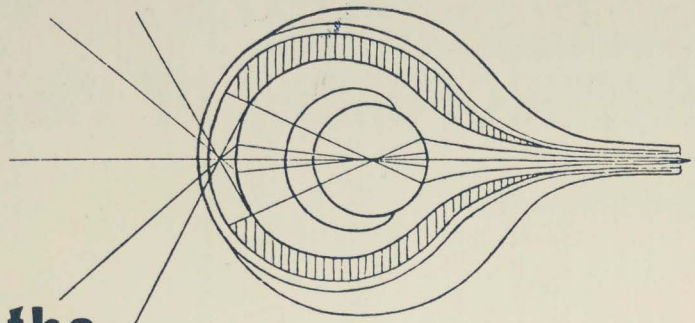


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# STUDIES in the ANTHROPOLOGY OF VISUAL COMMUNICATION

VOLUME 5 NUMBER 1

FALL 1978

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# STUDIES in the ANTHROPOLOGY OF VISUAL COMMUNICATION

Editors: JAY RUBY

Department of Anthropology  
Temple University  
Philadelphia, PA 19122

LARRY GROSS

Annenberg School of Communications  
University of Pennsylvania  
Philadelphia, PA 19104

Editorial Board: JAY RUBY, LARRY GROSS, RICHARD CHALFEN, STEVE FELD, TOBIA L. WORTH

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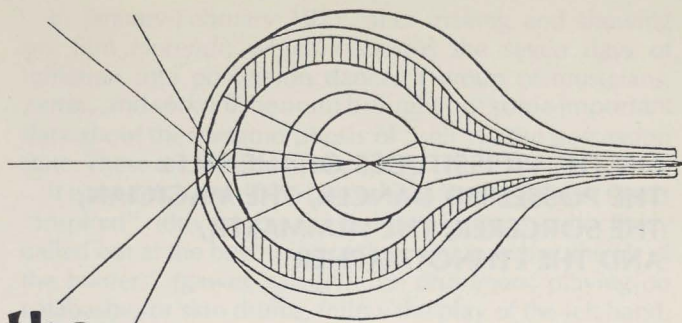
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# ON THE VICISSITUDES OF THE SELF: THE POSSESSED DANCER, THE MAGICIAN, THE SORCERER, THE FILMMAKER, AND THE ETHNOGRAPHER<sup>1</sup>

JEAN ROUCH

TRANSLATED BY  
STEVE FELD AND SHARI ROBERTSON

This essay is based, on the one hand, on knowledge about the Songhay-Zarma, at the loop of Niger, which I have gathered over a period of 30 years of ethnographic research. On the other hand, it is based on experimentation with direct cinema, deriving from the theories, under the name *cinéma-vérité*, prophesized in 1927 by the Russian filmmaker Dziga Vertov. I have used direct cinema as a special research tool in doing ethnography among these same West African groups.

If the notion of "personne"—the self, person—is effectively one of the key religious factors involved in trance, possession dance, magic, and sorcery, it appears that it would be dishonest to leave the matter there, since the "self" of the observer who attends to these phenomena equally merits critical attention. This is especially so when the observer records and plays back the sounds and visual images for the subjects of these trances; those filmed consider these images to be a reflection of themselves and of their divinities; that is, part of the "self" of both men and gods.

This article is intended as a contribution to "shared anthropology."<sup>2</sup> First I will try to point out, within the limits of present knowledge, the concepts of the "self"

among the Songhay-Zarma in certain critical periods.

Possession dance	The character of the possessed person and of the possessing spirit
Magic	The character of the magician and of clairvoyant states
Sorcery	The character of the <i>tyarkaw</i> ("eater of souls") and the character of his victim

After this I will show how the filmmaker-observer, while recording these phenomena, both unconsciously modifies them and is himself changed by them; then how, when he returns and plays back the images, a strange dialogue takes place in which the film's "truth" rejoins its mythic representation. Finally, this demonstration of the active, involuntary role played by the observer will lead me to attempt to get closer to the situation of the ethnographer in his own field.

## THE "SELF" IN POSSESSION DANCE

A previous international colloquium of the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique provided us with an occasion to review research on possession phenomena. It seems that even though we now have a baseline of complete information about different manifestations of possession in the world—and particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa—it is still not possible to establish a precise typology or sketch out a satisfactory theory. However, it now appears that the phenomenon of trance (whether wild or controlled) is one of the essential features in the momentum behind great religious movements, and, perhaps, behind great movements in artistic creativity. For example, schools of theater have, for 20 years, utilized ethnographic information about possession in order to extract methods applicable for training actors (e.g., Julian Beck and the Living Theatre, Peter Brooke, Roger Blin, and Grotowski).

In the present work I will not go back over the particular mechanics of Songhay possession but rather will deal with the metamorphosis in "the person" or "self" of the possessed subject and of the spirit which possesses him or her. It is enough to note that in this region of the Niger valley possession is a means of special reciprocal communication between people and their gods.

The possessed, the "horses of the spirits," are largely women and are specialists who enter into a recognized group after a long and difficult initiation. After that, they are involved in "wild trances," which treat the sick excluded from the society. These trances are run by priests (*zimas*) and take place only during public ceremonies regularly organized by and for the entire society.

Some hundred divinities form the pantheon that reveals itself here. These gods are invisible, but they appear as men. They are of different races, have particular characteristics, and are special "masters" (of water, wind, bush, thunder, rainbow, etc.) from complicated legends which make up a very diverse mythology, one that continually reenriches itself with each new ritual and revelation.

After the initiation, each dancer is a "horse," reserved for one or sometimes several "horsemen," who will mount her (sometimes a male) during the trance and for

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*Jean Rouch is an ethnographer and filmmaker. He has lived extensively in West African communities of Mali, Ghana, and Niger, and has published many ethnographic studies, including *La Religion et la Magie Songhay* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1960). He has made over 30 ethnographic films since 1948, and was instrumental in organizing the Comité International des Films de l'Homme (CIFM). Currently he is a director of research in the French Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, teaches cinema and social science at the University of Paris, and is secretary-general of the Comité du Film Ethnographique of the Musée de l'Homme. Four of his films, *Les Maltres Fous* (1955), *Jaguar* (1954-67), *La Chasse au Lion à L'Arc* (1965; English title *The Lion Hunters*), and *Chronique d'un Été* (1960; in collaboration with Edgar Morin), are available in the United States.*

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*Steve Feld and Shari Robertson do research at the Anthropology Film Center, Santa Fe.*



minutes or hours "operate" the body and speak through the mouth of the "horse." For the Songhay-Zarma, contrary to other neighboring systems, it is this dialogue with the gods that is the essential aim of possession ceremonies. There is thus a profound metamorphosis of the "self" of "the horse," who gives up a part of herself to a part of the "self" of the god who is now incarnated in her body.

While observation of possession phenomena is easy because of the essentially public character of the ceremonies, interpretation is much more delicate because, for the Songhay-Zarma, the possessed person does not, at least theoretically, have a single memory of the trance and resists all allusion to the possessing god. Of course, while in a normal state herself, she has seen others possessed, but this does not seem to influence her.

The sources of information are thus limited to the *zimas*; they are responsible for the initiation, become possessed themselves, and have acquired control over the possession of others. (I have sometimes tried to question the gods themselves through the "horse" during possession, but this technique seemed to be both singularly dangerous and, all things considered, too incoherent.) The most widespread theory propounded by the *zimas* is that during possession the "double" (*bia*) of the god has taken the place of the "double" of the "horse." It is this exchange of "doubles" that I would like to analyze.

The notion of *bia* itself is very fuzzy, designating at the same time "shadow" (it literally means "somber"), "reflection" (in a mirror or pool of water), and "soul" (spiritual principle of all animate beings). This *bia* is tied to the body throughout life; it can temporarily leave the body during sleep (in dreams) or, occasionally, while awake (in a state of imagination, reflection, or possession). It leaves the body at the moment of death to follow its own course in the hereafter. Curiously, some people locate this "double" a bit to the rear of the body, on the left side (when dreaming, one must sleep on the right side); it is here that the possessing god temporarily comes to place himself or his "double."

Do invisible gods, in effect, merely have a "double" or are they themselves a "double"? The question must rest there, because in certain circumstances (for the important *zimas*) these gods can materialize and show themselves in human form (thus having or not having a *bia*, shadow, reflection, double).

It appears, however, that possession is only the affair of the gods, but even at this level of the "double," the phenomena of possession merit careful attention. I have attended several hundred possession ceremonies (I have filmed about 20) and have been able to observe, under the best conditions, this strange metamorphosis of trance and vertigo. It begins with the apparent loss of consciousness and is followed by the slow appearance of a new character, first trembling and howling, then becoming calm. Then the behavior takes on another manner, manifested by speaking in another voice and sometimes in another language. Once one is accustomed to the repertoire of personages, immediate identification is possible: it is *Dongo*, the spirit of thunder, or *Zatao*, the captive of the Peul people.

In January-February 1971, after making and showing my film *Horendi*, which concerns the seven days of initiation into possession dance, a group of musicians, *zimas*, and *sorko* fishermen brought out some important data about the metamorphosis of "self" in the possession state. These are the principal traits:

It is the left hand of the bowed lute (*godye*) player that is "inspired" (driven) by the spirits who are collectively called out at the beginning of the ceremony by "the air of the hunters" (*gawey-gawey*). The drummers, playing on calabashes or skin drums, follow the play of the left hand, and the vibration of bass notes gives "power" to the dancer. It is also in the left hand that the lute player expresses the first sign of the arrival of the spirit in the dancer's body. He kicks the drummer in front of him, who in turn accentuates the rhythm; this accelerates the power of the dancer and "reinforces" the spirit that has begun to straddle him.

What is happening with the dancer? Following numerous indirect accounts (it has already been noted that the dancer is not supposed to remember his state), the dancer "sees" the spirit penetrate into the dance circle and direct himself toward him. Occasionally the important initiates see him too. The spirit has in his hands the skin of a freshly sacrificed animal, which he holds out with the bloody side toward the dancer. He offers it three times. The first time the dancer's eyes tear. The second time the dancer's nose runs. The third time the dancer howls. If several "horses" of the same spirit appear in the course of the dance, they all will see him, and they can all have the same reaction simultaneously. However, only one selection is made during the three provocations.

After this, the spirit approaches a fourth time and retrieves the bloody skin from the head of the dancer. The dancer chokes—it is the climax of the ceremony. At this point the spirit embodies the "double" of the dancer and takes the double's place. The dancer is now "mounted on his or her horse"; that is, the dancer is possessed. During the entire period of the possession the *bia*, or "double," remains enclosed and protected, particularly against witches, by the bloody skin. When the spirit wants to leave, the skin is lifted, liberating the *bia*. When this happens the "horse" opens his eyes, is dazzled, coughs as if having been strangled, and snorts in order to remove the traces of the bloody skin from his face.

The Songhay theory of the person in the possession state thus involves three elements:

1. A temporary substitution of the "double" of the person by the "double" of a spirit or by a spirit himself.
2. The preservation of the substituted "double" in a protective fresh skin.
3. The role of music and dance in calling the spirit into incarnation.

## THE "SELF" OF THE MAGICIAN

Contrary to the case of possession dance, where through the intermediary of a "horse-medium" men can communicate directly and publicly with their gods, the case of magic is different. Here, it is a question of an indirect and private consultation with invisible forces, in



which the magician, all alone, performs a special and difficult role.

The magician (*sohantye*) is a descendant, through his father, of Sonni Ali, the *Si*, founder of the Songhay empire. He is chosen and initiated by his parent or by a more skilled master who is trained in the difficult exercise of permanent contact with invisible forces. He cannot practice his art until after the death of his father (or of his initiator), for it is at this time that he swallows a small initiation chain, which he in turn will vomit up several days before his death. The magician has a solitary and distant personality. He is feared but indispensable. A master of gestures and words, of trees and stones, he is guardian of the spiritual order of the village, and capable of reconciling the spirits with men who dare ask it. These permanent "seers" are, without an intermediary, the masters of their "doubles." They are sent in the form of vultures to encounter allied spirits and to reconnoiter through space and time the course of certain enterprises.

One consults a magician with a certain reticence, and only under grave conditions, because once his action commences, it is hardly ever possible to reverse it. Misfortune without recourse befalls the imprudent person who goes astray on the dangerous routes of the invisible. The consultation is long and difficult. The magician must take all precautions, study his client, and discover the unacknowledged purpose involved. After several days of consultation, he may stop short and reconsider if an awkward gesture or word revealed any deceit in the actual transaction.

Whether divination is involved (by either throwing of cowries or direct prophecy) or the preparation of a magical charm (*korte*), the procedure is always the same. By his words and movements, the magician converts his "double" and sends him to gather the necessary materials for his work. Or he simply projects his "double" by the side of the "double" of the client in order to find out things that the client has not said or may not even be aware of.

The recited texts (which I have discussed at length elsewhere) are quite extraordinary. The magician first locates himself spatially, in relation to the six cardinal directions, and then situates himself in respect to his initiation chain. The identifying text is said in a loud voice, which both strengthens the magician himself and gives his *bia* the necessary energy to undertake the "path," or voyage.

As Luc de Heusch has correctly noted, it is more important for a shamanistic act than for a possession phenomenon to be disguised. Thus the recited texts are accounts of the dangerous voyage; they convey how the "double" of the magician confronts the "double" of both beneficial and evil spirits, confronts the "doubles" of other magicians who try to destroy his work, and, above all, confronts the "double" of the demiurge *Ndebi*, and of god himself. Through his "double" the magician must triumph in successive tests, emerging superior to all other forces encountered. Throughout he does not require the assistance of these secret powers; rather the "double" should be able to compel them to actualize what the magician has asked. Then, when all has been decided, the

"double" returns, following the reverse route, ending up next to the magician, who has never lost control of it.

This brief but total power sometimes manifests itself in a dramatic public way, during the festival of magicians (*sohantye hori*). For the occasion of a circumcision, the *gossi* (an ancient initiation of young girls) or, more simply, for the purification of a village, the *sohantye* will all come together for a festival. The magicians dance to the rhythms of the hourglass drums, brandishing in one hand a sabre (*lolo*) to lance or pierce the "doubles" of sorcerers, and in the other, a branch from a euphorbia plant.

This dance is a dramatic mime of a fight with the forces of evil. The magicians dance continually until the moment when one who feels himself to be the strongest enters into a trance. This trance has little in common with the state of possession previously described; the magician trembles violently, and then up from his mouth gushes a piece of the metallic chain that he swallowed at the time of his father's (or initiator's) death. This initiation chain is, in fact, his "superior identity," inasmuch as it materialized from his initiated ancestors. During the short time that the chain is visible the *bia* of the magician, in the form of a vulture, quickly accomplishes its journey to the land of the spirits and their "doubles." The purpose of the voyage is to discover, then wipe out, the causes of impurity in the village. The risk involved here is considerable: if an enemy or rival has more power than the magician who has spit up his chain, the former can hinder the reswallowing. This would effectively prevent the retreat of the magician's "double," who, as a result, would die from the loss of his essential source (the chain).

Based on the above description, one can sketch out a Songhay theory of the "self" of the *sohantye*, or magician:

1. The "double" leaves the body of the magician, but without substitution by another "double" (as in possession).
2. This "double" undertakes a dangerous voyage among spirits and invisible forces.
3. The magician's speech (or the music of the drumming *griots*) and his special gestures (or ritual dance) are the underlying driving forces behind the shamanistic voyage.
4. Communication with other men is made by the material preparation of charms, by direct prophecy, and by the dramatic exhibition of the chain.
5. The voluntary projection of the "double" can be accompanied by mortal risk.

### THE "SELF" OF THE TYARKAW, THE "SORCERER-SOUL EATER"

The sorcerer (*tyarkaw*) is much like the magician, but instead of using his or her power to defend or guide other men, the sorcerer uses it to work evil, causing the death of victims by stealing "doubles."

The power of the sorcerer, like that of the magician, is inherited through mother's milk—an infant nourished by a *tyarkaw* will become a *tyarkaw*. Songhay mythology emphasizes this irremediable character. Once upon a time, a sacred woman, responsible for a community of women as a result of having made a vow of chastity, yielded to a visitor who spent the night with her. The next morning she changed him into a sheep. Her companions



in turn asked permission to eat this mysterious animal; as they did, the woman ate also. Thus she was pregnant by a man whom she helped eat. From this union of a woman and a man she had eaten, a child was born—a female “eater of doubles,” a *tyarkaw*. From this *tyarkaw* all other sorcerers descend.

Since that mythic time each Songhay village contains a fairly large number of *tyarkaw*. Of course everybody knows who they are, but nobody speaks about it. *Tyarkaw* work evil because they are obligated to do so; in actuality they are criminals, but, from the Songhay point of view, their criminality is not intentional. This mysterious system can only be comprehended by means of the concept of the “self,” or “personne,” of the *tyarkaw*; but inquiries about these people are so risky that they are almost impossible.

Like the magician, the sorcerer has the skill to direct its “double”; and it is the “double” who is in fact the actual agent of the sorcery. The “double” performs the task of hunting other “doubles.” Often at night near certain villages, one perceives from the bush visions of rapidly moving fires, which stop and start up again in successive bounds. These suspicious lights, whose explanation is not clear, are interpreted as *tyarkaw* roaming about. In effect, these sorcerers have the power to propel themselves through the air owing to fire that is emitted from their armpits and anuses. The few inquiries that I have been able to make indicate that the sorcerer’s “double” is responsible for these manifestations; in other words, it is the moving about of the “double” that is perceived in the form of the fire movements. Meanwhile, at the same time, the body of the sorcerer is at home in the village, “in a state of deep meditation.”

The flashing “double” can self-metamorphose into a calabash, a crying baby, or a donkey with two heads—forms it takes in order to frighten its future victim. While flying, the *tyarkaw* double sees a delayed traveler; the “double” successively turns itself into these three forms along the road, and, should the traveler pick up the calabash, touch the baby, or strike the donkey with two heads, misfortune befalls him. He lapses into a state of panic and fear, losing his reason and hence the control of his own “double.” At this point, the *tyarkaw*’s “double” seizes the “double” of the victim and eats it. Once his body is empty of its “double,” the victim returns to the village, stupefied. If after seven days no one has returned his “double,” he dies.

One of the basic functions of the magicians is to engage in combat with the sorcerers and force them to return stolen “doubles” before they are eaten. This involves a strange kind of fight—“double” against “double,” while each corresponding person has his intact body lying in a corner of his house.

The accounts of these imaginary combats are fabulous. Armed with a *lolo* lance, the magician tries to prick the *tyarkaw*, who defends himself by throwing millet stalks. At dawn, when the “doubles” rejoin their respective bodies, they are marked with the wounds they received, swollen scars which they proudly exhibit. But never does the fight otherwise prolong itself in reality. The magician never asks about the actual sorcerer (who might very well

be a neighbor). The only exception here is when the sorcerer has overstepped his or her bounds, by attacking either the children of the *sohantye* or those taken in by his family. If this happens, the *sohantye* takes a *lolo* and pierces the *tyarkaw*, forcing him or her to defecate the “egg of power.” This fight of “doubles” does materialize into reality; the sorcerer is deprived of the “egg” which the *sohantye* uses in order to concoct charms for his defense. (This allusion to an “egg of the witch” appears generally throughout the savannah of West Africa and deserves systematic study.)

But, all this notwithstanding, what becomes of the “double” of the victim, his stolen soul? Mysteriously passive and defenseless, the “double” is “hidden” (or perhaps pierced by a *lolo*) over the course of seven days. At the end of this period, the sorcerer leaves in the form of an owl to share his hunted “double” with other sorcerers who belong to the same “society.” (This concept is analogous to the “diabolical societies” found along the West African coast.) Alternatively, it is given to his protecting spirit, himself a sorcerer. The “double” is then “eaten” by one or the other and the victim dies.

While apparently logical, this scheme is nonetheless insufficient. For example, there are several things it does not explain:

1. The personal benefit the sorcerer or the society derives from his risky acts. Is it accumulation of power? How? And for what?
2. The particular role—benevolent or malevolent—of the sorcerer in the society where he or she also acts in a vulnerable manner.
3. The fate of the “double” (in principle, immortal) of the victim after death. Does the double change into something else? Is the double reincarnated? Or surrendered following some particular use in the world of “doubles”? Does the double become a spirit? If so, he could become an originator of other myths.
4. The total immunity of certain people from their village *tyarkaw*. The *tyarkaw* are known by all but tacitly ignored. In some villages, for example, where there are many known sorcerers, young men avoid marrying their daughters. These women then either exile themselves or become courtesans.

In-depth studies of these questions are evidently quite difficult but obviously necessary; a phenomenon so widespread must hold an essential key to systems of thought in Sub-Saharan Africa. For the moment I must refrain from applying to the sorcerer-victim relationship an eventual Songhay theory of the “self” of the sorcerer. As for the rest of the data:

1. The “double” leaves the body of the sorcerer and as in the case of the magician, no other “double” can take its place.
2. This “double” undertakes a hunt for the “doubles” of other men. It separates them from their bodies by fright. This offensive is, in some ways, comparable to the process of the spirit brandishing the bloody skin in front of the dancer at the moment of possession.
3. No “double” can be substituted for the victim, who quickly regains consciousness. He is thus like the sorcerer in body but incapable of recovering, as is the sorcerer, his spiritual principle.
4. The appearance for the first time of the death of the “double” (and consequently his body) as the result of prolonged separation.
5. The existence of a potential world where the “doubles” of living men associate with the “doubles” of spirits (or with the spirits themselves). In this world they encounter themselves, fight with or mutually assist one another, thus sharing a secret collective imagination (in contrast to possession dance, where this collective imagination is publicly witnessed.)



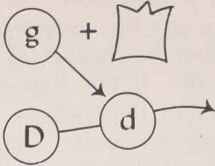
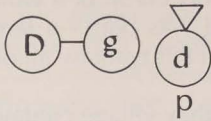
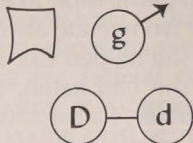
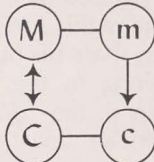
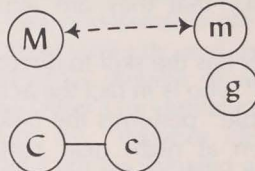
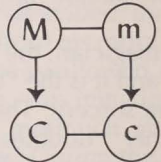
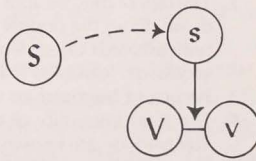
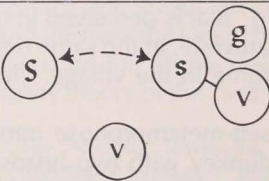
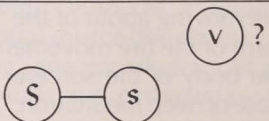
<p>POSSESSION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>—Public—day or night</li> <li>—Spirit speaks</li> <li>—Dancer = horse</li> <li>—Double of dancer under bloody skin</li> </ul>	 <p>1. <i>Possession trance:</i> The spirit "g" offers the skin "p" to dancer "D," whose double "d" is displaced.</p>	 <p>2. <i>Possession:</i> The spirit "g" has taken the place of the double of dancer "D," whose double "d" is concealed under the skin "p."</p>	 <p>3. <i>End of possession:</i> The spirit "g" has left; dancer "D" has rejoined her or his double "d."</p>
<p>MAGIC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>—Private—day</li> <li>—Voyage of magician among the spirits</li> <li>—Magician = vulture</li> <li>—Mouth chain</li> </ul>	 <p>1. <i>Consultation:</i> The client "C" consults the magician "M," whose double "m" explores the true intentions of the double of the client "c."</p>	 <p>2. <i>Voyage:</i> The magician "M" sends a double "m" among the spirits.</p>	 <p>3. <i>Magical charm:</i> The magician "M" and his double "m" give a magical charm to the client "C" and his double "c."</p>
<p>SORCERY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>—Secret—night</li> <li>—Kidnapping of the double of the stranded victim among the spirits by a sorcerer</li> <li>—Sorcerer = owl</li> <li>—Anal egg</li> </ul>	 <p>1. <i>Sorcery attack:</i> The sorcerer "S" is at home; his or her double "s" attacks the double "v" of the frightened victim "V."</p>	 <p>2. <i>Devouring:</i> The double of the sorcerer "s" goes to carry the double of the victim "v" to the spirits "g"; the victim "V" has lost his double.</p>	 <p>3. <i>Death:</i> The sorcerer "S" has rejoined his or her double "s"; the victim "V" dies, but what happens to the double "v"?</p>

Figure 1

- The singular economy of the "doubles" of victims—consumed, exchanged, or destroyed—is an area whose key remains to be discovered.
- The forced production of an anal egg, in which is concentrated the sorcerer's power (this again contrary to the magician, who voluntarily spits up his chain).

Before dealing with the other side of the observation process (by the ethnographer-filmmaker), it might be useful to review and summarize the points concerning the notion of *bia*, the "double."

Each man has a *bia*, or "double," who lives in a parallel world, that is, a "world of doubles." This "world" is the home of the spirits, the masters of the forces of nature; it is also the permanent home of the imaginary (dreams, reveries, reflections) as well as the temporary home of

magicians and sorcerers. This reflection world does not seem to extend beyond the limits of the earthly world, and, in particular, does not overlap with the world of the hereafter managed by god.

Between the real world and its "double" certain connections are possible, whether by the incarnation of spirits during possession dances, by shamanistic incursion of magicians into the reflection world, or by the materialization of a sorcerer at the time of his hunt for other men's "doubles."

These two worlds, finally, are so completely interpenetrated that it is nearly impossible for the noninformed observer to distinguish the "real" from the "imaginary." For example, the statement "I met Ali yesterday" can mean equally "I actually met Ali yesterday" or "I



dreamed or I thought I met Ali yesterday." And when the observer is first thrown into this exercise, he can disturb or upset both the "real" and the "imaginary."

## THE "SELF" OF THE OBSERVER AND PARTICULARLY OF THE ETHNOGRAPHER-FILMMAKER

In this world of fragile mirrors, standing beside men and women for whom any clumsy action may provoke or inhibit trance, the observer's presence can never be neutral. Whether he wishes it or not, the observer himself is integral to the general movement of things and his most minute reactions are interpreted within the context of the particular system of thought that surrounds him.

I have chosen here to begin with the "self" of the filmmaker because recording and then projecting images and sounds introduces a concrete element which books—even illustrated ones—leave out. This is so because the people we study are in large part nonliterate but do know how to look and listen. Over the years technical advances have resulted in increasingly complex equipment whose operation is increasingly simple. This has led to the use of direct cinema—that is, the synchronous recording of image and sounds—as a tool of ethnographic observation. Since the making of several film studies in Dahomey and Mali, in collaboration with Gilbert Rouget and Germaine Dieterlen, during the period 1957–1965, I have systematically used this technique.

The two pioneers of the technique of direct cinema were the American Robert Flaherty and the Russian Dziga Vertov; during the 1920s they invented the notions of the "participating camera" and of "cinéma-vérité." Just when the first theoreticians of film tried to define this new "language" in relation to fiction (coming directly from the theatrical tradition), Flaherty and Vertov turned their barely outlined rules upside down by experimenting with cinema in real life.

Dziga Vertov understood that cinematic vision was a particular kind of seeing, using a new organ of perception—the camera. This new perception had little in common with the human eye; he called it the "ciné-eye." Later, with the appearance of sound film, he similarly defined the "radio-ear," a new special organ of recorded hearing. Extending his analysis we know today that this new kind of audio-visual language can be understood (I should say "ciné-compris," or "film-understood") by audiences with no special education. He called the entirety of this discipline "kinopravda"—(cinéma-vérité, or "film-truth"), an ambiguous or self-contradictory expression since, fundamentally, film truncates, accelerates, and slows down actions, thus distorting the truth. For me, however, kinopravda (cinéma-vérité) is a precise term, on the same order of *kinok* (ciné-eye), and it designates not "pure truth" but the particular truth of the recorded images and sounds—a filmic truth (ciné-vérité).

At every stage of direct cinema, a film attitude (ciné-attitude) manifests itself. Contrary to scripted fiction films, the direct-cinema filmmaker must be ready at every

moment to record the most efficacious images and sounds. To return to the terminology of Vertov, when I make a film I "film-see" (ciné-vois) by knowing the limits of the lens and camera; likewise, I "film-hear" (ciné-entends) in knowing the limits of the microphone and tape recorder; I "film-move" (ciné-bouge) in order to find the right angle or exercise the best movement; I "film-edit" (ciné-monte) throughout the shooting, thinking of how the images are fitting together. In a word, I "film-think" (ciné-pense).

Robert Flaherty, a rough Irish-American geologist, used a camera for the first time in the far North among the Hudson Bay Eskimos. He was unaware of these theories, and did not need them, although he had to solve similar problems in the field. From the very start he applied an extraordinarily empirical technique by allowing the Eskimos, Nanook and his family, to participate (beyond acting) in his film, *Nanook of the North*. Under incredible field conditions Flaherty accomplished this kind of participation by building a location development laboratory and projection room. In doing so, he invented the use of the "participating camera," a technique that he saw not as an obstacle to communication but, on the contrary, as an indispensable part of filmmaking in the field.

I have been more or less consciously synthesizing and applying these two methods to my own work in ethnography. Today all the people I film know the camera, and they clearly understand its capability to see and hear. They have helped me during the editing process by screening projections of my films; in Vertov's terms, at the time of shooting they are "film-seen" (ciné-vus) when I "film-observe" (ciné-regarde) them. In fact, they react to this art of visual and sound reflection in exactly the same manner as they react to the public art of possession or the private art of magic or sorcery.

Long ago, Frazier, in *The Golden Bough*, noted the frightened reaction of "primitives" to being photographed; the reflection might endanger their souls. What does this imply about the moving image, in color, with sound? It is only necessary to have once attended the projection of such a film in the field to understand this kind of emotional shock. One year after its making, I showed my film, *Sigui 1969—La Caverne de Bongo*, to the villagers of Bongo, in Mali, where I shot it. Animated by a piece of celluloid, they relived a past time—reflections of disappeared people, phantom impressions that one sees, that one hears but does not see, or that one does not hear.

