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EVIDENCE AND IMAGINATION: PHOTOGRAPHY IN ENQUIRY**

I

As a sociologist, my major area of study has been language use in social contexts. Photography has been a hobby. In other words my work has been with verbal materials. Word versus image. More recently however, I have begun bringing photographic practice into my ethnographic inquiries and into my teaching.

One substantive area I have been inquiring into I call "street work", meaning the work of generally unsalaried persons whose goods and services are sold on the public streets. In the Third World there is a large amount and a highly varied range of such street-work as we can see with a few examples of vendors of:

- goods: kleenex (even while nursing her baby), balloons, chewing gum, fruits, lottery tickets and even birds, etc., or
- services: shoe repair, or personal momentos (ahsh - the photographer), or magnanimity (beggars - including a leper in Africa, in black and white and then in white and black), or entertainment (such as this organ grinder or most terribly this fire eater using leaded gasoline), or brute labor such as these stevedores in Mexico and Africa.

I have chosen one group of street workers for more careful and systematic study, namely shoe shiners - or "boleros" as they are commonly called in Mexico.

This inquiry has involved me in a lot of trial and error and

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** Editorial note: The paper was accompanied by a series of slides. The projection of slides is marked in the text by the sign [§].

what I will be presenting today can be understood as on the one hand attempting to understand consciously what it is that I have been doing and, on the other hand trying to put it into a more general perspective so I can discover possibilities and alternatives. In this latter sense I'm looking for the rough outlines of an elementary theory of methods which covers both visual and verbal materials. And, as is appropriate for this conference, I have attempted to formulate my argument on a level of generality which will make it applicable to both aesthetic and scientific productions.

So much for my good intentions. My plan for how to approach this matter is by dealing with the following three leading questions in order, namely:

1. What is a photograph?
2. How is the social production of photographs organised?
3. How can visual and verbal texts be integrated in this production process?

In conclusion I will point to some implications which are of value for both artistic and scientific practice.

II

The first question, "What is a photograph?" has concerned me for some time. I have wondered about its ontological status as evidence in an investigation. Clearly it is different from the legissigns of a typescript - to use a term from Peirces' theory of signs. We are struck by the literal nature of the photograph. It appears a copy. This view focuses upon the scene-to-film relation as controlled by certain laws of nature: electromagnetic radiation from the scene onto the exposed film leaving an imprint for transfer to paper. Certainly it is an imprint subject to causal natural scientific laws of nature.

But, there is more, for a photograph is a human artifact: an artful construction by persons in society for persons in society. Without exception. As Byers has very aptly put it, "Cameras don't take pictures, people do". But where humans excel is in selectivity and manipulation. Still photography is a clear example. Consider the whole buzzing world from which one elects one event -

and then after looking around for one hour, from some distance, angle, focus, etc. one picture is framed and exposed. Just the election of this, rather than some other event is one in many millions. Then the time frame of 1/60th second-to-one-hour is a one-to-12,960,000 - and of course the angle, distance, etc. which governed the framing is one out of an inestimably large number of possible ones. This incredibly selective frozen instant and frame is not taken at random but is chosen (consciously or unconsciously) to stand for some larger whole in a typical way. Thus the frozen instant is an icon, similar in form to something in the scene.

Therefore, as imprint, a photograph is literal, or as Collier says, a recording of a relatively low level of abstraction. However, as icon, the photograph is metaphor. In summary, photographs are neither just imprints nor are they just icons but rather they are both, namely iconic-imprints. They have a dual nature.

This dual nature of photographs as iconic imprints has several implications relevant to our purposes here. Our time here today only permits me to list a few.

First, an iconic imprint requires both scientific and artistic sensibilities in both its production and evaluation and icon standards will provide parameters for imprinting standards. For example, this slide of a classical concert is sharp while the next slide - part of a student project exploring the differences between audience behavior and ambience at classical and at Rock concerts - is blurred. Yet as an intentional icon for the tremendous audience movement which marks Rock concert behavior, it is fine.

