) with a mind to considering or even enacting alternative modes of organising predicated on more inclusive, responsible, humanistic or emancipatory principles.

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At first glance it may not be clear that such imagination has a place within our business schools, particularly where:

> 'the perception of management as a field of study for young people is entirely instrumental – an effective stepping stone to launch a career; but one devoid of either intrinsic interest or social value' (Gabriel, 2009:379).

Such perceptions are associated with tendencies toward intellectual singularity, narcissism and boredom which can only be combated insofar as we encourage management learners to look both at and beyond themselves (Whitehead, 1929). It requires that they be excited in the imaginative consideration of alternative ways of seeing and being within the world, in which the potentiality of locating self within networks of relations, structures, processes and forces speaks to an active project of organising self and other. It requires figuring out *who you are* with all of the associated implications for your way of being in the world. One way of moving toward such a position is to encourage learners to view the world ethnographically.

Ethnography 'rests on the peculiar practice of representing the social reality of others through the analysis of one's own experience in the world of others' (Van Maanen, 2011, xiii). It takes as its starting point the need to imagine the relations between self and other in specific cultural, spatial and temporal contexts. This includes the requirement that the individual make sense of the wider scene as part of a process of re-presentation. Practically, this speaks to a commitment to 'being there' wherein patient, diligent and cautious observation of unfolding processes allows the tutored eye to see the remarkable in the everyday as well as 'the mundane elements of remarkable events and contexts' (Silverman, 2007: 18). What and how we see is of course influenced by the social location of the viewer, a limitation which – when unrecognised and unacknowledged – has left ethnography open to claims of colonialism, sexism, objectification and coercion. This reminds us that there is never 'just looking' rather, we are always looking at the relations between things and ourselves, wherein what we perceive depends on the ways in which we have been encouraged to see (Berger, 1972).

Within ethnography Van Maanen (2011) identifies a number of different ways of seeing, variously labelled as realist, impressionist, confessional, critical, formal, corporate and literary tales. Each effects what is seen and reproduced depending on how the ethnographer conceives of facts, negotiates their distances to participants, claims authority and visibility, promotes the voices of others, or explicitly acknowledges the effect of their own politics, in addition to innumerable other refractions of the gaze. Yet what each mode of seeing has in common, what each fieldworker learns, 'is how to appreciate the world in a different key' (Van Maanen, 2011:118). It is this knack for seeing differently and arriving – however imperfectly – at views of organising that are embedded in an appreciation of wider cultures, processes and structures that is particular useful to business students. Indeed, it is the ability to link specific events and intricacies to wider movements and meanings, while still reflecting on the effect of self as viewer (and writer) that is a trademark of both an active sociological imagination and good organizational ethnography (Cunliffe, 2010).

Developing the above point Cunliffe (2010) notes that ethnographic modes of seeing require immersion and translation if the student is to understand human experiences in context. Such commitment is a pre-requisite to the production of thick descriptions that give a sense of temporality, being-there and credibility. It requires time to figure out who you are, the type of tale you will tell and how you will write it. It is also an ethical project in the sense that from start to finish the ethnographer makes decisions that will effect participants and self in respect of: who and what to observe (where, when, what, duration, frequency, appearance, relations), what to leave unsaid (bracketing off), the use of trust, the portrayal of others, the selection of voices, the mode of interpretation, and style of representation. It is something of this experience and resulting sensibility that I seek to invoke within large numbers of management students.

To convey, as described below, all of the above to large groups of undergraduate students attending a single module is no easy matter. It is for this reason that no claim can be made to produce fully fledged organisational ethnographers from just one course. Accordingly the aim is more modest, yet hopefully still profound, directed as it is to opening up students to a wider and more sociologically informed view of organising through an ethnographically informed mode of learning. The purpose of the course I lead is to plant seeds that germinate

an interest in and understanding of ethnographic ways of seeing. Yet to achieve this I must first connect with the learner: I need to take some everyday aspect of students' lives and employ them as a means through which to open up an interest in the worlds and lives of others. To this end I recruit the Smart Phone camera as accomplice in the promotion of the ethnographic lens.

