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# Visuality and the Difficult Differences in Networked Knowledge Communities

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# Emerging Pedagogies in the Networked Knowledge Society:

## Practices Integrating Social Media and Globalization

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## Chapter 14

# Visuality and the Difficult Differences in Networked Knowledge Communities

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter argues that as Networked Knowledge Communities (NKC)s become increasingly the way knowledge is constructed, represented, and circulated, visuality in information-based societies is also being shaped, and shaped by, the interactive and collective ideologies of digital technology environments. Like the written text, which constructs and imposes hegemonic ideals of identity through discursive practices, visual representations of identities also serve as powerful discursive reservoirs of subordinating representations. By focusing on NKC)s as an epistemic space that reflects, recirculates, and reacts to bodies of knowledge produced by the institutions of power in the larger social culture, this chapter examines the vulnerability of subjugated identities to normative processes of identity formation in digital networked communities. This inquiry positions visuality not as a subordinate and incomprehensible form of discourse to the written text, but as a symmetrical and understandable discursive practice and democratizing pedagogy imbued with all the possibilities and inadequacies that come with interpreting identity and the difficult differences. Without question, globalization is a key factor in this debate despite the lack of transparency in its meaning and use. However, despite its resistance to a comprehensive definition, globalization will provide an important ideological framing from which to begin this argument given its loosening of sociopolitical, cultural, economic, and technological borders.*

### INTRODUCTION

*It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences. – Audre Lorde*

The view that NKC)s are unaffected by the same institutional hierarchies of identity formation because culture jammers disrupt dominant ideologies is damaging both to the ethos and ethics of NKC)s. Further, it is equally dangerous to presume that

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digital natives (Palfrey & Grasser, 2008) whose identities are the most socially constructed in the digital visual culture (Bentkowska-Kafel, Cashen, & Gardiner, 2009) do not reimagine the old tyrannies of individualism in class-based learning environments into new tyrannies of NKC, which aims to democratize learning by collaboration pedagogies. Therefore, it is important to take a critical and explicit inquiry into the development of new bodies of knowledge in NKC with particular consideration to the social construction of the visual (Duncum, 2001; Tavin, 2003), which anchors subjugated identities into dominant discourses of identity construction for definition and representation. With this view, visuality, which embodies and inscribes the experience of seeing in historical and canonical discourses, unites in NKC two meaningful and engaging conversations. The first one considers the difficult differences (race, gender, ethnicity, religion, language, culture, sexual identification, and disability) in relation to the shaping and articulation of identities within NKC. The second one examines NKC as sites of social justice where democratizing pedagogies can dismantle artificially imposed notions of self, to a technological space where the agent can exercise authorial control over the shaping of an authentically ascribed notion of self.

This chapter is divided into five sections with the overarching goal of examining the visuality of subjugated identities in the sphere of NKC, and characterizing the interconnectedness of NKC, self-fashioning, and the power of democratizing pedagogies of resistance. First, I identify the difficult differences that are challenges to the subjugated agent's authorship and agency in NKC to include digital natives. Second, I describe rhetorical and political strategies agents can invoke to resist and dismantle a canonical experience of seeing. Third, I bring into focus the ideology of NKC as disruptive epistemic spaces to hegemonic modes of knowledge construction. Fourth, I describe NKC as a scopical regime and the new rhetoric as an argument strategy that en-

ables countervisualizing the difficult differences. Finally, I conclude the chapter by identifying a democratizing pedagogy of resistance for visualizing the difficult differences within NKC.

## **AUTHORSHIP, AGENCY, AND THE DIFFICULT DIFFERENCES IN NKC**

In the modern visual age language and images intersect and interact in digital networked communities while opening new forms of knowledge through the prism of the visualizer's eye. Yet, to presume that the interplay between the two discursive formations does not create overt or subtle tension is to ignore the shifting relations of the written text to the visual image in networked knowledge communities. Like voice, facilitated primarily through the written text, and which has the discursive power to claim or encapsulate the author's identity, the author's visual representation can also shape authorial presence. Although questions of ideology, aesthetics, and sociopolitical constructions of identity will inescapably arrive and converge along with the antagonisms of the difficult differences, it is clear that visuality like the written text structures, channels, and redistributes power relations. Therefore, visual self-fashioning also holds and unfolds ontological significance when encountered in the spatial matrix of NKC. What are NKC? For clarity in this chapter, I define network knowledge communities as virtual sites where assumptions of identity and belief systems taken as visually natural and immutable are critical discourses for redefining, reconstruction, and reinterpretation. Thus, one can argue that NKC are subversive virtual sites since they destabilize concepts, practices, and perspectives that underlie sociopolitical structures entrenched in relations of power. As noted earlier, as slippery as the term globalization is it has both problematized and produced new systems of thought for the twenty-first century and most particularly for digital natives. While in another section of this

