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Collaborative Ethnographic Film

A Workshop Case Study

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Introduction

The development of ethnographic film is inexplicably interrelated with the history of cinematography itself, and holds a special relation to documentary film. Anthropologist and filmmaker-centric models have long dominated ethnography and have remained a focal point for most major theories within visual anthropology, while collaboration has often been relegated to the fringes of ethnographic work. Furthermore, within the limited collaborative approaches that have surfaced there has been scant discussion or critical analysis of the workshops and training sessions that are designed to prepare cultural constituents working with anthropologists in the practices of visual ethnography and film. In this article I examine the development and direction of ethnographic film within anthropology, with an emphasis on collaboration and workshops. By highlighting the Stonewall Mountain and Flat Ethnographic Film project led by Dr. Jeremy Spoon and Elder Richard Arnold as a case study, I present argument for the need to develop a rigorous collaborative methodology within visual anthropology.

A Selected History of Ethnographic Film

Nearly as soon as movie cameras were invented early anthropologists began to make use of the technology as a documentary tool. Despite the early uptake, Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead's Balinese studies in the 1940s are commonly cited as a major starting point in visual anthropology and ethnographic film (see Jacknis 1988); however, their work is by no means the first foray into ethnographic film. According to Emile De Brigard, president of the Anthropological Film Research Institute, the distinction of first ethnographic film belongs instead to Félix-Louis Regnault (2003:15). Regnault was a French physician by training and his interest in anthropology took form around 1888. By 1895 he had produced the first film based on anthropological inquiry, and was especially interested in

documenting cultural variations on body movement (MacDougall 2006:89). Regnault was perhaps also the first to propose the creation of an archive of anthropological film, and advocated for the systematic use of film in anthropological work (Rouch 2003b:30). While Regnault's work can certainly be considered the first anthropological film based on this mode of inquiry, the ethnographic qualities of his work are open to debate.

Throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries many other anthropologists made starts into anthropological film. Notably anthropologist Alfred Cort Haddon shot film in the field, perhaps the first to do so, and like Regnault encouraged others to utilize photographic equipment in their research. Baldwin Spencer, a colleague of Haddon, produced a staggering 7,000 feet of footage (more than one hour of runtime) during two periods of filming in Northern Australia, during 1901 and 1912. For his time this was quite a feat considering the volatility of film and difficulties filming in the field. Even Franz Boas engaged in the use of film in 1930 for his lengthy work with the Kwakiutl of the Northwest Coast, though his work was conceived primarily as a form salvage ethnography instead of exploration into visual representation (El Guindi 2004:124).

Common among the varied histories of visual anthropology are references to Roberty Flaherty, a prospector-turned-filmmaker, who produced a number of well-known documentary films. Flaherty's most well known works include: *Nanook of the North* (1922), *Moana* (1926) and *Man of Aran* (1934). Despite his lack of anthropological background, film training, or even a basis in scientific inquiry, Flaherty is still considered by many to be a pioneer of documentary film, and is cited for his collaborative approach to filmmaking with the Inuit people for *Nanook of the North* (e.g. MacDougall 1998:193; Ruby 2000:87-91). Although Flaherty may have shown his raw footage to the Inuit during filming of *Nanook*, it is not documented if this approach was utilized in his later films as well. The actualities of Flaherty's approach notwithstanding, the critical element of his work, as Karl Heider points out, is the potential for

"making film more truly reflective of the natives' insight into their own culture" through a collaborative approach to representation (2006:23), rivaled in anthropology at the time only by Franz Boas' key informant collaborations (Collier and Collier 1986:157). Flaherty's work helped to shape not only documentary film, but has also contributed to the observational style of ethnographic film in anthropology as noted by Heider above. Unfortunately, neither Flaherty's collaboration nor Regnault and Haddon's appeals for the systematic use of visual recording were to take immediate hold within anthropology.

