



The Other Vietnam Syndrome: The Cultural Politics of Corporeal Patriotism and Visual Resistance

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Abstract

This article argues that the emergence of the U.S. counterculture contemporaneously with the Vietnam antiwar movement produced a visual coding of antiwar thought and action as dirty, messy, and most of all ‘hippie’, as a result of the visual differences between the most visible elements of the movement and the U.S. mainstream. This coding of antiwar sentiment as visually Other was seized upon by the right as part of the process of remembering this era of U.S. history, and this visual coding has over time evolved into a ‘regime of visibility’ that delegitimizes opposition to war and introduces a kind of corporeal patriotism where one’s loyalty to the state can be measured by an evaluation of one’s appearance. Whereas the Vietnam syndrome was an expression of elite disdain for public opposition to ‘the use of force’ (i.e. military invasions), the *other* Vietnam syndrome (OVS) constitutes a regime of visibility that links visual deviance to opposition to war, with the intention of delegitimizing both and placing deviant-looking protesters outside the body of the ‘legitimate’ public. The article provides historical and theoretical overviews of the OVS and discusses implications for contemporary protest movements.



Introduction

Visualize the movement against the Vietnam War. What do you see? Hippies with daisies in their long, unwashed hair yelling “Baby-killers!” as they spit on clean-cut, bemedaled veterans just back from Vietnam? College students in tattered jeans (their pockets bulging with credit cards) staging a sit-in to avoid the draft? A mob of chanting demonstrators burning an American flag (maybe with a bra or two thrown in)? That’s what we’re supposed to see, and that’s what Americans today probably do see – if they visualize the antiwar movement at all. (Franklin, 2000, 47)

This article is concerned with an underappreciated aspect of the protest movement against the Vietnam War in the United States, namely the role that corporeal appearance has played in the attempt to delegitimize antiwar thought and action then and in the years since. I refer to this role as the ‘*other* Vietnam syndrome’ (hereafter OVS).

The original notion of a ‘Vietnam syndrome’ emerged soon after the official end of the Vietnam War. “The concept was taken to mean that after the trauma of defeat...the American people would no longer support risky foreign interventions” (Buley, 2008, 63). The Vietnam syndrome is understood as referencing “a sickness or weakness for which a cure is needed so that a more strident and unfettered foreign policy may once again emerge” (Martin, 1993, 6). The foreign policy elite in the U.S. view this lack of support for war-making as “an unacceptable restraint on covert operations and military interventions” (Martin, 1993, 5). Thus, in 1980 presidential candidate Ronald Reagan “blamed the ‘Vietnam syndrome’ for making Americans apologetic about their nation’s past and timid in the face of aggression” (Hagopian, 2009, 37). Saddled by this syndrome, U.S. citizens are allegedly paralyzed by their unwarranted remorse and thus incapable of supporting their government so it could legitimately “reassure or intimidate others by wielding the credible threat of military force” (Hagopian, 2009, 48).

The Vietnam syndrome presented a problem for the exercise of military power, and the OVS can be understood as one solution to this problem. I argue that a specific ‘regime of visibility’ arose in reaction to the countercultural movements of the 1960s. This regime of visibility represents an attempt to delegitimize antiwar thought and action by associating it with a deviant bodily appearance. The OVS produces a kind of ‘corporeal patriotism,’ whereby the loyalty of citizens to the state and their legitimacy as members of the nation are defined by their bodily appearance. The goal of this article is to understand how the visual style of antiwar protest during the 1960s and 70s in the U.S. influenced the understanding of antiwar thought and action among the general public. Far from being a peripheral aspect of social life, visibility is co-constitutive of the social, a central and politicized element of its materiality.

This analysis is primarily relevant for studies of protest in the tradition of Western liberal democracies, particularly in the context of movements that occupy public space as a political tactic. As Scott (1985, xvi) points out, this kind of protest has historically been a luxury limited to the relatively privileged, and the kinds of resistance employed by the “subordinate classes” have generally been characterized by less publicly visible activities such as “foot dragging, dissimulation, desertion, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so on”. It is furthermore important to keep in mind the various ways in which public protest is embedded in hierarchies of, among other categories, race, gender, class, nationality, and sexuality, and thus not equally available to all individuals at all times. With that caveat in mind, the argument proceeds as follows. I begin with a theorization of the OVS as a regime of visibility and discusses this phenomenon in the context of the literature on visibility, visibility, and the body. I then move on to a review of the historical development and contemporary relevance of the OVS to antiwar activism. This review focuses on the secondary literature, as the goal is to understand how the memory of the Vietnam era is contested through visual rhetoric, how this period is represented visually in the service of a political agenda in the present. This contestation occurs in part *through* the secondary literature. A more in-depth analysis of primary sources is beyond the scope of the present article.

Visibility and Visible Bodies

The OVS represents the politically- and culturally-inflected perception and valorization of the appearance of certain (visible) bodies, and this process relates to the concept of ‘visibility’. Geographers have long been interested in visibility, a key component of which are images—what Fyfe and Law (1988, 1) call sites “for the construction and depiction of social difference,” thus entailing “principles of exclusion and inclusion” (cf. Mitchell, 2002, 175). Hence, the making of the visual is an inherently *political* process, one that relies on images and stereotypes to produce “architectures of enmity” (Shapiro, 1997) that in turn reproduce notions of Self and Other (Campbell and Power 2010, 186). At the heart of visibility lies a fundamental concern with identity and difference, with organizing the social field according to a visual metric.