chapter I draw upon the central features of John Palfrey's and URS Gasser's definition of digital natives and their unparalleled connection to and function with technology—I would like to extend their definition of digital natives as modern shape shifters in the technology sphere. With this view, I am suggesting, as Palfrey and Gasser (2008) will articulate that digital natives voluntarily and regularly renounce one identity for another which makes a mockery of canonical patterns of visualizing the difficult differences. Indeed, one can argue that visual self-fashioning is a narrative with imported epistemologies that can both enable and disable a multiplicity of descriptive representations of identity circumscribed, subordinated, and governed by the difficult differences. This notion is especially significant for authoring agents who have the challenge of managing the colonizing, restrictive, and global force of their identity, which can lead to sociopolitical alienation and contempt in NKC's. To be sure, if NKC's do not maintain their democratizing ethos, they can act out, confirm, and reiterate the very ideological, aesthetic, and sociopolitical judgments they claim to dismantle. This is where I believe an attempt at a definition of globalization is required since it is interconnected to issues of representation, power, agency, and transformation within the global sphere. Manfred B. Stegner (2009) argues that globalization should not be seen as something that has a specific and concrete dynamic. For Stegner, globalization is about reproduction and change, where no ideology is permanently enshrined within space and place, but subverted by the action of the collective. For Stegner (2009) globalization, "is the expansion and intensification of social relations and consciousness across world-time and world space" (p. 2). Regarding questions of identity Stegner (2009) argues that globalization has no single framing feature to unite all persons and identities. Therefore, he claims globalization "inhabits class, race, and gender, but belongs to neither" (p. 2), which enables and defends spaces, spheres, and systems of belief that create ideologies

for self-authoring. Aware of the divisive power of identity, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 after the Second World War in response to a hierarchical notion of identity representation. Therefore, given that NKC's bring people together with varying identities in a borderless space to discuss and generate new knowledge, it is important to avoid identity polarization within these digital networked communities. Despite its twentieth century outlook, I argue that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights also binds NKC's to this civic action to protect authorship, agency, and the difficult differences with vigilance. Thus, for consistency purposes, when speaking of the difficult differences in this essay, I will now defer to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to constitute my articulation, which argues:

*Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty. (United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 2, 2012).*

While the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is an inspiring manifesto that makes particular reference to identity representations, it is worth noting that the structural patterns of the difficult differences in the social culture have been examined from a political perspective. The work of political philosopher Iris Marion Young (1990) has also been integral in examining the challenges of the difficult differences as a barrier to self-authoring. In her work on the difficult differences, Young argues that the authoring agent's space and location within the sociopolitical culture

is almost impossible to circumvent because of the restrictions imposed by one or more of the five faces of oppression. For Young (1990), the five “faces” or types of oppression are “exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence” (p. 40). With this definition, Young (1990) argues, it is often the social justice actions of a well-intentioned liberal society that erect institutions of power that are anchored in domination and oppression which impose, regulate, and limit participation in the sociopolitical culture (p. 41). Rather than erase the difficult differences for the preservation of social justice, Young (1990) believes that “[s]ocial justice, [. . .] requires not the melting away of differences, but institutions that promote reproduction of and respect for group differences without oppression” (p. 47). According to both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 2) and Young (1990), self-fashioning is an emancipatory step towards the authoring-agent’s ideological formation, which adds to, rather than detracts from, the tapestry of the sociopolitical culture. In other words, sociopolitical transformation does not have to come at the expense of self-authoring.

Drawing on these arguments, there are both rewards and warnings for NKC’s where recursive self-authoring is more acceptable and practiced in digital networked communities. However, before we examine the digital identity of authoring-agents, we must take a closer look at the notion of identity and its sociopolitical morphology in a post-World War II American culture and the identity split between the individual and their culture. Robert Dunn (1998) argues persuasively from a socio-historical perspective that identity and difference or the difficult differences are in lockstep with the sociopolitical shifts from a modern to a postmodern society. For Dunn (1998), the transition from a culture built on “kinship and religion” (p. 53) to a “large scale society” (p. 52) began the thawing of those traditional structures to “a new, self-conscious identity [. . .] having

or making an identity [. . .] standing apart from others through the development of a unique set of personality traits” (p. 53). Dunn (1998) continues saying:

*The assault on traditional social structures gave rise to an individual called on to forge his (but seldom her) [and those who embody the difficult differences] own identity independently of the ascribed characteristics inhering in one’s placement in tradition and nature. Through resources of self, this individual was seen as destined to receive, acquire, and fashion his own identity in an increasingly unknown, uncertain, and rapidly changing world. Negotiating the contingencies of time and place, this figure of self-creation was to achieve status within a more or less tenuous social order by means of his own willful and self-interested actions. (p. 53)*

Dunn’s (1998) reflection of the post-World War II shift of identity construction from a system where kinship and religion are foregrounded as anchors to self-fashioning to one of “autonomy, freedom, and choice” (p. 53) has a striking similarity to the current shaping of identity in NKC’s. For example, John Palfrey and URS Gasser (2008) argues anyone “born after 1980” (p. 1) is a digital native and that their everyday existence is “mediated by digital technologies” (p. 2). Palfrey and Gasser (2008) argue that this is not a resistance, but that digital natives have “never known any other way of life” (p. 2).

