EDITORIAL

When Program In Ethnographic Film was organized, the cinematic interests of most anthropologists centered on the production of ethnographic films usable in the classroom. While this concern continues and has markedly increased, other visual media and other scholarly interests in these media have emerged.

In order to more accurately reflect this growing interest in the anthropological study and use of visual media, PIEF must expand. During the recent AAA meeting several PIEF members met informally and decided to create a new organization, The Society of Visual Anthropology (SOVA). This Society will continue the work of PIEF but will broaden its dimensions to include all persons interested in the anthropological study of visual symbolic systems.

It was further decided that the next year will be spent in developing an organization which will reflect the needs of our profession. At the 1972 AAA meeting SOVA will officially come into existence.

The next issue of the Newsletter will contain more information on the Society. We ask you to send us suggestions and offers of assistance. We are hoping to create an organization to serve your needs. To accomplish that goal we need your active participation.

Jay Ruby

ETHNOGRAPHIC FILM: DEFINITION AND EXEGESIS


We are, belatedly, entering an era of heightened interest in the use of film as a part of the anthropological task of recording, interpreting and communicating the diverse cultures of the world. This powerful medium, however, sometimes runs away from us, taking matters away from the essential purposes of scholarship and science to the private ends of those who use it. This power must be contained if the instrument is to serve the purposes of the profession. One step in containing it is to arrive at some criteria as to what constitutes ethnographic film—as distinct from such other established genres as cinéma verité, travelogs, non-ethnographic documentaries, and fictional dramas.

My present purpose is to formulate a definition of ethnographic film. I will first present this definition, then take up each item briefly, and close with some general remarks. My definition is:

"Ethnographic film is film which endeavors to interpret the behavior of people of one culture to persons of another culture by using shots of people doing precisely what they would have been doing if the camera were not present."

1. . . . film . . .

I limit myself to the production of a filmed sequence prepared for public viewing, whether this is to demonstrate some phenomenon for one's colleagues, an educational device for classroom use, or a presentation made ready for a mass public. It is not the raw footage out of which film can be made.

2. . . . endeavors. . .

It is well to turn early to the notion of endeavors, because this emphasizes that we are speaking of an ideal, something to be sought, and reminds us at the outset that it is the intent and the commitment on the part of the film maker that is as important, or more important, than the final product. The true ethnographic film is an ideal, rather than an actuality.

3. . . . to interpret. . .

This term has two valences, each of which must be carefully attended.

a) On the one hand it concerns itself with the ideal of recognizing that there is something there (i.e., in the culture under description) which is being conveyed; and this means that the film maker is not engaged in expressing himself, but is interpreting what somebody else is "saying." The ethnographic film maker is not writing a novel or expressing a personal agony or contributing a piece of his personal autobiography. That this is a real problem can readily be appreciated when we look at a film like Dead Birds. Clearly, Bob Gardner was expressing a personal view rather than attempting to convey the meanings of the Dani.
b) At the same time, the film maker as interpreter is not merely a tube through which substance is flowing; he first must understand what is going on, and then he must explain it, or set it forth for others. He is therefore using his intellect in the process. Certainly a major criterion of the success of the end product is the degree to which he has accurately understood what is going on, and the precision with which he has conveyed his understanding. But if it is true that facts never speak for themselves, it is also true that film footage does not do so either. An ethnographic film is not made by simply running the camera while action takes place.

4... the behavior of people...

It is important to appreciate that what the camera does is to record ongoing events. An ethnographer writing can say: "The Whosits have a joking relationship between a man and his sister-in-law." The camera cannot say this: it can record instances of two identifiable persons engaged in horseplay; it can record the specific act. This is both its power and its limitation. It is therefore behavior that is recorded; not culture. The behavior is always selected: personnel, time, place, type of activity, etc.

It is important also to realize that behavior is going on at different levels at the same time:

a) There is the act itself (the youth is dancing; the man is haranguing the youth).

b) There is the manifest purpose of the act (the youth is engaging in a ceremony; the man is informing the youth).

c) There is the social involvement of the act (the youth is changing his social status through the ritual; the man is helping the young man in his initiation).

d) There is the symbolic meaning of the act (the youth is demonstrating his courage, his manhood, his acceptance of traditional values; the man is demonstrating his support for the youth).

e) There is the psychic load of the act (the youth is suppressing his fear; the man is anxious that he meets the challenge).

On the screen there is still only dancing, haranguing. But if we are left only seeing these acts we are not reaching an understanding of the meaning these have to the actors and we are therefore merely taking pictures rather than interpreting. One significant measure of the success of an ethnographic film is how deep into these levels the film maker manages to reach in a meaningful way.

5... of one culture...

While the camera must record specific acts of specific actors, it is important that these acts and actors must be characteristic of the culture being portrayed; that they be representational and illustrative. It hardly needs pointing out that this is one place where the film maker is engaging in that interpretation of which I spoke earlier, for he must know to what extent the actions are characteristic or idiosyncratic, and he must present them in such a way as to maximize the characteristic and minimize the idiosyncratic—while, incidentally, not losing sight of the person as a human being. The individual acts are important in an ethnographic film precisely because they have social meaning, involving some larger sector of mankind in a system of interaction.

In the treatment of culture, just as in the treatment of behavior, we must recognize the several levels of involvement:

a) The traditional ways of behaving.

b) The culturally established purposes of the behavior.

c) The social interaction as it expresses aspects of the established social structure.

d) The shared symbol system (nonverbal as well as verbal) conveying information that is mutually understood.

e) The sentiments, attitudes and personality attributes that characterize a culture.

f) There is one further "level" in the culture sphere: the internal consistency, harmony, logic of the totality. Perhaps the ultimate measure of success of a film is the degree to which it accurately portrays such a pattern.

6... to people of another culture...

We must take cognizance of the fact that the consumers of an ethnographic film have a set of meanings which they are apt to attach to symbols that pass before them on the screen, and thus a proclivity to misinterpret what they see. The film maker must take care not to present an act which he knows to have one symbolic meaning in our culture which has a very difficult meaning in the culture he is displaying, without making it quite clear what their meaning of the act is. For example, to spit on a person in our culture is a grievous insult; among many people it is a form of blessing.

It is for this reason that the nature of the target audience is an important element in film making.

7... by using shots of people...

Actually, there are three separate channels of communication that the film maker inevitably uses: sight, sound, and narrative or explanation. One can formulate a rule for ethnographic film making that goes as follows: Everything possible visual, whatever else possible aural, and as little as possible in narrative.

a) Narrative, as I am defining it, refers to written or spoken explanation of what is going on, and is always present if only in a title. It is necessary to locate time, place and general context; the problem is how to avoid it as an intrusion, for interpreting cultures is a difficult business.
b) Sound. The ethnographic film maker is inevitably faced
with this most serious problem: culture is expressed in sound
as much as in sight, but while the latter may often be relatively
clearly decoded (with important reservations such as that
already noted), most of the culturally relevant sounds are in
language. Though the tone, especially when accompanied by
gestures and facial expression, may sometimes be understood,
the actual words cannot. There are places where the necessary
understanding cannot be had by the film viewer without
knowing what is actually being said and where the viewer will
remain in darkness unless this intelligence is somehow com-
municated to him. This is a very great problem in ethnographic
film making.

c) Sight. Ultimately, of course, the intent is to get as much
into this channel as possible, and what makes a good
cameraman is the degree to which he captures elements of
depth (as defined in items 4 and 5) on the screen which
become meaningful with minimal use of the other two
channels.

8. . . .doing precisely what they would have been doing if the
camera were not present. . . .

This is an essential element of the definition; it separates
ethnographic film from staged film and puts it in the tradition
of cinémá verité. It is what makes ethnographic film
difficult, because of what is known at UCLA as McCarthy’s
Law, namely: when the camera is set up for shooting, the
important action takes place elsewhere; with its corollary, if
the action takes place in front of the camera, something will
go wrong with the equipment.

But this problem is more subtle than it first appears.
a) It is not possible to know whether there is some
heisenberg effect of the camera’s presence.
b) What is permissible? Balicki had his Netsilik Eskimos
do what would have been done had there not been intervening
years of acculturation, giving us a synthetic view of the past.
Rouch, in Jaguar, gives his youths an unusual experience and
then shoots them doing what they do in response to this
situation, giving us, perhaps, a synthetic view of the future. In
The Hunters, the editors piece together diverse acts to make us
see “one set of events” of a characteristic kind. These are
compromises with reality. They all share the basic element in
the fact that each “actor” was not an actor; he was not
following the direction of the film maker, but his own inner
impulses. When the “actors” are fabricating a sled, and if this
is our ultimate interest, the matter is not so important; but if
our interest is in seeing social relationships or seeking the inner
meanings of the acts, particularly if these acts and their
meanings are taken to be representative of a culture, then the
degree of external influence takes on greater importance. One
measure of the quality of an ethnographic film is the degree to
which the camera and the shooting have avoided altering the
behavior being filmed.