I now believe that for the people who are filmed, the "self" of the filmmaker changes in front of their eyes during the shooting. He no longer speaks, except to yell out incomprehensible orders ("Roll!" "Cut!"). He now only looks at them through the intermediary of a strange appendage and only hears them through the intermediary of a shotgun microphone.

But, paradoxically, it is due to this equipment and this new behavior (which has nothing to do with the observable behavior of the same person when he is not filming) that the filmmaker can throw himself into a ritual, integrate himself with it, and follow it step by step. It is a



strange kind of choreography, which, if inspired, makes the cameraman and soundman no longer invisible but participants in the ongoing event.

For the Songhay-Zarma, who are now quite accustomed to film, my "self" is altered in front of their eyes in the same way as is the "self" of the possession dancers: it is the "film-trance" (ciné-transe) of the one filming the "real trance" of the other. This experience is really true to me, and I know by the control of my camera eyepiece, by the reactions of the audience, whether the filmed sequence is a success or a failure and whether I have been able to free myself of the weight of filmic and ethnographic theories necessary to rediscover the "barbarie de l'invention."

One can even take this further: Isn't the "image-hunt" comparable to the sorcerer's "hunt for doubles"? And the material that I take such extraordinary care of—the film, keeping it in darkness, dry, at a low temperature—is it not just a "reflection package," a "package of doubles"? If the camera can be compared to the bloody skin of the possessing spirit, then the shipment of the film to the distant processing laboratory can be compared, by contrast, to the devouring of the double by the sorcerer.

The analogy for me stops there, because the next steps are not explicitly a part of African mythology. The "stolen" image comes back several months later, and when projected on the screen, recovers its life for an instant. The reflection is bestowed with such a strange power that its viewing is enough to make a "horse of the spirit" see itself possessed on the screen and immediately enter into trance.

Currently I am at the point of reflecting on my own role as a taker and giver of "doubles," as an "eater" and "shower" of reflections. I already know that the next step is research to clarify these roles in relation to the "self" of the ethnographer and ethnography itself. For the moment it is hardly possible to establish a Songhay theory of the "self" of the filmmaker, but I will be trying to draw up such a profile in my future work with the priests, fishermen, and magicians who have collaborated with me over the last 30 years.

Nonetheless, I can show a short film which points out the obvious role played by the camera as a stimulant to possession. [At this point in the presentation Rouch's film *Tourou* was shown. See the Appendix for a description of this film.]

## CONCLUSION

These critical reflections on the "self" of the filmmaker lead me to expand on the concept of the "self" of the ethnographer.

In the field the observer modifies himself; in doing his work he is no longer simply someone who greets the elders at the edge of the village, but—to go back to Vertovian terminology—he "ethno-looks," "ethno-observes," "ethno-thinks." And those with whom he deals are similarly modified; in giving their confidence to

this habitual foreign visitor they "ethno-show," "ethno-speak," "ethno-think."

It is this permanent "ethno-dialogue" which appears to me to be one of the most interesting angles in the current progress of ethnography. Knowledge is no longer a stolen secret, devoured in the Western temples of knowledge; it is the result of an endless quest where ethnographers and those whom they study meet on a path which some of us now call "shared anthropology."

## APPENDIX

### Description of the film *Tourou*

On March 15, 1971, the *Sorko* fisherman, Daouda, asked me to come film at Simiri, in the Zarmaganda of Niger. The occasion was a possession dance to ask the black spirits of the bush to protect the forthcoming crop from the locusts.

Despite the efforts of the *zima* priest Sido, Daouda's father, and despite the use of two special old drums, "tourou" and "bitti," no one became possessed for three days.

On the fourth day I again went to Simiri with Daouda and my soundman, Moussa Amidou. After several hours without possession taking place, I decided to shoot anyway. Night was about to fall, and I thought I would take the opportunity to shoot some footage of this beautiful music, which is in danger of disappearing.

I began to film the exterior of the compound of the *zima* priests, then, without turning off and on, passed through the pen of the sacrificial goats, and then out into the dance area where an old man, Sambou Albeydu, was dancing without much conviction. Without stopping I walked up to the musicians and filmed them in detail. Suddenly the drums stopped. I was just about ready to turn off when the *godye* lute started up again, playing solo. The lute player had "seen a spirit." Immediately Sambou entered into the state and became possessed by the spirit *kure* (the Hausa butcher, the hyena). I kept filming. Then old Tusinye Wazi entered the dance area; she immediately was possessed by the spirit *Hadyo*. Still without stopping, I filmed the consultation of spirits by the priests—a sacrifice was requested. At this point I began to walk backward, framing a general establishing view of the compound, now flushed with the coming of sunset. The filming was thus one continuous shot, the length of the camera load.

Looking back at this film now, I think that the shooting itself was what unlatched and sped up the possession process. And I would not be surprised if, upon showing the film to the priests of Simiri, I learned that it was my own "ciné-transe" which played the role of catalyst that night.

## TRANSLATORS' NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Translation of *Essai sur les avatars de la personne du possédé, du magicien, du sorcier, du cinéaste, et de l'ethnologue*. The paper was prepared for a conference held in Paris, 11-17 October 1971. It was published in the proceedings, *La Notion de Personne en Afrique Noire*, Colloques Internationaux du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, No. 544, 1973, pp. 529-544. For a detailed discussion of the ethnographic materials from Niger, see Jean Rouch, *La Religion et la Magie Songhay*, 1960, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France. A recent popular essay, with photos, on Songhay possession rituals is *Dongo-pluie et foudre au Niger*, in *Atlas*, No. 96, May 1974, pp. 60-83. A general introduction to Rouch's work with cinema is *The Camera and Man*, in *Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communication*, 1(1):37-44, 1974. Our special thanks again to Ms. Marielle Delorme of the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique for reviewing the translation.

<sup>2</sup> Rouch uses the term *anthropologie partagée*; the concept is similar to what is termed "reflexive anthropology" in the United States.



## HOW I SEE THE YORUBA SEE THEMSELVES

STEPHEN SPRAGUE

Photographers and photographic studios are prevalent throughout many areas of Africa today, and particularly in West Africa many indigenous societies make use of photography. However, the Yoruba of western Nigeria, though not unique, are certainly exceptional in the extent to which they have integrated the medium of photography into many aspects of their culture.

The following photographic essay visually presents some of the results of an investigation which I conducted primarily in the Igbomina Yoruba town of Ila-Orangun during the summer of 1975. Ila-Orangun is a typical Yoruba community of about 30,000 inhabitants, which, at that time, had neither electricity nor running water. Despite the lack of modern facilities, the town supported ten flourishing photographic studios.

My observations of comparable material in the Ijebu-remo area and in the large cities of Lagos, Ibadan, and Kano strongly suggest that the use of photography in Ila-Orangun is typical of many Yoruba communities, and probably has much in common with other areas of West Africa.

I have shown elsewhere (Sprague 1978) that the Yoruba, at all levels of their society, have indeed integrated photography into both traditional and contemporary aspects of their culture; and that Yoruba photography is a genuine expression of the culture with unique symbolic meanings and functions and with an implicit set of culturally determined conventions governing proper subject matter and formal coding of the visual image. In the present introduction, I would like to outline my methodology for photographing and collecting this material and to present some additional contextual information to amplify the main points of the accompanying photographic essay.

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*Stephen Sprague received his M.F.A. from the school at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1970. He is presently an Assistant Professor teaching photography and filmmaking at Purdue University. His main interest is in the concepts of documentary photography, in the ways in which photographs seem to present an illusion of reality, and in the ways in which the photographer's personal and cultural biases might be revealed.*

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When I photographed in Nigeria, I mostly used a medium format camera and often a tripod. I always obtained the subject's permission and cooperation before photographing and invariably framed the subject straight-on. This turned out to be the way the Yoruba expected a good photographer to work, so I was immediately accorded respect among the Yoruba photographers and in the community, and I was seldom refused permission to photograph. I know that if I had been making candid photographs with a small camera I would have met with a great deal of suspicion and little understanding or respect.

Though our manner of working may be similar, my photographs are obviously quite different from those taken by Yoruba photographers. While photographing, I tried to be conscious of my own training in the Western tradition of documentary photography and to be aware of how this was influencing my seeing. The resulting photographs, I feel, contain a mass of visual details, frame by frame, which are structured by a combination of personal and documentary aesthetic considerations and anthropological insight. I hope that my photographs can be appreciated and understood on all these levels.

In addition to making my own photographs, I collected or copied examples of Yoruba photographs. These were obtained from both photographers and other members of the community. One of the best sources was the photographers' negative files. Some 300 negatives were viewed at each studio in Ila-Orangun, and each photographer was requested to make postcard-size prints (3½ in. by 5½ in.) of ten to fifteen selected negatives. These were selected on the basis of criteria established, in part, from a stylistic and subject matter analysis of 300 sample postcards kept by Sir Special Photo Studio for prospective clients to view. Briefly, these criteria were (1) that the photograph be a good example of a distinct subset of Yoruba photographs as previously defined by the analysis of Sir Special's postcards; (2) that the photograph be unique in some way or not fit any previously defined category; (3) that the photograph seem to contain anthropological information useful to Marilyn Houlberg, who was also in Ila-Orangun continuing her research on Yoruba sacred children; and (4) that the photograph particularly reflect my own personal aesthetic tastes.

The ten photographers in Ila-Orangun were interviewed, and they willingly discussed their profession and demonstrated their camera and darkroom techniques.<sup>1</sup> Also, members of the community contributed information about the subject matter and function of photographs that they owned. Yoruba photography in Ila-Orangun was studied, then, from the points of view of both producer and consumer as well as from an analysis of the photographs themselves.

The Yoruba consider photography a respectable modern profession for young people to enter, and though the vast majority of photographers are men, there are no stated restrictions against women. To



become a photographer a young person must first have completed primary six (sixth grade) and must then become an apprentice to a master photographer for a period of one to three years. He can then open a studio and practice photography, eventually attracting his own apprentices.

Photographers are highly organized. There is a local photographers' union in each town to which every photographer automatically belongs and which meets at least once a month. These local unions form regional unions which meet about every six months. The unions regulate the price structure of the various types of photographs and services, the details of apprenticeship, the professional conduct of its members, and so on.

The typical photography studio in Ila-Orangun is usually small but efficiently laid out. Double doors swing open to reveal to the passerby samples of the photographer's work. A backdrop hangs a few feet inside the studio with a bench for the sitter placed immediately in front of it. These backdrops are painted by sign painters in various shades of black, white, and gray. They often display a fascinating if naive use of Western perspective and usually depict a mixture of traditional and contemporary motifs. Behind the backdrop is a tiny darkroom, often without electricity or running water. Along one wall of the darkroom is a narrow table on which are set the processing solutions in enameled bowls from the market. A kerosene lantern with a red cloth surrounding the globe serves as a safelight. An old postcard-size view camera is installed with its back to a window for use as a solar enlarger, and a mirror, located outside the window, is tilted to reflect sunlight through the system. An enlargement is made by placing a negative in the back of the camera and projecting its image onto a sheet of photographic paper clipped to a vertical easel. Except for minor variations, this makes up the photographer's entire facilities.

Since about 1960, the traditional view camera has been increasingly relegated to the status of enlarger, as there have become available a variety of cheap and more flexible twin-lens reflex cameras taking twelve 2¼-inch-square negatives on inexpensive 120 roll film. However, the photographers still offer standardized photograph sizes based on the old British view camera negative formats.

The photographers of Ila-Orangun claim that practically any subject may be photographed except for those ritual objects, masquerades, and ceremonies which some segments of the public are traditionally prohibited from viewing. Also, they say that a good photographer will photograph whatever the client requests. Study of the kinds of photographs most commonly produced, however, indicates that the actual practice of photography is generally much more restricted than the limits claimed by the photographers themselves.

Yoruba photography in Ila-Orangun and elsewhere consists almost exclusively of posed portraiture of either single individuals or groups of people, and

these portraits are often commissioned in order to commemorate an event of some importance to the people depicted.<sup>2</sup> Though an important ritual object or prized possession such as a traditional sculpture or a new car might occasionally be photographed, such general subjects as landscapes, architecture, or ordinary objects and events are very seldom taken by local photographers.

Yoruba photography certainly shares some similar categories of subject matter and some formalistic conventions with other West African societies as well as with Western cultures, particularly the British. But cultural patterning exists, not only in the subtle differences in these conventions but, more importantly, in the unique culturally derived symbolic meanings and specific functions attributed to these seemingly similar forms.

What I call the traditional formal portrait (see Figures 10 and 13) seems to be in part a fusion of traditional Yoruba cultural and aesthetic values with nineteenth-century British attitudes toward the medium. Both the nineteenth-century British and the traditional Yoruba culture placed great emphasis on tradition, proper conduct, and the identity and maintenance of one's proper social position in society. Early British portraits and Yoruba traditional formal portraits visually codify these commonly held values by the dignified manner in which the subjects pose while wearing the proper clothes, and often displaying symbolic objects, which identify their social station in life. There are distinctions, however; British portraits also emphasize the Western values of individuality and even eccentricity, while the Yoruba traditional formal portrait is meant to memorialize the subject in terms of how well the individual has embodied traditional Yoruba ideals and fulfilled his given traditional position in Yoruba society. When the Yoruba subject dies, this is the portrait which might be carried in his funeral procession to particularize the ancestral *Egungun* (Schiltz 1978:51). It is the portrait which might be hung in his crypt or laminated to his tombstone and which might be published in memoriam each year in the *Lagos Daily Times*.

The manner in which the subject poses in the traditional formal portrait seems especially Yoruba because the pose is never seen in early British portraits<sup>3</sup> but is commonly assumed by Yoruba in traditional dress. Also, the sculptural massiveness and bilateral symmetry of the pose relates directly to the form of Yoruba sculpture. (Another relationship between photography and the sculptural tradition is the practice of mounting a portrait on a thin sheet of wood and cutting it out to make a freestanding three-dimensional object (see Figures 9 and 11). Traditional Yoruba aesthetic values as outlined by Thompson in his discussion of Yoruba sculpture (Thompson 1971:374-381) are also apparent in the traditional formal portrait. The concept of *Ifarahon* ("visibility") is particularly important, as it is evident in many other forms of Yoruba photographs as well. *Ifarahon* implies a clarity and definition of physical form and line,



and a subsequent clarity of social and individual identity. This is emphasized in the traditional formal portrait by the isolation of the subject against a shallow neutral background, and in the inclusion of objects and clothing symbolizing the subject's position in Yoruba society. To give another example, in group photographs, symbolic objects are always prominently included to identify the particular ceremony or event. Also, the social hierarchy of the group is reflected in the physical positioning of individuals within the frame. The most important individual is seated (often in the traditional formal pose) in the center of the first row, with the next most important seated to his left. Persons of the lowest status stand to the back and edges of the frame. Children are exceptions, being allowed to squat or sit anywhere in the foreground.

Many Yoruba would not consciously know, or be able to articulate, how their photographs reflect commonly held values. However, most members of our own culture would find it equally difficult to explain the symbolic meanings of their own family photographs. Many members of both cultures share the common assumption that the photographic image is simply a visual record of the thing photographed, which serves as a memory device to bring to mind at some future time the people and events depicted. The actual structure and symbolic meaning are not consciously considered; they serve only to trigger the viewer's memory of the subject.

The Yoruba photograph itself, as an object, also serves specific functions in the community. Photographs are prominently displayed in the parlor or sittingroom of many private homes and at the front of many shops and offices. By displaying these photographs, the owner publicly acknowledges his respect for and involvement with the subjects depicted. There is often the additional implication of status: individuals of greater wealth and social standing will have more and larger photographs on display, and many of them may be elaborately hand-colored and framed, or occasionally made into a freestanding cut-out.

There are exceptions to the general function of the photograph as a literal record and memory device and as an object symbolizing respect and status. The photograph is sometimes believed to possess additional meanings and spiritual power, and can be used in traditional rituals. The most fascinating and widespread example is the integration of photography into the traditional beliefs and rituals surrounding twins. Because twins are sacred children with connections to the spirit world, it is especially important to show these children proper respect. The traditional procedure when a twin dies is for the parents to commission the carving of a twin figure, or *ibeji*, which then is used in the traditional twin rituals along with the living twin. Also, photographs are often made of twins and other young children to hang in the parlor with the other photographs of family members. Then, if a child dies, there is a portrait by which to re-

member it. However, the procedure becomes complex when one twin dies before a photograph has been taken of the pair. The living twin is then photographed, and this negative is multiple-printed twice to give the illusion of both twins together in the same photograph (Figures 14, 15, and 16 detail variations of this procedure). The most fascinating aspect is that in some areas it is now accepted practice for the twin photograph to be substituted for the traditional *ibeji*. The photograph is then kept on the twin shrine and is utilized in the traditional twin ceremonies.

The exact function of these twin photographs seems to depend in part on the religious convictions of the parents. Houlberg (1973) states that the Christian, and especially Muslim, prohibition against graven images has been a major influence in the simplification of *ibeji* forms used by Christian and Muslim Yoruba, and in the substitution of other objects, such as plastic dolls, for *ibeji* in the traditional twin rituals. Houlberg suggests in a more recent article (1976) that this prohibition has been a major influence in the substitution of photographs for *ibeji*. Through the use or possession of a twin photograph, Christian and Muslim Yoruba seek to distinguish themselves from believers in the traditional religion.

The cycle of substitution can, on occasion, come full circle when both twins die before any photographs have been made of them. Then, if the traditional *ibeji* are carved, they are sometimes photographed, and this photograph is hung in the parlor in place of the usual twin photograph.

I will conclude with some observations concerning the study of Yoruba photography. The large number of photographs available from individual Yoruba and from photographers' negative files form a vast visual data bank which is unique in that it has been generated entirely by members of a non-Western culture. This material might be utilized in a number of ways. The most obvious use would be simply to study the subject matter of photographs available in a particular community in order to discover the existence of people, ceremonies, events, and even objects which might not otherwise become known. Copies of these photographs could then be used to elicit more information from other members of the community.

More importantly, these photographs are "coded in Yoruba" and can give us much information about how the Yoruba see themselves and about their cultural values and perceptual view of the world. The following photographic essay attempts a visual presentation and analysis of Yoruba photography through the juxtaposition and sequencing of my own photographs with photographs taken by Yoruba photographers. I have tried to present this material in such a way that viewers can form their own opinions and compare them to my observations both in the photo essay and in this text.

However, a well-defined methodology does not exist for extracting cultural and other information from even our own photographic heritage of family snapshots and anonymous photographs, and the



formulation of a methodology for interpreting the heritage of a non-Western society has not yet been attempted as far as I know. The hope is that continued investigation of Yoruba photography will eventually lead not only to a better knowledge of how the Yoruba view themselves but also to a better cross-cultural understanding both of how we communicate through mediated images of the world and of the formulation of a methodology to analyze these images.<sup>4</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank the photographers in Ila-Orangun, and especially Sir Special Photo, for their cooperation in providing information and in allowing me access to their negative files.

<sup>2</sup> Newspaper photographers in the cities have adopted a more candid journalistic approach, but their range of subject matter is much the same—predominantly people at ceremonial or other newsworthy events. Many news photographs typical of Western papers, such as accidents, disasters, or action pictures of sports, seldom appear.

<sup>3</sup> Many types of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century British photographic portraits were looked at in detail. This included the work of artistic photographers such as Julia Margaret Cameron (Gernsheim 1975), commercial studio photographs (Hillier 1976), and colonial British photographs of India (Worswick 1976).

<sup>4</sup> The writings and research of Sol Worth have had a large influence on my own thinking and work, particularly his research with the Navajo published in *Through Navajo Eyes* (Worth and Adair 1972). I would like to dedicate this present work to his memory.

<sup>5</sup> *Abiku* means literally "We are born to die." Children who are discovered to be *abiku* must be paid special ritual attention in order to keep them in this world, else they will surely die and return to their spirit world. See "The Concept of *Abiku*" (Mobolade 1973) for more information.

<sup>6</sup> I would like to credit Marilyn Houlberg, who, through her research on Yoruba sacred children during a field trip to Nigeria in

1971, first heard of the existence of this particular twin photograph and its use in traditional twin ritual (Houlberg 1973). It was my fascination with this unsubstantiated fact that compelled me to undertake this investigation of Yoruba photography, which was conducted in part with Houlberg's assistance during the summer of 1975. Houlberg has previously published a similar photograph of Taiwo in connection with her discussion of new forms of *ibeji* and of twin photographs replacing *ibeji* (Houlberg 1976:18).

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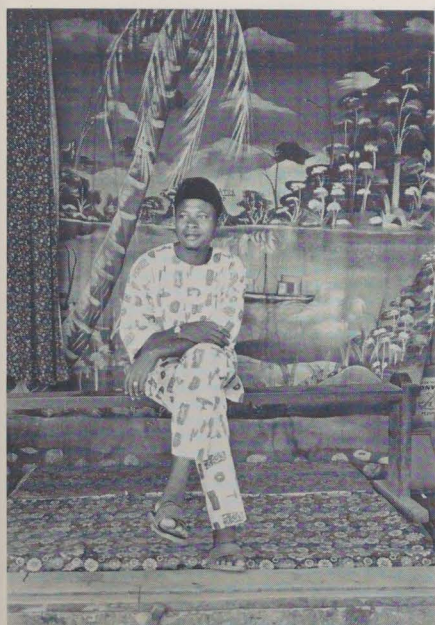


Figure 1 (a and b) —The photographer, Chief Atos, is shown standing in front of his studio, Chief Atos Photo, and posing before the canvas backdrop just inside his studio door. Chief Atos is not this photographer's real name, however; it is the custom that photographers be known and addressed by the name of their studio rather than by their own given name. Chief Atos Photo and the studios shown in Figures 2, 3, 4, and 6 are all laid out in a similar manner and are typical of many small-town Yoruba photography studios.



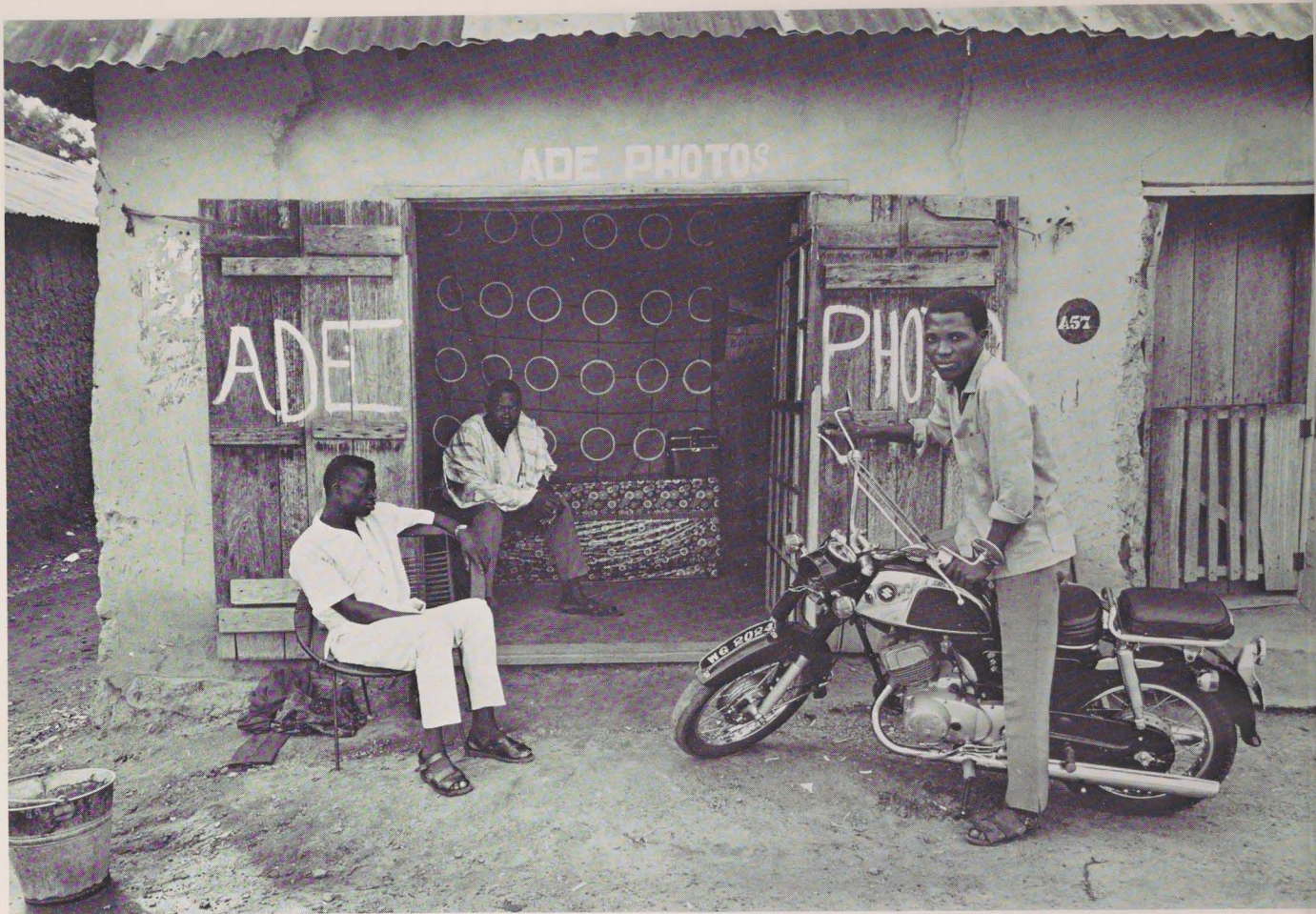
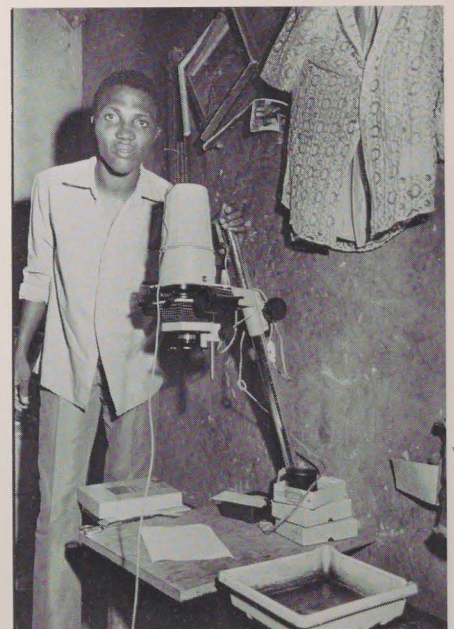


Figure 2 (a and b) —The photographer, Ade, sits on his motorcycle in front of his studio. Notice that his motorcycle headlight is missing; Ade owns the only enlarger in Ila-Orangun and utilizes the headlight as the light source for his enlarger. When Ade is at work in the darkroom, his motorcycle stands rapidly idling at the front of the studio, and an extension cord runs to its headlight in the enlarger.

All the other photographers in Ila-Orangun were still using their old view cameras as enlargers. However, power lines had been installed, and electricity was due to be turned on by the end of 1975. If Ade is any indication, the photographers will have quickly adapted to the availability of electrical power.





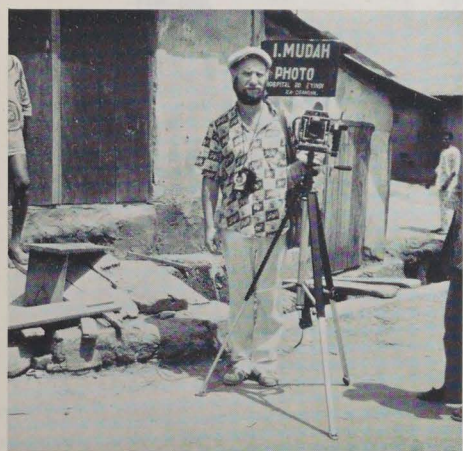


Figure 3 (a and b) —After I had taken my photograph of the two photographers, Oyus and Muda (with the camera), Muda requested that we switch places so that he might take my photograph in full sunlight. He claimed that he was the only photographer in Ila-Orangun who could make a good photograph in direct sunlight, and he wished to prove this to me by consciously breaking the convention that photographs should be taken only in diffuse light.

Munda later gave me a postcard-size print (3½ in. by 5½ in.) and the original 2¼-inch-square negative. I have printed the entire negative here. A person not familiar with Yoruba photographic conventions would probably look at this print and think the original negative poorly composed, with people cut off by the edge of the frame. However, a Yoruba photographer would know that convention dictates a vertical rectangular print of a one-person portrait and that the square negative was properly composed with this final print format in mind. Also, the Yoruba photographer would probably say that the photograph should not have been taken in direct sunlight.



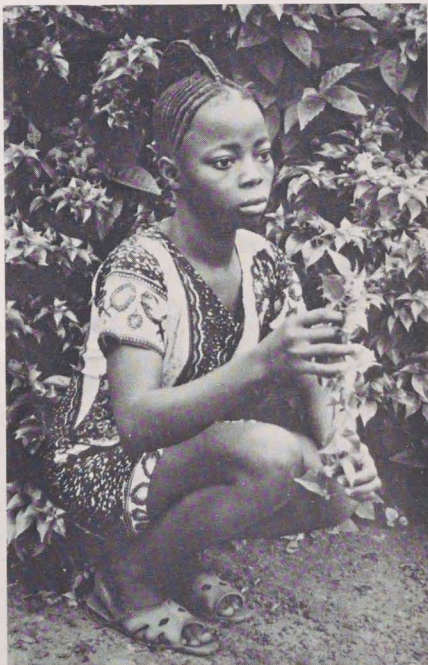


Figure 4 (a, b, c, and d) —This particular style of portraiture, which I call the squatting pose, is seen throughout Yorubaland: the four examples shown here are postcard-size prints (3% in. by 5% in.) collected from photographers in Ila-Orangun. This pose seems restricted to young Yoruba ladies dressed in contemporary styles, and may be a visual expression of the ambiguous position of Yoruba women in a changing society. In particular, this pose may be in part a fusion of the traditional deference behavior required of young women toward their social superiors, with the rather innocent physical allure shown in American “cheesecake” pinup photographs such as the one imitated on Oyus’ studio backdrop (see Figure 5). The impression given by this pose is of a young woman who, while maintaining her proper place in traditional Yoruba society, has turned her fascinated eyes on the modern world.