Taking into account the development of ethnographic film thus far, the work of Bateson and Mead perhaps then deserves recognition not as the first foray into ethnographic film, but rather for its scope and primacy. Their work set an early standard for observational film theory, as seen in *Bathing Babies in Three Cultures* (1952); it also served as the catalyst for reflexive evaluation of the anthropologist-filmmaker sparked by a lively interview of the two anthropologists conducted by writer Stewart Brand in the 1970s. Bateson and Mead's primary concern with visuals was systematic data gathering using photography, film and sound recordings (Banks and Morphy 1997:14-15). This approach ultimately allowed for the widening of critical analysis upon the filmmaker's interactions in the creation of ethnographic film. Brand's famous interview of Bateson and Mead (1976) explored not only the idea of the subjective artistic qualities Bateson favored in contrast to the purely objective reality Mead proposed, but also began to enrich critical analysis of the work anthropologists did through a reflexive look at the research method itself.

Following Bateson and Mead's work in the 1940s, observational approaches to ethnographic film became the mainstay of visual anthropology. The collaborative experiments that preceded them remained obscure, and the foundation of the discipline, formalized in the 1970s, progressed in a fashion that seldom considered the value of collaborative approaches outside of the anthropologist-filmmaker

centered model. The first major revisiting of collaboration would not come until the late 1960s with Sol Worth and John Adair's *Through Navajo Eyes* (1972), and was perhaps the first to consider implicitly the interaction between film-subject and audience. Likewise, workshops aimed at teaching and engaging cultural constituents (i.e. the film subjects) in filmmaking have not been widely discussed or documented within visual anthropology, with the notable exception of Vincent Carelli and his Video in the Villages work in Brazil beginning in the late 1980s (Aufderheide 1995:83).

Despite more than a century of experiments and research into visual methodologies the primary work of anthropologists remains the written word. Work in visual anthropology continues to be at the edges of greater anthropological inquiry and theory. Yet, attempts to bridge the descriptive power of written language with the visually demonstrative characteristics of film and video have continued to be fostered in new ways as technology has changed. Notably the work of Timothy Asch and Napoleon Chagnon in *The Ax Fight* (1974), an ethnographic film concerning a fight in a Yanomamo village, blends film and written analysis. Their work presents first the unedited footage, followed by anthropological analysis and description, and a final edited version. In 1996 Gary Seaman and Peter Biella collaborated with Chagnon to produce an updated interactive CD-ROM called *Yanomamo Interactive: The Ax Fight* (1996) that builds upon the original concept even further. More recent anthropological work includes Kansas State University professor Michael Wesch's short film *The Machine is Us/ing Us* (2007); which pushes to make the ethnography the analysis itself. Wesch's work questions the very way in which we perceive and interact with media technology, and demonstrates the evocative power that visual anthropology can have on a broad audience. These are but two examples of the ways visual anthropologists have attempted to address the gap between written and visual ethnography, and ultimately bring visual anthropology into the greater anthropological discourse.

The status of visual anthropology along the fringes of anthropological inquiry has inspired a varied and wide scope to its practice. A full analysis of the development of visual anthropology is outside the scope of this essay. Anthropologists Jay Ruby (2000), Anna Grimshaw (Grimshaw and Ravetz 2005) and David MacDougall (2006), among others, have written extensively on this topic and their historical accounts offer greater breadth where this account cannot.