This, then, is what I perceive as being the ideal of an
ethnographic film, whether that film is directed at a profes-
sional audience for purposes of setting forth some technical
matter for other scholars (say, how mothers handle their
babies, how livestock is treated, how baskets are made) or
whether it is aimed at a general audience for popular
consumption.

It is worthwhile to note that for the most part the problems
in ethnographic film are not very different from those inherent
in writing an ethnographic account. Both are efforts to convey
to the people of one culture the realities of another, and each
endeavors to interpret precisely what is going on in that
culture. Clearly it is true that the ethnography, as much as the
ethnographic film, must face problems of interpretation, of
editing, of the relation between individual acts to the cultural
and social expectations, of levels of meaning, and even the
influence of the ethnographer’s presence.

There are, however, two differences. First, there is the fact
that film is a far more powerful medium than the written
word, so that the falsification that enters into it has greater
impact and staying power, and thus a greater potential for
damage. The second is that the film engages inevitably in what
I would call false specifics. We see a particular person doing a
particular thing and we cannot constantly remind the viewer
that this may, here and there, be a little different from the
norm—as every specific act is a little different from the norm.
The film maker does not have the advantage of the corrective
footnote, so to speak. If we compare shooting film to taking
notes in the field, then we must recognize that however much
things are edited by the film maker, what the viewer sees is
bits and pieces of these notes strung together. The ethnog-
rapher may occasionally quote sections of his notes in the final
monograph, but most of what he writes is a distillation of
them.

Though this places a problem upon the ethnographic film
maker, it is also a great source of strength. For, as I argue in
“An Ethnography of Encounters” (Current Anthropology, in
press), what we record in ethnography is too much influenced
by our theoretical predilections (and thus tends to reinforce
these preconceptions). The ethnographic film, by its very
particularizing quality, can, if honestly made in terms of the
ideal I have here been setting forth, have a powerful corrective
influence upon the whole of anthropology.

Walter Goldschmidt
Department of Anthropology, UCLA

To Make the Balance

A village legal system in Mexico is shown in action in a
16mm film, To Make the Balance, distributed by the University
of California Extension Media Center, Berkeley, CA
94720. The 33-minute black and white film may be rented,
purchased and previewed before purchase.

The film, based on twelve months’ field work, was
produced, directed, written and narrated by Dr. Laura Nader,
professor of anthropology at Berkeley. It shows five varied
cases recorded during a week’s stay in the town of Ralu’a,
in Oaxaca. Its insights into the workings and values of a legal
system that contrasts strikingly with those of most industri-
alized nations make it of interest to a wide range of audiences:
to teachers and students of anthropology, sociology and
political science, and to lawyers, judges and laymen interested
in understanding and changing our own legal system. It is also
useful in the study of methodology—how to observe and how
to use information observed in other cultures.

Further details may be obtained from the Extension Media
Center, University of California, 2223 Fulton Street, Berkeley,
CA 94720.
OH, WHAT A BLOW THAT PHANTOM GAVE ME!

The following passages have been excerpted from Edmund Carpenter's new book, Oh, What a Blow That Phantom Gave Me!: Anthropologist in the Electronic World. Soon to be published by Bantam Books.

Speak, That I May See Thee!

New Guinea has been called "the last unknown." Its highest mountains are snow-covered and below these, in early morning, you walk through clouds, your breath visible. Yet tropical swamps lie immediately north and south.

Port Moresby, the capital of the eastern section, resembles a southern California town with air-conditioned buildings, supermarkets and drive-in theater. Four hundred miles to the west, tiny, isolated bands practice cannibalism.

The bulk of the population lies between these extremes, living in thousands of tiny villages and speaking over 700 languages.

In 1969-70, the Territory of Papua and New Guinea hired me and a communications consultant. They sought advice on the use of radio, film, even television. They wanted to use these media to reach not only townspeople but those isolated in swamps and mountain valleys and outer islands.

I accepted the assignment because it gave me an unparalleled opportunity to step in and out of 20,000 years of media history, observing, probing, testing. I wanted to observe, for example, what happens when a person—for the first time—sees himself in a mirror, in a photograph, on film; hears his voice; sees his name. Everywhere New Guineans responded alike to these experiences: they ducked their heads and covered their mouths.

When a shy or embarrassed person in our society ducks his head and covers his mouth, we say he is "self-conscious." But why does consciousness of self produce this response? Does the acute anxiety of sudden self-awareness lead man everywhere to conceal his powers of speech-thought (his breath, his soul) behind his hand the way an awakened Adam concealed his sexual powers behind a Fig Leaf?

* * * *

World's End

We ascended the Wagamush, moving country so beautiful, past villages so remote, that this living past seemed to deny the very existence of the world from which we came.

As we approached Sio, the village leader stood alone on the bank, confronting us the way Axel Heyst confronted the mysterious trio approaching his remote island in Conrad's Victory: their appearance, Heyst felt, was "like those mythic current in Polynesia, of amazing strangers who arrive at an island, gods or demons, bringing good or evil to the innocence of the inhabitants—gifts of unknown things, words never heard before.

We established some sort of rapport by distributing gifts. Then we did nothing. After a few days, women came out of hiding and village life resumed its rhythms.

Sepik villages have had contact with the West since before the First War. Highland villages were drawn abruptly into the world economy during the Second War. But those in between remained remarkably untouched. It cost the Government money each time it extended its authority and it had no money to waste. A few patrol officers, missionaries, hunters, prospectors and timber buyers—count them on two hands—moved through these hills, but lightly, leaving little imprint. Some villages escaped even these visits.

Today, Westerners who enter this country make hand-drawn maps of rivers and villages, sharing this information when they meet, for no better maps are available.

What changes occurred came more from awareness of the existence of a world outside, than from direct contact with that world. Tribal hostilities ceased and villages shifted from inland sanctuaries to river banks. At Sio, this relocation was so recent that the old village still stood, its haus tambaran sheltering ancient treasures, as well as elders who chose not to move.

Missionaries visit Sio frequently; a local teacher has a handful of students; itinerant traders leave behind steel axes. Yet Sio remains far removed from Western centers. Stone axes were still in use when we arrived; cameras and recorders were absolutely unknown.

We gave each person a Polaroid shot of himself. At first there was no understanding. The photographs were black and white, flat, static, odorless—far removed from any reality they knew. They had to be taught to "read" them. I pointed to a nose in a picture, then touched the real nose, etc. Often one or more boys would intrude into the scene, peering intently from picture to subject, the shout, "It's you!"

Recognition gradually came into the subject's face. And fear. Suddenly he covered his mouth, ducked his head and turned his body away. After this first startled response, often repeated several times, he either stood transfixed, staring at his image, only his stomach muscles betraying tension, or he retreated from the group, pressing his photograph against his chest, showing it to no one, slipping away to study it in solitude.

We recorded this over and over on film, including men retreating to private places, sitting apart, without moving, sometimes for up to twenty minutes, their eyes rarely leaving their portraits.

When we projected movies of their neighbors, there was pandemonium. They recognized the moving images of film much faster than the still images of photographs.

Seeing themselves on film was quite a different thing. It required a minor logistic feat to send our negative out, get it processed, then returned, but it was worth the effort.

There was absolute silence as they watched themselves, a silence broken only by whispered identification of faces on the screen.

We recorded these reactions, using infrared light and film. In particular we recorded the terror of self-awareness that revealed itself in uncontrolled stomach trembling.

The tape recorder startled them. When I first turned it on, playing back their own voices, they leaped away. They understood what was being said, but didn't recognize their own voices and shouted back, puzzled and frightened.

But, in an astonishingly short time, these villagers, including children and even a few women, were making movies themselves, taking Polaroid shots of each other, and endlessly playing with tape recorders. No longer fearful of their own portraits, men wore them openly, on their foreheads.

When we returned to Sio, months later, I thought at first we had made a wrong turn in the river network. I didn't recognize the place. Several houses had been rebuilt in a new style. Men wore European clothing. They carried themselves
differently. Some had disappeared down river toward a
government settlement, “wandering between two worlds; one
dead, the other powerless to be born.”

In one brutal movement they had been hoiked out of a
tribal existence and transformed into detached individuals,
lonely, frustrated, no longer at home anywhere.