Figure 5 (a and b) —Oyus' Photo Studio exhibits all the typical studio features previously discussed. The backdrop is particularly interesting with its varieties of foliage and architecture, mismatch of perspective, and mixture of contemporary and traditional motifs. The motif of the 1950-style American pinup girl squatting on top of the modern skyscraper may be a visual representation of some of the contemporary influences implied in the squatting pose for the young Yoruba ladies seen in Figure 4.





Figure 6 (a and b) —The photographer “Sir Special” leans on his motor scooter outside his studio while a friend rides a plywood horse in front of the backdrop inside. The horse is a Muslim prop. Traditionally, when a Muslim returns from a religious pilgrimage to Mecca, he rides into his hometown on a white horse. However, because of the ravages of the tsetse fly, there are very few horses in West Africa. So the poor pilgrim must be content to symbolize the event by having his photograph taken on a plywood horse.

Props such as this horse are not always taken seriously. In fact, neither Sir Special nor his friend are entirely serious about the way they are posing for me here in these two photographs.

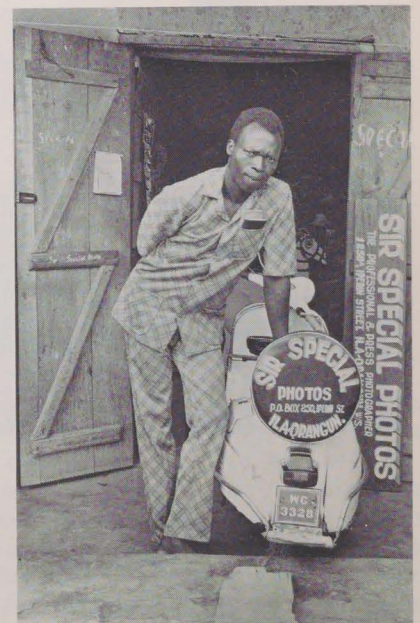






Figure 7 (a and b) —The two older girls have dressed up in what they consider modern dresses and "Afro" wigs in order to have their photographs made by Sir Special Photo. Sir Special posed them together and singly, first standing up, then in the squatting pose discussed previously. In my photograph of this event, Sir Special has a black cloth over his head to block the light and allow him to compose and focus more accurately on the ground glass of his twin-lens reflex camera, which he is hand-holding. When Sir Special was finished, the girls took off their wigs and revealed their carefully arranged traditional hairstyles. I immediately requested permission to make this photograph of them without their wigs.





Figure 8 —This is the interior of the bar at which we stopped for a beer before dinner practically every day after work. The bar is owned by this woman and her husband, who is depicted in four of the five photographs displayed on the wall behind her. The left-hand photograph shows one of their children with her prized possession, a tricycle; the second photograph shows the husband and a friend of the same age dressed alike; the third is a portrait of the husband; the fourth and fifth commemorate the husband's participation in the Ileya festival, which is symbolized by the ram. This display of visual imagery (a mixture of personal photographs and commercially reproduced images) is typical of many Yoruba shops and small-business establishments.





Figure 9 —The carver Yesufu Ejigboye, from the Ijebu-remo area, stands in his parlor surrounded by visual images. He carves both traditional sculpture and modern objects such as airplanes and the white rooster seen in the lower left side of the frame. He says these modern carvings are "like photographs," meaning they simply depict the subject but have no spiritual or ritual significance. The two lovely ladies on either side of the rooster are full-color magazine reproductions which have been cut out and mounted on thin board as freestanding sculptural figures. The large inflatable airplane is a recent addition, a gift from myself and anthropologist Marilyn Houlberg. See Houlberg's article "Collecting the Anthropology of African Art" (1976) for more photographs and information about Ejigboye.





Figure 10 —This woman is head priestess of the Abiku<sup>5</sup> Society in Ila-Orangun. The shrine room is inside the door behind her, and above the door is a portrait of her mother, who was also a head priestess of the society. The portrait is in the particular style I call the "traditional formal portrait." This photograph could be as old as pre-World War I, which gives some indication of the length of time Yoruba photography has been associated with the traditional culture.





Figure 11 (a and b) —The Orangun of Ila-Orangun is the Oba (king) of the town and surrounding community. He is posing in the traditional formal pose in his private sitting-room in the palace. The horsetail flywhisk, necklace, beaded crown, and other beaded objects surrounding him are all symbols of his position as Oba. Notice the repetition of the same pose and many of the same symbols in all three of the freestanding cutout photographs on display.



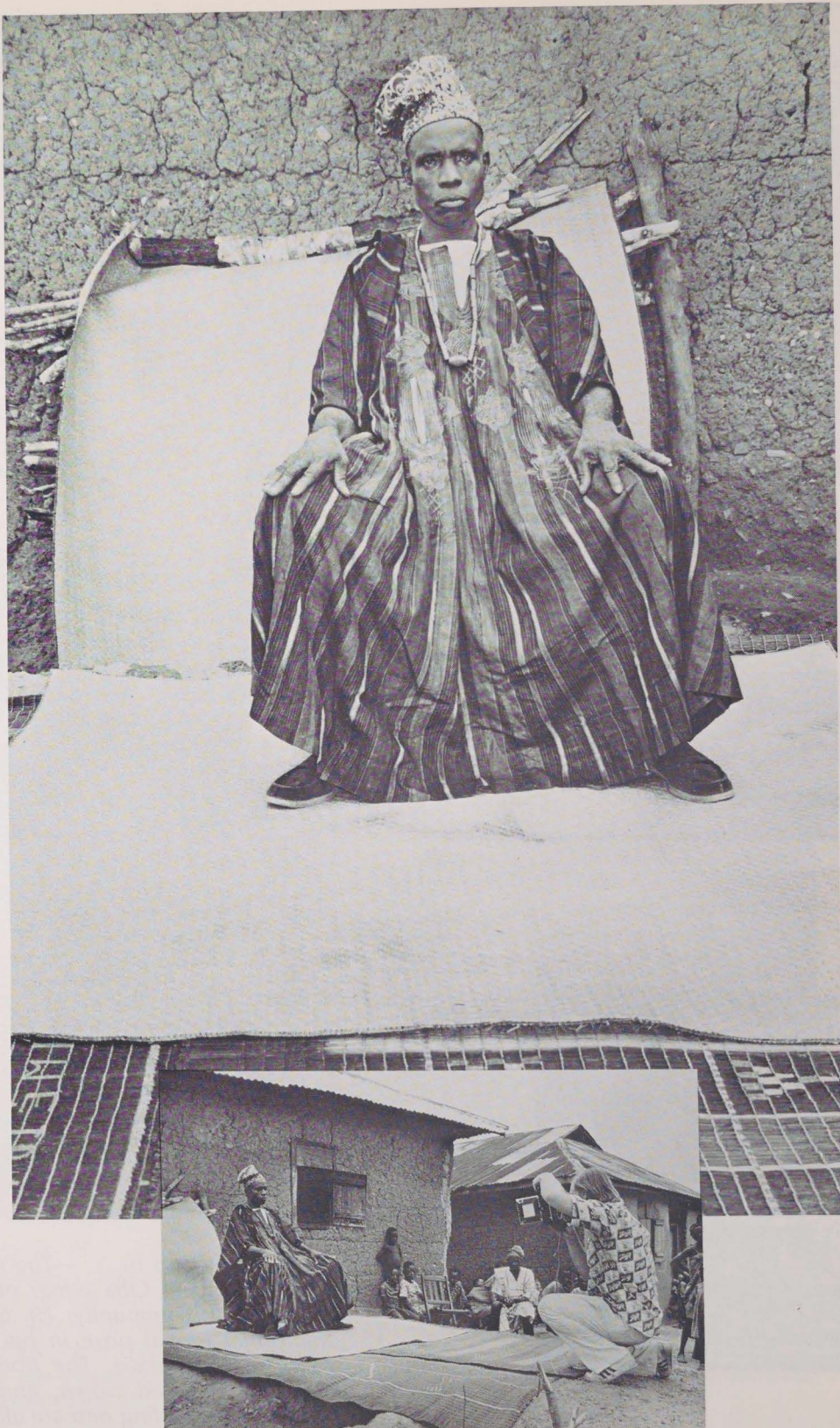


Figure 12 (a and b) —This man is an important chief and a babalowo (Ifa diviner), who is often summoned to the palace to divine for the Oba. He requested that I make a portrait of him, and he had his family set up the mats and background. He then proceeded to pose in the traditional manner. I consciously tried to make this photograph in the same way that a Yoruba photographer would make a traditional formal portrait. (The snapshot of me at work was taken by Marilyn Houlberg.)



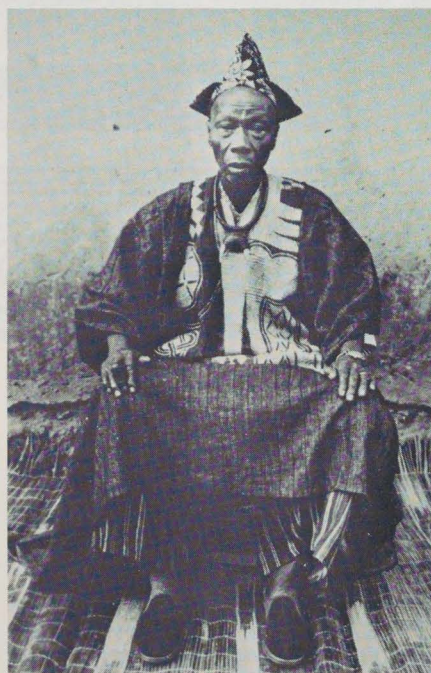


Figure 13 (a, b, c, and d) —These four examples display all the typical characteristics of the traditional formal portrait. Ideally, the subject is shown full length, seated in front of a neutral background. He squarely confronts the camera with a dignified but distant expression, wearing his best traditional clothes and displaying symbols of his position in traditional Yoruba society. Some variation does occur; commonly the subject is slightly cropped by the edge of the frame, and occasionally the subject will be smiling.

The four portraits are postcard-size contact prints (3½ in. by 5½ in.) made for me by the photographers of Ila-Orangun from glass-plate negatives I selected from their studio files. The original clients would have commissioned prints in a variety of sizes and types of frames.





Figure 14 (a and b) —This little girl, Taiwo, is holding a multiple-printed and hand-colored photograph which represents her and her dead twin sister sitting together. It is actually the same image of Taiwo printed twice. The blending of the two halves of the print is practically invisible, thus sustaining the illusion of twins being depicted in a single photograph. The photograph is used by her mother in place of the traditional *ibejì* (twin sculpture). It is kept on the twin shrine and participates in the traditional twin rituals.<sup>6</sup>

The small photograph of a typical pair of *ibejì* was collected from Ariyo Photo Studio. Ariyo stated that the client commissioned the original photograph to hang in the parlor along with the other family photographs, presumably because both twins had died before any photographs had been taken of them.







Figure 15 —In this example the twins were of opposite sexes. The boy has died and the surviving girl has been photographed twice, once as herself in her own clothes and once as her dead twin brother in matching boy's clothes. Both of these exposures were made on opposite halves of a single  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inch by  $5\frac{1}{2}$  inch glass-plate negative. The photographer, Simple Photo, has manipulated the background so that the line joining the two exposures is not readily apparent.

I requested that Simple Photo make a full-plate enlargement ( $6\frac{1}{2}$  in. by  $8\frac{1}{2}$  in.) for me in the same way that he would for a client. He mounted the finished enlargement in the usual manner on a 10 inch by 12 inch cardboard mount with a printed border.



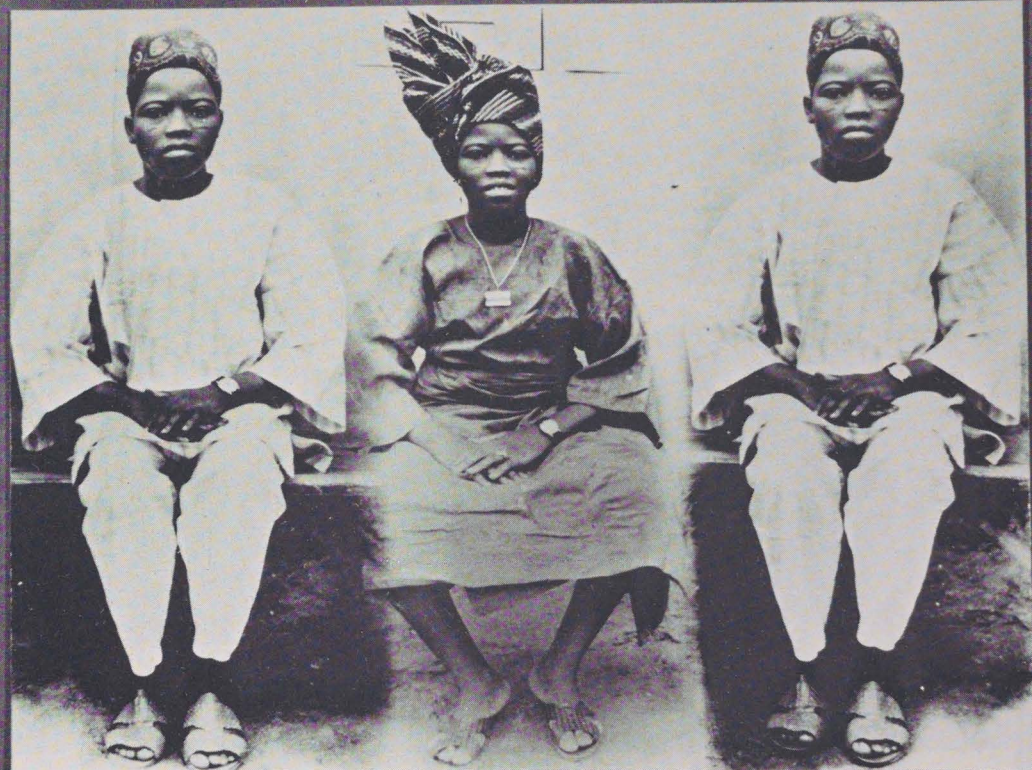
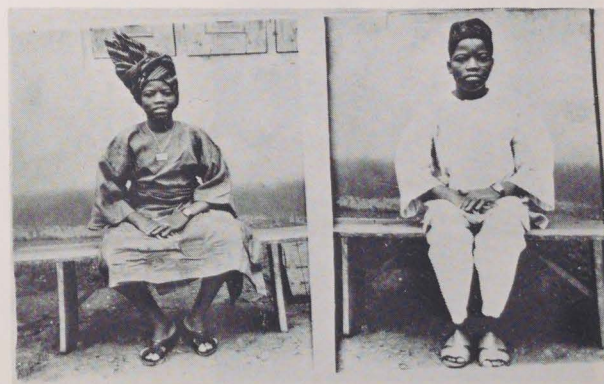


Figure 16 (a and b) —A rather rare example of triplets collected from Simple Photographer Studio. The twin boys have died, and the surviving girl has been photographed twice on the same  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inch by  $5\frac{1}{2}$  inch glass plate, once as herself and once in matching boy's clothes to represent both her dead brothers. The small photograph is a straight contact print made from the original negative. The mounted full-plate enlargement, made by Simple Photo, shows the male image printed twice, once on either side of the girl's image, to represent the triplets sitting together.









## THE FORMS OF CARICATURE: PHYSIOGNOMY AND POLITICAL BIAS<sup>1</sup>

MITCHEL GOLDMAN and MARGARET HAGEN

The analysis of techniques of caricature as a system of communication for transmitting information about pictorial subjects has in the past remained primarily the province of artists and their historians, for example, Ashbee (1928), Lynch (1927), Berger (1952), and Rother (1966). More recently, however, perceptual psychologists interested in the history and function of art have turned their attention to the psychological mechanisms which must underlie the successful perception of the caricatured subject. Gombrich (1961) has stressed the role of the creative imagination of the observer in the successful perception of caricatures, while E. J. Gibson (1969) and J. J. Gibson (1954, 1971) have emphasized the crucial role of the information about the subject carried by the caricature itself. J. J. Gibson (1954) argued that caricature was a combination of the techniques of geometric projection and artistic convention. He wrote that it was necessary for the artist to go beyond the projective information about the subject given in the light coming to the eye and to impose certain agreed upon conventions of exaggeration and distortion in the production of a successful caricature. However, Gibson revised this original formulation in a later definition of "picture": "A picture is a surface so treated that a delimited optic array to a point of observation is made available which contains the same kind of information that is found in the ambient optic arrays of an ordinary environment" (1971:31).

Of course, Gibson is referring here only to representative art, to art whose object is the recognizable depiction of objects and scenes from the natural environment. Clearly his definition of pictures excludes the very large class of nonrepresentative, or abstract, art and, indeed, is not even intended to account for all the variables which determine the aesthetic character of a work of art. The purpose of the definition is simply to establish the nature of the optical correspondence between representative pictures and the scenes they depict. The concept of information central to the above definition is Gibson's (1966) major subject matter.

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*Mitchel Goldman is a recent graduate of Boston University. He wrote this paper as a distinction work senior honors thesis at Boston University under the supervision of Dr. Margaret Hagen. Dr. Hagen is an Assistant Professor of Psychology at Boston University whose research interest focuses on problems in the area of visual perception, particularly the development of pictorial perception.*

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## THE SENSES CONSIDERED AS PERCEPTUAL SYSTEMS

In general, J. J. Gibson has defined optical information about an object as the formless and timeless invariants in the structure of an optic array that specify the distinctive features of the object. E. J. Gibson (1969) has dealt extensively with the concept of distinctive features, which she defines as invariant relations that specify a particular object and allow for its discrimination from a field of similar objects. Distinctive features are relations, ratios, proportions, and gradients which remain invariant across specified sets of transformation. Thus, in this theory, a caricature is successful to the extent that it preserves the distinctive features essential to the discrimination of the particular subject across the exaggeration distortion transformations of caricature. This concept of invariant information or features preserved across transformations is clearly adapted from geometry and has been formalized by J. J. Gibson in his theory of ecological optics.

### *Invariant Features in Caricature*

Perkins (1974) was the first psychologist to begin an analysis of the techniques of caricature within the framework of the theory described above. He hypothesized that caricature recognition is identical to the process of ordinary facial recognition and that caricatures must therefore contain the same attributes as the caricatured face itself or photographs of the subject. On the other hand, as Worth (1977) observed, one might argue that there are grammars and conventions of caricature recognition that are different from those of facial recognition in real life. That is, it may be the case that recognizing pictures demands some of the properties we need to recognize objects in real life, but it may also demand many other things. Still, Perkins's hypothesis that feature correspondence between picture and subject is the core of successful facial recognition in caricatures can be tested by the straightforward process of looking at existing caricatures and their subjects. This is exactly what Perkins did. Through informal observation of caricatures and photos of Richard M. Nixon and through the deletion of various facial attributes from those pictures, Perkins found that the four key properties of caricatures of Nixon's face were jowls, a hairline with bays on either side, a box chin, and a long nose. The omission of these properties or a contraindication of any one seriously degraded the representative character of a caricature. If Perkins is right about the critical nature of these facial properties for the success of a caricature, it should follow that (1) all artists generally use what Perkins calls "the rather necessary" key properties and thus are consistent among themselves in the nature of their depictions; (2) that any individual artist should be consistent in his depiction across time; and (3) that changes over time in the form of the caricature should be a function of changes in the face itself.

The present authors, while acknowledging the insightful and provocative nature of Perkins's exploratory investigation of caricature, take issue with several aspects of his



analysis. First, Perkins has quite freely taken liberties with the concepts of invariants across transformation postulated by the Gibsons. He chooses to speak of "individuating 'properties' or 'attributes' of the face," a translation which we feel may well do violence to the essential relational component of distinctive features. Consideration of faces in terms of feature ratios would more truly have retained the flavor of the relational concept. Second, Perkins offers no objective analysis of the data, and the reader is left to rely on Perkins's own informal observations. Third, Perkins provides no objective evidence concerning the influence of the individual stylistic bias of the caricaturist. Finally, in analyzing how the requirement of recognition influences caricature, he does not address another important issue: how the political climate also exerts an influence.

### *An Empirical Study of Caricature*

In consideration of these points, the purpose of the present investigation was to carry out a systematic empirical test of the hypotheses which follow from Perkins's argument, with particular attention to the hypothesis of consistency within a single artist and that of consistency across artists and time. We wished to test two aspects of consistency: consistency in specific *features* chosen for exaggeration and consistency in *degree* of exaggeration. We hypothesized that any single artist would be consistent with himself, that artists would not be consistent with one other because of variable stylistic bias, and that there would be a lack of consistency across time as a function of shifting political climate. By shifting political climate we mean variation in the degree to which a public figure is evaluated positively and negatively by the public and by the media. Richard Nixon provides a very clear example of a public figure who experienced an increasingly negative political climate from his election to the dénouement of Watergate. So, like Perkins, we have selected caricatures and photographs of Nixon as our data base. This choice will also facilitate comparisons between Perkins's work and the present investigation. Also, we have chosen as our units feature ratios of property magnitude rather than single properties.

The data for the consistency analysis were obtained in the following manner. Five photographs of Nixon from 1973 were measured by two independent judges, and eleven mean feature ratios were obtained, such as length of jowl/vertical head dimension (Perkins's jowl property), width of jowl/length of jowl (box chin), and length of nose/vertical face dimension (long nose). (See Figure 1 for a full presentation of feature ratios.) The particular feature ratios chosen do not exhaust the possibilities but were selected because they seemed to represent obvious candidates for distinctive features and were easily measured. (The larger of the two dimensions was always the numerator.)

The interjudge correlation for these measurements was extremely high ( $r = .99$ ). Then, through a search of news and political magazines and periodicals from 1973, 100 caricatures from 17 artists were obtained. The only con-

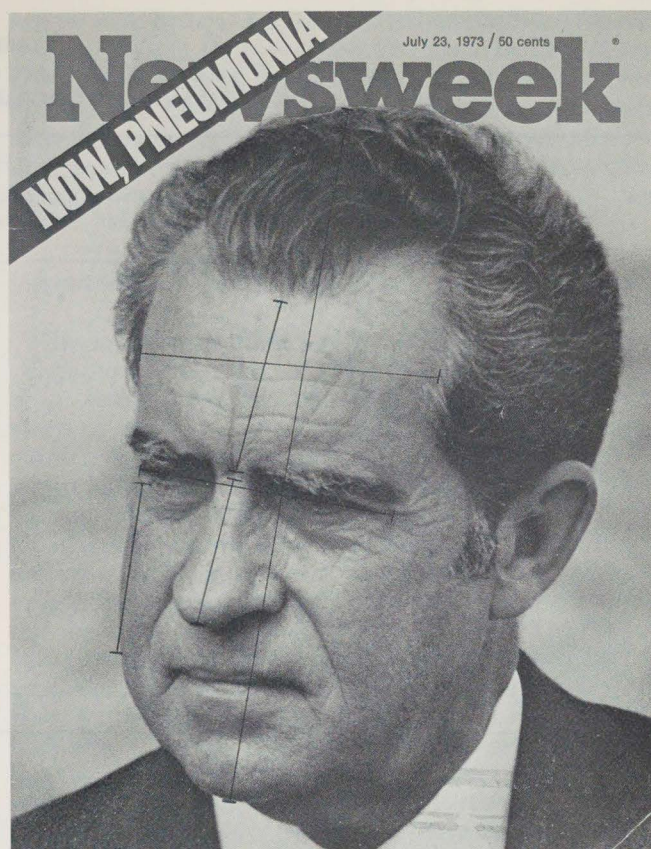


Figure 1 —Cover photograph of Richard M. Nixon with measured feature magnitudes indicated by bars. (Newsweek, July 23, 1973.)

straints on selection were clarity of reproduction and measurability in terms of size. From these 100 caricatures, one caricature was randomly selected for each of the seventeen artists. The eleven feature ratios were again obtained for each drawing. For each feature ratio in every caricature a deviance score was obtained, expressed as the percent deviance from the mean photographic ratio. Thus, if the caricatured feature ratio of width of jowl/length of jowl equaled the mean photograph ratio, the deviance score for this ratio for this drawing was 0 percent. Then, for each artist the 11 feature ratios were ranked from 1 to 11 in terms of least to most deviance from the photographed ratios. These data are tabulated in Table 1. In order to illustrate the technique, we will take the first artist, Cummings, as an example. As one can see from the table, Cummings modified the relation length of nose/length of jowl least of all in his drawing, relative to the magnitude of the relation measured in photographs of Nixon. Thus this relation is assigned a rank of one (1). On the other hand, the relation length of jowl/width of jowl was distorted to the greatest extent in the drawing relative to the photograph, thus receiving the rank of eleven (11). This procedure was followed for all the feature ratios for all the artists.



**TABLE 1**  
**RANKS OF DEVIANCE OF FEATURE RATIOS**  
**FROM MEAN PHOTOGRAPHIC RATIOS, BY ARTIST**

Artist	Feature Ratios										
	Vert. Head Len. Nose	Vert. Head Len. Jowl	Len. Nose Len. Fore.	Len. Nose Len. Ear	Len. Jowl Wid. Jowl	Len. Nose Eye Eye	Vert. Head Len. Fore.	Len. Nose Len. Jowl	Vert. Head Wid. Fore.	Vert. Head Len. Ear	Vert. Head Eye Eye
1. Cummings	9	10	5	8	11	7	6	1	3	4	2
2. Behrendt	11	10	9	7	3	8	6	5	2	4	1
3. Marlitte	9	11	10	6	2	7	8	1	4	3	5
4. Whitte	11	10	9	8	4	7	6	1	3	5	2
5. Staskyl	10	7	9	8	11	5	6	1	3	4	2
6. Oliphant	9	10	7	8	11	6	4.5	1	2	4.5	3
7. Herblock	9	8	7	9	11	6	3	1	4	5	2
8. Wright	5	11	10	9	6	4	8	3	2	7	1
9. Lurie	8	3	7	5	11	10	1	9	4	2	6
10. Simpson	10	11	8	9	5	7	3	2	4	6	1
11. Hill	11	3	8	10	9	6	2	7	5	4	1
12. Engle	10	11	9	8	4	7	6	1	5	3	2
13. Davis	4	10	2	5	3	9	7	11	6	1	8
14. Haynie	10	4	9	8	11	7	3	5	2	1	6
15. Fisher	10	7	9	8	11	6	5	4	1	3	2
16. Scrawls	11	10	9	8	5	7	6	4	2	3	1
17. Sanders	11	9	10	8	3	7	5	6	4	2	1
Mean Ranks	9.4	8.6	8.1	7.7	7.3	6.8	4.9	3.6	3.4	3.4	2.7

### *Statistical Analysis*

Three types of analysis were performed with these rank data. First, a Kendall coefficient of concordance was computed,  $w = 0.597$ ,  $X^2(10) = 101.43$ ,  $p < .001$ , indicating a very high degree of consistency among artists in terms of which feature ratios are chosen for exaggeration. Second, a Friedman analysis of variance for ranked data was performed and  $F = 83.13$ ,  $p < .001$ , indicating that the mean ranks for feature ratios differ significantly from chance ranking. Last, in order to isolate which feature ratios differed significantly from one another in rank, a parametric analysis of variance with multiple post hoc comparisons was performed. The main effect for rank was significant,  $F(10, 170) = 19.2$ ,  $p < .02$ . Newman-Keuls post hoc comparisons indicated that of the 55 possible comparisons among feature ratios in terms of rank, 31 of these comparisons differed from one another in rank with  $p < .05$  at least. This very high number of significant differences is another indication of the high level of consistency among artists in their selection of which features to caricaturize.

### *Interpretation of the Analysis*

The three types of analysis allow us to conclude several things about our consistency hypotheses. First, we have shown that there is a very high level of agreement from artist to artist in terms of which feature ratios are to be distorted in the caricatures. Generally speaking, a feature ratio greatly distorted by one artist will also be greatly distorted by the others, and a ratio little modified by one artist is relatively untouched by the others. Of course this

is not true in each and every case, but statistically the level of agreement is overwhelmingly significant. Second, we have shown that the relative degree to which a particular feature ratio is distorted in caricatures is very stable from artist to artist. Individual feature ratios tend to stay in the same ranked position as one goes from artist to artist. The most distorted tends to remain the most distorted, the least, the least, and those ratios in between tend to maintain constant positions in the ranking. Although this is but another way of saying there is very high agreement among artists, the interpretation goes even further: The agreement across artists on what to distort even extends to this finer level of analysis of individual feature relations.

## **INDIVIDUAL FACIAL FEATURES**

A comparison of high- and low-ranked feature ratios also allows for the specification of feature as independent from feature ratio as the source of exaggeration. It should be noted, however, that the specification of a particular feature as a source of distortion always implies underlying feature ratios. That is, a long nose is long only with respect to other dimensions of the face. A long nose will stand out as a feature per se, rather than a component of a ratio, only if it functions in multiple ratios as a source of high-ranked deviance. Comparisons of pairs of feature ratio ranks provide support for Perkins's argument that the jowls and nose function as major distorted features with good consistency across artists. When these two features occur in the same ratio, the ranked deviance from the photograph is very small (3.6), but when either occurs in



conjunction with another minor feature, such as the vertical dimension of the head, the feature ratio deviance rank is very high (jowls/head 8.6; nose/head 9.4). That this is not due to increase or decrease in the vertical dimension of the head is evident from the low ranks occupied by other ratios with this dimension such as eye-eye/vertical head = 2.7 and length ear/vertical head = 3.5. Such pair comparisons, as well as the three convergent analyses for consistency, provide considerable evidence in support of Perkins's general argument for consistency among artists in terms of features chosen for caricature. It should be noted, however, that while there is significant agreement among artists about *what* to exaggerate there is little agreement about *how much* to exaggerate. Mean percent deviance from photographed ratios is 53 percent but the means for individual artists range from 12 percent for Davis to 86 percent for Fisher. Presumably such variability is due to the artists' individual bias and style.