Theory in Visual Anthropology – Praxis and Collaborations

Collaborative approaches to ethnographic film have long ignored inclusion of cultural constituents as integral to research design and execution. Much of the theory within visual anthropology has focused upon the objective versus the subjective perspective of the anthropologist-filmmaker as sole creator; characterized by the observational objective style of John Marshall's *The Hunters* (1958) contrasted perhaps with Jean Rouch's subjective ethnofiction *Jaguar* (1955). The anthropologist-as-filmmaker is essential to the dominant theories of observational film, more recently referred to as observational cinema, as these theories are predicated upon objectivity through the outside observer (see Grimshaw and Ravetz 2009a). Interestingly, David MacDougall stands out simultaneously as one of observational cinema's most versed practitioners and sharpest critics (Taylor 1998). His own examination of film-as-text notes an important departure from the strictly observational cinema theories and recognizes the interplay of primary elements involved in film. An advantage to treating a film as a text is that it then "lies in conceptual space somewhere within a triangle formed by the subject, filmmaker, and audience and represents an encounter of all three" (MacDougall 1998:193). This necessarily considers the perspective of the anthropologist along side, as opposed to above those of the film subject and audience. A disadvantage to this approach, though, is the implicit assumption that there must be a concrete meaning to be read from the film. This assumption of meaning potentially denies

impressionistic works, such as Robert Gardner's *Forest of Bliss* (1985), to be accepted as ethnographic film. However, when considering collaboration or lack thereof, we may forgo any intentional meaning within a film and still examine the relationship between these three elements (filmmaker, subject and audience) in regards to perception and representation.

The importance of recognizing the filmmaker-subject-audience interplay is demonstrated by Anna Grimshaw and Amanda Ravetz's examination of the film *Salseman* (1968), directed by Albert and David Maysles. In their book *Observational Cinema* (2009a), the authors focus upon the power of the Maysles' observations in contrast to editor Charlotte Zwerin's subjective assembly of the final 90 minute film. Interestingly, Grimshaw and Ravetz's analysis ignores the film subject's response while favoring instead the response of the audience (the authors) and the implied meaning held in the cinema vérité style used. This clearly demonstrates the intersection of filmmaker and audience, but ignores the subject completely. Furthermore, the meaning of the film as discussed by Grimshaw and Ravetz relies upon a lexicon rooted firmly in Western theories of film, thus precluding alternate interpretations to that meaning. While this interpretation may be acceptable to the audience and the filmmaker, it is unclear if it is agreeable to the film subject. The authors' analysis includes no mention of subject participation in the design, filming or editing of the film; from which we should inquire as to the appropriateness of the Maysles' representation. A collaborative approach on the other hand, must consider carefully not only the filmmaker-audience interactions, but also the film subject's interaction with both as well.

Despite the narrow focus upon anthropologists and filmmakers within visual anthropology, there has been previous headway on collaborative ethnographic film. One of the most well known collaborative ethnographic film projects, briefly mentioned earlier, is Sol Worth and John Adair's *Through Navajo Eyes* (1972). The ambition of Worth and Adair was to investigate a 'Navajo' way of seeing — by eschewing the predilection for the dominant Western cinema format of previous ethnographic films — what we

now refer to as a form of *cultural media* (Ginsburg 1991:92-93). The resulting short films however, were considered by some to be unwatchable to a general Western audience, likely due to the emphasis on sharp cuts and long walking sequences (see Callenbach 1973; Collier and Collier 1986); the experiment has not been reproduced in its original form to date.

At the heart of Worth and Adair's experiment was recognition of the influence that Western theories of film have upon representation. The issue of representation is especially pertinent for people sensitive to historical traumas such as colonialism (e.g. Adams 1995; Archuleta, et al. 2000; Child 2000; Turner 1992). Worth and Adair's consideration of Western influence has since been echoed, if not intentionally engaged, by Vincent Carelli and his Video in the Villages project. Started in the late 1980s the Video in the Villages project works primarily with Amazonian groups in Brazil. A key aspect of Carelli's approach is the positioning of the cultural constituent as the filmmaker, through workshop training and experimentation. One project outcome for the Amazonian groups has been a more effective means to engage government and private agencies that have historically marginalized them. The anthropologist works collaboratively with the filmmakers to produce short films that contain the cultural specificity that satisfies ethnographic inquiry, while also serving the distinct needs of the filmmakers and their communities.