Palfrey and Gasser (2008) continue saying that digital natives do not feel mastered by any notion of self, and that “[i]nstead of thinking of their digital identity and their real-space identity as separate things, they just have an identity” (p. 4). Therefore, not feeling trapped, silent, and invisible in any identity, Palfrey and Gasser (2008) suggest that networked digital technologies, like post-World War II culture, “is prompting another large shift in what it means to build and manage one’s

identity” (p. 19) although they add, “the Internet doesn’t change the notion of identity altogether” (p. 20). In fact, they posit, digital natives are not rigidly oriented to one articulation of identity because there is room for “more experimentation and reinvention of identities” (p. 21) than there were for post-World War II generations and “there are different modes of expression, such as YouTube and blogging” (p. 21). Digital Natives’ sense of identity formation unlike post-World War II generations, do not seek to shape the parts into the whole. Rather, they are more likely to reproduce the parts than to preserve them. With this view, for digital natives, identity formation is an ongoing construction in NKC’s to include a visual presence—a discursive formation used by authoring agents to countervisualize their difficult differences. Therefore, NKC’s are sites where power is utilized by authoring-agents against and through dominant processes and networks as an ontology to rupture, repress, and reject normative constitutions of the subject. For Michel Foucault (1978), this “omnipresence of power” (p. 93) is not discursively sterile as a methodology in its decentering hegemonic belief systems given the presence of power since as he argues, “power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere” (p. 93). Indeed, power must be understood within its “complex strategical situation” (p. 93) or context—it can both control and resist—depending on how its force is distributed by agents and any system of belief.

### **VISUALIZING AND THE ARISTOTELIAN APPEALS AS A METHOD OF ARGUMENTATION ... AND PEDAGOGY**

NKC’s are a reservoir of discursive rhetorical practices. This includes visualizing within the visual culture as a rhetorical appeal, which like written text can either be used as an instrument

for sociopolitical change or illuminate weaknesses in the sociopolitical system that require change. W. J. T. Mitchell (2002) locates the act of visualizing to the social arguing, “[v]isual culture is the visual construction of the social, not just the social construction of vision” (p. 170). Mitchell’s (2002) intertwining of the terms culture, visual, social, [and political] amplifies the development, influence, and the shaping power of visuality in our modern global society. Moreover, Mitchell (2002) argues that what we see in our social space does not sit silently within our consciousness—it frames ideology. He also suggests that what we see in our field of vision is a socialized reality imported through our visualizing. For Mitchell (2002), then, visualizing does not invade our discursive formations, visualizing is a discursive formation with roots in the sociopolitical culture where it is produced by its own narrative. Mitchell (2002) argues:

*a dialectical concept of visual culture cannot rest content with a definition of its object as the social construction of the visual field, but must insist on exploring the chiasmic reversal of this proposition, the visual construction of the social field. It is not just that we see the way we do because we are social animals, but also that our social arrangements take the forms they do because we are seeing animals. (p.171)*

Like Mitchell (2002), Nicholas Mirzoeff in *An Introduction to Visual Culture* (2009), seeks balance between visuality and visualizing within the sociopolitical culture and both scholars have ontological connections in their theories on visual culture. However, Mirzoeff (2009) attempts to locate the theoretical contours of Mitchell’s (2009) *visual construction of the social field* as a counter hegemonic act to interpret the sociopolitical manifestations of visualizing. For example, Mirzoeff (2009), posits that “visual culture endeavors to create a decolonial genealogy for the paradoxical convergence of war, economy,

religion, the environment and globalized visual media” (p. 2). Mirzoeff (2009) also states that as “a comparative mode of critical practice” (p. 9) visual culture critiques new concepts of the modern sociopolitical order inscribed and overshadowed by old principles of visualizing that remain rooted in “the commodified labor of looking” (p. 15). By disassembling the discursive coding in the visual image, the authoring-agent can disrupt the sociopolitical grip imbued with both a canonical and historical rhetoric of looking, which has soiled the audience’s visualizing and shaped their seeing.

Within these ideas of globalization, power, and belief systems, I argue that visualizing is a critical pedagogy. As an empowering and transformative methodology, critical pedagogy allows authoring agents within the sphere of NKC’s to exclude and disrupt the regulating of dominant modes of discourse over the construction of their visual identities. Henry Giroux (2011), one of the architects of the critical pedagogy movement, emphasizes the intertwining of the sociopolitical to transformation. He writes that:

*Critical pedagogy is about more than a struggle over assigned meanings, official knowledge, and established modes of authority: it is also about encouraging students to take risks, act on their sense of social responsibility, and engage the world as an object of both critical analysis and hopeful transformation. In this paradigm, pedagogy cannot be reduced only to learning critical skills or theoretical traditions but must also be infused with the possibility of using interpretation as a mode of intervention, as a potentially energizing practice that gets students to both think and act differently. (Kindle Locations 323-327)*

Like Mitchell (2002) and Mirzoeff (2009), Giroux (2011) argues persuasively that the authoring agent must neutralize hierarchical discursive formations by action. For Giroux (2011), this involves critical pedagogy because it “takes seriously the educational imperative to encourage

students to act on the knowledge, values, and social relations they acquire by being responsive to the deepest and most important problems of our times” (Kindle Locations 328-330). This is important since sociopolitical networks do not remain neatly within their sphere of operation when they marginalize and subjugate subjects. Therefore, they require exposure, examination, and expulsion. In this way, they are unbound from the moral and ethical rootedness and protection that enshrines their repressive system of belief. To be sure, visualizing plays an emancipatory role in this action to destabilize hierarchical discursive formations that restrict the freedom to self-definition.

