

**Knowledge and Perception: Demystifying
paradigmatic orientation in visual anthropology
and its effect on ethnographic film**

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Abstract

Ethnographic film theories, like the social sciences, are divided between positivist theories and interpretive theories. The literature of ethnographic filmmaking only implies this distinction, with the assumption that a certain theory of filmmaking will lead to a certain type of film. However, there are no explicit distinctions in the contemporary literature of what makes a theory, and thereby a film, either positivist or interpretivist. This dissertation makes an explicit distinction between these types of theories in ethnographic film theory, and then makes use of a semiotic film analysis of each type of film in order to assess if the distinction holds, both theoretically and practically.

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Chapter 1:

Introduction

Ethnographic films are records of cultural significance (MacDougall, 1998d: 260). There are two main definitions of ethnographic film in the visual anthropological literature. The inclusivist, or pluralist view, and the exclusivist view (Tomaselli, 1999:163-176). The former sees all films as being of anthropological worth. Films are about people and are useful to an anthropologist as a means of understanding the cultures of those portrayed in a film and those who make the films. Ethnographicness is a quality in film, making films better or lesser representations of ethnographic knowledge. True ethnographic films show ethnographic intent and have the highest possible ethnographicness (Heider, 1976: 1).

The exclusivist or pluralist definition narrows the definition of ethnographic film. Specific research intent by anthropologists produces ethnographic films. These films are not useful because of their degree of ethnographicness (Heider, 1976). Rather a film is either ethnographic or it is not. This limited definition places ethnographic film specifically as an anthropological practice rather than the focus on filmmaking itself (Ruby, 2000: 10).

The definition that this dissertation will make use of, is the exclusivist one. This limits the acceptance of a film as ethnographic by the exclusivist definition. The theories in the visual anthropological literature are an understanding of films' use in a research capacity. However, the literature on ethnographic filmmaking lacks a coherent structure, as Jay Ruby states:

The literature about ethnographic film has been hampered by a lack of a conceptual structure sufficient to the task of allowing anthropologists to theorize about how film can be used to communicate knowledge. It is a failure that burdens all discourse about nonfiction film. As a result, authors have concentrated on making proscriptions and programmatic admonitions, and telling war stories

about how a film was made. Other topics of discussion have been the assumed dilemmas between science and art; questions of accuracy, fairness, and objectivity; the appropriateness of the conventions of documentary realism; the value of film in the teaching of anthropology; the relationship between a written and a visual anthropology; and collaborations between filmmakers and anthropologists and the native production of visual texts (Ruby, 1996: 1347).

In the above excerpt, Jay Ruby gives a succinct description of the state of ethnographic film theory in visual anthropology. The main debates have been over whether film is a science or an art (cf. Heider, 1976), the nature and lack of realism in non-fiction films (cf. Loizos, 1992, 1997), questions of accuracy and objectivity of knowledge gained from film (cf. Heider, 1976), the difference between film and written accounts as representations of knowledge (cf. Hastrup, 1992; Mead, 1995), and ethics of ethnographic filmmaking (cf. Pink, 2000; Ruby, 2000). Each of these specific accounts will be given a brief description in this introduction in order to orientate the reader with these issues. The focus of this dissertation is to develop a conceptual structure for ethnographic filmmaking, which is lacking in these theories as noted by Ruby (1996) above.

To begin I will offer a brief description of these areas of debate in the visual anthropological literature. Each of these debates gives more description and admonition than prescription about ethnographic film. It is as a medium of entertainment and art that film is normally associated. This becomes worrisome for scientific intellectual practices as film lacks the capacity for use for scientific purposes (Heider, 1976: 4). The practice of ethnographic filmmaking needs to differentiate itself from traditional entertainment film. For ethnographic film to be validated scientifically this separation of ethnographic film from entertainment cinema, needs to be made.

Realism in film is another of the debates in the visual anthropological literature. Through convention, ethnographic film and documentary film represent reality for audiences, as it exists through the manner of recording and editing images (Loizos,

1997:82). This is in opposition to entertainment fictional films, which construct their own realities. Film realism as depicted in documentary and ethnographic film is as constructed as a fictional film (Tomaselli, 1999: 52). The perceived realism of these films is due more to the conventions that structure them rather than as a fundamental characteristic of these films. In semiotic terms, these films are realistic through the codes that give these films their meaning.

Stemming from the issue of realism is the concern with accuracy and objectivity (Heider, 1976: 50). To be useful film needs to record images in a way that makes them more amenable to scientific enquiry. If film is a realistic recorder of reality then it does so objectively. However, due to the constructed nature of film it is not an objective record. The accuracy of the record depends not on its objectivity but rather the purpose of the filmmaker (Ruby, 2000: 140-141).

The difference between filmic and written accounts of ethnography is the fourth strand of the argument (Hastrup, 1992: 8-10). Film as a medium of representation provides specific pictorial information, while written accounts are more apt at representing academic thought because of their generalizing indexical nature. Since film is specific, it is unsuited to academic argument. It can however be used to illustrate anthropological issues.

Ethics is the final concern in the literature of ethnographic film. In academic research, the subjects of field research are not merely receptacles of information that researchers may treat in any manner. Researchers are to treat subjects in a fashion that respects their rights and way of life. In ethnographic film, this ethical obligation is also paramount, as filmmakers need to be responsible to the individuals that they represent in a film. Ethnographic filmmakers must work with the subjects of their films in a respectful manner that does no harm to those individuals (Ruby, 2000: 138).

While there is an attempt to consider issues of filmmaking as a scientific endeavour, there is also a general distrust of film as a medium of research. The issues are descriptive of

what is lacking in film. Film representation while useful, is not to be trusted completely. As Ruby (1996: 1347) has noted, there has been no conceptual structure with which to place these debates into larger theoretical concerns. The need for a conceptual structure becomes important in order to offer visual anthropologists a means to analyse the perspectives on ethnographic film from a coherent theoretical viewpoint.

This dissertation will develop a conceptual structure based on the paradigms of social research. Ruby (1996) calls for a conceptual structure to be developed from within the visual anthropological literature. The approach that this dissertation will use differs from Ruby's (1996) vision in that the structures are general to the social sciences.

Research practice in the social sciences is divided between positivism and interpretivism (cf. Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999; Crotty, 2003, Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Each of these paradigms has a specific ontology, epistemology, and methodology. This dissertation will make the implicit distinction between positivist and interpretivist theories of ethnographic film explicit, so that the debates can be better situated. These distinctions are at the theoretical level within the visual anthropological literature. An investigation in the practise of ethnographic filmmaking will show the impact of the paradigmatical divisions on filmmaking practise. This will allow us to see the degree of prescription that a paradigm of ethnographic filmmaking will have on a produced film.

The conceptual structure is a means to delineate the debate on ethnographic film as discussed above. The structure will be able to offer new perspectives on the debates in the literature. This dissertation will not deal specifically with these debates. Rather, the development of the conceptual structure will enable us to deal with these issues. The structure will offer a new depth to the understanding of ethnographic filmmaking. Thus, the structure does not replace the debates on ethnographic film; rather the structure augments our understanding of these issues by placing them in a new frame.

This dissertation will begin with an overview and general description of the paradigms within the social sciences in Chapter 2. This chapter makes the distinction between

positivist and interpretivist theories of research apparent. The specific ontological, epistemological and methodological orientation that each paradigm encodes, along with its historical origin, describes the character of each paradigm. A number of theories and understandings give each paradigm its specific character. The chapter will develop and state the definitions needed in order to make sense of the ethnographic film theories in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3 explicitly identifies the paradigmatic divisions within the social sciences within the ethnographic film theories. With the understandings of Chapter 2, we will be able to classify ethnographic film according to paradigm. This chapter will offer corrections of a number of assumptions in the literature, as well as address other inconsistencies.

The purpose of this chapter is to make explicit the distinctions between positivist and interpretivist theories in the ethnographic film literature.

Chapter 4 will describe the semiotic film method developed by Keyan Tomaselli (cf. 1999). This method's use will be applied to an analysis of two ethnographic films for their paradigmatic sympathies, *The Hunters* by John Marshall and *Les Maîtres Fous* by Jean Rouch. The table of phanerescopy (Fig 2.) structures the use of this method for film analysis. This table will set out the structure of the analysis of each film in Chapter 5.

The penultimate section of Chapter 5 will be the specific analysis of two ethnographic films. Each film will correspond to a specific paradigm; *The Hunters* with positivism while *Les Maîtres Fous* with interpretivism. Each film is analysed using the phaneroscopic table to make its paradigmatic character specific.

The final chapter will conclude as to whether the divisions according to paradigm are attainable at both the theoretical and practical levels in ethnographic film theory and filmmaking. If the divisions at the theoretical level determine the character of a film with a specific character, then said theory is a prescription of a film type. All of the specific concerns within the literature on ethnographic film reside within the structures of the divisions made at the paradigmatic level.

Chapter 2:

The Paradigms of Social Science

This chapter discusses the traditional theoretical debates and contentions found in the social scientific literature. The perspectives between positivism and interpretivism as paradigms of research are delineated here¹. Each paradigm incorporates specific epistemological, ontological, methodological and theoretical orientations. Positivism has become somewhat of a social scientific straw man; however as will be argued, positivism has undergone a remodelling of its views on knowledge as has occurred with natural science. Interpretivism as a paradigm is not a single theoretical orientation as a number of theories share the same epistemological and ontological positions. I will, however, not be arguing for one paradigm over the other. This chapter will focus on shedding some light on the debates and definitions that lie within the literature on the paradigms of social science.

The distinctions drawn between the paradigms will be the structure with which to organise the theories of ethnographic film in the next chapter. The correspondence a theory has with a particular paradigm will be used to arrange these theories. The distinctions made in this chapter allow us a means to define the ethnographic film theories to come in the next chapter.

Describing the paradigms of social science

Research in social science is not a homogenous endeavour as in the natural sciences. In the social sciences, researchers make use of a variety of potentially competing theories and methods in attempts to answer questions about social phenomena. The formulation of these questions and the means to answer them may fall within certain research traditions. These traditions supply their adherents with specific perspectives on the nature of social

¹ The division is a broad one and in my analysis I will leave out some theoretical views that are prominent in the social sciences. The division is a traditional division that has existed in the social sciences for some time. My attempt is to show how the debate between positivism and interpretivism has changed.

research, often in contrast to competing theories and methods. The social sciences have a rich but fragmented theoretical/methodological history making the landscape of terms often confusing even within research traditions (Crotty, 2003: 4-7; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:6; Lincoln & Denzin, 2000: 22).

These traditions are paradigms (Terre Blanche & Durrheim: 4, 1999; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000: 19). Paradigm is the term used by Thomas Kuhn to describe how periods of science are distinct traditions rather than historical extensions of previous scientific traditions (Kuhn, 1970:10). The use of the term in the social sciences is to delineate perspectives on the research process. Each paradigm, or tradition of research, offers its followers a specific view of how to go about research and why. A paradigm is an orientating description for a number of theories that share similar views and pursue similar ends.

The use of paradigm describes broadly the philosophical and methodological assumptions that a given research practice has (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999: 6; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000: 22). The ontological, epistemological and methodological concerns define a particular paradigm's research character. From this view, a paradigm offers researchers an orientation from which to conduct their research.

Ontology is the philosophical study of being (Crotty, 2003: 10; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999: 6; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000: 18). That is, ontology is concerned with the order of reality and a human's experience of it. The character of reality allows researchers to understand the conditions within which research will take place. How a paradigm defines its ontology orientates a researcher's expectation of what is researchable in a meaningful reality.

Epistemology is the concern with the nature of knowledge (Crotty, 2003: 8; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999: 6; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000: 18). Here researchers are concerned with the meaning that an individual can have of knowledge. It is both an understanding of the means of gathering knowledge and the character of that knowledge once gained. Gaining knowledge (Epistemology) takes place within a view of reality

(Ontology). A paradigm’s epistemology is effectively a description of the nature of truth and meaning.

Research methodology refers to the processes that researchers apply to gain knowledge as determined by a paradigm (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999: 6). The methodology of a paradigm helps researchers structure the practical designs of their research. In a particular methodology, information gathering makes use of a number of research methods. These methods and methodologies broadly dichotomise research into either qualitative or quantitative. This distinction entails that the methods used are either mathematically based (Quantitative) or ‘word’ based (Qualitative) (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999: 6; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000: 8-9). Quantitative methods, abstract from experience, give researchers a general view of a phenomenon, while qualitative methods are naturalistic and give researchers specific knowledge of social situations.

At the epistemological level, the two paradigms of research are incompatible. However, at the methodological level these paradigms may both make use of quantitative and qualitative methods. There is no exclusive link between paradigms and methodologies (Crotty, 2003: 13-14; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999: 8; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000: 4). Each of the perspectives are suited to answering specific kinds of questions, thus researchers are able to use a variety of theories to answer different questions in certain circumstances. Researchers are able, and are encouraged, to suit their methods to answering the questions that they have. The table below gives a schematic overview of the distinctions between the two paradigms of research:

Paradigm	Ontology	Epistemology	Methodology
Positivism	Realist	Objectivist	Experimental
Interpretivism	Relativist	Constructionist	Naturalistic

Fig 1: Paradigms of Research

Positivism: The Battered Straw Man

The first of the research paradigms is Positivism. This paradigm of social research attempts to emulate the natural sciences. Proponents of this paradigm strive for a social science that has the same character as the natural sciences. This paradigm attempts transference of the ontological, epistemological and methodological dimensions in the physical sciences into the social sciences (Crotty, 2003: 27; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000: 9).

Positivism's ontology is a realist one (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:6; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000: 9). This holds that reality exists independently of those who are able to view it. The external physical world operates independently of any human experience. Reality is static and fixed. For the positivist, the world is comprised of neatly delineated predictable events. These events are law-like as they follow expected patterns.

Positivism has an objectivist epistemology (Crotty, 2003: 18). Objects exist as meaningful entities independently of any conscious experience of them. Scientists discover the meaning of these objects through experimentation, while making sure not to influence the results. Truth is unambiguous. Truth is absolute as an object has only one meaning. The meaning of an object once discovered is the only meaning that the object contains. Truth in positivism is singular and absolute; there can be only one correct answer to any question (cf. Crotty, 2003; Benton & Craib, 2001; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

Positivism makes use of an experimental methodology. These experimental designs require a deliberate manipulation of an event/state and then a test to see if there was a corresponding effect due to the manipulation (causation). These designs are usually quantitative, which are mathematical and statistical measures whose use is to determine whether a cause actually determines an effect. The use of these procedures aims to remove the presence of the researcher's bias (subjectivity) from the experiment as truth or falsity depends on these measures' objective assessment of reality rather than on the subjective perspective of the researcher (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999: 6).

Post-Positivism

The positivist paradigm has undergone a revision, which has led to a renaming of positivism as post-positivism. The shift between the two conceptions of scientific social science is around the understanding of truth. Post-positivism is a challenge to the assumed absoluteness and dogmatism that is inherent in this paradigm. Truth by this new conception of the paradigm is not an absolute certainty but rather a provisional understanding open to retesting. The two scientists best known in this regard are Werner Heisenberg and Niels Bohr (Crotty, 2003:29).

Heisenberg (2000), one of the founders of quantum theory, puts science's (and positivism's) claims of certainty and objectivity into question. This challenge comes in the form of the "uncertainty principle" (Crotty, 2003: 30). This principle states that it is impossible to determine both the position and momentum of a subatomic particle with any real accuracy. Scientists are unable to predict with certainty where a particle will end its course. Also, the very act of viewing the particle affects the course that it takes. What this principle achieves in science is to turn the laws of physics into relative statements, and to some degree subjective statements, rather than reify them as objective certainties.

Niels Bohr won the Nobel Prize for his work on the structure of the atom (Crotty, 2003: 30). For Bohr (1987) the limitation of science is ontological. The problem of uncertainty does not lie with the scientist but is rather due to the way that atoms exist. Atoms occupy a reality that is different from the one that we as humans inhabit. Scientists need new concepts in order to deal with these atomic worlds, as traditional concepts cannot provide accuracy. Bohr urges scientists to complement traditional scientific concepts with other kinds of descriptions that offer a different frame for scientific consideration.