While discussion concerning the subjective reality of filmmaking and editing has been constant in the dialogue of visual anthropology (see Grimshaw and Ravetz 2009b; Hockings 2003; MacDougall 1991; Mead 2003), the discipline has rested predominantly upon ideals such that "the ethnologist alone … knows when, where, and how to film" (Rouch 2003a:87). This perspective has held the anthropologist in the hallowed position of filmmaker while tepidly exploring subject participation in *participatory cinema*, though still ignoring a truly collaborative approach (Collier and Collier 1986:157). As such, there are no strong models for collaborative ethnographic film within visual anthropology.

Although not among the mainstream, models of collaboration do exist within anthropology and are often found within the discipline of practicing anthropology. Two prominent authors on the subject of collaboration include Luke Lassiter and Marietta Baba. Lassiter's approach to collaboration emphasizes the role of the community studied, the cultural constituents, in the research method itself through *reciprocal ethnography* (2005:8-9). Reciprocal ethnography is an approach whereby the anthropologist continually adjusts their perspectives and interpretations through dialogue with cultural constituents during the research phase. Lassiter thus repositions the anthropologist-subject relationship into one of clear mutual understanding, as opposed to the more hierarchical interaction that has prevailed – as seen in Timothy Asch's model of post editing feedback that seeks *ex post facto* approval of the final product (Asch 1992). Asch's approach seeks only final approval of the anthropologist's work, which the subject may not even be able to read, let alone appreciate the full impact of. In contrast, Lassiter's approach requires a rethinking of the anthropologist-filmmaker's role in producing ethnographic film; in this manner it implicitly engages in MacDougall's triangle of interaction and considers prominently the issue of representation.

Marietta Baba, likewise, proposes a more direct interaction between anthropologist and subject, especially in regards to the Western conception of knowledge. Although her discussion is in context to the disconnect between practice and theory in applied anthropology, the core of her argument engages a holistic approach to reconciling multiple knowledge systems through acknowledgement of the subjective experiences informing knowledge (Baba 2000:26). This approach stands in opposition to purely observational theories of ethnography by embracing subjectivity. Similar to Lassiter, Baba seeks to gain better understanding through recognition of subjectivity as a part of knowledge.

While applied outcomes may not be at the fore of visual anthropological method, it is undeniable that such work has been interlaced within the discipline's history. It should be of little surprise then that past

experiments in collaborative ethnographic films served not only the academic purposes of the anthropologist, but often the political or practical needs of the film subjects as well. One example of this can be found in Elizabeth Wickett's work in rural communities of Egypt and Pakistan, and serves to demonstrate the convergence of praxis and theory ethnographic video may serve. Her work investigated deployment of development agendas, and utilized video as a mode of communication between rural housewives and development agencies (Wickett 2007). Employing Baba's model of praxis theory would further develop the work of anthropologists such as Wickett by fully accounting for the cultural knowledge systems of the film subjects.

Stonewall Mountain and Flat Ethnographic Film Workshop

In the context of collaborative ethnographic film, the Stonewall Mountain and Flat Ethnographic Film project provides a notable case study into the potential of such approaches. The still in-progress project is led by Dr. Jeremy Spoon, an applied anthropologist and assistant professor of anthropology at Portland State University, working alongside Southern Paiute elder and Co-Primary Investigator Richard Arnold. I was fortunate enough to be invited by Dr. Spoon to observe a five-day filmmaker workshop for the project held last June. The Stonewall Mountain and Flat project is part of a larger research initiative that emphasizes collaboration, indigenous perspectives and government-to-government communication between Native American tribal governments and Nellis Air Force Base (NAFB) in cultural land management (see Spoon 2009). The ethnographic film project more specifically seeks to document the Stonewall Mountain and Flat landscape, which is an important cultural cross-road for many Native American groups in the region, though part of the landscape is restricted by state and federal agencies. The workshop was designed to engage five Native Americans of varying ages, tribal affiliations, and genders, in the creation of an ethnographic film concerning the importance of the landscape. Each

individual was selected as a representative by their respective nations as representatives to NAFB and expressed interest in participating in the project. Throughout the workshop they were referred to as 'native film technicians', and I have adopted this description herein as well. I have also refrained from using their personal names out of respect to the on-going nature of the Stonewall Mountain and Flat project. In addition to the native film technicians, attendees included project staff, government agency representatives, as well as a local filmmaker and his assistant hired to aid with filming and editing.

