Folklore, Folklife & Still Photography: A Synergetic Approach

Debbie Gibson
Western Kentucky University

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FOLKLORE, FOLKLIFE AND STILL PHOTOGRAPHY:
A SYNERGETIC APPROACH

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of Modern Languages
and Intercultural Studies
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Debbie J. Gibson
August 1981
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A SYNERGETIC APPROACH

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Director of Thesis

Approved August 7, 1981
(Date)

Dean of the Graduate College
To
Glenda Sue Moody Gibson
(1935 - )
and
Willard Claude Gibson
(1932 - )
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In 1978 folklorist Jan Brunvand presented a definition of modern folkloristics that challenged folklorists to take an eclectic approach to the study of traditional culture by employing theoretical and methodological approaches from a variety of disciplines including communications. This thesis represents one effort at addressing part of this challenge by discussing specific folklore and folklife objectives and how still photography can be incorporated in the research process.

Chapter one includes a brief overview of how still photography has been used in social science research, emphasizing use of the camera for examination and communication. Chapter two examines the photographic "moment" and discusses its relevance and application in folklore genre research. Discussions about three approaches to folklife research and the use of still photography to understand the broader concerns of regional culture constitute chapter three. Chapter four outlines the basic methodological steps for using still photography in folkloristic research from pre-field preparation to post-field analysis.
Numerous photographs which illustrate or further explain key points are interspersed in chapters two and three. Sections on the problems and limitations folklorists are likely to confront when using photography are also discussed in these two chapters. A reference bibliography covering the major photographic thrusts applicable in folkloric research is also included.
Introduction

Modern folkloristics embraces oral, customary, and material aspects of tradition equally, and it makes eclectic use of theoretical and methodological approaches from anthropology, linguistics, communications, psychology, and other relevant areas. The hope is to develop a viable approach to studying the whole phenomenon that is known as 'folklore' (behavior, texts, performance, effects, etc.) whenever and wherever it occurs, and from a point of view that is uniquely 'folkloristic' . . . .

This thesis is an attempt to fulfill part of this challenging goal for modern folklore and folklife research by discussing specific folklore and folklife objectives and how still photography can be incorporated in the research process. Synergetic is a key word. Simply stated, it means working together. When done successfully, a synergetic approach will not only give folklorists more information, but also more systematic methods of obtaining this information. In this thesis, a synergetic approach is used through a combination of verbal and photographic explanations, and through discussions from scholars in folklore, folklife anthropology, sociology, political science, American studies, psychology and photography.

Chapter one includes a brief overview of how still photography has been used in social science research. This history reveals that the terms folklore and photography were coined about the same time, and since then, members of both disciplines have shared many common goals

and methods even though still photography has yet to be fully employed in most folkloristic research. Chapter two examines the photographic "moment" and discusses its application in folklore genre research. Although usually associated with news photography, the photographic moment can have important applications in genre research, particularly in the areas of customary and material traditions. Discussions about folklife and the use of still photography to understand the broader concerns of regional culture constitute chapter three. Documentary and portrait photographers have refined specific techniques that can be successfully used in folkloristic photography to obtain a more complete understanding of folklore and folklife. These techniques are not new, but they have not been examined in any depth from a folkloristic perspective. Chapter four outlines the basic methodological steps for using still photography in folkloristic research from pre-field preparation to post-field analysis. As political scientist David Easton points out in his discussion of the steps social scientists must adopt to carry out a scientific study of behavior, "means for acquiring and interpreting data cannot be taken for granted. They are problematic and need to be examined self consciously, refined and validated so that rigorous means can be found for observing, recording, and analyzing behavior."

A reference bibliography is also included. Divided into sixteen categories, the bibliography lists works by various social scientists and photographers, including discussions about how to use still photography for cultural investigation, examples of works that demonstrate these

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principles and works explaining the specific photographic specialities incorporated in the thesis.

Photographs illustrating specific points and approaches are interspersed in chapters two and three. All of the photographs except the ones on page forty-two were taken between 1978 and 1980 in a bi-state area of southcentral Kentucky and northcentral Tennessee known as The Upper Cumberland. A majority of the photographs were taken as part of a two semester independent study entitled "Women of the Upper Cumberland: A Photographic Study." Those remaining were taken for course assignments in folklore and photography classes except for the photographs on page forty-two which were taken in Tennessee during videotaping for an educational television program on a family singing group.

Sections on the problems and limitations folklorists are likely to confront when using photographic techniques are included throughout the thesis. These discussions are based on the understanding that still photography is not a panacea for all fieldwork problems. Although photography can provide different information from that usually obtained from verbal interviews or participant observation, it is not appropriate in all circumstances and cannot be used to completely document any folkloristic situation if verbal fieldwork methods are eliminated.

One additional assumption underlies the suggestions included in this thesis. The use of still photography in folklore and folklife fieldwork as it is discussed here requires two fieldworkers, one responsible only for taking photographs. A single fieldworker cannot accomplish these objectives. The validity of this two fieldworker method is illustrated and defended in Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead's Balinese
Character: A Photographic Analysis, the only work of its kind to achieve a true synthesis of photographic and verbal documentation. As Bateson explains in the introduction: "For work of this sort, it is essential to have at least two workers in close cooperation. The photographic sequence is almost valueless without a verbal account of what occurred, and it is not possible to take full notes while manipulating cameras."³ Although modern fieldwork staffs are almost always limited by tight budgets, this team method is absolutely necessary if folklorists are to make full use of still photography in the collection and analysis of folkloric materials.

Whether the use of photography and other visual communication methods are even necessary in folklore studies is a question some folklorists still debate. Michael Bell and Steven Ohrn noted this problem in their introduction to "Saying Cheese: Studies in Folklore and Visual Communication":

The legitimacy of these no-name phenomena (still photography, film and video) has by no means been established within the academy; audio-visual technology continues to be conceived either as a teaching tool or as entertainment; thus it is associated with vice principals or film critics. Scholars still take refuge in the security of the printed page, despite the prophetic writings of Buchminster Fuller and Marshall MacLuhan. In most graduate programs, visual communication is neither recognized as a language or tool skill nor routinely accepted as a medium for serious scholarly exposition. Low budgets and the hassles of selecting, obtaining, and showing the products of visual communication encourage chalk talks; similar problems are evident in attempts to teach production courses.


When folklorists do decide to employ photography in field research, this decision inevitably complicates an already complex human situation according to Robert Georges and Michael Owen Jones:

\[ \ldots \text{The introduction of a tape recorder or camera complicates matters, however, for many individuals feel that such devices, being nonhuman, are less selective and more inclusive than the humans who operate them, and that the records these machines produce, being permanent and reproducible, can be made available to wider audiences.} \]

However, despite the additional problems photography presents, Georges and Jones point out that dependence on memory or note-taking usually reduces both the quantity and quality of fieldwork documentation besides placing a tremendous strain on the fieldworker. The folklorists say the chances of being charged with incompleteness or bias also increase since notes and memories are not as perceptible to others as photographs.

Perhaps the most persuasive argument for using photography in cultural research was presented by Margaret Mead in a 1961 *American Anthropologist* article:

\[ \ldots \text{It may be plausibly argued that the growth of science has been a function of the growth of instruments--the telescope, the microscope, the computer and, for the study of living creatures, cinema film and sound recordings.} \ldots \text{If we stop to think where astronomy and biology would be if they had treated the telescope and microscope in as casual, unaware, and irresponsible a fashion as anthropologists have treated the camera and tape recorder, the strange archaic palsy that has come over parts of our science is only too clear.} \ldots \text{A science that does not welcome new instruments which raise its capabilities by a} \]

factor of ten has somehow got out of step.  

As folklorists leave the questions of who, what, when, where and how and start asking why, the proper and complete use of photography becomes critical. John Collier Jr. summarizes this point:

Visual imagery becomes increasingly important to anthropology as the search for why, for insights that may not be revealed in material observation can be found in subliminal messages surrounding the artifact, in technology and in ceremony. Traditionally, beyond the interpretation of verbal interviews, there are few responsible ways of studying the psychic fulfillment of otherwise pragmatic activity. Visual anthropology makes possible a shift in focus from descriptive analysis of artifacts and behavioral process to the emotional overtones and fulfillments of culture.

The varied uses folklorists and other social scientists have made of still photography, along with many of their reasons for employing photography in their research, are further elaborated in chapter one. However, as Jon Wagner emphasizes, the use of still photography at its best is "a result of our willingness to look and our skills in doing so." Many of these skills are discussed in this thesis; their application is dependent upon the individual scholar.

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CHAPTER ONE

An Overview On The Use Of Still Photography In Folklore, Folklife and Social Science Research

... your pages have so often given evidence of the interest which you take in what we in England designate as Popular Antiquities, or Popular Literature (though by-the-bye it is more a lore than a literature, and would be most aptly described by a good Saxon compound, Folklore, The Lore of the People) ... .

The year is 1846, the location England. Using a pseudonym, William Thoms is writing a letter to The Athenaeum magazine to make a suggestion. According to Thoms, the "good Saxon compound" folklore should replace popular antiquities as the proper term to describe an emerging discipline concerned with the traditions and customs of the common man. Thoms' suggestion found favor in the academic community, and a new field of study had a new name.²

Seven years earlier in France another profession received an official beginning. With the aid of an acquaintance, Louis Jacques Daguerre announced details about what is now considered the first permanent photographic process. Although cumbersome and impractical, the process was available for public use and the beginning for a new breed


of professionals called photographers.\(^3\)

From dictionary definitions, folklore, defined as "traditional customs, tales, or sayings preserved orally among a people," and photography, defined by the same dictionary as "the process of producing images on a sensitized surface," would seem to have little in common.\(^4\) More broadly defined, however, the two disciplines share many common concerns and goals.

People constitute a major concern for both folklorists and photographers. Both are interested in recording what people do and how they do it. As folklorist Jan Brunvand says: "Folklore is fascinating to study because people are fascinating creatures. . . the study of folklore is a subdivision of the broader study of people and their works, and as such folklore research has much in common with both the humanities and the social sciences."\(^5\)

To record what people do, both disciplines rely heavily on fieldwork. The use of mechanical recording devices, the need for reliable collection methods and the goal of achieving valid information while developing and maintaining rapport with informants present members of both fields with similar concerns.

\(^3\)Robert Taft, Photography And The American Scene (N.Y.: Dover Publications, 1964), pp. 3-7. Also see Brian Coe, The Birth of Photography (N.Y.: Taplinger Publishing Co., 1977). Both events are now recognized as benchmarks although neither represented the first work done in either specialty. Folklorists say it is impossible to pinpoint an exact time when the study of their discipline began, and photographers recognize a wide variety of techniques preceeding Daugerre's announcement as early photographic techniques.

\(^4\)Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, s.v. "Folklore" and "Photography."

As academic disciplines, folklore and photography are gaining acceptance although even today some educators do not consider them legitimate academic pursuits. Folklore programs, like those in photography, are growing in number and size, but are still found in only a comparatively small number of universities.

Perhaps the strongest bond between photographers and folklorists is their common quest to understand and explain more about why people act as they do. Folklorists are not content to simply act as cultural scavengers, preserving information for future generations. Even beginning folklore students are asked to explain the larger meaning of their data collections, and photographers are supplying an ever increasing amount of information about their photographs as they demand that their products be regarded as more than illustrations. This concern for understanding mankind is summarized by Edward Steichen in an article entitled "Photography: Witness and Recorder of Humanity":

I want to emphasize what I consider the most important service photography can render history, and that is the recording of human relations in the explaining of man to man. . . . The photographer who is photographing his fellowman with understanding, with sympathy and warmth, gives us something that comes out of his pictures and remains with us; something that helps us to know and understand each other.

Before social scientists can use the camera to delve into human behavior with any degree of precision, they must understand the tool. Social scientists, especially anthropologists and archaeologists, have been using still photography as a research tool for decades; but it is only recently that social scientists have attempted to categorize the types of

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photographic research.