'Smart Phones' & the ethnographic lens

As fully fledged citizens of the YouTube generation, the fresher's class of 2011/12 were comfortable with the invitation to *broadcast yourself*. They were comfortable with the ubiquity of image and the ability to endlessly produce and reproduce visually centred and textually accompanied accounts of the self and other. They were comfortable with the technology that facilitates such reproduction, not least the internet enabled, photographically capable and almost universally available Smart Phone.   This device connects students to friends, family, strangers, networks and the wider world. It is a logical step to extend this connection to the academic world of ideas. Indeed, Mitchell (2011) suggests that such novel visual tools can help novice researchers explore the possibilities for eliciting critical and engaged commentary as part of a more inclusive exploration of that which constitutes 'data'.

A second related concerned is with the effect of seeing the world through a lens. At the very beginning of his book on Digital Film Making director Mike Figgis talks of the ways in which using different cameras and different lenses makes you 'suddenly realise this is a whole different way of looking at things' (Figgis, 2007: 3). This links to Thomas's contention that objects – in this case the Smart Phone – obtain their meaning in use: 'objects are not what they are made to be but what they have become' (Thomas 1999:4 cited in Rose 2012:286). It is only with interaction that certain qualities become activated or meanings mobilised. This interactional becoming is not however unidirectional for the process of engagement shapes the interlocutor in so far as the person is 'momentarily shaped by the visual object as they look at it' (Rose, 2012: 286) – or look 'through it' in this case – as the agency of the object ensures the co-constitution of the person and the object in the given moment as each changes and disrupts the other. Thus a Smart Phone is phone until it is employed as a camera lens for viewing, and the nature of that view changes in-turn depending on whether the viewer is

concerned with stills or motion, literalness or post-capture enhancement. The presence of lens changes the way in which the person views and interacts with the world around them, moving with rather than independently from the would-be ethnographer, affecting their modes of engagement with, and embodied experience of, the environment they are in and re-presenting (Pink, 2009). Moreover, the nature of the pocket-lens is transformed according to the techniques – cinematic, documentary, vérité, reportage – that are brought to bear by the student. In these ways the deployment of Smart Phone lens has the potential to change – to usefully disrupt – our taken for granted ways of seeing.

A third reason for employing the Smart Phone camera lies in the ability to reproduce the mediated encounter with *other*. To capture, develop, edit and re-present image and text is to begin to understand the processes and limitations of reconstituting our ethnographically informed encounters for other others to see. It speaks to the *graph* or writing in ethnography; but rather than being required to produce some Malinowskian tome, the camera lens enables more immediate and perhaps less mediated communication of that which has been seen. Unlike writing, the un-doctored image carries traces of the 'real' (Clarke, 1997) a link to something, however bracketed or posed, that 'was there'. Not that the photo is 'real' in any essentialist sense. As Barthes (1981/2000) notes, a photo is nothing but chemicals on paper (or digitally stored data resulting from the work of electronic photo detectors). The photo or film is nothing without that to which it refers. And yet, that the referent was in some sense captured attests to the student being there – a certification of the presence of one with the other in a way that words alone can never provide (Barthes, 1981/2000). Thus, images are useful ethnographically not because they reproduce or prove a 'real', but because they speak to a series of relations and hidden affects – cultural, emotional, political, organisational – negotiated within and between ethnographic context, student, photograph and viewer. Indeed, it could not be otherwise if we accept that the image 'purposely distorts the world we take for granted and makes the photographic act part of a larger way of seeing and constructing meaning' (Clarke, 1997:37).

In these ways the effect of having sight mediated through the lens of a camera is to open up the possibility of the camera phone serving as a channel through which to encourage students to consider alternative 'ways of seeing' (Berger, 1972) as a response to that which Rhodes

(2009:662) describes as a 'responsibility for experimentation that breaks from the established ways of thinking and writing that confine becoming'. Experimentation does not mean that anything goes. Ethnographically informed observations are a 'systemised form of looking at others, that is to say, they are disciplined' (Madden, 2010: 101). Rather, the point of experimenting with the Smart Phone camera lens is to free sociologically imaginative modes of thinking that encourage the student 'to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and external career of a variety of individuals' (Wright-Mills, 1959:11) where career speaks not just of some narrow vocational self-interest, but a playfulness of mind that allows for the (often unexpected) combining of ideas 'as well as a truly fierce desire to make sense of the world' (Wright-Mills, 1959:233). The remainder of the paper considers the effects of such experimentation in terms of teaching, learning and disciplining in respect of a cohort of 150 first year management students.