While Ives (2009, 245) has argued that “visibility remains under-theorized” in geography, there appears to be an increasing interest in visibility among human geographers. Rose (2012, 2) defines visibility as “the ways in which both what is seen and how it is seen are culturally constructed,” and for Gregory (2012, 152), visibility denotes “culturally or techno-culturally mediated ways of seeing.” MacDonald understands visibility as “the acculturation of sight” (MacDonald 2009, 151), as vision is configured as much by cultural processes as by biological ones; visibility is thus grounded in the experiential, discursive and subjective nature of human sensory perception. When I use ‘visibility’ in this article, I am referring to the politically and (techno-)culturally mediated ways of seeing that have political

effects. These ways of seeing in turn rely on visibility (the occupying of public space in a way that allows oneself to be seen a broader public) and corporeal appearance or visual style (the way that the visible body *looks* to the seer). The foundation of the OVS is the image of the long-haired, dirty hippie, a figure who is coded as illegitimate and even treasonous. This image occupies a central place in the remembering of a tumultuous period of U.S. history, and, importantly, the image is linked to a particular narrative regarding the lessons of the (alleged) folly of opposing and protesting the war. As Foucault (1996, 124) puts it: “if one controls people’s memory, one controls their...experience, their knowledge of previous struggles”, and this contestation over memory is indeed part of the mediation of visibility. It is not solely the *knowledge* of previous struggles that is at stake; the *feelings* one has toward those struggles can also be decisively affected by certain historical interpretations. The OVS seeks to direct those feelings in such a way as to result in the delegitimization of the thought and action engaged in by certain (deviant) bodies, and it is in this way that the OVS acts as a ‘regime of visibility’.

Godfrey and Lilley (2009, 275) conceive of the visual “as a significant force in the production and dissemination of collective memory,” and they employ the concept “regime of memory” to examine U.S. films on Vietnam and World War II. The authors base this notion of regime of memory on Foucault’s “regime of truth” (though they do not offer a thorough engagement with Foucault’s understanding of the term). Foucault (1980, 131) defines a regime of truth as follows:

the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true;
the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true
and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the
techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth;
the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true.

Using this definition as a base for a conceptualization of ‘regime of visibility’, we can consider visibility one of the mechanisms by which true and false statements are distinguished, in the sense that antiwar thought and action are disqualified through their association with a deviant corporeal appearance. Similarly, we would expect bodily appearance to enhance or detract from the status of would-be ‘truth-sayers’. The regime of visibility represents an attempt to place certain bodies outside the accepted boundaries of public discourse. The visual is the ‘technique’ that is accorded value in the acquisition of truth, one that establishes who the truth-tellers are. And finally, the sanctioning of ‘true and false statements’ is crucial, as this gets to the issue of power. The term ‘sanction’ has positive and negative meanings. Its negative sense refers to the act of penalizing a transgressor, while its positive sense refers to approval or permission. What, then, are the sanctions involved in the OVS?

As Sturken (1997, 20) argues, images are “a primary mechanism through which individuals participate in the nation”. The power of the regime of visibility thus rests in part in the management of entrance into the collectivity of the nation. One function of the regime of visibility embodied by the OVS is to attempt to disqualify from membership in ‘the public’, and thus from the right to speak, those who adopt a visual style that violates prevailing norms. This could be understood as one of the negative sanctions exercised by the OVS. Its positive sanctions thus involve welcoming those who conform to the visual norms into the embrace of the nation and into the public discourse.

The workings of the OVS are consistent with Foucault’s (1998) notion of a power that is dispersed, embodied, and enacted. The impact of the OVS ultimately depends not simply upon political leaders who seek to reproduce and disseminate its discourse; it also relies upon the quotidian participation of ordinary individuals. This way of theorizing visibility does not foreclose possibilities of resistance; it is the very anchoring of the OVS in public participation that allows for resistance. The OVS is not a closed system producing an exclusivity of outcome. Instead, its effects are inevitably opened by the very nature of social contingency.

The OVS, as a regime of visibility, is grounded in the geopolitical event of the Vietnam War, so it is relevant to note the attention paid to the visual in recent geopolitical scholarship. MacDonald et al. (2010) note that visual evidence often serves as a foundation for geopolitical reasoning, and this visual demonstration establishes geopolitical truths and enacts geopolitical realities (see also Agnew, 2003). In addition, visual *cultures* have been argued to have crucial links with geopolitics (Carter and McCormack, 2010; Hughes, 2007), and two elements of visual culture that have been widely explored in the study of geopolitics are film (e.g. Dodds, 2005; Dittmer, 2011) and photography (Campbell, 2003, 2004, 2007; Foxall, 2013; Roberts, 2013). Much of this work highlights the ways in which visual representations work through eliciting affective responses (Dittmer and Dodds, 2008). More generally, Campbell (2007, 361) concludes that “images cannot be isolated as discrete objects but have to be understood as imbricated in networks of materials, technologies, institutions, markets, social spaces, affects, cultural histories and political contexts”. This line of reasoning reinforces an understanding of visibility that highlights the *mediation* of visual perception, a process that is central to the notion of regime of visibility.