### Statistical Analysis

The related questions of consistency within an artist's work and across time were addressed by similar types of analysis. For these types the data base was generated by multiple caricatures done by five prolific artists in 1972 and 1973. The five artists were selected solely on the basis of relative frequency of published drawings observed in the initial sampling of 17 artists (see Figure 2). They were Oliphant, with seventeen drawings; Herblock, with nine; Wright, with twelve; Lurie, with ten; and Haynie, with five. For each of these five artists for both years, mean percent deviance from photographs was computed and ranks assigned to the features ratio from 1 to 11 for least to most deviance. To address the question of self-consistency, Spearman rank order correlation coefficients were calculated for each of the five artists and the following rho values were obtained: Oliphant:  $r = .964$ ,  $t(10) = 10.8$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Herblock:  $r = .75$ ,  $t(9) = 3.4$ ,  $p < .01$ ; Wright:  $r = .855$ ,  $t(9) = 4.94$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Lurie:  $r = .44$ ,  $t(9) = 1.48$ ,  $p < .10$ ; Haynie:  $r = .97$ ,  $t(9) = 12.6$ ,  $p < .001$ . Thus, of the five artists tested, four showed significant correlations between 1972 and 1973 rank orders for feature ratio distortions,  $p < .05$ . Only Lurie failed to show this significant correlation. Consequently, grouped mean ranks for 1972 and 1973 also are positively correlated,  $p = .957$ ,  $p < .01$ , reflecting consistency of treatment from year to year. However, whereas the rank orders of feature ratios, in terms of relative degree of deviance from photographed ratios, are highly correlated between 1972 and 1973, the absolute size of the percent deviance or distortion increases from 1972 to 1973. Of the eleven feature ratios listed, only one does not change. Of the ten that change nine increase in distortion relative to the photographed ratios, and only one decreases. The results would occur by chance with  $p = < .011$ , so this nearly uniform increase in distortion reflects a very real change in degree of caricature. In order to test the significance of the magnitude of this change, a t-test was performed on percent of distortion of each

feature ratio by year relative to photographs from the two years, and  $t = 3.18$ ,  $p = < .01$ . The mean percent distortion for 1972 was 56 percent; for 1973, 61 percent. Thus the increase noted in the sign test is also a significant increase measured parametrically, that is, not only the directionality of the changes but their size is also significant at  $p = < .01$ .

### Interpretation of the Analysis

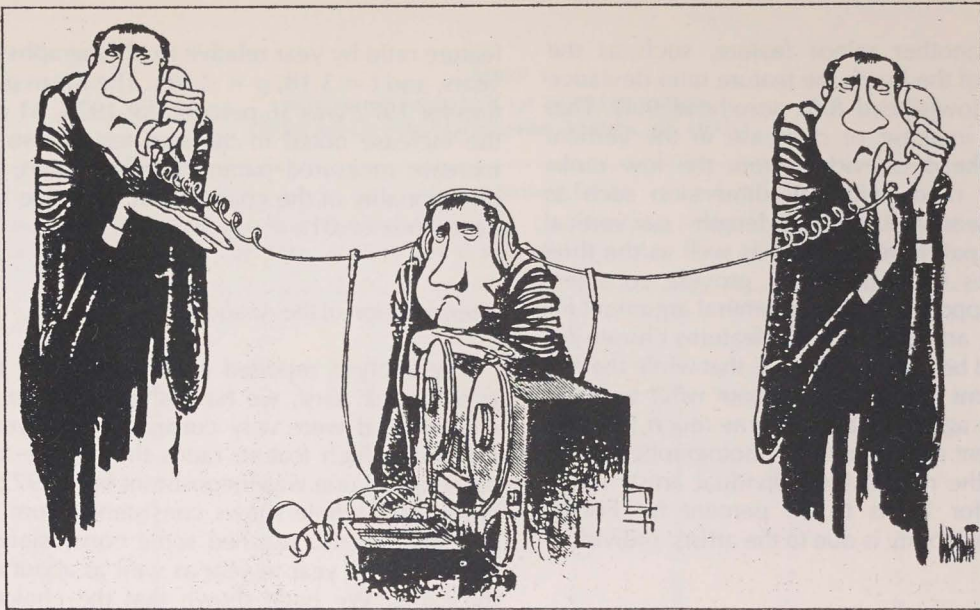
The analysis reported above allows for the following conclusions: First, we have shown that four of the five artists tested were very consistent from year to year in terms of which feature ratios they chose to distort. Because only Lurie was inconsistent from 1972 to 1973, the group as a whole shows consistency from year to year. Second, we also reached some conclusions about what changes from year to year as well as about what remains the same. We have shown that the choice of *what* to exaggerate is quite constant across artists and across time, but we have also shown that the *degree* of distortion varies considerably from artist to artist and from year to year. We found that the mean degree of distortion varies from 12 percent for Davis to 86 percent for Fisher. In addition, when we looked at all five selected artists together, we found that of the ten mean feature ratios which changed from 1972 to 1973, nine of them *increased* in the degree of distortion relative to photographs.

This increase in distortion could be due either to alteration in political climate (which underwent a very rapid change vis-à-vis Nixon from 1972 to 1973) or to real physical changes in Nixon's face due to aging, strain, or fatigue. In order to control for the effect of this type of change, photographs from both 1972 and 1973 were measured and compared for physical change in feature ratio. Of the nine feature ratios which increased in the caricatures from 1972 to 1973, only three were observed to change in photographs—the three involving jowl length. Measurements of photographs indicate a 30 percent increase in jowl length from early 1972 to 1973. It may be argued, however, that this finding still leaves the six jowlless feature ratios, which increased in distortion from 1972 to 1973, a function of increasingly negative political climate rather than of real changes in Nixon's face. Thus this result runs counter to any simplistic assumptions about caricature as a function of true facial features. The finding with respect to jowl size, however, shows that artists are also very sensitive to real changes in the subject's features.

### SUMMARY

The present investigation undertook an empirical analysis of several of the consistency assumptions which seemed to follow from Perkins's model of the caricature process. We looked at the question of consistency of distorted features in the work of 17 artists during 1972 and found a very high degree of concordance among artists in





DON WRIGHT—MIAMI NEWS

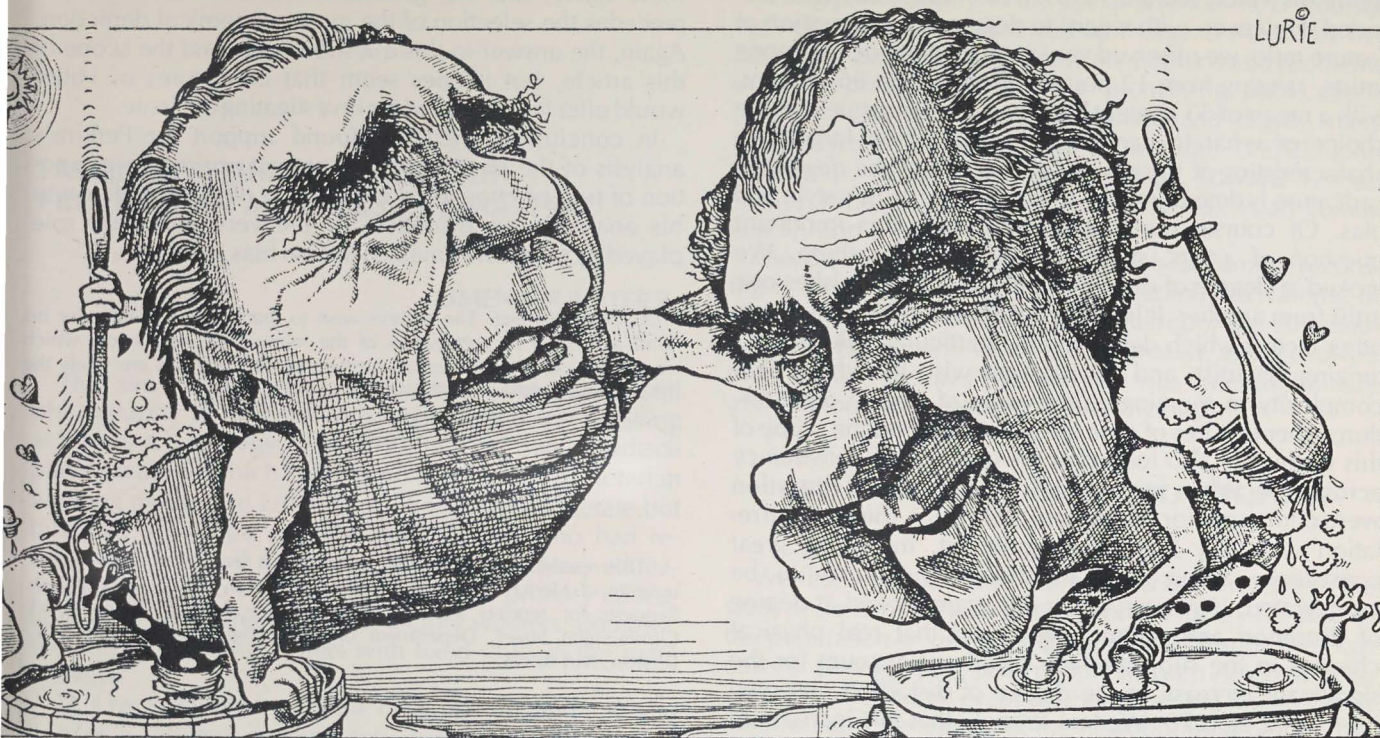
Time, July 30, 1973



© Herblock in Washington Post  
Newsweek, May 7, 1973

Figure 2 —Caricatures of Richard M. Nixon, 1973.





Hanan R. Lurie

Newsweek, June 25, 1973



Oilphant © 1973 Denver Post

A question of priorities: More for the Pentagon, less for the poor?

Newsweek, February 12, 1973



Haynie—Louisville Courier-Journal

Newsweek, November 12, 1973



terms of which feature ratios were most and least distorted. However, with regard to degree of exaggeration of feature ratio, we observed very great discrepancies among artists, ranging from 12 percent distortion to 86 percent, with a mean of 53 percent. Thus we wish to argue that the choice of *what* to caricature is determined largely by characteristics of the subject's face, while the *degree* of caricature is determined by the individual artist's style and bias. Of course, our analysis addresses this important question of artists' styles in a simplistic fashion. We looked at degree of distortion only as it distinguishes one artist from another. It is perfectly clear that there are many other factors which determine the particular style characterizing an artist, and we have no wish to reduce such complexity to the single dimension of degree of distortion; other features of style are simply beyond the scope of this study. We also looked at the question of consistency across time. When features ranked for degree of distortion were compared for the period 1972-1973, the rank correlation was very high and significant, indicating great consistency across time in choice of features to be exaggerated. However, when we again looked at *degree* of distortion across time, we found that real physical changes in the subject's face could not account for the significant increase in the degree of distortion observed from 1972 to 1973. We feel strongly that this increase in distortion was largely a function of the increased negativity of the political climate surrounding Nixon in 1973. It is not possible, of course, to directly test this conclusion, but an indirect method has been suggested by Worth (1977). If our reasoning is correct, that an increasingly negative political opinion increases the degree of distortion in caricatures of a subject, then the opposite of this reasoning should also be true. That is, as the political climate around some public figure becomes increasingly positive, the degree of distortion in caricatures of the subject should decrease and be, at least in principle, testable.

We also do not wish to appear to be arguing that simple exaggeration of feature ratios is all there is to caricature. If this were true, then increased distortion would be the unique and inevitable result of increased negativity of public opinion, which it is not. As Worth (1977) rightly observed, it might also be noted that by the end of World War II, all one needed to caricature Hitler was one diagonal line and one horizontal line underneath, and everyone understood the representation of the hair and the mustache. This increasing economy of line as a function of familiarity cannot be accounted for by the above hypothesis. At the same time it is not clear that increasing economy runs counter to increasing distortion. It may be that the two processes are parallel in time or,

more likely, that the generalized increase in distortion precedes the selection of the most economical depiction. Again, the answer to this question is beyond the scope of this article, but it does seem that caricatures of Hitler would offer fertile ground for investigating the issue.

In conclusion, then, we found support for Perkins's analysis of the process of caricature as primarily a function of true physiognomy but wish to offer, in addition to his analysis, our evidence for the very important role played by political climate, personal bias, and style.

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## NOTE

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## TALKING PICTURES: A STUDY OF PROLETARIAN MOTHERS IN LIMA, PERU

XIMENA BUNSTER B.

The aim of this paper is to discuss the use of still photography combined with open-ended interviewing as a research strategy. Using this method, the interdisciplinary team of which I was a part studied 200 proletarian working mothers in Lima, Peru.<sup>1</sup> Some were illiterate but bilingual (Quechua and Spanish). Others, who had resided in the city all their lives, had a rudimentary education equivalent to the first three grades of primary education. They were street vendors, factory workers, domestic servants, and market sellers with fixed stalls in the main markets.

This research dealt with the development and application of a different investigatory tool which we labeled "talking pictures" and which enabled us to develop an in-depth understanding of the ways in which our sample of marginally employed proletarian mothers perceives, structures, and evaluates its worlds.

One of our main goals was to analyze the adjustments that these women, marginal to the occupational structure, had made in order to survive in an underdeveloped, dependent, capitalist structure. Such a "mode of production has enormous repercussions in shaping the ways in which the marginally employed view and experience their many worlds. Ultimately consciousness reflects existence."<sup>2</sup> Because of this, we wanted the women to formulate their conventional, explicit, and conscious rules of behavior as workers, mothers, and members of unions and to state their values, objectives in life, and aspirations. We also desired to tap an inner world of feelings, values, and significance. Relying solely on interviewing is not the best way of understanding the subjectivity of informants who may have difficulty with language.

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*Ximena Bunster is a Chilean anthropologist and former Professor of Anthropology at the Universidad de Chile and at the Catholic University in Santiago. For the last four years she has been teaching at several universities in the United States. She is currently Visiting Professor at the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology at Clark University. Her research interests have centered on devising methodologies for studying and communicating with functionally illiterate proletarian women in Latin America. She is also involved with teaching about and writing on changing children's economic roles in the third world.*

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Using photography in the social sciences is, of course, not new. We were influenced by Margaret Mead: by her courses at Columbia University on methods and problems in anthropology, and by her pioneering publications (Mead 1963). We have also learned and drawn many insights from Sol Worth and John Adair (1972), John Collier, Jr. (1967), Paul Byers (1966), Edward T. Hall (1959; 1966), E. Richard Sorenson (1975), Alan Lomax (1975), and Jay Ruby (1976).

Mead (1975) has stressed that the best camera recording is made by the individual who combines training in photography or filmmaking with anthropology. Although we share her general views, our approach, as we evolved the "talking pictures" technique, was interdisciplinary and collaborative, entailing its own methods.

### DEVELOPMENT OF THE PHOTO INTERVIEW

We first investigated to see whether the subjects of the study were familiar with photographs, a luxury for most of the population of developing countries. Despite the high costs of photography, poor people in Latin America try to record the important events of their lives and those of their families, and sometimes of the neighborhood or community to which they belong. In towns and cities, extravagantly framed photographs of first communions, baptisms, or marriages may dominate otherwise bare walls in slum dwellings, and carefully packed photographs of a child's wake and funeral may be kept under lock and key with such other important documents as a marriage license or a voter's registration card.

Proletarian families are also familiar with movies and television. Television sets are found in the most dilapidated houses, a phenomenon common to large cities of Latin America. Families may lack the bare essentials of food and clothing but will become indebted for years in order to buy a television set. The most frequently watched programs are soap operas produced in Mexico, Venezuela, Argentina, and Peru. The plots invariably deal with a working-class female heroine, most often a domestic servant, who achieves upward mobility through sex. She is usually seduced by an upper-middle-class man, often a student, and gives birth to a child. Through self-denial, hard work, and refusal to settle down with a man from her own class, she wins over the child's father and eventually marries him. This is the happy ending, although getting him to the altar sometimes takes a lifetime. These themes illustrate the rigid class structure of most Latin American countries and the lack of opportunities for upward mobility, especially for women.

Working-class women also devour *Foto-Novelas*, a weekly magazine which is the equivalent of the true confessions story or the dime novel for the English-speaking public. The novels are presented through the photographic arrangement of scenes illustrating different chapters or sequences. The only writing in the magazine is the short narrative captions printed in large white letters over the corners of the photographs. All the dialogue is also printed in this fashion.



For women and their families who have recently migrated into the city from the highlands or from jungle areas, photographs are a novelty. Their inclusion in the photo-interview added problems and introduced new variables to the expected range of cultural and idiosyncratic interpretations. This was especially true of some of the street vendors, or *ambulantes*, who, attired in Indian dress, peddle their goods inside and outside the markets and on the main streets of Lima. For example, we took a Polaroid picture of an *ambulante* who was selling prepared food outside a market. The photograph showed her leaning against a wheel cart, evading the strong sun by wearing a beautiful, wide-brimmed straw hat. We handed her the photograph and told her she could keep it as a *recuerdo*, or souvenir. She thanked us but politely refused to accept the fact that she was the woman in the photograph. She crossed the street to show it to a friend, another street vendor, who reinforced our statement. Matching her sense of self with the image of the straw-hatted woman staring back at her from the picture was such a forceful revelation that she erupted in childish glee. For about half an hour she abandoned her selling post to show her coworkers the photograph while giggling uncontrollably.

Latin American Indians and the rest of the mixed urban proletarian population are wary of tourists taking photographs of them; they feel cheated and used because they never see the end result of the action of the prowler with the camera. Therefore, in general we utilized a Polaroid camera to capture the interest of the female workers in our study, to fully engage the ones who were more knowledgeable about their environment and willing to help us, to open communications with these women, and to assure their trust in us. We also offered Polaroid photographs as gifts in exchange for the subject's collaboration. The film is developed in a matter of minutes in front of the interested party, who can then take the photograph home

as a token of reciprocity. Cross-cultural research with visual tools has indicated that in most parts of the world having one's image made with the camera can be a very gratifying experience. As John Collier said, "The feedback opportunity of photography, the only kind of ethnographic note-making that can reasonably be returned to the native, provides a situation which often gratifies and feeds the ego enthusiasm of informants to still further involvement in the study" (1967:13).

#### Phase One

During the first phase of photographing, we followed Collier's recommendations closely. We shot pictures of the total environment of four basic occupational roles—street vendors, market women with fixed stalls, domestic servants or maids, and factory workers (Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4). We recorded overviews of markets, factories, and private homes belonging to the city's different social classes. The team's photographer-psychologist and anthropologist combed the streets of Lima for three weeks in order to choose salient aspects of the panoramic vistas and to become familiar with the complexity of the specific places we would select for the study. To interest women, we explained that we were investigating working mothers in the city to commemorate International Women's Year, whose celebration in 1975 coincided with the Peruvian Woman's Year officially proclaimed by the military government.

#### Phase Two

During the second phase of photographing, we had the full collaboration of key informants, about twenty-five women from the four occupational groups under study. They allowed the photographer and the anthropologist to follow them around during daily, weekly, and monthly



Figure 1 —Avocado vendor. [Ellan Young]





Figure 2 —Two maids pushing strollers. [Ellan Young]



Figure 3 —Factory women using machines. [Ellan Young]



Figure 4 —Comerciante estable arranging her fruitstand. [Ellan Young]



work and domestic routines. The traditional participant-observation approach was used to fully grasp the nature and degree of involvement of the women within the context of their occupational world.

Ideally, we would have taught the key informants how to use a camera and then incorporated their shots in the photo-interview kit. Sol Worth and John Adair (1972), in a pioneer experiment, instructed seven chosen native collaborators in filmmaking.<sup>3</sup> We abandoned the idea for many reasons. The Navajo, although they live on reservations, are part of a large national culture which makes constant use of film, whereas our working mothers belong to a developing society in which cameras are luxuries and the process of picture-taking is surrounded by an aura of high complexity, if not magic. Continual communication between researcher and informant will, because of the informant's knowledge of her/his culture, keep the researcher "from being carried away." Informants not only help to determine the emic dimension of a phenomenon, but they check, correct, and modify the components in a set of photographs that will later serve to illustrate a whole category of events.

We asked our informants to point out to us what was important, interesting, and meaningful in their work environment. The material culture of their everyday working scenario was recorded in this way. We learned, for instance, that a woman having a fixed stall in the market pays a great deal of attention to the way her stall is built and to the ornate display of her products. Furthermore, she will judge other coworkers by the pains they take in the arrangement of their products to catch the eye of the public. The *ambulante* is always aware of whether other *ambulantes* sit on the ground while peddling their goods, hang them around their bodies, or carry the load in a

wheel cart. *Ambulantes* rank the commercial talent of their coworkers on the basis of how far from the ground the merchandise is displayed; as they become more prosperous, the products offered for sale move from the floor, pavement, or sidewalk to a table or a wheel cart (Figures 5 and 6).

### Phase Three

With camera in hand we moved from recording the public domain to recording the very private. Once we had learned some of the ways in which market women, factory workers, and domestics describe, perceive, and pattern their roles, we felt prepared theoretically and methodologically to move into participant-observation of their domestic roles. We must stress the fact that we relied heavily on informants who were always extremely cooperative and patient. In this respect, we fully share Stephanie Krebs' (1975) views on the importance of exhaustive research cooperation from well-chosen native collaborators.

When the photographs were developed, we took them back to our key informants for the first meetings. During these sessions we chose the most appropriate photographs, which were then included in the photo-interview kit. We kept in mind Collier's assessment of the photograph as a focus on which the interviewee may center her/his attention. As such, it provides a fluid and fruitful context for insightful data gathering. Collier insists on the advantages of photography used this way when he states: "Methodologically, the challenge of comprehensive evaluation of life experience suggests the photo essay as an anthropological description using every sense and skill



Figure 5 —Ambulante with two ears of corn. [Ellan Young]



Figure 6 —Ambulante selling assorted merchandise. [Ellan Young]



of the photographer observer. When we assemble a photo-interview kit to probe Navajo values we are in effect presenting a selected essay on Navajo life which we have gathered and designed to give the Indian informant an opportunity to speak of the values and subtleties of his culture. The selection, stimuli, and language facility of the imagery determine the success of the venture. These are also the key elements in the reportage of the photo-essay" (1967:49).

We sought not only the cooperation of informants to evaluate, criticize, and help select the more illustrative scenes for the photo interview; we also asked them to aid us in a tentative arrangement of scenes under researcher-defined categories.

For example, which photographs would an informant pick to show the kinds of machines operated by men and by women in a factory? How many photographs would a proletarian mother pick to illustrate a day's work in her market?

The preselection of photographs was discussed by all members of the research team. Each team member was in charge of an occupational group and was responsible for compilation of relevant information. The sociologist, social psychologist, political scientist, and anthropologist proceeded to add other photographs to those already preselected by informants with the goal of eliciting very specific reactions from the respondents.

#### *The Photo-Interview Kit*

The kit was assembled, with 120 photographs chosen from the 3000 that were shot. They were pasted in a large album designed for the study which, though bulky, was a versatile interviewing tool. It could be opened on the grass, and we were therefore able to talk to many maids while they were taking care of children in parks. The kit could also be opened over crates and piles of vegetables in markets. The showing of pictures was combined with a structured but open-ended questionnaire.

The whole photo-interview was then given to a group of informants who had not collaborated in the initial stages of its construction. They were asked to read the photographs, to respond to the questions, and to react by criticizing the interview. Only after this step did we go to the groups of working mothers selected for the study. During the first photo-interview sessions with informants, we became aware of the fact that, not only did they enjoy "talking pictures," but they were eager to do well during the two-to-three-hour structured dialogue. They asked such questions as "How did I do?" or made such statements as "I liked our conversation very much; it is the first time that I talked about my life as a worker and as a mother."

A decision was then made to focus on these extragrammatic segments of conversation to aid in assessing both the informant's evaluation of the photo-interview and the interviewer's experience. Questions were appended to each interview. The informant was asked: (1) What did you think of our "talking pictures"? Do you think these photographs accurately illustrate the everyday

life of a worker like you? (2) Would you add other photographs to the album? Which one(s)? (3) Which photographs in the album did you like the most and why? Not like and why? (4) What did you think of me [the interviewer]? The researcher also observed the subject and her general reactions to the event. (See the Appendix for an outline of the organization of the photo-interview itself.)

#### APPLICATION OF LABOR SUBSETS

For purposes of illustration I have chosen to discuss the results of administering the labor subset of the "talking pictures" method to fifty women with fixed stalls in three different Lima marketplaces. We wanted to understand how these *comerciantes estables* perceived their double role as proletarian worker and mother. We also wished to isolate the main themes related to their work and the key statements about their world and problems.

This labor subset can be used independently of other subsets to assess themes, problems, and conflicts generated by the commercial activities of market women. The photographs for the labor subsets of the other three occupational groups studied—street peddlers, or *ambulantes*; maids; and factory workers—are different from those of the *comerciantes estables* (see Appendix), because the photos had to depict factories and the interior of homes and the activities of the street. The pictures are different for the four labor subsets, but the ideological content and the questionnaire remain the same. The photographs and questions of the two other subsets that make up "talking pictures," namely the "family subset" and the "participation subset," are the same for the four occupational groups.

The following findings are related to the *comerciante estable* group of proletarian mothers. These conclusions emerged once we analyzed the responses of the women in our sample. (For lack of space we are not printing all the photographs used in the labor subset.)

#### *Panoramic Vistas of Markets*

Market women gave full accounts of the history of their markets and of the ethnic origin of the sellers. When they looked at the photo of Indian women *mate* carving while selling their goods, they explained that these must be recent migrants to the city (Figure 7). The women themselves make a distinction between jobs held by urban women and rural women. "I come from the *sierra* (*soy serrana*), therefore I am a market seller," is a statement heard over and over again.

*Ambulantes* (see Figure 5) compete for customers with *comerciantes estables* (Figure 8) inside and outside the marketplace. Street vendors have the advantage of accosting prospective buyers while shouting and unfolding their merchandise; women selling at their stalls have to wait patiently for customers. Nevertheless the *comerciantes estables* bear no grudge against the *ambulantes*, arguing





Figure 7 —Indian women in native dress chatting in the market (Huancayo). [Ellan Young]

that life is tough and that these mothers also have a right to earn money for their families. It was discovered that this solidarity stems from the fact that 75 percent of the market women interviewed had been *ambulantes* when they started their commercial activities. Sympathy toward their competitors is an important factor in understanding the passive tolerance of the women with fixed stalls. It was explained that *ambulantes* are constantly harassed by the municipal police and their goods confiscated; some end up in jail for a day or two, for very few of them have the legal right to sell in the established markets of the city.

Market women attribute a great deal of importance to the physical layout of markets and to details of construction of their stalls. Lots of light and water and access to the public are considered essential for a successful day's work. Most women interviewed conceived of the ideal market as a giant stage where they could afford a stall in its center. The market is a place where things happen and

the preferred location is on a high level where the seller can look down at incoming customers and keep track of everything going on without abandoning their selling post.

#### Types of Work

Market women with fixed stalls specialize in selling meat, poultry, or fish. Some have small grocery stores in their stalls; others sell prepared food which they cook on the premises (Figure 9); others have newsstands (Figure 10). Some sell vegetables (Figure 11) or fruit (see Figure 4). There are others who have small spice shops, clothes stores, flower stands, or shops with native crafts.

Market sellers visually rate the economic capacity of their coworkers by an assessment of the size or amount of goods on display. A sparsely stocked stand on an early



Figure 8 —Ambulante with her two children inside market with baskets of vegetables. [Ellan Young]





Figure 9 —Woman frying doughnuts. [Ellan Young]



Figure 10 —Woman sitting beside a newsstand. [Ellan Young]



Figure 11 —Smiling woman in black with sparsely arranged vegetable stand. [Ellan Young]



morning is a sure sign of lack of capital. Butchers, seafood vendors, and owners of small grocery stores earn much more than sellers of fruit, vegetables, and spices or owners of small restaurants.

There is no sex segregation in the marketplace. Men and women work side by side and sell the same kind of product. The only difference admitted to by the market women is the greater physical endurance of the males. Therefore, selling meat is considered more appropriate for men, as the butcher expends much physical energy sawing and chopping large chunks of meat.

### Daily Routine

Market women start their working day at three or four o'clock in the morning. At that time they cook the midday meal so that their school-age children will find something to eat when they return home before the mothers, who work until five or six o'clock in the evening.

At five o'clock in the morning they set off with their babies and toddlers to *La Parada*, a wholesale market where they buy their merchandise for that day. As potato sacks and other goods are heavy, they have to pay a carrier, or *carretillero*, to take their load to a bus. If the load is too heavy they have to pay an extra fee to send it on a truck to their market.

*Comerciantes estables* finally arrive at their market at six-thirty a.m. They open their stands, arrange their merchandise, and eat breakfast. Selling starts immediately and the hectic pace decreases around one p.m. By that time they are exhausted (Figure 12) and very few of them have time for a midday break. Some manage to snatch a bite while selling. The more prosperous buy lunch at a neighboring food shop; others have members of their family bring them their lunch from home, although this is more generally the case with the *ambulantes*.

Around five p.m. marketplaces close and the proleta-

rian mothers go home to their older children and husband or *compañero* (the mate in a consensual union). More work awaits them there. They have to cook supper, wash, and put children to bed.

All the women of the sample interviewed complained of the burden of their double day as workers and mothers; all of them would like to have more time to sleep and to rest, and all agreed that women work harder than men.

All the market women expressed discontent at the amount of money they had to spend each day on bus and truck fares and on meals bought at the marketplace for themselves and for their children.

### Services

Market women lack the appropriate services that would ease their work load. All the women interviewed expressed their concern about not having an emergency clinic, a day-care center, and sanitary toilets.

Women and children get sick at the marketplace; accidents happen—cuts and bruises—and there is no doctor or nurse at hand. Most women come to work with their toddlers and small children, who are prone to infections from contact with garbage piles inside markets that are not removed regularly. Women also complain that they lack any form of socialized medicine; whenever they get sick they run into debt in order to pay expensive doctors' fees. Market women blame their illnesses on their unhealthful working conditions: bronchitis, colds, varicose veins, kidney trouble, and gynecological problems. Many of them give birth at home during the night and the next day are working at their stalls to earn money for their families.

All our informants wanted the creation of day-care centers in the markets. Older children sometimes take care of the smaller ones, but as a rule working women feel less anxious if they can take their children to work.



Figure 12 —Woman sleeping over vegetable stand while another woman stands. [Ellan Young]





Figure 13 —Woman in white in an angry discussion with a policeman while a woman in black looks on.

### Political Activity through Unions

Market women are not politically active in the pursuit of workers' benefits through unions. Though all of them identified Figures 13 and 14 as scenes depicting women on strike or fighting against authority figures, only a minority of them had been active in unions. A few had participated in strikes against the municipality, an institution that regulates everything concerned with markets, in order to veto a decree which had considerably increased the rental of their fixed stalls.