Secondly, light might be said to imprint the film, the paper and even our retina, but photographs as iconic imprints do not "speak for themselves". But I can speak for this photograph telling you it is "white clouds over black South Africa" in an angry voice. A stronger example: here is an icon for a particular two week period. Yet iconic imprints are dumb. And, like a mirror, when we look into it we see ourselves, i.e., those things we already know. To see more than we already know, someone will have to talk to us. Here we need to talk and listen in order to see. On other occasions we will have to look and see in order to hear. But all the talk and its conveyed understandings is in and between persons in society. To render the invisible icon which lies before our noses visible, I can speak for the Epiphany icon saying, "I am here

in the form of this little clay piggy bank, but only from December 25th to January 5th and you as a client can put an «aguinaldo» or Christmas bonus in it so that I can buy toys for my children like the three Kings who brought gifts to the Christ child. After Epiphany you won't see me again until next year". A moment ago you didn't see it, now you do.

Thirdly, recognizing the great selectivity and contrivance involved in iconic imprinting, how can we get a grasp of it? This brings us to the second of our three central questions, namely.

III

How is the social production of iconic imprints organised? The intent of this question is not to describe one specific way but rather to determine the principal parameters within which all possible ways can be discovered.

Let us first imagine a prototypical project whose eventual product will be an object for contemplation about something in the real world. It will include visual and verbal materials. The authors might be artists, journalists or scientists and it might be presented in a gallery, newspaper, journal or lecture and the purpose might be aesthetic, political or scientific. In other words, we're talking about a very general model.

What are the parameters for the social organisation of such a project? There are many possible approaches. I want to keep it as simple as possible. We have already named two parameters in speaking about the project as 1) a production process which is 2) socially organized.

The first parameter, process, can be simply conceived as a series of sequential steps or phases necessary to the production. A reasonable sequence of production phases would include 1) defining the project's focus and scope, 2) planning and 3) producing the materials, 4) reviewing and evaluating these materials, 5) editing or ordering a composite product, and 6) presenting the final product.

This is generally a linear sequence although it includes a number of essential feedback loops. Simply put, it is a complex process which takes time, regardless of how consciously or unconsciously, formally or informally approached.

The second parameter is social organization i.e., each phase in the production process has to be given some form of social organisation which controls the persons, activities and materials, or the who, how and what of each production phase. Therefore we are talking about the social, i.e., differential distribution of power.

Just as power and control over persons, activities and materials may be differentially distributed in adjacent or subsequent production phases, so too power and control may be differentially distributed within a production phase because of the problem of levels.

For example, in a very elementary sense there are three levels of control which must be exercised in taking any photograph.

The first level of control is over the when, where and what of the photograph. This content is at the broadest project level and is specified in what I will call election rules, because it elects where in all the world the photographer should go.

The second level of control necessary for taking a photograph is control over the taking of the photograph itself. This content is at the recording level and is specified in what I will call framing rules because it controls the relationship of the photographer-to-camera-to-scene relation in which a frame is exposed. There is a third level of control necessary for taking a photograph and it involves the power and control over the event being recorded. This is the event level and is governed by what I will call staging rules because it controls the interaction on the stage being framed in the elected project.