I fear our visit precipitated this crisis. Not our presence, but
the presence of new media. A more isolated people might
have been affected far less, perhaps scarcely at all. But the
people of Sio were vulnerable. For a decade they had been
moving imperceptibly toward Western culture. Our demon-
stration of media tipped the scales. Hidden changes suddenly
coalesced and surfaced.

The effect was instant alienation. Their wits and
sensibilities, released from tribal restraints, created a new
identity: the private individual. For the first time, each man
saw himself and his environment clearly and he saw them as
separable.

It will immediately be asked if anyone has the right to do
this to another human being, no matter what the reason. If
this question is painful to answer when the situation is seen in
microcosm, how is it answered when seen in terms of radio
transmitters reaching hundreds of thousands of people daily,
the whole process unexamined, undertaken blindly?

Technology is Explicitness

When technology makes behavior explicit, the resulting
images often seem more important—even sacred or obscene.
Most people swear, but when they hear blasphemy or
obscenity on film or radio, action becomes artifact, and the
explicit artifact offends them more than the action itself.

We know little about this, other than the fact that it’s true.
Any technology, including language, can make reality
frighteningly explicit, especially human reality. T. S. Eliot tells
us that human beings cannot stand too much reality, by which
he means, I assume, too much explicitness about reality. “A
fearful thing is knowledge,” says Tiresias in Oedipus Rex
“when to know helpeth no end.”

It’s a serious mistake to underestimate the trauma any new
technology produces, especially any new communications
technology. When people first encounter writing, they seem
always to suffer great psychic dislocation. With speech, they
hear consciousness, but with writing they see it. They
suddenly experience a new way of being in relation to reality.
“How do I know what to think,” asks Alice, “till I see what I
say?”

* * *

Love thy label as thyself—Joyce

In the Middle Sepik, radios are common, tape recorders
exist and, though I saw no cameras, I met would-be camera
owners.

Movies are occasionally shown by the Government in
certain villages. Without exception, the most popular films are
those on New Guinea life. Villagers are aware that cameras can
record their daily activities.

In Kandangan village the people became co-producers with
us in making a film. The initial proposal came from us, but the
actual filming of an initiation ceremony became largely their
production.

In this area of the Sepik, the male initiation rite is
absolutely forbidden to women, in the past on penalty of
death. Our chief cameraman was a woman. It never occurred
to us to ask if she might film: we assumed such a request
would not only be denied, it would offend. But the
Kandangan elders asked if she was good, and when told “Yes,
better than any of us,” they requested that she operate one
camera. Not only did they permit her inside the sacred
enclosure, but they showed her where to position her
equipment, helped her move it and delayed the ceremony
while she reloaded. I’m convinced she was allowed to witness
this rite, not because she was an outsider, but solely because
her presence was necessary for the production of the best
possible film.

The initiates were barely conscious at the end of their
ordeal, but they grinned happily when shown Polaroid shots of
their scarified backs. The elders asked to have the sound track
played back to them. They then asked that the film be
brought back and projected, promising to erect another sacred
enclosure for the screening.

Finally they announced that this was the last involuntary
initiation and they offered for sale their ancient water drums,
the most sacred objects of this ceremony. Film threatened to
replace a ceremony hundreds, perhaps thousands of years old.

Yet film could never fulfill the ceremony’s original
function. That function was to test young men for manhood
and weld them forever into a closed, sacred society. Now the
ceremony, and by an extension the entire society, could be
put on a screen before them, detached from them. They could
watch themselves. No one who ever comes to know himself
with the detachment of an observer is ever the same again.

Postscript: When the film was not finished within the
promised time and hence not shown in the village, involuntary
initiations were resumed.

* * *

Of course in this you fellows see more than I could see. You
see me.—Joseph Conrad, Heart of Darkness

Responses to the camera and recorder ranged from total
incomprehension, among the Biami, to keen sophistication,
among young political leaders in the cities.

The Biami, at first, had no idea what cameras were. That is,
they had no idea cameras made pictures. They thought
cameras simply stored pictures. To them, Polaroid cameras
were boxes containing images of themselves, while movie
cameras were boxes with windows into which we peered. We
encouraged them to sight through viewfinders, assuming they
might at least gain the notion of a telescope. But I don’t think
they understood even this and they continually wrecked one
scene after another by walking in front of cameras, standing in
front of them, above all peering into them. Time and again,
right in the middle of a superb sequence, I would suddenly see
an eyeball coming directly into the camera.

In the Highlands, however, and even in the Middle Sepik,
most villagers know what cameras are and the moment they
see one point at them, their behavior changes. This change is
far more pronounced than that produced by awareness that
one is simply being observed. A camera holds the potential for
self-viewing, self-awareness, and where such awareness is fresh,
it can be traumatic.

Using long lenses, we filmed people who were unaware of
our presence. Then one of us stepped from concealment and
stood watching, but not interrupting their activity. Finally the
cameraman set up his equipment in full view, urging everyone
to go on with whatever he was doing. Almost invariably, body
movements became faster, jerky, without poise or confidence.
Faces that had been relaxed, froze or alternated between twitching and rigidity.

Thus we had sequences showing people who, in their own minds, were: 1) unobserved, 2) being observed by a stranger, 3) being recorded on film which they later might see. There was little difference between 1 and 2, but 3 was quite different.

Before we learned better, we asked people to repeat actions just observed but missed in filming. It was hopeless. Subjects were willing enough but their self-conscious performances bore little resemblance to their unconscious behavior. Among the hundreds of subjects filmed in a variety of situations, I cannot recall a single person, familiar with a camera, who was capable of ignoring it. This makes me wonder about ethnographic films generally. Even where subjects are accomplished actors, how does their acting compare with their behavior when no cameras are present? We may compliment their acting, but is it the theatrical performance we admire or their true-to-life impersonation?

When Joshua Whitcomb, a 19th century actor, performed in Keene, New Hampshire, the audience demanded its money back. It couldn’t understand being charged admission. On stage Whitcomb was exactly the same as any number of local citizens who could be seen daily without charge. Said a representative in protests: “It warn’t no acting; it was just a lot of fellers goin’ around and doin’ things.”

Since most ethnographic films profess to record just that—people going around doing things—the question arises: do they? Or has the camera produced changes in behavior we can’t see because they are so common among us, so much a part of our lives, we fail to recognize them as alien in others. Do we take self-awareness for granted?

For New Guinea, the record is clear: comparing footage of a subject who is unaware of a camera, then aware of it—fully aware of it as an instrument for self-viewing, self-examination—is comparing different behavior, different persons.

Edmund Carpenter
222 Central Park South
New York, New York 10019

MAKING ETHNOGRAPHIC FILM FOR TEACHING AND RESEARCH

Movies have been used extensively in anthropology, though, I feel, inadequately. Too often the filmmaker has had either a superficial knowledge of the people he photographed or inadequate technical skill. Frequently, film has been used illustrating a theme which has been contrived by the filmmaker and imposed on his subject.

It is not enough to have a reason for ethnographic filming, such as the desire to record “primitive culture” before it vanishes; one must also have a method for shooting and editing footage which will not only justify the tremendous expenditure of capital and effort, but also provide useful documents that present, as clearly as possible, the culture one is recording. To do this, the filmmaker should be an anthropologist or work with an anthropologist who has studied the language and the society of the people, particularly in relation to specific topics that have serious relevance to his field.

It is the purpose of this paper to outline a method of filming and editing in synchronous sound, spontaneous social interaction in its natural context, without thematic projection on the part of the photographer or rehearsed acting on the part of the subject.

Films Used by Anthropologists

Occasionally films have been made (both documentary and fiction films) which are useful to anthropology. But as they were not made with this goal in mind; their value is accidental and stems from the creator’s ability to illustrate themes and patterns of social behavior unique to a particular culture. (To cite a few examples: Pagnol’s trilogy, Murius, Fanny and Cesar; de Sica’s Bicycle Thief; Satyajit Ray’s Panther Panchali, Aparajito and The World of Apu; and P. Chayefsky’s Marty.)

Robert Flaherty’s film, Nonook of the North, and John Marshall’s film, The Hunters, are particularly useful to anthropology because they are the best photographic documents we have of two important primitive groups. (In 1968, Asen Balikci and EDC made their reconstruction of traditional Netsilik eskimo life in eleven of the most significant ethnographic films ever made.) Both films are concerned with hunting, but within the framework of two very different environments: the arctic and the Kalahari Desert. Both men selected and organized their material around a specific theme using their subjects to express their own concepts of primitive life. Because both were keen observers, their films show many details about material culture and social patterns which are useful to anthropologists. Since The Hunters is one of the few films which touches on unrehearsed social interaction among a primitive society, it is an antecedent of the type of film to be outlined in this paper. The method described below is an outgrowth of Marshall’s interest in editing the 200,000 feet of Bushman film which he took after he had finished The Hunters. Some films are made by professional anthropologists to illustrate a given aspect of a culture. For example, Margaret Mead’s Trance and Dance in Bali illustrates an aspect of culture which would be difficult to describe in words.

