EDITORIAL

With this issue Program in Ethnographic Film ends. Beginning in the fall, the Newsletter becomes an official publication of the Society for the Anthropology of Visual Communication. (To avoid unnecessary confusion the volume numbers will continue.) It is the sincere hope of the editors that we will be able to continue to inform our readers about ethno-film as well as open up the Newsletter to cover the whole of the field that we are calling the Anthropology of Visual Communication. The success of this venture is primarily dependent upon you.

We are interested in receiving the following—short papers (up to 20 typewritten pages), notices of conferences and other events, training programs, publications (verbal, visual and written), and employment opportunities. The more unsolicited material we receive, the more the Newsletter will represent its readership.

One of the principal reasons for the creation of the new Society was to bring together a variety of social scientists who are involved in visual systems. This Newsletter can become a significant means of informal communication for these people—for us.

Jay Ruby

NEW PROGRAM OF GRADUATE STUDIES IN CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION OFFERED

The Department of Anthropology at Temple University announces a new program of graduate studies in Culture and Communication. The program has been designed for students of anthropology who wish to study various verbal and visual modes of human communication in a cultural context. The organizers of this program feel that all communicative, interactive and expressive forms should be the subject of anthropological inquiry. It is felt that since communication utilizes cultural mechanisms, anthropology must recognize the importance of analyzing basic and common features of communicative behavior. Conceptualizing such behavior as social activity, we must furthermore seek to understand the culturally structured relationships in man’s use of these omnipresent communicative components.

The curriculum shall have several foci:

(1) Man’s communicative behavior shall be approached as a pattern of communicative codes—codes that are simultaneously operative and codes that are situated within specific socio-cultural contexts. Primary consideration shall be given to the application of communication models for the study of all of culture.

(2) The potential of an ethnography of communication perspective shall be studied with respect to verbal as well as non-verbal modes of communication.

(3) Visual anthropology shall be studied from several vantage points:

(a) the study of visual communication in terms of culturally structured codes of perception and social behavior;

(b) the study of man’s use of symbolic materials examined not as artistic effort but rather as a cultural enterprise amenable to ethnographic methods of examination; and

(c) the study, use and production of anthropological visual materials for research and presentation.

The Culture and Communication program has been designed to emphasize the integration of theories, interests and methods of communication study into a total anthropological curriculum. Students are expected to gain a comprehensive knowledge of the four domains of anthropological inquiry. Graduates of this program are initially to be recognized as anthropologists and secondly as communication experts.

The study of language in a context of linguistic anthropology shall be one of several foci within the program. Although man’s use of linguistic codes has seldom been contextualized within a communications framework, techniques of linguistic analysis and experimentation in applied linguistics offer a rich source of insight and investigation into...
other modes of human communication. In this sense, language study—descriptive, theoretical and applied—shall provide one focus of the Program.

Furthermore, the curriculum shall coordinate and assimilate interests and work that are standardly part of separate disciplines. For example, theoretical and methodological ties between sociolinguistics and visual communication shall be presented; the study of art, dance, folklore and filmmaking shall be approached as expressive culture and communicative performance. Thus one additional dimension of the Culture and Communication program shall be to examine emergent relationships between these areas and anthropology. Acknowledging the more established relationships that have been demonstrated in the study of language in society and culture, importance shall be placed on the integration of other communicative codes, such as paralinguistics, kinesics, proxemics and vidistics, within culturally defined contexts.

Course Offerings in Culture and Communication

The following is a list of courses to be offered during the following two-year period, 1973-75:

*Introductory Undergraduate Courses

Anthropology 53  Images of Man: A Communications Approach to Culture
Anthropology 127  Introduction to Linguistic Anthropology
Anthropology 230  Folklore and Culture
Anthropology 237  Communication Systems
Anthropology 240  Introduction to Culture & Communication

*The above courses are designed primarily for the undergraduate major and a limited number may be taken for graduate credit.

Senior Seminars & Beginning Graduate Courses

Anthropology 327  Problems & Methods in Sociolinguistics
Anthropology 329  Vidistics: Ethnography of Visual Communication

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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.

Anthropology 330  Methods in Culture & Communication Fieldwork
Anthropology 331  Communication & Interactional Anthropology
Anthropology 333  Anthropological Film: History & Production

Graduate Courses

Anthropology 503  Seminar in Visual Anthropology
Anthropology 509  Seminar in Culture and Communication
Anthropology 591  Seminar in Sociolinguistics
Anthropology 633  Seminar in Non-linguistic Communication
Anthropology 644  Seminar in Expressive Culture
Anthropology 729  Seminar in Advanced Vidistic Research

Applicants to the Culture and Communication program must realize that a graduate degree specifically in ethnocinematography is not being offered. Interests in the production and presentation of ethnofilm must be well-integrated into a broad curriculum of anthropological study.

Students interested in other areas of culture and communication such as dance, music, folklore, theatre, mass media, design, architecture and planning are encouraged to develop individualized programs under the guidance of the anthropology department. Program committees may involve faculty and facilities in other departments at Temple as well as other communications specialists in the Philadelphia area.

Facilities

In the Fall of 1973, the Anthropology Department will move into its new building. The Culture and Communication program will have instructional labs in recording skills and production techniques in visual media (still, Super-8, 16mm and VTR) and linguistics.

In the past, Temple has hosted the Conference on Visual Anthropology. The event brings together social scientists and communication specialists to discuss theoretical developments and display innovations in this field. Students are encouraged to participate in the organization and functioning of this event.

In the summer of 1972, Temple conducted an NSF-sponsored Summer Institute in Visual Anthropology in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Plans are being developed for a similar summer program to be taught in the Philadelphia area in the summer of 1975.

In addition, Temple is the Headquarters of the Society for the Anthropology of Visual Communication (formerly The Program in Ethnographic Film).
Admission and Degree Requirements

The Culture and Communication curriculum is one of several program emphases in graduate studies in anthropology at Temple. Students enrolled in this program for an M.A. or Ph.D. are required to gain a basic knowledge of general anthropology. The departmental and university requirements for admission and awarding of degrees can be obtained by writing to the Department of Anthropology, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19122.

Further information can be obtained by writing to the Culture and Communication Program, Department of Anthropology, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19122 or by calling 215-787-7616 (7601).

Jay Ruby
Richard Chalfen
Temple University

RESEARCH FILMING AND THE STUDY OF CULTURALLY SPECIFIC PATTERNS OF BEHAVIOR

A paper presented at the 1972 African Studies Association

Different kinds of environment and social organization engender different culturally specific patterns and modes of behavior. These emerge in the growing child as the central nervous system is differentially programmed by the social and physical experiences provided by different cultures (Sorensen and Gajdusek, 1966).

In a few isolated societies, such as the Fore of New Guinea where civilization and the major religions of mankind have not restructured the social fabric, the growing infant and young child may be exposed to markedly different typical experiences involving touch and embrace, nursing and feeding, gesture and movement, and bodily contact, as well as to divergent requirements of manners, mores, etiquette, and education.

The absence of a generally acceptable field usable system of behavioral notation has retarded the study of culture and behavior. Only motion picture records make it possible to rigorously collect human behavioral data in their natural setting which, when analyzed, may reveal the effect of culture and ecological setting on behavior.

The theory and method of Research Films have previously been described (Sorensen 1967, 1968). Here I shall discuss the use of a semi-randomized sampling procedure as a means to collecting behavioral data on film within a given culture, and how such filmed records may be analyzed to determine culturally specific patterns and modes of behavior. It is the method I developed to study child rearing and socialization among the Fore of New Guinea.

The findings emerging from this study permit validative inquiry because the analysis was based on Research Films. Anyone may apply the same, or comparative, analytical methods to the same Research Films.

Because the findings come from film records, they may also be readily demonstrated as motion picture reports. Growing up as a Fore, the film report of this study, is an example of this new genre of ethno-documentary. Such films may be produced more cheaply than the usual documentary while reporting findings more rigorously. Scenes on which the actual study was based are selected on the basis of representativeness, determined by comparative examination of accumulated examples of specific categories of behavior—not aesthetic judgment or personal impression. They may not always be appropriate for general audiences.