The most complete analysis of folklore and what the editors call visual communications was published in a bibliographic and special series of *Folklore Forum* in 1975. The twelve articles contained within the volume entitled "Saying Cheese: Studies in Folklore and Visual Communication" deal with still photography, film and videotape. Michael Bell and Steven Ohrn, editors of the special issue, outline four general areas about which they say "the concerns of folklorists intersect with some aspect of the process of visual communication." They list the four uses of audio-visual technology as (1) a recording device for comparative, repeated and multiple analyses, (2) for elicitation, (3) for presentation, and (4) as data. 7

Other social scientists have also delimited categories in which they find photographic techniques most applicable to research. Jon Wagner, for instance, says there are five separate modes of photographic research. Wagner discusses each category and cites examples of the studies that have been done in the introduction to *Images of Information: Still Photography In The Social Sciences*. First, Wagner says photographs can be used as "interview stimuli." He cites works on phenomena such as the expression of emotion, landscape preference, the My Lai massacre and community design. His second category is that of "systematic recording." Wagner observes that "both still and motion picture cameras have been used by scientists to record and inventory a wide range of social phenomena, including the play of facial

expressions (Ekman et al., 1972), seating patterns along Manhattan streets (Whyte, 1972), accumulation and arrangement of household possessions (Collier, 1967), and pedestrian traffic patterns in airports (Davis and Ayers, 1975). . . ." All photographs contain data in addition to that intended by the photographer according to Wagner. Therefore his third category is "content analysis of native photographs." His fourth point is "native image making." Wagner notes a pioneering study on "native vision" with Navajo Indians and says subsequent analysis suggests a "rich mode of social research." Finally, Wagner lists "narrative visual theory" as his fifth category. He says a number of social scientists have used the techniques of social documentary photographers to explore the visual coefficients of social organization. In calling such work narrative visual theory, I am indicating that these efforts share a commitment to the narrative organization of photographs in which implicit elements of social theory are clearly acknowledged."

Others have used an enumerative approach to list the possible uses of still photography in cultural research. After discussing some of these enumerative approaches, Timothy Curry and Alfred Clark conclude that regardless of which particular list you prefer, "visual methods may be thought of as providing new perspectives on traditional subject matter, and new stimuli for any research process." 9

Whether used to provide new perspectives or new stimuli, the varied uses of still photography by social scientists fall into two broad


EXAMINATION

As a tool for examination, the use of still photography has been applied to a broad spectrum of social science concerns. Sociologists have used photography to examine social patterns and changes as Deborah Barndt explains in her article "Toward A Visual Study of Society." Anthropologists, perhaps taking their clue from the early work on child development by Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson, have often concentrated on specific topics, many times spawning new academic fields such as proxemics and kinesics along the way. Folklorists have generally used still photography to examine folkloristic processes although some such as Henry Glassie have tackled larger concerns. Whether it is social change or a traditional process, still photography can be used at two stages of examination: information gathering and/or post-field examination.

Information Gathering

In pre-field research, still photographs have been used in the same manner as written materials. By studying photographs already taken in a region, fieldworkers anticipate some of the activities and cultural traditions peculiar to the region. This type of pre-field study helps the fieldworker sharpen perceptions and understand more about initial field observations.

Once in the field, researchers have taken photographs of various situations, relying on the photographs to gain them entry into new areas. John Collier Jr. has discussed this "can-opener function" of photography in numerous books and articles. It is in this initial phase of fieldwork that Collier believes photography has been used most enthusiastically. The anthropologist says photography "offers the stranger in the field a means of recording large areas authentically, rapidly and with great detail, and a means of storing away complex descriptions for future analysis."

Folklorist Tom Adler calls this use of photography the exploration of new regions. Adler says:

I sometimes can move into a given cultural scene—whether it is a large region like "Da Region" (Northwest Indiana) or a smaller scene like a festival or a family sorghum-making—and begin to cope with its complexity by seeing what symbols of it are visually recordable. Practically, this has meant that I find that mere roaming around with a camera is quite valuable as part of one's entree into an unfamiliar cultural scene. I've learned things about places which I never expected to through serendipitously making photographic surveys. I guess I'm saying here that I don't always know what I'm doing when I take pictures, but (at least at the beginning of a project) that ignorance sometimes is mitigated by a kind of visual discovery process which the camera enables.

Once the fieldworker has initially explored the region, photography can and has been used extensively to document specific types of cultural information. Collier says the camera's value at this stage in the research process is that it can make a repetitive record covering numerous intervals. He says, "When interaction is examined repetitively, schemes are solidified into organic patterns—ebbing, flowing, gathering and

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12 Personal letter to author from Tom Adler, 30 January 1981.
dispersing— which tie interaction into the multiple cause-and-effect relationships of a culture. 13

Timothy Curry and Alfred Clark urge their beginning sociology students to use photography to record information in their textbook on visual sociology. The sociologists assert that "nearly everyone knows that cameras record information instantaneously. And nearly everyone has access to cameras." However, they insist that most people never use the camera to record facts except on special occasions such as vacations. 14

As a tool for documentation, the use of still photography has taken numerous directions, but researchers and informants alike have generally taken either an iconographic or a holistic approach.

Taking the iconographic approach, folklorist Simon Bronner used photography in his dissertation study of chain carvers in Southern Indiana. Bronner says photography helped him highlight the procedural and behavioral aspects of the folk processes. 15 Betsy Adler has used photographs of pie safes to examine tin patterns and construction features. 16 Also taking an iconographic approach, folklorists at various folklore and folklife centers have used still photograph to document such diverse concerns as ethnic celebrations (Center for Ozark studies), craft processes (Berea College Appalachian Museum), dance performances (North Carolina Folklife Programs) and costume.

13 Collier, Jr., Visual Anthropology, p. 37.


16 Personal letter to author from Tom Adler, 30 January 1981.
room decoration and occupational lore (Blue Ridge Institute).  

Others working for folklife centers have taken a holistic approach, using still photography to document the traditional culture in entire regions. At the Florida Folklife Program, Peggy Bulger says photographs have been an integral part of their documentation efforts, and Lynne Ireland, folklife coordinator at the Nebraska State Historical Society, says still photography has been a vital part of the Center for Nebraska Folklife efforts to "identify, document and publically present the state's traditional culture." Ireland says:

"We have made extensive use of photography in the documentation of folk artists and craftspersons (in black and white and color slide formats) and have used enlargements of these and historic photographs in interpretive exhibits. Photographs of Center-sponsored folk arts presentations serve not only as a record of our activities, but assist us in explaining what it is we do and why it is important." 

The American Folklife Center has undertaken six survey projects since its inception in 1977, all making extensive use of photography. Carl Fleischhauer explained the Center's use of photography in "Point of View: Regional Documentary Photography":

Although video recordings or motion pictures can show certain forms of culture more vividly, still photographs can portray the people we visit, describe the artifacts or tools encountered-conveying something about how they are used, or how people feel about them-and characterize the environments in which people live. Through photos, we can see the form of a sheet crook, methods of irrigation, the urban landscape,

\[17\] Personal letter to author from Robert Flanders, 4 February 1981; Loyal Jones, 2 February 1981; Della Coulter, 18 February 1981; and J. Roderick Moore, 4 February 1981.

\[18\] Personal letter to author from Peggy Bulger, 16 December 1980.

\[19\] Personal letter to author from Lynne Ireland, 10 February 1981.
or the type of guitar favored by a singer of French songs. We may also detect that the sheepherder is proud, that youthful angels are slightly worried, or that an artist is confident.

The Center for Southern Folklore was founded as a multi-media organization and has used photography to document and preserve Southern folk culture. In the Center's magazine on documentary photography executive director Judy Peiser explained the philosophy behind use of still photography at the Tennessee facility:

...we use it (still photography) to help document the people and landscapes that are a part of our region. Together with tape recordings, photographs are an important way of preserving the knowledge of folk artists, shopkeepers, storytellers, community historians--knowledge that history books frequently ignore.

We explore the community and the artists with our still camera the same way we do with our movie cameras. We begin by taking establishing shots of the landscape and the areas in which the people live and work. After that we move into the person's homeplace and workplace, photographing how each is constructed, landscaped and decorated. We then look closely at the artists and their friends and families inside their homes, at social gatherings and, of course, as they go about their daily routines. All of this is in an effort to capture the forces that shape the artist and the skill that shapes the work itself-how the basketmaker, for example, forms a tree into a handsome white-oak basket or a cook patiently prepares a meal.

In addition to using still photography as a primary documentation tool, other social scientists have taken a documentary approach but used still photography as a check on other collection methods. Archaeologist Elmer Harp explains this approach:

This (working field photography) is the archaeologist's bread-and-butter photography, the perfect demonstration of,

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and supplement to his written field notes. It is essentially documentary in purpose, used for illustrating or recording special features such as excavation profiles, important finds still in situ, spatial association of artifacts, or the step-by-step excavation of a significant discovery. It may become the ultimate verification of one's field techniques. 22

Rather than projecting their own opinions about information in photographs, some social scientists have taken photographs back into the field situation to ask informants specific questions, using the photographs to elicit additional information. Folklorist Michael Owen Jones explains how he used photography to elicit information on chairmaking in southeastern Kentucky:

...I took pictures of chairmakers, tools, chairs, and some of the processes of making chairs. The initial impulse was simply "to document." No particular intent or specific use was considered. Later, however, I used the photos in several ways, particularly those pictures of chairs. One use is that of eliciting additional information. Having images of the chairs, I could show them to the craftsman and ask why the chair had certain features, what materials were used, when it was made, who bought it and what the relationship between the customer and craftsman was, and so on. Such questions could have been asked without the photos I suppose, except in instances when the craftsman was not with me when I located the object, circumstances would not allow the posing of certain questions or a great number of questions, or I had not yet had enough experiences with a craftsman's work to have many questions to ask. Another kind of information elicited consisted of value judgments. ... Essentially, I showed photographs of chairs by different craftsmen to various customers, craftsmen, and others interested (and sometimes NOT particularly interested) in the subject. I asked the informant to identify those preferred, those disliked, those he or she would like to see altered, and so on, and to discuss the basis of these pronouncements. Without photos of chairs I could not have done that, as obviously I couldn't carry two dozen or so chairs around with me. On the other hand, I learned, and had to take into account, that photos may be deceiving, especially in regard to mass and size; further, I'm sure that setting and background influenced responses, as probably did the very fact that the photos removed

the chairs from one context, with all its sensory cues, and put those objects into another context with its own set of preoccupations (size, clarity, balance of photographic image, etc.).

Dr. Jones has his students in the folklore field research course at the University of California complete an exercise in eliciting information with photographs. To do so, he gives them four possible ways in which photographs can be used to obtain information. They are projective (the ideal rather than the real), corrective or additive, evaluative/normative (values and responses regarding objects and activities) and descriptive.

Other social scientists have used photographs to elicit information. For his master's thesis in anthropology, Oswald Werner discussed the use of photographs for eliciting information:

The old Chinese proverb that a picture is worth a thousand words has found its modern application in the use of eliciting with photographs. The eliciting sessions are similar to interviews. The strength of the picture interview is that pictures tend to elicit specific responses. This is possible because the denotative range of pictures is narrow and the connotative range is precisely the information which interests the anthropologist.

Anthropologist John Collier Jr. later expanded the discussion and listed the types of information researchers can expect to obtain from photographs. His list includes:

1. Precise identification of people-name, status, role, personality.

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23 Personal letter to author from Michael Owen Jones, 18 December 1980.

24 Ibid.

2. Identification of place: political, ethnic, and tribal boundaries; where people live, ownership of homes; ownership of fields and grazing areas, agricultural patterns.
3. Identification of all ecological elements: explanation of processes and technology; explanation of ceremony.
4. Historical happenings associated with places or people—contrast of present and past, the way things used to be.