However, many anthropologists have used extensive narration that tells the viewer what to look for in the film. Hence the film is not left to speak for itself but is used by the anthropologist to make a specific interpretation. Most viewers unconsciously accept photographic images as records of reality, although we all should know that “truth” on film is an entirely relative concept based directly on the integrity and knowledge of the editor (cf., the German documentary footage used in propaganda films during World War II: excellent footage, brilliantly edited for a spurious use).

In most documentaries, segments of film comprising parts of many events are shot over a long period of time: weeks, months or even years. The editor, who may or may not have been the photographer, rearranges and selects footage to express an overall feeling or plot conceived either by the photographer (perhaps while shooting) or by the editor. Hence, a film about a native dance may well consist of footage taken of several dances. This might clearly defeat the validity.
of the data (e.g., a film in which dances not occurring in the same season are edited to suggest a single dance). Such reordering of events in time, and the squeezing of the time perspective, can easily lead to many subtle misrepresentations.

A great opportunity is being missed in not closely photographing social interaction within an ethnographic context. If the filmmaker has thorough anthropological training, or works closely with an anthropologist who has a backlog of knowledge and field experience, successful films will be made. One cannot hope to film subtle relationships unless one understands the meaning of these relationships.

The Film Sequence

The following guidelines for making ethnographic films originated during my work with John Marshall on the Peabody Museum film project. (The whole concept of sequence filming as described in this paper was originated by Marshall.) My later anthropological studies among the Dodoth and, most recently, among the Yanomamó (with Napoleon Chagnon, a most knowledgeable and decisive anthropologist) have also influenced my method of filming. The method rests on the plan to photograph, in detail, naturally occurring sequences of social interaction; sequences are sometimes described in this paper as events. In this sense, a sequence could be defined as a span of social interaction in which two or more individuals, through the *natural* course of their social activities, reveal patterns of behavior significant to their society.

Filming commences with the beginning of interaction between individuals; it continues through the period of meaningful exchange and ends when the interaction ceases: two people see each other from a distance, they meet and discuss the desire to organize a hunt; they conclude and part. A peasant market is composed of many sequences, though to varying degrees they are all connected. As people move from one group to another, they move from one sequence to another. Human interaction is composed of these sequences. The number of people involved vary from sequence to sequence: there may be a mob, or only two people. The film sequence would be a model of such a definable period of behavior. (This notion is partially the result of technical improvements. It is now possible for an individual to go into the field with a small, light camera of professional quality and a Nagra tape recorder, the size of a briefcase, to take film with synchronous sound without wires between the recorder and the camera. Each unit remains independent. Previously, the cost was prohibitive for ethnographic work and a truck-load of equipment was necessary.)

One cannot photograph everything that occurs during a sequence. Inevitably, one must be selective. If the filmmaker knows the culture well, his selection can illustrate social relationships important to that culture. He will not be shooting random footage of events in the hopes that at some future date he will be able to piece them together to form a coherent whole. Thus the significance of a film is dependent on ethnographic knowledge during filming and editing. The filmmaker must be aware of the subtleties of the situation, if he hopes to get footage that is of ethnographic value.

One of the biggest technical problems in making a film is photographic field. If one takes a long shot that includes everybody, one has a confusing general picture with individuals and actions too far away to be seen in detail. But the closer one gets to his subject—to isolated movements—the faster one must cut away from the detail to show the movement or object in its larger context. One must be able to see the external stimuli effecting movement. Close filming becomes a problem of integrating bits of behavior to form a whole; this does not arise with long shots. The use of two cameras would ease the problem; but for most fieldwork, this is not feasible as it would probably modify the indigenous social environment.

Nor are two cameras essential. If the anthropologist works closely with the filmmaker he can often predict the basic course of social interaction that will take place at any one time and can direct the filmmaker so that he can be filming in the right spot at the right time. This happened over and over again while Chagnon and I worked together filming *The Feast*. Although he was taking sound, Chagnon kept his eye on the entire event. Since he had seen similar events several times in the past he could predict, in a general sense, the structure and direction the event would take. For my part, I could make sense and form only out of a small piece of the entire scene that we had chosen to film. To maintain on a film, a continuity of social relationships while they are actually happening and at the same time selecting one or two individuals as a focal point, requires all of the cameraman's energy. As an example: I had just filmed a headman, "K," who argued that he would not give up his dog to any of the guests for any reason. Suddenly, "K" announced he would give up his dog. Chagnon, keeping an eye and an ear on the whole scene, relayed the information to me. I stopped filming (as gracefully as possible) and whipped the camera over to "K," who was getting up to get his dog. I began filming "K" again as he walked to the other side of the village. Immediately, I had to make a decision: should I run over and film "K" finding and picking up his dog, or stay where I was and continue filming the excitement which was all about me? I reasoned that it wasn't significant how "K" got his dog, but to whom he was going to give it.

At this point I can give an example of how valuable it can be for the ethnographic filmmaker to have had training in anthropology. Chagnon wanted to film a feast in detail, which, if successful, would illustrate Chapter 4 of his book, *Yanomamó, The Fierce People* (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1968, paper). The basis for some of the theory that underlay his interest in feasting and alliance comes from a book written by Marcel Mauss in 1925, entitled *The Gift* (W. W. Norton, 1967, paper). *The Gift* and the concepts Mauss explicated were very important to me in my graduate studies. So, while filming *The Feast*, I wasn't trying to do beautiful camera work. (Indeed, having initially studied with Edward Weston and Minor White, it had taken years to get out of the habit of trying to make beautiful film.) The issue now was how to make a record and frame the action so that an audience could better understand it, in reference to basic anthropological theory, which Napoleon and I both felt was important.

I then went back to filming the seemingly aggressive exchange between the hosts and visitors and again became involved with a sequence of behavior that I was filming in detail. I had forgotten about "K" because of the intense effort to make sense out of what I was viewing. But Chagnon, who continually viewed the entire event, kept "K" in mind. He said, "Quickly, here comes 'K' back with his dog! He's probably going to give it to 'M.' " Having seen "K" leave, I knew generally from which direction he would be coming. I
moved to a better position without even looking at "K," and just managed to be in the right place at the right time, to film him coming in and presenting his dog to "M."

In order to have a film structure which explicates indigenous behavior, one is often helped by the fact that patterns of interaction within any social grouping repeat themselves over and over again. Therefore, if one is willing to work closely with an anthropologist, it is possible to film an event in detail with only one camera, providing one is in good physical condition (and able to move quickly in a pair of sneakers).

One of the main goals in filming a sequence is to film it in such a way that viewers can agree on the location of the camera and each of the subjects. The essential footage, without cut-aways or narration, must form a coherent pattern. A film sequence must indicate a continuous flow of action throughout and the audience must be in agreement about the relationship of space and time. To date, few ethnographic or documentary films are constructed this way.

Finally, there are many advantages to developing one’s footage while still in the field. This gives one an opportunity to judge the quality and to edit sequences in order to lend insight and direction to future filming. It would be extremely useful to show these films to native informants in order to hear their interpretations of the events and their predictions about what might follow and what to watch for. This would give insight into the elements to focus on in future films. In addition, the reaction of members of a culture to their own behavior may provide further insights for the ethnographer.

Organization of Resulting Film Material

Let us assume that an ethnographic filmmaker goes to the field with 80,000 feet of film, as I recently did. Usually, from 2% to 8% is waste. Generally, one or two films are made from the remaining footage. As best the ratio of footage used to that taken is 15%. However, were the footage used to photograph sequences (averaging about 1,000 feet) and were this material arranged in the following manner, about 90% of the footage would be useful.

Sixty research films of specific events (Sorenson and Gajdusek; 1966), each event being from 30 to 50 minutes long, would be made. All the material shot would be arranged in order of shooting and stripped with three sound tracks: one with the original synchronous sound, a second with a direct translation of all speech, and a third with the ethnographer's comments and interpretations and those of his informants. A complete record of time throughout the filming is made by the soundman directly on the tape.

These research films would then be edited into shorter films averaging about 600 feet or 20 minutes. The editing should clarify the action and the social relationships. It would also interlock further the interpretations of the anthropologist-filmmaker. Instead of a narration, the films would retain synchronous sound with subtitles, or sound overlays, where necessary, to translate pertinent conversations. Ideally these sequences would fall into several groups. One would not film a single event, say, a distribution of meat, but a number of events of different meat distributions, centering on a few specific individuals, each sequence photographed and edited as a complete entity. Of course the groupings would overlap, e.g.:

- "K". a headman meat distribution I
- "D," a headman meat distribution II
- "K," shamanistic trace-drama
- "K" feast
- "K" village fight role of headmanship in Yanomamo society

A series of sequences could then be linked together providing insights into an individual's relationships and activities within his culture.