The study was divided into three phases:

1. Initial fieldwork and collection of data as research films;

2. Analysis of Research Film records to educe patterns of behavior, child rearing, and socialization;

3. New fieldwork to test the hypothesis formed from examination of the film record.

Phase 1 required the development of a randomized search throughout the Fore region in order to minimize the possible skewing effect of particular places and situations on behavior. This was particularly important in this study because of the diversity existing within the Fore territory itself. In effect this randomized search could not be rigorously random because of the limitations of real life. But the approach toward randomness was important. In actuality the randomized collection was based on a deliberately digressive search across the Fore lands—along the trails, in the gardens and hamlets, and in the forest and grassland, and to sample, on film, the behavior of children in these different kinds of locations. So that the novel effect of my presence would not be too disruptive, I chose two South Fore communities (Waisa and Yagareba) as sites for concentration. In these places my presence came to be accepted as an everyday affair—not a special event. My choice of subject was also fortuitous in that infants and toddlers were not interested in my presence or behavior unless it directly affected them. In addition, that I was among the Fore to investigate the epidemiology of kuru as well made my interest in social behavior less obvious.

I was also lucky, in 1963-64, that most Fore were not familiar with cameras; there was no posing for pictures. Furthermore, their use of eye contact to signal interest in social engagement and aversion of eye contact to break social contact worked to my advantage. All my cameras were, luckily, with ground glass viewers. This required me to look into, rather than through, the camera as I aimed, focused, and took the pictures. This effectively broke off and precluded social interaction between me and the Fore while I was filming. The Fore, at this time, were not even aware that I could see them when I was looking into the camera. Thus, even though most Fore seemed to sense that the cameras were pointed at them, they soon treated my camera work very casually—probably because no ostensible effect could be traced to it. In villages where I was well known, I was virtually ignored when I was filming.

I had come to the Fore with two motion picture cameras, two still cameras, and 40,000 feet of film. I began to film immediately, even before I learned anything about what I was filming, so as to have film records during both pre- and post-familiarization periods.
Roaming the Fore lands and moving haphazardly from one site to another, I conducted my search for child behavior. A simple rule governed my use of the camera: whenever a child, or children, was seen engaged in any kind of activity, I pointed the camera and let it run until either the film ran out or the activity ceased. No dramatic or aesthetic considerations nullified this filming rule, nor did a poor camera location or disadvantageous lighting keep me from documenting the observed activity. Sometimes my filming activity attracted the attention of those being filmed; other times it did not. But whether it did or did not was not a serious matter as long as this was obvious or indicated. Even how interest was attracted or manifested in relation to me and my activities was of interest and could be studied and evaluated for what it was. For example, much of the data I accumulated on fear reactions of babies and toddlers was during my encounters with them on my first visit to their hamlets. It was my presence which caused the fear.

I never asked to have any activity repeated in order to better film it, nor did I ask to have specific acts performed so that I could film them.

Because I was relying on my cameras to provide me with the behavioral data I needed, I did not have to discuss behavioral matters with my subjects. Such formal data gathering from informants was limited to my investigation of kuru epidemiology. This was advantageous in that I was able to avoid the problem of my hosts being curious about my interest in their behavior at a time when I didn’t know how this would affect them.

My standard inquiries were limited to where I was and what was going on in general. This information I appended to the films. Specific inquiries about behavior came later.

The pictures taken during this phase of the study were to provide data for later analysis of child behavior. Thus, it was only necessary for me to prepare this as a research document which could be repeatedly viewed and studied without loss or disorganization of the data. Therefore, I only needed to keep records of time, place, circumstances of filming, general nature of events, and their precedent or surrounding conditions.

Phase 2 of the study was laboratory analysis of the film record. When the job of assembling the Research Films was complete, analysis began. All films were searched for episodes of infant handling, nursing, physical activity, affectionate expression, exploratory behavior, aggressiveness, response to aggression, deference patterns, disposal of body wastes, instruction, learning, peer interaction, expression of anger, and sharing. For some categories I had many events, for others only a few. There are many other categories of behavior which may also be shown to be meaningful, but these were the ones I chose as lending themselves to a manageable elaboration of cultural patterns and styles of behavior, at least among the Fore.

All sequences which fell into any one of the selected categories were viewed and compared; and a norm was hypothesized on the basis of commonness, absence of contradictory events, and reactions of others present. In many cases sequences were observed at slow motion and stop frame in order to detect fleeting movements and precise positions. The still photograph record was also searched for incidents falling into the above categories for further instances. From repeated examination of this data, patterns were postulated. If, for example, I could find no cases showing the breast being denied the child for nursing, I tentatively assumed that one of the features of the Fore pattern of nursing was the availability of the breast according to the desires of the child. Similarly, if in all the sequences of aggressive behavior by young children, I could find none where older children or adults became angry, or retaliated, when attacked, I assumed that the pattern of relation of elder to younger child was that of friendly tolerance to aggressive impulses.

In some categories of behavior there were very few examples to examine. There was only one event of a toddler defecating. However, since this was in the middle of a hamlet yard at the time of feast preparation, I made my deduction on the basis of the reactions of the people present as well as on my own recollection of events I witnessed when I did not have my camera with me or my film had run out. Because no one seemed surprised or disconcerted, and because mother and an older sibling good humorously cleaned up as the toddler repeated his defecations in one place and then another, I tentatively assumed that the pattern of toilet training was permissive—even from this one episode.

Since such assumptions were hypothetical and to be subjected to field verification, I was not adverse to sticking my neck out in this way. Furthermore, many of the deductions made from one or a very few filmed episodes were supported by other observations which did not get filmed.

Thus, the patterns, styles, and modes of typical Fore child related behavior which were established provided a testable hypothetical construct.

Phase 3, a return to the field, was undertaken to test the validity of the construct. Selective observation, rather than randomized, and questioning of informants were emphasized. I watched for episodes of aggressive behavior, and I tried to find instances of older children insisting on precedence over younger. I asked men, women, and children about the behavior which I had postulated to be typical and whether such behavior was ever thought to be peculiar or intolerable, and I asked about kinds of behavior which I had not postulated as typically Fore. New information was checked against further observation of what actually went on, and further questions asked—a circle of inquiry which was repeated as long as there were unresolved problems.

Unsubstantiated hypotheses were discarded, and those which were not contradicted were accepted as typical. In some cases new information led to additional findings, but more often it was more precise formulations which emerged. In most cases findings derived from the analysis of the Research Films held.

References

Sorensen, E. R., and D. C. Gajdusek 1966 The study of child behavior and development in primitive cultures. Supplement to Pediatrics 37(1), Part II.

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THE VOICE OF ANTHROPOLOGY
EQUIPMENT OF INTEREST AND VALUE TO THE ANTHROPOLOGIST

Take at least 6 pounds off your shoulder, record immaculate sound, and run your sync-recorder off the sun.

Whenever I have technical problems relating to research, I generally contact a few specialists for expert opinions. So when preparing to shoot a series of sync-sound motion pictures near the soggy Adriatic sea, I wrote C. Warner Williams for advice. Carroll, as many know, was a highly respected expert in sound recording before deciding to give the benefit of his knowledge and experience to anthropology.

In answer to my request for suggestions of field recorder/microphone combinations, C. Warner listed four or five in order of preference. The top two were Nagra and Stellavox. Since I only knew the Stellavox from its mystique, I wrote the designer Georges Quellet for complete specifications, and received, along with a pound of literature, an invitation to visit the factory in Hauterive, Switzerland.

Hauterive is not on any map, but we finally found the place (a rustic village near Neuchatell), and after walking up a windind street into the low hills, we found Stellavox.

As far as I can gather, the first practical battery operated sync-tape recorder was imported to the United States by Ryder Sound Services long before Nagra and the others came on the scene. This was a miniscule reel to reel instrument that ran at 3 3/4 ips. It was designed and built by Georges Quellet.

Quellet is one of those oldtime Swiss geniuses who are wont to create infernal machines in basement laboratories... and that is the way he started. Today, however, the shop is modern, immaculate, and houses approximately sixty skilled technicians.

Around 1965 Quellet walked away from his original concept and began to develop a completely new state of the art system. The prototype Sp7 was completed in July of 1968 and the first recorder of the new design arrived in the United States in November 1969. Since that date the system has been subjected to constant refinement both mechanically and electronically, a refinement that still goes on. The machines invariably perform better than the published specs guaranteed by the manufacturer.

About two years ago Quellet introduced a six brush motor for the Stellavox system that will function perfectly with only two brushes making contact. It uses no fly wheel and so is almost completely unaffected by "g" forces and consequently works just fine bouncing along on a Land Rover, or swinging at the side of a loping camel. One of these motors, unprotected by any housing, has been running constantly for almost 14,000 hours with no sign of difficulty.