Information Analysis

Besides directly eliciting information from informants during interview sessions, information has been abstracted from photographs by comparing a large number of similar pictures. This analysis has taken two routes: examination of quantitative information or analysis of qualitative information.

Thomas Williams discusses qualitative analysis in his book Field Methods In The Study of Culture:

"Records of cultural complexity made with still cameras seem today to offer the best means of providing contrasts between culture regions (as between Africa and Oceania) and over long period of time in the study of one culture by different observers. Our candid photographic record of Dunsun culture will be usable twenty-five years from now by another observer." \(^{27}\)

Discussing his fieldwork in southeastern Kentucky further, Michael Owen Jones elaborates on the qualitative analysis of photographs:

A second use of many of the photographic images proved to be analysis, especially involving the dual process of comparing and contrasting. I had tracked down scores of chairs scattered over a rather wide area. As new objects were examined, the experience tended to bring about reflection on and about others


previously encountered, and, sometimes, puzzlement. It would have been difficult to compare and contrast the objects had I not had photos of each chair. The very process of comparing and contrasting chairs made by the same man over time, and of different men, led to the posing of questions and to hypothesizing. How crucial the process was should be apparent to anyone who reads the third, fourth, and fifth chapters of my book THE HAND-MADE OBJECT AND ITS MAKER.\(^{28}\)

Qualitative analysis of photographs has been an essential tool in American studies research according to Marsha Peters and Bernard Mergen. They say since we can only infer past behavior from written descriptions, we often miss the "nuances and winks" that accompany most types of communication. The photographic record, they contend, supplies some of the missing texture.\(^{29}\)

Investigations of this texture are numerous and varied today. For example, Dr. A. Trachtenberg, of the Yale University English department received a research grant in 1979 to study the cultural implications of photography in America. In 1976, J. C. Ewens received a research grant to continue studying the lives and works of several hundred non-Indian lives and cultures. Along these same lines J. Gutman received a research grant in 1978 to examine 19th and 20th century Indian and British photographers in search of information about Indian accommodation to modern technology.\(^{30}\)

Margaret Mead also discussed the analysis of photographs in an

\(^{28}\) Jones, 18 December 1980.


article about the uses of still photography in culture and personality studies. Her discussion centers on quantitative analysis:

The use of large numbers of photographs, that is of the order of 20,000 per year's field observations, makes it possible to give some quantitative weighting to one's material. So it is possible to express quantitatively the use of crowd scenes, in which a given hand posture covered, and another, or to state that photographic observations child A are being compared with photographic observations of child B. As it is never possible to record one millionth of what one takes in through one's senses about a scene in the time available for a written note, such photographic records with the placement of each individual in a complex scene are invaluable checks on the bases of one's generalizations. Large numbers of photographs, especially photographs taken in depth, make it possible to check new hypotheses, not developed in the field, as for example the correlation between the body touching others and the mouth falling open in Bali. Individuals and events in the background of a photograph provide checks on the amount of bias which obtains in the choice of action in the foreground.

. . . From a great series of photographs of all varieties of scene and behavior it is possible to cross reference, in simultaneous presentation, some theme or emphasis which would otherwise have to be presented in verbal sequence which could only touch on the single regularity being noted.

Mead says it is during the analysis of large numbers of photographs that serendipitous findings generally occur:

. . . It is during scenes of this sort that the field worker often develops new insights about the culture, and, if these are recorded on the spot, then later one can go back to the exact visual situation which gave rise to the insight. Furthermore, if a large number of such sequences of interpersonal relations are shot immediately on entering the field, it is possible to check the effect of a developed hypothesis in the distortion of the field worker's perception, by going back to the photographs which were taken before the insights were articulated. . . .

32 Ibid.
Quantitative analysis of photographs has been used by social scientists to study a wide range of concerns including gestures, expressions, the organization of space and body position.

COMMUNICATION

As a tool for communication, folklorists and other social scientists have used photographs to explain their discipline to others through publications and classroom presentations.

Presentation

The most extensive use of still photography in social science work has been in the presentation of findings where, in Jay Ruby's words, scholars have used photographs to "describe, to amplify, to fill in details and to provide a 'feeling' for an object or situation."^33

John Collier Jr. further explains this illustrative function within anthropology:

> Usually an anthropologist takes a photograph to illustrate a finding that he has already decided is significant, frequently with publication in mind. . . . He uses the camera not as a research technique, but as a highly selective confirmation that certain things are so, or as a very selective sample of 'reality.'^34

Anthropologist Margaret Mead, a pioneer in cultural research, with photography, used photographs consistently, taking their illustrative function one step further to "bring home to the reader and student the extent and intensity of some comparison or contrast."^35 Other scholars

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^33 Jay Ruby, "Is An Ethnographic Film A Filmic Ethnography?" Studies In The Anthropology of Visual Communication 2 (Fall 1975): 104.

^34 Collier, Jr., Visual Anthropology, p.x.

have used still photographs to present concepts or ideas when words are inadequate. To again quote Michael Owen Jones:

I have included many photos in publications when words fail—how, for instance, would one describe verbally the "two-in-one bookcase rocker, masterpiece of furniture," which is the second chair illustrated in my book and the origins of which are the focal point of that book? While I employed photos a way to convey information to others, I included pictures in my publications as a persuasive technique as well. For, after all, each essay and the book set forth a number of hypotheses: words are used to support my arguments, but so too are images.  

In addition to books, photographs are commonly used as illustrations in journal articles. The chart on pages twenty-four through twenty-five summarizes the use of still photography in folklore and folk-life journals.

**Education**

Jon Wagner elaborated on the use of still photography in the classroom in an article entitled "Information In and about Photographs." Wagner said there are four ways in which photographs can be an integral part of formal social science education: to illustrate lectures, as a classroom stimulus, in student presentations and in student and class problem solving.  

Class presentations are perhaps the most common use of still photography in educational settings. In this setting, photography is used to in Tom Adler's words "show students what I'm talking about." Adler says: "I've found that existing-light and strobe-illuminated slides are the most versatile for me, most of the time. When I've captured an

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36 Jones, 18 December 1981.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journal</th>
<th>Issues Per Year</th>
<th>First Use of Photographs</th>
<th>Publish Relevant Photo Essays</th>
<th>Policy on the Use of Photographs</th>
<th>Additional Comments</th>
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<tr>
<td>Appalachian Journal: A Regional Studies Review</td>
<td>Four</td>
<td>Autumn 1972 Vol I:1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Will use photographic essays, photographs as illustrations or supplements to articles</td>
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<td>One</td>
<td>1977 Vol I</td>
<td>Not to date</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Photo printed on an experimental basis for one issue</td>
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<td>Folklore Forum</td>
<td>Three</td>
<td>1979 Vol 2-3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Will not accept photographs because reproduction quality is not acceptable</td>
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<td>Two</td>
<td>1969 Vol 2</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>Journal of American Folklore</td>
<td>Four</td>
<td>No response</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Will use photographs on the cover as an illustration or as supplements to articles</td>
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<td>Journal of Popular Culture</td>
<td>Four</td>
<td>No response</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Will use photographic essays, photographs as illustrations or supplements to articles</td>
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<td>No response</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Three</td>
<td>Spring 1964 Vol 10:1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Will use photographs as illustrations or supplements to articles</td>
<td>No photo essays submitted to date</td>
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<td>Issues Per Year</td>
<td>First Use of Photographs</td>
<td>Publish Relevant Photo Essays</td>
<td>Policy on the Use of Photographs</td>
<td>Additional Comments</td>
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<td>Mid-America Folklore</td>
<td>Three</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Will use photographs on the cover, as an illustration or as supplement to articles</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Vol 7:1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ceased publication in 1978 – See Mid-America Folklore</td>
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<td>Mid-South Folklore</td>
<td>Three</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>Mid-Western Journal of Language and Folklore</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Fall 1978</td>
<td>Do not publish reviews</td>
<td>Will use photographs as illustrations, as supplements to articles</td>
<td>Vol 7:1 contains an article with 65 photos</td>
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<td>Vol 4:2</td>
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<td>Photos have been used on an infrequent basis</td>
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<td>Two</td>
<td>1969</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Will use photographic essays and photographs as illustrations of supplements to articles</td>
<td>Would accept photographic essays if reproduction quality was better</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Vol 3:2</td>
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<td>Northeast Folklore</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>1958</td>
<td>Do not publish reviews</td>
<td>Will use photographs on the cover, as an illustration or as supplement to articles</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vol 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania Folklife</td>
<td>Four</td>
<td>Sept 1949</td>
<td>Do not publish reviews</td>
<td>As an illustrated journal, photos are required with articles</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vol 1:1</td>
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<td>Four</td>
<td>March 1960</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Will use photographs on the cover and as illustrations or supplements to articles</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vol 26</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Western Folklore</td>
<td>Four</td>
<td>No response</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Will use photographs as illustrations or supplements to articles</td>
<td>Will pay for the cost of one page of photos; author must pay for additional photos</td>
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</table>

*After two requests, no response was received from Journal of the Folklore Institute, New York Folklore, North Carolina Folklore Journal, Pioneer American Society, Southern Folklore Quarterly, and Winterthur Portfolio as of March 26, 1981.*
image on a slide, it's easy to file, easy to present to groups large and small, and still quite possible to convert it to an acceptable black-and-white print for possible publication." 38

Education can also take a more informal route. Many folklore and folklife centers use slide/tape presentations, exhibits and other organized photographic presentations to explain folklore and folklife to the public. Lynne Ireland summarizes this use of still photography:

Without wanting to overstate our case, most of what we do would be made extremely difficult, if not down-right impossible, without still photographs. While no substitute for the tradition-bearers themselves, photographs enable us to communicate our belief in the validity and importance of traditional culture in strong visual terms. We hope that for the people who use our exhibits, brochures, slide shows, etc., seeing will be believing. 39

To summarize, the chart on page twenty-seven lists the various uses of still photography by social scientists.

Limitations On The Use Of Photography

From this brief overview, it would appear that still photography has enormous potential in social science research, even if that potential has only been barely tapped. The obvious question then is why social scientists have not incorporated still photography in their research, a question others interested in the use of photography have also tried to answer.

Years ago, the answer was as simple as the lack of appropriate technology. Cameras were bulky, film was slow and processing not widely available. In the 1940s when Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead 38

Adler, 30 January 1981.

Ireland, 10 February 1981.
USE OF STILL PHOTOGRAPHY BY SOCIAL SCIENTISTS

EXAMINATION

INFORMATION GATHERING

Pre-Field Study
• understand the culture and/or area
• sharpen observations

Documentation

Recording Information

Check On Other Methods

Elicitation

Qualitative
• corrective
• additive
• projective
• evaluative

Quantitative
• enumerative
• descriptive

by fieldworkers

by informants

INFORMATION ANALYSIS

Qualitative
• examine cultural complexity
• values
• attitudes
• styles

Quantitative
• enumeration and inventory
• gradual change
• patterns

• serendipitous findings
• supplement to field notes
• memory aid

COMMUNICATION

PRESENTATION

To Specific Audiences
• communicate conclusions
• demonstrate intensity of conclusions
• prove findings
• convey atmosphere, tone

To General Audiences

EDUCATION

Students
• illustrate lectures
• classroom stimulus
• student presentations
• student and class problem solving

Public
• encourage funding
• facilitate understanding
decided to make extensive use of photography in their Balinese fieldwork, they prepared for this decision by packing seventy-five rolls of film for their two-year study. When they decided to use photography even more extensively, it was a major decision. Mead explains the threshold they reached one afternoon:

...we had observed parents and children for an ordinary forty-five minute period, we found that Gregory had taken three whole rolls. We looked at each other, we looked at the notes, and we looked at the pictures that Gregory had taken so far and that had been developed and printed by a Chinese in the town and were carefully mounted and catalogued on large pieces of cardboard. Clearly we had come to a threshold—to cross it would be a momentous commitment in money, of which we did not have much, and in work as well. But we made the decision. Gregory wrote home for the newly invented rapid winder, which made it possible to take pictures in very rapid succession. He also ordered bulk film, which he would have to cut and put in cassettes himself as we could not possibly afford to buy commercially the amount of film we now proposed to use. As a further economizing measure we bought a developing tank that would hold ten rolls at once, and in the end, we were able to develop some 1600 exposures in an evening.