Mirzoeff extends and broadens his thesis on dismantling hegemonic visualizing in *The Right to Look: A CounterHistory of Visuality* (2011). By extending his earlier claim, Mirzoeff’s (2011) argument takes a comparative stance and he argues convincingly that hegemonic looking emerges out of a system of power and authority which normalizes the “complexes of visuality” (p. 5) that establishes “a life-world that can be both visualized and inhabited” (p. 5). He identifies plantation slavery, imperialism, and the modern military industrial complex as the three complexes of visuality (pp. 5-10), and argues historically that the subjects in all three complexes have countered their domination by the right to look and it “is war” (p. 6). Mirzoeff’s (2011) three complexes are “classified, spatialized, aestheticized, and militarized” (p. 9) within and through an active, methodical, and deliberate system of power and authority. It is clear to Mirzoeff (2011) that the right to look is a subjugated agent’s counterhegemonic look at the discursive visualization of history. However, once the authoring agent has wiped the visual field of its canonical structures, the sociopolitical culture may appear luminous but is this autonomous visualizing coherent in the written text? Further still, how does the authoring-agent interconnect the compressed, subtle, and often reflective discourse from a visual image to a written text for the audience’s understanding? Finally, what method of

argumentation is employed to persuade the audience? With the interplay of a visual image and a written text, the authoring-agent's compositional discourse can intensify the persuasive force of the appeal as they act on each other to reinforce or counter their separate ideologies. Either alone or together, neither a written text nor a visual image is transparent in its structure and use to convey meaning. With this understanding, NKC's are also a political space where canonical ways of seeing the difficult differences are contested by authoring-agents who incorporate visuals as a form of knowledge making. This is another indication that visuality is pedagogy since it has the transforming capacity to affect the structural issues that give visual preference to dominant identities during the experience of seeing. As I argue elsewhere, the visual image is no longer subordinate to the written text because like the written text, it plays a formative role in the development and illumination of the composition's discursive properties. Nevertheless, whether the compositional document is a written text or a visual image, when engaged by an audience meaning is often constrained between and among the ideology, the authoring-agent, and the audience—this tension is always already knitted in the communication process. Therefore, the authoring-agent's ethos is critical for discursively representing the compositional document's meaning when crafting an argument for the NKC.

Aristotle's classical system of argument in *The Art of Rhetoric* (1991) is a useful mechanism to make an argument because it enables the authoring-agent to introduce rhetorical components in a visual image that may struggle to expose discourse in a written text. As noted previously, Giroux (2011) does not believe that critical pedagogy should be understood alone, but in connection with other oppositions to established authority, which I argue is argumentation. Indeed, as interrelated opposing forces to normative frameworks for visualizing, critical pedagogy and argumentation

reinforce each other with their emancipatory schemas. For example, in *Rhetoric*, Aristotle (1991) views rhetoric as a useful persuasive teaching tool of three kinds as a mode of persuasion or a grouping: "Some reside in the *character* [ethos] of the speaker, some in a certain *disposition* [pathos] of the audience and some in the *speech* [logos] itself, through its demonstrating or seeming to demonstrate" (1.2. 1356a). Although Aristotle (1991) emphasizes, "character contains almost the strongest proof of all" (1.2. 1356a), he also stresses that without question "proof is achieved by the speech [or the compositional document]" (1.2. 1356a) to create credibility if the authoring-agent is to build a communication bond and trust with the audience.

By employing the Aristotelian appeals in the visualizing process as a method of argumentation, it enables the authoring-agent to understand that neither their character nor the compositional document is rhetorically sovereign in their act to persuade. Indeed, with the effective integration of both the ethos of the authoring agent and a logos rich appeal, within the epistemic space of NKC's the canonical ways of visualizing the difficult differences by the larger sociopolitical culture are ontologically vulnerable to a revisionist way of seeing. However, this new mode of visualizing is not reimaged by one authoring agent—it is circulated and "put into action" by the collective intelligence of agents in the network knowledge society (and, global sphere) as a critical pedagogy and method for argumentation.