One or more feature films could still be made either by combining sequences or, as is usual, by re-editing the footage with respect to a specific theme, but now without disturbing the original sequence. One possibility would be a collection of sequences on a given topic or individual preceded by a general introduction to the people and their culture, with a narration giving pertinent ethnographic information.

The completion of these films is not the only responsibility of the anthropologist/filmmaker (see diagram 1). He must also prepare the following written material to deposit with the film:

1. A general ethnography based on field research.
2. A three or four page summary of pertinent ethnographic information to accompany each film upon completion.

Each major anthropological study would result in about 60 sequences, were the anthropologists and filmmaker an efficient team. Chagnon and I should be able to edit 50 sequences from the 80,000 feet of film. Many anthropologists may wish to make only a few sequences, using perhaps 2,000 to 5,000 feet of film, to illustrate specific aspects of culture. By making two or three sequences their film would be useful, both in conjunction with their written ethnographies and for cross cultural, comparative studies.

Uses of This Method of Filming

Anthropologists can use sequences in a variety of ways. A national archive and/or distribution agency would offer film material pertinent to particular courses, by providing an annotated list of all films available—culture by culture and topic by topic. Should a man be teaching a course in comparative religions, he could order those films which have specific material on, let us say, Bushmen or Yanomamo religion. His students would not have to watch a long film in order to get a few shots concerning religion. Before ordering, a professor should study the ethnographic material to gain insight into what has been filmed. (Sequences would not provide a stopgap for the busy professor who has traditionally turned to film when he needed something to fill a class period.

Film Formulas

Formulas to be used in developing film in very hot and in very cold weather are no longer obtainable through A. Michael Schreiber. Dr. Bill Geoghan at the Language Behavior Laboratory, Department of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley, has the material and would be willing to supply same if a stamped self-addressed envelope is included with the request.

- **FIELD NOTES**: Ethnographers comments and observations
  - **RESEARCH FILMS** (Timed and uncut)
    - Original, Synchronous Sound
  - **Index D**: of the sequences and their written ethnographies.
  - **SEQUENCES**
    - Sequence Ethnographies
  - **GENERAL INDEX** of all film and written material
    - Written Ethnography
    - Feature Films (if desired)
  - **Index A**: Ethnographers comments and interpretations
  - **Index B**: Shot list of the footage. HRAF headings, revised for a given culture, might be used. (An analogue computer would facilitate the location of data in its relevant order).
  - **Index C**: Significant words and their translations. The choice of words would depend on the subject of the film: e.g., if religion, then of words pertaining to ritual, etc. would be listed.

Diagram 2. Research desk for viewing research films.

A, index of ethnographer’s comments on the research films. B, index of shot list: descriptions of film shot-by-shot. C, index of significant words of original sound track. D, sequence index. E, general index. F, sequences: stored on each side of desk. G, research films: stored on back of desk. H, I, J, slots in which to place film cans to be projected. K, projectors which automatically thread the film and rewind it into the cans when finished. L, M, N, screens for rear projection of the image: the image is reflected onto the screen from two mirrors. O, P, Q, on-off, forward-reverse, focus, and frame line adjustment controls for each projector. R, S, T, volume controls for both sound tracks: synchronous sound and ethnographer’s comment. U, master control for forward and reverse when all projectors interlocked and running simultaneously. V, volume controls for master interlock, W, X, Y, foot controls for fast forward and reverse for each projector. Z, master control for fast forward and reverse when all projectors interlocked. ZZ, rollers so that desk can be moved easily.
To be useful, these films would require preparation by the professor.)

The archive films and possibly the edited sequences would be valuable for research, particularly in cross cultural studies. These films enable the researcher to examine a series of action repeatedly until every detail is noted and checked, something not possible in direct observation. A good film library would have equipment for simultaneous projection of several films at varied speeds, thereby facilitating comparison either cross-culturally or within a single culture (see diagram 2). (This use would extend well beyond anthropologists to include sociology, psychology, kinesics, biology, oral literature, music, and other fields of research. After a catalog of the raw footage has been carefully made, the simplest search and retrieval system would take the entire body of film, we will say 80,000 feet, and reduce it to 20 “Recordak” cartridges by filming one frame for every foot of film shot. The entire corpus would fit on one 18” shelf, 4” high. Any given sequence of film within the original 80,000 feet could be visually identified in 6 seconds on a brilliant 13” x 13” screen. Such a film reference catalog could be deposited in several centers throughout the country.)

Many sequences would be appropriate for elementary and high schools. The difficulty with most ethnographic films is that they are not specific enough, they are too long for younger children, and often certain aspects are inappropriate, thereby negating the value of the film as a whole. Films are needed which will stimulate questions and discussion.

A year’s course could be constructed around the films of a specific culture. Some of the sequences might be shown many times, both as unique entities and juxtaposed with other sequences, and followed by discussion and writing. Students might be asked to analyze what they saw as to the cultural context and also to predict what will follow. A student, by looking over his early comments, would gain insight into his own cultural bias and reactions in relation to new stimuli, as well as increasing his understanding of the foreign culture. The films would be accompanied by pertinent written material, specifically the related ethnography and outlines of each filmed event. Among other things, such a course would provide a laboratory of field experience in which to develop the students’ sensitivity toward cultural variation and also provide an opportunity to relate theory to observed behavior.

**The Position of Filming in Ethnographic Fieldwork**

Films do not compete with written ethnographies. They are a further way to convey an understanding of a particular culture. Their validity depends on the support of written ethnographic material. The ethnographer who writes a book is able to organize his material on the basis of his total knowledge of a culture. Each note, each insight, can be revised when necessary in the light of further research. (This may be a liability as well as an asset.) To a far greater extent, the anthropologist/filmmaker is limited to his knowledge and insight at the time the footage was exposed and the situation noted. His future learning will aid in interpreting the material, but he cannot express in film any incidents or relationships which he did not specifically photograph.

Assuming that the anthropologist is a well-trained and sensitive observer, his chief tasks become that of interpreting and translating what he sees so that it will have meaning for others. Whenever the anthropologist decides to use film, he should do so because he feels that this is the medium in which he can best express himself on a given subject. He may hope in recording certain events on film that he can avoid some of the pitfalls of unwittingly applying his own cultural categories in communicating his field analysis. By culminating his fieldwork with about 80 sequences on perhaps 15 individuals, the anthropologist could have a valuable record of specific, carefully selected events which illustrate key aspects of his study. He could still use his footage in traditional ways if he wished, but the method of filming described herein greatly enlarges the scope of the film’s use. By combining these films with other similar studies in an ethnographic film library, his material—written and filmed—would be available to many people for several uses, particularly cross-cultural studies.

In order to create useful film of a wide variety of cultures, it is essential that professional anthropologists reevaluate the potential use of ethnographic film for teaching and research, and actively support methods which will lead to footage which is professionally useful. A first step will be the creation and support of a National Ethnographic Film Archive to make all the existing film available and encourage methods of filming which produce material suitable for anthropological research and for teaching.

*Timothy Asch*
Co-Director, Center for Documentary Anthropology
Brandeis University

**HISTORICAL NOTE**

An early documentary film which has been overlooked by many anthropologists is *Grass* (1925) by Merian C. Cooper and Ernest Schoedsack. It is a study of the transhumance migrations of the Bakhtiari of Iran. It is interesting to note that Cooper and Schoedsack left the U.S. while Flaherty was in the Arctic and were apparently unaware that they were "independently inventing" the idea of the modern documentary and ethnographic film.

The following quote from Cooper’s book, *Grass* (G. P. Putnam’s Sons, New York 1925) indicates that Cooper, like Flaherty, anticipated the more recent interest in ethnographic films as devices for teaching—"It is the vogue to decry the motion picture as a thing of fakes and sham. He who dies so has no conception of its possibilities. The time is not far off, I believe, when the motion picture will play a very real and vital tool in education. The study of geography has passed the point of the old-styled text-book with its meaningless lists of names to be memorized. The modern text-book and the modern teacher are emphasizing more and more the importance of Human Geography—the science which deals with the relation of nature to man and man to nature. In the study of Human Geography the motion picture can and will play an increasing important part. With the flexible means of expression given by the film, it is possible to record the great natural geographical dramas which go on all over the world, wherever Man contends against Nature in the struggle for existence. And, given the proper technical experts and equipment, there is no reason why the screening of such a drama may not have almost universal interest. When man fights for his life, all the world looks on. And where does man have to fight harder than when he finds his opponent the unrelenting and stern forces of Nature?" (pp. ix-x).
PROXEMICS AND SEMIOTICS


Introduction

This paper is concerned with proxemic behavior on the interpersonal, transactional level: how man perceives, structures, and uses small amounts of space in face-to-face encounters with other men. The ways in which a person judges whether another person as “near” or “far” is a function of all his senses, in Hall’s (1966:172) words, a “synthesis of many sensory inputs: visual, auditory, kinesthetic, olfactory, and thermal.” Thus, proxemic behavior on the interpersonal level is viewed as a system of human behavior composed of several interrelated variables.