The decision we made does not sound very momentous today. Daylight loaders have been available for years, amateur photographers have long since adopted sequence photography, and field budgets for work with film have enormously increased. But it was momentous then.

Fieldworkers today still have to wrestle with how to finance their photographic work. Tom Adler says one of the major difficulties with folklorists use of photography is simply that they do not take enough photographs of any given subject. He calls cost the "fly in the ointment." The folklorist touches on a deeper concern also, that of how folklorists (and other social scientists) feel about using photography:

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41 Adler, 30 January 1981.
Many of us (folklorists) are a bit scared to take pictures, at least somewhere deep down. We're acutely sensitive to the feelings of our informants, who may seem at first to be camera-shy; and even when they're not, we worry about some kind of subtle change that we may be introducing into an event by being there and taking pix. Carl Fleischhauer, . . . was instrumental in altering my attitude about this. As he likes to say, the fears are usually in our minds, not those of our informants. Part of the problem, the way he sees it, is that we are so parsimonious with film that we take only a few pictures, and thus each one is "special," and offers something for us and our subjects to be nervous about. 42

Explaining why anthropologists have clung to verbal descriptions, Margaret Mead offers two additional explanations and possible limitations on the use of photography in cultural research:

"Much of the fieldwork that laid the basis of anthropology as a science was conducted under conditions of very rapid change, where the fieldworkers had to rely on the memory of the informants rather than upon observation of contemporary events. The informant had only words in which to describe the war dance that was no longer danced, the buffalo hunt after the buffalo had disappeared, the discontinued cannibal feast, or the abandoned methods of scarification and mutilation. Thus ethnographic enquiries came to depend upon words, and words and words, during the period that anthropology was maturing as science. . . .

Another explanation has been that it takes more specialized skill--and gift--to photograph and make films than it does to set a tape recorder going or take written notes. . . .

Many social scientists still believe that photography requires specialized training, but this need is not met in most graduate school programs. Students attending graduate school in folklore cannot take a course on media usage in the folklore department at any of the major

42 ibid.

folklore schools in the United States. If it is taught at all, photography is one of many topics covered during a fieldwork methods course. The reasons for this are varied; some schools cannot obtain university support; others have no demand for such a course, and other schools do not permit method courses at the graduate level. The result, however, is the same: folklorists are generally not completely comfortable with photographic equipment.

Even if they are competent photographers many folklorists find that photography has not been suitable for their research. Literature-oriented folklorists concerned mainly with texts find fewer uses for photography in their work. Other social scientists concerned mainly with text-oriented material face a similar situation.

Regardless of their orientation, Jon Wagner agrees that photography has limitations in social science research, but he says photographs have already explained much of the world to us and social scientists merely need to evaluate their use more thoroughly:

> It is through photographs that we have seen and shared the sights of war and birth, visualized our history, identified our families, and become aware of the richness and complexity of our culture. These heuristic functions of photographs, however, have taken place outside rather than inside the social sciences. The potential contribution of photography is thus not something which is totally unrealized in the culture but rather something which is not yet fully realized in the disciplines themselves. What remains is for social scientists to understand this medium in such a way that they feel comfortable using it, analyzing and evaluating the images produced through it, and

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Questionnaire sent by author to Dan Patterson, Hassan El Shami, D. K. Wilgus, Gerald Alvey, Richard Bauman, Alan Dundues, Henry Glassie and Lynwood Montell, 20 December 1980. See Appendix A for a complete copy of the questionnaire.
building space for it within existing conventions for presentation and communication."\(^{45}\)

The remaining three chapters will consider some of these possibilities for still photography within folklore and folklife research.

CHAPTER TWO

Photographic Moments: Their Relevance And Application In Folklore Genre Research

Of all the means of expression, photography is the only one that fixes forever the precise and transitory instant. We photographers deal in things which are continually vanishing, and when they have vanished, there is no contrivance on earth which can make them come alive.

Extracted from a definitive anthology on famous photographers and their viewpoints, this quotation sums up the importance of the "moment" in photography. Because the moment is important to photography, in fact intrinsic to the photographic act, it has been defined and discussed by photographers representing every speciality within the discipline. Hundreds of basic photographic manuals explain how the camera is able to capture this "transitory instant." More advanced works define the correct moment for a variety of subjects and suggest techniques for capturing these elusive segments of time. This ability to capture memorable moments on film is "the major contribution of the camera in this century" according to photographer-author David Schuerman, and the basis for a recent compilation of prize-winning photographs entitled Moments: The Pulitzer Prize Photographs. These works are tied


together by the common suggestion that a photographic moment is synonymous with an instant of time.

Photography critic and humanist Susan Sontag explains the history behind this association:

The proper moment is when one can see things (especially what everyone has already seen) in a fresh way. The quest became the photographer's trademark in the popular imagination. By the 1920s the photographer had become a modern hero, like the aviator and anthropologist—without necessarily having to leave home. Readers of the popular press were invited to join 'our photographer' on a 'journey of discovery,' visiting new realms as 'the world from above,' 'the world under the magnifying glass,' 'the beauties of every day,' 'the unseen universe,' 'the miracle of light,' 'the beauty of machines,' 'the pictures that can be found in the street.'

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The first definition of the word moment in Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary reiterates this relationship between a moment and an instant of time by describing the moment as "a minute portion or point of time: INSTANT." However, the dictionary also offers further definitions including: "A time of excellence or conspicuousness; importance in influence or effect; notable or conspicuous consequence; a cause or motive of action; (and) a stage in historical or logical


One of the most frequently quoted definitions of the photographic moment came from a French art photographer, Henri Cartier-Bresson, in the 1930s. Cartier-Bresson defined the photographic moment by saying: "To me, photography is the simultaneous recognition in a fraction of a second of the significance of an event as well as a precise organization of forms which gave that event its proper expression." He termed this instant "the decisive moment" and built a career in photography on his uncanny ability to record these moments. While acknowledging that an instant, a "fraction of a second," is inherent to photography, Cartier-Bresson's definition concentrates more on the content of this moment, on the effect it has. The belief that these moments are important and effect future action has partially spurred the photographic search for decisive moments, as one editor explains:

Think back to almost any historical moment: Pearl Harbor, the invasion of France, the assassination of John Kennedy. Much of what the mind retains from those events are images—visual images captured on film and then preserved not only in the photographic anthologies of the day but in the minds of the millions who behold them...

Those haunting images, with their staying power and ability to etch themselves into the mind, influenced people all over the world. In the United States they had enough impact to hasten and blend the course of history.

While picture editor for the London Sunday Times, Harold Evans

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further defined the photographic moment by dividing these moments into categories. According to Evans, there are three types of photographic moments—news, visual and symbolic. News moments have a monopoly on some unrepeatable event, and composition has no particular precision or poignancy. Symbolic moments distill the essence of some person, place, event or era; and visual moments succeed simply because they are visually appealing. They are united by the common characteristics of animation, context, and depth of meaning.  

Recently, social scientists have also begun to describe and define the photographic moment and discuss its place within their respective fields. These definitions are generally based on the idea that a photographic moment represents a peak in development. Anthropologist John Collier Jr. recommends including what he terms "peaks of information" in a photographic study of a community:

Research questions may evolve so that they eventually focus on information which exists between the random or schedule points which are known. In doing an anthropological study of a community I recommend a process of photographic and selective response to 'peaks of information,' where and when they happen. This is a flexible approach, one that can be responsive to unpredictable and uncontrolled behavior in social and cultural field settings. It is a process in which selectivity is not an immaculate and mechanical exercise, but a manifestation of human selectivity, one that rightfully portrays significant research as an accomplishment of human judgment.

Anthropologist and filmmaker Carl Heider uses the term "peak activity" which he says is "that part of the act which involves the most energy


and activity and draws the most attention. 

Applications in Folklore Research

Photographic moments have numerous applications in folklore research, particularly those Harold Evans categorizes as news and symbolic, although in photographs of folkloric events news moments could be more accurately defined as cultural information peaks. The visual monopoly these peaks hold may be on an unrepeatable event in the case of traditions that are not being carried on by the informant or succeeding generations. Early folklorists gathered much of their material believing the traditions were rapidly vanishing. More commonly, however, the monopoly will be on a specific act within a given performance. The folk narrator or a narrator after him will tell the tale again although not in an identical manner; the craftperson will produce other baskets or quilts although no two will be created exactly the same way.

These monopolies are important to folklore research. If folklorists are to discern patterns in traditional behavior, there must be consistent and systematic methods to record this information. Photography is one method of obtaining reliable and detailed data for folklore research. As a simple note-taking device, photography provides specific information about the situation for future analysis and interpretation. As John Collier Jr. points out: "The still photographic image offers

9 Carl Heider, Ethnographic Film (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979), p. 163.

10 This is a combination of terms used by John Collier Jr., Carl Heider and Michael Owen Jones. The addition of the word cultural makes the term more explicit for use by folklorists.
accurate information about all static elements: geography, topography, ethnographic detail, the proximal relationships of social order of personality.11 This type of communication is especially effective when large amounts of ethnographic detail need to be recorded. The photograph on page thirty-eight is one example of a folkloristic situation in which it would be virtually impossible to describe each detail verbally with accuracy. Many folkloristic situations occur where the number of people, objects or relationships override the fieldworker's ability to consistently record them. In other folkloristic situations, numerous interactions are occurring at the same time, making it impossible to observe and note the details of each situation.

Because information is the ultimate goal, folklorists should use methods that produce the most points of information. Paul Byers believes still photography offers social scientists information they cannot obtain with other methods:

When it becomes clear that photography can record significant information that is not seen with eyes, students can begin to use photography to search for information about human interaction that is unavailable to their eyes. . . . Movies are projected, normally, at a human time rate. But the still photograph holds a scene motionless for our continuous involvement-in-time with a non-time representation. We see relationships frozen that are, in life, too fleeting for our eyes. There is therefore, more information available at that moment at the scene itself. In the photograph we can examine complexities of a single exposure as long as we like. . . . The important point for the behavioral scientist is not that the photograph has more information but that it has different information.12

Byers points out that finding information in a photograph is not a

11Collier, Jr., p. 11.

Dark Documents

"May not film well."

WELL.
Bertha Key counts out money for a delivery of bread at Key's General Store in Hanging Limb, Tennessee. The store is a gathering place for local residents, especially at lunch and early afternoon when the schools let out.
matter of counting the number of objects, but of finding meaningful patterned relationships. As this anthropologist explains, a recent discovery linked such movement as body position and expression to larger social and cultural relationships:

When behavioral scientists realized that the elements or units of expression had the same relation to that expression that sounds have to words, it became possible to analyze the structure of behavior, beginning with small bits of body motion. The units of eye position, body stance, limb position and so forth combine in an exact way to form what is called an 'expression' or gesture. These gestures, in turn, are the communication elements of social behavior; the patterns of social behavior are part of what the anthropologist calls culture.

Kinesics, the study of body language, has been accepted by behavioral scientists, social psychologists and anthropologists as an additional method to understand more about the subtle yet persistent differences in culture. The important point for folklorists is that clues on body position and facial expression obtained through photographs can form the basis for understanding cultural relationships. Because most of the information folklorists seek concerns cultural relationships, whether between tradition bearers or between a traditional craftsperson and her craft, photography is an excellent mechanism for obtaining this information. Photographs containing cultural information peaks offer the most information because these relationships have reached a peak in development, and this climax can be examined repeatedly via the still photograph. Consider the photograph on page forty. Besides showing a large amount of detail such as minute differences in the hats all three of the men are wearing and the calendars hanging on the wall, this photo-

\[13\] Ibid.
Dark Documents

"May not film well."