The Stellavox Sp7 measures 3x3/8x10 1/2 inches, and, including tape and batteries, weighs eight pounds. My personal recorder (second hand after seeing a year or two of heavy use) shows the following performance:

- Measured at 7 1/4 inches per second with Scotch 203
- Wow and Flutter (weighted peak to peak) ........... ±0.06%
- Signal to Noise Ratio, via tape, relative 50mW .................. 70dB
- Record Amplifier Chains (including mike input transformer):
  - Response 20 to 20,000 Hz .......................... ±0.7dB ±0.8dB
  - Max Input Signal Levels .................. 80mV 82mV
  - Min Input Level for OdB .......................... 0.2mV 0.2mV
- Modulators 1/11 Response, 30 to 20,000 Hz ............... ±0.8 dB
  - Rise Time, to -1dB at OdB .................. 9ms

The recorder can be used stereo or full track mono, either one with or without camera sync, depending on which pro-adjusted interchangeable head block is used (interchangeable in the field). The Stellavox has a built-in loud speaker and adjustable power amplifier that can operate in any mode. It has six inputs, and there are provisions and space on and in the recorder for the incorporation of custom-made connections... this may be done without marring or changing the basic appearance of the Sp7. The machine is girded by two solid frames of die-cast aluminum alloy which extend out and protect all controls and inputs.

The Stellavox can be powered by AC 110 to 220V/50 or 60 Hz, or any external batteries from 12 to 20 V (i.e. two 9 V lantern batteries in series) can be plugged directly into the external jack. Internally the recorder will run on 12AA batteries; six continuous hours of recording with alkaline, 3 hours with rechargeable NiCad, and 5 continuous hours on record (per charge) with Type AAH NiCad Stellavox 600mAh batteries.

Using 12 "D" batteries the Sp7 will record for 50 hours continuously. For those working in areas of clear skies and good sunlight, Quellet has developed an interesting accessory; a solar charger. The unit is not much bigger than 4 standard playing cards, as thick as a home-made tortilla, and will fully charge a set of batteries in about 24 sunny hours. Used intermittently during a daytime recording session, it will probably extend recording time by about 50%. The unit fits flush to (and is smaller than) the recorder’s dust sealed lid. It should not be difficult to charge camera batteries with such a unit.

The compartment for the internal batteries (which are charged automatically while running on AC) is isolated for safety’s sake from the internal parts of the recorder. There is an illuminated “state of charge” meter for the battery, as well as meters for pilot and motor.

The guts of the Stellavox are built on a system of 16/35/40mm epoxy encapsulated and shielded plug-in modules... connectors are gold plated with double contacts. The unit functions beautifully under conditions of high and low temperature, as well as high humidity... which relieves the hell out of me. Last summer at the research site on the Adriatic the temperature was high enough to take the glue off of cellophane tape, and the other day I was recording during a driving rain... today (mid-October) it is snowing.

The Sp7 has 4 switchable speeds. At 3 3/4 it will record music better than some field recorders at double the speed. 7½ is standard for recording film sound tracks. At 15 ips sound quality surpasses requirements of the disc industry, and at 30 ips the Stellavox reaches well into ultrasonics and can be used in instrumentation and for such interesting applications as recording porpoise gossip.

Just recently introduced by Quellet, is an 11 pound portable professional quadrorasonic recorder (SQ7) that offers the features and specs of large studio installations. Presently the Stellavox system of recorders, mixers, etc., is being used by individuals and organizations in Europe, Asia and the Americas... a few would include: the National Film Board of Canada; BBC; ORTF (Office De Radio-Diffusion-Television Francaise); ORTF (Tokyo Office); Radio Studio Basel.
Admittedly both the Nagra and Stellavox recorders are highly reliable, both are of superior construction, and both will record sound with a "high reserve of super quality" (quote from Nagra ad), far surpassing the ability of any optical sound track to reproduce. However, I made the decision to use the Stellavox SP7 system in our fieldwork for a number of reasons, and the following few may be of interest to other filmmakers and researchers: Light Weight, 8 pounds compared to over 14; Small Size, approximately 48% smaller than the aforementioned brand "X"; Low Current Consumption, 140 mA (on "record") compared to 240 mA; can use dynamic microphones or power AB condenser mics by the turning of a switch; can use 5" to 10½" tape reels without additional motors; and has the ability to use, in addition to AC or a variety of internal batteries, any external battery (12 to 20 V) and solar cells plugged directly into the recorder without accessories or modifications, and 4 switchable speeds from 3 3/4 to 30 inches per second.

Actually my two main reasons for choosing the Stellavox were (1) Esthetically it's beautiful to look at, and (2) Ego, the name really impresses my friends in L.A. and Berkeley. If you too would like to impress your friends, and as a bonus take about six pounds of dead weight off your shoulder, you can write for more detailed specs, prices and other information to: Georges Quellet, Ing., STELLAVOX, 2068 Hauterive (Neuchatel-Suisse), Switzerland.

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ETHNOGRAPHIC COMPANIONS TO FILMS—A NEW TEACHING AID

For years now I have been grappling with the problem of how to use ethnographic films in teaching anthropology. I formerly used several films a week in introductory and advanced courses, screening them at a special evening hour so as not to take time away from lectures. Although many students are enthusiastic about watching films, the effect was overwhelming and inefficient. For most of the films, I do not know enough about the culture or the circumstances of the filmmaking to be able to answer the sorts of very valid questions which good students raise. Dead Birds was fairly easy for me, since I was present at the filming and have studied the Dani myself. But it only made me realize how badly I was doing with the other films.

The film catalogue, Films for Anthropological Teaching (now in its fifth edition), was an attempt to alleviate the problem somewhat. Films are listed together with the relevant bibliography so that instructors can at least know about the background data (where it exists). But little of this background data is directly relevant to any film; most of it is not easily available to most instructors, and certainly not in a form which can be assigned to students; and most instructors simply cannot be expected to read, say, all my publications on the Dani before they use Dead Birds in an introductory anthropology course.

At least as early as 1965, Jewelle Gibbs and James L. Gibbs, Jr., had the idea of putting together a book with ethnographic essays on the cultures treated by several different ethnographic films. I wrote an essay on the Dani for them, but for various reasons the book never came to be published. During the next six years the idea germinated. I rewrote the essay on the Dani, added a section on Dead Birds, called the whole thing An Ethnographic Companion to the Film Dead Birds, and tried to interest publishers in it. Everyone rejected it, for what still seems to me a most astounding variety of reasons. Finally, Claude McCabe, a publisher, came to the rescue. McCabe had been instrumental in starting the Bobbs-Merrill Reprint series, then had started an original series of pamphlets (called modules) in anthropology which was later taken over by Addison-Wesley. In 1972 he left Addison-Wesley to do something similar with a new company, Warner Modular Publications, Inc., and accepted the idea of a module series on ethnographic films, asking me to serve as Series Editor. The first one, on Dead Birds, was published in November 1972, and at least a dozen more are scheduled for 1973.

Each Ethnographic Companion will treat one ethnographic film. It will include:

(1) An ethnographic essay, written by an anthropologist who was involved in the filming, or who otherwise knows the cultural situation well. The essay will give a brief description of the culture, and a detailed account of the subject of the film, and will be cross-referenced to specific scenes in the film.

(2) An essay on the making of the film, by the filmmaker, saying as much as the filmmaker is willing to say about the ideas behind the film, the problems of making it, and the technical details involved.

(3) A shot-by-shot analysis, or ethnographic notation, of the film, printed in double column opposite the narration. This will allow a much fuller description of the details shown in each shot, and will permit viewers to retrieve the visual and aural information in the film, which has too often slipped past during the actual viewing.

Each module will appear in standard format, 8½" by 11", photo-offset in double columns. The modules will run from 30 to 60 pages long, and none should cost more than $1. The idea is to keep them short enough and inexpensive enough so that they can be easily assigned as supplementary texts in courses which use the films.

The first modules will treat films which are already in wide use, or are in distribution and would be widely used if this sort of material were easily available. It is hoped that they will radically improve the use of ethnographic films in anthropological teaching. For the first time a wide range of films will be truly available as sources of data about cultures, rather than fleeting, time-consuming impressions presented in dark rooms while instructors are occupied elsewhere.