Ultimately, it is the visual perception of *bodies* that is mediated by the OVS. “Memory attaches itself to sites, whereas history attaches itself to events”, writes Nora (quoted in Sturken 1997, 11). We can see the body as one of the sites to which politicized, visual memory can be attached. (Indeed, the body is also an important site for *contemporary* political legitimation in the U.S., as few national male politicians dare appear in public without wearing a flag lapel pin, and where college and professional sports teams bear flag patches on their uniforms. This is corporeal patriotism in action.) Rose and Tolia-Kelly (2012, 3-4) conceive of the visual “as an embodied, material, and often politically-charged realm”, and the

politicized visual perception of bodies is what drives the OVS. Thus bodies are not only agents of sight but also “the objects of certain discourses of visibility” (Mirzoeff, 2005, 3).

Indeed, bodies are central to the boundaries of identity. “Collective expressions of a fear of others”, notes Sibley (1995, 45), “call on images which constitute bad objects for the self and thus contribute to the definition of the self”. Images of long-haired protestors constitute “bad objects” for certain Selves in the U.S. and help to define these Selves as loyal, law-abiding, and patriotic citizens. Likewise, for Rogoff (2000, 35), “civility and bourgeois respectability need the stereotypical unruly ‘others’,...to define the non-existent codes of what constitutes ‘acceptable’ behavior”. These Others are also involved in setting the bounds of acceptable *appearance*.

For bodies to have broad political force, they need to be *visible*. Making oneself visible in public space has long been an important political tactic, but visibility can be a double-edged sword (Licona and Maldonado, 2014). Visibility has helped immigrant rights activists gain credibility for their demands (Bailey et al., 2002), while at the same time putting the undocumented at risk (Staheli et al., 2009). The visibility of a minority group can be experienced as threatening or alienating by the majority (Ehrkamp, 2008), leading to increased tensions between the groups. “Becoming public thus bears the risk of being represented in ways that are different from, and sometimes counterproductive to, the intention of why groups became public in the first place” (Ehrkamp 2008, 120). It is important to stress that while *visibility* can be an important tactic for activists, once a group becomes visible, their *visual appearance* can have consequences that are difficult to foresee. By considering the *visuality* of visibility, we can see that certain public actions (such as the occupying of public space for political protest) can potentially hinder the reaching of political goals. Thus the impact of the visibility of a movement is mediated by the perceptions of the appearance of the bodies that become visible.

The appearance of antiwar protestors during the Vietnam era made an impact on the public consciousness due to their visible presence in the cultural landscape, and thus I want to consider here the *visuality* of bodies in the landscape. The work of Duncan and Duncan (2004) is helpful in terms of identifying the specific contribution that the appearance of bodies makes to valorizations of the landscape. For example, the visibility of male Latino workers in the *public* space of the New York City suburb of Bedford is experienced as inappropriate by many of Bedford’s wealthy, white homeowners, for whom “the presence of the Latino day laborers on village streets is thought to spoil the look of the landscape” (Duncan and Duncan, 2004, 186). The authors quote a Guatemalan immigrant who started out as a dishwasher and eventually became a financial analyst, and who noted that the degree to which he was accepted by the white population was based on how he looked that day: “When I wear my name tag from work in the street, I’m treated

with respect. If I dress casual, they treat me like garbage” (Duncan and Duncan, 2004, 184).

What we see here is that the value judgments that people make about landscapes are similar to those they make about bodies. Duncan and Duncan also reveal the way perceptions of corporeal appearance in the cultural landscape are linked with a social order of moral judgments and exclusionary processes. This is important because of its connections to the related processes of generating moral and political judgments of antiwar protestors based on their appearance, judgments which attempt to exclude the protestors from ‘legitimate’ public discourse and even from the imagined community of the nation (Anderson 1991). An underlying process here is the spatial extension of identity – what we are seeing here is evidence that identities are not only ‘inside’ us but also extend out into space.

Finally, I want to consider the pedagogy of visibility. The pedagogical role of images was explored in Ryan’s (1994) study of the ways in which visual representations were used to instruct British children about the Empire during the early 1900s. I would extend Ryan’s analysis by suggesting that the pedagogical function of images is not limited to the classroom. In various ways, images teach the viewer about appropriate and inappropriate ways of being. And in this context it may be useful to recall Cresswell’s (1996) analysis of the processes by which understandings of what is ‘in place’ and ‘out of place’ are formulated. Cresswell notes that graffiti is criminalized, and constitutes an act of transgression, to the extent that it is visible. We could also say that the attempt to criminalize graffiti is a part of a visual pedagogy, as it constitutes a clear statement as to the kinds of appearance that are socially accepted and expected. At the same time, the threat of graffiti inheres in its alternative pedagogy, the message that one can shape the appearance of one’s environment in ways that defy the prevailing norms. This was the threat posed by antiwar protestors: that other ways of being and appearing, thinking and acting, were not only acceptable, but also necessary in order to stop the bloodshed and pave the way to a better future. Appearance can thus have political force due to its pedagogical role; as Staniszewski (2010, 8) writes, “Aesthetics and creativity are not an add-on to political and social movements, but are integral forces within them”.