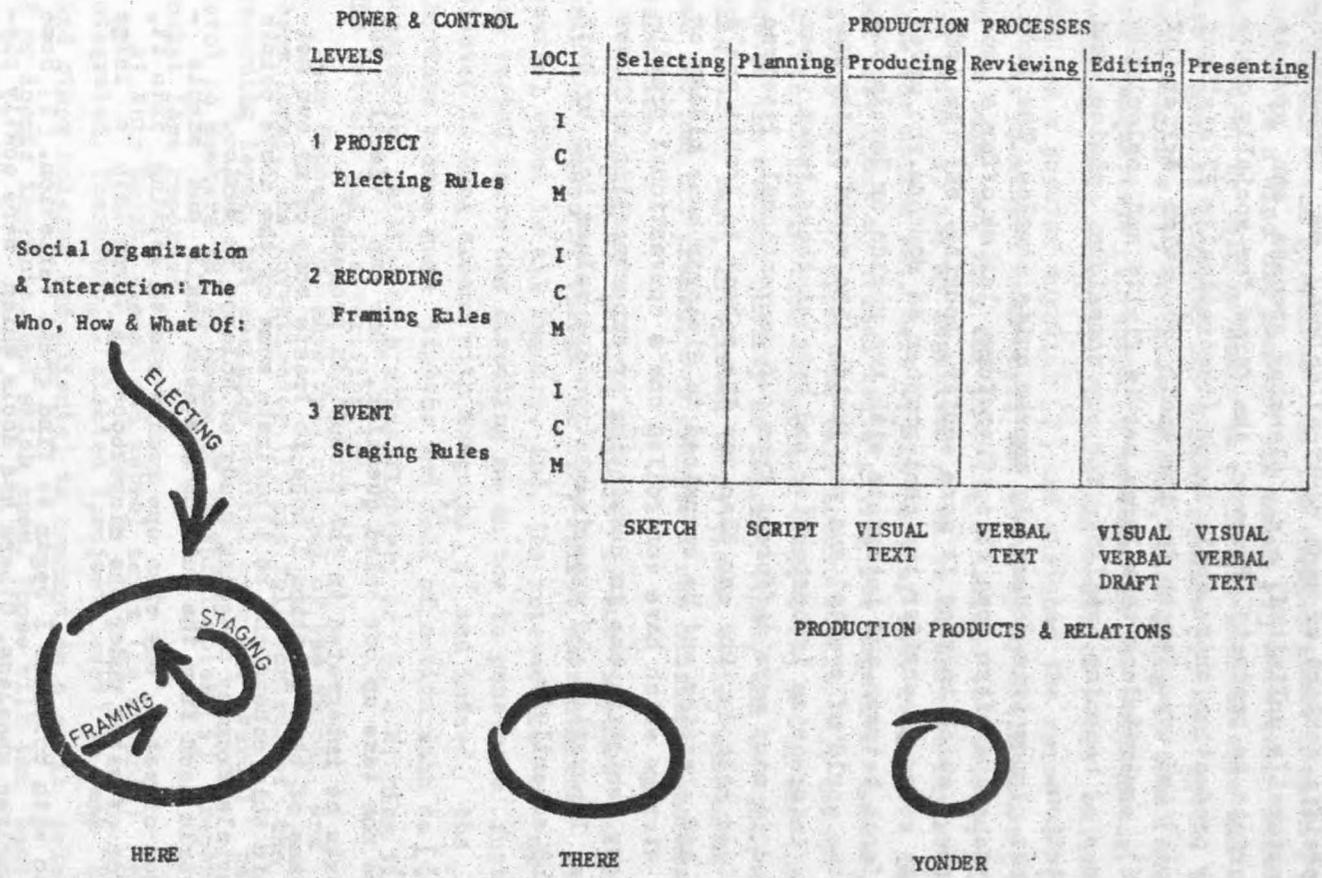
To summarize; for a photograph to be taken, three levels of control or social organization must be present: projects, level, and event. Every photograph has a complex history. The specifics of any particular case (any given photograph) can be found (exhumed) in the rules (conscious or unconscious) of its election, framing, and staging. Without election (in the sense used here) nothing is attempted. Without staging there is nothing there to photograph. And without framing, the photograph remains untaken. These are therefore three elementary and necessary levels of social control and organisation which must, and do exist for every photograph produced.

However, the parameter of power and control has, in addition to levels, a further dimension, namely locus. In whom is the power

invested at each level and phase of production? Power is of course a relational term and invokes a continuum of dominance and subjugation. For purposes of brevity let us reduce this continuum to three types of power distribution which illustrate the range of possible variation: 1) a relation where the Investigator (I) is very dominant and the persons, activities and objects in the scene are literally subjugated and subordinated to the investigator's prescriptions, 2) a relation where the investigator and the persons in the scene share the power to define and control the terms of their interaction and use of materials to that they can be called Collaborators (C), and 3) a relation where dominance in controlling the interaction phase and level is held by Members (M).