The series should also have a beneficial effect on ethnographic filmmaking itself. Now filmmakers will be able to design their films more filmically: they will not have to overload their narrations with data which detract from the visuality of the film, and they can present the supporting written data in the written module, instead of having to read it as a voice-over narration. I would also hope that the expectation of publishing an Ethnographic Companion to a film will increase the ethnographic accountability of the film.
CINÉMA NAÏVETÉ: A SOCIOVIDISTIC APPROACH TO THE HOME-MODE OF VISUAL COMMUNICATION


The making of home movies and family albums has not often been the subject matter for anthropological inquiry. This area of activity has been overlooked, and perhaps regarded as inconsequential because we have neither had the contextual framework within which to place these forms of expressive behavior, nor have we had any meaningful questions to ask of this activity.

However, when we begin to consider this subject matter as (1) expressive behavior, (2) visual communication, and (3) social activity, the place of such inquiry assumes its importance as a part of anthropological study.

Terminology

Perhaps my purposes are best served if I initially explain several of the terms in the title of this paper. In the phrase “home-mode of visual communication,” I am calling attention to three pragmatic issues: (1) the non-professional use (or amateur use) of communications technology; (2) the private use rather than the public use of such technology; and (3) the use of such image recording technology to serve a documentary function.

My use of the work “communication” stresses the process of communication activity rather than the product of such activity derived from still and motion picture cameras. This domain of inquiry includes both the production and reception of family albums and home movies. I shall concentrate on home movies in this report and make only parenthetical remarks to parallel findings in the study of family albums.

By the term “sociovidistic,” I intend to extend several theoretical concerns thoughtfully introduced by Sol Worth. As originally stated, Worth thought of “vidistics” as that area of study which treats film “as if it were the ‘language’ of visual communication, and as if it were possible to determine its elements and to understand the logic of its structure” (1968:311). He sought to “determine basic vidistic elements, the ordering of these elements, and cognitive representations of them as a mediating agent in a communication process . . . .” As I understand these early formulations, attention was placed on studying a visual code as a means of cognitive interaction. I add the prefix “socio” to emphasize the systematic study of a visual code within specific socio-cultural contexts.

Previous Work

Study of the home-mode of visual communication has been neglected by both anthropologists and communications researchers. Film scholars have had no interest in this mode of film production. Home movies have represented the thing not to do. This neglect has resulted from the inability to develop and apply a comprehensive theory of communicative behavior within an explicit framework of social activity.

Dell Hymes has proposed a paradigm for the study of speech, which he has called an “ethnography of speaking” (1962), in which he proposes the use of ethnographic methods in the study of one communicative mode—namely speech. Whereas the sociologist, Joshua Fishman, has been content to concentrate the theoretical development of sociolinguistics within the verbal domain, Hymes has elaborated his thinking toward a framework that encompasses verbal and non-verbal communicative codes. This direction is well articulated in Hymes’ 1964 paper titled “Toward Ethnographies of Communication.”

However, Hymes’ suggestion and challenge that communicative modes other than speaking can be studied ethnographically has not been met. The following discussion is an offering in that direction.

Specifically, I am suggesting a descriptive framework for the analysis of film and/or filmmaking as a social activity. Considering film as communicative process has led me to formulate a scheme of four types of serial events: namely (1) planning events, (2) filming events—which necessarily include the two sub-categories of on-camera events and behind-the-camera events, (3) editing events, and (4) exhibition events. Each of these categories of events may be thought of as a performance site, and furthermore, each may be examined for its particular social configuration.

I further suggest that each of these events be cross-referenced with a series of six communicative components; namely (1) participants (minimally a filmmaker(s), a viewer(s) and optionally “actors”), (2) settings, (3) topics, (4) message form, (5) code and (6) auxiliary channels.

The sources of data for this paper come from approaching home movies from three different directions.

(1) Seven “how-to-do-it” manuals on home moviemaking.

By examining these books, I have tried to extract a set of prescriptive and descriptive rules for home moviemaking behavior—in other words, the statements that determine what
kinds of behavior are considered appropriate in relation to the event-component framework.

(2) Approximately 5500 feet of what white middle class subjects have shown me as their “home movies.” In addition, I interviewed the possessor (who was not necessarily the maker) of these films for kinds of contextual information that was not available when one simply views the movie product.

(3) A series of 21 interviews on “what it was like to be an audience for someone's home movies.” I concentrated my efforts here on determining the social structure of the exhibition event.

Basic Technological Aspects of Home Movies

Let me initially review some basic characteristics and common assumptions about home movies. First of all, home movies are usually associated with a simple level of filmmaking technology. The first “amateur movie cameras” were designed in the early 1920's. The cameras were continually simplified, the film gauge made smaller, and with the introduction of battery operation, “electric eyes,” zoom lenses, built-in filters and magazine loading film mechanisms, almost anybody can make movies.

While the technological aspects of movies reveal some characteristics of the home moviemaker, they tell us little about social activity that surrounds the use of such technology. We should not be thinking in terms of what filmmaking equipment is used, but rather how, when, where and for what purposes it is used, and secondly, of the characteristic social structure that surrounds such activity.

Participants in Home Movies

In an attempt to uncover a set of patterned relationships between the components and the events, an examination of participants is a convenient starting point. We must look for patterned relationships between those people who do participate in some way and those who do not.

An informal inventory of participants that are most appropriately included in home movie exhibition events is conveniently outlined in several of the “how-to-do-it” manuals:

... how skillful you become in taking movies that your family and friends really enjoy watching.

... [movies] that will make it repeatedly enjoyable not only to you, yourself, but to the audiences of friends and relatives who'll also want to see.

This pattern of participants is not too unlike the list of prescribed participants that most appropriately appear in on-camera events:

Good movies... are entertaining. It’s fun to see movies of picnics, vacations, ski outings, and badminton games when they involve friends, neighbors and relatives.

Thus the community of participants appears to be limited to immediate family members, relatives, close friends and neighbors (the close friends don’t have to be neighbors but the neighbors have to be close friends). It is the closed system of participants—the people named as either taking the movies, being in the movies, or being invited to see the movies—that is of primary interest to this analysis.

In the home movies that I have recently seen, this pattern was strictly adhered to. Young children in the family of the moviemaker were the most popular choice of subject matter by far. Asking home moviemakers if and when this closed community of participants could ever be broken, I was told:

If an aunt brought a person to the party that we all didn’t know, I'd pretend to take her picture but wouldn’t—didn’t want to waste the film, we’re cheap...

This attitude was very obvious in the movies I viewed. In occasional scenes that show crowds of people (especially of beaches and amusement parks), the camera tolerates the “other” people but in no way attends to them as it does the central characters of the home movie community.

There is an emphasis on knowing the subject matter of the films. It is very clear that the majority of home movies are about people rather than things. One home moviemaker told me:

Almost never is there not a face—99% of the time. That’s just the way we operate; we think film is too expensive to expend on non-people, or, unless it has some historic value, it has nothing.

Thus there is a heavy emphasis on well-known people doing things.

In nearly all cases that I have investigated, the male head of household used the camera the majority of the time; in a few cases, a teenage son was learning about cameras and moviemaking, and he took over this responsibility. The rule was that father usually took the movies and therefore appeared least in the movies. One moviemaking manual offered the following advice:

By the way, if you should want your entire party in the same scenes... just set the camera and ask a friendly-looking bystander if he'll do the shooting. You'll hardly ever get a turnover.

I feel that there is more flexibility in letting someone unknown, yet "friendly-looking," take the pictures than in having a stranger share a major or minor role actually in the movies.

This suggests another important characteristic of this genre of film. It appears that it is more important to appear in the movies to be responsible for actually shooting the movies. Here, to "make a movie" means to appear in the movie rather than shoot the movie, set the camera, decide what to shoot, etc.

Thus the community of participants in the home movie genre is a relatively closed system. This is perhaps most clear in the exhibition events when only family, friends, other relatives, close friends and neighbors (who may or may not have been in the movies) are invited to see the movies. Being-on-camera activity or participation is limited to a similar grouping of people and is regulated by the man with the camera—who is usually the male head of the household.

Determination of Home Movie Settings and Topics

Examination of the relationship between two other components and home movie events further develops a profile of patterned social behavior. While our present camera technology allows us to take pictures of almost anything, anywhere, and promoters and advertisers of camera use encourage us to do so, it becomes clear that our actual use of cameras is relatively restricted to sets of appropriate topics, settings and themes.

Movies are best and most interesting when they show people actually doing things rather than merely smiling or
waving at the camera. A baby's first awkward steps, your family's vacation activities, a friend on water skis—these are the kind of subjects that make memorable movies.

How much would it be worth to you . . . to see your children as toddlers . . . watch your family through all their happy times . . . on Christmas morning . . . at birthdays . . . graduations . . . on family vacations . . . on visits to grandparents . . . to keep a complete filmed record of your family's life together?