Both scientists – Heisenberg and Bohr - sound knells of uncertainty within positivist science. The unity assumed in science cannot be taken as given any longer. There is also recognition that there is a contradiction between what science says it does and what it

actually does. In addition, science does not adhere to verification as is required, as many of the facts used in these theories are not observable at all. Truth is no longer an absolute as there is now more tolerance for a researcher's subjective effect on a research result.

A shift in positivism is a direct consequence of change in the understanding of the nature of science itself. Three philosophers of science challenge the precepts of science's superiority. They are Karl Popper, Thomas Kuhn and Paul Feyerabend. Each of these philosophers challenges the theoretical assumptions that science makes about its practice and whether their theories of science have an influence on the character and understanding of post positivism.

Karl Popper

For Popper (2002), advances in science are not just about making discoveries and proving them correct. Rather, scientists make guesses that are then unable to be proven wrong. Popper (2002: 18) develops his principle of falsification in order to address the relationship between valid and invalid knowledge. Popper also challenges the role that induction plays in the scientific method. Induction assumes that if an event proves true in a certain circumstance, then it will prove true again later. Since Induction is not an empirical fact, it can never prove anything with absolute certainty. The consequence is that scientists cannot assume an event will recur with absolute certainty.

Popper offers a solution by substituting falsification for verification in the scientific method (Popper. 2002: 64). No matter the amount of support for a principle empirically, there is always the chance that it is wrong; truth is probable rather than absolute. This is because by induction only one counter-case is necessary to prove a theory incorrect. Scientists are not to prove a theory correct, but should rather try to prove it wrong.

Popper swaps the Baconian inductive process for his hypothetico-deductive model (Popper, 2002: 38-39). To regard any theory or hypothesis as scientific, it must be open to refute by observational and experimental methods. Researchers must present all

scientific theories as clearly as possible in order to open them up to be refuted by other researchers. Theories are only ever provisionally accepted, and then only after every effort has been made to refute them.

For Popper, theory shapes the context with which observation takes place (Popper, 2002: 37). There can be no detached observer in science. Truth is also not absolute, it is only something that has not been proved false. Scientific truth then becomes a set of provisional statements. There are no absolutes, only probabilities.

Thomas Kuhn

In his research into the history of science, Thomas Kuhn discovered that different sciences were different not by degree, but of a kind (Kuhn, 1970: 14-15). This challenged the view that science was a single incremental development that grew with more true knowledge. Kuhn argues that this is not the case. Science is specific to its historical context. Sets of ideas within different sciences were not just different, but incompatible. For Kuhn a 'newer' science rejects the views of a previous science. This is where a revolution in scientific practice will have occurred.

Kuhn questioned the objectivity and value-free neutrality of scientific discovery. Scientific method is not static and unchanging. Scientists do their work in and out of a specific background of theory that brings with it its own agendas. These theories comprise of a unitary package of perceptions about science and scientific knowledge. Kuhn calls these sets of knowledge a paradigm (Kuhn, 1970: 10). A paradigm is an overarching conceptual construct, a particular way in which scientists make sense of the world or some segment of the world. The prevailing paradigm is the matrix that stakes and sets the boundaries for scientific research and, in the ordinary course of events, scientific inquiry strictly follows in line with it. The refinement of the current theories under the paradigm is normal science (Kuhn, 1970: 44).

However, there comes a time when a paradigm is found to be inadequate by those working within it. The need for an entirely new way of viewing reality gains acceptance due to various factors. This is when paradigm shift occurs (Kuhn, 1970: 92). During this change of science, there is a willingness to try anything. Scientists give expression of explicit discontent with the previous paradigm and there is recourse to philosophy and debates over fundamentals in science. A period of extraordinary science called a 'scientific revolution' revokes normal science.

The picture of science that Kuhn depicts is not one of objective, valid and unchallengeable findings. Science is conceived of as a human domain, one in which human interests, values, fallibility and foibles all play a role. Science is no longer removable from human subjectivity.

Paul Feyerabend

For Paul Feyerabend, scientific progress is anarchic (Feyerabend, 1989: 9). This is not a criticism, as this description is necessary for scientific development. He also moves beyond Popper and Kuhn in his attitude to normal science. While Kuhn challenges the status of science, he never fails to uphold the importance of its problem-solving function. Feyerabend on the other hand is sceptical of the unchallenged continuance of normal science, alleging that it is indoctrination and constitutes a threat to academic freedom (Feyerabend, 1989: 9-13).

Feyerabend queries the role of reason as we understand it, not reason itself but rather he attacks static and oppressive versions of it. Scientific findings are no more than beliefs as science cannot be grounded philosophically in any compelling way. Scientific findings must not gain privilege over other kinds of belief (Feyerabend, 1989: 18-19). He stresses the absurd and unpredictable in scientific knowledge. The only principle that can be defended under all circumstances and in all stages of human development is that "anything goes".

This is not to say that Feyerabend has no norms of his own. He insists that scientists test out their perceptions (Feyerabend, 1989: 33). The willingness to do so constitutes the difference between science and non-science. For Feyerabend, adopting a certain point of view is a starting point, not a conclusion. Cranks will flatly deny that any issue exists or will be content to defend their position, but the respectable thinker tests out the usefulness of his/her viewpoint, and takes full account of factors that seem to favour his/her opponents.

Scientists can also test their perception through Counterinduction (Feyerabend, 1989: 20-23). There is a need for rules that will enable scientists to choose between theories that they test, and those that they falsify. Rather than an attempt to prove something false, it is a calling of commonly used concepts into question by developing something with which they can compare theories. Counterinduction allows scientists to examine something that they use frequently, but which they cannot discover from internal use. What is needed is an external standard of criticism; a set of alternative assumptions with which to test theoretical assumptions.

Feyerabend realises that scientific thinking, like all human thought, is historically conditioned and can never be absolute (Feyerabend, 1989: 35-37). What he recommends is that when confronted with unusual ideas one should try them out and attempt to push them to their limit. As there is no idea, no matter how strange or plausible, that has at least a sensible aspect or some sort of concealed stupidity. Rationalists are just trying to sell their own perspective of the world (Feyerabend, 1989: 35-37).

Interpretivism

The interpretive paradigm is a reaction to positivism (Benton & Craib, 2001: 29; Rabinow & Sullivan, 1979: 7). In order for positivists to understand social phenomena, they must objectify and remove those phenomena to an ideal context, making those phenomena more amenable to scientific investigation. Interpretive social scientists study the natural contexts in which social phenomena occur. They search for cultural and

historical interpretations of the social context that they investigate (Rabinow & Sullivan, 1979: 3). These paradigms are thus at odds with each other in the status that they attribute to social phenomena, as they occur naturally within a context and the sense that subjects make of these phenomena in these contexts.

As opposed to objects in the natural sciences, interpretivist theories make use of subjectivities in research. (Ratner, 2002: 5-7). The individuals who are the subjects of interpretive inquiry are themselves, as are the researchers, self-conscious beings (Rabinow & Sullivan, 1979: 13). As individuals, we are subject to the meanings that life presents to us through language or through our own reflective understanding of our lives. In the interpretive social sciences, it becomes vital that as researchers we make use of reflexivity. Reflexivity is our understanding of how our subjective views shape the way in which we see the world that we inhabit (Benton & Craib, 2001: 75; Davies, 1999: 4-7). By being reflexive, we reveal our own individual and contextually situated understanding of events. This becomes vitally important when we try to study the life worlds of others different from us. Reflexivity gives researchers a means by which to understand how their view of the world may shape an understanding of the world of another individual.

Reflexivity is important in interpretive research at the methodological level. It is an understanding of the procedural and personal forces that shape an interpretation of a researcher and the meaning of a text (Prosser, 2000: 104). Reflexivity is a structural characteristic of a text. The use of reflexivity is also an understanding that an audience is able to gain from a text. It is important that researchers reveal their motivations in research only if it has an impact on the meaning of the research. Reflexivity should not be procedural like a statistical formula used by a positivist researcher. Rather, we understand reflexivity as the presence of the researcher in a text as being either explicit or implicit (Cragg, 2005: 226-228). We can understand the notion of reflexivity by examining the theoretical origins of interpretivism and its epistemological character.

Interpretivism is not a monolithic paradigm. It consists of a number of theories that make use of a constructionist epistemology. These theories are symbolic interactionism,

phenomenology and hermeneutics (Crotty, 2003: 5). All of these views are committed broadly to the understanding of the social worlds of individuals through interpretation. There is a commitment in these schools to both subjective experience and objective reality. The difference between positivist objectivism and interpretivist constructionism is the status that each gives to objects as having meaning in and of themselves. The constructionist view sees an object only having meaning because of a subject that views the object.

The epistemological perspective of these schools of thought is constructionism, which is:

the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context (Crotty, 2003: 42).

Constructionist epistemology sees the social and natural worlds as existing concurrently. The generation of meaning is the interaction between a subjective consciousness and the objective world. Meaning is a construct due to the interaction between the two. An objective world exists independently of an individual, but that world only gets its meaning from a conscious engagement with it. Thus, meaning is neither purely objective (as in positivism) nor purely subjective.

While subjectivity is important to interpretive research, it does not follow a subjectivist epistemology (Crotty, 2003: 66; Davies, 1999: 17-18; Rabinow & Sullivan, 1979: 12). A subjectivist epistemology does not see knowledge as being constructed as it is in constructionism. The subjectivist determines meaning solely by the subject, who applies the meaning for an object to it. The object has no defining place in the generation of meaning. The meaning a subjectivist applies to an object comes from an individual's subjective perspective of the world.

Wilhelm Dilthey's (1989) early work on interpretation advocates an affinity between textual interpretation and the epistemology of the social sciences. He contrasted the interpretive approach found in the social sciences, called *Verstehen* (understanding), with the explicative causal approach used in the natural sciences, called *Erklären* (explaining). His proposal was that natural reality (i.e. objective reality) and social reality are in themselves different kinds of realities, and thus each type of reality requires different methods respectively (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999: 124-125).

We can separate methodology in the social sciences between qualitative and quantitative methods (Crotty, 2003: 15; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999: 7; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000: 8). Text-based methods are qualitative and are associated with the interpretive paradigm and mathematical methods called quantitative and with use within the positivist paradigm. Qualitative research tries to harness and extend the potency of ordinary language in a bid to understand a social context from the perspective of those who live in that context. Quantitative methods attempt to abstract away from a context by applying mathematical procedures. While certain procedures may find a more ready place in a specific paradigm, either of the paradigms can make use of quantitative or qualitative methods.

To summarize the description thus far of the interpretive paradigm: ontologically this paradigm is relativist (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000: 21). This view holds that meaning is context specific. Rather than an absolute or overarching 'truth', it suggests rather that a number of 'truths' exist simultaneously. Each context will have its own way of making sense of the world.

As already discussed, the interpretive paradigm develops from a constructionist epistemology. Meanings that individuals determine within their context become the means by which they make sense of the external world. Objects in one's environment make sense in specific ways due to one's context.

Finally, interpretivism makes use of naturalistic methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000: 21; Rabinow & Sullivan, 1979: 13; Harris, 2006: 229-230). This naturalistic methodology seeks to understand the meanings that occur within specific contexts. These methods are traditionally qualitative as they make use of the language of the participants. Language is the means through which we are able to make sense of the world, thus these methods help researchers to understand the perspective of those they research.

These paradigmatic descriptions are a distillation of the concerns of interpretive theories. Within the rubric of the interpretive paradigm, three main theoretical schools follow the above ontology, epistemology and methodology. As mentioned, they are symbolic interactionism, phenomenology, and hermeneutics. I will now specify a description of each of these theoretical positions below.

Symbolic Interactionism

The first of the interpretive theories is that of symbolic interactionism, based on pragmatist philosophy (Benton & Craib, 2001: 86). Pragmatist philosophy is founded on the assumption that knowledge is derived from the practical relationships that people have with objects. The concepts that individuals generate are argued to be derived from some kind of practical origin. If these origins were to change, so too would our knowledge. Knowing is dependant upon the environment where that knowledge has a practical basis.

Symbolic interactionism originates from the work of George Herbert Mead (1964) who analysed the self in pragmatic terms (Benton & Craib, 2001: 87; Crotty, 2003: 74). An individual is a process rather than an entity. It is through interaction between oneself and others that one is able to determine one's place in the world (cf. Mead, 1964). Individuals come to understand who they are in relation to their specific practical position. An individual arises out of action rather than just being. One of George Mead's students, Herbert Blumer (1969), was the first to coin the term symbolic interactionism and lay down the main tenets of the theory. The tenets as set by Blumer (1969: 1) are:

1. Human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them.
2. The meanings of such things are derived from, or arise out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows.
3. These meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he/she encounters.

Symbolic interactionism sees interaction between individuals as a means of interpretation or definition of another's actions through symbols (Crotty, 2003: 75). The uses of symbols, interpretation and discerning the meaning that an individual has for their actions in relation to others, all mediate human interaction. Rather than individuals just reacting to another's actions, individual action reacts directly to the meaning (or symbol) that an individual attributes to that action. For example, a police officer has a specific social position in society. This same police officer can only be a police officer due to the way that others understand this position. The uniform that such an officer wears is a symbol used to identify his/her position as a police officer to others. When the police officer asks someone to stop their car, they do so because of the social position of the police officer known through the symbolic position of that officer. Thus, an individual will stop their car when asked to do so by a police officer.

Research is an investigation into how individuals create meaning during social interaction with others by using significant symbols (Benton & Craib, 2001: 87). This theory is specifically concerned with how individuals present and construct their identities while doing so in relation to other individuals that inhabit the same social space as them. The only way that we are able to understand the point of view of another individual is through dialogue or symbolic interaction.

Phenomenology²

Phenomenology is the study of the structures of experience or consciousness. It is the study of the ways that things or objects appear to our experience of them. These are called phenomena (Moran, 2001: 4-5). Interpreters are able to generate meaning from these experiences of phenomena. The study of consciousness is from the first person, as individuals are the only ones who have direct access to their experiences of phenomena. An individual's subjective experience of a thing is the meaning that the thing will have for that individual's consciousness. The things that are experienced can be objects, events, or other individuals.

The concept of intentionality describes the interaction between consciousness and the objective world. Intentionality is the relation that consciousness has towards an object, as consciousness is always of something or about something (Moran, 2001: 47-50). When a mind is conscious of something it reaches towards that object and into that object. An active and intimate link exists between the conscious subject and the object of that consciousness. Conscious experience of an object directs itself towards the object and concurrently shapes that object by the conscious experience of it. For phenomenologists no object can adequately describe itself in isolation from the conscious experience of it, nor can conscious experience describe itself independently of its objects.

Phenomenology understands culture as a mediator in the meanings that individuals can bring to an object (Moran, 2001: 11). The social environment is as much an object for the generation of meaning as a physical object would be. Through a process of enculturation, we arrive at meaning in our cultures. By being part of a culture, individuals have the meaning of their world presented to them by that culture. Thus, being part of a culture places restrictions upon the meanings within the culture that we find ourselves.

² The description in this chapter is by no means exhaustive. There are a number of theories of phenomenology by a number of theorists. For a more detailed description of the different types of phenomenology see Moran (2001).

Phenomenology is critical of the meanings that culture presents to us. Rather, we must engage with phenomena directly, in an attempt to try to develop our own meanings for objects:

Phenomenology suggests that, if we lay aside, as best we can, the prevailing understandings of those phenomena and revisit our immediate experience of them, possibilities for new meaning emerge for us or we witness at least an authentication and enhancement of former meaning (Crotty, 2003: 78)

The meanings we have gained from culture need to be set aside to the best of our ability so that we will be able to engage with phenomena directly (Crotty, 2003: 80; Moran, 2001: 12). Phenomenology attempts to experience phenomena for what they are rather than how culture presents them to us. The phenomenological thesis is one that is critical of culture and its presentation of meanings to our experiences. However, phenomenology still acknowledges culture as that which allows us to reflect upon our immediate environment. While culture enables us to reflect on our environment, it also limits us because it has boundaries. Culture makes us human beings, but it does so in an extremely particular manner. We become specific to the extent that we may lose other potential meanings (Moran, 2001: 13-14). In addition, the meanings that are present to us in culture can become a means of oppression and manipulation. Thus, as individuals phenomenology expects us to determine the meaning of the world for ourselves.