When asked about the causes of their political passivity, all women interviewed answered that they were too tired to engage in activities related to syndicates (men, who have more time, do) and that there was not enough time left in their daily routine for them to participate. The only association that was popular among working mothers was the credit cooperative. Every market has one. This allows workers to obtain emergency loans.

### Interpersonal Relationships in Work

It was found that, as a rule, market women prefer working by themselves or with their husbands and children. They are mistrustful of hiring nonrelatives for fear of being robbed or cheated on their earnings or having to spend too much money on an assistant's meals. Therefore, selling has become a solitary activity. Women think they earn more if they work by themselves.

Though most women like to work by themselves, they have developed solidarity links with their neighboring female coworkers. This way a woman can leave her stall unattended—while the neighbor keeps an eye on it—at intervals during the working day in order to run her own errands.

When women were urged to choose a working companion from a set of photographs, they unequivocally chose to work alongside other women rather than men, explaining that they had more to share with other women



Figure 14 —Women with flags.



and that it was safer for their teen-age daughters who also came to help them. (The choice of women can be seen as fear of machismo behavior on the part of the men: sexual conquest to boost their egos and disregard for the young girls.) Market women do not enjoy working in the marketplace but feel that this work gives them a sense of security about earning enough to feed the family.

Only negative responses and attitudes and feelings of anger and powerlessness were vented by the *comerciantes estable*s at the sight of the municipal inspector or policeman (Figure 15). He regulates the vendors to prevent cheating. If a woman is caught selling at a higher price than the one fixed by the *Consejo Municipal* (Municipal Council), she is fined or jailed. Some inspectors are corrupt and threaten to fine honest vendors if they do not willingly give the inspector free meat, poultry, potatoes, or some other product. Market women are very independent and resent this abuse of authority.

### Socialization

Ninety percent of the women interviewed believe that their children should help them and work alongside them. The reasons are numerous: children should learn at an early age to work in case their parents die; children are better off helping their mother in the market than running into mischief on the street or being locked up in the house while the mother is away (many children have died in fires when locked in this way); if children work, they are better able to struggle when they grow older. This fact was corroborated by many life-histories of market women who had started working and supporting their families at age 10 or 11.

Ten percent of the women interviewed, those who were upwardly mobile, tried to keep their children away from the marketplace. They wanted them to become professionals. They argued that once youngsters start earning their own money they want to drop out of school.

### Evaluation of Occupations and Level of Aspirations

Of the 11 photographs presented to the market women, three were immediately rejected as portraying occupations for women which were harsh, unrewarding, and humiliating: (1) a peasant woman (because of the harsh working conditions and because of the poverty of the *sierra* which caused them and/or their families to migrate to the city; Figure 16); (2) a factory worker (because of the inhuman and stringent work routine—only two brief pauses during the day to eat and to go to the toilet—and because they are denied the company of their offspring at work; Figure 17); and (3) a maid (because of its humiliating and servile characteristics; Figure 18). The opinion of the market women, who are very independent, is that women engaged in the above-mentioned occupations are slaves to everyone, a condition that becomes even more intolerable because they are women and "if one is a woman, everyone feels they can boss you if you find yourself in a position of inferiority."

The photographs which ranked highest were those of the nurse, schoolteacher, seamstress, and typist (Figures 19, 20, 21).

### RESPONSES OF INFORMANTS

Patterned statements about the world of the subjects in our study emerged as we organized the responses of the 200 women. Of the pictures included in the family set, all the informants selected the same one as their favorite: a scene portraying a working woman at home, sitting at the table with her husband and her five daughters (Figure 22). She is laughing and looking fondly across the table at the toddler. The other girls are involved with the father, who is leafing through a magazine. Empty dishes and cups are scattered on the table. The recurrent evaluation of the



Figure 15 —Woman with glasses in fishstand with policeman (authority). [Ellan Young]





Figure 16 —Campesina with hoe.



Figure 17 —Factory worker. [Ellan Young]



Figure 18 —Maid. [Ellan Young]

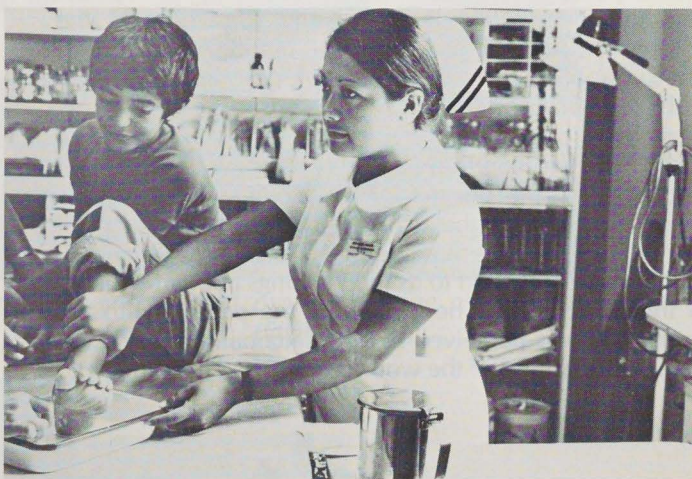


Figure 19 —Nurse.

family scene by all the informants was: "It is a beautiful photograph because all the family is together"; "they are having fun together"; or "they have time to share each other's company." Most working mothers never have the time to enjoy their families. Factory workers have to comply with work shifts stipulated by management which contribute to further atomizing their already fragmented family interactions. Market women—street vendors and those with fixed stalls must awaken at three in the

morning in order to buy merchandise at wholesale markets, usually taking infants with them and leaving toddlers and older children at home to fend for themselves. Domestic servants are the most alienated of all. When hired young—sometimes at the age of 10—they are cut off from their nuclear families, and when they grow older and become mothers, their slavlike seclusion in the homes of their employers diminishes the likelihood of healthy, happy family relationships.





Figure 20 —Teacher. [Ellan Young]

Two other photographs in the family set were chosen unanimously. One shows a family consisting of a pregnant mother, her husband, and her four children: the mother is putting the baby to bed and the father is supervising the homework of the older ones (Figure 23). This family scene was praised because "the family was together and everybody was doing something in the company of other members of the family." The second photograph shows a young couple strolling in a park with their small son (Figure 24). The bodies of the parents are harmoniously linked to the child, who is in the middle and whose two hands are securely clasped, the right one by the father and the left by the mother. The shot was taken from behind the walking figures and against the scenery of one of the more densely forested parks in Lima. The women described to us their feelings about the theme of the photograph. The activity of the parents with the young son was perceived as an unattainable ideal situation, because most of the women never had the time to go

on an outing solely for relaxation. All of them would like their husbands or *compañeros* to share more free time with their sons and daughters, something seldom done since the men go off by themselves.

The members of the research team naively but intentionally included with the rest of the family interaction scenes one of a man sitting by himself, in a comfortable sofa, watching TV. We expected the informants to read the photograph as one of an "uncooperative father" (watching news and film while his wife continued working around the house). The replies, however, carried the connotation that it was wonderful to have something (the TV) at home to entice men to spend more time there.

Photographs of the different types of dwellings in which most proletarian mothers live in urban Lima elicited both manifestations of upward mobility and conflict-laden attitudes: (1) the typical one- or two-room thatched house without roof, a common sight in the *barrios jóvenes* (shantytowns) that encircle Lima (Figure 25); and (2) the



Figure 21 —Costurera. [Ellan Young]





Figure 22 —Irma's family. [Ellan Young]



Figure 23 —Pregnant mother putting child to bed; father with children near table. [Ellan Young]



Figure 24 —Couple strolling in park. [Ellan Young]





Figure 25 —Thatched house lacking a roof, with child in doorway. [Ellan Young]

one-story brick house and the half-finished two-story home of the more prosperous families (Figure 26). Although about two-thirds of the women in the sample would instantaneously relate to the photographs and talk endlessly about their living conditions and describe their migration into the capital city as they pointed to the different-type houses in the *barriadas* where they had lived when they first arrived, the upwardly mobile women would set themselves apart from the scenes. These women, most of them having fixed stalls in the markets of the more affluent neighborhoods and having distanced themselves from the rest of the population still trapped within the context of the marginal pole of the national economic system, came up with patterned "market-stall occupational responses . . . which were opposed to the ones verbalized by domestic servants, market peddlers, and factory workers." These women felt that their houses, compared to the one in the album, were so much more

*decente* (decent, or of good quality), and that "certainly their neighborhoods were so much nicer" as they had managed to buy homes in *urbanizaciones* (middle-class houses in residential areas). In spite of such differences in outlook between owners of market stalls and the rest of the working proletarian sample, it was possible to conclude that the one material thing all the proletarian mothers dream about is owning a house, no matter how small. The majority of them at the time of the study were going through incredible financial stress to satisfy this generalized and strongly felt need.

The value attached to the economic role of children emerged from the pictorial analysis of working mothers photographed alongside their working children (Figure 27). The urban proletarian mother perceives child labor not as parental exploitation but as a necessity for the survival of the whole family. Eight- to twelve-year-old children become so skillful at selling, handling money,



Figure 26 —Unfinished two-story brick house; two children sitting on roof; child on bicycle on street. [Ellan Young]





Figure 27 —Three generations carve mate. [Ellan Young]

preparing and marketing food, and performing domestic services that their income or salary becomes an essential part of the whole family's financial pool. Sometimes they make more than their mothers—usually the ones selling in markets—or work as substitutes for an ill or alcoholic father who is unable to work at his job as street vendor. In many cases the women interviewed had children who had sporadically assumed the role of worker and family provider, transforming the mother (when ill or giving birth to another offspring) or both parents into their dependents. Child labor was described as something of an introduction and a preparation for adult life. One of them explained: "When children suffer young, they make better adults . . . they become more clever at running a business." The economic roles of children were looked upon as part of the socialization process in the proletarian urban context. The following statements were recorded over and over again: "Children have to start working early in life; it's the only way in which they can learn their obligations as members of a family." "Boys and girls have to keep their minds engaged in something, otherwise they roam free on the street; work keeps them out of mischief." "When our children work we all eat better and lead a better life."

After the women had talked about the pictures, they were asked, "After having lived all these years, with all the good, regular, and bad things that life has in store for us, what choice would you make if you had the chance—would you like to be born as a man or as a woman?" Over two-thirds of the women interviewed openly confessed that they would rather have been born male. Caught in the subuniverse of the marginally employed and unable to rise because of lack of education and a rigid class system, most of the proletarian mothers expressed themselves thus: "I would like to be a man, because if he is educated he can go in and out of important places and earn more, because men were born to accomplish more." "I would like to be born again as a

man, they only have one thing to worry about—bringing money home—and that's all; women have to look after the children, cook, wash, and work outside the home." Clearly, the culturally patterned male and female roles, with their pertinent ideology, operate against the working proletarian mother. She has been socialized to accept the shared cultural belief in the inferiority of women as compared to men, itself a *sine qua non* for the perpetuation of the machismo concept.

Yet the photographs eliciting the most revealing responses, for all the working women studied, were the ones illustrating the most significant events in a woman's reproductive cycle: pregnancy, childbirth, and motherhood (Figure 28). Scenes depicting a young couple sitting together on a bench in a park (Figure 29) were the most evocative in bringing forth remembrances of past love experiences. (Marriage and raising a family were clearly perceived as manifestations of love and sacrifice.) Photographs portraying pregnant women extracted detailed accounts of the way in which they viewed their bodies and themselves, and a picture representing a factory woman breast-feeding her child was rated the most beautiful of all. These photographs stirred up hidden emotions better than any of the others shown. For nearly all proletarian working mothers, the experience of childbirth and motherhood—in spite of their economic situation—is the most meaningful experience of their lives, and the only one they can really claim as their own. It brings them the only real feeling of fulfillment, a sense of sheer being, tenderness, and joy.

The data also indicate a lack of political awareness. Working mothers do not have the institutional framework that would help them develop a sense of class consciousness and solidarity with the lot of their coworkers. They participate neither in unions nor in political parties (banned by the present military government). They understand mobility in terms of their own lives and occupational history instead of their socioeconomic position.





Figure 28 —Mother (factory worker) breast-feeding her child in factory. [Ellan Young]

## CONCLUSIONS

This paper is an attempt to discuss the advantages and disadvantages, pros and cons, of the "talking pictures" approach: the utilization of still photography combined with structured open-ended interviewing as a different and rewarding method for studying working proletarian mothers in developing countries.

Since males and females are active participants in creating, handling, and transmitting the social and cultural world they inhabit, it was deemed important to try to understand the patterned ways in which proletarian women—in our case Peruvian—saw, felt, labeled, and experienced their many worlds: work, private domain of the family, and those institutions to which they have no access, "including those sectors which produce the symbols and values that endow activity with cultural meaning" (Sutton, in press).

Aware of the role of culture in shaping perception and of its importance in the selection of what is considered universally significant for a given group, we decided to recruit the interest and collaboration of a number of informants—market sellers, domestics, and factory workers.

It is relevant to insist on the importance of involving members of the group under study with still photography during the preliminary stages of the research design. Informants turn out to be excellent assistants in determining not only the emic dimension of a phenomenon but also in checking, correcting, and modifying the cultural components included in a set of photographs that will later serve to illustrate a whole category of events. For

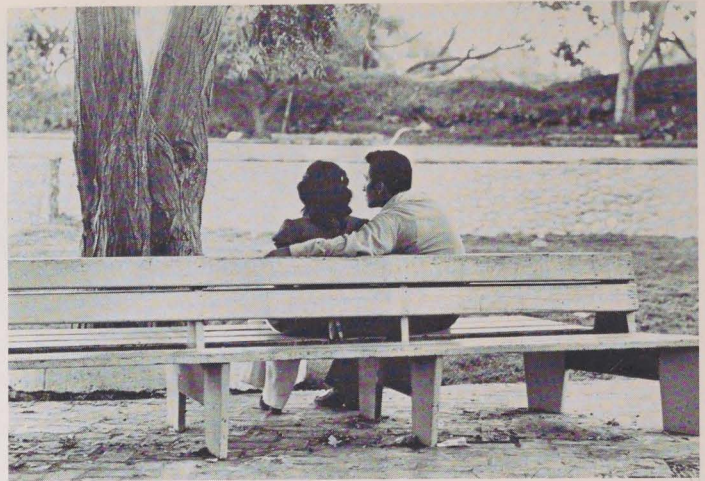


Figure 29 —Couple on bench. [Ellan Young]

example, an informant of the street vendor group looked critically at the set portraying a typical working mother's daily occupational routine and said, "There are many scenes about our occupation that were left out here; the photos showing one of us carrying big bags with merchandise as well as our children strapped to our backs and tugging at our skirts and no one to help us; and there are not enough shots of us *ambulantes* inside and outside the markets—you have missed all that."

Informants are also of utmost importance during the stage of standardization of the photo-interview. Their patterned reactions to the stimulus of a pictorial event or subject give the researcher the clue to that which is significant and meaningfully embedded in their shared world of thoughts, feelings, and beliefs. In our experience with this particular type of research we were prone to discard photographs that the informants had difficulty in deciphering.

A more sophisticated collaboration can be obtained from informants concerning the arrangement of photographs for the purpose of structuring a visual category of observation and analysis. The aim is to untap and release conscious, and sometimes not fully conscious, rules of conduct and statements of values, goals, plans, aspirations, attitudes, and feelings from the subjects under scrutiny. This stage provides the real testing ground for the efficacy of the collaboration between researcher and key informants.

In the development and implementation of the photo-interview technique, researchers have the advantage of communicating expediently with informants from the very beginning. Participant-observation provides the basis for an uninterrupted dialogue with members of the occu-



pational strata selected for study. With the help of a second group of informants, the intermediate stages of standardization of the photo-interview widen the spectrum of relationships for the researcher. The researcher eventually becomes more familiar with the problem under investigation and more in touch with the subjects, in this case the working mothers. Consequently, the field worker deals progressively with more complex networks of relationships.

The "talking pictures" approach can also be used as a research tool, both during its construction stage as well as during the process of its application to informants in which they are purposely used as "openers" for new data. Sol Worth stresses this point very clearly when he explains that the photo in the hands of a researcher not only serves its traditional purpose of an *aide memoire* to the scientist—equal to his pencil, notebook, or typewriter—but that the camera can be used as a tool to collect data about culture as well as of culture. In other words, following Worth's thinking, the relevance of photography is its analysis of it, and the reason why some, unfortunately not all, photographs are records of a society and culture is the fact that "they are taken in ways which allow them to be analyzed so as to illustrate patterns observed by scientists who knew what they were looking for" (1976:8). In this respect we feel that a good number of the more than 3000 photographs taken during the initial stages of the research can be used to analyze important patterns of the economic activities of the proletarian working mothers.

For the purposes of a study such as ours, we doubt the existence of a better means than the "talking pictures" technique for establishing communication. Meaningful photographs had a cathartic effect on the women of our sample. They were often moved to tears and strong outbursts of emotion. Again and again, we heard such statements as "I have seen my life before my eyes and I cry for my sorrows and for the hard life of the working mothers like myself." This was especially true of maids and market women, who lead an extremely rigorous existence. Experiencing the photographs, they released and discovered hidden dimensions of the ways in which they structure and conceptualize their life cycle. As researchers, we were invariably overwhelmed by their suffering. The constant reaching out to them during critical moments of the interview gave us added insights into their lives and exposed us to hitherto stifled dimensions of their battered existence.

This investigatory tool was successful as a means of retrieving a wealth of information from proletarian working mothers who had previous experience with photographs. These were the ones who had lived longer in the urban setting, had been exposed to television programs, mostly soap operas, had read *foto-novelas*, and had received a higher level of education.

We strongly recommend the use of a photo-interview technique for other studies in Latin America as well as other nations in the process of development. It is adaptable for the study of working women in any region, rural or urban, and in any nation. However, any study of the specific problems of women in the labor force must be

done within an analytic context of the socioeconomic structure of the nation to which they belong.

Furthermore, if we want to penetrate the many parallel worlds in which the proletarian mothers live and manage to survive, and if we do not want to research the obvious, the "talking pictures" approach is the most useful, rewarding, and creative.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The research team included an anthropologist, Ximena Bunster B.; a political scientist, Elsa Chaney; a psychologist, Carmen Pimentel; a social psychologist, Gabriela Villalobos; a sociologist, Hilda Mercado; and a psychologist who was also a professional photographer, Ellan Young. In addition, we are greatly indebted to Jeanine Anderson, anthropologist and research assistant in our study, who tested the interview kit critically and contributed creatively toward its standardization as a research tool.

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The photographs printed here were taken by Ellan Young, with the exception of Figures 13, 14, 16, and 19, which appeared in Lima newspapers.

<sup>2</sup> Heleith Iara B. Saffioti, personal communication with the author. For an important theoretical contribution to women's studies, see Saffioti (1969).

<sup>3</sup> Sol Worth's paper (1976) is also relevant to the methods we used in Peru.

## APPENDIX

### THE ORGANIZATION OF THE PHOTO-INTERVIEW

The "talking pictures" kit consists of three general sets. Though overlapping, they can be used independently. They are:

#### 1. Labor Set

This sequence of photographs is intended to help the working mother focus her attention on her work environment. It serves as a stimulus for interviewing, a tool for projection, and a means of establishing rapport at the beginning of the hour-and-a-half to three-hour-long recorded interview. Its subsets include:

*Panoramic vistas.* Shots of the exterior environment and personnel of markets, factories, and private homes, as well as shots revealing the complexity of the interiors of the homes and relevant aspects of the material inventories.

*Types of work.* Different activities within an occupation are illustrated with detailed photographs portraying maids applying for a job, then cooking, cleaning, laundering, and looking after children; street vendors engaged in the sale of assorted merchandise, with the amount, size, and quality of the products easily seen, from the women selling five ears of corn at the market to the fruit vendor pushing her well-stocked wheel cart.

*Daily routine.* This is a detailed photographic arrangement—a different set for each occupational group—displaying the typical daily work routine within each set. Factory workers are seen starting the day at the entrance of the factory, punching the clock, working, and ending their routine while eating prepared food, bought from local vendors, on the street. Market women are shown opening their stalls in the market, unloading trucks with foodstuffs, snatching a bite while selling to their



customers, dozing off—exhausted during the early afternoon—over piles of vegetables while nursing their babies.

The analysis of the pictorial arrangements by the women interviewed was designed to elicit information relevant to their work load, occupational expectations, and behavior.

*Services.* A sequence of photographs illustrating the kinds of services offered to working mothers in an ideal factory, such as medical care, a day care center, counseling by a social worker, free busing, a cafeteria, and in-service training. These photographs were designed to discover whether such services were a part of the institution where the interviewed women were working as well as to probe into their perception and evaluation of them. For the market women, to whom the majority of these services were not available, scenes showing the lack of these facilities, such as a toddler sleeping in a carton on the street with toys scattered around, women nursing their children inside markets, and women eating on the sidewalk, were used.

*Political participation through unions.* To sift the women's views on the nature and frequency of their union participation, scenes of women marching with flags, factory women on strike, women arguing against two helmeted men in uniform during a public demonstration, and a full view of the Ministry of Labor building, where workers file their complaints against their employers, were shown.

*Interpersonal relationships in work.* Photographs of the work milieu of the factory worker, the market woman, and the domestic servant, intended as stimuli for the projection of the proletarian mother's preferential attitudes to different styles of interpersonal relations in work, were presented. For example, *ambulantes* were shown photographs representing a vendor working alone, selling fruit in one of the main streets of Lima; two *ambulante* women working together; a woman selling yarn from a bicycle cart with her husband and children; and a prepared-food ambulatory vendor peddling her goods and chatting with a male *ambulante*. Other photographs capture occupational situations in which women are in a position of authority, such as supervisor at a factory, or are working under an authority figure, male or female, such as the case of the domestic servant in relation to her *patron*, or male employer.

*Socialization.* A cluster of photos of children of both sexes working alongside adults—included only in the photo interview of the market women—designed in this context to investigate attitudes about children working and the value of their economic roles. Photos feature a woman selling inside her market stall aided by a young boy; three generations of female artisans—a grandmother, daughter, and young grandchild—carving gourds in their shop; mothers being helped by their children in uniform at their work post in the market; street vendors shouting their goods while aided by their offspring. Sequence was also utilized to recall the interviewee's childhood and have her develop her occupational cycle starting from her childhood years' economic tasks and gradually moving into her present situation.

*Evaluation of occupations and level of aspirations.* Pictures of twelve women of all ages and ethnic groups, representing different occupations, aimed at investigating how informants ranked the occupations and which seemed suited for daughters. They included market women with fixed stall, peasant woman handling a hoe, artisan, schoolteacher, seamstress, nurse, salesgirl, secretary, and hairdresser.

## II. Family Set

These photographs were designed to illustrate the proletarian mother's family life and to help us learn about the significance that the women placed on family. Among its subsets were:

*House styles.* A photographic record of the different types of dwellings and neighborhoods in the urban context, aimed to generate data on the housing situation; the value, if any, placed on home ownership; and information relevant to the Peruvian setting, such as whether the family had been involved in land invasions to secure a plot of land on which to build their home.

*Attitudes, values, and feelings on critical stages of the women's reproductive cycle and ideas about their bodies and about themselves.* Intended to probe into the feelings of working mothers about male-female interpersonal relationships, sex, pregnancy, childbirth, and motherhood. Shots of young single women, couples on park benches (the patterned style of dating), a pregnant woman alone, a pregnant woman with a child, and a nursing mother.

*Domestic routine.* To discover the women's perception and evaluation of their dual role as mothers and marginally employed workers. Photos of mothers putting children to bed, cooking for them, and washing on the street.

*Working mothers' interpersonal relationships with husband or compañero (mate in consensual union) and children.* Photos concentrated on the activities of family members, with the man in the house either helping the working mother with house chores or not cooperating. These shots were intended to elicit attitudes and feelings relevant to the way proletarian mothers structure family relations and roles, and their rationale for the allotment of responsibilities within the territory of the home; to decision making about children's activities, punishments, and rewards (which of the parents does what under what circumstances); to the husband's ideas about the mother working outside the home; and to the mother's perception of the same problem. Pictures included a father playing with a child in a park, a father alone, a family together sharing a meal, and a couple strolling in a park with a child.

*Sequence of children alone at home while mother is away at work.* Photographs emphasize the aloneness of a little girl in a house, children playing by themselves, and a scene of a large group of male children tampering with an old bicycle in a slum.

*Activities of children in collaborative work with mother at home and at work.* Photographs of young female children cooking with adult utensils, and a child studying alone, to inquire into the beliefs sustained by the working mothers about child domestic help. They were utilized as well to elicit parental attitudes on child labor, because many proletarian mothers, especially market women, have children work like adults and share in their economic pursuits for the benefit of the family unit to which they belong.

## III. Participation Set

Under this third broad category of observation and analysis were grouped photos aimed at learning whether the women had been exposed to political institutions and processes at the national and union level; whether they were aware of what political participation entails; whether they were familiar with the voter registration card; and to elicit their views on military service for women, their ideas about women's groups and associations, and their attitudes about women in key positions in the power structure. The three subsets were:

*Political behavior.* Photographs of massive political demonstrations, working women on strike with flags, a female judge at a professional meeting addressing a group of men, an enlarged photo of the voter registration card, young Peruvian women in the act of being weighed and measured for induction into military service, and a mothers' association meeting were shown to scrutinize the proletarian mother's perception and exposure to political institutions.

*Religious behavior.* Pictures designed to help understand when, how, and why working women would resort to the sacred world for the solution to their problems; for example, a woman kneeling and praying before the entrance of an easily recognizable Lima church, and a portrait of San Martin de Porres, a favorite patron saint.

*Migration.* Three photos—an Indian woman tending a flock of sheep amidst the scenery of the Peruvian highlands, young women buying bus tickets at the station, and a young mother on the street with a toddler and suitcases—were presented to learn about attitudes, feelings, and experiences involved in migrating to the city.

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## TELEVISION NEWS AND THE METAPHOR OF MYTH

GAYE TUCHMAN

Although Marshall McLuhan (1968) once fostered the analogy, it is not currently fashionable to think of the news media as myths. "Myth," Chase (quoted in Bruner, 1968: 276) informs us, "is an esthetic device for bringing the imaginary but powerful world of preternatural forces into a manageable collaboration with the objective [i.e., experienced] facts of life in such a way as to excite a sense of reality amenable to both the unconscious passions and the conscious mind." Myths resonate with the unconscious; news, in contrast, claims to be a veridical account of reality addressed to a rational analysis of worldly events. Thus, when most contemporary researchers seek a metaphor for news, they reach for shadows—mass-mediated images projected on a wall and having some discernable relationship to the events they portray. Because the metaphor of myth connotes religion, primeval forces, Greek drama—not the painstaking reproduction of the everyday world intended by news—it is rejected.

Yet some recent authors, most notably Enzensberger (1974), have introduced notions that wed the news media to myth. Enzensberger writes of the media as "the consciousness industry." Forsaking a concern with attitudes and values, notions dear to contemporary social science, he unabashedly suggests that the modern media, including television news, encourage the "industrialization of the mind"; they foster a consciousness conducive to advanced industrialism, just as some 50 years ago, earlier industrialists and efficiency experts transformed the body into an extension of the machine (Braverman, 1974). The task of news, Enzensberger's work implies, is not merely to inform and to impart facts. Rather, in its adaptation of a particular mode of facticity, identified by Fishman (1977) as bureaucratically produced facts, it fosters the subordinate consciousness of the citizen-viewer (a term borrowed from Dahlgren, 1977), who is presented with a symbolically consistent construction. Myths, not shadows, are wedded to consciousness. Myths, not shadows, encode oracular visions of the everyday world and present themselves as both palpable and primitive realities. Nonetheless, past research analyzes news as a potentially accurate representation.

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Gaye Tuchman is Associate Professor of Sociology at Queens College and Graduate Center, C.U.N.Y. She is the author of *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality*, coeditor of *Hearth and Home: Images of Women in the Mass Media*, and editor of *TV Establishment: Programming for Power and Profit*.

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With little reflection or self-consciousness, research on news has adopted one central tenet of newsmen's professionalism: news is or should be a veridical account of occurrences in the everyday world.<sup>1</sup> Academic scholars have insistently sought to develop models and measures of the relationship between occurrences and news stories. For instance, Lang and Lang (1953) speak of how television "refracts" reality. Writing about MacArthur Day (a civic celebration in honor of the general after his recall from Japan by President Truman), they seek to determine the laws governing refraction, much as a physicist might search for the physical laws governing the passage of light through a prism. The metaphor implies that the objective reality of an occurrence may be reassembled, just as a physicist can reassemble the unity of light by passing its refracted, rainbowed diversity through another prism. Lang and Lang do not consider the theoretical possibility that television news inevitably accomplishes an intrinsic transformation of the transmitted phenomena, akin perhaps to the inextricable and observable distinction between animals playing at fighting and engaging in fights (discussed by Bateson, 1955, and Goffman, 1974).