## **VISUAL RUPTURE AS AN ACT OF LIBERATION**

Since the publication of Pierre Levy's *Collective Intelligence: Mankind's Emerging World in Cyberspace* (1997), collaborative knowledge building has become increasingly the way new knowledge is generated and disseminated within digital

spaces. This is where Stegner's (2009) notion of globalization enables Levy's (1997) notion of the collective wisdom to flourish since globalization disrupts the power and status of nations-states on behalf of a global civil society. Stegner declares:

*The multiple inscriptions and incomplete projections of the global on what has been historically constructed as the national have become most visible in the proliferation and reconfiguration of what counts as community and who should be included. For this reason, one of globalization's most profound dynamics has been the messy and incomplete superimposition of the global village on the conventional nation-state and its associated key concepts of 'citizenship', 'sovereignty', 'territoriality', 'borders', 'political belonging', and so on. (p. 2)*

At the same time, scholarship on this digital mode of knowledge making within the global sphere often remains smothered by its utopian instrumentality rather than its effectiveness as a space to engage with and transform imposed ways of exclusionary looking at the difficult differences. While in his critical approach to visuality Mirzoeff (2011) articulates a solid argument for counter resistance to hegemonic and imported ways of looking, Levy (1997) confronts head on issues of humanity and ethics within his reordering of collective intelligence in the knowledge space. For Levy (1997), the knowledge space is rooted in an anthropological theory where culture is not circumscribed by one essentializing and unifying feature, but by an integrative and communal humanity "dependent on human technologies, significations, language, culture, conventions, representations, and emotions" (p. 5). Levy's (1997) conception of collective intelligence echoes a similar anthropological stance, which he states "is a form of *universally distributed intelligence* [emphasis not mine]" (p. 13) where "no one knows everything, everyone knows something,

all knowledge resides in humanity" (pp. 13-14). Further still, Levy (1997) perceives the knowledge space not as repressive but expressive of humanity where "human relations [are] based on ethical principles" (p. 13) and the "terrifying, lethal, and molar distinctions between "us" and "them" (p. 159) dissipate for the "becoming-identity of the collective intellect" (p. 221). Although in Levy's (1997) conception of knowledge space the collective, politics, and the discursive formation of power (Foucault, 1978) are lurking in any system where humans interact and subvert individualism. Therefore, we must not close our eyes to this safe bet or new forms of sociopolitical tyranny will rise.

Because identities are constituted by and within power relations of the sociopolitical culture, it is important to address them even when "the liberal imperative that [the difficult] differences should make no difference puts a sanction of silence on those things which at the level of practical consciousness people "know" about the significance of group differences" (Young, 1990, p. 134). NKC's I argue are vital to the unsilencing by the polite policing of difficult differences since they routinely are networked spaces of dissent. Stuart Hall (2000) posits that the formation of identity is part of a much larger discursive field but in modern times is "operating 'under erasure'" (p. 16) and "cannot be thought in the old way" (p. 16) but nonetheless "without [. . .] certain key questions" the sociopolitical and historical mechanisms that frame identity "cannot be thought at all" (p. 16). Hall (2000) maintains his cleavage to Foucault's theory of discursive practices (1978) arguing that articulated as a discursive formation "the question of identity recurs" (p. 16) despite attempts to contain its meaning in an all-encompassing discourse. For Hall (2000), then, any notion of identity will be neither sufficient nor inclusive enough to synthesize rhetorically all the blendings and applications of this term because he argues, "[. . .] identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured,

never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions” (p. 17). With this perspective, rather than anchoring identity within wholesale discourses it is perhaps beneficial for each authoring-agent to self-identify. This allows each authoring-agent to examine and chart their identity in relation to their personal ontology. Of course, this in no way naively presumes that the fundamental questions of identity are resolved and will disappear even in the global sphere—it simply places the expression of identity consciousness in each authoring-agent’s hand. Therefore, the concept of countervisualizing unmistakably entails a new practice of looking—a pedagogy—when the author-agent’s identity and visual representation within the sociopolitical culture of the global sphere is constructed in discursive practices that are a parody to their visual sense of self. Any argument against the right to self-authorization is an argument against humanity.

Nevertheless, even in Levy’s (1997) optimistic notion of the knowledge space, autonomy by those that embody the difficult difference requires visual rupture. By visual rupture, I do not mean just an aesthetic shift that guides the sensory and value judgments of beauty. Nor do I mean the annulment of identity within the concepts and categories of the sociopolitical; although, it is impossible to disregard the social and political function of the visual regime that invades and orients our looking while preserving a visual hierarchy. Visual rupture entails an ontological shattering of an institutionalized cosmic truth that ‘this image’ is the differentiation between an identity that is right or wrong, and one that is good or bad. Further, visual rupture considers identity as an adaptive expression that overturns and declares invalid ‘fixed claims of identity’ while it breaks through and lays open a visualizing space for recurring and dynamic amendments of identity. Visual rupture has its conceptual foundations in Gilles Deleuze’s and Felix Guattari’s ‘rhizomatic theory of thinking’ (1987) that argues against the production

and dissemination of static patterns of meaning for transformative thinking, which emerges when conflicting ideas intersect and coexist only to be reimagined in any form without trying to capture and catalogue a method of thinking.