Well.
Standford Moore chats with patrons at Dovie's Cafe in Tompkinsville, Kentucky. The family owned cafe is known for its hamburgers.
graph shows proximal, kinesic and personal relationships.

Because the action has reached a peak, various interactions can be examined for similarities and differences. Folklorist Edward Ives discusses this principle when using a tape recorder:

I cannot overemphasize the importance of recording the same item more than once. . . . If someone is telling a story, it may be that he has several ways of telling it, depending on who he is telling it for, when, where, and so on. If it is a narrative of his own experiences, it will be interesting to try to find out just how much of a 'set piece' it really is, how fixed in form and detail.14

Cultural information peaks are an excellent tool for examining questions related to style. For example, if one storyteller is photographed on numerous occasions, the photographs can be used to examine the degree of consistency in the storyteller's use of dramatic devices. Two cultural information peaks of the same point in a tale can be compared for marked or subtle differences. The same comparison can be made between two storytellers in the same region or two storytellers in different regions. A similar study can be made of one storyteller who specializes in legends and another who tells only tall tales. The list of possible comparisons is almost limitless.

Not only do photographs containing cultural information peaks offer the most information in many situations, but they also communicate this information the most effectively. For example, the photographs on page forty-two were taken under identical technical situations by the same photographer. Photograph one was taken 1/60th of a second before photograph two. Both contain virtually the same information, but

Dark Documents

"May not film well."

WELL.
During a church service, one member of the congregation "falls out."
photograph one communicates this information better, the action is clearer, because that action has reached a logical stage in development.

In all folkloristic genre research, cultural information peaks are most effectively used as a means of breaking a continuous process into small units for examination of each unit and its relationship to the others. The most obvious and commonly employed use includes examination of such processes as quilting and basketmaking. Isolating each step in a folk art or craft process allows folklorists to study not only the steps but variations and patterns that emerge. In fact, folklorists have made extensive use of still photography to record the how-to's of folk life. Through photographs, numerous articles have enumerated the steps a particular craftsperson or artist takes to produce a material artifact. Two types of processes are generally omitted from these studies however. First, the steps generally included are major steps, not the multitude of smaller interwoven steps. For instance, consider the photographs on page forty-four. Photographs of the quilting process generally exclude minute dissections such as how the quilter completes each stitch although this small detail may make a marked difference in the final product or reflect an attitude on the quilter's part. Second, although process photography serves an obvious need for folklorists, many processes seem to escape the folklorist's camera. Such simple processes as the steps a woman takes to put her shoulder length hair in a tight bun each morning are often either noted only in passing or shown through one photograph.

Technology and mass cultural exposure have affected not only the well known folk processes, but the small everyday parts of what we refer to as lifestyle. These lifestyle processes point to the need for
DARK DOCUMENTS

"May Not Film WELL."


The quilting process involves numerous small steps from attaching the quilt to the frame (pictured above) until the final stitch is made.
photographs of events included under the broad headings of oral and customary folklore. Within these genres, there are countless processes that must be broken into smaller steps if folklorists are to answer broader questions about meaning and relevance. In his handbook on how to analyze social situations, John Lofland lists six steps for the study of social phenomena. From microscopic to macroscopic they are: acts, activities, meanings, participation, relationships and setting.  

Within very short periods of time, these steps can be recorded on film. Consider the photographs on pages forty-six through fifty. These photographs were taken within one eight-hour period. By recording the normal interactions of a young mother and her family as they occurred, the photographs--each taken at some peak in the action--include information on every one of Lofland's criteria for meaningful study of social phenomena. For example, the photograph on page forty-six records a specific act--a good-bye kiss--along with information on the setting, participation and relationships. The photographs on pages forty-seven through fifty provide information on specific activities and the settings in which this action occurs. In turn, these acts, activities and relationships are important keys to questions about traditional lifestyles and why certain traditions persist.

Tape-recorded interviews concerning lifestyle, family life or customary folklore in general rarely produce the detailed information found in these photographs. Questions such as "What are your days like?", "What do you do all day?", or even "What is the first thing

DARK DOCUMENTS

"May not film well."
Each morning is spent completing household tasks such as making the beds (right) and getting Joy Lynn ready for the day (below).
Joy Lynn and her mother watch "Happy Days," on television. Mrs. Norfleet enjoys this type of situation comedy although soap operas are her favorite among the afternoon programming.
Joy Lynn is the first baby for this generation so she receives a lot of attention from her grandmother (above) and her aunt (below).
At two months Joy Lynn takes frequent naps. Sometimes Mrs. Norfleet lets her sleep on the living room couch, but many times she holds her throughout the entire nap.
you do each morning?" will most likely be answered with responses such as, "One day is pretty much like the other," or "I get up, get my husband off to work and clean up the house," rather than detailed descriptions of the interactions, much less the setting in which the action occurred.

When patterns or impressions emerge, words also rarely describe the atmosphere and flavor of the situation as well as a photograph. Photographs representative of--or, to use Harold Evans' term, symbolic of--an event can be used to explain specific folklore genres or folklore in general to persons outside the discipline. The value of symbolic moments goes beyond answering the basic questions. Howard Becker hints at the larger value this type of photograph can have:

The most obvious questions that photographs answer are the most specific. . . . But we are only interested in such specific information if the subjects of the photographs are celebrities of some kind or intimates of ours, or if the photographs are to be used in a legal proceeding. Normally we find photographs interesting because they answer questions about something larger than the immediate subject and photographs usually give us to understand that their images have such broad meaning. . . .

So we usually inspect this kind of photograph with an eye to answering some general question about social arrangements or processes. The kinds of questions that concern us are often those social scientists ask. . . . Other photographic works characterize the way of life of some social stratum, occupational group, or social area by detailing major forms of association among the group's members and placing them in relation to some set of environing forces. . . .

Carl Heider also discusses these generalizations in his textbook on ethnographic film by noting that "most ethnographic films make cultural generalizations by showing a particular event or artifact or person and

implying or openly claiming that the particular is typical, that is, general. 17

Consider the photograph of a quilter in one Monroe County, Kentucky, community on page fifty-three. Although not every quilter in this tiny Kentucky community would have an identical quilting frame or quilt in a room such as this one, the situation is representative of older quilters in this part of Kentucky and shows many aspects of the quilting tradition. This same photograph could offer a visual introduction to traditional quilting for educational and political purposes. Because many individuals responsible for funding folklore projects are not familiar with folk culture, photographs such as this can provide an introduction to the discipline and the material folklorists are documenting. Although he is discussing film, Leslie Greenhill explains the educational purposes photography can have:

The film can play several important roles in the field of folklife. First, it can do much to inform the public about various aspects of our cultural heritage and to help develop an appreciation of it. This can be accomplished through films designed for general showing, for use in schools,18 for release over commercial or educational television stations.

Especially when choosing photographs for educational and funding purposes, the desired objectives must be kept in mind and photographs chosen to meet these objectives.

The photograph on page fifty-five was taken during the same

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17 Heider, p. 88.

DARK DOCUMENTS

“May NOT Film WELL.”
The often romantized process of quilting actually involves long hours of solitude for Flossie Williams. Although her primary motivation for quilting is economic, Mrs. Williams says she enjoys the activity and wishes she had more time to devote to it.
session as the photograph on page fifty-three, the only difference is the camera position. The overall effect, however, is considerably different. Use of photographs as symbolic or representative carries a built-in danger of misrepresentation if the photographs are not carefully chosen and backed by ample research.

Symbolic photographs do not have to include dramatic action either, as the photograph on page fifty-six demonstrates. Photographs taken several seconds before and after this particular frame give the same overall impression as this one. Frame selection is based on minute differences which in this case contribute to, but do not significantly alter, the overall effect. To summarize, the chart on page fifty-seven lists the major uses of photographic moments in folklore genre research.

Problems The Folklorist May Encounter

Because of their brevity and irregularity, the major difficulty folklorists are likely to encounter when attempting to record photographic moments is capturing the precise moment on film. As previously noted, a thorough understanding of the culture helps field-workers anticipate the action. The use of a motorized film advance is also a tremendous benefit for this type of photographic research.

Even if folklorists are also competent photographers, however, several problems are likely to emerge. If folklorists concentrate totally on recording cultural information peaks, some valuable information is likely to be missed. These peaks are the middle of any given act; movement and information occur both before and after the major and most significant information. To totally understand the event, the entire process must be photographed.

Some social scientists also object to the use of photography that
DARK DOCUMENTS

“May not film well.”
Flossie Williams pins a quilt to the quilting frame. The frames were handed down through three generations with each generation learning from the previous one.
Katharine Wolfe cleans out an infected ear for a patient in the emergency room at the Cookville, Tennessee, hospital. Dr. Wolfe divides her time between the hospital and her private practice.
### MAJOR USES OF THE PHOTOGRAPHIC MOMENT IN GENRE RESEARCH

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<th></th>
<th>As a Time of Excellence</th>
<th>Having Importance in Influence or Effect</th>
<th>As a Stage in Logical or Historical Development</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Oral Tradition</strong></td>
<td>Provides concentration of contextual information including such items as the physical setting, number of persons present, their arrangement and physical characteristics.</td>
<td>Shows proximal relationships between participants, providing clues to the informant’s status in the community or within the group of people present.</td>
<td>Breaks the transmission process down into small units for the study of how and when dramatic devices, eye contact and body movements are associated with various motifs, tale telling situations or performers.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Material Folk Traditions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Used to photograph the entire production process, reveals economic role of folk arts and crafts in individual and community life.</td>
<td>Isolates steps in folk art and craft processes for the study of technique, variation, pattern and regularities.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Customary Folklore</strong></td>
<td>Records the flavor and feel of events, informant’s personality; and distinctive characteristics about individuals or groups.</td>
<td>Used to record family or group events, small changes in individual attitudes and behavior can be plotted through the study of gestures, expressions and other proxemic and kinesic devices.</td>
<td>Reveals relationships between participants offering clues to the larger questions of how folklore functions in the individual’s life and as well as within the community.</td>
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</table>
concentrates on recording peaks. Sociologist Frank Webster voiced this concern in an article entitled "The Photographer and the Sociologist":

Introducing sociology into photography brings forward the need for research and planning. A common approach we find amongst students is that they catch a scene and snap it at the 'decisive moment.' We are back to the pitfalls of intuitionism. Sociology's emphasis on the communicative process underlines the fact that photography, especially in the media, must be a planned, researched and laboured procedure before the shutter is pressed. 19

Also, if folklore photographers concentrate on capturing action as it peaks, informants invariably learn to freeze in position when they reach the height of action in any given process. Discussing interview techniques, Michael Owen Jones and Robert Georges point out that "a subject's response to the fieldworker's questions about most topics is determined by expectation of what the fieldworker wants to know and why he or she wants that information." 20 An informant's response to photography follows an identical pattern. If informants believe the photographer is only interested in "action shots" they will provide the action, often with contrived, bland or continuously pleasing expressions. If folklore photographers make the camera a natural part of the scene, however, informants soon learn to ignore it, relax and give the fieldworker what he or she wants--a more realistic view of the informant's world, although this view is always filtered through the fieldworker's perceptions. Even informants who have never been photographed by a professional or those who are very suspicious of the camera return to characteristic behavior after several rolls of film.


CHAPTER THREE

Applying Principles From Selected Photographic Fields To Folklife Research

... in distinction to American folklore studies, which have been until recently, genre oriented, folklife research is oriented toward holistic studies of culture regionally delimited toward 'life,' the life of the society under study and of the individual within that society.