What should be kept in mind is that the distribution of power between the investigator and the persons in the scene has effects on the nature of their interaction and on the qualities of the recorded materials, i.e., it controls the very form and content of the creations being produced. As a general proposition, I would propose that the greater the dominance of the investigator, the greater will be the imposition of outsider (etic) relevancies and the greater the tendency for subjects to maximize what Spradley calls their "translation competence" i.e., an ability to reframe their actions and thoughts in the investigators terms consequently fostering a record with high etic content. At the other extreme, with dominance by the member, insider or emic relevancies would dominate. As a constant trend, neither extreme is desirable but in specific instances either extreme may be useful. Over time, a science for example, must muddle through by weaving down the road between the etic extreme of validity crisis and the emic extreme of non-science. There is, I believe a parallel for the relationship between art and life. Here it should perhaps be pointed out that in the social world of multiple realities, the general etic/emic distinction and tension is just as real and persistent as the group identities (e.g. scientist/member or artist/member) which forge them. Indeed, nurturing these tensions in productive ways is what can heighten reflectivity, imagination and innovation.

In fact, with the three parameters of 1) process phases, 2) control level, and 3) control locus, we should now be able to size-up the whole range of possible ways - or methods - for the socially organized production of iconic imprints as is depicted on the scheme 1.



Evidence and Imagination: Photography in Enquiry

Scheme 1. The Social Production of Iconic Imprints
The meaning of the above concepts and categories is presented in the paper,
look p. 86-90

The specific content of each vertical column, or production phase is naturally unlimited, e.g., planning process can produce endless scripts as products. However, the forms for socially organizing any production phase while large (theoretically 27 distinct combinations) and even larger for the whole production series of phases (x6), nevertheless this large set is finite and calculable in the sense of becoming available for our conscious choice and experimentation.

At first glance this schema may appear quite complex. The formalism of schemata often does this. Therefore, let me offer a metaphor through which to view it more easily. Looking at the left side of the schema, consider the photographer as someone who moves back and forth between and interacts with two worlds or levels one outside (the world of events) and one inside (the world of the project). How interaction is controlled and between these three can be designed in many ways different from our conventional, received practices and methods. One can also use the schema to locate one's own style and practice and be surprised to discover some hidden or invisible strings which have controlled one's conventional practices, thereby assisting one in developing or experimenting with new approaches. Innovation and experimentation are values held by both artists and scientists.

IV

Let me now take up our third question, "How can visual and verbal texts be integrated in the production process?"

By means of this question I hope to locate some of my own methods within this schema and to illustrate some of the above points with materials from my on-going study of boleros in Mexico.

Any world seen from the outside may seem small and simple - like a drop of water, but when one really starts getting into it, like a drop of water under the microscope, it turns into a large universe.

So too with boleros. I began to find great variation. [§] Some were themselves shoeless. Others had dools which were costly pieces or artwork. [§] and some just costly. [§] Some had many clients [§] and some had none [§]. Many dimensions of variation began

to appear - and questions too: for example about health. [§] This bolero is a wise old man and his hands [§] have been deformed by his trade. He told me where he could get medical care and I visited a special hospital for street workers [§] and spoke with the local union's [§] volunteer doctor, then going to local and national headquarters [§] which is embedded in the bureaucracy of the reigning party monopoly. To find out costs of basic materials, I visited a popular supplier [§] and sketched the names and prices [§] on this unskilled hand copy, and wrote up my field notes. [§] Still on the edge, not very far into it, I decided to develop, [§] file and print [§] all my negatives so as to be able to review and analyze the entire set. Here [§] is part of that review: it is a verbal text about my visual texts giving its negative number, date, city, street (PL) apparatus (A), bolero attire (B), client attire (C), three interaction categories (B-C, C-PL, B-PL) and then evaluates the overall quality as imprint (TECH) and as icon (AESTH). This verbal text, integrated to my visual texts, showed me what I had and had not framed. For example I was missing closeness and interaction.