Disciplining seeing

The qualitative methods course I run at Durham University Business School is designed to ensure that each learner 'develops the observational, analytical and communication skills that every effective manager needs' and to do so 'through a focus on more qualitative and interpretive modes of knowing' (Course Handbook). The course introduces a range of skills pertaining to communication, team working and presentation, along with exposure to a range of approaches to research in organisations including ethnography, observational theory and practice, interview methods and reflexivity. These are couched within discussions of the different implications of competing research paradigms (Burrell & Morgan, 1979) and the possibility that there are different ways of seeing the worlds of work, managing and organising.

While theory is delivered through a series of fairly traditional lectures; weekly workshops afford space for activity based practice and experimentation. Workshop activity is focused around the theme of 'ways of seeing'. From the basics of visual perception and perceptual selectivity (Whitehead, 1929; Douglas, 1966) through to issues of perspective (Berger, 1972) and then multiplicity and absence (Dali, 1940; Mitchell, 2011) students are invited to challenge taken for granted assumptions about the world around them, and indeed the

usefulness or otherwise of unconventional ways of seeing. A brief account of three of the exercises employed might usefully convey the ways in which students were prepared or disciplined to reconsider 'seeing' as 'observing' both with and without the camera lens.

In example one, students are asked to consider which of the images of art dealer and writer Ambroise Vollard (1866-1939) are more 'real': the photographic portrait of Vollard on the front piece of the 1981 Sale Chlomovitch Catalogue; Renoir's dressed up version of *Vollard as Toreador* (1917), or; Picasso's (1910) portrait which simultaneously shows multiple perspectives of Vollard's head in the style of analytical cubism. Initial replies asserted the representational reality of the photographic portrait. Following reflection and discussion students then moved from this position to note that: the photograph was not the thing – not Vollard himself; that lighting and pose may have been intended to control meaning; that you could not see all of him – and less as compared to that offered by Picasso's analytical cubism, and; perhaps, Vollard as Toreador told us something more of the personality of the man, perhaps hinting at his role as the main performer and orchestrator in the art world's ring.

A second exercise inspired by Berger's (1972) chapter on publicity and marketing, requires students to consider what might be behind various images and global brands. They are asked to consider what is being suggested, who the speaker is, what the audience is, and crucially, who or what is being exploited. The students' initially descriptive accounts were contrasted with Berger's (1972) observations of passivity, meaninglessness, envy and control, before inviting the students to locate Berger's own position within the theoretical framework of Burrell and Morgan's (1979) paradigms. In this way I begin to build within the students the disruptive notion that there are different ways and depths of seeing. Together we begin to consider the ways in which analysis, training, theory and politics can be used to produce quite different accounts of a single image or scene. At the same time students are themselves being subjected to discipline and training, both in terms of being opened up to questioning and imaginative exploration of multiplicity and meaning, but also to the need for greater precision in the expression of ideas, the substantiation of arguments and the interrogational of alternatives. From seemingly prosaic skills centred on information searching and referencing, to identification of ontological positions and epistemological implications, students are trained to discipline and extend their imaginations through growing knowlegde.

A third exercise (just three weeks into the course) brings a discussion of photography and research; and with it the challenge to create a photo essay. Students are shown the ways in which photo essays combine image and text with a view to conveying something more of the context, culture, emotion and experience of a scene in an attempt to provoke a response in the viewer (Mitchelle, 2011; Rose, 2012). Among the various exponents of this art were the photojournalists of *Life* Magazine, the apogee of which was in the middle part of the twentieth century and whose moving images include those of Country Doctor, V-J Day Kiss in Time Square, and RFK's assassination to name but a few.

<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<insert image 1 about here>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>

Working in teams, students were briefed to 'take five pictures to form a photo essay on the routines of university life'. They were asked to consider what they had already learnt in terms of the purpose, potential, limits and ethics of employing visual methods in research; and informed that they were required to present their essays to the workshop (as a power point presentation) followed by a brief reflection on approach and message. In this way students were being required to move intellectually from consideration of presented images, to representations of their own experiences through visual imagery.