Good movies are especially great in a few years when you want to relive a trip to the lake, the shore, or to the big city; the snowball fight the kids had after the blizzard of '68; Johnny's first birthday and his first steps; the day you got the new station wagon; the Easter egg hunt—it's an endless list.

However, the list of topics and settings that the home moviemaker can make and the actual list of topics and settings that he does make do not match. And while I find suggestions for "a complete filmed record of your family's life together" and "an endless list" of home movie topics, the list of preferred topics and settings appears to be quite restricted and limited.

The best example of this non-overlapping situation involves the suggested shooting of "everyday activities." This is one of four categories (others being "special events," "vacation activity," and "holiday activity") that regularly appears in the movie manuals.

When a boy meets a bologna sandwich, especially small boy and large sandwich, the movie potentialities are measureless. Children at mealtime are first-rate movie subjects . . .

This category of everyday activities (settings and topics) received very little attention in the selection of home movies I viewed. The home setting is often used, but the setting must include another special element. Christmas day, Thanksgiving dinner, or relatives visiting to see the new baby might provide this additional element. Something must intrude to change the common appearance of the home setting—such as a snow storm. On the other hand, I did see a lot of common everyday activities that took place outside of the home setting. For instance, if a family is visiting a vacation site, there might be some bicycling activity, playing ball or just roughhousing on the ground.

It appears that the reality appropriate for the home movie genre is a special reality, and the everyday reality of around-the-house-activity is not considered appropriate subject matter.°

Several broad categories of settings and topics can thus be listed as the most appropriate choices for this film genre:

1. Vacation activity—such as children at the beach, boating and swimming activity, bicycle riding, children playing especially when a lot of movement is involved (as on swings), limited attention paid to scenery;
2. Holiday activity—the Christmas tree, family opening presents, Thanksgiving dinner, Easter egg hunt, Halloween costumes, etc.;
3. Special events—a christening, a trip to the amusement park, a child's birthday, graduation day, "pop going to Italy," a parade with a family member involved, a wedding party;
4. Local activity—a snowball fight, a lawn party, a baby learning to walk in the driveway or playing in the snow, the showing off of new material wealth (new bicycle or new car), the family pet, etc.

The Functional Dimension of Home Movies

While I have not listed "function" as one of the sociodynamic components, any understanding of the relationship between the suggested components and events must be considered along a functional dimension. Aside from initially asking why home movies are made at all, we should also examine what people do with their private use of this mass media technology, and what the making of home movies does for the people involved.

Again, the home movie guides are quite helpful with the first of these questions:

Few people enter upon movie shooting out of any fatal fascination with the photographic details of it. Usually the impetus is the single desire to preserve things . . .

With a movie camera . . . you can preserve the entire event, unfrozen and continuous, exactly as it happens.

The first category of functions involves the idea of preserving a piece of experienced reality. The ideal is to get hold of it and possess it forever, to be able to retrieve it and re-experience it at any time. This preservation function is very cogent, persistent and persuasive. The reader of such manuals is led to believe that the primary function of the home movie is to "capture" a strip of reality.

Closely related to the preservation function is the positive value placed on a visual memory and retention of details. The manuals would have us believe that a major function of such movies is that of a memory bank:

There's just nothing that will recall all the color, fun and reality of good times like a good home movie.

You've got an investment in every 50 feet you shoot. It's not only an investment in money . . . but one in memories. Every roll you shoot probably has a dozen things on it you'll want to remember . . .

The manuals also present the idea that not only should one have a good time while making home movies, but one must be able to repeat and re-experience the pleasurable times. The hedonistic function plays a large role:

This is a book about movies. Not the LIGHTS-CAMERA-ACTION kind of movies, but the kind of personal movies that we make so that we can enjoy our good times over and over again, as often as we like.

These manuals concentrate on the theme of pleasure and value in re-seeing the "good times." What is neglected is the basic drive in most of us to see ourselves performing, either in terms of doing something, such as work or riding a bicycle, but also in some interaction situations.

From the small sample of moviemakers that I interviewed, I found general agreement on the functional importance of home movies. The most frequently mentioned was the "triggering of the memory" function characterized by:

Someone might say "oh look at such and such doing such and such," and the family would make general comments—"oh remember when we were driving past there." It's almost as though the pictures would sometimes serve as a triggering device and then they'd come out with some incident that was associated with the trip . . .

It has also occurred to me that the making and showing of home movies tends to bond a specific social structure. Whether
this structure is based on kinship ties or neighborhood and/or close friendship alliances, home movie activity offers visual evidence of specific relationships and offers future social opportunities to re-establish, reify, and celebrate these relationships. Home movie exhibition events illustrate the function of communion. People are brought together to see important images. The showing of these movies tends to initiate conversation at a party and hence keep people interested and participating:

. . . a lot of times, home movies are just good entertainment when the same people come back and see them—it's good for a lot of laughs.

Appropriate Home Movie Filming Activity

In an examination of filming events, consideration must be given to both on-camera and behind-the-camera activity. The task becomes one of extracting a pattern of behavior that is appropriate to both categories. I repeat one of the stated objectives of the home moviemaker—namely to “capture” a specific reality. We must first examine how the presence and use of the camera might alter or disturb the “natural reality” before it, and second, what is considered as appropriate behavior on both sides of the camera.

We have all experienced changes in behavior that take place when that “magical reality grabber” is brought out in a party situation. The “how-to-do-it” manuals explain it as follows:

There’s something about a movie camera that makes people stop what they’re doing and stare into the lens. Or, they may simply wave at the camera.

There’s no use ignoring the all-too-obvious fact that most adults feel somewhat ill at ease in the bright beam of a movie light.

Given that the presence of the camera in the home moviemaking setting disturbs aspects of the reality before the camera, the cameraman then has to devise a strategy to minimize potential disturbance. This behind-the-camera or shooting strategy may take the following forms:

. . . I believe that the best kind of home movies result when you avoid being self-conscious about shooting motion pictures.

To capture them un-selfconscious and relatively uninhibited, your best bet is to plan your shooting for occasions when your intended subjects are engrossed in some sort of activity.

The main line of strategy is to have the subject matter behave as if no camera were watching. The ideal is to catch “off-stage” behavior rather than “on-stage” behavior. There is thus an emphasis of filming natural, impromptu reality that exists in spite of the camera’s re-structuring abilities.

It is the consensus of the “how-to-do-it” manuals that an impromptu reality and natural action are most appropriate and most preferred to a staged reality; and that ideally, the moviemaker should follow the natural sequence of events in an activity:

For the kind of home movie continuity in which most people are interested, no rehearsals and no heavy planning are needed.

Sometimes your greatest shots occur when an unexpected situation happens . . . Film all scenes like this, the ones that “just happen.” They’ll be an important part of a true-to-life story.

I learned of an interesting variation of this quest for an impromptu reality. Several interviewees mentioned the best shots occurred when the cameraman “caught” someone doing something generally considered inappropriate for “preservation” on film:

A lot was based on catching people at embarrassing moments, in the sense that you get the mother, as she’s walking off with toilet paper, into the woods.

However, as I viewed approximately 5500 feet of home movies, patterns of on-camera behavior contradicted behind-the-camera objectives that were recommended by the manuals. Capturing an impromptu reality was by far the exception rather than the rule.

I found a repetitive pattern of on-camera behavior that may be labelled as characteristic of the home movie genre. The following elements or tendencies reappeared in the movies and were often mentioned in the interviews as “common things that happened in home movies.”

1. There is a lot of waving at the camera. When the cameraman says, “okay, do something,” or “move,” this seems to be appropriate. Also when people first realize that the camera is taking pictures, they will wave at it.
2. Very frequently one sees people, especially children, walking directly toward the camera, sometimes directly into the lens.
3. There is an extraordinary amount of staring into the lens of the camera, looking as though the camera is going to make some form of facial expression in acknowledgment. This staring is often similar to the looks of people sitting for still portraits.
4. People will “strike a pose” or present a “camera-face.” They will project themselves as the camera watches them.

Home Movie Exhibition Events

In studying the home-mode as a process of communication, it is extremely important that we examine the reception or viewing of home movies as well as the production of them. The exhibition of such films represents another important site of performance and of social activity. Just as we examined filming events as organized social gatherings/groupings, so exhibition events must be studied from the point of view of who shows the film, who is invited to see the films, how the screening is organized, and what other activities may simultaneously occur. In general, we are asking what constraints exist, what behavioral prescriptions and restrictions are maintained, and what setting characteristics make the home-mode distinctive.