The process of "getting into it" or our "impulse to penetrate into the reason of things" as C.S. Peirce characterized it, is a central value in all inquiry. And, the interaction of my visual and verbal texts was directing me on how to penetrate further: I elected to hang around with Ezequiel [§] and indeed, the iconic imprints became much tighter and full of action such as [§] discussing the jailing of a prize fighter, or [§] a winning ticket in the lottery and its verification [§].

Here Members (M) have full control of the verbal and visual scene level, the Investigator (I) has full control of the visual recording level, but assigns control over the verbal recording level to Members (M) by means of faithful notes [§] recorded by pocket tape recorder.

At this point, visual and verbal text (as records) are not integrated. Therefore, I elected (project level) to ask Ezequiel (and other boleros and clients) to comment on a small select set of my iconic imprints. But which ones. Those with the best iconic realizations of course. [§] Here is my verbal record of my search for the best/worst tools or apparatus. These categories come that big layout review we saw earlier. And here [§] the 13 icons se-

lected are summarized. Here is one used in my interviews with boleros and clients. Would they see what I had seen? Far from it! Of course how much similarity or difference is likely depends to a large degree upon how much control I exercise in this production phase. Consider this photograph as one card in a card game. How will the game be played? Countless possibilities exist but let me locate the game as we played it in our schema: For this reviewing phase in the project's production, the Investigator (I) elected at the project level the who, how and what: for example here [§] with a 70 year old client, in his home, to discuss five photographs. At the staging level, most of the power has been invested in the Member (M) because the only Investigator control is to place a card (photo) on the table saying only "tell me and the taperecorder what you can find in this picture". In fact this client was a walking encyclopedia who staged the event like a detective game and he talked for almost three hours! Here, at the recording level, the verbal text of the client is being tape recorded just as the client is giving it (recorded-as-coded) so he (M) is controlling what is produced on the tape, although the Investigator (I) controls the production of the field notes. [§] Later, in the editing [§] phase, the investigator can listen to the member's commentaries on: the photograph while simultaneously viewing the same photograph. Here the integration of visual and verbal texts is very tight and were a very rich source enabling a much deeper view into their worlds. At the editing phase, the Investigator (I) can elect at the project level what parts of the tape might be - at the recording level - either literally transcribed (Member locus), paraphrased (Collaborator locus), or directly encoded (Investigator locus). At the scene level - and here the scene is the editing process itself - clients or boleros could (but were not) given a role with more or less control. So reviewing at the scene level was controlled by the Investigator in this case. Alternatives to this practice should be seen as pragmatic concerns and not as an ideological issue. Now at least I can envision some alternatives which look interesting.

V

I hope these examples shed some light on the social organisation of production of iconic imprints and verbal materials as matters of process, power and control. If so, then we are brought to three conclusions:

First: Photographs have a dual character as iconic imprints and flourish between art and science.

Second: Understanding the process and power parameters in the production of iconic imprints reveals a large array of choice.

Third, and finally - by integrating visual and verbal texts in the process of inquiry we give added impetus to our "impulse to penetrate into the reason of things".

For those who want to break the constraints of established conventions I suggest the trick is not to leave or abandon society but to use the parameters of social organisation for change and innovation. I hope this model suggests some ways.

Rolf Kjolseth

DANE I WYOBRAŹNIA: FOTOGRAFIA W BADANIU SOCJOLOGICZNYM

Autor wskazuje na potrzebę wprowadzenia materiału wizualnego do badania interakcji. Koncentracja na warstwie werbalnej interakcji, a także wykorzystywanie przez socjologów niemal wyłącznie słowa w procesie opracowywania danych pociąga za sobą następstwa, które ograniczają poznanie socjologiczne. Artykuł przynosi również uwagi na temat fotografii jako materiału w badaniach socjologicznych.