Hermeneutics³

The last of the interpretive theories is hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is the study of the interpretation and understanding of texts. The term originates from biblical studies and is the science of biblical interpretation (Benton & Craib, 2001: 103). The explanation of what a biblical text means is called exegesis (Crotty, 2003: 87). These explanations are arrived at through the use of a number of theories and methods known as hermeneutics.

³ As with phenomenology, there are a number of different conceptions of hermeneutics. For a more detailed survey, see Crotty (2003) and Benton & Craib (2001).

The term is now also used in the social sciences and philosophy to refer to the number of theories and methods in the interpretation of texts broadly.

The usage of hermeneutics has not only been used in written texts, but also in understanding human practices, human events and human situations (Crotty, 2003: 90-91). These other domains are read and interpreted like written texts. Language becomes central to all areas of human activity, as human beings are essentially languaged beings. Language shapes the situations that we as humans find ourselves dealing with, the practices that we carry out, and the manner in which we reach understandings. Human reality and its situations, events, practices, and meanings are constituted by language.

In hermeneutics the process of interpretation is a paradoxical one (Crotty, 2003: 92). A text is distant and removed from the context wherein the interpretation takes place. While concurrently the text also has an immediate relevance to that very same context. There is a relationship between the text and the reader/interpreter which allows for an interpretation of that text to emerge within the context of the interpreter. While a text is removed in terms of context or time, they are still a means of transmitting meaning from the context in which the text is produced to the context of the interpreter of the text.

The meaning that is contained within a text is not just a purely semantic fact. Rather a text contains a number of tacit features that may not have been explicitly known to the originator of the text or explicitly intended (Crotty, 2003: 91-92). The intention of the author, his/her historical context, the relationship between the author and interpreter, and the particular relevance that a text has for the interpreter, are all examples of the implicit factors that shape the meaning of a text. These implicit meanings are essentially hidden in the text, and it is the task of the interpreter to make these implicit factors explicit in an interpretation of a text.

Hermeneutics, at its heart, is a practical exercise. How meaning is to be transported between communities and individuals is through a text (Benton & Craib, 2001: 104). The text is the site of meaning and its interpretation needs to account for how a text is to be applied. The meaning is not to be only judged theoretically but also needs to have some

practical or common-sense application. Thus, the sharing of meaning between communities and individuals situates interpretation both historically and within culture.

The interpreter of a text comes to understand a text through the process known as the hermeneutic circle. The hermeneutic circle is the understanding that the interpreter gains of the whole text through reference to its parts. Paradoxically, the interpreter comes to understand the parts of the text in reference to the whole of the text. No understanding of the text is possible without the whole or the parts of the text referencing each other. Hence the process is described as a circle because the means of understanding remains within the text cycling upon itself. The cyclical character of interpretation does not make an interpretation impossible, rather the text needs to be situated historically, contextually and literarily in order for an interpretation to be gained of the text (Taylor, 1979: 34).

The General Character of Interpretive Theories

The three interpretive theories all in their manner follow a constructionist epistemology. Each offers an understanding of interpretation that is a negotiated activity. Interpretations are never given; the individual who makes an interpretation does so through a process of negotiation. Symbolic interaction gives an account of how meanings are arrived at within a social space that we share with others. The meanings that we gain of ourselves are negotiated with those with whom we share a social space. Phenomenology provides a specific account of how meaning is generated with objects through the intentional relationships we have with objects. The meanings that we gain from objects need to be developed from our own individualities, rather than the meanings already present to us socially. Finally, hermeneutics explains how we make sense of texts from contexts different to our own. Meaning by this view is one that is negotiated with the originator of the text. Each of these descriptions follows a constructionist understanding of the generation of meaning with different emphases on the way meaning comes about. It is important to note these distinctions as it gives a nuanced understanding of how meaning is generated by the interpretivist paradigm.

Conclusion

The purpose for the detail in this chapter will be made clear when talking about ethnographic film theories and the paradigms on which they draw consciously and unconsciously, and/or explicitly or implicitly. Making the current distinctions will enable us to assess whether these hold for the ethnographic theories to be discussed in the next chapter.

To be able to describe a theory as either interpretivist or positivist requires that we know what each of these labels entails. Positivism and interpretivism are not single definitions in themselves. Positivism in its original conception is no longer credible as a scientific position. Science itself has changed its rigid and absolute view on the knowledge it produces, which has shifted to what has been described as a post-positivist view, where truth is probable and understating is more relative. To define a theory as positivist is quite distinct from calling a theory post-positivist, a distinction that becomes necessary when we come to examine ethnographic film.

As with positivism, interpretivism is not one specific understanding. A number of interpretive theories exist: symbolic interactionism, phenomenology, and hermeneutics. The commonality between these theories is the ontology and epistemology that they share based on a commitment to the role that an individual exerts in the generation of meaning. Knowing these theoretical distinctions makes it possible for us to understand how an interpretivist theory may define the role of the individual in the generation of meaning. These theories are not just an alternative to positivist theories, although they do react against them. Interpretivism is an understanding of how we as individuals come to make sense of our world through our own perceptions.

In the next chapter these distinctions will enable us to make finer divisions in ethnographic film theories. By making these distinctions we will be able to lay bare the points of view about ethnographic filmmaking in terms of these two paradigms. Distinctions made between theoretical views will aid in an understanding of the perspectives that exist in the debates in the visual anthropological literature.

Chapter 3:

The Who's Who of Ethnographic Film

The previous chapter distinguished a positivist from an interpretive account. In this chapter, these distinctions also differentiate the various theories of ethnographic film. Firstly, I will give an account and description of the positivist theories. Starting with a general description of how these theories define ethnographic film. I then examine two specific theorist/practitioners, Karl Heider and John Marshall. Secondly, interpretive theories will be analysed. I will discuss two early theorists of these types of theories, Jay Ruby and David MacDougall.

Positivist Ethnographic Film Theory

Film is an attractive research medium to the positivist paradigm. Positivism regards film as an ideal recorder of reality as it is a mechanical process. A positivist account tries to approximate itself with natural science using experimental research designs. These designs wish to remove the subjective presence of the researcher from the experiment. Researchers must keep the meaning that resides in the object of inquiry as pure as possible. Reality exists on its own terms and it is possible to capture it in a pure form with film. As a mechanical device, film is not subject to the bias to which a human researcher is subject. Film is a way of preserving the objects of study without the intervention of the researcher. This assumes that film offers a means of obtaining an objective record of reality (Prins, 1997: 283).

Positivist film theory argues for film's ability to capture reality, as it exists. These arguments find their greatest expression with Margaret Mead's (cf. 1995) defence of film as a medium of ethnographic research. Film for her is an ideal medium through which to preserve cultural rituals for posterity. This is because film is able to capture reality objectively. The debate over data capture by film and/or by writing has since been a long one in visual anthropology (Tomaselli, 1999: 62). This view argues that written

anthropology is more accurate than film because of its ability to be abstract and selective (Hastrup, 1992).

Observational filmmaking, for example, proposes a practice that assumes an accurate record of reality is one that removes the presence of the filmmaker from the film. This approach aims to capture reality as it exists, which is a positivist ideal. Observational cinema sees traditional documentary making practices as its opponent. I will detail below these two positivist positions and their arguments.

Salvage Ethnography

Positivism in film is indicated by 'salvage ethnography' (Grimshaw, 2001: 23-24). Margaret Mead (1995: 5), a proponent of this view, argues that the best use of film is in its ability to record cultural events for preservation. Preservation is motivated because of anthropological perceptions that indigenous cultures are dying out. Preserving them is thus argued to be important for future researchers who may not have access to those cultures. In order for these records to be useful, their recording needs to remove the subjective presence of the researcher/filmmaker. Mead (1995) proposes that this is possible by limiting the amount of movement of the camera while recording. By leaving a camera in one position to record an event on its own, that film record would be ideal, as the camera will capture reality objectively. This describes the long take; the camera records one subject for an extended period of time from one position. The film record is then a product of reality as it exists. The film captures the meaning that resides with the object of enquiry as it removes the presence of the filmmaker from the film.

While salvage ethnography regards film as an ideal recorder of reality (De Brigard, 1995:14-15), it is not a robust medium of research dissemination (Mead, 1995: 9-10). It is this lack of faith in film as a medium of ethnographic research against which Mead argues. The reason for the academic negativity towards film is due to the specific descriptive and iconic nature of its images. Film does not allow for analytical argument as is possible with written accounts. Academia is committed to analytical theorizing.

Kirsten Hastrup describes the division between visual and textual modes of representation in anthropology (1992: 10-14). Visual records are ‘thin descriptions’ that only give a record of the form of behaviour, while textual records are ‘thick descriptions’ that are able to offer an account of the meaning of those forms of behaviour. The written account has more of a propensity to offer a more meaningful account of cultural information (Hastrup 1992). However, the distinction that she makes is between photography and written accounts. Film is a mediating point between photography and written accounts.

Film presents researchers with a rich data source. The “value of the camera lies in its ability to do and record what the human eye cannot film” (Asch, Marshall & Spier, 1973:179). Film is a better record than a written description in preserving research in the field, as film records have the possibility of being able to present more information to researchers than what was initially expected. This view is in line with that expressed by Mead (1995) and is thus a commitment to a positivist notion of objectivity. The camera does not lie and therefore sees more than anthropologists are able to observe.

Observational Filmmaking

Positivist theory sees ethnographic film as being in opposition to traditional documentary. Paul Welles (2003: 188) describes traditional documentary: “documentaries [are] characterised by the use of voice over, a roll-call of experts, witnesses and opinionated members of the public, an apparently ‘real set of locations, footage of live events and ‘found’ archive material.” The procedures for filming ethnographic film differ from documentary film. The difference is that an ethnographic film encodes an aesthetic that is a true representation of reality. We call this an observational aesthetic.

Observational ethnographic filmmaking is associated with positivism (Prins, 1997: 288). This approach records events as if participants of the film do not know of the presence of the filmmaker, often referred to as the fly on the wall approach (Young, 1995: 107-110).

The audience and participants are supposed to ignore the presence of the filmmaker as in a normal fictional film. This type of filmmaking attempts to record events objectively by using long takes. This is a response to trying to capture a context that is scientifically useful and valid, and in opposition to traditional documentary film.

Traditional documentary films are enddistancing and do not present pro-filmic events as they occur naturally. These filmmakers record events based upon a script. These films follow an abstract word-based account of events (the script) and not the actual context within which the filming occurs (Tomaselli, 1999: 154-155). It is possible to describe these films as talking head documentaries, as they talk more than they show.

Observational films are a reaction to this form of documentary filmmaking. The purpose of these films is to record reality, as it exists without the influence of the filmmaker. This approach is a response to the manner in which documentary films present a dialogue about a context, rather than dialogue within a context. The purpose of these observational films is a commitment to recording reality.

The above description is of the positivist paradigm in ethnographic research. A number of theorists source this view incorrectly to the theories of Karl Heider and John Marshall (cf. Pink, 2001; Ruby, 2000). These theories are not purely positivist, as each theorist sees film as a limited representation of reality. Rather I will argue that these theories are post-positivist. For while they see film as unable to capture reality objectively and purely, each theory is still a commitment to an objective and ultimately knowable reality.

Karl Heider: Of Pens and Cameras

Neither Heider (1976) nor Marshall (1993) present themselves as positivists. The theories of filmmaking they propose are nevertheless implicitly so. Taking what we know about positivism from the previous chapter, I will show how and why these theories qualify as post-positivist.

Heider suggests that:

the task of ethnography is to achieve a truthful and realistic description and analysis of cultural and social behaviour, and I assume that the task is within the reach of a normal ethnographer. It follows that ethnographers attempt to achieve this in their work and that critics' base their judgements on the notion that truth and reality are achievable (Heider, 1976: 50)

For Heider (1976: 7) debate about ethnographic film is located in the tension between traditional cinematographic aesthetic concerns (developed in fictional and documentary films) and ethnographic scientific considerations (in this case the written ethnography that conforms to scientific criteria). Heider defines ethnography as "a way of making a detailed description and analysis of human behaviour based on long-term observational study" (Heider, 1976: 6). Ethnography is only possible through a written account, thus a truthful ethnography is a written one.

Accuracy and truth are both necessary for ethnography (Heider 1976:11). While various factors in the production of a written ethnography may distort the truth, trained ethnographers know how to counter these potential distorting factors in a written account. Documentary filmmakers manipulate the events in film in service of a higher truth, which they validate as an artistic goal. These films record events in service of an understanding. This notion of a higher truth is an artistic one, one that ethnographers must avoid in order for their work to remain scientific. What an ethnographic filmmaker must do is try and capture reality as it exists without the manipulation of the filmmaker.

Holism is another of Heider's (1976: 75) features that is necessary in ethnography. Holism is the ethnographic need to present whole bodies, personalities and behaviour within a cultural context. In ethnographic film the cinematographic use of close-ups in traditional filmmaking is to be avoided as these isolate specific features of a context rather than generalise a context. Films must capture whole bodies and whole acts in order

for them to be ethnographically useful. Ethnographic filmmakers must capture whole bodies using wide shots. The images of people in a film must present an individual completely, while also capturing whole acts in long takes to preserve the entire temporal sequence of an act within a film. Thus, a scientifically valid ethnographic film makes use of an aesthetic composed of wide shots and long takes (Heider, 1976: 75, 125).

Film in this approach is required to play a subservient role to a written account in scientific representation; “film is the tool and ethnography the goal” (Heider, 1976: 4). Ethnographic film is an attempt to represent a written ethnography visually. When judging the appropriateness of an ethnographic film we need to compare it in relation to a written ethnography and the traditional cinematographic conventions of filmmaking. These conventions are the manner in which film is structured to relate information.

Written ethnography also relates specific behaviour to cultural norms that can be generalised with theories (Heider, 1976: 8). Film however is visual and specific, making it difficult to pose general questions within the film as film is an objective record whose account of an event is fixed. Film can only capture an account as it occurs to a filmmaker. For ethnographic film to be scientifically useful, it must make the written ethnography the most important foundation from which the film will derive its meaning. The filmic representation of the written account must be structured in such a manner that it makes it easy to view for an audience, thus the film must also conform to cinematographic conventions.

While ethnographic film needs to conform to traditional film techniques, the filming of ethnographic film cannot follow the same shooting as traditional documentary films. An ethnographic account will require filmmakers to spend extended periods with the participants of their film (Heider, 1976: 125). This is to make sure that nothing is missed when an event is filmed. Traditional filming techniques used in documentaries, make use of a script, so filming becomes specific to the structure of that script and may lead to the loss of potential information. This would occur when the footage to be shot in the field has been decided upon before entering the field. If opportunities arise that are of

ethnographic worth they may be lost, as the script cannot consider these opportunities. A written ethnography allows a researcher to record an event that they may not have experienced first hand. The filmmaker however, will need to be present at an event in order to capture it. The written account is thus able to gain a true sense of what occurs in the field, as researchers are able to gain information from a number of sources. Film is only able to present information from the specific view of the filmmaker.

It is here that we are able to identify Heider's positivist commitment. For Heider, written anthropology becomes the best account of ethnographic research because it is considered an accurate representation of reality. Reality is an absolute state that exists to be recorded by a trained ethnographer. This commitment to reality is positivist in its espousal of a realist ontology and objectivist epistemology. Reality exists as a truth to be captured. Capture can only occur accurately through writing. The written account becomes the most accurate expression of reality as it exists and is an absolute account of it.