To summarize, visibility can be understood as the technological, cultural, and political mediation of visual perception. With regard to the OVS, what is of interest is the interpretation of the perception of bodies that are made visible in the landscape. Through this process of visual interpretation, bodies are classified and valorized according to political and cultural norms. Visibility thus involves the production of norms regulating both acceptable bodily appearance and the specific places that are acceptable for certain kinds of bodies to occupy. The political *effects* of visibility are produced by the obedience to, as well as transgression of, these norms. The effects of the visibility of bodies in public space are produced by the reigning norms (and regimes) of visibility, and thus visibility as a tactic carries the risk of producing unintended consequences. That said, I want to emphasize that the

quality of corporeal appearance is not a characteristic of the *body* that is being perceived but rather of the whole *system* of perception, of the visualities of that place and time. The visual style of a body is endowed with meaning only through its incorporation in cultural discourses and systems of perception.

Having now laid out a theorization of the OVS, it is time to turn to an examination of its historical development and contemporary relevance, where we see how deviations from norms of corporeal appearance can gain powerful political meanings.

The Visuality of the Vietnam Era

On 17 April 1965, about 25,000 people responded to a call by Students for a Democratic Society to protest the Vietnam War in Washington, D.C., and most in attendance were “neatly dressed in jackets and ties or skirts and dresses” (Franklin, 2000, 55). Indeed, peace activists in previous decades did not necessarily differ in appearance from the general population, as suggested in studies such as Hochschild’s (2011) analysis of the opposition to World War I in the U.K. One photo shows socialist leader Keir Hardie speaking in London’s Trafalgar Square in 1914, dressed in a three-piece suit. But in 1965, the U.S. was on the cusp of the countercultural revolution, and not long after the SDS march in Washington, the appearance of the protestors began to change dramatically.

It is helpful to consider the process of changing visual styles in the context of generational differences. Early in the 1960s young people expressed their distance from their parents’ values without changing their speech or style of dress, but as the decade wore on the changing styles of youth alienated the older generation. “Their clothes, their music, their experiments with sex and drugs, their slovenly apartments and communes, their offensive language—these were hard to ignore” (Bates, 1996, 185). Not only that, they were making their ‘deviant’ bodies visible in new ways through mass gatherings such as rock concerts. This change in visual style ultimately had an effect on the U.S. public’s views of antiwar protestors.

Indeed, the ‘older generation’ often seemed fixated on the appearance of antiwar protestors. For DeBenedetti and Chatfield (1990, 161), a pivotal moment was the demonstrations in New York in November 1966, which solidified “public identification of antiwar activism with hippie counterculture”.

High on Beatles music and following a stage-prop ‘Yellow Submarine’, about three thousand young bohemians gathered in downtown New York on 5 November and improvised...their own feeder march into the city’s rally of ten thousand. They added a new dimension to the antiwar opposition, if only in popular perception. Flaunting outrageous clothing and hairstyles and proudly permissive in their attitudes toward individual personal behavior, sex, and

drugs, hippies converted the seeming madness of their society into a rationale for joyous absurdity.

At a time when performativity was an unknown concept, this ‘joyous absurdity’ was lost on much of the public, as well as the political establishment. Like many of his constituents, President Lyndon Johnson found the counterculture of the 1960s repulsive. “And like many others he (conveniently?) confused hippies with protestors as when he drove around the Lincoln Memorial the day after the October 21, 1967, March on the Pentagon because he was ‘interested in seeing what a hippie looked like’” (Small, 2000, 8). The visibility of the protesting hippie thus made up an important part of the cultural landscape in the nation’s capital, and clearly represented a visually deviant creature that was considered to reside outside the realm of the public and was posed as a visual Other to the national Self (Campbell and Power 2010).

This conflation of *hippie* with *protestor* is important. Already by 1966, Ronald Reagan, in the campaign for governor of California, regularly ridiculed hippies by offering various versions of the claim that a hippie “dresses like Tarzan, has hair like Jane, and smells like Cheetah” (Lee and Shlain, 2007, 163). At President Nixon’s inaugural parade in January, 1969, the National Guard and U.S. Army patrolled sections of the parade route where “hippie-looking youths” had gathered (Beamish et al., 1995, 352), clearly considering them to be a threat. And according to Bates (1996, 185), in discussing the reactions of the locals to the 1970 Kent State University shootings, “What most outraged the people of Kent...were the stylistic expressions of cultural alienation peculiar to youth—the long hair and bizarre or unkempt clothing, the partying and coed living arrangements in off-campus housing. Older women seemed obsessed by the number of girls without bras”. Here we see the emotional response of the locals in Kent to the transgressive appearance and patterns of behavior of the students (not all of whom were necessarily protestors).

The importance of the visual was also in evidence when one considers coverage of a New York march of union members in support of the war, in this case in *Time* magazine: “Callused hands gripped tiny flags. Weathered faces shone with sweat....New York’s brawniest union marched and shouted...in a massive display of gleeful patriotism and muscular pride” (quoted in Jeffreys-Jones, 1999, 202). This contrast between the visual portrayal of a prowar union march and antiwar hippies raises important issues of class. For example, in May 1970 a group of construction workers marched in Manhattan and assaulted students demonstrating against the war, with the complicity of the police. This was not an isolated incident, and such conflicts might suggest that in disrupting antiwar demonstrations, construction workers were expressing support for the war. Yet individual construction workers went on record with their opposition to the war, while at the same time explaining their actions. For example, one construction worker who was arrested for disrupting an antiwar event confessed that he did not support the war, but added, referring to antiwar protestors, “when they try to ruin

the country and desecrate the flag, I can't stand it" (Bates, 1996, 88). Indeed, some protestors used flag desecration as a visual tactic of resistance, one that proved difficult for many in the U.S. to stomach.