The results were photo essays on socialising, alcohol, sleep, money, sport, work, food and changing community. As Mitchell (2011) notes, the production of limited amounts of text accompanying the images invited discussion of how and why particular images were taken and created. At this point there was little evidence of linking between personal experience of routines and broader organisation theory represented by say Weber or Ritzer. There was however a developing conversation with visual imagery and method.

Students positioned themselves in front of as well as behind the lens as part of deliberate accounts of the embodied experience of routines with regards to stress, relaxation and excess.

This was achieved while playing with the intimate anonymity of body parts (Mitchell, 2011; Petersen & Østergaard, 2003) as hands, groups of arranged feet, turn faces and the obscuring of distinguishing marks were all employed as symbolic representations of a larger whole.   In part this reflected a growing concern with the ethics of representation in terms of consent, anonymity and an ethical responsibility – these issues having been covered as part of a lecture on the ethics of social research and business practices in terms of honest reporting, fair dealing, integrity and avoiding treating others as means, all of which was reinforced by assessment rubrics stating that transgression of ethical guidelines would result in a zero mark. It also spoke to attempts to see more deeply, as objects and body parts were presented for their connotative as well as denotative meanings. To this end, students recounted the manner in which the depiction of five beds (Images 2-6) stood for similarity and difference in the routinized lives of undergraduates pre-occupied with socialising, working, studying, drinking and sleeping.

<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<Insert Images 2-6 here>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>

The above images drew on workshop discussions of the power of absence in visual imagery. Specifically, they borrowed from the example of Stephen Riggins's 1994 study in which a row of empty dryers in an African hair salon stood for the absence of the young women who were dead or dying at home of HIV/AIDSs (see Mitchell, 2011). By adapting this use of absence students combined notions of part, whole, self, other, absence and routines in imaginative combination (Wright-Mills, 1959) to comment on their own connections to the wider world. For others the development of more sociological thinking took on a political edge as photo essays were presented as comments on student poverty and debt, and with it allusions to the wide variations in privilege and familial wealth among their own cohort – with all this implied for opportunity and position. In these ways photographs allowed for multiplicity of perspectives and interpretations in terms of both that which is seen and unseen by audience, authors and community members (Petersen & Østergaard, 2003).

Thus, after three weeks of study the students had been encouraged to shift attention from the search for concrete answers and definitive solutions, through the layered analysis of the

images of others, to the presentation of images of their own lives as linked to the wider organising theme of routines. Students had taken up the challenge of turning their ethnographic lens safely upon themselves as part of a first tentative attempt to identify, understand and represent the lived experience of the everyday and mundane as part of a developing capacity to 'shift from one perspective to another, and in the process to build up an adequate view of a total society and its components' (Wright-Mills, 1959:232).

The teaching term culminated in the use of Smart Phone cameras in the production, posting and presentation of student films, with the expressed purpose of extending the learning process. Over a period of 4 weeks, students were required to work in groups of 5 to construct films analysing *processes of rationalisation in work, business or society*. Completion of the assessment in groups prioritised the need for team work, while also encouraging students to reflect on intra-group variations in ways of seeing, thinking, analysing and representing. More prosaically, it also renders the supervision and marking of the resulting films more manageable. Basic tips were offered in terms of lighting subjects, shot planning, camera movement, equipment choice, audience and post-production (Figgis, 2007) in addition to the prior work on ways of seeing and representing.

The resulting films[1] employed poetry, empathetic acting, location interviewing, approximations of auto-ethnographic accounts as well as silent movie approaches to deploying the camera lens in observation of the effects of rationalisation on self and others. Discussions of intra- and intergroup comparisons of the ways in which students variously saw and interpreted rationalisation suggested a developing understanding of their films as personally informed versions of reality rather than 'objective or truthful accounts' (Pink 2009). There were cases in which students conveyed a more objective sense of the world around them. In these latter cases students expressed a more positivistic account of their filmic presentations while still recognising that their ontological and epistemological

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[1] 1 Examples of student pocket-film submissions on the theme rationalisation
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U_Zol42fSls
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BydkxD1UHTI
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OV1ZAoZttGw
http://youtu.be/-4r59FB2SXA

positions were just one way of viewing and representing the world (Burrell and Morgan, 1979).