The composition of home movie audiences almost perfectly reflects the composition of participants in both shooting and being-on-camera events. While potentially anyone could see the movies, only select people are invited to an exhibition event. Furthermore, the person who originally shot the film is present and is usually showing the movie. The rolls of film that show neighbors will usually require that these neighbors attend the showing, and the same pattern holds for relatives and friends. In general, duplication of the people in the film and the people seeing the film illustrate a “moving mirror” function of the home movie.

Home movies can be shown at any time, but there is a high likelihood that they will be screened at night, on weekends, or on holidays when the extended family is likely to be together.
Thus there is an overlap in appropriate shooting and screening times.

I found little consensus on how participants are invited to an exhibition event. Some interviewees stated that the showing of movies was just part of the evening, while others said they were invited specifically to see the films. And still another sector of my sample was represented by the following remark:

"Almost always it just comes out at a gathering—never planned; no one would ever dare invite them over to see films—they’d trap them into it. The idea is to get them cornered, have them over ostensibly for other reasons and then get them to look at a 400 foot reel, a half an hour or more."

In almost all cases, the screening of the movies was not the sole activity of the evening. Drinks, dinner and/or dessert would usually precede the screening. Patterns of events of the evening could take different forms. Requests for previously made home movies would often follow seeing the latest "rushes." The conclusion of the screening usually signalled the end of the evening. Conversation stimulated by the home movies would often follow the screening but would not continue very long.

During the exhibition event, the pattern of expected audience behavior may be characterized as follows:

1. Audience members are expected to be interested in what appears on the screen. They are not expected to sit without emotion and merely watch the movie. They are expected to contribute to the event in terms of conversation, usually in the form of asking questions.

2. To remain silent throughout the screening would signal disapproval and would be thought of as rude.

3. Audience members are not expected to be critical of things that might have gone wrong in the shooting event, such as under or overexposing the film.

4. When criticism is made, it should be stated in a humorous form, such as, "a solar eclipse at that time of year?" (for underexposed footage) or, "you experimental filmmakers are all alike" (for something not understood due to being "tricky" with the camera).

5. It is also expected that audience members will be relaxed; other activities contributing to the enjoyment of the exhibition, such as drinking, smoking, etc., are appropriate.

6. More acclaim and praise is expected for the content of the movies than for the form of them. That is, the cameraman is thought of after the people and things that appear in the movie.

7. In the case where the movie is technically poor, it can be expected that the projector will be blamed rather than the camera, and the camera will be blamed before the cameraman.

So far, I can find no regular pattern of behavior on the part of the projectionist. It appears that the projectionist reacts to the reactions of the audience. If the audience is being too quiet (as possibly in the infrequent case of a low correlation between the people in the movies and the audience), he will tend to narrate more. If, on the other hand, there is a lot of audience reaction, he may be the quietest participant. One home movie projectionist told me:

*He doesn’t need to say much; I mean there’s little Susie, she’s receiving Holy Communion—what can you really say? We know all about it.*

In summary, as audience members of the home movie genre, we have learned to accept what happens on the screen, to translate forms of reality alterations into meaningful "statements," and to value the home movie for several unique abilities and functions.

To conclude, I would like to return to some of my initial objectives. Through an application of the suggested socio-vidistic framework, a pattern of communication behavior has emerged. Rather than thinking of home-mode activity as random behavior, we have gained some insights into the basic elements, operations and relationships between these elements, and the functions of such activity.

However, such an abbreviated look at this area raises many questions. While I have taken my findings from a white middle class sample, it would be interesting to know if the same or different patterns emerge from work with other socio-economic groups. What kinds of cross sub-cultural universals and/or differences are operative?

It must not be overlooked that this treatment of communication as social performance has direct ties to current developments in semiotics, sociolinguistics, and folklore. Interesting parallels can be drawn between home-mode activity and other examples of ritualized expressive behavior. The ultimate goal of such work is to gain a better understanding of human communication behavior beyond the confinements of the overemphasized domain of linguistic interaction.

Notes

1. When Jonas Mekas, Stan Brakhage and other members of the "New American Cinema" mention the term "home movie," it is clear they are referencing a very different set of phenomena than I deal with in this paper.

2. The manuals are as follows:

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   | A phenomenological approach to a study of the home-mode "key" of reality (in Erving Goffman’s terms) is the subject matter for a second essay on the home-mode now in preparation. |

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Richard Chaffen
Department of Anthropology
Temple University
UP THE ZAMBEZI WITH NOTEBOOK AND CAMERA
or
BEING AN ANTHROPOLOGIST WITHOUT DOING ANTHROPOLOGY . . . WITH PICTURES


The purpose of this paper is to explore the question—why do anthropologists take pictures? For many years the still camera has been a normal part of all archaeologists and most cultural anthropologists’ field equipment. A conservative estimate would place the number of photographs taken by anthropologists in the millions.

If “taking pictures” is an anthropological activity, it would seem quite reasonable to expect to find a body of literature which demonstrates that anthropological picture-taking is scientifically justifiable. In other words, if anthropologists spend their time, money and energy taking pictures, they must do so because the unique qualities of this medium allow them to record, analyze and present some visual manifestation of culture which could not be dealt with in any other way, or which, at least, is dealt with better in this way.

Obviously, this is not the case. If we make a somewhat superficial dichotomy between anthropological findings which are the result of non-photographic means and those, at least, partially derived from still photography, we find that the latter’s contribution has been confined largely to one area, non-verbal communication, and that most anthropologists simply use photographs to illustrate their books and lectures.

While it is not the purpose of this paper to exhaustively review the anthropological literature on photography (those interested should consult John Collier’s Visual Anthropology (1968) and Oswalt Werner’s Ms thesis, Ethnographic Photography (1961)), it should be stated that Mead (1956), Byers (1964), Collier (1968), Werner (1961), Hall (1968), Birdwhistell (1972) and others have advocated a rather extensive set of methodologies which revolve around still photography. While concentrating on non-verbal communication, these suggestions cover a wide range of potential anthropological applications. Their suggestions have seldom been followed by others and most of these advocates have themselves abandoned stills for the motion picture. We are therefore led to the somewhat confusing conclusion that while the proven anthropological relevance of photography is extremely limited, anthropologists continue to take a lot of pictures.

Further examination of this question requires the introduction of two sets of assumptions which are basic to this study. The first are concerned with the ethnography of anthropology. All anthropologists belong to two cultures—a home culture (the one we were born into) and a field culture (the one we acquired in graduate school). The terms home and field are not used here geographically but rather contingently. Field should be regarded as a subset of the broader category, social science academicians.

When the anthropologist is participating in the field culture he is performing behaviorally and cognitively in a manner which allows him to be both an anthropologist and to do anthropology. In other words, anthropologists share a set of conventional signs which allow us to recognize each other. For example, we are native speakers of an anthropological written code which permits us to label an article in the American Anthropologist as anthropological and to distinguish it from an article in Playboy.

Accepting the idea that our behavior is as amenable to ethnographic analysis as anyone else’s, we can now ask—does our field culture contain a set of rules for picture-taking which would differentiate that activity from picture-taking at home so that a formal definition of anthropological photography could be constructed?

The second assumption is that picture-taking, for our purposes, is best understood as a communication activity. The model to be used here has been previously suggested by Byers (1966), Worth (1969) and Chaffin (1970). When an anthropologist, or anyone else for that matter, takes a picture he follows a set of culturally specific conventions which determine the selection of subject matter and the treatment of that subject. In addition, the subject, if he is a member of a culture where pictures are normally taken, follows another set of “on camera” behaviors which shape his photographic presentation of self. Finally, the viewer follows a set of conventions which permit him to derive meaning from the picture. He attends to the picture as a symbolic form which was deliberately produced by the maker to communicate something, i.e., the viewer does not treat the picture as a mere substitute for reality.

Combining these two sets of ideas, the questions can now be rephrased. Anthropologists have a set of picture-taking conventions which are a reflection of the visual communication system of their home culture. Do they have a second set of conventions which reflect their field culture and thus make picture-taking an anthropological activity?

The following statements are offered as an answer to this question and as an explanation of the present role of still photography in anthropology.