Film is a poorer account of reality than can be depicted via writing. Film is hampered by its iconicity. Images cannot confer general and abstracted accounts like in a written account. Heider discusses film in post-positivist terms, where film is able to capture reality but not absolutely. While film is not able to capture reality, as it exists, it is still a useful medium able to give specific representations that a written account cannot give. Heider is positivist when it comes to a written account in its ability to capture reality in absolute terms. Film is less suited to capturing reality in absolute terms making his understanding of film post-positivist. However, while this schism in paradigmatic terms exists at the representational level, Heider is still a positivist as he adheres to the belief that reality can be represented in absolute terms via a written account.

John Marshall: Reality's Advocate

Marshall defines the film making practice that he employs as *cinéma vérité* (Marshall, 1993: 72-73). In actuality, he is actually referring to direct cinema (Prins, 1997: 285). Marshall considers the terms as interchangeable, however. The distinction between the

two types of filmmaking may seem slight but the difference is crucial in determining the methodological orientation adopted by a filmmaker. Cinema vérité and direct cinema originated in different contexts (Grimshaw, 2001: 78, 82). Cinema vérité originated in Europe with filmmakers like Jean Rouch. Although direct cinema appropriated some characteristics of cinema vérité, as a practise, it was originated in the United States by filmmakers like Richard Leacock, Donn Pennebaker and Robert Drew⁴.

Cinéma vérité is a reactive cinema. The filmmaker's presence is a reactive entity that has an effect on the action that takes place in front of the camera (Grimshaw, 2001: 81), while direct cinema, like observational cinema, tries to capture reality in its own terms, negating the presence of the filmmaker (Grimshaw, 2001: 84; MacDougall, 1998: 115). In direct cinema, the filmmaker observes the patterns of action to be recorded (Marshall) while in cinema vérité, the filmmaker becomes part of the action (Rouch). Cinema vérité and direct cinema present two very different views of reality even though each type of cinema is a commitment to recording reality. The distinction between the two is the notion of the reality that is to be recorded.

Marshall's post-1978 films and videos are a form of advocacy for the Ju/'hoansi (Marshall, 1993: 20). In order for these films to be effective they needed to represent the reality of the Ju/'hoansi's lives. The challenge is to create films that break down the stereotypical myths of 'the Bushmen'⁵. These myths are western cultural stereotypes of the Bushmen as idyllic hunter-gatherers rather than as real people living their lives. The only way to destroy these myths about 'the Bushmen' is to show the 'undistorted' reality of their lives. The lives of these people are the true reality, the reality that the Bushmen themselves live.

⁴ The term cinema vérité was originally an attempt by Rouch to translate Dziga Vertov's kino-pravda (cine-truth) into French. The terms cinema vérité and direct cinema have been used interchangeably. Grimshaw (2001: 75-85) details the different contexts that informed the two similar styles of filmmaking. Cinema vérité originated in a colonial context while direct cinema stemmed from the civil rights movements in the United States. Direct cinema is similar in shooting style to cinema vérité, with a commitment to journalistic ideals.

⁵ The term 'Bushmen' is used in a generic sense to denote the Ju/'hoansi people (cf. Tomaselli, 1999). The researcher is aware of the controversies of the term, as its usage can lead to stereotypical constructions. This dissertation will make use of the term in the film analysis (Chapter 5), the term's use will be a means to describe the individuals in *The Hunters* and not as a stereotypical construction.

The camera for Marshall is a window that can be moved around (Marshall, 1993: 30). The camera is an unmediated representation of reality. The only limitation to the adequacy of the representation is the amount of distortion of that reality that a filmmaker brings to a film. This distortion is myth-making, it is where a filmmaker brings his/her own preconceived notions to a film about an existing reality. These distortions limit the accuracy of the film as a representation of the reality being recorded. What a filmmaker needs to do is try and represent reality as it exists, and be mindful of his/her own view of that reality. Marshall is cautioning filmmakers about their own subjective biases which need to be suppressed. This is a positivist notion of how research needs to be conducted: the researcher must remove his/her presence and allow the object of study to present its meaning.

The number of slots captured in a film determines the accuracy of reality depicted in a film (Marshall, 1993: 90). Slots are the specific events that happen around the frame of a film showing a particular event. They are the events that affect a current event, but are not all able to be shown at one time, because the window of the camera can only attend to specific information at one point. Reality is a composite of a number of slots. These slots together make up an overall view of reality. This overall view sees reality as an absolute and therefore entirely knowable state, although a composite one. It then becomes the job of the filmmaker to try to capture as many slots as possible within a film in order to get the most accurate representation of reality.

Marshall's commitment to capturing a true reality is indicative of his theoretical perspective. As discussed in the previous chapter, positivist views see objective reality as pre-existing as a whole. The challenge for a researcher is to try to give an accurate account of reality as it truly exists. This is exactly what Marshall (1993) articulates. It is a view that reality is knowable and that as a filmmaker one must try to limit one's effect on the final film.

Like Heider (1996), who sees a written ethnographic account as the best knowable source of reality, for Marshall (1993) reality is a complete state from which a film is made. Film as a medium captures reality in a weaker form than it really exists. Both accounts see reality as being ultimately knowable and existing in its entirety. Although Marshall does not advocate that a film be based on a written account, the manner in which he has conceptualized reality is the same way that Heider (1976) talks about a written ethnography. Essentially, reality based on slots and a written record are both ideal representational states that film needs to try to represent as best it can.

While the two theories aspire to an ideal representation of reality in their own ways, their views of the limits of film are also similar. This differs from Margaret Mead's (1995) account that sees film as an objective record of reality in and of itself. Marshall and Heider make no such commitment. Both approach film as being able to capture reality to a degree only. Taking what we know of the paradigms of social research into account, these theorists can be located as post-positivists rather than positivists when it comes to the nature of filmic representation. Reality exists as an absolute, but due to film's limitations, it is not able to capture that state completely. What film is able to do is offer a representation that tends towards reality. How much a film tends towards reality makes a film a lesser or better account of the reality that a filmmaker wishes to capture. Thus, film is only able to capture reality to a degree. It is this understanding of film's representational ability that makes both of these theories post-positivist.

Interpretive Theories: Just When You Thought it Was Safe to Go Outside

Interpretive film theory sees meaning as being generated by both the audience and filmmaker. Following a constructionist epistemology, these theories view the generation of meaning as being between a subject and an object. The film becomes the object about which individuals make sense. The manner through which individuals make sense of films will depend on their social environment and experience. Since these views take the audience's perception into account, the way that a film is made will also determine the form of a film.

A number of theorists of interpretive ethnographic film exist⁶. This analysis will consider two theorists: Jay Ruby (1977; 1980; 2000) and David MacDougall (1998). These theorists articulate respective interpretive theories. Ruby articulates a reflexive ethnographic cinema, while MacDougall develops a phenomenological approach. Each of these theories are exemplars of other interpretive theories in ethnographic film. Ruby's theory will be shown to be inconsistent with the methodology of interpretivism while MacDougall will be validated as a truly interpretive view.

In interpretive accounts, the audience is an active determinate of the meaning of a film. Arnold Shepperson articulates such an interpretive view of the audience (1994: 396-397). In a commentary article on Bill Nichols's book *Representing Reality*, Arnold Shepperson challenges Hansen *et al's* (1991) view on the way that specific types of films encode meaning. Hansen *et al* (1991) find few differences between ethnographic films on the one hand and pornographic films on the other, as both are argued to exhibit naked bodies. For Hansen *et al* (1991) the difference between the types of films is the way in which they are produced to evoke specific responses from their audiences. For Hansen *et al* (1991) the production of a film codifies a film's meaning in specific ways, thus different types of film have different production goals. Shepperson challenges this view. Rather than the film being coded to be either pornography or ethnography, what also determines the meaning of a type of film is the expectation that an audience has for a film. Shepperson (1994) argues that audience anticipation will shape the meaning derived from it. The anticipation that an audience has for a film is directly shaped by marketing and the context of exhibition. If an ethnographic film which does show naked bodies were to be shown in a red light district then it might be interpreted as pornography by audiences looking for this genre.

Another account of the role of the audience in determining meaning comes from Wilton Martinez (1992: 133-134; 142-145) who examines the meaning of ethnographic film from the perspective of the audience. Martinez opposes author centred theories that locate

⁶ Two other mentions would be Sarah Pink (2001) and Keyan Tomaselli (1999). Pink follows a subjectivist notion of ethnographic filmmaking. Tomaselli, like David MacDougall, describes ethnographic filmmaking in terms of a phaneroscopy, a phenomenological theory described by Charles Sanders Peirce. .

the meaning of a text as having been constructed solely by the author of that text; this view sees the text as having power over the audience and presents a single message. Martinez (1992) applies reception theories in order to examine how meaning is gained from ethnographic texts. His subjects were drawn from a class of University of Southern California visual anthropology students. What he found was that students were largely resistant to the messages that the films were supposed to engender. Anthropology's purpose is to challenge ethnocentric bias that westerners have of indigenous cultures. However, Martinez's (1992) results show that these students were reading the films in ethnocentric ways and that these views did change during viewing. The students were bringing in their own cultural perspectives in reading the films, which subverted the directors' intentions.

From both Shepperson (1994) and Martinez (1992) we can see an interpretive film commitment to the audience in the determination of the meaning. Audiences actively engage with a film and do not just passively receive intended messages. A commitment to an audience is the specific way in which to identify an interpretive film. With this in mind, we can then understand how different theorists argue for an interpretive film theory. This contrasts sharply with the positivist commitment to reality as a stable and absolute entity. Positivist films focus more intently on the creation of a film to better capture reality, rather than on the way in which audiences make sense of a film. This general commitment should be present in an interpretive theory of ethnographic film, which we will look for in the following two theories.

Jay Ruby: 'If it quacks like a duck...'

The first of the interactive theories is that offered by Jay Ruby (1977). Ruby describes an interpretive ethnographic cinema as one that is reflexive. By being reflexive, a film is able to give an audience all the information required to make an informed decision about how to make sense of that film. However, while Ruby identifies his theory as an interpretive one, his view is still very much a positivistic one. David MacDougall (1998)

attests this, and I will give justification to this claim from what is known about the two paradigms of social science.

Ruby (1980: 155; 2000: 161) denounces the positivist's view in anthropology. This antiquated paradigm's concern with the legitimization of anthropology as a science led to what has been described as a crisis of representation in anthropology (Ruby, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Criticisms levelled concerned the paradigm's naïve views on objectivity, truth and the progress of science. The previous colonial subjects of anthropological enquiry challenged the previous scientific legitimacy of anthropology. Scholars such as Edward Said (1979) presented a disturbing picture of the role that anthropology played in suppression in many of these communities in the name of colonialism. This challenged the tightly held belief that anthropology, as a science was an objective and unbiased scientific endeavour.

It is from this political climate that Ruby develops his vision for an anthropological cinema, one that is interpretive rather than positivist. Anthropologists are no longer able to invoke objectivity as a means of legitimizing their research. Positivist methods hide a range of intentions that the researcher has during the research process that will shape the outcome of the research (Ruby, 1980: 154; 2000: 153). Anthropologists now have ethical, political and moral responsibilities to those they research. The researcher is accountable for the impact that his/her research exerts on the subjects and the manner in which the subjects are being portrayed. Reflexivity as a method is encouraged, as researchers need to make sure that their presence and intentions are known in a study. This is done to ensure that the methods employed are transparent to others and that the representations of the subjects in a research project are not solely based on the conclusions of the researcher, but also the manner in which that research was conducted.

Reflexivity is described by Ruby (1977: 3-4; 1980: 156-157; 2000: 154-155) with the aid of the producer-process-product model appropriated from Johannes Fabian (1971). Firstly, the producer is the person who encodes the text, the process is the means, methods, etc. that shapes the text and the means by which it is sent, and finally the

product is the final text that represents the research. In his book, *Picturing Culture* (2000), Ruby adds the reader/viewer of the text in the process. The reader/viewer is responsible for the decoding of the text for its meaning.

Ruby talks of symbolic strategies when describing his notion of communication between the producer and the viewer in visual anthropology (Ruby, 2000: 184-185). This communication theory assumes that all kinds of pictures are culturally coded communicative events that are produced for a specific context. The producers use a variety of codes that are culturally appropriate for the specific target context. The meaning that viewers are to gain from a text is specific and is what the producer intends the viewers to gain. Thus a text has an intended impact that the producer wishes to impart to the viewer. Producers need to hypothesise the viewer's ability to derive the intended meaning with little hope of knowing whether the meaning they intend is received. However, viewers have an active role in the construction of meaning in a text, the relationship the viewer has to a text is that they either take meaning from it or supply meaning to it. A viewer can take the intended meaning that the producer intends and/or they can supply their own cultural meaning to a text. Most viewers, contends Ruby (2000: 184), attribute to a text what they already know about the world in which they live, regardless of what the producer intends. Thus, viewers are able to construct meaning that is contrary to what the producer intended the meaning to be.

Ruby gives a definition of what it means to be reflexive:

To be reflexive is to structure a product in such a way that the audience assumes that the producer, process, and product are a coherent whole. Not only is an audience made aware of these relationships, but they are made to realize the necessity of that knowledge. To be more formal, I would argue that being reflexive means that the producer deliberately, intentionally reveals to his audience the underlying epistemological assumptions which caused him to formulate a set of questions in a particular way, to seek answers to those questions

in a particular way, and finally to present his findings in a particular way (Ruby, 2000: 157).

Reflexive ethnographic film is a response to the objectivist assumption held about film (Ruby, 1977: 5; 2000: 161). Like a written ethnography, film can be used to capture a culture rather than present a record of a specific event or activity. This does not mean that film cannot be used as an objective record, but rather that film has more uses than just as an objective record. Film is a cultural product produced by individuals in an attempt to present certain points to their audiences. An objective record attempts to remove the presence that the researcher/filmmaker has on the film, with the assumption that film is an unmediated and objective means of capturing culture.

David MacDougall (1998b: 88-89) agrees with Ruby on the need for an interpretive theory of ethnographic film. MacDougall does not agree with the nature of reflexivity as described by Ruby. He refers to this type of reflexivity as external reflexivity. This type of reflexivity as an interpretive strategy is problematic. The definition that Ruby espouses does not go far enough as an interpretive method and the definition sees reflexivity as external to the text. External reflexivity proposes an external frame of reference that researchers make use of to assess the work. The external frame becomes the standard from which the work is judged. This makes the work more scientific as it permits an interpretation of the known bias in a work. There is thus the implication that there is an ultimately achievable “correct” interpretation in giving a text its scientific objectivity.

The interpretivist theory that Ruby articulates is more positivist in detail than interpretivist. MacDougall (1998) notes how the notion of reflexivity detailed by Ruby preserves a notion of objectivity. To put it another way, let us look at Marshall’s (1993) theory of slots again. This theory sees reality as composed of a number of events called slots, the more slots able to be captured on film, the better a representation of reality that film will be. Think of Ruby’s notion of reflexivity as a slot. By saying that reflexivity must reveal the producer’s presence in the creation of a film, makes it just another type of slot that we don’t normally see. What Ruby is essentially saying is that a reflexive film

by his definition is a realistic representation of reality as it is. This is thought of in absolute terms, which oddly makes Ruby a positivist, because of the strong case that he makes for this type of film as presenting filmmaking, and thereby reality, as it really happens. So a film becomes a way of representing how things exist in reality through seeing how the film is produced. Thus, Ruby's theory of reflexivity is a positivist one as it is an absolute view of reality.

David MacDougall: Transcultural Cinema

With David MacDougall (1998a), we begin to see interpretive theory that adheres to the understanding of interpretivism that follows a constructionist epistemology. This account gives the audience a determining status in the generation of meaning from a film. I begin with a description of this account by MacDougall. This account is phenomenological in nature as it argues for a bringing of object and subject together in meaning construction through intentionality.