As this quotation implies, scholars studying traditional culture in the United States are divided between those preferring the term folklore and a basically genre-oriented approach to the discipline and those preferring the term folklife and a holistic approach. The genre-oriented approach was considered in chapter two. This chapter will discuss the folklife approach and how still photography can be employed in this type of cultural research.

The Folklife Approach

A "holistic approach" to the study of culture is how folklife scholars usually describe their method. Specifically, folklife investigations fall into two categories according to J. Geriant Jenkins: investigations of single aspects of culture on a local regional or world basis and investigations of a limited area that consider all aspects of life in that area. Jenkins elaborates further on the goals of folklife research in an article entitled "Field-Work and Documentation in Folklife

Folklife may be described as everything that intimately concerns the life of ordinary people; in their minds, their speech, their homes, their fields, their workshops and their leisure activities. . . . In ethnographic research, therefore, our aim is to search for the key to the world of ordinary people; we are attempting to throw light on their astonishingly ill-documented day to day life, and to study material that to most historians seems too obvious, too commonplace and near at hand to be important. In our studies we are not by any means confined to what may be called peasant culture; the manor house and the large farm are of as much concern to the student of folk-life as the cottage.

Jenkins goes on to conclude that whether the researcher is interested in oral, social or material customs, folklife research is primarily concerned with recording regional personality. In the United States this effort has taken three separate directions according to Don Yoder, the leading folklife scholar in America. Yoder defines these directions as historical folklife studies, folklife studies and survivals, and folklife studies and the ethnographic present. The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to a discussion of these directions in folklife research and how still photography can be used most effectively in the research process.

### Historical Folklife Studies and Folkloristic Analysis of Photographs

Scholars studying the historical past through what Don Yoder calls historical folklife studies concentrate on reconstructing past levels of culture. Dr. Yoder uses a basically enumerative description to explain the method of historical folklife studies. Travel accounts,

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3 Yoder, p. 6.
newspapers, diaries, autobiographies, collections of letters and local histories are the basis of historical source material that must be "plowed through and abstracted" to fully understand regional culture according to the folklife scholar. The ultimate result, he says, will be a diachronic documentation for ethnographic studies. 4

Although Yoder does not specifically mention photographs, other historians have used photographs to reconstruct the past in the same way Yoder suggests using other historical materials. Glen Holt, for example, reconstructed a view of Chicago, Illinois, between 1845 and 1930 through photographs. While pointing out that the use of photographs as historical documents has limitations, Holt concluded that photographs "offer insights into our urban heritage and keys to understanding the metropolis in our own time." 5 Memphis State University professor Jack Hurley says he does not think historians will be able to make major new historical interpretations based on photographs alone because visual images are not that literal. However, using photographs to augment what is already known is another matter according to Hurley. "When a thorough knowledge of a period is combined with a careful eye for detail and some knowledge about how and why photographs are made, the results can be very satisfactory indeed," he says. . . . When used carefully, photographs can add a dimension to history which would be difficult to obtain in any other way." 6

Early historians used photographs in their research in a variety of ways according to Marsha Peters and Bernard Mergen. Peters and Mergen traced the use of photography in historical research back to 1888 when the Boston Camera Club made a survey of buildings and farms for local archives. They describe a variety of the innovative techniques and approaches used with photographs in their first paragraph of an article entitled "'Doing The Rest': The Uses of Photographs in American Studies." Unfortunately, they report the demise of virtually every project in the next paragraph and note the reluctance of modern historians to use photographs as historical documents. Despite sparse use by modern historians, Peters and Mergen say that both amateur and professional photographers left behind countless pictures of people, landscapes and activities that are a virtually untapped resource for students of American culture.

One of the most extensive collections of value to historians is the Farm Security Administration photographs taken mainly during the Great Depression. A few of these photographs have been reprinted and discussed, but most of the photographs of daily life during that period, the "tweedle dum" documents as Edward Steichen calls them, have not been examined. The few researchers who have discovered the collection such as folklorist Robert Bethke find what he says is "a gold mine for studies of vernacular architecture, crafts and regional folklife occupations." Bethke, who has been examining some 75,000 images taken mainly during the late 1930s, believes most scholars of

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American folk tradition are not aware of the collection although he says they contain "incredible images of American rural folk culture." 

Others interested in traditional culture are also beginning to look to photographs for information on past lifestyles, especially within the family context. Marjorie McLellan and curator George Talbot are examining a family photograph collection that McLellan says spans most of the history and evolution of family photography. She says these photographs "contain clues about family life, material culture and farm activities in the region, but, more importantly, they provide us with keys to understanding the way this particular family has adapted and integrated their traditional ways and values within mainstream developments in rural Wisconsin." 

One of the main reasons scholars have not used photographs to uncover and examine the past may be the lack of a systematic instrument to employ in this analysis. Marsha Peters and Bernard Mergen suggest that this is because no one can construct a model that includes the many faceted details photographs contain. They find a five-part approach devised by photographer John Szarkowski most appropriate for historians because it identifies some of the biases historians should recognize and examine. Szarkowski's five categories are (1) the thing itself--the subject; (2) the detail--a symbol of the whole; (3) the frame--what the photographer thinks is most important to include; (4) time--the tenuous connection between a fragment of time and the

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8 Personal letter to author from Robert Bethke, 27 March 1981.

whole event; and, (5) vantage point--the photographer's perspective.  

Other scholars using photographs have also devised methodologies tailored to their particular discipline. Archaeologist Elmer Harp for instance says photographic statements contain four kinds of data relevant to archaeological research--elements, attitudes, context and impact. He defines elements as units that the audience recognizes as representations of familiar facts. Attitudes, he says, are the specific configurations of the elements. Context is the elements and attitudes in a photograph that the audience lumps together into a general idea of background or environment, and impact is the part of the message that the audience receives but does not interpret.  

From a sociological viewpoint, Timothy Curry and Alfred Clark advise students to use six categories when analyzing photographs. Presented as the first project in an introductory textbook on visual sociology, Curry and Clark list suggested questions under their groupings. Their categories are general impression of the picture, objects in the picture, relationships, order of significance, interpretation of the time frame, and sociological extension of the picture.  

Regardless of which approach is used, there are basically two types of data that can be gleaned from photographs for use in cultural research: quantitative and qualitative.

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Quantitative Information

As John Collier Jr. has repeatedly pointed out, photographs offer researchers a method of measuring, counting, qualifying, comparing and tracking material items. According to Collier, "most photographic evidence which has found practical use in direct use can be examined under one or more of these five categories."¹³ Large numbers of photographs have been used for quantitative analysis of cultural clues including gestures, kinesics, proxemics and choreometrics.

Qualitative Information

Photographs are also being increasingly used as a method of gaining new psychological insight. Psychologist Robert Akeret calls the study of photographs for personal and interpersonal insight "photoanalysis" and insists photoanalysis is a psychologically sound method of increasing self-awareness and helping people become more visually sensitive:

Photographs have a special language of their own, and all photographs tell some kind of story beyond the purely visual record. Obviously, not all photographs are equally rich, and many tell more when viewed as a series than singly. I don't wish to imply that by analyzing photographs we can tell everything there is to know about someone's personality or his relationship with others. People are infinitely complex and multidimensional. But like dreams, body language, slips of the tongue, and handwriting, photographs reveal significant aspects of individuals and are lasting records of our lives and deeds. From them we can accumulate significant and valid knowledge about ourselves and others--knowledge that is frequently beyond external observation or otherwise obscured.

Think for a moment. The human face is capable of displaying thousands of different expressions, each of which has something to say about us, about how we react to the world around us. Photography can capture every one of those expressions, whether

we intend it to do so or not. And a photo offers a pure visual experience that is not contaminated, distorted, influenced, or distracted by words or movement. You can go over a photograph time and time again, and every time you look at it--if you know how--you can discover new meanings, new experiences, new sensations.

Folkloristic Analysis of Photographs

To analyze photographs from a folkloristic perspective, it is first necessary to categorize the types of information folklife scholars wish to abstract from the photographs. A list of questions must then be devised for each category. Because folklorists using photographs to reconstruct the past will be interested in a myriad of topics, it is impossible to consider all the possible directions photographic analysis can take. However, the outline on pages sixty-six and sixty-seven lists the major topics folklorists should consider and includes suggested questions.

A. Initial Examination
1. What do you see first?
2. What dominates the photograph? (i.e. people, material items, land, etc.)
3. What is your overall impression of the photograph?
4. What mood or tone does the photograph provoke?

B. Identification
1. List the people or items in the photograph.
2. Describe the items by size, shape, color, design, substance, signatures, marks, common themes, function, etc.
3. Identify the people by name, birthdate, birthplace, residence, occupation, nickname, religion, etc.

C. Quantification
1. Count the objects.
2. Divide them into categories.
3. Compare the categories numerically.

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D. Qualitative Examination
1. What emotions are evident on the faces of the people?
2. What gestures are being used? What body positions?
3. How far apart are people and/or objects spaced?

E. Relationships/Patterns
1. How are the people or objects arranged?
2. Is there any significance to this arrangement?
3. Who suggested the arrangement? Why?

F. Folkloristic Genres
1. Who is participating? Why? How?
2. What is the function of the event, art, activity, etc.?
3. Explain and describe the context.
4. Elicit information on the personal background of the participants.
5. Is this a common activity, event, art, etc. for the participants? In the geographical area/region? During this time?
6. Are there others in this family, geographical area, etc. who participate in this type of activity?

G. Folkloristic Processes
1. What are the steps involved?
2. Do others do it the same way? If not, what are the differences?
3. How long does it take to do it?
4. Where did the person pictured learn the skills? When? From whom?
5. What materials are used? Have they always been used?
6. Where does the person get them? Cost? Availability?
7. Why does the person practice the skill?
8. What is done with the final product?

H. Historical Reference
1. What type of photographic process was used?
2. Is the photograph dated?
3. Are items or stylistic concerns indicative of a specific time period?

I. Geographical Concerns
1. Describe the geographical area shown.
2. Does the area/region have a name? If so, what? Why did it get that name? When?
3. Do the residents have other names for it? If so, what? Why?
4. Does the geographical terrain or location affect the lifestyle of residents in the region? How? To what degree?

J. Events Surrounding The Photograph
1. Who took the photograph? Why? When? Where?
2. What is the photographer's background (academic training, occupation, etc.)?
3. Who suggested the photograph be taken? Why? When?
4. What occurred prior to and immediately after the photograph was taken?
Folklife Studies and Survivals

Folklorists following this approach look at the present, but focus on existing remnants of "true" folk culture according to Don Yoder. Whether the informant still actively uses these "true" cultural remnants or not, photography can be used in the research process.

When the individual still actively practices the cultural "remnant" this should be documented using the techniques discussed in the remainder of the thesis. But folklife photographers should also be willing to ask informants to demonstrate skills they possess even if these skills are not actively practiced. This is especially true when the informant has knowledge of a process which is no longer in common practice.

These photographs offer a visual explanation of material that is often recorded only by oral historians, and many times one picture will explain a procedure as well or better than a lengthy narrative.

This type of photography is termed "descriptive" by photojournalist Harold Evans. Admitting that the appeal is less obvious than photographs with dramatic action, Evans says descriptive photography is constantly neglected. The photojournalist describes this type of photograph in his book Pictures On A Page:

> It does not have dramatic action or symbolism. It may at a glance look dull, or it may catch the eye easily, but the essence is that the descriptive photograph offers secondary as well as primary signals, detailed observation which appeals to the intellect rather than to the emotions, so that the picture is full of interest rather than excitement. . . . The detail must, of course, be relevant to the observation the picture is making, not just clutter. The

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15 Yoder, pp. 7-8.
The photographs on page seventy would be categorized as descriptive by Evans. At the time these photographs were taken, this rural doctor no longer actively practiced medicine. However, the 99-year-old still remembered the exact method he used to dispense medicine (photo 1) and listen to a patient's heartbeat (photo 2). As the oldest physician in Kentucky at that time, he had first-hand information that would be lost at his death. Thus, these photographs offer a visual record of cultural "remnants" in the ethnographic present and as such augment other research methods.