Opinion polls suggest that even those blue-collar workers who were themselves critical of the war had a low level of tolerance for long-haired protesting students and for what they regarded as the snobbery and self-indulgent arrogance of the student 'counterculture'. The style of student protest, distorted as it was by the media and by politicians seeking their own goals, prompted a moral contempt in the workplace. This contempt inspired proud displays of the Stars and Stripes on the porches of American homes and a spirited defense of the working-class men fighting in Vietnam. (Jeffreys-Jones, 1999, 183)

Note the claim that the media and politicians *distorted* the "style of student protest". This claim hints at the contested nature and ambiguous message of this visual resistance tactic. For some, the antiwar movement expressed a sorely-needed, alternative value structure, and its visual style was symbolic of these new values. For those who opposed the idea of resistance to the status quo, the visual style of the movement provided material that was quite easy to 'distort' to the general public. In addition, the visual style of the antiwar movement worked in a dialectic with the regime of visibility. Thus, in the example mentioned above, visual resistance (soiling or burning the flag) elicited, in turn, a visual response (publicly displaying clean flags at home).

Politicians saw an opening to exploit class tensions in the context of antiwar demonstrations by using visual rhetoric. In an October 1970 speech at a Republican party rally, Vice President Spiro Agnew "equated the hard hat with honesty, thrift, hard work, prudence, common decency, and self-denial. Given a choice between the hard hat and the 'high hat' (elitism, radical liberalism cynicism, egotism), Agnew said, 'the American people would come down on the side of the hard hat every time'" (Bates, 1996, 87). In reality, working-class people were more antiwar than the middle and upper classes (Franklin, 2000), a fact that is today largely forgotten (Loewen, 1995). This fact is obscured by the regime of visibility produced by the backlash against the Vietnam era protests and counterculture. When opposition to the Vietnam War is discursively linked to hippies or long-haired college students (or, ideally, hippie college students with long, unwashed hair), the working-class dimension of antiwar sentiment is easily lost.

Polling data from the 1960s and 1970s shows that "open protest against the war [was] not well regarded by the great majority of American adults" (Schuman, 2000, 130). Part of the problem was that "When the television cameras focus on the protestors themselves, rather than on the object of protest, Vietnam, the demonstrations probably lead many people who are against the war toward support for the president" (Schuman, 2000, 131). Indeed, some scholars argue that the

protesters may have strengthened support for an otherwise unpopular war, as “a majority of Americans found the anti-war movement, particularly its radical and ‘hippie’ elements, more obnoxious than the war itself” (Herring, 1986, 173). Chatfield (1990, 394-95) argues that the antiwar movement “was most visible between 1967 and 1971 when it was least conventional and, therefore, least acceptable to many Americans”. The movement’s “cultural image appear[ed] to have fixed it in popular thought as a deviant force on the margin of national life” (Chatfield, 1990, 395). All of this supports the notion discussed above that alternative visual styles, when made publicly visible, can have unintended consequences, such as increasing opposition to one’s cause. This poses a dilemma for activists who might themselves be quite comfortable with a countercultural corporeal appearance.

The appearance of antiwar protesters was indeed recognized as an obstacle by some within the antiwar movement; there was an awareness that the “association of radical, countercultural, and anti-‘American’ images with antiwar demonstrations...made the movement vulnerable to attack” (Chatfield, 1990, 398). According to Katz (2000, 65, emphasis added), the real task of the ‘peace liberals’ in the group SANE “was to generate a mood of hostility to the war, or at least of doubt and anxiety about it. That is why it was so important that the crowds be large, *look respectable*, and therefore elicit the best publicity possible. By doing it this way, they legitimized the protest, gave it political scope and meaning, and thereby certainly enlarged the area of accepted political action”. Garfinkle (1995, 196) argues that among the “most influential demonstrations” of 1971 were “small but poignant occasions” organized by the Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW). He writes approvingly that these events were effective because “veterans were by definition patriotic. They were not draft-dodgers. They did not and never had rooted for the enemy. They were not spoiled students on elite college campuses. *They did not have long hair, wear beads, or openly smoke pot.* In short, *the very fact that they appeared respectable helped earn their views respect*” (Garfinkle, 1995, 197, emphasis added). While the documentary evidence actually shows that many VVAW members really *did* have long hair and probably did not appear all that ‘respectable’, what is important about Garfinkle’s comments is how he envisions a corporeal patriotism that delegitimizes antiwar thought and action (associating opposition to the war with ‘rooting for the enemy’, elitism, and cowardice). This illustrates one aspect of the regime of visibility represented by the OVS: the idea that the ability of the protestor to speak a legitimate truth (i.e., one’s status as a ‘truth-sayer’) is grounded in the individual’s corporeal appearance.