MacDougall espouses the use of an observational filmmaking aesthetic associated with positivism. However, MacDougall refines the approach to suit a more interpretive method. In describing his approach to filmmaking, MacDougall describes it as participatory cinema (MacDougall, 1998c: 134). Rather than observe and record the lives of the subjects from a removed distance like in observational films, MacDougall approaches the film making process not just as a capturing of reality. In his participatory approach, the filmmaker develops the thesis of a film with its participants. Thus, the authorship of the final film cannot be ascribed only to the filmmaker, as the participants are also involved in the negotiation of the meaning encoded into the text of the final film. While MacDougall uses the aesthetic techniques of observational cinema, he goes beyond the observational approach's attempt to capture reality and rather constructs his films as a negotiation of meaning with those being filmed. The final film is thus mediation between the filmmaker and the filmed on the nature of the reality being filmed.

The meaning that a film encodes is also strongly determined by an audience for MacDougall (1998b: 79). In an ethnographic film, the audience understanding of events is what determines the final meaning. MacDougall later developed his participatory cinema to an intertextual cinema (MacDougall, 1998c: 137). This refinement of his earlier participatory approach sees the role of meaning construction as shared between the filmmaker, the participants and the audience. While similar to Ruby's distinction, MacDougall does not see each entity as existing independently from each other in the construction of meaning. The three entities exist as a single entity in the construction of meaning. The meaning rests as much with the audience as it does with the filmmaker or the filmed participants. If any one of these entities is absent then there can be no film, and thus no meaning.

MacDougall offers an account of how meaning is to be generated through an interaction with a film (1998b: 262; 271-273), thus a subject (audience) interacts (intentionality) with an object (film). This view also gives an account of how meaning is created in the film through the interaction between filmmaker and the participants. Together filmmaker and participants create the film of which the audience makes sense. Thus, when the audience watches a film they are also interacting with the filmmaker and the participants in the film to generate the meaning of the film.

MacDougall uses a nuanced concept of reflexivity, described by Lucian Taylor (1998: 18) as deep reflexivity, rather than that of external reflexivity as described by Ruby. This notion of reflexivity sees the position of the author of a text as an implicit manifestation in the film itself. MacDougall (1998b: 89) argues that the audience is able to discern epistemological and methodological choices that the filmmaker has chosen without having the filmmaker to explicitly invoke it. Reflexivity and the subject matter of a film coexist. The assumptions that the filmmaker brings to the subject matter will manifest in the film itself without the filmmaker's explicit intent to make it apparent. The epistemological position of the filmmaker is also the position that will manifest in the film by that filmmaker. The discernment of these epistemological and methodological positions is done by and the responsibility of, the audience. Audiences make the final

meaning of the film and are able to see the filmmaker's intentions. The responsibility of the reflexivity of a film is not just of the filmmaker but also equally of the audience (MacDougall 1998b: 89-90; Taylor, 1998: 18-19).

As discussed in the previous chapter it is important for interpretive researchers to have an understanding of reflexivity. The notion can be either a deliberate one or an implicit one. The danger with an explicit reflexivity is that it just becomes an itinerary concern. For Ruby (2000: 154) reflexivity is a structural commitment to representing reality as it truly is. Ruby is committed to the construction of a film rather than the meaning that is gained from it, or the meaning that a filmmaker creates in a film. This is a fixation on process rather than on the perception of the filmmaker. Reflexivity should not be only concerned with the creation of a text, but rather with the way that an individual makes an interpretation through a text. MacDougall realises this distinction, where an interpretive theory of ethnographic filmmaking is an interpretation that is negotiated firstly with the subjects of a film and secondly with the audience. Rather than the film having to follow a certain structure, film is ultimately an expression of interpretation. Reflexivity in a film is the site where meaning is generated by interpretations, and these interpretations are not fixed and absolute. A perspective gives insight into how a filmmaker, participant or audience make sense of the final film. Thus, in interpretive film theory, film is an expression or perception of reality rather than an absolute version of reality.

Conclusion

By having analysed ethnographic film theories in terms of their paradigmatic orientations we have been able to make some discoveries. The positivist film theorists discussed are actually more specifically post-positivists, a distinction that becomes important. The post-positivist view does not assume film as an objective record of reality, as the medium is too susceptible to subjectivity. Thus, although film is still a beneficial tool for research it is not able, due to its limitations, to capture reality as wanted by the post-positivist theory.

The interpretivist theories rather than regarding film as an unsuitable medium of research see subjectivity in any film as inevitable. These theories realise that a filmmaker is not the only individual who generates meaning in a film. The process of understanding is not attributable to any one individual involved in the process of meaning generation. However, the presence of those who make a film is not invisible. For this reason, reflexivity is argued to be important in a film, as the filmmaker is revealed. The disagreement becomes what form reflexivity should take. External reflexivity does not provide an interpretation, it is rather an attempt at a new realism. This reflexivity has a conception of what reality is, and it is this reality that must be shown in a film, making this conception of reflexivity more like a positivist view. Interpretation is not fixed, it is multiple. Thus, there can be no one correct understanding of reality. An interpretivist film should try to represent the perspectives of those who are portrayed and those who make a film so that an audience is able to come to their own understanding of those perspectives. There is no specific set and determined answer in an interpretivist film.

Thus, we can see that by looking at the ethnographic film literature we are able to note inconsistencies and understand the issues in a more specific manner. What needs to be done, in the following chapters, is to examine how these theories affect the way ethnographic films are made.

Chapter 4:

Semiotic Film Analysis

Film criticism...needs to move beyond mere analysis of the produced text and integrate questions of form, content, and con-text. Films, or even criticism of them, should never be taken for granted. It is a comment on academic practices that few books and articles on film deal with context/historical context, and the cycle of relationships that develop between the conceived and public texts. As important, is the need to examine the above intertexts in relation to con-texts and, indeed, concealed texts, those discourses and information suppressed by preferred readings (Tomaselli, 1999: 55).

The semiotic analysis is one that has been laid out by Tomaselli (1999: 29-48), and as described in the previous chapter is an interpretive view of the production of film. Tomaselli (1999) locates semiotics within a phenomenological framework of film analysis. Meaning is not the sole domain of the film or text but rather the generation of meaning between how a text is constructed and how audiences make sense of that text. Whether the meaning the audience gains from that text is the intended meaning is irrelevant, as we cannot change the interpretations that audiences make of a film. All that can be reasonably expected is to motivate and describe how those meanings are arrived at and are specific to particular audiences. The audience is as important in the generation of the meaning of a film as the film is itself. Film is the site of potential meanings that an audience makes sense of through their understandings of the world.

Semiotics is a method of analysis that investigates how meaning transpires within various modes of representation: language, pictures, performance etc. Semiotics is concerned with not only how these representations come to gain meaning but also how their prevailing meanings are the outcomes of encounters between individuals, groups, and classes. The meanings that are possibly generated, are bound within the purview of culture, which is the description that individuals have of the social, mental, and physical

worlds that they inhabit. However, within cultures there are struggles for meaning, which are made manifest in semiotic struggle. Representations are thus the site within a culture that embodies these struggles for meaning.

Meaningful communication within semiotics is through the propagation and understanding of signs and codes. **Signs** (or representations) are the minimal units that are required for the communication of meaning. A sign refers, stands for, or represents something other than itself called the object of that sign. The object is whatever the sign represents. This is not just a physical thing, but also possibly abstract concepts (Peirce, CP: 1.540; 1998: 4-6; Eco, 1976: 7). These signs either refer to meanings or are the manner in which meaning comes about through reference to the object. An example of a sign is the word “count”; this can refer to two types of objects, either a nobleman or as the act of determining the number of a set of objects. It must be remembered that a sign does not have to correspond to an actual physical object, but this makes the possible meaning of any one sign arbitrary.

The object that a sign represents is also known as the **signified**. The medium through which the signified is represented by a sign is known as the **signifier** (Tomaselli, 1999: 30). The signified, as already stated, need not correspond to a physical object, but also as shown by the example, is able to represent an action. The object acquires its meaning only within cultures that have use for or understand what is signified. Thus, a count can be either a benevolent protector of people in an unstable country during war or as an oppressor in an imperial colony. The meaning of the signified will be shaped within the understanding of those who make sense of the signified.

In Saussurean semiology, signs also belong to **paradigms**⁷ (Tomaselli, 1999: 39). Each sign is of a type existing with a set of other related signs. These paradigm sets exist externally to a text; they are a range of possibilities that can be used to replace an existing sign within the structure of a text. In film analysis, paradigms are determined by the actual character of shots within a film. A shot can be a close-up, mid-shot, wide-shot etc.

⁷ The usage of paradigm in this chapter will be in reference to semiotics. To avoid confusion, paradigm as used to orientate theories of social science will be referred to as ideology.

Why a particular shot size is chosen by a filmmaker is an attempt to invoke a specific type of response in the audience of the film. So, for any specific shot that is used in a film the other shots within its paradigm are noted due to their absence.

Signs, especially in film, are not independent and discrete within a text. When signs are strung together they form **codes** (Tomaselli, 1999: 31-32). Codes become the manner in which various types of representations such as film or language, have their signs structured for presentation. Codes are effectively the syntax that orders the signs of the various forms of representation. A film only tells a narrative when a number of images are shown together in a socially agreed upon way. These signs cohere to present information in expected ways to an audience. Codes are the way that authors of messages structure those messages for consumption by an audience.

Codes are also called **syntagmas**⁸ in Saussurean semiology (Tomaselli, 1999: 33). Syntagmas are the syntax through which texts are structured. They are concerned with the combination via which messages are structured. A text can have a number of different combinations and it is specific combinations that produce a specific and total meaning. Syntagmas and codes are both concerned with the overall meaning that messages have through their combinations of signs, as it is in the case of a film.

Paradigms are intertextual. Syntagmas and codes are intratextual by the Saussurean view, but as texts exist within sets or genres, they too are intertextual (Tomaselli, 1999: 33).

Intertextuality is the network of meaning within which texts interrelate. It is through these relations that cultures, language and genres are able to form. It is meaning that is

⁸ Syntagma originates from Saussurean semiology. Tomaselli (cf. 1999) warns that semiology is not able to easily account for documentary film. Semiology has a linguistic origin; this view works in binary oppositions, between signifier and signified, within language and more traditionally in written texts. Communication operates within the bounds of a linguistic model of it. Code originates from Peirce's semiotics (cf. Peirce, CP, 1998). The semiotics of Peirce are based within his philosophical view of pragmatism. Pragmatism by Peirce's account, is a philosophy where concepts are conceived and exist within reference to their practical consequences (cf. Misak, 2004). Unlike semiology where the world is divided between states, semiotics makes no such division. This view takes the experiences that individuals have about their world as viable. This view is not a linguistically based view, but rather one based on symbolic logic, allowing for a more robust and varied view of representation. This makes it possible to include not only written representations but also visual ones.

negotiated between groups of individuals. In the case of genres, producers of films or television, structure texts in such a manner that audiences know what to expect from each text. Thus, a particular crime film will evoke comparison with the other films within its genre. These films also become latently present as they define the specific films genre itself.

Meaning is created in messages through the process known as **encoding**, and the same messages' meaning is interpreted through a process known as **decoding** (Tomaselli, 1999: 32). The meaning of an idea that is elicited through the decoding process is known as the **text** or **interpretant** (Peirce, CP: 1.541; 1998: 304); these ideas take root in the mind of the individual who does the decoding. The text is a mental reconstruction of the idea generated through the act of decoding. Texts are specific constructions of codes or syntagmas.

The interpretant in the mind of the individual doing the decoding is further made sense of by another interpretant also within the mind of that person. The process of decoding potentially never ends and can be carried on ad infinitum (Eco, 1976: 15). The encoding of meaning that is intended by the author does necessarily lead to the messages being decoded in the way that is intended by the author. This is known as discrepant decoding, where there are an infinite number of possible interpretations for an encoded message other than the one intended when said message was encoded. This we can understand because there are multiple subjectivities able to apply their specific meanings to an object. Thus, the meanings that an object can have potentially can be infinite due to the possible number of subjectivities. Conventional genres are expected to be read in specific ways by their viewers. These specific interpretations are called closed texts. This has much to do with interpretations within an ideology. An ideology is an agreed upon way of looking at the external world. Thus, meanings are to be gained from certain objects in particular ways.

The Semiotic/Phaneroscopic Table and its description

Orders of signification	2 nd Trichotomy of signs	Nature of semiotics interaction	Phenomenology
1: Central Idea	Icon –Visual	Encounter	Being-there
2: Difference, Identity in the face of the “other”	Denotation Index Connotation Myth	Experience Transmission/ Transmitted text	Activity/doing Reading/writing conceived/received texts
3: Codes, Syntagma, Syntax and Form	Myth Symbol Common sense Ideology	Intelligibility Making sense	Public signs Produced texts

Taken from Tomaselli & McLennan-Dodd (2005: 225)

Fig 2: Phaneroscopic Table

Phaneroscopy like phenomenology can be used to describe the manner in which we interact with the world in general. When looking at film, there are a number of possible perspectives where this can be applied. There is the experience of the filmmaker, the participants and the audience. Each experience can be explained by phaneroscopy and how each different part of the filmmaking process makes sense of that process. The analysis to be used will be from the perspective of the audience. This analysis will require an understanding of the filmmaker’s position, as the intended meaning of a film enables an audience to gain an enhanced understanding of a film. This is not to say that an audience should or will read a film in the intended manner. It is from understanding the context of the filmmaker that an audience is able to create a reading of a film in their own terms.

Following the Phaneroscopic Table, there are three orders of signification. Each order corresponds to a category of signs as defined by Charles Sanders Peirce. The three basic signs are the icon, the index, and the symbol (Peirce, CP: 2.247). Each sign exists within an order that corresponds to Peirce's phaneroscopy, which is effectively Peirce's version of phenomenology. This sees a category of signs as existing within a certain space of the phenomenological experience of that sign. What this means is that certain experiences of signs happen within a specific phenomenological order. As discussed in the previous chapter, an interpretive paradigm has a constructionist epistemology of which phenomenology is a theory.

The analysis to be used makes use of the Table to discern certain elements and types of signs within a film. This is not to be taken as a reduction into separate parts. Rather the orders are discerned so that their synergistic effects on each other can be better understood. Each order of signification depends on the other two orders of signification in the generation of an overall meaning. A viewer is able to discern these individual parts, and these parts convey certain kinds of information when noted. The meaning that one gains from the film as a text will depend on all of the elements coming together synergistically. Thus, a semiotic analysis allows us to unpack how the overall meaning of a text comes about.

This can be understood by again looking at how constructionists understand the generation of meaning. In reference to the Table, there are three elements that make meaning. The first element that is needed for the generation of meaning is the object. The object exists independently; this corresponds with the first order of the Table. The second element is the interaction between object and subject through intentionality. This is the site where meaning is generated by a subject/object interaction. Again, in congruence with the Table, this intentionality stage falls into the second order. Finally, the last element in the generation of meaning, is the subject of the third order. The subject, or mind, or phaneron (to use Peirce's terminology), is where all mental concepts reside. The subject takes existing mental concepts (or interpretants) and applies them to objects. However, the object is not totally defined by the subject, as the object already exists with

a partial meaning before the subject applies any meaning to it. Through intentionality, an object gains a specific meaning for the subject as that subject makes sense of the object. I ask the reader to keep this in mind as I describe the three orders of signification and their corresponding signs in more detail below.

The three orders of signification are structured around Peirce's triadic descriptions of both phaneroscopy and signs (Peirce, 1998: 4-6). Phaneroscopy is, as already noted, Peirce's version of phenomenology (Peirce, CP: 1.284-1.287; 1.280). There are three stages or orders: Firstness (Peirce, CP: 1.302), Secondness (Peirce, CP: 1.322), and Thirdness (Peirce, CP: 1.377). Each stage gives description to how, as subjects, we make sense of signs as objects external to our minds. Each of these stages, or orders, is linked to a corresponding sign of which there are three types: icon, index and symbol. Each sign is linked to a certain stage. However, I will show that this categorisation is not as neat as we would like. The Table is a useful tool in analysis of any text. I will note potential issues and offer solutions in my description of this method of analysis as I proceed.

In the **first order of signification**, we have the **icon** that is a sign that resembles the object that it represents (Peirce, CP: 2.247). This category of sign is specific or motivated in its representation of what is signified. What is represented is specific because of the likeness between the signified and signifier. An example of an icon would be a photograph, a carving, a statue, or a film.