For the most part students succeeded in communicating something of their understanding of and relation to processes of rationalisation as theory, experience and representation. Representations of rationalization and its absence included: mundane routines of waking, eating and commuting; the purpose and structure of educational systems; the functioning of and resistance to global capitalism; the potential for alienation in the modern work place; the functioning of signs and systems; supply chains; behaviour modification, and much more. Links were made to the conceptual contributions of those including Marx, Weber, Ritzer, Taylor, Demming and Ford and were presented through approaches approximating reportage/cinema vérité, narrative, staged presentation, poetry and animation.

<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<Insert Image 7 here>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>

It was notable that the composite nature of both photo essay and film assignments with respect to the 'co-equality' they impose between image and speech/text (Mitchell, 1994 cited in Rose, 2012) had the effect of levelling the field for students whose first language was not English (approximately a quarter of the cohort) as imagery allowed greater freedom of expression for those not yet confident when communicating complex ideas in text alone. More broadly, students reported finding the task of film production challenging in terms of time, organisation, and the necessity of 'being there' in order to produce images (*inter alia* Barthes, 1981/2000; Silverman, 2007; Cunliffe, 2010; Van Maanen, 2011). The act of having to look at and re-present the world beyond books was said to have heightened awareness of rationalising, control and its pervasiveness. This echoes Wright-Mills (1959:232) observation that once you are really into a subject you see it everywhere once you are sensible to its themes. To this end students looked again at everyday processes and details that had become common place to them.   Students reported having to engaging more deeply with concepts in readiness to present them clearly through visual media to a wider audience, while the very act

of presenting was perceived by students to have embedded their understanding of the subject more deeply than exam or essay. Students noted that interviewing and observing others as part of filming opened them up to alternative view points and perspectives, while also increasing their awareness that others may interpret the finished films in different ways. This was felt to be enhanced by the possibilities offered by sound, soundtrack and poetry as supplements to the creative conveying meaning and eliciting emotion. Finally, students stated that the process had generally been rewarding and fun. This chimes with claims that one of the benefits of utilising film and photography in ethnographic research is the sheer joy and sense of fun that accompanies the process (Mitchell, 2011) thus 'enhancing the aesthetic dimension of the research itself for all concerned' (Warren, 2002: 243). These are of course self-reported accounts of the impact of employing visual methods in learning, and no claim is made for effect size in terms of change or improvement in learning outcomes. Moreover, satisfaction was not total as some students commented that they would have found a traditional essay or examination easier (being well tutored in there forms). This last point is important in so far as such ethnographically informed visual methods should be seen as compliments to rather than a replacement for more traditional essays and examinations.

Overall, there was a sense in which the Smart Phone camera had afforded students the necessary freedom to consider new 'ways of seeing' that linked to and developed their sociological imaginations.   There was a sense in which the products of their labours could be said to have been ethnographically informed in so far as ethnography is a process of:

> 'creating and representing knowledge (about society, culture and individuals) that is based on the ethnographers' own experiences. It does not claim to produce an objective or truthful account of reality, but should aim to offer versions of the ethnographers' experiences of reality that are as loyal as possible to the content, negotiations and intersubjectivities through which the knowledge was produced' (Pink, 2007a:22 cited in Pink, 2009:8)

While these films were not ethnographic in the sense of representing extended periods of time in the field or being embedded in particular sites of organising, the best did offer theoretical informed and critically presented accounts of people and their social patterns as considered, experienced and encountered by the students themselves. They accounted for the *ethno* in so far as they had their basis in careful observation of people (and indeed non-human actors that

shape the lives of people) coupled with sympathy for the other's point of view. The writing (*graph*) took a visual form which was intimately concerned with audience. This concern was foregrounded because students knew their films were to be made available to the world and each other via YouTube. They were also aware that their researcher observations were to be the subject of critical summative judgement by a particular other: the course leader.