The visual communication system anthropologists learned at home largely governs their picture-taking activities in the field. The home system contains a variety of contextual subsets—one being vacation picture-taking. When an anthropologist takes pictures in the field he most closely resembles someone from his culture on vacation. (I feel that the analogy of fieldwork as vacation can be extended further than picture-taking but that is not the purpose of this paper.) While on vacation or in the field, the camera is taken everywhere. The experience is exotic and to be recorded visually so that it can be remembered and shared with others who were not there. A good tourist attempts to get a complete photographic record; so does the fieldworker. The selection of subject matter for the anthropologist is not based on his particular research problem but rather on the dictum that, “A good photographic record is an essential part of every kind of anthropological field work.” (Notes and Queries, p. 353.)

If asked, most anthropologists would separate themselves from the tourist photographer by saying that they have a scientific obligation to pictorially record any culture under study because that culture will undoubtedly undergo rapid change and they need to preserve this record for the future. This assumed responsibility and justification does cause us to take some pictures that the average tourist would not.
However, I submit that the photographic coverage of a vacation or a field trip has virtually nothing to do with whether the photographer is an anthropologist or not but rather his level of photographic sophistication in his home culture. For example, one mark of sophistication is the idea of sequence. Amateurs tend to take a lot of isolated pictures whereas the professional will in effect compose a photo essay by shooting a series of related pictures. Whether an anthropologist takes isolated pictures or sequences is not the result of his anthropological education but his level of photographic experience.

The majority of field photographs are only peripherally related to the maker's particular research problem and are seldom used as data for analysis or evidence for presentation. Instead the anthropologist, like the tourist, uses his pictures as illustrations of the experience. He methodically files his photographs away where the majority remain forever.

The only qualities which distinguish photographs taken by an anthropologist in the field from photographs taken by the same anthropologist on vacation is the exotic subject matter of most field photographs. Further, it is suggested that photographs taken by non-anthropologists of the same culture be indistinguishable.

Another subset of our visual communication system is professional photography—the particular aspect of that category of concern to us here are the so-called documentary photographers, e.g., Diane Arbus, Walker Evans, Irving Penn, Elliot Elisofon, etc. Some people have suggested that their work resembles that of the ethnographer. The term visual ethnography has been applied, for example, to the work of Ken Heyman and Edward Steichen in the same way that Tom Wolfe's essays have been called ethnographic. However, while most native speakers of anthropology would designate Wolfe's writings as being similar to ethnography but lacking in enough specific signs to qualify as ethnography, no such distinction could be made with the photographs of these documentary photographers, i.e., apart from the obvious fact that the photographs were made by a professional, anthropologists viewing them could not tell whether the maker was an anthropologist or not.

Not only are the anthropologists' picture-taking activities governed by their home system but we also inadvertently teach our informants to perform within that system as proper subjects. If this is the case, and it is also true that the developmental sequence for learning picture-taking as a culturally specific visual communication system begins with learning to be a good subject and watching others perform as makers, then vicidric research which involves giving cameras to people who have already been the subject of our photographs must consider the possibility that the pictures these people take will be more a reflection of our culture than theirs.

Finally, it is suggested that our reading of photographs is also governed by our home culture, i.e., with the possible exception of non-verbal researchers, anthropologists do not know how to derive anthropological information from pictures, but instead read photographs the way everybody else in our culture does.

The camera is an identity badge for the fieldworker. The act of picture-taking helps to fulfill our image of a proper anthropologist. We take pictures in order to be good anthropologists and not very frequently to do anthropology. When we present ourselves publicly or in writing we perpetuate this image by including photographs in our lectures and books.

The above explanation was developed out of an informal pilot study. These preliminary findings have indicated that a larger sample is required and a more extensive and exhaustive analysis necessary. Let me briefly describe the methodology.

(1) Three types of anthropological literature were collected and examined: (a) descriptions of the uses of still photography from fieldwork texts, such as Notes and Queries; (b) written accounts of fieldwork where photography was mentioned, such as Frelich's Marginal Natives (1970); (c) examples of extensive use of photographs in anthropological writings such as Bateson and Mead's Balinese Character (1942). The results of the investigation can be summarized as follows: (1) it is generally agreed that all fieldworkers should take pictures; (2) it is technically difficult to take field pictures; and (3) with the exceptions noted earlier, no one discussed why they took pictures.

These conclusions lead me to design some ethnographic research on the anthropologist as picture-taker. My informants consist of a group of anthropologists selected on the following bases: (1) they have taken pictures in the field and during vacations; (2) the group must range in technical skill from inept amateurs whose involvement with photography is on the "snapshot with an instamatic" level to people who are on a professional level of technical skill and who see photography as a personally expressive and aesthetically pleasing activity; (3) some, if not all, must have published their photographs and/or used them in lectures.

An interview has been developed which will provide the following information from each informant:

(1) The visual communication system under which they operate in the field and at home; i.e., when they take pictures, where, of what, what do they do with the pictures, and what are the criteria for judging the effectiveness of pictures, their own and others. The questions are designed to reconstruct as much as possible their picture-taking activities in the field and at home.

(2) A completed and published piece of their own research is examined with them to determine if they saw the problem as having any visual manifestations.

A sample of photographs from one field trip and one vacation is collected from each informant. The informant is questioned about the photographs as to its intended meaning and significance. These photographs are then subjected to a stylistic and content analysis in order to determine: (1) the similarities and differences between the field and vacation pictures, and (2) the fit or lack of fit between the field photographs and the research problem. The photographs selected by the informant for publication or other forms of public presentation are compared to other field photographs in order to determine what criteria were used in the selection process. The informants will also be asked to describe the basis for their decisions.

Next, the field photographs of all the informants will be examined to see if they share any features in common; i.e., an attempt will be made to define the genre, anthropological photography. One of the results of this research will be some discussion on the question of whether concepts like genre or tradition which have been applied to other visual forms, such as movies and paintings, can be applied in other than intuitive ways to still pictures.
Coders for the stylistic and content analysis will consist of
two groups—one of anthropological graduate students and a
second of graduate students from non-social science dis-
ciplines. By using these two groups additional data will be
gained concerning the question of whether or not anthrop-
ologists have a system which enables them to derive
anthropological information from photographs.

Finally, a photographic book authored by an anthro-
pologist such as Gardner and Heider’s Gardens of War (1968)
and a photo essay such as Irving Penn’s Highland New Guinea
pictures will be given to the same two groups of coders. They
will be asked to select out the photographs taken by
anthropologists and explain their criteria for selection.

Conclusion

At the present time still photography occupies a marginal
place in anthropological inquiry. For most anthropologists it is
more of a recreational activity like novel reading and letter
writing than a scientific endeavor. Perhaps it has only limited
applications. I don’t think that we know enough yet to say
that. Anthropologists, like others in our culture, suffer from a
faddish attraction for new technology. Some have discarded
the still camera for the motion picture camera and are now in
the process of dropping that device for portable television.
These changes have been rationalized on the basis that the new
piece of equipment is a better recording tool. The fantasy
underlying this attraction is that someday someone will invent
a way to transport the field situation intact and complete back
to our labs.

I don’t believe that the problem is one of technology. It is
one of conceptualization. If anthropologists design their
research concentrating on visual manifestations of culture then
visual recording devices become a necessity. If visual com-
munication becomes both the research problem and the means
of gaining the data to solve that problem then anthropologists
will begin to see that they like other people use visual
technology in a non-random ruleful manner, and that these
conventions shape not only what they record but what they
see. Knowing this, it then becomes incumbent on anthro-
pologists who are interested in using still photography in their
research to examine their own visual communication system to
see if it is appropriate for their own research needs.

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NOTICES

Anthropological Film Conference at the Smithsonian

The Smithsonian Institution will present its first anthro-
pological film conference, “Film Studies of Changing Man,”

The conference will give primary emphasis to the problems
and potentials of filming disappearing cultures and the salvage
of unique film documents. It will be organized under three
main themes: Anthropological Film for Research; Anthro-
pological Films in Teaching; and Methodologies for Anthro-
pological Film. There will also be evening lectures of general
interest.

The conference is sponsored by the Center for the Study of
Man and the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
of the Smithsonian, and the Anthropological Film Research
Institute. It will be held in the Museum of Natural History,
12th and Constitution Avenue, N.W.

Registration will be $10 for non-students, $5 for students,
and $5 for daily registrants. Registration forms, a preliminary
program, and general conference information may be obtained
from Ms. Ruth Frazier, Office of Public Service, SI 105,
Washington, D.C. 20560.