To be sure, visual rupture is an act of liberation for the authoring-agent in NKC’s since as Stegner (2009) notes because of globalization, “we are witnessing the destabilization of taken-for-granted meanings and instantiations of the national” (p. 2). As an epistemic space intertwined with and that reiterates the discourse of the larger social culture, visual rupture is central to disrupting fixed notions of identity embodied in the act of visualizing. By confronting the ideological underpinnings in the visual field, the authoring-agent reproduces and/or adapts the representational argument of the visual imagery in the name of self-authorization. This is not an artificial separation between representation and expression, but a dynamic rhetorical articulation of reimagined visual thinking of the difficult differences. This proposition, then, requires both a conceptual and a perceptual unfolding of how one visualizes. As pedagogy, visuality strips the experience of seeing from the dominant sociologies of identity by examining the visual belief system that governs visualizing. Therefore, dominant narratives of identity canonized in visual belief systems no longer serve as perceptual anchors since their discursive formation is disrupted and refused any broadening as a unified apparatus to subjugate and marginalize the authoring-agent within its domesticating visual framework.

## **THE NEW RHETORIC OF THE SCOPIC REGIME**

Martin Jay (1998) argues that visualizing and visuality are interlocked during the act of looking which makes it difficult to resist the imposition of the dominant narrative embedded in the visual field. For Jay (1998), a multiplicity of seeing undergirds visualizing in the modern scopic regime, and he

challenges any method or strategy of looking that calls for the maintenance and perpetuation of a master vision. This process of visual rupture within a scopic regime is an on-going challenge and Jay (1998) believes that it is “a contested terrain” (4) instead of a utopian space where “a harmoniously integrated complex of visual theories and practices” (p. 4) are brought into coherent order. He describes scopic regimes as “visual subcultures” (p. 4) and suggests that it “allow[s] us to understand the multiple implications of sight” (p. 4) that various perspectives bring. Understanding that there is value in multiplicity and with the shift from master narratives of visualizing, Jay (1998) posits that it is “imperative to restore rhetoric to its rightful place” (p. 19).

By channeling rhetoric into the scopic regime, assimilationist visualizing is disabled in the visual sphere by the authoring-agent where a set of images can no longer secure a material concept of authenticity. That is not to say when a visual rupture occurs the reimagined self is not marked by historical patterns of visualizing, which have guided and organized the author-agent’s looking. Nor does this position imply that self-authorization requires the subjugation of another identity in the name of visual autonomy. Further still, we should not misinterpret traces of the imposed identity in the authoring-agent’s representation as self-loathing, but as an ongoing process to self-actualization that materializes out of a complex interplay of inferiority and the struggle for agency. Because of this, rhetoric enables the fracturing of the modern visualizing system by “acknowledge[ing] the plurality of scopic regimes” (Jay, 1998, p. 20) with an eye to the difficult differences. This reformation of looking that Jay (1998) suggests also requires a rhetorically accommodating discursive system ‘to look’ at the ways in which visual rupture can occur in the scopic regime of NKC’s so that “we may learn to see the virtues of differentiated ocular experiences” (p. 20). As noted earlier, I argue that the twin discourses of critical pedagogy and Aristotle’s argumentation (1991) are key to

intervening the power of this adversarial way of visualizing. Still more, within the global sphere it would be difficult for any domesticating visual framework to maintain its continuity of subjugation given the collective goal of authoring-agents in NKC’s to claim agency over normative models of identity. In *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation*, Chaim Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca (1966), present several rhetorical strategies that can bracket inconsistencies in arguments and provide alternatives for counterarguments. Their concepts are important because they have effectively united the classical art of persuasion with a new persuasive discourse, which they argue when usefully adopted “the discursive techniques” (p. 4) are able to “*induce or [ . . . ] increase the mind’s adherence to the theses presented for its assent*” (p. 4). The rhetorical strategies of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1966) provide the authoring-agent with a variety of ways to disrupt and overturn the hegemonic discursive formations during visuality. Their concepts are important for understanding the rhetorical processes within the argument schemes of the scopic regime because they provide an avenue for critical questions to the dominant claims of visuality. For example, one strategy “inclusion of the part in the whole” (p. 231) is a discursive technique that reacts against a system where division exists between the part and the whole. From the perspective of the authoring-agent within the scopic regime of NKC’s, this strategy as pedagogy is a coherent starting point for removing the normative gaze away from the difficult differences in an effort to contain its visualizing power. Indeed, the part and the whole uncomfortably coexist within the visual sphere of dependence and disagreement and this line of argument, “*ascribe[s] no special quality either to the parts or to the whole [since] the whole is treated as similar to each one of its parts*” (p. 231). In this reading, the part and the whole are shaped and shaped by a mediating relation within the scopic regime—both must unfold their discursive situatedness to illustrate

the contrasting ways in which they interpellate each other. In short, to terminate one means the abolition of the other. To be sure, the ‘inclusion of the part in the whole’ argumentative strategy by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1966) mirrors the collective intelligence vision of Pierre Levy (1997) because both systems resist a dominant configuration that enables one view while disabling another. Such conceptions, viewed as naively utopian, have as their overarching goal to reinforce human interconnectedness and to disrupt individual or group monopoly. No doubt, this approach will rail against the deeply entrenched Western notion that hierarchies must exist to preserve order in the sociopolitical culture of the global sphere. To understand NKC as epistemic spaces for democratizing pedagogies of resistance it is important to consider twenty-first century technologies that enable rhetorical criticism of visuality in the modern scopic regime. Therefore, we must return to Pierre Levy’s (1997) braiding of humanity and ethics within the knowledge space because the concepts are interwoven into the tapestry that frames the ethos of collective intelligence.