The research reported in this paper is based on a sample of 110 male foreign students studying in the United States who were interviewed and observed in a controlled, laboratory setting (Watson 1969). The proxemic behavior of these subjects was measured using five directly observable, operationally defined categories: the directness with which interactants face one another, the physical distance between the interactants, the amount and kind of touching which goes on during an interaction, the eye contact which takes place during an interaction, and the voice loudness with which interactants converse. These categories were broken down further into smaller analytical units. The category “eye contact,” for instance, has four subdivisions which amount to: looking another person directly in the eye, looking at him in the area of his face, looking in his general direction, and directing the gaze away from him. [For more complete operational definitions of proxemic variables see Hall (1963) and Watson (1970).]

Semiosis has been defined by Charles Morris (1938:3) as “the process in which something functions as a sign . . . .” and the study of sign systems is termed semiotics. Semiosis, according to Morris (1938:3), has three principal components: the sign vehicle (“that which acts as a sign”), the designatum (“that which the sign refers to”), and the interpretant (“that effect on some interpreter in virtue of which the thing in question is a sign to that interpreter”). Further, Morris (1938:6-7) abstracts the relationships between the principal components of semiosis into three different aspects: the semantic, the pragmatic, and the syntactic. The semantic dimension of semiosis deals with the relationship of signs to the things signified, the pragmatic dimension with the relationship of signs to the behavioral responses which they elicit, and the syntactic dimension with the relationship of one sign to another sign within the same system of signs.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss proxemic behavior, as defined above, in a semiotic frame of reference. The term “proxemic sign” as used in this paper is defined to mean that element of behavior which is subsumed within each of the analytically distinct subdivisions of the five categories which operationally define the system of proxemic behavior. Using, once again, the category “eye contact” as an illustration, looking another person directly in the eye is one proxemic sign, looking at his face is another, and so on.

The Semantic Aspect of Proxemic Behavior

The semantic aspect of proxemic behavior deals with the relationship of a proxemic sign to the meaning attached to the sign. In terms of the semantic dimension, proxemic norms, once internalized, are maintained largely “outside awareness” (Hall 1964a:41; 1966:109), i.e., people are not conscious of the importance of these norms until they have been violated. Thus, the meanings of proxemic signs become clearer when they are violated. Violations of proxemic norms most typically occur in a cross-cultural interaction in which two different patterns of proxemic behavior clash and produce interference. Since foreign students in the United States are likely to be exposed, to a greater or lesser degree, to violations of their proxemic norms every day, they seemed to be a particularly suitable sample to question about the meanings attached to various proxemic signs. The subjects were asked about differences in proxemic norms between North Americans and people in their own countries, and what violations of these norms meant in terms of their own systems of proxemic behavior. Each category of proxemic behavior will be discussed in turn.

Directness of Facing (Sociofugal-Sociopetal Axis)

Empirical evidence indicates that Arabs, Latin Americans, and Southern Europeans face each other more directly during an interaction than do North Americans. [Empirical evidence cited in this paper comes from Watson and Graves (1966)] Most Arab subjects indicated that to face another Arab with the directness which characterized North American interactions would mean that the person is not paying attention. Most Latin American and Southern European subjects answered similarly, saying that this indirectness would signal lack of interest. Subjects from both the Arab and Latin American groups mentioned that directness of facing is generally not as important as eye contact.

East Asians, Indians and Pakistanis, and Northern Europeans fall into the same group as North Americans in directness of facing, so less specific indications of the meaning of the violation of this proxemic norm were obtained. None of the East Asians, interestingly enough, were able to think of any meaning associated with different degrees of directness of facing. Also interesting was the fact that several Northern European subjects mentioned that directness of facing and eye contact go hand in hand, in contrast to the remarks made by Arabs and Latin Americans.

Distance

Although the Arabs interacted the closest of any group observed, several Arab subjects said that distance is not very important. An Arab, they continued, compensates for distance by shouting and eye contact. Latin Americans felt that North Americans used more distance in their conversations and that to use such a distance in Latin America would seem “cold.” One student from Ecuador said that standing in line for tickets in the United States made him nervous because of all the space between people. Southern Europeans felt that using the greater North American distance in a conversation would appear to be too impersonal, or to impart a feeling of “lack of harmony,” as one French subject put it.

The East Asians indicated that standing closer than is normal would imply superiority. Several subjects from the Indian-Pakistani group felt that North Americans were a little more distant in their interactions and that not to stand close
to a person in India or Pakistan is not to be close to that person. Northern Europeans used about the same distance in interaction as North Americans, and most of them said that they got nervous when approached too closely.

**Touching**

Almost half of the Arab, Latin American, and Southern European subjects touched each other during an interaction, while only two East Asians and no Indian-Pakistani, Northern European, or North American subjects touched. The Arabs reported that it just wouldn’t seem right not to touch another man during an interaction. The Latin Americans considered it extremely unusual not to touch during an interaction, and not to do so would appear to be “cold.” Southern Europeans felt that they touched each other much more than North Americans, and not to do so would be unfriendly. To the East Asians, touching another person during a conversation would indicate anger, loss of self-control, or over-friendliness, and Northern Europeans couldn’t imagine a situation where one would touch another man a great deal. Although none of the subjects from the Indian-Pakistani group touched during an interaction, most of them felt that men in their countries touched each other more than North Americans and not to touch would impart a feeling of distance.

**Eye Contact**

The Arabs, Latins, and Southern Europeans put more stress on the importance of direct eye contact than did subjects from the other groups. One Arab said that conversation was impossible without the use of the eyes. Many Arab, Latin American, and Southern European subjects mentioned that to employ less contact is taken to mean impatience to break off a conversation or a lack of interest in the conversation. Subjects from the other groups frequently mentioned that too much eye contact signals anger, hostility, or prying.

**Voice Loudness**

Arabs mentioned that distance is spanned by raising the voice and several subjects from the Arab, Latin American, and Southern European groups indicated that to employ a voice loudness as low as that typically employed in North America would indicate shyness or embarrassment. Most East Asians mentioned that raising the voice indicates anger, threat behavior, or loss of self-control. Many Indian-Pakistani subjects said that it is impolite to speak too loudly. Among Northern Europeans raising the voice seems characteristic to convey anger.

The brief examples cited above to illustrate the semantic dimension of proxemic behavior serve to emphasize the fact that different meanings are attached to the same proxemic signs in different culturally specific systems of proxemic behavior.

**The Pragmatic Aspect of Proxemic Behavior**

The pragmatic aspect of proxemic behavior is concerned with the relationship of a proxemic sign to the response it elicits from an interpreter. Again, it is more illuminating to talk about violations of proxemic norms than their maintenance, and to employ the distinction which Hall (1964b) makes between adumbrations and cues. Adumbrations are precedents and accompaniments to the “formal” topic of a transaction and serve as a feedback mechanism in adjusting or maintaining behavior. An adumbration, in Hall’s (1964b:157) words, “is a perceivable manifestation of A’s feelings of which he may not even be aware,” while a “cue is a short message of minimal redundancy in full awareness from A to B that indicates what A wants B to do.” One can see that the principal difference between adumbrations and cues is the level of awareness at which each is employed. Proxemic signs can be used both as adumbrations and as cues in communication within a culture, but in a cross-cultural situation proxemic signs are most frequently cues, or, more appropriately, miscues.

When two people from the same culture engage in a conversation, proxemic signs can be used as adumbrations in accordance with the subjective expectations of the interaction. A person is engaged in a conversation with his friend. Both share the same system of proxemic norms. Both of them have defined the situation in the same way and the behavior elicited is reinforced and maintained in part by proxemic signs used as adumbrations. The conversants use distance, a degree of eye contact, an amount of touching, and so on, which is appropriate to the situation. Things go smoothly and the interaction is broken off. If questioned, the interactants would probably be hard put to specify the rules which govern the proper distance, amount of touching, and so forth, which went on during the interaction. Proxemic signs can also be used, at a higher level of awareness, as cues in culturally prescribed ways: you’re angry so you raise your voice, you’re hostile so you stare, you want to make a point so you jab your friend in the chest with your finger. You use, in other words, a proxemic sign as a cue to elicit a response from your conversational partner.

