

The Transparent Body? Diagnostic Radiology Julie Palmer

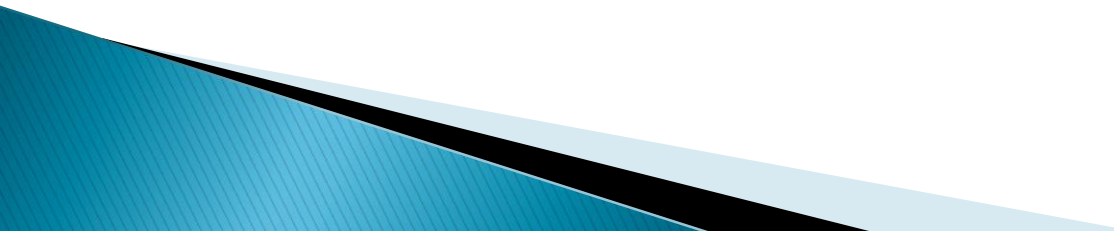
University of Warwick
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Biomedical Visualisations and Society

- ▶ To critically explore the social and political implications of biomedical imaging
- ▶ To gain technical knowledge of visualisation
- ▶ To foster collaboration and networking between early-career researchers

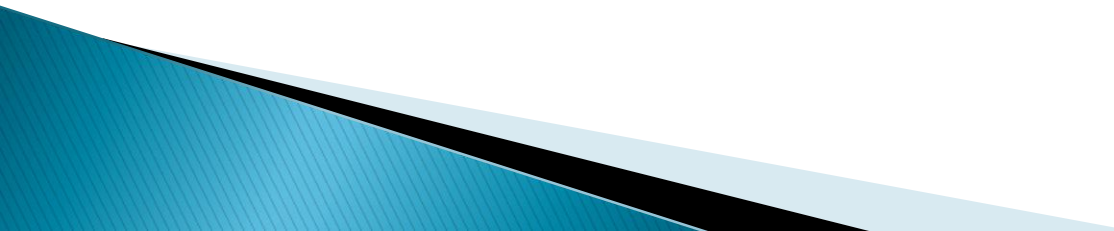
The Transparent Body?

- ▶ Cultural familiarity with medical images
 - ▶ Visualising illness and disorder
 - ▶ The characteristics of visual knowledge
 - ▶ The 'black-boxing' of human values, decisions and work practices
 - ▶ Patients' experiences of medical imaging
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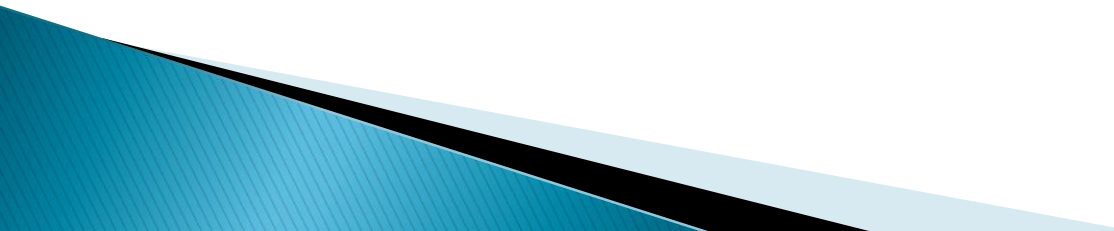
Cultural familiarity with images

- ▶ Increased use of imaging
- ▶ Direct to consumer advertising
- ▶ Popular culture

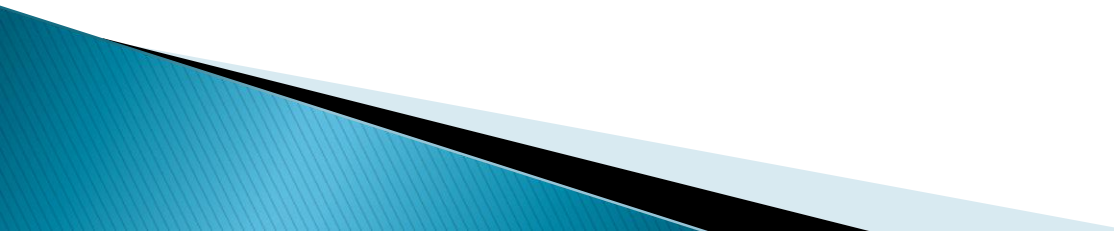
The 'ideal of transparency' (van Dijck 2005)

- ▶ The transparent body?
 - ▶ The body under medical control?
 - ▶ Subjective experience of pain and illness
 - ▶ Uncertain prognosis
 - ▶ Overinterpretation
 - ▶ False negatives
 - ▶ False reassurance
 - ▶ Anatomical diversity
 - ▶ New dilemmas
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The characteristics of visual knowledge

- ▶ ‘Hierarchy of the senses’ (Urry 2000)
 - ▶ Detached, Neutral, objective
 - ▶ Revelation of the physical world (Joyce 2005)
 - ▶ Objectifying?
 - ▶ Exaggerated when vision is extended by high-technology (Haraway 1991: 189)
 - ▶ ‘mechanical objectivity’ (Daston & Galison 2007)
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Black-boxing human values, decisions and work practices

- ▶ Technology as 'agent' (Joyce 2005)
 - ▶ Design
 - ▶ Learning to see
 - ▶ Implementation
 - ▶ Daily use
 - ▶ Interpretation
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Patients' experiences

- ▶ 'Our bodies become objects for others'
(Brown & Webster 2004: 19)
- ▶ Objectified
- ▶ Patients' narratives replaced by an image
- ▶ Or is imaging a symbol of receiving excellent care?
- ▶ Imaging can validate experienced pain and lead to treatment (Rhodes et al. 1999)

- ▶ ‘Transparency, in this context, is a contradictory and layered concept. Imaging technologies claim to make the body transparent, yet their ubiquitous use renders the interior body more technologically complex. The more we see through various camera lenses, the more complicated the visual information becomes. Medical imaging technologies yield new clinical insights, but these insights often confront people with more (or more agonizing) dilemmas...The mediated body is everything but transparent; it is precisely this complexity and stratification that makes it a contested cultural object.’ (van Dijck 2005: 3–4)