Appalachia’s Living Newsletter

VideoMaker is an attempt to combine the need for univers-
sities, schools, cable TV stations, and other groups to develop
a greater insight into the Appalachian region and its people
trough Appalachian studies materials, and the great need for
mountain people to communicate with and learn from their
own experiences. Through the Living Newsletter, we use
portable, half-inch videotape equipment in order to motivate
an educational dialogue or exchange among groups and indi-
viduals in the mountains. Mountain people who, past or
present, have confronted problems and concerns central to
Appalachian life, record the experience that they as a group or
community have had. The video tapes are then shown to
another group or community that shares the same vital
concerns, and they in turn respond on tape to other mountain
people. This problem-oriented, problem-centered technique expands on the oral learning tradition of the mountains and widens the constituency and framework for fundamental problem-solving in Appalachia.

The value and legitimacy of such a disciplined, educational exchange has been well recognized by people in the mountains who are continuing to explore this learning technique among themselves. However, while such a process is valid in its own right, the tapes are also a valuable resource to schools, universities, and communities which desire to understand the mountain region and its people. The tapes are essentially a dialogue or exchange—no one makes a tape without first seeing someone else on tape who shares his interest and concerns—so that, with picture and sound, the tapes have an intimacy and informality that often allow the deeper, more personal, and more complex issues to surface. This is a resource that can enrich the more traditional, written materials usually available to students of the region.

For further information contact: Ted Carpenter, Video Maker, 132 S. Washington, Cookeville, Tennessee 38501.

Symposium on the Anthropology of Visual Communication

A symposium on the Anthropology of Visual Communication, organized by Carroll Williams, will be held at the Society for Applied Anthropology meetings in Tucson, Arizona, April 12-14. The papers presented are: “A Look at Cultural Difference in Film,” Dr. Rudolph Serrano (University of New Mexico); “Toward an Understanding of the Relationships Between the Film Crew (Including Equipment) and the Person or Persons Being Filmed,” Becky Ryan (Anthropological Film Center); “An Interpretation of the Use of Visual Anthropology Among Tribal Peoples,” LaRayne Parrish (Anthropological Film Center); “Stealing Their Souls: The Anthropological Consequences of a Wired Planet,” Jay Ruby (Temple University).

Through Navajo Eyes—A Book Review

At last the methodology and analysis of one of the most seminal pieces of research in the Ethnography of Visual Communication has been made available to us. The report of Sol Worth and John Adair’s research with the Navajo has just been published by Indiana University Press under the title, Through Navajo Eyes.

Worth and Adair, assisted by Dick Chaffen, were the first researchers to put a camera—in this case a motion picture camera—into the hands of a people in order to study how the people presented themselves, in their own way, with their own choice of subject matter, form, and narrative style. Since the birth of the film medium it has been used by Western scientists and social scientists to show us other people and other worlds, but always in our cognitive styles, for our purposes, and in our manners of “science” or “art.” In Through Navajo Eyes the methodology of teaching others to use cameras, without imposing our values and cognitive systems, and more importantly the field of methods of observation as well as analysis are described with rare candor and clarity. The anthropological problems behind the work are discussed in great detail so that is now becomes possible for us to replicate, build upon, and expand the data base upon which we may be able to understand how other cultures use the visual mode to make statements and to present themselves to us. The book contains also a significant chapter written with Dick Chaffen reporting some of the first findings in his research with Black as well as White teenagers in our society.

Worth has several chapters which clarify quite beautifully the basic concepts of vidistics as they relate to anthropology, and Chaffen’s chapter begins the development of the concept of Sociovidistics. The book not only serves as a fine theoretical and methodological text for all of us interested in the Ethnography of Visual Communication but can and is already being used as a textbook for several new courses in Communication and Culture.

It is in our opinion a book that opens up several new fields of study in anthropology and communication and we cannot recommend it too highly.

Jay Ruby
Temple University

Job Opportunity

Wanted: Someone with clerical-secretarial-organizational abilities and experience to work with the Culture and Communication Program, Temple University, Society for the Anthropology of Visual Communication, Conference on Visual Anthropology, and Anthropological Film Research Institute. Conditions—long hours, low pay, and neurotic superiors. For further information contact—Jay Ruby or Richard Chaffen. Department of Anthropology, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19122.

New Bibliography Available

A new 21 page annotated bibliography entitled Uses of Film in the Study of Human Behavior: The Social Scientist as Film-maker and Analyst, has been compiled and is available for $1.00 by writing to Ms. Ellen M. McGrath, 1356 Madison Avenue, Apt. 4N, New York, New York 10028.

New Newsletter in Media Anthropology

According to Charlene A. James, editor,

Media Anthropology is based upon three premises: first, the American public is interested in the information that social scientists explore; second, the media has attempted to provide this information with varying degrees of success; third, up to this time the media specialist and social scientist have only infrequently come together to provide the public with more coherent, substantive, yet interesting programs.

With this in mind, Media Anthropologist has set out to become a liaison organ between the media specialists and the anthropologists. In order to do this, we are establishing a format which will attempt to appraise our readers of current happenings in the media by way of excerpts from media news material.

The Newsletter also hopes to publish articles by media men—here we mean anyone in the media, be he television, radio, or newspaper professional, or social scientist who has had recently aired program or news exposure. To do this we have sent out surveys to social scientists already publicized in the media in hopes that they will assist us.

The Media Anthropologist Newsletter is published quarterly. The subscription rate is $2.00 per year. Persons interested in subscribing or submitting material for publication should contact: Ms. C. A. James, Editor, Social Science Division, Prince George’s Community College, Largo, Maryland 20870.
June Date Set for 19th Robert Flaherty Film Seminar, Coordinators Appointed

The 1973 Robert Flaherty Film Seminar will be held on the campus of Bradford College, Haverhill, Massachusetts, from the 23rd of June to the 1st of July.

The 19th annual Flaherty Seminar will examine the processes of making films related to documentary traditions and concerned with human values. The seminar will look especially at choices and alternatives—both technical and aesthetic—that are involved in the making of a film and at the effects of these choices. The seminar will include a workshop in which participants will be given the opportunity to discuss and develop their own approaches to a particular film problem.

The program will be coordinated jointly by Jack Churchill of the Education Development Center, Newton, Massachusetts, and James Broschart, Director of Film Studies at Emerson College, Boston.

Seminar enrollment is limited to 80 participants; the cost for the week is $225 which covers room, board, and full seminar fee. Only full time enrollment is accepted. All participants are housed on campus. A limited amount of scholarship assistance is available. A $50 deposit must accompany all applications.

The 1972 Seminar included such films as Asylum by Peter Robinson, The Sorrow and the Pity and A Sense of Loss by Marcel Ophuls, Marjoe by Howard Smith and Sarah Kornchan, and Reminiscences of a Journey to Lithuania by Jonas Mekas. All of these filmmakers were present to discuss their work.

The program coordinators are now screening films for possible inclusion in this year’s seminar. It should be noted that although the seminar is informal, it is not a place where participants look at each other’s films or bring the work of other filmmakers. Final programming will be determined by the coordinators. Filmmakers interested in submitting their work for inclusion in the seminar should address all inquiries to Jack Churchill, Education Development Center, 55 Chapel Street, Newton, Massachusetts, (617/969-7100 or 8292), no later than May 10th.

Applications for the seminar are available from Barbara M. Van Dyke, Seminar Coordinator, 505 West End Avenue, New York, New York 10024 (212/787-4742). The closing date for attendance applications is May 1, 1973.

Council of Planning Librarians Bibliography

The Council of Planning Librarians brings to your attention one of our recent bibliographies of special interest to anthropology librarians, faculty, and research workers who are involved with Visual Anthropology: “The Techniques and Application of Aerial Photography to Anthropology: A Bibliography,” by Laurence Kruckman, Department of Anthropology, Southern Illinois University, 1972, 22 pp, $2.50, #339.

This bibliography and others may be purchased from the CPL Exchange Bibliographies, Post Office Box 229, Monticello, Illinois 61856 (217-762-3831). A complete list of our publications in print is available upon request.

Museum of Modern Art Ethnographic and Sociological Film Series

The Department of Film of the Museum of Modern Art will present a series of programs of ethnographical and sociological films from May 17—July 3, 1973. The films have been selected from archive sources, as well as current productions, by a guest curator for the Department of Film, Mrs. Emilie de Brigard. The selection has been designed to illuminate the historical development of the anthropological film. Among the subjects and treatments that will be represented in the programs (each program will be shown on three successive days) are the following: films by and about North American Indians; family life in different cultures; culture contact, colonialism and independence; filmed ethnographies; film in ethnomusicology, linguistics, and psychiatry; anthropologists at work; films for anthropological teaching; explorer films; and the history of cinéma vérité.