The workshop was planned to aggressively maximize the short time frame available. Methods for accelerated anthropological research stem from the field of practicing anthropology, in which Dr. Spoon has experience and has adapted them to this project (for an introduction to methods in practicing anthropology see Ervin 2005). The overall approach to the workshop was open, engaging and predominantly interactive throughout. A great emphasis was placed on creating a warm environment for all participants, and Mr. Arnold excelled at providing a friendly humor to keep everyone's attention sharp while easing transitions in the agenda. This was an important component in regards to the intense proximity of the group during the five-day workshop. Activities within the workshop itself could be broken down into three major components: lecture, discussion and practicum. These were not strictly delineated divisions or periods of time, but rather serve to conceptually convey specific strategies utilized during the workshop, while providing a functional guide to the following discussion.

Lecture

Lecture components were kept to a minimum during the workshop, but nonetheless were necessary. As an invited guest I was asked to give a small presentation on the field of visual anthropology and ethnographic film theory. This was presented early on in the schedule and provided an informational backdrop from which further discussion developed. Although my presentation was primarily lecture format, it too engaged the filmmakers in a discussion about visual meaning, imagery and perspective,

which would resurface in later discussions and the practicum evaluations. The hired filmmaker, Wolfgang Muchow, also provided several lecture style presentations. These covered basic film techniques as practiced in Western cinema, a documentary film overview with extended discussion on direct cinema and cinema vérité styles, as well as instructions and demonstrations on use of sound and logging film for editing. Mr. Muchow's presentations also included viewing extended excerpts from films such as *Salesman* (1968) and *Slasher* (2004) to demonstrate documentary film styles. In addition, Dr. Spoon and Mr. Arnold both engaged in information sessions concerning schedules and other pertinent planning tasks as required for the project.

Discussion

The primary component of the workshop was an interactive discussion and information gathering approach. Open discussion was highly appropriate to the diverse backgrounds of all participants. Reflexive exercises such as answering the question "what do mountains mean to you?" were utilized to elicit feedback from participants, promote constructive dialogue and help formulate parameters for the film. Often times Mr. Arnold would take the role of moderator while Dr. Spoon acted as scribe and facilitator. Both worked to keep participants engaged and on track for the particular segment of the workshop at hand.

It was within this discussion component to the workshop that the collaborative style was most evident. While Dr. Spoon and Mr. Arnold worked as collaborators in the familiar model of anthropologist and key informant that has been ritualized in the literature (e.g. Bernard 2006:196-200), their collaboration extends such methodologies toward more fully realizing the co-authorship proposed by Baba in regards to community engagement (2000). Mr. Arnold is simultaneously Co-PI and knowledgeable cultural constituent, actively engaged in the research design and execution. Adding to this is the inclusion of the five native film technicians and their contributions to the creation of the Stonewall Mountain and Flat

Ethnographic Film. Workshop discussion served not only to inform the participants, but also to establish the parameters of the film treatment. This was evident by frequent reiteration on establishing a vision or focal point for the film, which was to be determined by the film technicians themselves, and utilized as the foundation for the footage they would subsequently shoot. Furthermore, the film technicians were to assist in creating the scripts used for interview segments with American Indian elders to be included in the film. Most importantly, however, was the transparency of this design. Throughout the discussions emphasis was placed on the technician's presentation of cultural perspectives and respect to indigenous knowledge in an open forum. This notably goes beyond Asch's call for mere feedback as discussed earlier (1992), and engages the creation of ethnographic film in a deeper collaborative effort than seen in Wickett's development work (2007). Furthermore, the incorporation of Richard Arnold in the dual role of Co-PI and cultural constituent incorporates elements of native anthropology that anthropologist Takami Kuwayama has identified as lacking in Western scholarship (2004). Kuwayama's emphasis on incorporating native anthropological theory in ethnography recognizes the domination of Western knowledge in anthropology. This is parallel to the domination of Western film theories within documentary film, and also provides a well formulated discussion on collaboration outside of film.