In a culturally specific context proxemic signs can be used to help gauge the smoothness of an interaction or to dare a person to punch you in the mouth, but the signs are usually interpreted correctly and elicit the expected response. Correct interpretation of a proxemic sign is often not the case in a cross-cultural interaction where the proxemic patterns of the interactants clash. For example, Arab, Latin American, and Southern European subjects gave a composite description of North Americans which characterized them as shy, uninterested, embarrassed, and generally “cold.” These impressions are due, in large part, to a misinterpretation of proxemic signs, and such misinterpretations are understandable in light of the earlier discussion of the meanings of proxemic signs. An Arab and an American engaged in a conversation might define the situation in the same way, but the proxemic adumbrations used by each could be noticeably different and therefore serve as cues. The American’s failure to maintain direct eye contact is normal to the American, but the Arab is very likely to read it as a cue which he interprets as meaning lack of interest. The behavior elicited from these misinterpretations is most often, to use Goffman’s (1957) phrase, “alienation from interaction,” i.e., the interactants begin to direct more attention to what’s going wrong than to the topic of conversation, and such responses are obviously not conducive to good communication.

**The Syntactic Aspect of Proxemic Behavior**

The syntactic aspect of proxemic behavior concerns the relationship of a proxemic sign to other proxemic signs. The task in investigating the syntactic aspect of proxemic behavior
is to attempt to construct a network of proxemic signs. Using the operationally defined, phenomenally distinct units defined as proxemic signs, correlation matrices can be constructed which give some idea of what the interrelationships between these units are (Watson and Graves 1968; Watson 1970). Matrices correlating proxemic signs in different culturally specific systems turn out to be quite different, suggesting that proxemic signs within different systems have different relationships to each other (Watson 1968). Making further use of the relationships between proxemic signs, cluster analysis reveals that the proxemic behavior of my sample falls into seven different clusters, or groups. Such findings, if valid, place limitations on the notion of two global proxemic types, “contact” and “non-contact,” suggested by Hall (1963).

But it is analysis of proxemic behavior at the syntactic level of semiosis which serves to demonstrate how little is known about proxemic behavior. The way in which the term “proxemic sign” has been used in this paper is a convenient analytical device which may or may not have relevance within a culturally specific system of proxemic behavior. The isolation of proxemes—contrastive units of proxemic behavior which are relevant within culturally specific systems—seems to be a task which has to be undertaken if a meaningful analysis of proxemic behavior as semiosis is to be made. We must know what the culturally meaningful signs are before we can determine the ways in which they are used. But to determine the boundaries between proxemes remains a difficult, but probably not insoluble, methodological problem.

Conclusions

We know that Arab men hold hands and stand nearer to each other during a conversation than do North American males. We know that Latins look each other in the eye more than Northern Europeans. So where do we go from here? I suggest two immediate goals: the search for the elusive proxeme, mentioned above, and study of the situational context in which proxemic behavior occurs.

Proxemic behavior has been discussed in this paper as if it occurred isolated from a situational context. Obviously it doesn’t. We need to know more about the ways in which people define situations and the proxemic behavior appropriate to these situations. Certainly an understanding of the situational context is a necessary prerequisite in interpreting a direct gaze as passionate longing, hostility, disappointment, or surprise. I feel that only until these basic areas of proxemic behavior have been investigated more thoroughly will there be a basis for really understanding how proxemic behavior works.

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O. Michael Watson
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RESUME OF FILM PROJECT OF THE LIFE OF A BOLIVIAN TIN MINER, TITLE I HAVE SPENT MY LIFE IN THE MINE

The film is the combined efforts of filmmaker Roy Loes and June Nash, anthropologist. It is based on an autobiography of Juan Rocha.

In July of this year Roy Loes and I went to the mining center of Oruro, Bolivia, to begin filming the autobiography of Juan Rocha, a first-class driller in Bolivia’s nationalized tin mines. Through Juan’s eyes we hoped to create an image of the life and culture of mining communities. In the life changes he has experienced, related as they are to the national transformations from the time he entered the mines at the age of eight in 1934 to his retirement in 1970, we hope to project a sense of the human dimension of the processes “industrialization” and “modernization” that stud the economic and sociological literature.

We combined documentary filming with dramatization of sequences from Juan’s narrative to make the film. A neighbor’s son acted the sequences of Juan as a child, and men who were working in the mine on the day of the filming willingly entered as extras and supporting actors. Sequences of Juan as a young married man are acted by a young miner and his wife, who reenact the daily schedule of getting up and going to work, as well as a fight between neighbors recalled by Juan’s wife, a scene that epitomized some of the conflicts and techniques for handling them within the mining encampment. We were able to go to the block cavein section of Siglo XX where Roy filmed the documentary sequences of miners at work, with Juan entering one working group to show his own role until retirement.

The 16mm color film will probably be edited by spring of 1972. The project was supported by the Social Science Research Council.

June Nash
100 Bleecker Street, Apt. 12 D
New York, New York 10012
ETHNIC FILM AS ETHNOGRAPHIC FILM

If the purpose of ethnographic film is to reveal one culture to another, then the recent discovery of an American ethnic film history—films shot by Black Americans for showing to all-Black ghetto audiences—is of no little interest to anthropologists.

The all-Black American cinema apparently began with The Birth of a Race (1918), a feature-length epic financed by the Black bourgeois and intended as an answer to the bigoted Birth of a Nation. Promotional material proudly announced: "For the basis of our photoplay we have chosen a race which has become American through and through, it has helped fight our battles, clear our land, build our cities and worked shoulder to shoulder with all other races. Ah! You guessed it the first time! The Negro!" The theme was compromised when the producers had to get completion money from white backers, and the apparently shoddy result was a failure. No copies seem to have survived.

But a short from the same period, Spying the Spy (1917), demonstrates that even the earliest ethnic filmmakers were quite sophisticated. Subtitled "A Black Sherlock Holmes," it includes the famous sleuth complete with Deestalker cap, a comic Watson, and an evil all-Negro society complete with costumes and rituals which parody the Ku Klux Klan! The plot revolves around efforts of the mock KKK to spy out American secrets for the Kaiser. By the late 1920's, the all-Black cinema had several hundred theaters nationwide, as well as showings in schools, churches, tent revivals, and white theaters after midnight. A film from this period, the elegantly photographed and powerful Scar of Shame (1927, Colored Players Film Corp.), has been preserved. Its protagonist, a young concert pianist, rescues a poor working girl from the evils of her environment (her immediate problem is a beating by a stepfather-drunkard who takes all her earnings). The pianist marries her out of pity, and then is unable to accept her as one "of his class." The wife is forbidden to meet her mother-in-law, who lives in a private home with a Black butler. Despondent, the girl lets herself be persuaded by her father and his friend, a criminal, to become a nightclub star. As the wife is about to leave, the husband returns and pleads for her not to go. In the melee the wife is shot and disfigured, the husband imprisoned for it. Escaping and becoming a music teacher, he falls in love with a pupil. One day he is sent to the local speakeasy to find his intended father-in-law, and discovers his first wife, now a lovely entertainer hiding her "scar of shame" with a silk scarf. Knowing his past, she tries to blackmail him, but he decides to tell all. The wife, in despair (she will never be good enough), takes her own life. The fiancé and her upper-class father, told of the husband's innocence in a suicide note, forgive him and agree to the marriage.

Scar of Shame is of ethnological interest for its depiction of the Black subculture of the period, and particularly the Black caste system. A subtitle reflects its Darwinian underpinnings: "If only she had turned her mind to the higher things in life." Beyond this, the film contains an enormous wealth of social and cultural details, particularly valuable in that they indulge the characteristic cultural references of the Black makers, rather than scholars. Finally, the talent and skill displayed in Scar of Shame transform it from a document to a work of art.

Another all-Black silent, Body and Soul (?), marked the first film appearance of Paul Robeson. It was shot by Oscar Micheaux an ingenious Afro-American who managed to make twenty-four feature films. In Body and Soul, Robeson plays a treacherous Black preacher who in fact is a dirty, venal ex-convict, trying to dupe a pious mother into letting him marry her daughter. When an old prison pal spots the sham, he is forced to simply steal the old woman's savings, arranging the facts so her daughter takes the blame. The crisis worsens, and as the Robeson character seems about to triumph, the old woman awakens to find it was all a dream; her daughter is really to marry a polite ambitious Black inventor, also played by Robeson. Besides a wealth of cultural detail, the story suggests a mistrust of various sorts of faith as answers to social problems.