However, while the icon is a type of sign within this order of signification, it is not the only type of sign in the first order of signification. This order is the order that defines the material quality of a sign. It is what the sign is, physically or objectively. This does not only mean that a sign can only be an icon to qualify for this order of signification. It can also be a more abstract form of representation such as a written word which would be an indexical form of representation. At this order, a sign exists in its own terms before any human interpretation is made of that sign. At this stage, signs are things in and of themselves. With regard to the material nature of a sign, the sign does have a partial meaning as an object external to the mind of an individual.

Another consideration is that a sign at this stage becomes the representation for a reality. The representation becomes the means that an audience is able to gain information about a situation that they have not experienced themselves. Representation at this stage gives audiences a sense of 'being there', where 'there' is the reality that is being represented. The icon is the best representative sign at this stage of signification, because the icon has a physical resemblance to what it signifies. Thus, the signs at this stage of signification are the most direct link with what they represent. The later stages augment these signs with the meaning that the subject/audience provides.

In the **second order of signification**, the sign is called the **index** (Peirce, CP: 2.248). This category of sign draws attention to what is signified. The signified is unseen except for reference from an index that makes the presence of the signified known. A classic example would be a weather vane to show the direction and presence of wind which is not visible to the eye.

The categories of signs thus far described can be either **denotative** or **connotative**. An icon is denotative because the icon and the signified share a physical correspondence. For example, a statue of a male lion denotes a specific type of lion. Besides the denotative meaning that the statue has of a lion, there are also various associated connotative meanings. To some, the lion will represent power and nobility while for others it will be a representation of danger. The connotative meanings are not inherent within the statue itself, rather individuals apply these meanings to the statue, but the statue still maintains meaning as a representation of a lion. Thus, the connotative meanings are indexical signs rather than iconic ones. The connotative meaning of a sign determines the category of that sign.

The connotative and denotative distinction effectively is a division between the material existence of a sign (first order sign or an icon) and the associations to information that those signs make (second order sign or an index). The denoted meaning of a film or any picture, is conveyed solely through the action of the photographic image reproduction.

Effectively these are icons. Connotation however is determined by human intervention (intentionality, see above). The connotative meaning that an audience brings to a film will be shaped by the use of lighting, the format of filming, the camera angles used, the special effects and the way these are interpreted by an audience. Effectively all the ancillary processes that go into the production and post-production of the film. These processes are indexical signs that are used to generate other kinds of sensations in the audience other than those denoted in the image.

It is in the second order that an audience interacts with a text. Depending on the means through which this interaction takes place the meaning of the text will differ. For example, one can watch a film in a cinema or on a DVD in one's home. In the cinema, an audience receives the text passively as an experience in its own right. Watching a DVD allocates an audience more power over the meaning of the text both as a text to be consumed and as an object. As a text to be consumed it may be like the cinema experience, while the text as an object allows the audience the opportunity to extend the meaning. A DVD allows an audience to play back and skip forward through the sequence of the film. DVDs also come with production extras, giving audiences information on the production of the film. These experiences can be differentiated by the power that the audience exerts over the meaning of the text. Remember that an index refers to something other than itself. A film as an index refers to the production that produced that text which demystifies the reality that the text presents to the viewer. The viewer is able to differentiate between the film as a reality and their own reality.

The last order is the **third order of signification**. The basic sign at this order of signification is the **symbol** (Peirce, CP: 2.249). The symbol has no fixed and immediately identifiable connection with its signified. These signs are arbitrary or unmotivated; there are other linkages of meaning between the signifier and signified other than through conventions. For example, the new South African flag is a symbol. The meaning that is attributed to the flag is arbitrary because what is represented (i.e. the new South Africa) corresponds in no way physically with the flag itself.

This order of signification is the stage of **ideology**⁹ (Tomaselli, 1999:42). An ideology is an arbitrary understanding of the order of an event that is determined through subjectivities. In our case, ideology can be interchanged with paradigm. Ideology is not fact, it is a way of ordering available information with a logic that is internal to that ideology. Remember, the third order is the domain of the subject, thus information stems from the interpretant in the mind/phaneron of the subject. This has been noted when considering the epistemologies of the positivist and interpretive paradigms. Each paradigm has a specific way of ordering the world in order for meaningful information to be produced. These ideologies/paradigms will shape the overall meaning at both the encoding and decoding of any sign.

The generation of the interpretant in the mind of the interpreter depends on a variety of factors that may not have anything to do specifically with the production of the text. The interpretation of a text is affected by the historical environment within which the text is both encoded and decoded. These environments are called **con-texts** and are also affected by not just historical, but also social, economic and political forces (Tomaselli, 1999: 34). This is distinguished from context which refers to the historical material processes into which individuals are born. The definition of context is more general than that of con-text, which is specific in its definition of the immediate domain that affects the encoding and decoding of a text. Con-texts vary, and it is these variations that will shape the meaning of a text. Thus, meaning encoding and decoding are affected and determined by the immediate con-text in which they take place.

However, the intended effect is motivated by the third order - ideology. It is the ideology that will shape the paradigm choices of signs within the film. Thus, a positivist film will potentially, and by Heider's (1976) account definitely, make use of certain types of shots throughout said film. The paradigm of shots gives us an indicator of a film's ideological orientation. For example, Heider talks about an ethnographic (and by my account positivist) film needing to make use of wide shots. These shots are linked to a specific

⁹ Ideology is used in the semiotic method in the same manner as paradigm has been used in the previous chapters.

way of trying to capture information for ideological reasons. Ideology becomes the means through which the entire text is shaped. Another example of how ideology shapes a text is in Hollywood. Hollywood films follow a three act mythic structure, this structure affects the way that audiences experience the film and creates films with identifiably similar structures. The ideology then becomes the motivation that shapes the character of the final film.

Structure of Analysis

Two ethnographic films will be analysed using the semiotic method as described above. The films are: *The Hunters* (1956) by John Marshall and *Les Maîtres Fous* (1954) by Jean Rouch. Each has been chosen as an example of a specific paradigm or ideology.

The ideology of each film will be determined upon the con-text within which the film was encoded. The con-text of each film will be divided between the con-text of production and the con-text of interpretation. These con-texts will be established by evaluating the literature that exists on the production and interpretation of each title. Each con-text will be determined through the theoretical impetus behind the making of each film and the academic reviews of each film after production. The con-text will be the means through which we will be able to understand what the expected purpose of the film was to be. I hope thus to be able to determine the ideological/paradigmatic orientation that affected each films' construction. Through this we will be able to identify the epistemology that informs each film and thus the corresponding ideology/paradigm.

The first stage of the analysis will be the establishment of the con-text. The first order to be considered will be the third order of signification, as this will allow us to establish the ideology of the film. This then will enable us to note the effect each ideology has on the other orders of signification within each film. The purpose of each analysis will be to establish the effect that ideology/paradigm will have on the orders of signification of each film. Also, each ideology is a specific commitment to different epistemologies. How these epistemologies become apparent will allow us to categorize each film.

After having established the ideology of a film, the analysis will then apply the first and second orders of signification. The first order will be an analysis and description of the type of shots used in a film. This is a paradigmatic analysis. What shots were used from the possible paradigmatic set of shots becomes a means to understand how ideology is expressed at this level. The choice of shot will either be an implicit or explicit advocacy of an ideology. Remember, at this stage we are concerned with the material nature of the text, so the analysis at this point gives us a material description of a film.

The second order of signification becomes the means to understand the relationship between the audience and film. Again, ideology will determine the nature of the relationship. How audiences are expected to interact with a film and how they actually interact with a film can be separate things. Signs at this stage become connotative, allowing audiences to gain information from within the text that is not explicitly coded in the text. Thus, at this stage an audience is able to generate information from the film that is not explicitly intended.

Finally, through understanding these levels of signification it will be possible to note the impact of ideology on the total film. At this stage, in an analysis, we will be able to determine what kind of codes each ideology produces in a film.

Chapter 5:

Film Analysis

This chapter will analyse two films using the semiotic method. My investigation concerns how divisions at the theoretical/paradigmatical level translate into the practice of ethnographic filmmaking. Knowing the ideological sympathies of a filmmaker, it then becomes a matter of analysing each film through the orders of signification to assess whether or not their paradigmatical positions affect the character of a film in the orders of signification.

Both theories articulate specific practices in the making of an ethnographic film. These practices become tendencies towards a particular paradigm. The analysis of each film notes these tendencies. The tendencies will be either the positivist or the interpretive. Below, I describe the specific tendencies of the two paradigms. Each of these tendencies expects a film to belong to its corresponding paradigm.

Positivist Tendencies

Holism and Observation

Holism requires that a filmmaker frame his/her shots so that they show participants in context, where the context is, the place and action recorded. The emphasis on context is also advocated by the observational approach, which calls for filmmakers to use long takes. This theoretical tendency cautions against the use of close-ups in a film. The concern with the nature of the image construction places this tendency within the first order of signification, as a specific shot is an icon. The type of shot to be used is from the paradigmatic set of possible shots. Following this tendency, we can expect a positivist ethnographic film to be composed of wide shots, long takes and a static camera.

Chronological Code

A positivist film tries to capture a reality chronologically through its code or syntagma. The form of a film needs to be true to the order in which events occurred. Recording these events must then follow the structure of how the event occurred. This is linked with the principle of holism, as the filmmaker's intention is to record reality without the distortions that a filmmaker presents in a film. The order in which a film is presented needs to be structured following the chronological order in which it was filmed.

Interpretivist Tendencies

Deep Reflexivity

Deep reflexivity is the tacit or implicit presence of a filmmaker in a film. This takes place in the second order of signification. When an audience watches a film, they know they are viewing a product made by other human beings. The audience sees the film as indexical signs, which refer to the presence of the filmmaker even though the filmmaker is not shown in the actual film. This type of inference can only be achieved through the con-text of the filmmaker and the con-text of the audience. Where the con-text of the filmmaker is encoded into the film text, audiences decode the film through their own con-texts.

External Reflexivity

The second notion of reflexivity is more apparent in a film. This type of reflexivity articulates itself as the revelation of the producer and process of filmmaking. The filmmaker is shown to be making the film, which is the revelation of the process. This type of reflexivity exists at both the first and third orders of signification. As a first order signification, the filmmaker is shown in the text, thus at an iconic level we visually see his/her presence. This type of reflexivity exists in the third order of signification where

the process of editing a film is shown to the audience, thus affecting the way that the film is coded.

Structure of Analysis

Each analysis briefly describes the content of the film. The analysis is not a comment on the content of a film but rather the way that a view of a paradigm leads a filmmaker to make a film. The way the content is shot can reveal the paradigm of the film. A specific conception of reality leads a theorist to articulate a particular truth. This conception will lead to a certain emphasis in different aspects of the filmmaking process. Another reason that the analysis will not be focussing on the content of the film is that ethnographic filmmakers are attempting to represent another culture. Only the way that a culture is recorded is of interest in my analysis. The filmmaking techniques used implicitly or explicitly indicate the paradigms that they follow.

Analysis of Ethnographic Films

Analysis of *The Hunters* (1958) by John Marshall

Synopsis of 'The Hunters'

The Hunters documents the hunting practices of the Ju/'hoansi bushmen of the Kalahari. The film follows four hunters (≠Toma, /Goa, /Qui and //Ao) from the community as they track and attempt to hunt various prey in the Kalahari wilderness. The film pays particular attention to the relationships between the four men and the skills that they use in tracking and hunting down prey. These Bushmen are shown to have an intimate relationship and be a part of the wilderness in which they hunt. The hunters manage to wound a female giraffe and a chase begins that lasts for five days, at the end of which the men are triumphant in their hunt.

Con-text of Production

The Hunters was filmed between the years of 1952 and 1953 during the Marshall-Peabody Museum expedition (Marshall, 1993: 26-28). The expedition comprised of the Marshall family (Laurence, Lorna, Elizabeth, and John) and various other individuals. The purpose was to record Bushman culture. Lorna was to do an ethnography, Elizabeth would also do an ethnography and write, and John was given a film camera and told to film the Bushmen by his Father.

Laurence, John's father, was an electrical engineer by training and he believed in the ability of scientific method to be used in all fields. This view was a commitment to the belief of the objectivity of truth, which was to be gained through objective methods. This we know of as positivism, which is not surprising considering the era. During the 1950's, anthropology, like all of the social sciences, was trying to gain respectability as a science through positivist methods. This required that anthropology become an exact, reliable and replicatable pursuit. Film was a technical tool that could achieve the desired objectivity needed for scientific pursuit. This was impressed upon John who was asked to make a record of events and not a movie (Gonzalez, 1993: 182).

John learnt how to film with the aid of the Eastman Kodak *How to Make a Movie* guide. The guide laid down the accepted screen grammar that filmmakers were to follow. This required that a filmmaker work from wide shots or establishing shots to middle shots and close-ups when filming events. John describes another text as his scientific script. This was a compendium published by the British Association for the Advancement of Science called *Notes and Queries* (Marshall, 1993:35).

The final film was edited from a number of sources, that is, the hunt for the giraffe was not a single hunt. John used footage from a number of different occasions to tell the story that he wished to tell in *The Hunters*. One of the hunters initially shot the giraffe in the film from a Jeep. After an initial edit of the film, John returned to the Kalahari to shoot more footage that was used in the final film. Another Bushmen replaced one of the

original four Bushmen near the end of the film. John admits that the film was edited to drive the story forward rather than to capture the context in which the men found themselves (Marshall, 1993: 36-37).

Con-text of Interpretation

Marshall discusses his film as a representation of his own concerns about the Bushmen rather than the film being about their own reality. The role of a documentary filmmaker is as an advocate of those filmed and a statement of their perspective. This Marshall feels that *The Hunters* does not do. He describes his thoughts about *The Hunters*:

I do not regret making *The Hunters*. The film is a good example of a narrative documentary, but Laurence was uneasy when the film was released in 1957. He thought I should have made more of an effort with the record. I decided Laurence was right. *The Hunters* was a romantic film by an American kid and revealed more about me than the Ju/'hoansi (Marshall, 1993:39).

Karl Heider argues the ethnographic merit of *The Hunters* is based on its representation of the process of hunting (Heider, 1976: 31-32). The representation of the hunt was more systematic than any previous ethnographic accounts. This can be explained by the way that the film was shot, as the coverage of the events in the film is thorough. The film shows all the stages of the hunt and how the hunters practice hunting. The narration gives the viewer a sense of what the hunters are thinking as they are going about the hunt. The hunters are presented with specific personalities that allow the audience to identify with the men as individuals.

However, as an ethnographic account *The Hunters* is based on a false premise (Heider, 1976: 31-32). Heider details how the premise that the Bushmen had limited resources was shown to be false at a later date by anthropologists. The reason for this understanding was that anthropological knowledge during the fifties held that the Bushmen existed in a marginal environment and survived with inadequate subsistence technology. However,

this description was to be later challenged by anthropologists and shown that the Bushmen had an adequate and abundant source of food. The reason for misunderstanding was due to the Bushmen exaggerating their situation when researchers like the Marshalls arrived with abundant and readily available resources.

Semiotic Analysis

From the con-texts established above, we are able to discern the ideological perspective of Marshall during his filming of *The Hunters*. This is a commitment to a positivist view of science. The camera is an unbiased recorder of information that could be used as a preservation tool. The purpose is to preserve the culture of those recorded in an objective manner so that anthropologists will be able to analyse the information. An objective view sees reality as stable and thus amiable to recording and preservation. This view will tend towards an attitude to the process of filming.

It is thus expected that the ideology of the filmmaker (in this case it is positivism), will be present throughout the orders of signification in the film.