An awareness of the potential liability of a ‘hippie’ appearance for political campaigns was felt as early as 1967, at the beginning of the 1968 presidential election campaign. Organizers for Senator Eugene McCarthy’s campaign in New Hampshire instituted the “(Get) Clean for Gene” strategy, where “students from throughout the country [who] showed up in large numbers to work for McCarthy...cut their hair and shaved their beards” (Pugmire, 2006). McCarthy was

running against the incumbent Lyndon Johnson for the Democratic nomination, and he had expressed interest in curtailing the country's involvement in Vietnam. But there was a concern among campaign organizers that these eager college students would alienate voters if they had the 'wrong' appearance.

Arriving students were instructed to 'Get clean for Gene.' That meant they would have to look more like preppies than scraggly goatherds just in from a hard season in the mountains. It wasn't always easy to persuade a student after a long bus ride that appearance was as important as message, but 'Clean for Gene' was nonnegotiable, and it quickly captured the attention of the national media and demonstrated that the students were serious. (Brokaw, 2007, 95)

Rising (1997, 67) argues that 'Clean for Gene' "was smart political strategy. The hippie peace movement had shown mixed results, but New Hampshire proved that clean-cut students could oppose the war without expressing hostility toward the 'silent majority' they wanted to convince". It is interesting that merely having long hair and/or a beard could be experienced as *hostility* by voters; once again, appearance seems to have a decisive link to affect, as suggested by Dittmer and Dodds (2008). Indeed, there was a concern that students canvassing for McCarthy would "*scare off* potential voters" if they did not "cut their long hair, and [dress] respectably" (Schoenwald, 2001, 251, emphasis added). Long-haired youth clearly served as Sibley's (1995) bad objects that help define the Self, and they do so in a way that seems grounded in a kind of emotional geopolitics (Pain 2009).

This focus on long hair is a recurrent theme in the historical literature; the emphasis on hair is so strong that it even seems to be the primary measure of visual deviance. Clearly, then, the deviant figure of the long-haired, hippie protestor is gendered as male. After all, long hair on women has long been considered normal in the U.S., so women would not be deviant by wearing their hair long. (They could, however, embody deviant visual styles in other ways, such as dress.) One consequence of the gendered nature of the OVS is the potential to marginalize the agency of women in the antiwar movement through a focus on male norms of appearance. Indeed, the gendered protestor serves as an appropriate opposite to the gendered soldier – a long-haired, disheveled man contrasted to a clean cut man in uniform. The focus on long hair in the public discourse can also be considered an attempt to feminize antiwar *sentiment*, even as it masculinizes the figure of the *protestor*, as a way to endow it with an inferior status in public perception. The gendered nature of the OVS is one illustration of the notion that bodies are objects of discourses of visibility (Mirzoeff 2005).

This section has explored the context of the period in which the OVS was established. We can clearly see the relevance of Campbell's (2007) that the visual must be understood in its political, cultural and historical context. In the following section I will examine the continuing legacy of this regime of visibility.

The Legacy of Countercultural Visual Resistance

By the early 1970s many on the right were tired of the protests and sought to reclaim the offensive. In 1973, Nixon's speechwriter (and future political commentator and presidential candidate) Pat Buchanan commented that the "Far Left has been banging away at us for years...It's because of them that this war lasted longer than it should have. Now is the time to nail them to the wall" (DeBenedetti and Chatfield, 1990, 357). One might arbitrarily designate this as the first shot in the coming 'culture wars'. The Nixon administration certainly had many tools at its disposal to achieve the infiltration and disruption of the antiwar movement, cultural discourses perhaps being among the least important at that time. But the process of 'nailing the left to the wall' would come to take on deeply cultural meanings over the next twenty years.

Many observers see a general trend toward political conservatism from the late 1970s onward in reaction to the perceived excesses of the countercultural movements, a trend that has discredited the antiwar movement (Bleakney, 2006; Franklin, 2000), especially to the extent that the movement is visually remembered in a way that constructs it as 'un-American'. This re-imagining of the Vietnam War and the attempt to delegitimize the resistance to it was part of a coordinated effort on the right to move the country back in a conservative direction. (Relevant here is Lembcke's (1998) work revealing that the visual myth of hippies spitting on soldiers returning from Vietnam was a fabrication by conservative politicians and others on the right.) This effort included the establishment of think tanks, training institutes, advocacy organizations, and speaker booking agencies, and the use of these institutions to influence schools (at all levels but particularly colleges and universities), radio and television, publishing (including scholarly outlets), advertising, the courts, and politics (Lakoff, 2001, 2013). Such a program was first outlined in the infamous 1971 'Lewis Powell memo',¹ which details the need for a concerted and broad effort on the right to counter the perceived influence of the left. This effort had both cultural and (geo)political aspects, and due to limitations of space I focus on the latter here.