The promise of an ability to fill in "what really happened" from television accounts—to construct the everyday world from the mass-mediated image—crops up consistently in Lang and Lang's frequently cited article. Writing of the television camera's ability to transmit a "false impression" of an occurrence, specifically that masses of people have assembled despite the insistence of sociologically trained observers that the crowd was sparse, they introduce the term "technological bias." The Langs specifically state they are referring to the technical limitations of the camera: it includes some phenomena in the picture and necessarily excludes others; it frames. But they do not discuss frames as devices for knowing, as do more contemporary researchers (cf. Goffman, 1974; Tuchman, 1978b).<sup>2</sup> Rather, their term "bias" raises the possibility of discovering how "distortion" occurs and how the objective facts may be reassembled. As Fishman (1977) suggests, the use of the term "bias" in the study of news invokes social psychological experiments on rumor: one can trace the progressive distortion of a rumor and the selective perception and retention of those repeating the rumor to derive psychological "laws." But this approach, like the analogy to physics, ignores the possibility of a *transformation in kind* as opposed to an alteration in the degree of accuracy.<sup>3</sup>

It is unfair to fault Lang and Lang as researchers and theoreticians. Their attempts to break down news into the occurrences it claims to mirror or refract and their refusal to analyze television news as an artful accomplishment are characteristic of research during the 1950s. Similar assumptions about the primacy of everyday reality (frequently called "objective reality") are also found in Daniel Boorstin's *The Image* (1961), a respected and classic discussion of news. He decries the growing prevalence of the pseudo-event, the occurrence arranged by news promoters (a term offered by Molotch and Lester,



1974) for newswriters. Again, the social scientific term is metaphoric and confers substance on the everyday world, but not on news. The false, pseudo, or ersatz event is opposed to the real event—the genuine happening existing independently of the news machinery, such as the spontaneous fire. Using reasoning parallel to that of Lang and Lang, Boorstin ignores the possibility that the news media transform the fire by creating it as a “public event” and a “resource for public discourse” (Molotch and Lester, 1975; cf. Chaney, 1977). As a public event, defined by the newspaper or television newscast, the fire is as much a part of the news product and the news process as an occurrence that was specially arranged for the cameras. And the unreported fire is as private an occurrence as the unreported feelings of Biafran mothers who watched their children starve.<sup>4</sup>

During this same period of research, there were promising attempts to reconsider news as organized process accomplished in organized settings, to view the production of news as the creation of a self-contained reality. Walter Gieber's famous article “News Is What Newspapermen Make It” (1964) comes immediately to mind. As implied by the title, Gieber discussed news as the creation of news editors (gatekeepers), working in concert within constraints established by their organizations. Avoiding the psychological reductionism and notion of personal preference implicit in David Manning White's earlier study (1950) of a wire service editor, Gieber claimed that, for example, the closer the newspaper's deadline, the more selective the wire service editor in his choice of materials. Yet although Gieber also stressed that editors at a variety of newspapers made essentially the same decisions about which stories were (or were not) newsworthy, he entitled his article “News Is What Newspapermen Make It,” not “News Is What Organizational Constraints Make It” or “News Is the Product of Interacting Institutions.” Retaining the notion of bias, seeking to construct models of how occurrences are turned into news (see particularly Gieber and Johnson, 1961), the work is fundamentally ambivalent. On the one hand, news is an organizational construction; on the other, newsworthiness is created out of newswriters' selectivity, a psychological selectivity collectively shared by newswriters as a norm of newswriting. The emphasis remains upon organized individuals more than upon the organized features of the setting in which news is found and processed. Thus Gieber, too, promulgates the notion of some sort of direct correspondence between the everyday world and the world called news.

## PRESENT RESEARCH

Ultimately, Robert Park (reprinted in Park and Burgess, 1967) remarked years ago, news is simply a story. For Park, an ex-journalist ambitious to establish the cultural importance of the media, news was the modern replacement of the short story. Park's comment is important for its claim, if not its historical accuracy. For few would insist that a short story exist as a veridical account of the

everyday world. Like a poem or painting, it must “capture” something of the world. But a poem or a painting insistently defines itself as a different order of reality, a frame containing its own form and meaning, revealing aspects of a society but not literally of it. Like children playing at fighting, a poem or painting is to be distinguished from the phenomenon it transforms.

So, too, recent research seems to announce, news is necessarily a different kind of reality from the everyday world. To try to speak of the organized individual biases of reporters and editors, as crudely done by Altheide (1977), or even of organizational bias, as done by the very sophisticated work of the Glasgow University Media Group (1976), is to collapse news back into everyday life, as opposed to appreciating and analyzing its artful construction and mythic appeal.

Goffman (1974), the Glasgow University Media Group (1976), Molotch and Lester (1974, 1975), Fishman (1977), and I (1978b) have all written about news as an artful construction. The theoretical thrust, adopted from interpretive sociologies (including Garfinkel, 1967) and anthropology (Bateson, 1955), analyzes news as a “frame” organizing “strips” of everyday reality and imposing order on it.<sup>5</sup> It asks: (1) How does the news frame transform occurrences in the everyday world into news events (Molotch and Lester, 1975; Fishman, 1977; the Glasgow University Media Group, 1976; Tuchman, 1978b)? (2) How does the news frame transform news events into news stories (Glasgow University Media Group, 1977; Tuchman, 1978b)? How does the newspaper reader or television viewer perceive the latent structure of news (a term from Katz, 1977) as accounts of the structured social world (Halloran et al., 1970, and Gitlin, 1977, among others)? Implicitly or explicitly, all this research recognizes the essential reflexivity of news stories, the embeddedness of selectively detailed accounts in the methods of their production, and the mundane presence of news in readers' and viewers' lives. News draws from life, transforms life, and reenters life.

Two recent and very different works stand out as prototypes of this approach. One is Mark Fishman's (1977) dissertation on a small-town newspaper; the other, the Glasgow University Media Group's ongoing analysis of British newscasts (1976). Gathering his data through participant observation and interviews, Fishman writes of the methods reporters use to notice occurrences and to define and to glean facts. A student of Molotch (see particularly Molotch and Lester, 1974; Molotch, 1978), Fishman starts with the recognition that newsmaking is an interactional process. He demonstrates that news is a product of negotiated interactions among newswriters and news sources and that details chosen for inclusion in stories indicate what is newsworthy within the bounds of that relationship as ongoing process. But those negotiations are not the product of individual proclivities and mere professional understandings. Rather, according to Fishman (1977), they are enmeshed in both bureaucratized and routinized interactions between and among workers in legitimated institutions, including newswriters' interactions with one another.<sup>6</sup> The centralization of information in bureaucracies and the generation of facts



by bureaucracies stand at the center of Fishman's analysis: to meet the prescheduled deadlines of bureaucratic news organizations, newswriters must rely on centralized legitimated sources.

Take one telling case, the coverage of a fire that destroyed many homes. To estimate the damage by calling every homemaker is a time-consuming and arduous task. Calling individual insurance companies to learn of claims filed with them is equally onerous. Faced with the job of estimating damage,<sup>7</sup> one reporter whom Fishman observed surmised that insurance companies must report claims to a centralized source in order to prevent the possibility of fraud, a family filing claims with two companies, for example. Once the reporter's assumption of a centralized source was confirmed by an insurance company, the task was simplified: call the centralized source for an aggregate estimate of the damage.

Fishman points out that all hard-news reporting reproduces the primacy of such legitimated bureaucratic institutions: facts produced by centralized bureaucratic sources are assumed to be essentially correct and disinterested. Facts promoted by others are "soft," "nonobjective," and interested. Logically, then, what is reported as fact is a product of bureaucratic interaction embedded in instrumental rationality, and it both predigests and hides lived social experience. Crime is defined by the police, not by either the victim or the perpetrator; the impact of inflation is defined by government statisticians, not the taxpayer; the level of noise produced by a supersonic transport is defined by the Federal Aviation Authority, not those whose homes are under the airplane's path.<sup>8</sup>

Additionally, Fishman argues, reliance on centralized sources may blind reporters to occurrences. For instance, when a policy-making group debates administrative matters (in his example, a city council debate on the purchase of heavy machinery), reporters chat throughout the discussion as though "nothing" were happening. Adhering to a bureaucratically derived frame that identifies policymakers with policy and administrators with the implementation of policy, the reporters cannot perceive the city council's extended exchange as a challenge to administrative authority. An organizationally induced trained incapacity (see Tuchman, 1978b) is operating to prevent reporters from getting a handle on the occurrence they are witnessing.

Equally important, reliance on centralized authority and sources may force modes of otherwise unacceptable behavior on groups and individuals trying to promote occurrences as newsworthy events. Take social movements, particularly those in prebureaucratic stages. Not only do they have little access to newswriters (see Goldenberg, 1975), but, additionally, they seek to promote issues by offering facts contrary to those of centralized sources: they challenge the news frame. Accordingly, to compete with the "logic of the concrete" (Phillips, 1976) embedded in both newswork and centralized sources, social movements must assemble in the wrong place at the wrong time to do the wrong thing—to paraphrase Molotch and Lester (1974). Otherwise, they remain invisible to reporters and editors.

News, then, presents a politically legitimated reality.

And the news frame thrusts that mode of interpreting the world on news consumers. News objectifies and reifies social and economic forces, presenting inflation as though it were a tornado, impossible to control, but necessary to mop up after (Tuchman, 1978b; Dahlgren, 1977). And it counsels that the appropriate officials are doing everything humanly possible to mop up. As myth, news suggests that social and economic forces (never analyzed but detailed through the logic of the concrete) are "primeval forces" akin to the bureaucratized legitimated institutions designed to cope with them. Social and economic forces and legitimated institutions become actors in a postindustrial passion play.<sup>9</sup>

Using content analysis to understand how television news frames its industrial coverage, the Glasgow University Media Group (1976) verifies in detail the mythic transformation of everyday life. Its data indicate not only that news generates accounts of uncontrollable forces but also that social actors are cast as villains and heroes, those who disrupt the consumer society and those who battle to retain social order.

Recognizing that news is embedded in the processes of its production, the Glasgow University Media Group bases its analytic categories on those used in newsrooms. Three findings are particularly interesting. First, although television is more likely to cover occurrences suitable for filming (cf. E. J. Epstein, 1973), the pattern of British television coverage of industrial disputes does not significantly depart from that of newspapers. All news has an essential unity.

Second, industrial coverage draws upon routine bureaucratic sources, such as government agencies, for facts, including facts about strikes and industrial disputes, and covers union activity when unions generate "events" (the Glasgow University Media Group's term for organized actions other than news conferences and releases). Associated with this pattern is the practice of asking official sources for facts about the union's activities and then asking the union to deny or substantiate them (a practice of simultaneously confirming and shaping information also discussed by Fishman).

Third, by comparing patterns of coverage with government records on industrial activity, the content analysis indicates that television news stresses union actions as both disorder and a challenge to consumers. The Glasgow University Media Group explains that those union activities stressed by the media concern "unscheduled interruptions to production processes and consumption patterns" (1976:204):

The emphasis on transport and communications and public administration reveals . . . a concern for the inconvenienced consumer of goods and services. A strike that grounds aircraft is highly inconvenient to the holidaymakers and businessmen, a railway strike is very troublesome to the commuter . . . and a strike of dustcart drivers is a growing difficulty for the consumer wishing to dispose of his unconsumed leftovers [1976:203].

The Glasgow University Media Group concludes:

Given this emphasis, it is difficult to structure news in a way that does not implicitly, at least, blame those groups or individuals who precipitate action that, in one way or another, is defined as disruptive.



This structuring often demands a search for the "disruptive" element, which is exacerbated by the lack of historical perspective [cf. Phillips, 1976]—an element of news presentation that often results in a somewhat arbitrary allocation of blame for the disruption. . . . The contours of coverage never deviate from this frame [1976:204].

One may identify these patterns with systematic bias, as done by the 1950s communications researchers, and the Glasgow University Media Group does introduce such terms. In their ongoing contrast of television news with government data,<sup>10</sup> they speak of "skewed coverage." Yet, as indicated by the above quotation, the group is always sensitive to news as the creation of a *consistent* frame, an internally coherent reality. Thus, it suggests that if one accepts reportorial news values and the news frame, one "would be hard put to demonstrate any bias at all" (1976:204). The news frame resonates with the legitimacy of bureaucratic and professional authority.

Furthermore, the Glasgow University Media Group does not suggest that news reflects back on society by reinforcing attitudes about *specific* occurrences, the tack taken by earlier researchers and reviewed by Klapper (1960). Rather, it argues, news encourages the viewer to see the everyday world in terms of the news frame's internally created consistency. It cites the consistency rule developed by conversation analysts: "If some population is being categorized and if the category from some device's collection has been used to categorize the first member of the population, then that category or other categories from the same collection may be used to categorize further members of the population." The Group offers the following example:

The week had its share of unrest: Trouble in Glasgow with striking dustmen and ambulance controllers, short time in the car industry, no *Sunday Mirror* or *People Today* and a fair amount of general trouble in Fleet Street and a continuing rumbling over the matter of two builders' pickets jailed for conspiracy [1976:23].

#### It comments:

In this piece of news talk, the category "unrest" is used simultaneously to gloss such diverse phenomena as different strikes, short-time working, and a conspiracy case. The preferred hearing is clearly that we see . . . all of these as merely cases of "unrest." . . . a hearer who uses the consistency rule, and most of us do as a matter of course, will regularly not even notice that there might be an ambiguity in the use of some category among a group [1976:23, 24].

Consistent with Molotch and Lester (1975), Dahlgren (1977), Fishman (1977), and Tuchman (1978b) the Glasgow University Media Group is announcing that the ongoing framing of the everyday world produced by television news shows creates an ideologically integrated consciousness. The mass media, including the news media, "are the cultural arm of the industrial order from which they spring," the Glasgow University Media Group reminds us (1976:15), quoting Gerbner (1972:51).

But ultimately, even while affirming the similarity between newspaper reporting and television news coverage, the first volume of the Glasgow University Media Group's project leaves us somewhat bereft. Like some other sophisticated discussions of television newscasts (e.g., Dahlgren, 1977), it concerns news talk not news film.

News presents itself as an ahistorical unanalytic presentation of the logic of the concrete (cf. Phillips, 1976). So too news film. It claims "actuality" but eschews understanding. Although Sontag (1977) carefully differentiates between photographs and film, one of her comments about still photography seems particularly applicable to news film. She writes, "Photography implies that we know about the world if we accept it as the camera records it. But this is the opposite of understanding, which starts from *not* accepting the world as it looks" (1977:23). Although the Glasgow University Media Group occasionally gives examples of accompanying visuals and is working on a book concerning the visual presentation of industrial news, we still lack data on the key element that distinguishes newscasts from newspapers.

To be sure, there are some data available. The Glasgow University Media Group (Paul Walton, personal communication, July 1977) has isolated a basic vocabulary of 50 camera shots used in news film of industrial stories. Elsewhere I have discussed the camera angles associated with different kinds of stories, suggesting that protests are framed differently from bureaucratic sources (1978b, chap. 6). Sontag's comment on the "normal rhetoric of the photographic portrait" (1977:37, 38) also seems applicable to news film. The newsmakers or newsreader's talking head "facing the camera signifies solemnity, frankness, the disclosure of the subject's essence."<sup>11</sup> But the slim data do not suffice. For we do not know the social meanings of the seemingly consistent visual news frame—their resonance with "unconscious passions and the conscious mind" and their significance in para-social interaction. We do not know how that frame is embedded in the activities of television camera crews and those who process and edit their film without an understanding of the latent structure of news film, akin to our knowledge of the latent structure of news talk. And so we cannot know the impact of news film's style—whether, like news talk, it encodes a particular ideology or industrializes mind.

To understand what we do not know, we must reconsider the sparse literature on the use of film to construct accounts, particularly the question of style.

## DEALING WITH FILM

Three recent studies seem promising for an eventual discussion of television news film. Worth and Adair (1970) demonstrate that silent film corresponds to linguistic devices used within a culture to tell stories. Bellman and Jules-Rosette (1977) suggest that film and video techniques chosen by informants mark their cultural understandings of the events recorded. Rosenblum (1978) demonstrates that three styles of photography—news, advertising, and art stills—derive from the division of labor characteristic of their production.

Perhaps the most powerful comment in Worth and Adair's book and article on Navaho filmmakers is a quotation from a Navaho-speaking woman on the work of a bilingual filmmaker: she couldn't understand the film



because it spoke English. Worth and Adair can describe what it means to speak either English or Navaho in a silent film. The Navaho films eschewed close-ups, even after the anthropologists show a cameraperson how to make one in a specific situation. They include the structure of Navaho storytelling. In one film, there are more scenes of walking than footage on the process of making jewelry, the ostensible topic of the film. And the film includes walking to locate metal with which to make jewelry, reproducing oral narrative patterns, even though that activity is not normally the task of the jewelry makers. In Worth and Adair's research reports, Western film practices (and news film practices in particular) emerge in contrast to the Navaho practices. Learning what the Navaho do, one learns what Western news filmmakers do not do, and so one can visualize news film conventions otherwise taken for granted. Even the most astute observer of photography and fiction films might not notice those conventions without the Navaho contrast.<sup>12</sup>

Bellman and Jules-Rosette criticize the work of Worth and Adair for not going sufficiently beyond the Whorf-Sapir hypothesis. Rather than demonstrating a simple correspondence between language and film, Bellman and Jules-Rosette wish to explore film as the simultaneous description, depiction, and definition of realities—film as act and film techniques defined in and definitive of the context of their usage. As Sontag argues of photographs:

A photograph changes according to the context in which it is seen. . . . Each [situation in which it is viewed] suggests a different use for the photographs but none can secure their meaning. As Wittgenstein argued for words, that the meaning is the use, so for each photograph [1977:106].

So, too, Bellman and Jules-Rosette argue, the meaning of specific techniques foreign to Western documentaries—panning while changing the camera angle analyzed as a cademic marker—is embedded in their African informants' understanding of the ceremonies and daily activities they record. The films speak neither English nor an African dialect (although following Worth and Adair, Bellman and Jules-Rosette employ linguistic analogies, at one point discussing "pidginized" film techniques of informants exposed to Western filmmakers). The films themselves speak, for they are embedded in the filmmakers' understanding of their topic. This interpretation of Bellman and Jules-Rosette's argument is strengthened by a footnoted comparison they provide:

In a study of Manhattan day care centers, Bellman and Joseph Glick found significant differences between videotapes made by directors with different philosophies and positions regarding day care. The camerapersons who were in more contact with the children tended to follow the activity rather than attempt to describe the center without regard to the children in it. The camerapersons who had only a formal relationship to the center were unable to locate the sense of the children's behavior. They . . . [showed] close-ups of "cute" children and several shots of short duration presenting an inventory of the center's facilities [1977:201].

The interpretation also emerges from extensive comparisons of the cademic markers in films and video tapes

made by the Africans with those used by Western students possessing varying degrees of familiarity with the scenes and ceremonies they were recording.

Like the work of Worth and Adair, that of Bellman and Jules-Rosette propels us into an analysis of Western culture by highlighting the distinctions between Western news and documentary film and that of non-Western industrialized people. They note:

The cademic markers can also be regarded as a means to explore how informant, documentary and commercial media productions are structured. . . . For example, the presumed neutrality of news broadcasts, the attractions of children's programming, and the calculated appeal of commercials might be examined with regard to the use of camera movements across these recording contexts [1977:201, 202].

Such a study would be complex. It might generate data on methods of seeing conducive to structural analysis as done by modern linguists. But it would also have to detail the specific organization of work in each context and analyze each context as producing methods of both seeing and not seeing, of knowing and not knowing (see Smith, 1972). For, analyses of newsmakers' methods indicate they entail methods of not knowing endemic to the bureaucratic production of news (Fishman, 1977; Tuchman, 1978a and 1978b). And Rosenblum (1978) convincingly demonstrates that professional standards of photographic styles appropriate to news, advertising, and art derive from the organized division of labor in complex work settings. Cademic markers may be produced by work processes as methods of organizing understanding.

But such a study would still leave significant questions unanswered. It would remain difficult to discuss such basic dimensions of consciousness as our socially given sense of time. News, like other television shows, appears promptly and regularly. (One can discard clocks and tell time by television, and television sets have replaced clocks as a temporal marker and comforting presence in the family living room.) But news seems changeless: like the lead characters of entertainment programs (Gitlin, 1978), newsmakers do not grow and develop. They drop from view (where has George McGovern gone?). They are announced to be all new and improved, like the "New Nixon" of 1968, the new grown-up and short-haired Marie Osmond, and the new and improved detergent. Moreover, television news film reduces the world to snippets of approximately the same duration: 30 seconds of silent film with voice-over or a minute and 30 seconds or two minutes and 30 seconds of a complex audio-visual package, reassuringly introduced by the anchorperson who will reappear to read another story. People, issues, events—all fade. Bureaucratic rationality portrayed as means-ends schema endure, as do some (but not all) anchorpersons: modern oracles. Perhaps the consumers' experience of viewing snippets lends a constant authority to the frontally framed newsmakers.

Relatively few anchorpersons age. Locally, one fresh young face is replaced by another. Nationally, Walter Cronkite has grown gray. Startled, a viewer who has "grown up with Walter" (as one of Levy's [1977] infor-



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mants put it) may notice Walter's grayed hair, much as one suddenly perceives that a favorite uncle no longer walks with the spritely step of his youth. But Walter does not change except in that physical sense. Although his characteristic immutability may reassure and encourage viewers to talk back to their television sets (Levy [1977] tells us some viewers reply "Good night, Walter"), we do not know how Walter's solemnity and occasional smile or tear participate in the production of our sense of our times and our sense of time itself. We need to know about time and our times, for time is an elemental aspect of consciousness.

A FINAL THOUGHT

Recognition that the frame of television news—including its rendition of time and its arrangement of space on film and video—is qualitatively different from that of everyday life and the realization that news cannot be a veridical account free us to look at the production of news as the generation of myth. This is a very great freedom. It sensitizes us to the transformation of legitimated institutions and social and economic factors into preternatural forces. It also invokes past traditions in social sciences and the humanities, for scholars in these fields are quick to consider the essential reflexivity of myth, including the central role of myth in both expression and creation of societal consciousness.

Seeing news as myth, we can begin to view it as the product of the consciousness industry. And we can then seriously discuss the consciousness industry as the industrialization of mind. We become liberated from both the narrow stimulus-response model of the impact of the mass media and the equally restrictive research on the uses and gratification of the mass media.<sup>13</sup> Rather than asking how news about an election campaign influences the public agenda or why people watch television news, we can begin to ask about the concrete social meanings attached to talking to Walter Cronkite when he "enters" our homes. And we can ask about the relationship between television's clocked programming and the clocked industrialization of the body achieved in the early twentieth century (Braverman, 1974).

Hopefully, this freedom will take us beyond Boorstin's contrast between the heroes of the *Iliad* and the celebrities of the gossip column and talk show, his insistence that modern myth is debased and news is ersatz reality. Rather, giving news its due, recognizing it as an artful accomplishment that appeals to both the unconscious passions and the conscious mind, may lead us to a richer analysis of our times and the social creation of meaning. Hopefully, understanding news as myth will help us to explode contemporary myths, for to understand the creation of a myth is to explode it. To understand the construction of television news as myth is to undermine the media as the consciousness industry.

NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Schudson (1978) and Tuchman (1978a) analyze the development of this ideal as part of journalistic professionalism. Schudson traces its association with the growth of industrialism, naive empiricism, and distrust for public opinion.
- <sup>2</sup> Following Dorothy E. Smith (1972), Tuchman (1978b) and Fishman (1977) analyze the methods of knowing employed by the news frame as methods of *not* knowing.
- <sup>3</sup> Fishman (1977) cites an exception to those modes of analyzing rumor: Shibutani's *Improvised News* (1966).
- <sup>4</sup> See Cynthia Fuchs Epstein (1978).
- <sup>5</sup> According to Goffman (1974:10, 11), a frame is "the principles of organization which govern [occurrences]—at least social ones—and our subjective involvement in them." A strip is "an arbitrary slice or cut from the stream of on-going activity."
- <sup>6</sup> Like Tuchman (1978b), Fishman suggests that those professional interactions are defined within and by the organizational context.
- <sup>7</sup> One must wonder why an estimate of damage is relevant. Assigning an economic value to a fire underscores monetary value as a basis of social meaning, as does the use of the term "priceless" to describe an aesthetically powerful painting.
- <sup>8</sup> Tuchman (1978b) distinguishes between television news' use of representatives (congressional delegates, mayors, bureaucrats and officials) and symbolic representations, the "common man or woman" whose plight representatives supposedly aim to ameliorate. Symbolic representations offer feelings about and views of their situations, not facts.
- <sup>9</sup> The analogy to religious enactments of myths is purposive. Gerbner and Gross (1976) argue that television has replaced religion as a source of unified consciousness. Baumann (1972) makes a similar argument, referring to the Catholic Church as that great broadcasting center of medieval Europe sending out essentially the same information to all social classes at about the same time in a decidedly one-directional flow.
- <sup>10</sup> Seeking to undermine the credibility of television news, the Glasgow University Media Group uses government data as an "accurate" indicator to lend political power to its analysis. But, it seems to realize that those data are, themselves, socially produced.
- <sup>11</sup> This signification is, of course, empirically verifiable.
- <sup>12</sup> A student of photography who has performed numerous social psychological experiments about film and photographs showed me a news clip he had produced for a major study. The newsmaker was framed "incorrectly" in three-quarter view, occupying only the right side of the picture. The film was also cut "incorrectly," leaving several seconds of dead airtime at the beginning of the clip as the newsmaker drew on his pipe, giving the impression of thinking before answering the question.
- <sup>13</sup> Uses and gratifications research aims to show how gratifications are associated with effects, but that linkage has yet to be empirically demonstrated. And the uses and gratifications listed in the standard questionnaires tend to be conscious ideas rather than unconscious resonances. Like other functionalist approaches, it tends to accept our society as given, rather than to challenge the society's basic institutional arrangements.

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## REVIEWS AND DISCUSSION

*City Families—Chicago and London.* Roslyn Banish. New York: Pantheon, 1976. ix + 181 pp., photographs. \$7.95 (paper).

Reviewed by *Richard Chalfen*  
Temple University

Roslyn Banish has published a collection of photographs and narratives that merits the attention of students of ethnographic photography, documentary photography, visual anthropology, visual sociology, and people generally concerned with the behavioral and conceptual dimensions of "image management." *City Families* provides us with interesting lessons regarding: (1) the use of photographic imagery for students of society and culture; (2) the value of integrating images and people's comments about their own images; (3) the problematic nature of some unquestioned assumptions of what it means to certain people "to have their picture took"; and (4) the needs and importance of presenting contextual information regarding "the frame" of visual recordings. I will comment on each of these points in the following review and suggest a few "next steps."

In 1973 Banish began to make family portraits of people who lived within the same London neighborhood. Subsequently her publisher suggested that she select a comparable Chicago neighborhood and produce a comparable set of portraits. The first half of *City Families* contains 41 photographs of families living in the Pimlico section of London; the second half consists of 40 portraits from the Lincoln Park area of Chicago. Each photograph is accompanied by statements extracted from interviews conducted by the author with family members. An attempt was made to homogenize these narratives by asking each family to respond to the same questions, such as where family members were born, how they came to live in Pimlico/Lincoln Park, why they like their neighborhood, and so on. In addition, Banish includes a short section on what family members felt about their portrait and, in some cases, what the family felt about having its portrait appear in her book for many unknown readers to see. In most cases, the family portrait appears on the right-hand page with comments by family members on the left-hand page. All the photographs have been reproduced very well, and the book has an overall attractive appearance.

My enthusiasm for Banish's work and hence my decision to review and recommend it in favorable terms results from the simple observation that the photographer/author has given viewers/readers some idea of what is being shown in terms both of who these people are and how they came to be presented to us in this mass-produced symbolic form. In different terms, we are

given information along several contextual dimensions that are frequently ignored and eliminated under some unquestioned assumptions that the photographer/writer as artist is simply not accountable for his/her methods, photographic strategy, initial intentions, motivations, and/or expectations. For instance, Banish offers her readers some information on where she found her subjects. She sought cross-sections of English and American families living in heterogeneous neighborhoods in central London and Chicago. Banish also provides us with some information on the procedures and methods of her photographic project. She recruited "volunteer families for subjects, by putting up illustrated notices explaining my project and intent" (vii). (It would have been a nice touch to publish the exact wording of this notice.) As part of this explanation we learn something about the social relationship and contractual agreements established between the photographer and her subjects: "Everyone I photographed either signed up . . . or was later referred to me by those already photographed. . . . All families had an appointment to be photographed. They could prepare in any way they chose, without instructions from me. . . . They could clean or not clean their houses in advance. If a preference for background was stated by the family, I respected it, lighting conditions permitting" (vii-viii). Banish reveals some of her feelings as a photographer and her intentions: "The voluntary aspect of this procedure was important psychologically to me, because starting out with willing subjects put us at ease. . . . More important, it was knowing how easy it is to take unkind advantage of one's subject with a camera, and not wanting to do that" (vii).

Banish further stated that her "aim was to produce a photograph that would be pleasing to both the family and myself" (viii). She apparently made several photographs of each family (specific information on how many photographs were made is not given), and subsequently made her choice. Banish then returned to the family and elicited its responses to her choice by asking such questions as "Is this photograph a fair description of you?" and "Would strangers get the right idea of you from this photograph?" (viii). Banish found that most families agreed with her choice, but she also includes instances of disagreement. In six cases, she presents us with two photographs of the same family and its preference for one of them (only one in the Chicago section, but five in the London section). An interesting next step might be to present several families with a series of six portraits of themselves. The accompanying narrative could then include all their approving and disapproving comments, preferences for certain images of each family member, discussions of significant distinctions and points of contrast, and the like.

Through this technique, Banish introduces comment on herself, her project, her methods, and on her subjects' feelings about being part of a symbolic event. A lot is to be learned from the rare negative comments:

*Mrs. Woolley:* I don't like the photographs. I find the children looking incredibly unnatural. I think your sort of aim really was to set people



up formally, and within that aim I would find it difficult to feel comfortable . . . We're not formal, and I think we all go a bit goofy when we're lined up to be shot [p.14.].

Mrs. Gray: . . . He (her husband) spoilt the photo because he hadn't a coat on [p.82]

Mrs. Charge: . . . It would have been better if you had caught everybody sitting doing something, rather than standing in a group. It wouldn't look so artificial (p. 48).

An interesting remark was made by one gentleman who would not agree to being photographed with the rest of the family:

Mr. Homans: No, I will not have me photo done. I will tell you why. Now since I come out of the Army now I've had me photo done once with my people. And it seems I'm superstitious against it. Because since I had me three brothers and my father done together, it seems we all broke up and we're all gone a different way. If anybody goes to take a photo of me, I turn me back, because I don't like it [p.36].

Banish's decision to include these remarks is very appealing. I found myself reading each family's remarks about its picture first and then reading the autobiographical material. I also caught myself skipping over the seven families on which, for some reason, no comment is given. Somehow, in the context of this entire collection of portraits, these "No Comment" families were not quite as interesting as the others.

With regard to the ubiquity and importance of "private" photographs (see Goffman 1976:78) displayed in households, we see that 18 families chose to be photographed in front of, or with, previously taken photographs of family members. For instance, we see enlarged snapshots (p. 89), portraits that appear to be of the Sears Roebuck variety (p. 111), travel photographs (p. 103), baby pictures (p. 143), wedding photographs (p. 47), and, in one case, a large painting made from "an old photograph of my mother as an infant" (p. 92-93). In another instance, the family made direct reference to other photographs:

Mr. Bertucci: I think we may have been more relaxed if we didn't prepare for being photographed, but we did. We wanted a formal photograph.