Practicum

Hands on practice executing film techniques discussed and demonstrated during the workshop constituted the remainder of the sessions. Each native film technician was supplied with a handheld digital movie camera that would be their personal camera for the duration of the project. Exercises for the practicum portion were organized in to two parts. First was an equipment familiarization and technique practice assignment. Each native film technician was tasked with performing the pan, zoom, framing and other basic techniques demonstrated previously by Mr. Muchow and his assistant. To help familiarize them with filming other people, each technician was also tasked with producing a short

interview with another technician. Following this practice period the short films were reviewed by the entire workshop group on a projection screen, with comments from Mr. Muchow on technical aspects, and group evaluations provided through open discussion.

The second part of the practicum was organized as a field visit with the workgroup traveling to two locations of cultural significance to the native film technicians, and importance to the project overall. This half-day trip continued the rapport building and strengthened group solidarity while providing more hands-on experience. This practice built upon the previous exercises and discussions by setting a goal for the group: each technician was to conceptualize and record footage for a one minute long video. Footage was logged and clips selected for editing during the ride back to the workshop location made possible through the use of the in-camera playback capabilities of the devices. Each technician then worked with Mr. Muchow and his assistant at an editing station to produce the final one minute video from their footage. The final films were screened for the entire workshop on a projector. This final viewing provided a palpable sense of accomplishment and encouraging motivation to the group. It was at this point that individuals expressed a great relief and astonishment at the potential that lay before them, expressing a sense of empowerment through completion of the short videos.

Rethinking Collaboration in Ethnography

The Stonewall Mountain and Flat project is not the first to embrace the participation of the subject in the creation of an ethnographic film. Franz Boas certainly had the cooperation of the Kwakiutl in order to have them perform important ceremonies entirely out of context, due to the limitations of camera equipment in the 1930s (Pink 2006:7). The 1950s and 60s saw a limited number of attempts at more collaborative and more emic-centric ethnographic films as well. These included *Navajo Silversmith* (1966) and *A Navajo Weaver* (1966) from Worth and Adair's Through Navajo Eyes project, as well as

Jean Rouch's *Jaguar* (1955). More recently the Alaska Native Heritage Project has taken a notably more community-based approach to film by working closely with sympathetic filmmakers (Ginsburg 1991:96,109), and the Video in the Villages project formed by Vincent Carelli is at the fore of collective authorship (Flores 2009:101). Yet as John Malcolm Collier noted in the late 1980s (1986:157), experiments such as these are often isolated incidents not methodological standard, and this still holds true today. The Stonewall Mountain and Flat project, on the other hand, is yet another step toward immersive collaboration and concerned ethical representation. Within the project the collaboration is not exclusive to the production of ethnographic film alone; it is a core element of each stage of the research process. This places the project firmly in the model of collaboration called for by Luke Lassiter, to be inclusive at every point in the research process while maintaining transparency (2008).

The shift away from hierarchal interactions is a difficult road. Anthropology is no stranger to rapport and recognizes the value of consultants and key informants, yet co-authorship and representation are still among the debates that fuel the constant reevaluations of theories. This is evident by the proposal of a shift from observational cinema to participatory cinema as a reevaluation of the anthropologist's role in filmmaking, and critique on the limits of objectivity (Grimshaw 2002). This reevaluation examines specifically the filmmaker-subject interaction; but stops short of moving toward the repositioning of subject as filmmaker. Discussions still remain focused resolutely upon the anthropologist as filmmaker and reflect a resistance toward the fully transparent collaboration Lassiter proposes.