From the late 1970s through the 1980s, the national security establishment saw the Vietnam syndrome as a serious problem. This group understood that one 'cure' for this illness would be "to discredit its prime carriers – anti-war activists – as a way of preempting the mobilization of grassroots resistance in the event of a future U.S. intervention" (Beamish et al., 1995, 355). While the national security elites did not single-handedly shape the image of Vietnam War protestors, "those elites played a significant role in writing the dominant history. The public memory outcome is more consistent with the images suited to the elite's purposes rather than to those of the anti-war movements" (Beamish et al., 1995, 355). Here we can

¹ See http://reclaimdemocracy.org/powell_memo_lewis/ to read the full memo.

see clearly the relationship between the Vietnam syndrome and the OVS: in a sense, the Vietnam syndrome is the problem, and the OVS the cure. Thus are the two syndromes separate, though linked, phenomena. This is not to suggest that the OVS was produced exclusively by the actions of elites; as we saw in the previous section, there was a distaste for the countercultural visual style among a broad segment of the population. But the reactionary conservative movement provided an infrastructure to capitalize on this already existing tendency by persistently disseminating an interpretation of the antiwar movement as illegitimate, an effort that constitutes one of the negative sanctions of the regime of visibility as discussed above.

One of the primary messages employed in the push to shift the country rightward was that rebellion was wrong, politically, morally, and strategically. In Mendel-Reyes's (1995, 72) description, the reliance of this message on a vision of corporeal patriotism is clear:

To refer negatively to the sixties in political discourse is to call up memories of young people in revolt: disheveled, wild-eyed demonstrators rioting in the streets of Chicago during the 1968 Democratic National Party Convention; Black Panthers in leather and berets, carrying rifles and shouting "Black Power!"; a noisy group of unkempt, unshaved women burning their bras during the Miss America Pageant; hundreds of thousands of unkempt, unshaved, and naked young people making love and taking drugs in the open air, while rock groups play ear-shatteringly loud music with unintelligible or obscene lyrics at Woodstock. By evoking such images, the dominant sixties-as-metaphor tells the cautionary tale of a childish rebellion against America.

Mendel-Reyes does two things here. First, she illustrates the ways in which visibility articulates racial and gender classifications by noting how the visual styles of women (probably mostly white) and African Americans (probably mostly male) violated visual norms, albeit in different ways. Second, Mendel-Reyes is describing a hegemonic interpretation of 'the sixties' that seeks to *caution* the U.S. public, to warn them that this kind of counterculture is foolish and dangerous, consistent with the notion of a pedagogical role for the visual (Ryan 1994). Likewise, Beattie (1998, 125) argues that in visual representations of the sixties, the decade "is encoded predominately as an era of assassinations, rock music, war, riots, and failed political aspirations". Once again, the sense that is being communicated by this interpretation is that there is little in this period of U.S. history to admire or emulate. There is a disciplinary aspect to these negative messages, and to the extent that the messages are linked to particular images (i.e., hippies), it is their disciplinary nature that produces a *regime* of visibility and seeks to manage entry into the imagined community of the nation. All this is not to suggest that the visual style of the 'sixties counterculture' and the antiwar movement is *only* conceived of in this way. It is certainly possible for the appearance the antiwar protestors to be

understood in a positive sense, as representing freedom and the broadening of the social rights of the individual. But Mendel-Reyes and Beattie are describing what they perceive as the *dominant* story about the Vietnam era, a story that delegitimizes antiwar thought and action (in part) by defining the bodies of protestors as visually deviant.

This historical practice of defining the anti-Vietnam War movement as visually deviant still had the power to inform perceptions of protests against the first Iraq war in 1991. Covering one such protest, Peter Applebome of *The New York Times* wrote:

Saturday's demonstration in Washington was full of angry language about American imperialism and racism. There were mainstream peace groups and families with babies in strollers. But overall, the demonstration had the aura of the 60s, with shaggy youths pounding on tom-toms and numerous fringe groups like the Revolutionary Communist Youth Brigade with its chants of 'Baghdad is everywhere; we are all Iraqis,' or the Spartacist League with its banner reading 'Defend Iraq! Defeat U.S. Imperialism' (quoted in Mendel-Reyes, 1995, 93).

The 'aura of the 60s' would indeed prove difficult for antiwar protestors to shake, and it continued to shape the context in which antiwar thought and action were exercised. Thus, even "after the victory of the American-led coalition forces in Kuwait [in 1991], it still remained necessary for the popular press to proclaim that America had finally triumphed over the psychic traumas of Vietnam" (Martin, 1993, 5). Indeed, President George H.W. Bush was delighted by the swift conquest, not least because it meant to him that "we've kicked this Vietnam Syndrome forever" (Kendrick, 1994, 129). The feeling was that 'kicking' the Vietnam syndrome would "restore national strength and moral legitimacy" to the U.S. state (Kendrick, 1994, 131), thereby removing a long-standing hindrance to the global projection of military force.

Some observers suggest the continuing relevance of what I am calling the OVS into the 2000s, particularly in the context of the opposition to the second Iraq war. "It didn't seem to matter what evidence critics of the rush to war presented", writes Paul Krugman (2013). "Anyone who opposed the [second Iraq] war was, by definition, a foolish hippie." The opposition referenced here was indeed massive, at least before the invasion was finally launched, and thus it is debatable whether the first Iraq war truly did neutralize the Vietnam syndrome for good. In any case, the *other* Vietnam syndrome seemed, during this period, to still have the power to influence antiwar thought and action. According to antiwar activist and former Marine Mike Ergo, many active duty soldiers who were against the second Iraq war were reluctant to speak out publicly. "They don't want to be associated with a movement they see as entirely leftist or irrational or hippies from Berkeley or San Francisco...But once people see us [Iraq veterans] on the news, maybe they'll say,

‘Hey, that guy has a short haircut, he looks like he could still be in. He wears tucked-in shirts. He doesn’t have long hair’” (Garofoli, 2007). Ergo’s comments suggest that the regime of visibility produced in reaction to the opposition to Vietnam continues to have an impact on contemporary antiwar thought and action, as the ‘normal’ appearance of the Iraq soldier or veteran is understood as an asset to the antiwar movement to the extent that it defies expectations of the visual deviance of protestors as defined by the OVS.