Mrs. Bertucci: . . . And we'd never had a formal portrait taken

Mr. Bertucci: And also we'd spent considerable time before that looking at old family photographs.

Mrs. Bertucci: That's right. We spent several weekends looking at old family photographs [p.100].

Another source of my enthusiasm for this book derives, in part, from comparisons with other attempts to communicate visually about "ordinary" people in their familiar home surroundings and in the context of everyday life. I am not criticizing the artistry or excellence of photographs presented to us in Bruce Davidson's *East 100th Street* (1970), Bill Owens' *Suburbia* (1973), or much of the Farm Security Administration work done in the 1930s by Dorothea Lange, Russell Lee, Walker Evans, and others. However, for people who want to learn something about these photographically represented people, such books are very frustrating. Banish indirectly speaks to this issue as follows: "My decision to interview families . . . came

from the realization that the photographs on their own left out too much information . . . such as "Who are these people?" "Where did they come from?" "What are some of their concerns?" So six months after I had made the photographs, I returned to the families with my tape recorder" (viii).

Without this additional information, I feel that viewers derive culturally structured inferences based on subjective perceptions and ethnocentric judgments from a comparatively meager corpus of visual information. However, when we acknowledge the manipulative power of the person-with-the-camera, the variety of motives and intentions that might be involved, and the subjectively and culturally varying opinions and attitudes of what different people understand about having their pictures taken, etc.—and when we are given no information on these matters—I think we are left with simply an attractive collection of pictures about some group of human beings.

Before I sound too heavy-handed and out of context, let me add the following: The previous remarks are clearly not applicable to all "kinds" of photographic endeavors. It appears we are not supposed to ask the same kinds of questions about all kinds of photographic representations. With respect to artistic work, we have tacitly agreed that our "artists" are not accountable for their methods in the same way our "scientists" are accountable. If we apply the wrong criterion of evaluation, somehow we don't "understand" what is being shown. One might argue that Davidson's photographs of Harlem residents are valuable because they are good photographic portraits, and that is all that counts. I find this acceptable with respect to photographs of sand dunes, green peppers, nuts and bolts, forest scenery, animals, and the like. However, when it comes to images of individual human beings or collections of people, whether in contexts of "art" or "non-art," we must always consider the troublesome issue of relationships between people—people as photographers and people as subject matter.

Howard Becker, in his review of Bill Owens' *Suburbia*, expresses this concern as follows:

Photographers and anthropologists share a concern for whether the dignity of the subjects of the pictures has been respected. Did the photographer allow the people to present themselves as seems most suitable to them, allowing them to conceal what they feel to be inappropriate, unworthy, or unrepresentative? Or did the photographer search out hidden and shameful aspects of their lives, things they would prefer that no one else see? [1976:63]

Banish's *City Families* seems to gain some ground on these troublesome questions. By asking for volunteers, by allowing her subjects to prepare themselves and their "settings" in any way, and by allowing them to comment on the chosen image, we as viewers/readers are given an unusual package of ethnographic information. The book provides us with an interesting example of a sensitive and sensible photographer reflecting out loud on the making of photographic images as a social and communicative event. Whether in the context of "photo-elicitation" techniques (Collier 1967), developing an ethnography of photographic communication (Chalfen 1976), better un-



derstanding "the presentation of self in symbolic form" (Worth 1972), or a reflexive visual anthropology (Ruby 1977), Banish's *City Families* should serve as a valuable and innovative contribution to our literature.

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About Documentary: Anthropology on Film. A Philosophy of People and Art. Robert Edmonds. Dayton, OH: Pflaum Publishing, 1974. 115 pp. \$4.75 (paper).

Reviewed by *Jim Linton*  
University of Windsor

In his preface to Edmonds' book, Lewis Jacobs exclaims:

How refreshing it is to come upon a new book about documentary that doesn't present yet another interpretation or evaluation of Nanook! In fact, nowhere in it will you find attention given to the interpretation or evaluation of any individual documentary film.

There is no denying that the study of documentary (as well as of film generally) has been too shortsighted and repetitive in nature. The recent publication of an erudite but basically standard history of the documentary by as eminent a scholar as Erik Barnouw (1974) would seem to underscore this deficiency. One must be grateful, then, for Edmonds' raising of the larger questions related to documentary film, since Rotha (1952) and Grierson (Hardy 1971) seem to be the last ones to have seriously done so.

In dealing with these general theoretical matters, however, Edmonds' ignoring of specific films causes him to

work entirely deductively, an approach completely at odds with his avowed method of teaching and inquiry. This deductive approach, combined with a tendency to consider documentaries mainly as works of art, leads Edmonds to talk about the documentary in basically creator-oriented terms with virtually no concern for historical context.

Such an orientation makes him vulnerable to the first trap for writers on documentary film: defining "documentary." Edmonds feels he has solved this problem by disentangling the material of documentary from the manner of its presentation. The characteristics of the material are what are used to classify films as documentaries, while questions about the manner of presentation become questions related to evaluation.

What then is the documentary film? "Documentary is simply [?!!] anthropology on film!" (p. 14). Or more fully:

The subject matter of documentary film is, we have agreed, the various relationships of mankind in this world—the relationship of man to his environment, man to his work, man to other men, these relationships taken singly, or in any combination. From this we have further agreed that a simple collective term for this kind of subject matter is anthropology [p. 57].

This simplistic solution is, of course, no solution at all. Just as any other film (as Worth [1966] points out), the documentary is first and foremost a form of communication, and in Edmonds' own words:

the meaning of each of the terms of a communication, and the meanings of the collection of terms, exist because of mutual convention arrived at by the parties to the communication [p. 8].

From this perspective, documentary film is a genre (or a collection of subgenres) in the sense that genre involves a cultural consensus (on the part of the audience rather than an individual critic or analyst) as to what is meant by the genre term (Tudor 1970). This means that for the documentary there are popularly recognized and accepted methods (i.e., conventions) of presenting "reality" filmically.<sup>1</sup> And Sari Thomas (1974) would go so far as to contradict Edmonds completely, claiming that structure rather than content is what determined viewers' acceptance of films as depictions of reality.<sup>2</sup>

It is not as if Edmonds is altogether oblivious of the conventions surrounding documentaries. He says at one point:

Some of the criteria [used to make choices] are based on conventions accepted by the society which the maker and the respondent may share. Such community may be in cultural tradition and convention, sub-cultural convention, or historical contemporaneity [p. 39].

But Edmonds' exclusive interest in the artistic nature of documentary, his emphasis on the vision or "style"<sup>3</sup> of the great documentarians which caused them to surpass the perceptual bonds of cultural viewpoint, and his overwhelming concern with the individual viewer's response precludes a fuller exploration of this important observation.

This complex of factors also leads Edmonds into some



rather narrow and dogmatic positions, particularly as regards the concept of "truth." While he acknowledges that the goal of the filmmaker is to present the truth, this truth is a personal, essential, or "artistic" type of truth, i.e., "the essential reality as it exists for" the filmmaker (p. 24). Arguing that any filmic presentation of reality or actuality cannot be complete or without some form of distortion, Edmonds rules out the possibility or even the desirability of "objectivity" on the part of the documentary filmmaker.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, he dismisses the journalistic and scientific conceptions of truth with some vehemence. While one may agree that the issue of objectivity has often been used as a red herring by documentary filmmakers, a more useful approach would be an attempt to understand the sources and implications of the notion, as Hall (1974) has done for media in general and Ruby (1975) for ethnographic film in particular.

Perhaps it should be borne in mind, however, that the title of the book contains the phrase "a philosophy of people and art." As a philosophy, then, one might expect less emphasis on the descriptive and explanatory and more on the normative, as is the case. One senses, however, too much confusion among film philosophy, film aesthetics, and film theory<sup>5</sup> to be comfortable with the results. In addition, the theoretical aspects of the discussion (on which a large portion of Edmonds' philosophy is based) are somewhat weak owing to the rather cursory attention that he pays to documentary film theory.

A major reason for this weak theoretical base is the lack of historical perspective Edmonds exhibits. He discusses the documentary film as if its central dynamic remained untouched by historical development. He does acknowledge the impact of history and other circumstances on the choices a documentarian makes, but it is the filmmaker's *personal* history and the "circumstances [are those] surrounding his engagement in producing an artwork [emphasis added]" (p. 29). The important question, however, would seem to be whether or not, and in what manner, the viewing public's cultural consensus about the filmic depiction of reality has changed over time. The films of the British documentary film movement of the 1930s seem stilted and artificial by present standards, but it is not inconceivable that the viewers at that time accepted them as valid depictions of reality (Linton 1975). The question then becomes one of determining the various factors which contribute to the acceptance of a particular mode of reality-depiction at a particular moment in time. This approach also has the advantage of identifying different "styles" or "subgenres" of documentaries or films related to the documentary (e.g., *cinéma vérité*, direct cinema, free cinema, poetic documentary, ethnographic films, etc.) and of suggesting a method of considering how these styles may be connected via some evolutionary scheme (Tudor 1974). Edmonds has abolished these distinctions as means of discussing the documentary as a communicative form, relegating the consideration of the "manner" of presentation of documentary content to the realm of evaluative judgment (p. 14).

While the book is "about documentary," Edmonds has

a good deal to say about the process of education. He places a great emphasis on developing the ability to conceptualize, contending that students achieve this by continually asking meaningful questions. And to demonstrate the possibilities of this approach, he includes several student papers submitted for his course on documentary film.

Perhaps the most appropriate way to approach *About Documentary*, then, is as a pedagogical tool. If used critically, in conjunction with a more traditional, historically oriented text (e.g., Barnouw [1974]), Edmonds's book could assist students in exploring the historical development of documentary conventions, leading to an increased understanding of this particular form of audiovisual communication. And perhaps such a form of conceptualization would set the stage for the production of a more definitive study "about documentary."

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Edmonds would seem to concede that documentaries deal with reality when he says: "Let us agree that the word documentary denotes a kind of film that presents, in some manner or another, reality or actuality (whatever they may mean)" (p. 14).

<sup>2</sup> Thomas (1974) considers and rejects the possibility that "the relationship between a given [documentary] technique and/or procedure and reality or fiction was purely arbitrary." This rejection of the possible conventional nature of documentary film seems premature on the basis of her study, given that she examines only present documentary techniques and procedures and works strictly with an analyst-centered approach.

<sup>3</sup> "Style is the manifestation, through the quality of behavior, of the perceptions of problems and the techniques of solving them" (p. 61).

<sup>4</sup> "The other, more common and less correct [usage of the term 'true to life'] seems to mean 'reproducing everything just as it appears in real life.' We have found how far away from the truth this can be. Besides, to reproduce everything just as it is in real life is to record life itself. Even if it were possible, is this the function of the artist?" (p. 23).

<sup>5</sup> Tudor (n.d.) distinguishes the three terms as follows: "*Film aesthetics* I would define as a set of criteria (implicit or explicit, consistent or inconsistent) which are employed to judge the 'quality' of a film . . . . *Film philosophy* is related to *film aesthetics* in the sense that it is concerned with the *grounding* of the specific aesthetic standards. . . . *Film theory*, finally, will be used to refer to a body of work which makes certain assertions about the manner in which film functions, communicates, etc., these assertions in effect being hypotheses which may then be tested according to the normal canons of verification and falsification."

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*City Families—Chicago and London*. Roslyn Banish. New York: Pantheon, 1976. ix + 181 pp., photographs. \$7.95 (paper).

*Elsa's Housebook: A Woman's Photojournal*. Elsa Dorfman. Boston: Godine, 1974. Photographs. \$5.95 (paper).

*The Family Album of Lucybelle Crater*. Ralph Eugene Meatyard. Millerton, New York: Jargon Society, 1974. 84 pp., photographs. \$10.00 (cloth).

*The Camera of My Family*. Catherine Hanf Noren. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976. 243 pp., photographs. \$20.00 (cloth).

*A Loud Song*. Daniel Seymour. New York: Lustrum Press, 1971. 57 pp., photographs. \$2.50 (paper).

Reviewed by Mark Silber  
Boston University

Perennially debates appear regarding the interpretation of visual images—still and film—over reality and universality of the communicated message, and over the innate faculties necessary for interpretation of these capsules, from person to person through time and space.<sup>1</sup> Ultimately, the most successful message is communicated from the individual to himself. And, undoubtedly, any other audience implies a digested interpretation through additional filters of culture, subculture, to the individual. Thus any student of visual communication will have to deal with modes, deviations, prevalence, and exceptions in interpretation.<sup>2</sup> Confusion and debate exist because most students agree that images suggest to them certain messages. The same arbiters cannot agree that the message is the same for the photographer and the interpreter of the final image. The reality of the image, as well as the myriad messages implied by the choice to produce that image, is subjective and objective at the same time.<sup>3</sup>

Because photographs contain a great array of information—in their contents, composition, contrast, tone,<sup>4</sup> perspective, sequence—it is possible for one

member of the audience to choose one symbolic constellation for reflection while another member may construct a completely different symbolic aggregate. Thus the two will be viewing the same photograph or a series, perceive different messages, and comment on the inability of the images to communicate the intended message. A recent example of such double-blind communication appeared between Collier and Cancian. Collier viewed Cancian's book and said "the book has no layout, no sequential relationships; pictures tumble one upon the other with little association" (1974:60). Cancian replied: "I hope the message of commonality gets through often enough to the viewer to make him or her identify with some Zinacanteco experiences . . ." (1975:61). It seems as if the two individuals—the photographer and the critic—were looking at completely alien topographies. One saw the valleys; the other, the peaks.<sup>5</sup>

In a review of literature on symbolism, Firth noted that "in situations of everyday life our senses are being constantly stimulated by a variety of impressions, among which we have learnt to pay attention to some as being specially significant because they are signs of something else in which we are interested" (1973:63). Perhaps it is this differential perception of significance in chaos that reflects the variability in symboling from culture to culture and individual to individual. An illustration of an assumption of this concept is found in Worth and Adair's study of Navajo filmmaking:

We assumed that . . . people would use motion pictures . . . in a patterned rather than a random fashion, and that the particular patterns they used would reflect their culture and their particular cognitive style (1972:11).

An intuition of some "importance" of visual images—particularly photographs from the 19th century—is expressed in the first sentences of a chapter on collecting old photographs: "Do not throw away old photographs—however small and/or insignificant they may at first appear. . . . within almost any small number of cartes and cabinet portraits there are invariably two or three photographs at least of real worth and interest; mirrors of age . . ." (Mathews 1974:78). Since the photograph is purported to represent a fragment of reality, then it is proposed that the portrayed object and context will be implicitly understood.

Doubtless, photographic images mean something. The question that some students of visual communication try to tackle is: What do these images mean? It is a Sherlockian dilemma. Individual images, generally, are out of context and are primarily important to collectors (individuals and institutions) who, as a rule, are not interested in the study of culture, context, or the ideology of process and production. Again, it is these individuals who first attempt to preserve items because of the collector's interest in oddity. A social scientist, on the other hand, is generally concerned with trends, prevalence, and meaning on the level of culture. For the social scientist, collections of specific "unique" old photographs may be useless because they may not be representative (modal) of subject matter manner of



production, or the photographer's original intentions for a specific audience.

In my review of the photographic books below, I will concentrate on how the content of each book may serve the social scientist's study of symboling through the photographic medium. I will analyze these books from the following problematic concerns: Are these books helpful in determining the mode and intention of the photographer and the audience for whom these images have been created? What do the photographic images convey? The basis of judgment is the content of the photographs—as opposed to contrast or composition. Nor do I intend to evaluate the quality of the photographs as would a critic of the photographic medium.

Perhaps it is important here to indicate that the books under review have one thing in common: Each book contains an array of photographs—photographs which are generally referred to as “snapshots”—primarily intended to portray an inclusion in the family album. With the exception of *Lucybelles Crater*, which I believe was created to illustrate a “universal” family album, the images in the books by Noren, Seymour, Dorfman, and Banish are interspersed with explanations of the subject matter in the photographs. Green suggests that the photographers in his book—*The Snapshot* (1974), for instance—are “not snapshotters but sophisticated photographers. Yet, their intentional pursuits of the plastic controls and visual richness hinted at in the work of the casual amateur, or their explorations of familial subject matter, involves their work with the ongoing tradition of the home snapshot” (1974:3). In other words, as opposed to the home-mode amateurs, these photographers have a vision and are aware of their own style, which is imitative of the “universal” amateur style rendered for the home audience album. The photographs in this review were made by both amateurs and professionals and may be classified as those of the snapshot genre.

Noren's *The Camera of My Family* is a document of a representative collection of visages of members of her genealogical line. This book is an interesting collection in that accompanying elaborations of the individual's mementos, such as marriage licenses, letters, and anecdotes, explicate the life-style of an upper-middle-class family coming from Germany and then dispersed throughout the globe after World War II. This book is important as a document. However, it could be more useful for interpretation of symbol and meaning, in the context of the picture-taking activity, if the reader were given information about the author's selection process and the frequencies of the types of photographs that appear in the original albums. Moreover, there is a dearth of information about the reasons for taking pictures, about inclusion of items in the family album, and about the individuals who took interest in taking photographs of the family. The collection is remarkable in that it contains a transition from photographs of the family in the 1850s to the present. Thus, it offers a possibility for an analysis of the method of posing, selection of backgrounds, and history of the period. The only note relating to the photographic activity of the families is made by the author in passing: “My father's family was clearly not as in-

terested in documenting themselves visually, and thus there is not a fraction of the material available” (Foreword). The question of this book, as well as the others, is: Why do members of one family choose to photographically record themselves while others do not?

Meatyard's collection of 64 prints and some accompanying texts attempts to portray a family album. I believe this book to be a statement of universality from (1) the contents of the photographs—people in masks in various poses in familial settings—and (2) from the text—a collection of arbitrary prose and poetry attempting to elucidate and contribute to the preceding 64 images. In the first “cogitation” Jonathan Williams writes to Meatyard:

There is something more hypnagogic than demagogic in proposing that, instead of sheep, one start counting 210,000,000 Americans, all with the same name, all eating at the very same time the very same interchangeable McDonald's hamburger. It is like a foretaste of the Last Judgement [p. 73].

Different people—always in pairs—wear the same two masks. Meatyard replies:

Last Judgement is very strong, but, Judge, the mask ain't me. I am the mask. In the final picture, as you might have partially noted, I am wearing Lucybelles's mask and clothes and she is wearing mine. . . . I think I have been able to eliminate the idea of a third person: the Intruding Photographer. Natural in their own right, unlike so many portraits” [p. 73].

On the contrary, there is nothing in the photographs to indicate a change of clothes or body, but maybe that is irrelevant. The only obvious distinction of the collection of these photographs is that people change, masks stay the same, scenery changes, and all the participants pose, that is, they are all conscious of the picture-taking process. From this evidence, I judge that anonymity is achieved through masks. The anonymity with the addition of the name “family album” implies universality of the family-album-type imagery, but is unlike any family album I have seen. Even the essence of “family album” is missing.<sup>6</sup> The book suggests a “feeling” and an emotion, but the quality of that emotion is elusive in the attempt to achieve analytical force. The book should be used to examine why and how the authors think that the family album should be conceived in this particular manner.

Seymour's *A Loud Song* is a grouping of the author's family photographs. Some have been produced by his father, who was a studio photographer; some have been produced by the author. As in Noren's book there are mementos of the family, such as letters, photographs, and narrative. Seymour's text is replete with expression of feelings and emotion about his family and friends. The author suggests that the book is “an attempt to use the photographic image as a language, and with that, to make literature . . . an attempt to survive—to preserve my identity. . . . It is fiction as much as fact, it is fantasy.” However, the story board is not explicit. The turgid beginning, in photographs and prose, ends in a whimper of abstraction. For instance, while we find explanations about individuals in the first part of the book, explanations do not appear in the last part. Headliners such as “Here are a few friends” or “The light of my life” do not give a



clue to the meaning or purpose of those images in the context of the whole work. Seymour asks in the introduction: "Is it exhibitionistic?" In the context of logical analysis, this book does not reveal or exhibit enough.

If I were reviewing the book for a general audience, I could say that Elsa Dorfman's *Housebook* is a "delightful revelation of her most intimate secrets." But that is not relevant in this context. Here photographs are used to show readers what her "friends look like." As a photographer, Dorfman was aware that she was reaching a specific audience of literati who would delight in the portraits of the famous—Ginsberg, Danny Kalb, Ferlinghetti (poets and writers of the circle of Cambridge/Berkeley intelligentsia). She describes her interest in her audience as follows:

In October 1972 I got the idea to hawk my photographs from a supermarket shopping cart at Holyoke Center . . . Mazur, and some of my students were aghast. "You're making your work too available. People won't take care of it if they don't have to pay a lot of money for it. You should wait to be in a gallery," they advised me. But I wanted to see what people liked, what they didn't like [p. 70].

In a way, *Elsa's Housebook* is a family album, in the sense that her friends and her outgoing intimacy are shared with all with whom she comes in contact. It is directed specifically at the above audience and at the reader, with whom she would like to be friends and share intimacy. Curiously, however, the process of selection—the logic of choice of one image over another or the choice of a smile over a frown—is not clear. It would be interesting to discover how the individuals in the photos perceive themselves—do they like the photos of themselves? Are these images representative of the audience? I would surmise that an interview with self-perceptive Dorfman would easily elucidate her selection and intent.

One of the most unusual collections of photographs that I have seen is Banish's *City Families*. The uniqueness of her approach is not in the types of photographs or subject matter which she utilizes. Rather, the unique qualities of her book are in the format and in the method of her interaction with her subjects. Unlike most other photographers who take their photographic representation to be a true and "real" description of the subject,<sup>7</sup> Banish questions her subjects about their feelings in regard to the photograph. She knew "how easy it is to take unkind advantage of one's subject with a camera, and [she did not want] to do that" (p. vii). Shortly after taking the photographs of her subjects, she returned to ask them: "Is this photograph a fair description of you? Would strangers get the right idea of you from this photograph?" (p. viii). Thus she asked them to conceive of the audience—the strangers—to dissociate themselves from their bodies and to interpret the imagery in terms of conveying a respective reality.

Banish gets an interesting spectrum of response which makes this book invaluable to the student of photographic imagery. In showing Mr. Jeffcock, an English stockbroker and his family, she gets the following reply:

Mr. Jeffcock: People would get the completely wrong idea but it's the one that we try desperately hard to give (laughter). But I mean, in a way they would get quite the right idea. . . . Well, if you show a photograph of a man and a woman relatively well dressed, with four

tidy children and in a comfortable drawing room on a large sofa with a dog sprawling on the floor and some pretty furniture, you get an impression of great elegance which is much more apparent to somebody who doesn't live in it than to those who do.

Mrs. J.: You don't see the cigarette burns on the sofa . . . [p. 88].

Mr. Luhman, a Chicago lawyer:

I think that photograph definitely looks and feels like us. It's very hard to say what other people would see in it [p. 178].

Mr. Harrington, a policeman:

The only thing is that you wanted me in uniform. I usually work in civilian clothes [p. 180].

Whether a photograph is produced by an amateur or a "snapshot photographer" who is working in the style of the amateur, this kind of feedback is indispensable in determining the perception of the audience by the photographer and in ascertaining the symbolic structure of the photograph for both participants: What facets of the photograph are most important (the expression, position, tone) in determining the intent, and how does the photograph function as a symbol? This approach is basic in the empirical determination of the symbolic value of the documentary image.

The books mentioned in this essay have several points in common. First, they imply that what they portray is reality; the reader is to understand and feel this reality for himself. Second, they document a progression and a transition from one time to another; they document a growth of the individual. However, these books differ remarkably in their approach. Seymour's is an emotional, revelational account; Dorfman's is a rational, detached, limited autobiography; Noren's is a genealogical array of photographs; Banish's book is an attempt at ferreting out perception through feedback. Individually these books would be of questionable value in the analysis of imagery. As a collection, they are valuable productions by photographers with a remarkably similar background and with an interest in the possibilities of communication via visual imagery. Thus, for the students of albums, images, perception, and communication, these books, along with the book by Green, are an invaluable aid.

NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See especially the interesting review of theories of color perception in Marc H. Bornstein's article. Bornstein touches on his explanation of "illusion susceptibility" among different cultures—that which was a riddle to Segall, Campbell, and Herskovits (1966).

<sup>2</sup> M. F. Malik writes about the teaching program in Film and Television at the Concordia University in Montreal: "One area which is not usually followed at film and television school, is the area of audience . . . . Therefore, we have instituted in our school a special stream of education, occupied with the measurement and assessment of the film and television information impact on audiences [n.d.:7].

<sup>3</sup> For some examples of treatment of subjectivity/objectivity in defining reality, see Freire (1971), Berger and Luckman (1967), D'Andrade (1973), DiRenzo (1967).

<sup>4</sup> Scherer notes how "Harrington, a prominent ethnologist and linguist, requested in the 1930's that his negatives of California Indians be



printed extra light because his Indian friends did not want to see themselves with dark skin" [1975:69].

<sup>5</sup> Becker, in reviewing Owens' *Suburbia* (1972) and *Our Kind of People* (1975), said that "Owens' pictures are both respectful and condescending, sympathetic and contemptuous, depending on who is looking, where, and when" (1976:64). What is the basis for interpretation of symbols in each context?

<sup>6</sup> In my paper (1977) I have shown how the logic of organizing an album reflects the ideology of the milieu in which the album exists.

<sup>7</sup>See, for instance, Davidson's *East 100th Street* (1970), Owens' *Suburbia* (1973), and Silber's *Rural Maine* (1972).

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*Nonverbal Communication: A Research Guide and Bibliography*. Mary Ritchie Key. Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, 1977. 445 pp., illustrations. \$17.50 (cloth).

Reviewed by Ray L. Birdwhistell  
University of Pennsylvania

Mary Ritchie Key has presented us with an unusual compendium of bibliographic notes and items representing a body of material remaining from the research which led to her *Kinesics and Paralanguage* (1975). Professor Key, in her very useful and other-serving work as editor of her clearing-house, has earned the respect and gratitude of a wide spectrum of students, researchers, and interested onlookers. We have looked forward to the publication of this book to see whether it would focus more tightly upon problems left lightly touched on or broadly conceived of in her earlier discussion. This volume, however, neither in its discussion nor in its extended bibliography is definitive. The breadth of the author's interests, while productive of years of reading in the general area of body activity, leads to the presentation of a bibliography so diffuse as to suggest an absence of critical choice. And yet this judgment is probably unfair. From my point of view two contrasting theoretical frames are prevalent today in the general arena which might be termed "the relationship between human body activity and human communication." One of these positions, succinctly stated by Key, is "Human communication is body movement" (p. 5). The alternative position, which has governed my research and theory, is that the social processes involved with patterned human interaction employ the *relationships* between body activities. From this latter point of view "nonverbal communication" becomes that social behavior which can be seen regularly to influence human interaction even if the investigator ignores lexical behavior. All human societies possess and utilize language; they are not speechless when silent.

However, this question is perhaps moot for those who wish to get a perspective on the vast array of attitudes, observations, and reflections in these areas. I think that the "Research Guide" part of the title is a misnomer. But Mary Ritchie Key has deepened our indebtedness to her by the extended discussion (139 pages) and voluminous bibliography (approximately 300 pages). I look forward to seeing an annotated bibliography from her. I can think of no one more qualified to present one.

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*Introducing Visual Sociology*. Timothy J. Curry and Alfred C. Clarke. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt, 1977. vi + 93 pp., photographs. No price (paper).

Reviewed by George Psathas  
Boston University

This is a workbook-manual designed to introduce sociology undergraduates first to the study of visual images in their own society and second to the doing of



visual studies themselves. An introductory section of 40 pages makes the case for the study of visuals. A set of ten exercises or projects then guides the student in making a series of collections and studies. The section focuses primarily on the uses of still photography, and exclusively so in the exercises presented.

The authors intend to stimulate interest in a "new dimension of sociology" (p. iii)—the visual study of society. They are self-consciously aware of the newness and innovativeness of the area, and seek to guide the student to new explorations. They convey a sense of adventure and excitement about their project, and they seek to stimulate others to follow their leads. They provide a series of photographs taken by contemporary sociologists (Cataldo, Quinney, Stasz, Erickson, Rosenblum, and others including themselves) to introduce the book, as if to say, "Here are singular images of considerable interest and depth which persons in your field have taken." Offered without commentary they can be taken as inspiration or exhortation to others.

The text part of the manual, some 25 pages, of which 12 are pages of photographs, is too brief to do more than suggest a few approaches to a visual sociology. The main approach advocated by the authors is (1) the use of the camera to obtain new kinds of information to supplement verbal descriptions and analyses and to stimulate new modes of studying society using the concepts of sociology translated or mediated through visuals, and (2) the merger of visual and verbal perspectives to provide more adequate descriptions and analyses of social life. Their theoretical perspective is vaguely eclectic and favors an ethnographic-field research strategy.

At the same time the authors mention the possibilities of the visual medium as a source of data—a faithful data-collecting device which enables the researcher to discover things previously unnoticed. This emphasis on discovery and collection is admittedly more difficult for undergraduates to work with, and perhaps it is put aside for this reason. The rest of the text enumerates rapidly a number of the positive advantages in visual sociology and argues for their further exploration. A two-page bibliography is included.

The mixture of all things that come under the heading of visual sociology as used by these authors is a problem. The term has been and still is used to refer to the sociological study of visual images (the sociology of visual images) and the study of society through visual images made or collected by the sociologist (the visual study of society). The former includes most of the exercises in the book: Project 1, for example, asks students to analyze a photograph; 2, to inventory all images seen during a single day; 3, to analyze portraits in relation to self-concepts; 4, to analyze a family snapshot and the occasion and relationships portrayed; 7, to collect and analyze photographs of persons in occupational roles; and 8, to analyze advertisements for ways in which gender roles, norms, rituals, and dominance patterns are displayed.

A smaller number of exercises teach the student to use a camera to conduct a visual study: exercise 5 sends students to study symbols worn to display persons' reference group identities; 6 studies similarities and dissimilarities in

clothing between friends and acquaintances; 9 sends the student to study symbols of age, gender, and status in cemeteries; and 10 asks for an original project which may involve making original photographs.