The one danger in using demonstration photographs in folklife research is the possibility that other researchers might assume the informant still used these skills and draw incorrect conclusions from the photographs. Therefore, this type of photograph must be clearly labeled as a demonstration photograph. If the photographer does not differentiate between photographs of the informant demonstrating skills and those of the informant actively practicing skills, an inaccurate account will emerge.

Folklife Studies and the Ethnographic Present

The focus of folklife studies in the ethnographic present is a scientific description of the contemporary forms of American traditional culture according to Don Yoder. The method is fieldwork, and

17 Yoder, p. 8.
DARK
DOCUMENTS
“May NOT Film WELL.”
according to Yoder, fieldwork is the primary need in American folklife scholarship today.

Use of still photography in folkloric field situations is considered through two approaches in the remainder of this chapter. These two approaches are documentary photography and photographic portraiture. Because photographers using these approaches have many of the same concerns as folklorists, the specific techniques are applicable in folklife research.

**Documentary Photography**

Like the terms folklore and folklife, documentary photography has a variety of meanings depending upon the context. The word was coined in the early 1930s by John Grierson, the "father" of English documentary. Grierson first used the term to describe a film about the daily life of a young Polynesian, but broadened the scope of his definition in later years, redefining it as "the creative treatment of actuality." In succeeding years his definition was added to and altered by other filmmakers and photographers and "came to represent vast and far-reaching use of the film for social comment."18

Documentary photography also came to represent a trend toward photographing the common man with the still camera. As William Stott says: "Documentary is a radically democratic genre. It dignifies the usual and levels the extraordinary. Most often its subject is the common man and when it is not, the subject, however exalted he be, is looked

at from the common man's point of view."\textsuperscript{19}

It is this trend that is most applicable in folklife research. Not surprisingly, it is this trend that anthropologists have also refined for their use. Considering documentary photography from an anthropological viewpoint, John Collier Jr. says: "all that needs to be said of documentary photography is that it is a camera record of living history, a concern for detail and with a concern for detail, an awareness of both social and human context."\textsuperscript{20}

This concern for detail was exemplified in Roy Stryker. Although not a photographer himself, Stryker directed the Farm Security Administration photographers during the 1930s. Stryker insisted that his photographers try to understand the hidden social processes behind pictures. He was not interested in what he called "the America of the unique," but instead wanted his photographers to record "the America of how to mine a piece of coal, grow a wheat field or make an apple pie. The America of 'what does it mean' not the America of 'amuse me.'"\textsuperscript{21} Stryker explains his approach using a silo as an example:

\begin{quote}
... an ordinary silo is an insistent temptation for the angle shot from below--converging lines, dramatic light, re-filtered clouds. Yet such a picture has little value beyond the satisfaction the photographer may feel in having made a possible 'salon print.' On the other hand, imagine the same silo photographed so that it stands in proper size relationship to the farmhouse and the fields behind, with the light used to bring out the texture of the structure and the quality of the day, and with the
\end{quote}


farmer and his hired man unloading corn in the foreground. You will then have a photograph which tells the story of the silo.

To tell the story, Farm Security Administration photographers as well as later documentary photographers and photojournalists refined many of the techniques still used today. Two of these techniques—use of a variety of focal lengths and the inclusion of both objective and subjective photographs—are especially applicable to folklife research.

Perhaps the most widely accepted is the practice of recording each scene or event through close-ups, overall photographs and medium shots. This practice is still widely used by photojournalists as a method of obtaining visual impact and keeping the reader’s attention. In research photography, this technique helps the photographer emphasize the types of information he or she wishes to record. For example, close-ups can emphasize the details of various folklife processes while overall photographs show larger relationships. The chart on page seventy-four explains the use of various focal lengths in folklife research.

A second technique, although more subjective and controversial, centers on the use of artistic versus ethnographic photographs. Jorge Preloran says there are two approaches to documenting the human condition through film. The first is to use film as another tool for the anthropologist, recording data for future analysis but not structuring it in any way. The second is to try to convey the "feel

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## USE OF VARIOUS FOCAL LENGTHS IN FOLKLIFE RESEARCH

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall Photographs</th>
<th>Medium Shots</th>
<th>Close-ups</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical Setting</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gives others an orientation to the area</td>
<td>Isolates icon areas</td>
<td>Provides detail for qualitative comparisons</td>
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<td>Reveals patterns on use of space</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Individuals</strong></td>
<td>Identifies informant</td>
<td>Emphasizes body position and gestures</td>
<td>Offers psychological insight through emphasis on expression or characteristic features</td>
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<td><strong>Processes</strong></td>
<td>Establishes location where activity occurs</td>
<td>Isolates steps emphasizing differences in techniques and style and provides quantitative validity to breakdown of steps</td>
<td>Shows detail such as texture, design, distinguishing features, etc.</td>
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of the people, the ambiance in which they live, the ways by which they have adapted to a certain pattern of living. ..." Preloran believes in the second approach:

My conviction is that people relate to each other through feeling, rather than through intellectual exercises, theories, discussions, and debates. These can easily be dislodged by other theories, discussions, and exercises, if strongly enough stated. And so man flips from one point of view to another with few qualms. But when a man FEELS, through emotion, this is indelible ... .

Use of this artistic approach to any degree magnifies the possibility that the folklorist will be charged with subjectivity, but as Bill Aron explains, "Photographs at their best do not simply make assertions; rather the viewer interacts with them in order to arrive at conclusions. ..." Aron says it is through this interaction that photographs can help people see, feel and understand in ways that words alone cannot.

Refusing to consider photographs that lean to the artistic side is much like setting up a living history museum in the bottom of an air conditioned basement with no flies or smells or sounds. The information is presented, but in such sterile terms that the impact of reality is lost. This is a very difficult balancing act to be sure, and use of artistic photographs cannot take precedence when information is the goal. However, folklorists should include photographs of this type

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as a method of presenting a different type of information rather than deciding that photographs which demonstrate a feel for the subject are outside the realm of folklife research. To quote Robert Redfield, "The first open response to a strange environment often reveals character that is never clearly seen again after the research descends to the micro details of the culture." 25

Once a decision has been made to use a combination of ethno- graphic and artistic photographs and a variety of focal lengths, folklife photographers must decide how informants will be chosen. In social science research the case study has become a widely accepted method. In his book Sociological Work: Method and Substance, Howard Becker explains the term and its research applications:

The term 'case study' comes from the tradition of medical and psychological research, where it refers to a detailed analysis of an individual case that explicates the dynamics and pathology of a given disease; the method supposes that one can properly acquire knowledge of the phenomenon from intense exploration of a single case. 26

The two purposes of the case study according to Becker are to (1) arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the group under study and (2) develop more general theoretical statements about regularities in social structure and process. Becker says these goals are utopian, but even though they probably will not be reached, they have important and useful consequences:

It prepares the investigator to deal with unexpected

25 Ibid.

findings, and, indeed, requires him to reorient his study in the light of such developments. It forces him to consider, however crudely, the multiple interrelations of the particular phenomena he observes. And it saves him from making assumptions that may turn out to be incorrect about matters that are relevant through tangential, to his main concerns.27

The visual essay on the following pages is a combination of the approaches and techniques discussed in this chapter. Specific information about the photographs is included beside each photograph.

Photographic Portraiture

The threshold between universal and individual man has fascinated photographers as well as social scientists since members of both disciplines began studying mankind, and both have looked to photographic portraits for some of the answers. For many photographers, portraiture has been their bread and butter. Estimates and numbers vary, but photographic historians agree that most early photographs were portraits, some historians estimating that more than ninety-five percent of all daguerreotypes made in the United States were portraits of individuals. Portraiture has also been a staple in the photographic diet of many folklorists. Offered to informants as a gesture of appreciation or taken to accompany journal articles, portraits have been an integral part of what fieldworkers term rapport development.

The difference between a photograph of a person and a portrait of that person is an important one, however, as Edward Weston explains:

At the outset let us distinguish between portraits and mere pictures of people. To the latter class belongs such material as casual snapshots, a high percentage of candid-camera work, glamourized commercial work, and all those photographs labeled

27 Ibid.
DARK DOCUMENTS

"May not film well."

"For"
(Right) Mrs. Barton on Easter, 1979. This photograph was taken on the front porch of her Fentress County, Tennessee, home. (below) Mrs. Barton walks up the gravel drive to her house after picking greens.
Mrs. Barton shucks corn on the side porch. As the variety of jars and pails indicate, she uses this porch for a variety of purposes.
Three-year-old Jeanetta receives a good-bye kiss from her grandmother. Jeanetta spends approximately one hour with Mrs. Barton every Sunday afternoon. Each year Mrs. Barton raises a garden and uses the vegetables year-round. Here she shells beans for canning.
Because her Fentress County home does not have indoor plumbing, Mrs. Barton keeps water in gallon jugs for preparing food and washing dishes. While cleaning chicken (above) she can look out her back window and see the land where her son's cows graze.
Sundays are Mrs. Barton's favorite day because of the Sunday School class she teaches. The class meets in the basement of the church and has about a dozen regular members. Saturday is the only day she has for doing the grocery shopping since she depends on her son for transportation. Normally, she stops at two grocery stores and occasionally a general store.
Preparing for a photographic portrait, Mrs. Barton completes the final steps in her morning routine of putting her hair in a bun. When her hair is taken down, it falls just below her shoulders. The process takes anywhere from ten to twenty minutes depending on how many adjustments are needed.
(Right) Hopper, one of Mrs. Barton's pet cats, plays on her lap. (Below) every Wednesday Mrs. Barton joins other local women at the Schnuk community center to quilt. The quilts are sold and the profit used for activities.
Mrs. Barton places flowers on her husband's grave. Because she is not able to get to the grave regularly she uses plastic flowers, this time yellow and white lilies to observe Easter.
Writing in her journal is the final task of each day for Mrs. Barton. She methodically records the birthdays, deaths and weather for each day along with such highlights as who she talked with.
'portrait' in the making of which the photographer paid a good deal more attention to his lighting devices and composition than he did to his subject. That leaves in the first class those photographs in which the photographer's primary purpose has been to reveal the individual before his camera, to transfer the living quality of that individual to his finished print. This is, in fact, the aim of good portraiture in any medium—not to make face maps or superficial likenesses but to capture and record the essential truth of the subject; not to show how this person looks but to show what he is.  

How can one photograph of a person, many times showing only his face, reveal more than just physical characteristics? Ben Maddow offers one explanation:

... our first experience is that of a face: gigantic, looming, sensuous, and warm. Current research on the newborn child shows how astonishingly responsive we are just after birth; we look where our mother looks; we watch her voraciously; we learn in the first weeks of our lives to judge the changes and interpret the signals in that immense maternal face: to smile in response to smiling, to sense fear, and ward off deeply hidden impatience or even hatred. The power of character and the support of social nexus is strongly concentrated in the face—an organ, one might say, especially made for that purpose.

The earliest portraiture clients were artists and intellectuals willing to try a new and mystery laden activity. Many of these portraits, especially the early ones, were taken in studios. Since then portraiture has been refined by additional techniques, more flexible equipment and new crops of professional photographers, but with only a few exceptions, the essence of studio portraiture has remained virtually the same. Apart from new gimmicks, the main thrust of studio portraiture has been detecting and emphasizing one personality


trait of the subject. As Gjon Mili notes: "A moment can hardly reveal the whole person, but it can communicate one of two things: the emotional state of the subject, or a dominant, not necessarily definable expression on the person."30 Because the photographer and subject are usually strangers, photographers have generally concentrated on capturing a distinguishable physical characteristic.