Indeed, visibility is of concern not only to movements on the left. For example, in August 2013 the League of the South, a Southern nationalist organization based in the southeastern U.S., sent an invitation by email to a protest in the town of Uvalda, Georgia. The League objected to the Uvalda mayor’s stance on immigration, and wished to mobilize its members and supporters to show visibly their opposition by demonstrating there. The League was careful, though, to announce a dress code for the protest:

No t-shirts. Shirts must be tucked in. Belt needed. No belt buckles with pictures, flags or messages. The same goes for hats. No old or holey jeans. No re-enactment paraphernalia. Do not bring flags or signs – we will provide these. Please be ready to smile and make a positive, friendly first impression of the League of the South and Southern nationalism! (email, 16 August 2013)

The League was apparently concerned that its members risked reinforcing negative stereotypes of white Southerners, thereby potentially negating the intention of the rally. Thus for a more complete understanding of the politics of visibility, one would clearly want to consider the visual styles of movements on the right as well (see Schedler, 2014).

Conclusion

I have argued that the emergence of the U.S. counterculture contemporaneously with the Vietnam antiwar movement produced a coding of antiwar sentiments as dirty, messy, and most of all, hippie, as a result of the visual differences between the most visible elements of the movement and the U.S. mainstream. This defining of antiwar sentiment as visually Other was seized upon by the right as part of the process of remembering this era of U.S. history, and this visual coding has over time evolved into a regime of visibility that delegitimizes opposition to war and introduces a kind of corporeal patriotism where one’s loyalty to the state can be measured by an evaluation of one’s appearance. Whereas the original Vietnam syndrome was an expression of disdain by foreign policy elites for public opposition to military intervention, the *other* Vietnam syndrome constitutes a regime of visibility that links visual deviance to opposition to war, with the intention of delegitimizing both and placing deviant-looking protestors outside the body of the nation. I have also discussed how tactics of visual resistance are at the same time constrained by and offer challenges to the dominant regime of

visuality. This article thus seeks to contribute to the literatures on visuality, geopolitics and the body by illustrating the importance of considering the visual in the relevant context, and, in doing so, revealing the ways in which visual rhetorics interact with (geo)political struggles and historically-embedded conceptualizations of the body to produce discourses that seek to impose political effects.

In light of the recent Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement, it appears that the OVS may not only apply to *antiwar* sentiment, but rather any kind of dissent or resistance that appears to come from the left. The right has referred to OWS protesters as “dirty smelly hippies” (Gitlin, 2011), and in response, one OWS protester showed up in Denver, Colorado, dressed like a business executive. This former money manager said “I decided they needed one person in a necktie and sport coat” (Johnson, 2011), suggesting an awareness of the prevailing regime of visuality as well as a desire to use it tactically. An important direction for future research would be to study in more detail the role of visuality in both the opposition to the second Iraq war and the Occupy Wall Street movement to examine the extent to which the OVS affects more than just *antiwar* thought and action.

It is also useful to acknowledge, as MacDonald (2009, 155) points out, that a problem with the study of visuality is the tendency “to isolate vision from other sensory modalities”. It is thus relevant to note that beyond visual appearance, smell was occasionally mentioned as something that defined the deviance of antiwar protestors, as we saw in Reagan’s comment above. But in this case, the focus on the perception of the visual in this article reflects the overwhelming emphasis on the visual in the historical record. That said, it is certainly important to keep in mind the ways in which visual perception interacts with other sensory faculties when one’s research engages with sensory perception. This may be particularly relevant for investigations of contemporary activism in political contexts where we see a shift from liberalism to security paradigms that “are prone to identify as suspicious, and also potentially threatening, each deviation from given norms” (Amir and Kotef, 2015, 673). As a result, bodily presence is “growingly subjected to a developing security rationale that governs public spaces”, which means that “facets of identity that are seemingly not relevant to the intended political action become central, especially in confrontational zones” (Amir and Kotef, 2015, 676).

Finally, I wish to emphasize that I do not argue for an understanding of visuality that privileges its role in social and political processes or that assigns it a decisive power over other aspects of social relations. The process (and politics) of visuality exists in a web of social relations, and this web provides the crucial context for understanding the ways in which visuality *works* in the collective social body. The regime of visuality represented by the OVS points to a larger struggle over historical interpretations as much as over contemporary norms of visuality. As Foucault (1996, page 123, emphasis added) has written about the French context: “There’s a real fight going on...Over what we can roughly describe as popular memory...Now, a whole number of apparatuses have been set up...to obstruct the

flow of this popular memory”. These apparatuses serve the purpose of “reprogramming popular memory...*So people are shown not what they were, but what they must remember having been*”. The apparatuses also employ a regime of visuality as part of an effort to show the public what and how *they must never dare to be*.

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