## **THE TAPESTRY OF COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE**

The consuming image of a fixed identity is one of the most important features of the sociopolitical culture, but its existence is rarely called into question. For example, the imagery of dominant identities is such a key component in the identity formation of subordinate groups that the everydayness of its structuring power is often imperceptible. Yet, dominant identities are present everywhere tacitly producing normative, stable, and ideal visions of itself to be copied. At the same time, as this chapter suggests, critical methods for the erosion of an ideal notion of identity are emerging for analyzing the tacit hegemonic features of dominant identities. Furthermore, the imperative

to destabilize and defeat the institutions, sociopolitical practices, and discourses that support these systems of visual inequality are linked to even larger systems where democratizing pedagogies of resistance can help to reimagine what is considered natural. For example, NKCs are perhaps the most fertile sites for revisionist looking where the argument strategy of “inclusion of the part in the whole” by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1966) can valuably orchestrate and have an ongoing influence in the perpetuation of a collective intelligence. Moreover, the politics of visualizing and the mythologies associated with visuality are collaboratively examined against its sociopolitical background. Rather than visualizing the self as frozen in the footsteps of the dominant identity, author-agents can interrogate the notion of identity formation and learn that it is permeated within and by the ideology of the dominant group. To be sure, the transformation of an imposed and stock identity to an identity with sovereign visualizing is no easy task, since the dominant identity has perpetuated itself as static and immutable. With the ideological backing of a range of institutions and systems that empower the dominant identity, the process of self-recognition and self-definition can appear meaningless and overwhelming. However, it is in this space of visual liminality where a democratizing pedagogy of resistance can undermine the non-coercive and naturalizing discourse of normative visualizing.

Walker Percy’s (1975) visual sovereignty theory is particularly suited as a break with dominant modes of visualizing for self-identity formation. Percy introduced the study of visual sovereignty in his influential essay, “The Loss of the Creature (1975),” which brought a new level of prominence and exposition to the subject of visuality. Percy (1975) argues that the symbolic complex subjugates the author-agent’s visualizing power for a visual norm that is neither constructed nor challenged because of the contaminating influence of a prescriptive mode of looking. He posits that “the symbolic complex which has already been

formed in the sightseer's mind" (p. 47) obscures the majestic beauty of geologic monuments like the Grand Canyon. For Percy (1975), normative visualizing categorizes rather than conceptualizes and "the sightseer measures his satisfaction *by the degree to which the canyon conforms to the preformed complex* [emphasis not mine]" (p. 47). For Percy (1975), imaginative visualizing constrained by pre-existing discursive formations governing visuality institutes a "radical loss of sovereignty" (p. 54). Visual dispossession, then, is projected onto the authoring-agent's looking by the ideological gatekeeping of sociopolitical forces that define visuality within the borders of its own mythologies on identity formation. The result is "a generalized surrender of the horizon [by the authoring-agent] to those experts within whose competence a particular segment of the horizon is thought to lie" (p. 55). Indeed, the authoring-agent is seduced by a supposed enriching visual experience; when in fact, their visualizing has been hijacked by a normative frame of looking that arose out of discourses of power rather than their own visual conceptions. For Percy (1975), if the authoring-agent is to regain visual sovereignty they "should be prepared to enter into a struggle to recover a sight" (p. 62) from the visual regime that subverted their right to look.

With this view, Percy's (1975) concept of visual sovereignty ideologically pairs well with Levy's (1997) concept of collective intelligence, and both I argue, are pedagogies of resistance. For instance, Percy (1975) denounces the influence of dominant discourses over the visualizing experience, while in Levy's (1997) knowledge space, a similar intolerance is articulated for "images of the subject that assume the form of linear, hierarchic, or systemic structures, stratified into well-behaved and interlocking levels of integration" (p. 158). While I cannot claim that any visualizing experience is entirely free from the surveillance of the normative affect, I am in agreement with Percy (1975) that the authoring-agent should attempt to restrict and contain any dominant classifying system of

visuality. Moreover, I am equally in agreement with Levy (1997) that creative imagination has the possibility to revision dominant discourses of sociopolitical control. The convergence of Percy's (1975) and Levy's (1997) concepts as democratizing pedagogies of resistance, are useful to transform dominant structures of ideology in NKC's regarding barriers erected over the difficult differences. As noted previously, Percy's (1975) and Levy's (1997) theories must be understood not in isolation, but in connection with each other because they are theoretically complementary. Each examines visual resistance from a different perspective. Only their approach to oppositional visualizing against the all-encompassing norm and values associated with dominant identities are different. However, the metaphor of the tapestry articulates the interweaving of Percy's (1975) and Levy's (1997) theories as a synthesis to oppose de facto cosmic truths codified in visuality. With this background, let us now return in detail to Levy's (1997) theory of collective intelligence within the knowledge space.