First Order of Signification

In this order of signification, we are concerned with the iconic and material nature of the film. The basic sign is the shot, or frame, which is an iconic representation. The film resembles the Bushmen in appearance, as one would encounter them in reality due to films photographic nature. This semiotic relationship is a motivated one where the representation of the Bushmen is specific of them. This is due to the likeness between the photographic representation of the Bushmen in the film and what they look like in reality. This is because the signifier (The Film) and the signified (The Bushmen) are visually similar. At this level of signification, viewers are given access to the world of the Bushmen as if they were experiencing that world for themselves as if they were the filmmaker. Thus, at this level the audience gains a pre-sense of 'being there' with the Bushmen, as the film is visually correspondent to the world that it represents.

In *The Hunters*, Marshall follows the first of the positivist tendencies, that of holism and observation. The types of shots are a selection from the paradigm set of possible icons limited by the ideology of the filmmaker. The images in the film are framed wide and are long takes. This gives a strong visual representation of context, as the Bushmen are shown to live their lives within the context of the bush. The framing of these wide, long takes captures the environment within which these people live and gives a sense of 'being-there'. All the segments in the film show complete action within its duration. The framing within the film is also static and there is little movement beyond slight pans. This gives an impression of looking out of a fixed and static window through which we view the action.

A specific example from the film would be the scene where the four Bushmen first encounter the giraffes. The scene begins with a wide shot showing all of the Bushmen. /Qui, still in this wide, prepares his bow and exits through the bottom of the frame. The next shot is another wide of /Qui running after the giraffes. This is a long take, as the frame holds as /Qui runs from the left of frame to the right. As he gets to the right, the camera pans slightly to the right. There is then a cut back to a medium shot of ≠Toma looking off to the right of the frame, then a cut to another wide and long take of /Qui running towards the giraffes. The last shot in the sequence is a wide over the shoulder exposure of /Qui shooting the giraffe with his bow. This last shot follows the entire action of /Qui hitting the giraffe with an arrow, from cocking his bow to landing the arrow and the reaction of the giraffe after it is struck.

Second Order of Signification

The second order of signification is where the interaction between the audience and the film takes place. It is during this stage of signification that an audience actively reads a film. The film is a conceived text but through the reading of the film an audience creates a received text. In this order, signs are indexical and refer to other meanings other than what they themselves depict. As noted in the first order of signification *The Hunters* is a

collection of iconic signs. These signs have denotative meanings in terms of what they represent. In the second order of signification, these meanings are also connotative, as an audience supplies their own meanings to a film.

In *The Hunters*, two specific indexical meanings draw attention. The first is the indexical link to reality that the icons have as described in the first order. These follow the positivist tendency described by holism. These pictorial representations are structured in such a way that the frame appears as if it is a window onto reality (to borrow Marshall's term). The type of frame does not confer this significance on its own; it is only when an audience views them – that is, generates interpretants – that a correspondence with reality occurs. Audiences actively construct a sense of 'being there' from the type of shots in a film. Looking back at the above example, the final shot of /Qui shooting the giraffe gives us the sense as if we are looking over his shoulder as he shoots the animal with his bow. This is the effect that practitioners of positivism want the audience to have. The intention of the filmmaker is to present reality as it is by giving the audience a sense of being there themselves.

The second indexical meaning comes from the narration of the film. The film is narrated by a young John Marshall, and ascribes the first order images a specific meaning. The shots in a film enable audiences to make their own interpretations of what is happening within the film. The narration is a guide for the audience on how exactly the film should be understood. As indexical signs, the narration connotes a specific meaning for the images. This is how we get the names of the Bushmen, the specifics of how the Bushmen track the animals etc. The iconic meaning is made specific with the narration.

Another connotative meaning of the narration is the presence of the narrator. The narration is an indexical sign for the presence of the narrator as an individual involved in the creation of the film. This is made more apparent as the film does not use sound from the context in which it was recorded. We do not get to hear the Bushmen for ourselves, which strengthens the presence of the narrator as our interpreter. This corresponds with the interpretive tendency of deep reflexivity. The audience is able to note the existence of

the filmmaker in the film implicitly in the construction of meaning. Thus the narration of the film becomes indexical of the construction of the film.

Third Order of Signification

Symbols are embedded in the third order of signification. The connection between the meaning of an object and the symbol is arbitrary. The application is due to convention rather than to any identifiable link between the meanings applied and the object to which it is applied. Ideology is located in this order of signification and in the specific case of this analysis, ideology is interchangeable with paradigm.

In this production con-text, the film follows a positivist ideology. We can also see an affirmation of positivism in the first and second orders. The positivist ideology is both intended and practiced in the making of the film. However, when we come to analyse the editing codes or syntagmas we see that the film fails to follow the chronological tendency. This we know from the context of production, where Marshall (1993) describes how the film was edited together with stock footage. The overall sequence depicted was not the order in which the events occurred. Each smaller sequence of action however, follows a chronological ordering. This is known because the smaller sequences make use of long takes, which allow actions to complete themselves within those takes. Thus, while the overall sequence may not be chronological, the minor events in the film are recorded in this way.

Conclusion of Analysis of The Hunters

The Hunters is not a purely positivist film ideologically. The expectation that the film is to be such, is made apparent in the con-text of the film. In the first order, there is a commitment in the selection of iconic signs with respect to the positivist tendencies of holism and observation. The second order indicates how these denotative signs become indexical of the reality they record, thereby strengthening the positivist intention to present reality as it is encountered and is thought to exist. The film is positivist in both

the first and second orders, however as Marshall (1993) noted, the film is more of a representation of his views as an ‘American kid’ regarding the Bushmen, than the perspective the Bushmen had of their own lives. The narration is an indexical sign for Marshall’s interpretation of the action within the film. His perspective through the narration propels the film forward. The film’s code does not present its signs chronologically, thus not meeting the second positivist tendency of chronology. Nevertheless, the scenes within the film follow the sequence of events as they unfolded in reality, thus in specific instances the film follows the chronological code. Following with the definition of positivist film in Chapter 3, we may not be able to call *The Hunters* a positivist film but we can categorise it a post-positivist film. As the film is not an exact record of reality, it does however offer accurate recordings of events in their own rights.

Analysis of *Les Maîtres Fous* (1954) by Jean Rouch

Synopsis of ‘Les Maîtres Fous’

Les Maîtres Fous deals with spirit possession in Niger during the 1950’s. The film begins in Accra where members of the Hauka cult start their journey. They travel to a ceremonial compound where the spirit possession takes place. The spirits that possess the men are identified as members of the British colonisers of the country. The film shows members of the cult being possessed by these “European” spirits of the Hauka. These individuals foam at the mouth, are not able to be burnt by fire and sacrifice, boil and eat a dog. The film concludes with these individuals returning to Accra as normal individuals in that society.

Con-text of Production

Les Maîtres Fous was filmed by Jean Rouch in 1954. To understand the influences behind the film we need to look at Rouch’s life. Rouch’s early personal history is the source of his view of the world and subsequently his attitude to his work (Stoller, 1992: 24). Rouch was the son of a naval meteorologist (his father) and the daughter of a family of painters and artists. He was exposed to both the worlds of science and art from the

influence of both his parents. From his father he gained an appreciation of the hard sciences, while his mother instilled in him an appreciation for the arts.

Rouch studied at the Ponts et Chaussées, a civil engineering school in Paris. Rouch referred to the school as the school of make believe (Stoller, 1992: 25-27). The school advocated an approach to science of building bridges and roads as if they were works of art. Paris during the late 30's was a great time for intellectual life. Surrealism¹⁰ had branched with a new school called the Collège de Sociologie and in 1938, Paris was the site of the International Surrealist Exhibition and also the year that the Musée de l'Homme was founded. (Stoller, 1992: 27)

At the Musée de l'Homme, anthropologist Marcel Griaule had installed a film theatre. It was here that Rouch discovered the works of cinema that would affect his later career (Stoller, 1992: 26), such as the work of Robert Flaherty. Flaherty was invited to the museum to present two of his films, *Nanook of the North* and *Moana*. It was from these screenings that Rouch began to develop an interest in anthropology. He would develop this interest through a course in anthropology given by Marcel Griaule he would take in his final year of studies. (Stoller, 1992: 26)

After having graduated, Rouch took up a civil engineering post in Niger. It was during this time that Rouch first discovered the world of spirit possession in the Songhay culture. After experiencing and photographing a possession ceremony, Rouch sent Griaule his notes which was to be the start of Rouch's career as an anthropologist (Stoller, 1992: 30).

Rouch's background offered him a robust view of the role of representation. As both a scientist and an artist, he understood the limits of how film could be used. He took the medium and used it to represent what traditional scientific methods could not. In case of

¹⁰ Surrealism is a major influence in Rouch's work (cf. Tomaselli, 1999; Stoller, 1992). Rouch himself did not explore the effect that surrealism had on his work. However, surrealism is not a scientific paradigm, and is not discussed here in detail.

Les Maîtres Fous he was able to present another view of the world through the Hauka cult (Stoller, 1992: 35).

Con-text of Interpretation

Les Maîtres Fous was a very controversial film even before it was officially released. Rouch had shown the film to a select audience at the Musée de l'Homme. Griaule detested the film so much that he requested that it be destroyed. Griaule did not like the manner in which the Africans in the film pretended to be white Europeans. He saw this as a mockery of Europeans. In addition, the black African intellectuals at the screening saw the film as reinforcing racism, as the film represented Africans as savages, especially the scenes of the men eating the dog. The film reinforced racial stereotypes about black Africans (Stoller, 1992: 151).

When released officially, the film caused as much expected outrage as the first screening, but there was also critical praise for the film (Stoller, 1992: 152-153). In 1957 the film won first prize for best short film at the Venice film festival. The film received praise for its technical merit and film aesthetic (Stoller, 1992: 152). The film gave Europeans a glimpse of a world they themselves could never experience. Further criticism saw the film as decontextualised (Stoller, 1992: 153). The film did not give viewers all the necessary information required to make sense of the film. Anthropologists like Jean-Claude Muller (Stoller, 1992: 152-153) expressed this criticism. He believed that in order to get the most out of the film, an audience needed to have read the accompanying ethnographic writings. The writings would give audiences the necessary means to make sense of what was depicted in the film.

Paul Stoller (1992: 157-158) argues that *Les Maîtres Fous* is more than an attempt to make an observational ethnographic account. The film does not just offer an objective account of its subject matter. Rather, Rouch's intent is to include the audience in the world of Songhay spirit possession. The film is not meant to be a passive viewing experience, but rather challenges traditional European ways of thinking about the world.

Semiotic Analysis

From the description above of the con-text of *Les Maîtres Fous*, we can expect the film to be an interpretive one. While Rouch is scientifically trained, he is also sensitive to creating an understanding between himself and those he films. According to Stoller (1992: 157-158), Rouch also intends to involve the audience in the film so that they are able to experience another view of the world. By this means, he indicates an understanding of the relativity of reality within a context, rather than the positivist notion that reality is a single and pure concept. This is why we can expect the film to be an interpretive one.

First Order of Signification

In this order of signification, we are concerned with the character of the material nature of the film. The basic sign is the shot, an iconic representation. The film resembles the Songhay Hauka members in appearance as one would encounter them in reality due to film's photographic nature. This semiotic relationship is a motivated one where the representation of the Hauka performers is specific of them. This is due to the likeness between the photographic representation of the Hauka in the film and what they look like in reality. At this level of signification is the closest representation of reality. The film then is the closest correspondent to the world that it represents that we as viewers have access to.

The paradigmatic range of the framing in *Les Maîtres Fous* varies and ranges from close-up to wide. The type of framing used occurs more often at the different stages of the film. The opening in Accra is in wide angle and depicts people within the context of the city. The majority of the action during the possession ceremony is in close up, placing an emphasis on the individuals involved in the ceremony rather than their context. The shots in *Les Maîtres Fous* are handheld; the camera does not remain fixed and static. The sequences are also of short duration. Actions are incomplete within one sequence. These actions are composed of a number of perspectives that shift. Rouch's framing does not

conform to the positivist tendency of holism and observation. The film makes use of close-ups of short duration and the camera is always in flux. Rouch presents the action in the film to us as viewers in a kinetic manner, especially during the ceremony.

An example from the film of the shot type is in the final stages of the possession ceremony when the Hauka are taking the dog meat from the boiling pot. The first shot in the sequence is a close up of the pot - the camera shakily dollies towards to the pot. The next shot is a medium close-up of the major fishing out a piece of dog meat from the boiling pot with his bare hands. After he has picked up the meat he stands and leaves, the camera keeps the same framing while following as he stands and exits the screen to the right. The next shot is a shaky medium image of the major with the dog meat in his hands while he walks from left screen to right. Then there is another medium shot of the major standing with the dog meat from a slightly different angle to the previous frame. The final sequence is a mid shot of the major taking a bite of the dog meat. The engineer comes up to the major and takes a bite of the major's dog meat, the camera shifting position to accommodate the engineer in frame. All the sequences are rapidly cut between each other; the camera does not dwell long on any one action.

Second Order of Signification

The second order is where the interaction between the audience and the film takes place. In this order, iconic signs are indexical and connote meanings other than what they denote. In the first order, *Les Maîtres Fous* is a collection of iconic signs. These signs have denotative meanings in terms of what they represent. In the second order of signification, these meanings are also connotative, as an audience supplies their own meanings to a film.

The men in the film become indexical representations of the Hauka spirits that have possessed them. When they are possessed they foam at the mouth, walk in a strange manner, are resistant to being burnt by fire, their hands are not scalded by boiling water and they eat the flesh of a dog. These actions become the means through which the men represent the Hauka that possess them. They themselves and their behaviour become the

index that refers to the presence of the Hauka spirits. The behaviour of the Hauka makes them very frightening to viewers that have no experience of spirit possession.

From the first order of signification, we know the iconic signs during the ceremony in *Les Maîtres Fous* are mainly close-ups of short duration with the camera in flux. The close-up shots make the connection between the audience and the Hauka very intimate, facilitating audiences' interaction with the spiritual and psychological reality of those being possessed. The difference between the Hauka and the audience takes place both through the act of viewing and the audiences understanding of what takes place. Together with the frightening content of the images, the intimate contact through close-ups with the Hauka makes a western audience uncomfortable. The camera captures the psychological reality of the possession ceremony, which is frenetic and violent. The types of shots which characterise the film are used to augment the psychological reality of the Hauka. Thus, together the content and the shots in the film become indexical signs of the spiritual and psychological reality of the Hauka members.

The presence of the filmmaker is also made apparent throughout the film. Firstly, the narration is indexical of the presence of the filmmaker and the film as being a product. In order for a film to have narration requires a human presence. The narration becomes an indexical sign for the film as a product. In addition, the handheld style of the film is also indexical for the presence of the filmmaker, as the jerky movements of the camera are a result of the filmmaker being unable to hold his camera steady. Thus, we can see this film as displaying the interpretive tendency of deep reflexivity, as the presence of the filmmaker is implied rather than explicitly stated in the film.

Third Order of Signification

The symbol is located in the third order of signification. The application is due to convention rather than to any identifiable link between the meanings applied and the object to which it is applied. Ideology (or paradigm) is situated within this third order. *Les Maîtres Fous* is coded in such a way for it to elicit the most impact from the experience of the Hauka possession ceremony. The film's code achieves the greatest

effect on the audience from the possession scenes. As noted, the film makes use of the range of possible shots within the paradigm set. In the beginning of the film the context of Accra is shown in predominantly wide framing. The possession ceremony is shown in medium shots and close-ups, and the final section of the film back in Accra, is shown in wide and close-ups. The opening and ending scenes are the means of comparison with the possession ceremony. The opening scenes are a lull before the ceremony. These scenes present Accra as a context within which people go about their lives, the shots in this section of the film are edited to preserve the continuity of space within Accra. The possession ceremony however works contrary to the previous section of the film. The shots reduce context to the extent that it is almost removed. The focus is solely on the possessed Hauka. The editing is rapid and sharp, making the scenes frenetic in pace. The final scene back in Accra serves to extenuate the contrast between the men as they exist in Accra and what they become when possessed. Thus, the codification of the film serves to highlight the possession ceremony in the mind of the audience.