The weight of the exercises is therefore on the study of visuals rather than on the making of visual images. That both are needed is not in dispute. By learning to analyze visual images, the student can become a better observer, recorder, and photographer. The analysis of visuals can reveal the operation of the culture, norms, and rules as well as the ways in which status, role, and membership are conventionally displayed in photographs as cultural objects. The visual images produced by members of the culture are indeed rich resources for analysis of cultural conventions. However, when students are then sent to make yet other images, how are their own sets of cultural understandings, that taken-for-granted stock of knowledge, to be used? Will the image be drawn upon uncritically as a resource or made self-consciously into a topic of study itself? The study of other peoples' displays of knowledge of the culture cannot alone enable photographer-sociologists to produce images which are any different from their own. What is missing from the authors' studies and exercises is attention to this problem. Why are we not to analyze the photographs of the student in the same way the student analyzed the photographs made by others? The questions brought to bear on the students' own collections of visual studies of society are different from those to be asked by the students of other peoples' photographs. For example, exercise 6—"How long has the dyad known each other? How did the dyad describe their relationship?"—assumes that the subjects of the study can be studied *through* the photographs made by the student. The photographs are assumed to be *of* the subjects as the subjects are portrayed *in* and *through* the photographs. In contrast, when students collect photographs made by other people, the photographs themselves and the objects they portray are the topics of study. Questions concern the photograph, how it was made, who made it, what one's reactions to it are, what conventions operated to produce the particular poses and arrangements shown, where the picture was taken and published, what stereotypes are depicted, what "little study" the ad tells, and so on.

It is clear that the authors are not aware of the problem of reflexivity, nor are most sociologists. It allows us to produce visual studies in which we, as photographer-sociologists or anthropologists, remain unexamined, unnoticed, and outside the frame of our own creations. We can be said to be studying the world "out there," but we are somehow not a part of the process of studying it. When we turn to study others' photographs, however, we, as social scientists, can study the creator-producer-users of the photographs and the scenes depicted in the photographs themselves.

The reflexivity of all observation is not a matter peculiar to visual studies or to studies of visuals. As long as it remains outside our awareness, however, it will return to plague us. Phenomenological, existential, and ethnomethodological approaches to the study of society are the best sources of help on this issue, since they recognize the problem of reflexivity—and recognition is at least a first step in clarifying and modifying our



approach to visual studies of society and to studies of visuals.

Nevertheless, the authors have done a service in bringing out a workbook-manual which will orient undergraduates, and instructors who have not yet considered ways of doing such studies, to the possibilities of a visual sociology. Although limited and not strong in its presentation of the potentials for original research using photography, this publication will provide a good introduction for the intended audience.

*Eskimo Art: Tradition and Innovation in North Alaska.*  
Dorothy Jean Ray. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1977. x + 298 pp., 307 black-and-white photographs. \$29.95 (cloth).

Reviewed by Nelson H. H. Graburn  
University of California, Berkeley

This encyclopedic work is the latest of Dorothy Jean Ray's many works on Alaskan Eskimo arts and may represent the culmination of her decades of research in northern and western Alaska. It is also the latest of a number of recent volumes on the historical and contemporary arts of the Eskimo (Burland 1973; Ritchie 1974; Roch 1975; Swinton 1972) and is a major contribution to the important trend to take seriously the nontraditional arts of native peoples (Graburn 1976). Though the book was published in connection with an exhibition shown at the Henry Art Gallery at the University of Washington, in May 1977, it is more nearly an encyclopedia than a catalog, in that it attempts to describe and comment on the significance of all the genres or arts and crafts of the North Alaskan Eskimo in historical and recent times.

This is a large volume, with an 11 by 8½ inch format, wide margins, and plentiful illustrations, as befits the breadth of the subject matter surveyed. In spite of the imbalance between text (69 pages) and illustrations (176 pages), which is partially redressed by the extensive captions placed next to the photographs, this is not a "coffee table" book as it might first appear. Though the book is adequately illustrated, the photographs are all black and white and not spectacular, nor is the paper on which they are reproduced of high quality. Furthermore, as the author explains in the "Note about the Photographs," many of them were taken purely for the record under "home-made" conditions with ancient equipment. More than a small proportion of the plates lack definition either through having unsuitable backgrounds or through being out of focus. It should be added that a few of the institutionally produced photographs (e.g., #237 from the Smithsonian Institution) also suffer from the same faults, whereas some of the very oldest photographs (e.g., #296 by Lomen, 1903) are superb, as are the line drawings (taken from Choris 1822, and others) which illustrate the oldest material culture.

The book is for the serious collector and scholar interested in all aspects of Alaska Eskimo material culture.

The contents cover the area from St. Michael north around to the Canadian border, roughly the Inupik-speaking area, plus St. Lawrence Island (included because of its historical and stylistic affinities), and the time span is from 1778 to the present. After a short Foreword (by Richard Grove), the very brief Preface and Chapter I cover the historical and cultural contexts of Eskimo art. The bulk of the text comprises Chapter II on Traditional Art and Chapter III on Market Art. These sections are organized by material and genre, in approximately chronological order, allotting a page or so to each type. The breadth of the study will become obvious to the readers from the following lists: (1) Traditional Art includes Wood; Masks, Sculpture; Ivory; Charms, Amulets, Dolls, Decorated Utilitarian Objects; Baleen; Flint; Stone; Jade; Charms; Mythological Creatures: Painting and Engraving; Body and Face Painting, Tattooing, Rock Painting; Modified Engraving; Ice, Frost, Feathers and Decoys; Clay Pots, Mud Decoys, Rock *inuksuks*, Ice Models; Sewing: Ceremonial and Vanity, Traded Skins, Clothing, Ornament, Coiffure, Ptarmigan Quill Work; Weaving, Basketry: Grass, Birchbark. (2) Market Arts comprise Ivory Carvings; Wood Carvings; Other Materials: Bone, Baleen, Whale and Elephant Ivory; Stone; Soapstone Carving, Fakes; The Billiken; New Engraving; Figurines; Ivory Jewelry; Erotic Objects: Walrus Penis; Baleen Baskets; Bentwood Buckets, Horn Ladles and Dolls; Siberian-style Pipes; Caribou Jaw-Model Sleds; Skin Masks; Cloth and Fur Products; Drawings, Clothing, Soft Dolls, Appliqued Skin and Felt Pictures, and Stitchery.

Each of the above is described in an authoritative fashion, with attention to history, outside influences, and materials, in sections ranging in length from a paragraph to two pages. Each section in turn is well illustrated in the many photographs with long explanatory captions; in fact, the plates illustrate well over 600 objects. The last part of Chapter III is devoted to Projects and Programs rather than genres, and is again nearly encyclopedic, including the Indian Arts and Crafts Board; Alaskan Native Arts and Crafts Cooperative; Shungnak Jade Project; Kivalina Caribou Hood Project; Noorvik Projects and Taxco; Canadian Eskimo Art; Designer Craftsmen Training Project; University Projects, Arts Centers and Native Art Shows, and so on—described by the author as a flood of academic and subsidized programs since 1965. The artists themselves and the technical processes employed are partially illustrated in the last thirteen plates of the photographic section, but the bulk of the illustrations is devoted to objects rather than their creation.

As noted by Richard Grove in the Foreword, Dorothy Ray is "thoroughly unsentimental . . . she tells us exactly where we may see fine collections of Eskimo art of the past in museums, and she speaks of young people who are 'in the vanguard of the new Alaskan art' "(p.v.). Dorothy Ray herself stresses the ceaseless ingenuity of the Eskimo craftsmen and the immense variety of their arts; she does not bemoan lost genres but expresses her "gratitude to the nonnative custom of collecting for collecting's sake. . . . Without the white man's compul-



sive dedication . . . most of the objects . . . would not have been saved for future generations—Eskimo and non-Eskimo alike" (p. x.). Throughout the book souvenirs and market art are preponderant; they appeared soon after the earliest voyages of discovery and become very common from the 1870s on. Professor Ray rightly points out that we can understand little of the meaning of traditional arts, for they were already moribund by the time of the first good accounts, but that we can still appreciate them for the goal of perfection and the enjoyment of craftsmanship that the Eskimo creators must have borne in mind.

Market arts, on the other hand, while still demonstrating the Eskimo characteristics of craftsmanship, ingenuity, and humor, are the result of outside demands. The market searches for the twin values that the objects must (1) look "Eskimo" and (2) be handmade by Eskimos. These forces have favored ivory carving over other media, particularly since wood and painting are not automatically deemed "Eskimo." Occasionally this has led to the unfortunate emphasis merely on the "handmade by Eskimos," such as the popularity of Billikens, an introduced form, with little attention given to content and quality. The author sensitively discusses some of the ethical problems of what "handmade," "Eskimo," and other loaded terms mean, and the problems of what the older and younger generations think Eskimo art should be. She forthrightly comes out in favor of artistic quality rather than ethnic purity when discussing contemporary genres. She points out that the "art industry" has long been extremely important to the economy of Eskimo villages, and she estimates that by the 1970s some 1500 or more of about 10,000 adults are active producers and that many of them have chosen their residence on the basis of centers of art production. She concludes the text with a chapter entitled "The Past and the Future," which stresses the inherent limitations of the art market on the Eskimo craftsmen and the relative freedom enjoyed by the new breed of subsidized artists in the burgeoning modern support and training programs. She considers the new arts and artists very important in the emerging redefinitions and sustenance of modern Eskimo ethnicity in contemporary Alaska, with its vast industrial enterprises, higher-education programs, galloping urbanization, and powerful native corporations.

In summary the volume is almost "everything you wanted to know about North Alaskan Eskimo arts and crafts," and it will be sincerely appreciated by collectors and scholars for its comprehensiveness, authoritative data on collections, and bibliography; its glossary; and its useful index. For the reviewer its breadth, sadly, precludes it from having the depth of Professor Ray's *Artists of Tundra and Sea*, and its price precludes a higher quality of photographs and reproduction. In addition to the minor drawbacks mentioned above, one might note that the one small map (p. 4) should be larger and include all of the place names mentioned in the text, and that there should be an explanation of the orthography which appears to stem from a number of lay sources. This is an extremely useful sourcebook that will undoubtedly be treasured for many years by Eskimos and whites alike.

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*Evidence*. Mike Mandel and Larry Sultan. Santa Cruz, CA: Clatworthy Colorvues, 1977. 72 pp., photographs. \$12.95 (cloth).

Reviewed by *Drew Moniot*  
Temple University

Photographs furnish evidence. Something we hear about, but doubt, seems proven when we're shown a photograph of it. [Sontag, 1977:5]

Susan Sontag's remarks capture the essence of the photographs contained in *Evidence*. Her words provide a unifying theme which permeates what might otherwise appear to be a random potpourri of images:

- A strange configuration of four human footprints, left in the dirt-covered surface of what might be cement patio flats. A pencil placed parallel to one of the prints in the foreground.
- A sizable pile or bank of rocks, retained by a huge net of wire mesh.

Between these opening and closing images in the book, others depict:

- a space-suited figure apparently executing a push-up on a carpeted office floor.
- nine men with I.D. cards attached to their lapels, standing along the crest of a hill, trying to appear casual for their group portrait.
- a white parachute extending horizontally above the ground, its shrouds attached to the top of a utility pole.
- a 1960-model Thunderbird with flames pouring out from its burning interior.
- a towering column of dust created by an explosion just ahead in the dirt road which stretches on into an expanse of Korean-looking terrain.

According to a release which accompanied a review copy of the book, *Evidence* began as an exhibition of 89 photographs retrieved from the files of government and industry offices and displayed at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art last spring. The release goes on to say: "The exhibition and book are the results of Mandel and Sultan's intensive three-year investigation of over 2



million photographs from the files of 77 federal, state, and municipal government agencies and large corporations. Financed in part by the National Endowment for the Arts Photographers Fellowship Program, their project's purpose was to demonstrate how the meaning of a photograph is conditioned by the context in which it is seen."

As a point of departure into a discussion of photography, context, and meaning, we might begin with an article published several years ago in *Art Forum*. In this article, entitled "On the Invention of Photographic Meaning," Alan Sekula suggested that "the meaning of a photograph, like that of any other entity, is inevitably subject to cultural definition." In his investigation of the "photographic discourse," Sekula pointed out:

[although] a photograph is an utterance of some sort, that it carries, or is, a message . . . [it is] . . . an "incomplete" utterance, a message that depends on some external matrix of conditions and presuppositions for its readability. That is, the meaning of any photographic message is necessarily context-determined. . . . We are forced, finally, to acknowledge what Barthes calls the "polysemic" character of the photographic image, the existence of a "floating chain of significance, underlying the signifier" (Roland Barthes, "Rhétorique de l'image," *Communications*, 4, 1964, p. 44). In other words, the photograph, as it stands alone, presents merely the possibility of meaning. Only by its embeddedness in a concrete discourse situation can the photograph yield a clear semantic outcome. Any given photograph is conceivably open to appropriation by a range of "texts," each new discourse situation generating its own set of messages. [1975:37-38]

Taking Sekula's remarks into consideration, one might imagine the effect of placing the very same image or set of images in the contexts of, say, a newspaper, an art gallery, a book, and so on. Intuitively, one can sense that the shift in context would result in a subsequent shift in the meaning associated with the image or images. They would be regarded differently. They would be approached differently with different sets of criteria, each appropriate to the particular context.

The social-documentary photography of Lewis Hine, as well as the sensational photojournalism of Weegee, for example, succeeded in making a contextual jump from magazines and newspapers to the gallery walls of the Museum of Modern Art. Further, a number of these photographs made still another contextual leap at one time or another upon having been published in various books relating to photography. It should be realized that the very same Hine or Weegee photograph would be perceived quite differently, depending upon whether one encountered it in the periodical, gallery show, or book in which it appeared.

Likewise, in *Evidence*, photographs collected from the files of a government/corporate context were first placed in the gallery context of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and later published in their present context—a book of photographs. Such a seemingly unlikely transposition (less likely, at least, than in the case of either Hine or Weegee) clearly warrants further consideration, both of the conditions which could make such contextual shifts possible and of the implications of these shifts once they have occurred.

To begin with, there is the issue of intent. How is it that

89 photographs, probably never intended to be regarded as art, were nevertheless exhibited in a gallery setting? Although it is true that Hine or Weegee may never have intended his pictures to hang in MOMA, the compassion and intensity injected into their work at the outset at least made possible an eventual elevation of these images to the status of art. How, though, is it possible for images snatched from the impersonal files of government and industry offices also to be regarded as art?

The very "look" of these photographs discloses something of the spirit in which they were created as well as the purpose which they were meant to fulfill—the routine recording and presentation of visual data. Stylistically, the images are rather straightforward and utilitarian in appearance. For the most part, though competently rendered in a technical sense (in terms of exposure, contrast, etc.), the photographs seem to possess a somewhat cold objectivity stemming from the frequent use of on-camera flash illumination and the resulting harsh shadows. In some cases they have an almost snapshot quality owing to the haphazard manner in which the scenes were framed. Here, also, the nature of the content of these shots—with things or situations merely being "shown" and individuals passively presenting themselves to the camera—establishes connections with the snapshot aesthetic. Thus, while the images may not necessarily be stylistically dissimilar to the work of Hine or Weegee, they lack the powerfully affective content which drew public and critical attention and acclaim to these two men. Here, one gets the distinct impression that the photographers were quite satisfied to quickly, simply, and directly document an event or condition. Little, if anything, indicates any aspiration to do more in the way of masterfully utilizing the medium for either the expression of anything resembling social commentary or the creation of anything approaching art.

But of course we know that these images were, nevertheless, exhibited in an art gallery. The tradition which permitted this to occur is known as the principle of "found objects," whereby virtually any object (like Duchamp's urinal) can be discovered, declared to be art, and exhibited in a gallery. The "artist," rather than being the creator of the object, is instead the first person to recognize it as an objet d'art and to so declare it (for a more in-depth discussion, see Ward's *The Criticism of Photography as Art*, 1970:21-23).

This is the key to what the Bay Area artists Mandel and Sultan have done. The photographs which they have discovered, exhibited, and published are "found images." They represent a logical extension of the notion of "found objects." In order to be regarded as art, it was not necessary for the images to have been intended as art nor necessarily to possess any intrinsically artistic qualities. All that was required was their placement or embeddedness in the proper context. This context—the gallery—conferred aesthetic value and importance on them.

So much for the first contextual leap by which Mandel and Sultan transported and transfigured photographs from filing cabinet drawers to gallery walls. The one which followed is equally deserving of attention. Here, 59 of the



89 images were published as the book *Evidence*. This repackaging, however, did not incorporate the familiar photography-book context.

We are accustomed to finding photographs presented in conjunction with some sort of written text—whether a surrounding page of prose, a caption, or at least a title. Indeed, we have been culturally conditioned to experience photographs in this way. Perhaps the magazine or newspaper format provides the best example by illustrating our dependence upon supplementary verbal input when we generate meaning from photographs. Unconsciously, we shift our attention back and forth between image and accompanying text in order to synthesize the total message. The photograph is never really enough. As Sekula was quoted as saying earlier, it “presents merely the possibility of meaning.”

In *Evidence*, though, we are confronted with just such isolated images. Denied the usual supplementary input, we are presented instead with textless, captionless photographs appearing one per page (incidentally, even page numbers have been excluded!). The effect is unsettling. We can barely suppress the urge to find out what the images are about. But as we realize that the information required to satisfy this curiosity has been deliberately withheld, it becomes apparent that what we must deal with are the images themselves. (Although an alphabetical list at the beginning of the book furnishes the names of the agencies and offices which cooperated in the project, we can only guess which image is from which source.) What we are finally presented with, in addition to the photographs, is the task of making sense out of them.

Robert R. Forth, Dean of the California College of Arts and Crafts, suggests how to go about this in a short afterword entitled “The Circumstantial and the Evident.” Forth invites us to play the game of “skip read” when viewing the photographs:

In skip read, one person reads a sentence or paragraph or page of a book, then passes it to the next person who chooses a preferred or random passage at some distance from the first reader's and reads it, then passes the book on to the next person, etc. Sometimes these “leaps over logic” are more elegantly economical and to the point of the book than a faithful reading of all the narrated circumstances in between those passages made evident by the readings. Many times, however, the leaps over presented “logic” create new meanings which began as puzzles.

Without going into detail, it is well to recognize that this endeavor or strategy to generate meaning from the photographs is limited at the outset by the fact that it depends upon the process of psychological projection on the part of the viewer. Consequently, any meaning generated in this way is of the same order as the meaning which is read into such standard projective tests as the Rorschach inkblots or Thematic Apperception Tests. The fact that meaning must be imposed on or attributed to these images has serious implications for their communicative potential. Although it is possible to generate meaning from them, using psychological projection, we should exercise caution in assuming that the process necessarily constitutes visual communication.

In “Symbolic Strategies” (1974), Sol Worth and Larry

Gross suggested that there are two basic strategies which can be utilized to interpret and assign meaning to sign events: attribution and inference. As we have seen, the skip-reading approach represents the first of the two strategies, since meaning is being *attributed* to the images by the viewer (who, in a sense, plays “connect the dots” with randomly selected photographs). As defined by the Worth-Gross model, however, communication is “a social process, within a context, in which signs are produced and transmitted, perceived, and treated as messages from which meaning can be *inferred*” (emphasis added, 1974:30). Within their theoretical framework, then, communicative meaning can be generated only by the interpretive strategy of inference. In such a case, one recognizes that the sign event is purposefully structured or ordered, assumes intent on the part of the creator, and proceeds then to *infer* meaning from the sign event.

Once again, the distinction is that meaning which is attributed or brought to a photographic sign event is not of the same order as meaning which might be inferred from it. By definition, according to the Worth-Gross model, only the latter kind constitutes communication. This, however, is not the sort of meaning which can be generated from *Evidence* using the recommended skip-reading approach.

Before going further, it should be mentioned that the failure of the images in *Evidence* to meet the Worth-Gross criteria of communication is not the major thrust of this review. In all fairness to Mandel and Sultan, it must be remembered that their purpose was only “to demonstrate how the meaning of a photograph is conditioned by the context in which it is seen.” Thus, if one takes “demonstrate” to mean “to show,” “to illustrate,” or “to make evident,” the project could be considered successful. If, on the other hand, one feels that the term connotes some degree of description or explanation, it must be conceded that *Evidence* falls short of the mark, since it lacks any discussion or commentary along these lines, by either Mandel or Sultan. On a positive note, however, the challenge of pursuing the question “Exactly how is the meaning of a photograph conditioned by its context?” can, and should, be taken up by those involved in the study of visual communications. *Evidence* provides the opportunity to apply and test previous relevant theoretical assertions (by Barthes, Sekula, Worth and Gross, and others).

We have seen, for instance, that while these photographs may qualify as art (in the tradition of found objects), they do not constitute communication. By pursuing the question “Why not?” we stand to learn much about the nature of photographic images and how they function.

The first step might be to consider what is the essence of the Worth-Gross model: “. . . meaning is not inherent within the sign itself, but rather in the social context whose conventions and rules dictate the articulatory and interpretive strategies to be invoked by producers and interpreters of symbolic forms” (1974:30). In the case of *Evidence*, it can be seen that no clearly established social context exists to make possible any real consistency or



uniformity in the understanding of these images. Granted that we are invited to embark upon a skip reading of the images, this venture may well result in a sort of narrative which can be invented and superimposed upon them and their ordering. It must be realized, however, that this process is both subjective and arbitrary. This is all that it can be. What is lacking here is an articulation of the shared rules and conventions which would make this succession of images as understandable as the succession of shots in, for example, a theatrical film. Film narrative, with all its structural nuances and complexities such as montage, parallel cutting, flashbacks, and so on, is intelligible only because we are familiar with filmic form and know how to deal with it. The images in *Evidence* are not intelligible in a similar sense because their form and structuring do not obey the rules and conventions of an analogous social context.

Perhaps the overall message, then, to paraphrase and reiterate Jay Ruby's remarks (1976), is the need for the creation of contexts for photographs which would be conducive to the generation of their intended meaning. For if Mandel and Sultan have provided us with anything, they have presented evidence of the "polysemic" nature of photographic images. Such evidence has far-reaching implications, particularly for the communicative capacity of these images.

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Reviewed by Najwa Adra  
Temple University

In her conclusion to this work, Royce writes that the subfield of anthropology known as the anthropology of dance has grown to the point where it can now boast of a community of scholars, exchanging ideas and building on one another's research. Gone are the days when interested scholars worked in isolation, unaware of the work of others with similar interests (p. 217). This is still a young field, however, where, theoretically, contributions

are made through dispersed articles with a variety of underlying assumptions, aims, and methodologies. The book under review presents a synthesis of research already undertaken and offers suggestions for future work. Because of Royce's training in both anthropology and dance, she deals with both relevant anthropological theory and method and principles of dance analysis. This is the first book published that can be used satisfactorily as a text in an undergraduate course on the anthropology of dance and as a basic reference for those interested in the field.

The book is divided into three major sections. The first introduces the anthropology of dance, the second presents theoretical approaches to the field, and the third discusses future directions for research and includes a one-chapter conclusion.

Royce begins the book with a chapter on the phenomenon of dance, including definitions and problems of definition. She then summarizes the various approaches to dance used by anthropologists. Following this is a description of methods and techniques of dance analysis. This section concludes with a discussion of structure and function in dance. The second section, "Problems and Perspectives," includes chapters on the historical perspective, the comparative method, and symbol and style. The last section includes discussions of the morphology of dance and its potential significance to the anthropological study of dance and the question of the meaning of dance. Three case studies on the history of Colonial dancing, contemporary American Indian powwow dancing, and Zapotec dance style are combined with extensive examples from the literature and Royce's own research on Zapotec dancing to provide illustrations for the various theoretical positions discussed.

The strengths of this work are many. Early in the book, Royce insists that dance be analyzed as part of a *dance* event rather than as an isolated phenomenon. She argues that the significance of dance in any group cannot be understood if studied independently of the cultural totality in which it is found (p. 13). Another important issue discussed is the uniqueness of the phenomenon of dance in culture. This quality of dance is not often recognized by researchers. In Royce's words, "Dance may sometimes fill the same functional slot as other culture traits, but . . . it will fill the slot in a different way" (p. 32). Therefore, an adequate understanding of dance in its cultural context must include an appreciation of its unique and "complex" properties (p. 32).

Related to the question of uniqueness is the curious impact of dance. Dance usually engenders strong emotional responses in observers. A common reaction to unfamiliar dance traditions is that they are highly immoral, or at least licentious (p. 158). A good example of this is the similarity of European reactions to West African dances and West African reactions to Euro-American ballroom dancing (p. 158). Royce relates this quality to the use of the human body as the instrument of dance. Arguing that this use results in the dance form's striking immediacy, she holds that it is more difficult to be neutral toward dancing than, for example, toward a painting, which is at least one step removed from the artist (p. 159).



Another possible reason presented for the emotional power of dance is its simultaneous use of several channels (p. 162). During any single dance event, dancers and observers are bombarded with visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, and kinesthetic stimuli.

Another strength of this work is the emphasis on the need to study both form and context of the dance and to synthesize the two approaches. Royce suggests that attention paid to context, to the exclusion of dance form, has resulted in "impressionistic statements about the communicative powers of dance" (p. 216). She continues:

Only recently have we stopped to consider the implications of either the form of dance or the form of communicative channels in general. That we are working toward a synthesis of form and context in the areas of aesthetics, creativity and communication indicates, I think, a clearer appreciation of the complexity of that synthesis than has characterized any past era in the anthropology of dance.

This is a particularly important observation, because there has not yet been developed in the available literature a coherent theory of exactly what the relations between dance (form and context) and culture are. Although it is often assumed that dance "reflects" or "expresses" culture, exactly what aspects of culture are so reflected and the nature of this reflection have not been determined. Only studies which combine analysis of dance form and context can lead to a theory of the relationship between dance and culture.

Especially useful are "The Anthropological Perspective" (Chap. 2) and "Methods and Techniques" (Chap. 3), because they explain respectively, current relevant anthropology theory to nonanthropologists and principles of dance analysis and recording techniques to those untrained in dance. These two chapters demonstrate the serious lack of communication in the community of dance scholars between those trained primarily in anthropology and those trained primarily in dance. This is due not so much to conflicting interests as to a mutual lack of familiarity with the assumptions and methods of one another.

Royce's chapter on the anthropological perspective is intended not as a history of anthropology but merely as an explanation of the implications of relevant traditions in anthropology to the study of dance. As a result, it may seem simplistic to anthropologically trained scholars, but their turn will come when in the next chapter they must struggle with an introduction to methods and techniques of dance recording and analysis. It is hoped that the dance analysts will, in turn, sympathize with the needs of those untrained in dance and be patient with what may seem to them a simplified treatment. These two chapters should serve to help bridge a widening gap in the field.

Royce makes good use of her area of specialization, the use of dance as an identity marker, and she provides extensive discussion of this phenomenon. Contact situations, where a strong interest is expressed in the maintenance or revival of cultural identity and in which dance is used as at least one medium of this expression, are discussed at length. One misses, however, a discussion of situations in which an interest is shown in the revival of cultural identity but in which dance is not used as an

identity marker. Also missing is any mention of the use of identity markers other than dance (e.g., dress or song) and their relation to dance. A complete understanding of this function of dance requires an investigation of negative cases as well as the use of other cultural elements to fulfill the same function.

There are two areas which could have been treated more effectively. The first of these is the use of the concept of the aesthetic as it relates to dance, and the second is the implications of the author's treatment of change in dance.

In her discussion of aesthetic elements of dance (pp. 5, 82), Royce seems to equate aesthetic functions of dance with the dance of classical traditions such as Euro-American ballet and modern dance or East Asian traditions. In the following statement, for example, "aesthetic" is used as a synonym for "classical":

If a society wishes to have dance performed as an aesthetic activity, that is, where there is a dividing line between performers and spectators, then it must have a certain amount of leisure time in which to produce and enjoy dance performers (p. 82).

This is an unfortunate use of the term "aesthetic" because it implies the absence of an aesthetic level in dance not belonging to a well-developed classical tradition. Yet the concept of the aesthetic is crucial to the understanding of the previously mentioned uniqueness of the phenomenon of dance in culture and may, in fact, be a determining element in the kinds of messages that are transmittable through dance.

The aesthetic is not a characteristic limited to some types of dance but the identifying element of all dance. As Royce would agree, in dance the movement itself has inherent value ("dance as patterned movement performed as an end in itself," p. 8). Dance is defined as dance not because it belongs to a category of "ritual" or "entertainment" or "performance" (nondance activity may also fill these slots) but because it elaborates the kinesthetic, the sensation of movement.

To clarify, it would be useful to compare the relationship between dance and everyday movement to that between poetry and everyday language. In poetry the manipulation of words and sounds for their own sake is primary, whereas in everyday language word and sound arrangement are primarily tools for conveying messages. In poetry attention is drawn first to the manipulation of words and sound, then to other "purposes" of the poem. Similarly, in dance attention is drawn first to the movement and only secondarily to other "functions" such as the narration of a myth or performance aspects. In both dance and poetry there is a sensible exploration of the medium used—movements and movement sequences in one case, and words and word sequences in the other. It becomes apparent, then, that to divorce the aesthetic from dance is to take away the very characteristic that makes it unique and that forms the basis for its peculiar capacities for expressing the ambivalent and its potentials as a vehicle for signification. The lack of a methodology to deal with aesthetic phenomena has been a stumbling block in dance research. But to deny the essentially aesthetic quality of dance will exacerbate rather than help solve this problem.



In Royce's discussion of change, the determinants of change in dance are attributed to the flexibility of the dance style itself (pp. 104-108). The implicit assumption is that there is a one-to-one correlation between dance and culture. Therefore, when culture changes the dance will also change if the dance tradition is flexible enough to permit its adaptation. The problem is that the exact relationship between dance and culture has not been determined so far. To assume what one is trying to

establish or demonstrate is a dangerous practice in any field.

In conclusion, *The Anthropology of Dance* is a welcome introduction to the field. Royce presents students with a number of conceptual tools to use in the analysis of dance in culture. Some of these ideas may eventually be elaborated and others discarded. What is found in this book, however, is a basis on which to build further research.