Indeed, these conversations will not occur in tidy and hollow liberal discourses that often mask hostilities rather than reveal them. Rather, they will induce provocative and rigorous critical discussions that promote reflection on the self (part) and the collective (whole). For Levy (1997), this also includes dismantling and reimagining the epistemological contours of knowledge, which tacitly embodies Foucault's (1978) use of power for the subordination and transformation of structural systems of belief that subjugate and marginalize specific identities.

For Levy,

*Knowledge, in the sense I am using the term, is a knowledge-of-living, a living-in-knowledge, one that is coextensive with life. It is part of a cosmopolitan and borderless space of relations and qualities, a space for the metamorphosis of relationships and the emergence of ways of being,*

*a space in which the processes of individual and collective subjectivization come together. (p. 139)*

Further still, in the collective intelligence there is no master concept of identity formation other than vigorous reinvention of self with the central purpose to refresh the ethos of the knowledge space. Levy (1997) writes, “[m]embers of the collective intellect coproduce, develop, and continuously modify the virtual world that expresses their community: the collective intellect is always learning, always inventing” (p. 155). Levy’s (1997) insistence on radical and continuous shaping establishes standards by the abolishment of standards saying, “[t]he collective intellect constructs and reconstructs its identity” (p. 155). This effort resists any homogenizing discourse that can order linear modes of thinking to contain the visual sovereignty of the difficult differences.

Without question, Levy’s (1997) collective intelligence theory will have its critics. However, we must not overlook the overarching argument, which in his words is “to discover a new space” (p. 241) as opposition to established hierarchies of knowledge and imagery. To be sure, with globalization, as Stegner (2009) has articulated, we are already in this ‘new space’ of networked knowledge communities where normative frames of identity formation are challenged with destabilizing discursive practices. No doubt, the difficult differences will remain both difficult and different, even in Levy’s (1997) knowledge space. Furthermore, the yearnings for self-fashioning by individuals and groups who are discursively shaped by the visuality of dominant imagery will never cease, nor the strategies of resistance and rupture to oppose the forces of visual imperialism. What is most encouraging about networked knowledge communities is that they enable disturbances in the name of self-fashioning and that they are available for any authoring-agent to interweave their own self-identified thread to the networked pattern of this rich tapestry of human difference and diversity.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter began with an articulation of the difficult differences, the human right to self-authorship and the ways that we can visually self-fashion our identity in Network Knowledge Communities (NKC). The problematic nature of the dominant identity as a cosmic truth is well known, but attempts to disrupt its visual perpetuation within virtual spaces like NKCs is finally gaining momentum within scholarly conversations. Yet, more alternatives to the opposition of the normative identity still require opposition to its visual formation of subjugated groups such as pedagogies of resistance. For self-fashioning to emerge, authoring-agents must visualize against any imagery system codified and established as fixed. In this context, visualization is a vibrant pedagogy of resistance intertwined with the author-agent’s struggle for voice and agency since it does not prioritize one identity as the model for knowledge making over another identity. Rather, it transcends and disrupts any visual hierarchy that privileges a way of seeing. Globalization helps us to recognize and respond to the falling visualizing privileges of nation-states in the global sphere since the making of meaning is not relative to the vertical or horizontal status of nation-states, but to the emancipatory and transformative ways of seeing in NKCs. As a contribution to this critical conversation, this chapter provides a systematic analysis of the discursive and non-discursive practices of this important topic and its rhetorical situatedness in virtual spaces. I use both ancient and new theories of rhetorical criticism to examine the visual discourses of power within visuality and illustrate how they are reinforced and standardized by their de facto practices within the sociopolitical culture. Rhetorical criticism helps us to recognize how symbols and signs of persuasion are invoked in virtual spaces to complete the rhetorical act and how we can use these methods; also in virtual spaces, to identify and disrupt the very systems that interpellate us.

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## KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**Difficult Differences:** Identity classifications noted in the Declaration of Human Rights such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or status that implies a contrast of either subordination or hierarchy, which creates conflict and dissolves civil and productive engagement.

**Digital Natives:** John G. Palfrey and Urs Gasser uses the term in their book, *Born Digital: Understanding the First Generation of Digital*

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*Natives* in reference to anyone born after 1980 that have been integrated socially and culturally in the use of digital technology since birth.

**Epistemic Space:** How the subject's vision of the world is shaped by discursive knowledge in situated environments.

**Networked Knowledge Communities:** Knowledge that is developed, shaped, and disseminated by a community of non-expert learners and teachers through a digital technological process that links them.

**Pedagogies of Resistance:** A method of political action that opposes instructional strategies and techniques that integrate traditional methods of learning, which typically create and systematize unequal power relations.

**Visual Rupture:** A set of practices, strategies, and processes that shatters mythic truths within the social order that one identity is superior to another.

**Visual Sovereignty:** The subjects reclaiming of visualizing practices from canonical ways of looking.