Conclusion of Analysis of Les Maîtres Fous

The expectation for *Les Maîtres Fous* was that the film would be an interpretive one. The film does not conform to the holism of observational criteria of the positivist tendency. This may be enough for us not to categorise the film positivist, but it is not enough for us to locate it as interpretive either. In the second order of signification, we note how the images of the possessed Hauka refer to the spirits. The handheld nature of the shots during the possession ceremony reveals the presence of the filmmaker, as does the narration of the film. At this stage, the audience implicitly notes the interpretive tendency of deep reflexivity where the filmmaker's presence in the construction of the film is apparent. It is through the second order of signification that we are able to see the significance of the shot style as an interpretive strategy. The code that the film follows is a means to encode in the possession scenes as much impact as is possible. We can categorise *Les Maîtres Fous* as an interpretive film not for any one of these reasons, but because of the synergistic effect, each order has on the overall meaning of the film. This aggregated meaning is a specific attempt to engage an audience with another view of the world different from their own. It is the film's ability to present a specific view of reality

instead of an absolute view that makes the film interpretive. The film causes the audience to have a strong reaction to the action on screen. This reaction is a challenge to western beliefs and viewpoints. The audience does not just react to the film but rather generates a fluid, unlimited semiosis with the surrealism of the film. The film allows an audience to experience another viewpoint and challenges an audience's view of the world. Rouch's style fractures conventional third order significations and opens up active anti-positivist interpretations.

Comparative Analysis Between Films

Having established the character of each of the films, it becomes important to compare them alongside each other. This is in a bid to make the delineation between the two types of films more stark. Comparison will also reveal information about the nature of each type of film that has not been explicitly described in the literature on ethnographic film. For example, the literature on interpretive methods does not specify a particular shooting method. This comparative analysis will compare the two films through the three orders of signification. The focus will be on the differences in how the films' constructions differ from each other. This stage of the analysis will make use of the orders of signification to help structure the comparison.

First Order of Signification Comparison

The Hunters makes use of the style of shooting described by the positivist tendency of holism and observation. The camera records the Bushmen in wide shot, with long takes and as unobtrusively as possible. This follows the positivistic need to remain as impartial as possible and to record things as they are objectively. This is a concern for an accurate representation of reality as reality is perceived to exist as a stable and absolute existence.

Les Maîtres Fous's style is contrary to the camera style advocated by the positivist tendency of Holism. The film's style consists of close-up shots of short duration that seem to intrude on the action being recorded. Though the film's specific iconic nature is

different from that expected from the criteria of holism and observation, this does not mean it is interpretive in nature. Interpretivism cannot be thought of as a negation of positivism. Interpretivism may be a reaction to a positivist epistemology but this does not make it a second option by default. Thus, we cannot definitively state that the first order of signification in *Les Maîtres Fous* is interpretive.

What we can do is look at the reasons why each ideology would make use of a particular iconic set of pictorial representations. The positivist opts for a particular style of icon because reality is a single conception, and by delineating the type of icons for use, it becomes the best means to represent that reality. Thus, all positivist films would look alike because of the restrictions placed, as this also makes the film a more amenable representation for analysis. Film then becomes an object in itself. For this reason, film-as-object needs to capture as many salient features of reality as possible. By fixing the first order of signification for specific types of icons, the positivist fixes the view of reality.

The interpretivist rejects any such restrictions. For the interpretivist, reality is not a single conception, but a myriad of differing contextually bound views of the world. The first order of signification for an interpretivist film will not conform to any specific type of iconic representation, as the style will shift with the circumstances in which the film is shot. Thus, iconic representation cannot alone tell us whether a film is interpretive or not. Due to this lack of restriction at the iconic level, an interpretive film could compose itself using the positivist tendency of holism. In order to see what criteria make an interpretive film we need to look at the remaining orders of signification.

Second Order of Signification Comparison

The Hunters follows the positivist principle of holism and observation in order to be true to reality. A positivist film through the way that it is filmed, is an indexical representation of reality. Film needs to approximate as best it can to reality, making the film a means through which an audience is able to experience reality ('being there'). The experience

that the audience gains from the film is a mediated one of reality. Nevertheless, this mediated experience is a faithful representation that is linked to the actual reality.

While *The Hunters* is an indexical representation of reality, it is also indexical of the filmmaker's presence. This is through the presence of the voice over narration of a young John Marshall, which is the interpretive tendency of deep reflexivity. The narration alerts the audience to the presence of the narrator as an individual involved in the making of the film. The narration also anchors the meaning that the audience is expected to gain from the film as the narrator gives specific information that the audience does not get from the visuals.

Les Maîtres Fous also makes use of narration that encodes the presence of the filmmaker. The film is shot with a handheld camera, so the movement of the camera becomes an indexical sign for the presence of the filmmaker. This is in contrast to the static and fixed camera of *The Hunters*, where the presence of the filmmaker is not noted as the film frame becomes similar to a window. The difference between a static and fluid camera is that the latter indicates the filmmaker's presence, while the static camera conceals the presence of the filmmaker.

Both films have indexical signs of the presence of the filmmakers, which is a quality of interpretivism. One distinction between the two films is that in *The Hunters* John Marshall attempts to remove his presence from the film, while Jean Rouch deliberately includes his presence in *Les Maîtres Fous*. Another aspect that influences the meaning of each film is the degree of order in the film. In *The Hunters*, it is evident that the hunters have been coached in most of their actions on screen, while in *Les Maîtres Fous* the Hauka are conducting their actions spontaneously. This reveals the difference in the participation between the two different filmmakers and their respective participants. Marshall works with the Bushmen, but ultimately directs their actions on screen, while Rouch becomes more of a participant in the action on screen. Thus, Rouch shares the action that is on the screen rather than dictating that action as with Marshall.

Third Order of Signification Comparison

The codes that structure each film follow the concerns of their respective paradigms. As a positivist film, it could be expected that *The Hunters* would follow a specific chronological shooting order on actions as they occurred in reality. The film does not adhere to this principle in its total structure as some of the scenes were added at different times as some footage was shot on completely different occasions. When we look at the film's scenes around the completion of actions, we can see a commitment to the requirement of chronology. Each of these scenes is recorded with an emphasis on the action being performed. These actions are shown in the order within which they are begun and completed. While *The Hunters* does not follow the requirement of chronology in the film's overall code, it is applied in many scenes. This becomes important for the positivist view, as these actions are what need to be preserved for analysis. Thus, the film is still useful to researchers as it depicts instances of behaviour that have been recorded in a manner that makes them amenable to analysis.

Les Maîtres Fous reveals an entirely different purpose concerning its structure. Rouch makes use of its entire structure to elicit a specific set of interpretants in its audiences. The beginning and the end of the film become contrasts for the middle, which depicts the possession ceremony. The ceremony is the focus, as it is through the ceremony that the audience gains a new view of the world. As opposed to the structuring of *The Hunters* for an understanding of reality as it is conceived for the positivist, *Les Maîtres Fous* offers a specific view of the world, relative to those depicted under possession. By allowing the audience to experience the view of an 'other' reality, viewers are able to experience a view of reality to which they would not normally be exposed. The film presents the reality of the Hauka, a spiritual and psychological reality, rather than one that is just contextually bound. This permits the audience an insight into how the Hauka, as others, encounter the world and make it intelligible. This is an interpretivist strategy, as the film is coded to ensure that the audience is able to experience another reality other than the one that they know. This is in opposition to a positivist conception where reality in film is presented in a manner that audiences come to expect.

Conclusion of Comparison

The main difference between the two films is the degree of interaction with a film an audience experiences at the second order of signification. The positivist presents as much information to an audience in the film as possible, thus making the film the site where meaning exists. *The Hunters* records its participants in a manner that is expected by the audience and provides explicit explanation of events in the narration. The interpretivist view wishes the audience to engage and bring their connotative meanings to a film. In the case of *Les Maîtres Fous*, the audience brings the connoted meanings of their world which contrast with that of the Hauka members. Thus, we can conclude that *The Hunters* is a positivist (or post-positivist) film and that *Les Maîtres Fous* is an interpretive film by the analysis above.

Chapter 6:

Summary and Conclusion

When looking at the paradigms of the social sciences we see specific and differing commitments to epistemology, ontology and methodology. Positivism holds to a realist ontology, objectivist epistemology and experimental methodology. This paradigm is the pariah of the social sciences, as interpretivism has gained in validity. It is however incorrect to assume that the positivism that social scientists were using 50 years ago is still in practice today. As I have shown in Chapter 2, positivism, along with science, has undergone a shift in perspective, which sees science as less tyrannical in terms of its relation to truth and its own importance. This shift has renamed positivism as post-positivism. The knowledge gained from science is now as fallible as any other human endeavour while still making use of the scientific method.

Interpretivism is the alternative paradigm to positivism. Interpretivism is not a monolithic theory as there are a number of theories that share the same ontology and epistemology. These views are committed to understanding how individuals gain knowledge of the world and how their individualities shape this knowledge once gained. Knowledge gained is relative to the context from which individuals come.

Comparing and contrasting positivism and interpretivism is done in terms of their commitments to differing epistemologies. Positivism sees knowledge as existing in objects and the purpose of a researcher is to discover this knowledge already present within the object. Post-positivism sees human knowledge not so much as being constructed but rather as being fallible to further research findings. The distinction holds to a truth that requires research to constantly be validated; a truth is probable rather than absolute. Probability is a continuum that sees some accounts as being 'more' correct than others about a topic of research. Interpretivism however, sees meaning as a construction between an object and the subjective view of the individual. The difference between a post-positivist view and interpretivism is that interpretivism does not require a view to be

more 'correct' than another view. Each view is correct for the individual who has it in a context where such knowledge is valid. In post-positivism, truth is transitional while in interpretivism it is relative.

When looking at the theories of ethnographic filmmaking in visual anthropology we are able to define the paradigmatic orientations of these theories. There have been no specific articulations of a particular theory following a certain paradigmatic view in ethnographic filmmaking theory. Ruby calls his theory an interpretive one, however, upon closer analysis we see that his theory can be better equated with positivism. For Ruby, a reflexive film is a criterion for representing 'true' reality. Ruby's fault is that he contests positivism's view of reality with an opposing view of reality. This opposite is not an interpretive one because it is still a commitment to an absolute view of reality. Ruby's account is in effect a 'swap' of what an absolute reality is.

Heider and Marshall are post-positivist when it comes to using film as a medium of representation. For Heider, a written account is the perfect and correct account of reality which is a positivist view. However, for film his attitude is post-positivist. Heider has a distrust of film as a medium of research due to films inability to capture the whole of reality as it occurs. The theory that Heider articulates for film is one that notes the deficiencies of film to capture an absolute reality. This view sees a film as an impoverished description of reality. It is this understanding of film as a truth to a degree that makes this view a post-positivist one in terms of film.

John Marshall sees his film making as advocacy. What these films advocate is the 'reality' of the lives of the Ju/'hoansi Bushmen. For Marshall the true reality of the Bushmen needs to be shown to western audiences so that the romanticised and false depictions of the Bushmen can be demystified. Marshall realises that film is unable to represent reality as it exists, as the camera cannot be everywhere at once. There will be events that impact on what is shown in a film that are not able to be shown in a film. Reality is a composite of a number of events that affect each other, but also exist separately from each other. This is articulated by Marshall's theory of slots. A film

becomes a representation of specific event that shows a number of slots to varying degrees. What a filmmaker needs to do is try and capture as many slots as possible in a film so that reality is given an approximate representation. This approximation of reality shows that Marshall's theory of slots is a post-positivist one. Reality exists as an absolute state and film is only an approximate representation of it.

David MacDougall's theory of ethnographic film is an interpretivist one. For MacDougall ethnographic filmmaking is a collaborative endeavour in the creation of meaning. The filmmaker, the participants and the audience are all important in the generation of meaning of a film. In the field during the shooting of a film, the filmmaker and participants collaborate to develop a vision of the film that is the genesis of both parties. The filmmaker needs to work with the participants to create a film that captures the perspective of the participants, and the only way this is possible is through collaboration. The meaning that a film ultimately has is through the interaction that the audience has with the film. This interaction by extension is also with the filmmaker and the participants. This view also sees reflexivity as a more tacit and implicit notion than the explicit notion defined by Ruby. Reflexivity is a description of the point of view a filmmaker brings to a film, which becomes knowable in the film itself. This is what an audience is able to deduce for itself. The theory espoused by MacDougall is an interpretive one, as the audience determines the final meaning of the film through an interaction with the researcher and the participants.

The difference between the interpretive theories and the post-positivist theories is their commitment to different aspects of filmmaking. Post-positivists are concerned with the way that a film is structured and the ability of the filmmaker to structure a film effectively. There is a specific and intended meaning that an audience is to gain. The interpretive theories however, are more concerned with the negotiation of meaning in a film. Filmmakers and participants author a film in attempts to understand their own understanding of what is being filmed. This negotiation is extended when an audience views a film and seeks knowledge from it. Interpretive film is thus more focused on the

interaction of the audience with a film, and the negotiation between filmmaker and participant.

The Hunters by John Marshall and *Les Maîtres Fous* by Jean Rouch represent different commitments to each paradigm. *The Hunters* follows a positivist ideology from its context. The film makes use of the aesthetic as expected of a positivist film from the post-positivist theories. *Les Maîtres Fous* is an interpretivist film from noting its context and from the way that it challenges audiences to engage its images and reassess their own views.

While each film adheres to the expectations of its paradigm both films exhibit the deep reflexivity as espoused by MacDougall. This would be fine for *Les Maîtres Fous* but inconsistent for *The Hunters*. This is perhaps telling of the different paradigmatic perspectives. The post-positivist still wishes the presence of the filmmaker to be removed and present reality as it is. The interpretivist uses film as a means to present a specific view of a reality. The filmmaker's presence is acknowledged in the construction of the film while the post-positivist wishes to remove it. The complete removal of the presence of the filmmaker is not possible as the film is a product created by an individual. This is why we are able to determine the presence of the filmmaker as an audience. For the post-positivist, a well made film will hide the presence of the filmmaker. However, hiding this presence completely, is not possible.

What does this say for the conceptual structure that I have tried to develop in this dissertation? We are able to divide the theoretical perspectives along paradigmatic lines. This becomes necessary for two theoretically important reasons. Firstly, we are able to note the assumptions that a researcher brings when articulating a position in regards to ethnographic film. By knowing the paradigm a researcher ascribes to, it allows him/her to develop an understanding about the perspective's effect on research. Through this unified approach, researchers will have a coherent body of work that they can specifically draw from to conduct research. Secondly, by drawing these divisions between paradigms, we are able to note inconsistencies with theorists like Ruby. With a stable structure with

which to understand a theory we are able to see what the commitments of that theory are and not just what it is thought to be. Conceptual coherence is always a necessary condition for any social science. This allows debate to generate further precision in the theoretical positions of a discipline.

The paradigm/ideology is a key determinate of the construction of a film. We are able to see how a film tries to articulate the theoretical principles of the paradigm from which it is derived. What the paradigm expects of the film is not always possible as with the case of the post-positivist theory and *The Hunters*, but we are still able to see the influence of the theoretical position on the film. Thus, the conceptual structure derived from the theories of ethnographic film has an impact on the films themselves.

The conceptual structure proposed in this dissertation is that theories of ethnographic film be divided by paradigm. This division has an important effect on theoretical and practical applications of ethnographic filmmaking. However, this is not the final say on the issues discussed, as there is still the need for work to be done. Firstly, extensive paradigmatic analysis needs to be done on the work of individual ethnographic filmmakers such as Rouch and Marshall. Secondly, an ethnographic film should be made with the attempt to follow one of the paradigms or both. This will be a specific example of how theoretical perspective will shape a film and if a conscious intent can achieve an intended result.

The debates in ethnographic filmmaking have tended to lack specific paradigmatic position. These positions are implicitly present in the literature, and it is hoped that this dissertation provides a convincing enough reason for researchers to couch their understandings of ethnographic film from paradigmatic positions. These positions can be used to drive forward debate in ethnographic film. To conclude, ethnographic film is effected by the theory of filmmaking that drives its production. This requires us to understand these theoretical origins more specifically.

Filmography

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