The effects of Audience

The argument to this point is that the camera lens can serve as a useful engagement device through which to open up the sociological imagination (Wright-Mills, 1959) in management students. Employing technology and media familiar to members of the Facebook generation, students are invited to reconsider the taken-for-granted organization of their localized worlds. Informed by discussions on different ways of seeing (Berger, 1972; Cunliffe, 2010; Mitchell, 2011; Van Maanen, 2011) they are encouraged make explicit their interpretation of social worlds and subjective experiences in light of management concepts such as rationalization. The act of presenting their ethnographically acquired insights requires them to commit to their ideas (Madden, 2010) ready to discuss and defend the proffered relationships between experience, world, image, word and text. In concluding the paper I want to say something about the process of presentation and the effect of particular audiences.

The presager and corollary to presentation is, of course, audience. As photo essays are presented to peer groups and films displayed globally via the World Wide Web, students become aware of a wider audience who might pass judgement on their observations. Moreover, there is a sense in which the audiences' gaze falls not just on the material on display, but also on the 'body behind the camera and its relation with the world' (MacDougall, 2005:3 cited in Pink 2009:105) as presentational mode and subject matter are employed by the audience in consideration of the maker's own subjectivity (Rose, 2012). Here the student is opened up to a complex relationality in which what is observed and re-present must be considered in light multiple others's interpretations. This hidden other is spread across the globe: a heterogeneous audience whose assessment of presented subject and presenting subjectivity are likely to vary according to spatial, temporal and cultural geography. Under such circumstances the insightful student might think it unwise to

privilege or prioritise the viewing of any particular group within such a differentiated range of viewers (Kim, 2012). And yet, where observation and film are produced under conditions of university assessment there is an 'other' who claims a privileged right to know and judge: an eye that claims primacy over the rest of the audience when it comes to matters of seeing. This other who would seek to discipline the student's nascent ethnographic gaze is, as we have already established, the lecturer (in this case me).

Madden (2010) notes that ethnographers need to pay attention to the fact that their observations are saturated with power politics and history – a point echoed by Rhodes (2009) in respect of ethics. The same is true of the lecturer. For better or worse the embodied and disembodied presence the lecturer in audience of the learner has, and perhaps should have, a marked effect (see Dahlgren, 1984; Marton & Säljö, 1984; Ramsden, 1984; Lizzio *et al.*, 2002) for which we must take responsibility. It is important to take a moment to consider the nature of this effect, particularly given that the purpose of my own teaching is to encourage students to look beyond their own social milieu to consider how we are shaped by and in turn shape the wider processes of society (Wright-Mills, 1959).

Considered reflexively my own effect is both political and disciplinary. It is political in the sense that I announce up front my CMS sensibility in challenging the taken-for-granted assumptions of our organised realities, but in such a way as to leave room for 'undecidability' contestability and doubt (Rhodes, 2009). As I discuss research paradigms, students consider my subjectivist ontology and question whether I might best be located within the interpretive or radical humanist tradition epistemologically (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). While some share this ontological sympathy, finding solace in a management module that is not implicitly or explicitly underpinned by positivistic certainty; others find greater novelty in the suggestion of social constructionism, as well as the invocation to consider the perspectives of the marginalised minority or (dis)empowered worker, alongside that of the senior management executive that many of the students aspire to be. Here then is a political overtone which students might mimic, collude with or resist depending on their own sympathies. What is not negotiable is the requirement that the student's work be 'critical', 'substantiated' and 'sociologically imaginative' if it is to be judged favourably. This latter dictate is a product of the perceived need to discipline imagination with knowledge and preferred ways of knowing

(Whitehead, 1928). It also speaks to a far more direct relation of power which is overtly disciplining and disciplinary, as preferred ways of seeing are encouraged through the 'spatial 'nesting' of hierarchized surveillance' (Foucault 1977/1991:172) as self, peers, lecturer, institution and virtual worlds all play a part in observing that the subject attends to the correct training.

In the course I run group work and peer presentation are employed to ensure that the student body regulates itself with respect to the mode, level and timing of educational participation. YouTube's rules on copyright are co-opted to reinforce academic concern with ethicality. Assignment briefs, marking guides and grade descriptors reinforce the lecturer's primacy in determining how and what to see. In these ways film making and presentation effectively reinforce the disciplining, homogenising and differentiating gaze of my academic and institutionalised community. This exercise of discipline 'presupposes a mechanism that coerces by means of observation; an apparatus in which the techniques that made it possible to see, induce effects of power and in which, conversely, the means of coercion make those on whom they are applied clearly visible' (Foucault, 1977/1991:170-1). The result is that the nascent ethnographic gaze of the student is informed by a concern with what the academy, in the form of the lecturer, demands to see. It is the gaze of this self-privileging audience that works 'to alter them' (Foucault 1977/1991: 172) and claims the right as a representative of the 'Makers of Business Leaders' (Durham University Business School webpage, 2012) to determine some measure of what they are to be seen to be.