Another Miqueaux film, God's Step Children, also deals with the Black caste system, specifically a vibrant, light-skinned girl who falls in love with her handsome stepbrother but is forced to marry a coal-dark, cackling, but rich, farmer. In the end she kills herself. Filmmaker Ken Jacobs has suggested Micheaux's psychological naiveté allowed him to express the whole complex of Black racial attitudes in this way: "the nightmare trap of yearning to be white and simultaneously guilt for wishing to be white." His insight is reflected in the records of picketing of the film by outraged Black and white leftists, who saw it as "presenting a false picture that all light-skinned Negroes hate their dark brothers."

In the 1940's, whites entered the Black film market, and the results are also of ethnographic interest: Black-cast films made for Black audiences by white production teams. Films like Murder on Lennox Avenue, Dirty Gerty from Harlem, and Bronze Buckaroos are based on white plots, dialogues, and characters, letting the Black subculture, character, sensibility, and behavior through in only in scratches and patches: improvisations, "blank spots" in behavior, inappropriate expressions. As two Black ranchhands play poker in the bunkhouse, one spots the other cheating. When the cheater leans forward to "scratch his leg," the other party mutters: "Listen brother, put you hand under the table one more time, and the next time you go to buy gloves, buy one!" Bits like this reference to knife fighting, and many much more subtle ones, indicate a clear awareness of and reactions to the graft-in details of behavior.

This very brief survey suggests some clear special uses of ethnic film as ethnographic film: as ethnographic resource material in its own right; as ethnographic art; as a special case of advanced articulation by another culture with a complete knowledge of filmmaking; and finally as a particularly clear example of the limitations of ethnographic filmmakers working outside the culture (in the later films).

I might suggest an afterthought that bootleg prints of such early television material as Amos 'n Andy might also be useful in the last instance.

The films mentioned in this article are available for screening or viewing by scholars at the American Film Institute, Washington, D.C.

Norman Kagan
408 East 64th Street
New York, New York 10021
NOTICES

1972 American Anthropological Association Meeting

If you wish to submit a film for screening at the 1972 AAA Meeting, please submit the following information: Title, gauge, running time, credits, and a 250 word abstract, to Timothy Asch, Center for Documentary Anthropology, 24 Dane Street, Somerville, Massachusetts 02143. The deadline for submission is March 1, 1972.

Student Conference on Film Study

Oberlin College will sponsor a Student Conference on Film Study, April 20-23, 1972. The conference is made possible by an educational grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Twenty-five of the country’s most promising graduate and undergraduate student film theorists and scholars will be invited and flown to Oberlin as guests of the college for the four day meeting. In addition, two internationally known film theorists will be in attendance—Christian Metz of the Sorbonne, Paris, and Yves De Laurot, of Cinema Engage, New York.

The purpose of the meeting will be to provide a forum for discussing the interdisciplinary and societal implications of film study programs at colleges and universities. The twenty-five participants will each be chosen on the basis of an original essay focusing on the goals, methods, and scope of film study in the 70’s. The essays should be submitted by March 1 and should be written with an eye to presenting, from well reasoned theoretical, critical, or historical perspectives, a statement of what ought to be the role of film and its study in shaping the future.

A published collection of essays written by conference participants is planned. Persons wishing to submit essays need not be specifically involved with film study programs or courses at their institutions.

For further information contact Christian Kock, Department of Communication, Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio 44074.

Opportunity Wanted

A young anthropology graduate with own equipment experienced in all facets of still photography and 16mm documentary filmmaking desires position or association with anthropologists or museum to produce ethnographic films. He has recently completed a short 16mm color film on “La Judea” of the Cora Indians of Nayarit, Mexico. Previously he produced two other short films. Individuals or institutions who would like a film produced of their fieldwork at low cost should inquire to Fraser McAninch, 31 Wildwood Avenue, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada.

Writers Wanted

A small fee is available to persons living and working in the Third World, to write occasional commentaries, or even short pieces, on films and other media relating to international development, any aspect, for the International Development Review. The audience is the 5,000 plus readers, members of the Society for International Development, plus many libraries, government agencies, and universities throughout the world. Those interested should write to Jean Marie Ackermann, Culture Learning Institute, the East-West Center, Honolulu, Hawaii 96822.

Wanted

References to films, ethnographic or commercial (dramatic or documentary), that depict religious preaching. Needed for a sociolinguistic examination of language and religion. Write to Professor William J. Samarin, Department of Anthropology, University of Toronto, Toronto 5, Ontario, Canada.

1972 Temple University Anthropological and Documentary Film Conference

The preliminary program for Temple’s Film Conference is now available by writing to Film Conference, Room 200, South Hall, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19122. This year’s program includes film and VTR screenings, technical workshops and exhibits, symposia and seminars. The advance registration fee is $15.00 for the entire conference. Registration by mail ends February 18.

Hungarian Ethnographic Film Festival and Scientific Conference

The Hungarian Ethnographic Film Festival and Scientific Conference was organized for the second time in August, 1970. After the Festival’s initiation in Szeged, this series of programs became established in Székesfehérvár. Of the sixty films submitted to the jury and viewed by the general public, fifteen won prizes.

This year’s Festival will be arranged in Székesfehérvár, County Tolna, by the Tolna County Council and the Hungarian Ethnographic Society. Participation of native and foreign ethnographers, film people, researchers, scientists, and all those interested in popular culture is encouraged.

Purposes of the Festival

... Documentation and publication of ethnography by means of film. Cross-checks and discussions of the results achieved in this field.

... Exchange of working methods between the ethnographic experts; furthering of international co-operation.

... Enrichment and enlargement of the ethnographic archives.

The Festival Program

It is a seven day program with scientific discussions in the morning. Competition-films will be presented in the evenings followed by informative projections. County Tolna is rich and varied in ethnographical regions. The program includes opportunities for the participants to visit these regions and acquaint themselves with the rich traditions of the folk culture.

Divisions of the Festival

... Competition of professional films (motion picture studios, TV films).

... Competition of non-professional filmmakers (amateurs, ethnographers, etc.).

... Scientific Conferences.
Any films which have not already been presented at the previous Székszard Festival can be taken into consideration. This time the range of material will extend to the folklore of peoples outside Europe. The only exception is the TV film where only European material can be considered.

The next Festival will be held in August, 1972.


Recently Published

*Understanding Body Movement*, an annotated bibliography of research in the psychology and anthropology of physical body movement, authored by Martha Davis, Hunter College, is available from Arno Press, 330 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10017, for $15.00.

The Historians Film Committee

The Historians Film Committee is a nationwide group interested in widening and invigorating their teaching and research techniques with the use of film. A newsletter is published to keep people informed of developments in the field, and a journal of film and the social sciences is envisioned to be established at the earliest practical date. The Committee hopes to organize historians and other social scientists to work for the preservation of film archives and also plans to organize periodic conferences and seminars dealing with film.

For further information contact Historians Film Committee, c/o History Faculty, Newark College of Engineering, 323 High Street, Newark, New Jersey 07102.

American Science Film Association

*Purpose of ASFA*

The American Science Film Association was created to advance science through the use of motion pictures and allied communications media as tools of research, as means of communicating research results, and as instruments for science education. The Association endeavors to promote communication among scientists and the public understanding of science through audio-visual media.

*Functions of ASFA*

The Association seeks to

... Establish liaison with professional societies to encourage the exchange of scientific information through motion pictures, television and related media.

... Circulate information about scientific audio-visual media, and the application of cinematic and television techniques to scientific research in periodic and occasional publications.

... Establish a center for the collection, cataloging, retrieval, and dissemination of information about scientific films and film techniques, television productions and technology, related audio-visual media and methodologies, multi-media communications, and the evaluation and use of these materials.

... Encourage the establishment of scientific film and video-tape centers in the several disciplines to collect and distribute films and videotapes of a scientific nature.

... Establish liaison with the national science film and television organizations of other countries.

... Cooperate with the United States Government agencies in encouraging the international circulation of scientific audio-visual materials.

*Publication Activities of ASFA*

A newsletter, *ASFA Notes*, is published to report to the membership on activities of the Association and its members, and on meetings and other matters relating to the purposes of ASFA.

For further information contact American Science Film Association, 7720 Wisconsin Avenue, Bethesda, Maryland 20014.

**AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGIST Film Reviews**

If you have a film that you want reviewed in the *American Anthropologist* or if you wish to review a film, please write to Timothy Asch, A.A. Film Review Editor, 73 Frost Street, Cambridge, MA 02140.