Looking at the treatment of collaboration within academic programs such as the Granada Institute in Manchester, UK reemphasizes the dominating role of the anthropologist. In her article *Teaching Visual Anthropology*, Anna Grimshaw gives a detailed account of her experience teaching at the Institute and the works found there (2001b). Her discussion of the film series *Disappearing World* is particularly relevant to the issue of collaboration and perspective from within anthropology; she states, "the films

were not 'found', that is, they did not originate in the subjects themselves, rather they grew out of the specialist research interests of anthropologists" (2001b:240). This could be interpreted to suggest a perspective that such works originating in the subjects lack anthropological rigor – such as indigenous conceived ethnographies like *The Scent of the Pequi Fruit* (2006) or *The Day the Moon Menstruated* (2007) – and also that anthropologist conceived ethnography is more complete in addressing the issues that arise in representation of other people. Grimshaw goes on to note the importance of experiential learning in the Granada program (2001b:242-243). This further confuses the issue as it does not consider the experiential knowledge of the cultural constituents with whom the anthropologist-filmmaker collaborates with. This perspective, favoring the anthropologist over the cultural constituent, stems from the strong observational cinema approach the discipline has been dominated by.

It bears emphasizing that collaborative ethnographic film created from a purely anthropologist-centric model threatens to subvert the contributions of the cultural constituents. It may also undermine ethical representation of a people through bias (Grimshaw 2001a:7). David MacDougall keenly describes the tendency of film to be "liable to distortion" (1991:2) to which many groups of people are extremely sensitive. This is especially true of indigenous populations, which are a favorite among ethnographies (for discussions on indigenous representation see Cobern and Loving 2001; Ginsburg 2004; Smith 1999). Distortion may begin with filming, even before editing. For instance, a cultural constituent not familiar with the conventions of Western cinema may not be attuned to the full impact of using one particular style over another, or the audience's reception. For instance, we may look at Native American films in the United States. The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation in Washington are at once familiar with Western film and their own cultural ways. Their films *Coyote Stories along the Columbia* (2005), *Building Grand Coulee Dam* (2007), and *The Kettle Falls Fishery* (2009) all demonstrate a blending of Western film style, a cross between ethnography and political documentary, with their cultural perspectives on storytelling. The films demonstrate an awareness of the interaction between the

audience and Native Americans as both filmmakers and film subjects. Although the shift to fully acknowledging the cultural constituent, such as in the Colville films, goes against a legacy of anthropologist-centric authorship; a movement toward fuller collaboration is consistent with an ethical anthropology.

Conclusions

There is an unfortunate lack of transparency within visual anthropology concerning collaboration and ethnographic film. This is troubling concerning how representation is addressed for groups trained by anthropologists to film themselves. Especially groups not already prepared to engage a film audience, nor versed in film appropriate to their needs. Among those collaborative efforts that position the film subjects as reflexive filmmakers along side or in place of, instead of beneath, the anthropologist, we receive limited discussion on the methodologies used to mitigate such problems (e.g. Aufderheide 2008). The continued dominance of these Western film styles among ethnographic films is not without note though, and there has long been a call for more investigation into cultural media and representation (e.g. Ginsburg 1991; Heider 2006:48). This is not to say there is no place for Western film theory among ethnographic film, as that would grossly deny decades of discussion and critical theory. Rather, it is an acknowledgement of the limitations or complications that such theory and style may inadvertently impose, and a call for more rigorous treatment of collaboration in line with ethical imperatives.

The question of how anthropologists should model their treatment of collaboration, and ultimately co-authorship in regards to film should be at the forefront of current ethical discussions. The Stonewall Mountain and Flat Ethnographic project is a case study that may yet serve as a springboard to this end, but this requires the engagement of a discipline to recognize such a need. The realization of a fully collaborative ethnographic film project, one that embraces the film subject as co-creator not just in raw

footage or administrative ‘okay’, but throughout the design of the anthropology itself, is a profoundly humble approach to creating cross-cultural understanding. I am enlivened by the potential realization of such work within visual anthropology.

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