Thus, even within the context of a desire to engage and free the sociological imagination of students, such endeavours inevitably prescribe and conscribe that which learners are encouraged to see when education is delivered within a university. Within any discipline some ways of seeing are more acceptable than others: in this case more sociologically and ethnographically informed gazes that arise from and are reinforced by academic traditions, conventions, regulations, evocations, rewards and sanctions which form networks of supervisory relations that confine and bind lecturer and student, but which nonetheless give the lecturer as audience greater sway (Foucault, 1977/1991). Nowhere is this more evident to the student than in the lecturer's examination of the products of their observations, wherein the marking of that observation determines whether they have looked – and will the allowed

to continue looking – the right way. Considered thus, it appears that the use of the ethnographic lens is not so much about new ways of looking, as new ways of encouraging students to internalise the ways that academics continue to want them to see. There is then a tension between a pedagogic claim to set minds free and institutional contexts that are well versed in determining how individuals are seen and see.

Concluding thoughts

Madden (2010:111) notes that 'ethnographic observation is a complex and theoretically challenging issue, not a mere sensory act, but a theoretical and political act of categorising and attempting to understanding'. It is a way of seeing that seeks to understand something of the perspective of the other (outside) and the effect of the self (inside) in its relation to observing, observed, telling and reading. It is a disciplined way of seeing that enables the description, interpretation or enactment of organising, cultures, processes, practices and structures. In this sense *disciplined* takes on a less malignant tone than the Foucauldian (1977/1991) association with surveillance. It speaks, in part, to Whitehead's (1929) notions of discipline as precision in so far as any romance for ideas must be followed by an invitation to impose order on the relatively free and disorganized understanding that was encouraged in students at an earlier stage.

Acknowledging the existence of discipline in all its various forms is important because, as Rose (2012:154) notes we 'learn to see in particular ways and this is a process that is reiterated every time we look' producing certain types of subjectivities. This paper has been concerned with the how our ways of seeing might be expanded to include more ethnographic, sociological and critical ways of seeing. It has been concerned with the potential for the ethnographically informed camera lens to open reflection on our modes of living, working, organising and managing so as to disrupt the reiterating tendencies of habit and status and thus remind us that the world around us and our place within it are always in flow (Whitehead, 1929; Rhodes, 2009). Such endeavors require training and disciplining. They depend crucially on showing the learner that theirs is not the only way of seeing and that, with proper training they may come to employ a range of different lenses capable of construing multiple worlds. Novel teaching methods, such as the production of films, are

useful tools in such training. They encourage the combination of research and 'artistic representation' to 'make critical interventions, and help us to get in touch with our social worlds' (O'Neill, 2008:53). Both through and in spite of the institutional context of their offering, such experimental methods can portend 'new ways to think and talk about organizations and allow room for doubt, uncertainty, contradiction and paradox (Phillips, 1995), and subvert the dominance of masculine rationality' (Rhodes, 2009: 657) precisely because their format, marking, observation and categorization have not been wholly defined, fixed and institutionalized in the context of management learning. This, as Rhodes (2009: 666) goes on to suggest 'resonates with long-standing calls for the social sciences to be informed by an active imagination (Wright-Mills, 1959) that is creative in making links between the lives of actual people and the structures that they are located in'. This might include the imaginative faculties and ways of seeing require to mitigate some of the problems faced by the wider world.

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Image 1

Dr. CERIANI with Lee Marie

Correspondence from Magnum re permission to print 'Lee Marie' photo as follows:

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Jonathan Bell [jonathan.bell@magnumphotos.com]

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Images 2-6

Images 2-6: Student life, similarity and difference (NO COPYRIGHT)

Image 7

Image 7: Student Smart Phone camera films (NO COPYRIGHT)