Recording a physical likeness on film has also dominated portraiture done by folklorists. Taking an ethnographic approach, folklorists have used portraiture as a backstop method to describe the informant as well as a type of payment for the time and information the informant volunteered. Used to record basic physical characteristics, portraits of this type serve the folklorist well although many photographers would argue that they lack unique style or flair. For example, examine the photograph on page eighty-nine. As a record of physical characteristics, this photograph of Ona Barton shows her choice and style in clothing, the way this elderly Tennessee native wears her hair and even such specifics as her wedding ring. This type of approach communicates basic information about the informant. The esthetic quality is unimportant although basic technical requirements must be met. As Ansel Adams says: "There is good and bad painting, good and bad writing, and good and bad photography. The 'goodness' or 'badness' largely relate to the appropriate function of the photographs."31 Thus,

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Dark Documents

"May not film well."
as long as the details are clear and the important information is included, the photograph is successful for informational purposes.

Basic ethnographic portraits are also a natural first step in photographic fieldwork with an informant. Virtually all basic manuals on folklife fieldwork advise the fieldworker to begin with basic biographical information when conducting interviews. To quote Edward Ives,

... Start by getting the basic biographical information, if that comes easily—age, place of birth, family, schooling, length of residence here and elsewhere, etc.—but don't insist on anything. These are useful icebreaking questions, but if you find your informant becoming restive, move on to something else. . .

Photographic portraits offer parallel yet distinctly different background information on the informant than that obtained through verbal interviews. Take the case of an informant born in 1939. That fact alone tells you he is forty-two years old. It does not tell you anything about his physical appearance—whether he could pass for thirty or whether he looks more like the fifty-year-old men in that community. At the same time, the photograph cannot reveal the informant's age or birthdate, just his physical appearance. The same is true about his occupation. Knowing the informant was a farmer tells you one part of the story; seeing his hands tells you another.

The portrait, when taken in a straightforward manner, is also freer from judgment calls. The dress is not tight or loose or baggy or out-of-date; it is simply photographed for any number of professionals to examine with their own methodology and to answer their own

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particular questions about the individual.

Finally, just as acquiring biographical data is one of the least threatening or demanding parts of an interview, taking a portrait of the informant is also one of the least intimidating uses of the camera in fieldwork. Because photographs are taken by most everyone and "portrait studios" are set up everywhere from department stores to drivers license bureaus, having a portrait made is a typical rather than an atypical occurrence for most people.

Photographers who spend more time with individual clients generally try to go beyond basic "face maps" and concentrate on the individual's personality, or his character. In fact, portraits have been used to record character since the birth of photography. As John Collier Jr. writes, "Even in the pioneer day of the camera when equipment and film were better suited for photographing Roman colosseums and the promenades of Paris, photographers at once began probing the subtleties of personality through portraiture." To accomplish this merging of character and physical appearance, portrait specialist Phillipe Halsman advises photographers to "first look for the outstanding personality trait." He says this trait can be anything from frankness or thoughtfulness to merriment or urbanity. Stating that at least ninety percent of all pictures have people in them, Halsman argues that only a few of these are portraits: "Even a picture showing nothing but a human face is not necessarily a portrait--it may be only a record

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In quest of portraits that reveal more than strong physical characteristics, Bernard Hoffman began what he terms "character studies." According to Hoffman the difference between a character study and a portrait is, very often, the "difference between the personality of the subject and the impression or image he would like to create." Although he continues to define his products as portraits, Philippe Halsman agrees with Hoffman on the importance of revealing character:

"A picture of John is a portrait only if it is an attempt to show what John is really like. Showing what a person is like means characterizing him. And we realize that portraiture is truly nothing but characterization. Consequently, if we want to make a portrait and not just a snapshot, we must ask ourselves what kind of person our subject is and what we want to say about him.

Although a far more subjective approach, trying to reveal an informant's character through photographic portraiture can serve several functions for the folklorist. The most basic of these functions centers on an activity every fieldworker and informant must participate in: the process of developing rapport, or, more simply, the process of understanding each other. In their analysis and history of cultural fieldwork, Robert Georges and Michael Owen Jones criticize the authors of current fieldwork guides for suggesting that rapport development is a one-shot,

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36 Halsman, p. 3077.
first-step effort in folklife fieldwork. The folklorists insist that "rapport is ever-developing, continuously negotiated, and constantly changing."³⁷ They go on to say that as individuals learn about each other, their opinions and attitudes change. By taking portraits throughout the fieldwork process that reveal the informant's character, the fieldworker can document these shifting attitudes and actually chart the rapport development process. This characterization is mainly a record of how the fieldworker has come to view the informant if the fieldworker directs the portrait session by asking for a portrait of the informant in specific surroundings or with certain individuals. However, as informant and fieldworker develop a deeper understanding of each other, this relationship will also be reflected in the photographs through the informants choice of expression and body position.³⁸

Portraits do not have to be exclusively close-ups of the informant's face, either. As Will McBride points out,

Portraits do not have exclusively to do with naked faces thrusting up out of shirt collars, and the landscape of this face and the grimaces of that face. A portrait is a likeness. It shows things about the person. It can be dirt under his fingernails, the stoop of his shoulders, his heavy bones. You can tell about a man by showing his naked body, or by showing his choice of clothes or women or house or car.

The three photographs on pages ninety-four and ninety-five are


³⁸ See chapter four for more information on this topic.

DARK DOCUMENTS

"May NOT Film WELL."

WELL.
portraits of Ona Barton, each emphasizing certain aspects of her personality, none conveying all the myriad characteristics collectively called personality. The wedding ring and Bible in the first photograph represent the two most important influences in Mrs. Barton's life--her family and her church. The close-up in photograph two came from one page of the journal Mrs. Barton keeps daily. In it she records the weather, community births and deaths, a summary of the day's events and commentary on the events as well as her overall mood that day. The third photograph was taken on a Saturday night as she prepared for her Sunday School class the next morning. The dim lighting emphasizes the loneliness this 79-year-old woman speaks of in every letter and often records in her journal.

Other photographers let subjects do their own talking by allowing them to choose body position, expression and location of the photograph. William Stott, examining the documentary style of Farm Security Administration photographers in *Documentary Expression and Thirties America*, emphasized that to Walker Evans documentary meant no additions to any photograph by the photographer:

Evans took the superb group portraits of the Ricketts and Woods families without telling the subjects how or where to stand or sit or look. He set up his camera on a tripod where he found a number of the subjects gathered; let them get other people if they cared to and arranged themselves as they liked; asked whether they were comfortable and let them stir again if they were not; took the photograph. 'I knew I couldn't miss,' he says.

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40William Stott, *Documentary Expression and Thirties America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 269-270. Other authors, however, say that Evans provided more direction for his photographs.
Allowing informants to choose where the portrait will be taken and what image they want to project gives the folklorist a way to let the informant provide him with more information, many times more intimate information than the folklorist can produce on his own, or information the folklorist might not consider asking during an interview. The photograph on page ninety-eight is one example. Mrs. Barton took nearly thirty minutes to prepare for this photograph which was taken at her request. She meticulously fixed her hair, chose the pin on her dress because it hid the top of the zipper and matched the print on her dress, put on her watch which she rarely wears, and took off the dust cover which always stays on the chair. She sat down, folded her hands, made the necessary adjustments and indicated when she was ready to have the photograph taken. In short, the photograph communicates the image she wished to portray, and as in this case, not necessarily a portrayal the fieldworker would have considered typical.

Portraits that communicate important characteristics about an informant can be used by folklorists to introduce the informant or a folklife genre to a general audience. For example, a portrait of a basketmaker surrounded by her work gives the reader an immediate visual introduction to that person and links her to the craft. This is especially important when folklorists are presenting materials for educational purposes to persons not familiar with folk culture.

To summarize, the chart on page ninety-nine shows the cycle portraiture should take throughout folkloristic fieldwork beginning at the left with ethnographic portraits and progressing to more complicated psychological portraits.
DARK DOCUMENTS

"May NOT Film WELL."

WELL.
PORTRAITURE THROUGHOUT FIELDWORK

Cultural

Shows Involvement With Folklife Genre

Stresses Physical Characteristics, Artistic Composition

Ethnographic

Psychological

Shows Association With Family Or Community

Reveals Characteristic Gestures Expressions, Personality
Problems The Folklorist May Encounter

Each of the approaches discussed in this chapter offers folklorists a new perspective on traditional culture. Collectively, they cover the entire range of interaction with informants from total removal (when analyzing historic photographs) to total immersion (when using documentary approaches). Like all research methods, however, there are drawbacks.

One of the potential problems concerns the use of photographs as data, especially when they are examined by folklorists totally removed from the actual situation. A single photograph—no matter how technically perfect, visually exciting or content laden—cannot be used to draw accurate conclusions in folkloristic research. Most photographs, considered in isolation, will be misleading just as most segments of a taped conversation are misleading when taken out of context. When photographs are used as folkloristic data, researchers must demand the same types of contextual and background information about the photographs as they would about other source materials. To be useful in folklore research, conclusions drawn from photographs should be based on a variety of shots including different poses, lighting arrangements and physical settings.

The second potential problem concerns the nature of photographing human interaction using documentary techniques. In the past, documentary photographers have been concerned with societal problems. Using specific techniques, they photographed "typical" people or places to prove their point and then used the photographs to induce change. This is a valid and useful application of photography, but not for research purposes. When the documentary techniques discussed in this
chapter are used, it must be information, not impact. Objectivity, while never completely attainable, is still the ultimate goal. More specific guidelines on using still photography in cultural research are outlined in chapter four.
CHAPTER FOUR

Folkloristic Concerns For Recording Cultural Data With A Camera

...I must suggest that photography is not the product of technology but the product of the various human interactions involved: people being photographed, people taking photographs, people looking at photographs. Pencils and paper do not write and cameras do not take pictures. ... 

Taking the picture, as anthropologist/photographer Paul Byers notes above, is only one part of the often difficult process of using still photography to record cultural data. To obtain maximum potential from photography in folkloristic research, use of the camera cannot be divorced from the larger theoretical goals of cultural research. Therefore, adequate pre-field preparation, use of systematic techniques and proper analysis of the photographs are essential when still photography is used as a research method in folklore and folklife study. Before discussing these steps, however, one word of caution is in order. Because folkloristic photography involves human beings on both sides of the camera, no suggested methodology will ever direct fieldworkers to the one correct path. There is no yellowbrick road for use of photography in folkloristic study. Disparate paths may be right or wrong depending on the individuals involved and the aims of the research. Human judgment simply cannot be eliminated from the process.

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The following steps are an attempt to move use of the camera in the direction of scientific research while realizing that human factors cannot and should not be eliminated entirely. This outline represents the major steps for pre-field research, actual fieldwork and post-field analysis when still photography is used in folkloristic research. A more complete discussion of each category follows.

**PRE-FIELD CONSIDERATIONS**

A. Conceptual Framework
   1. folkloristic research goals
   2. most appropriate use of photography

B. Pre-Field Study
   1. knowledge of the culture
   2. knowledge of photographic principles

C. Ethical Concerns
   1. distortion
   2. use of the photographs

D. Technical Preparations

**FIELDWORK CONSIDERATIONS**

E. Initial Visit With Informant(s)
   1. tape-recorded interview with primary informant(s)
   2. familiarization with site

F. Photographic Documentation
   1. what to photograph
   2. types of information the photographs can yield

G. Verbal Documentation
   1. technical information
   2. background information
   3. contextual information
   4. individual frames

H. Ability To Integrate The Camera Into Cultural Settings

**POST-FIELD CONSIDERATIONS**

I. Data Analysis
   1. analyzing the photographs
   2. editing the photographs

J. Presentation Of Research Findings
A. Conceptual Framework

In all folkloristic research, a conceptual framework must be developed prior to the beginning of fieldwork. As Kenneth Goldstein points out in his *Guide For Field Workers In Folklore*, development of this framework is built upon a foundation of training in folklore theory, a foundation that enables the fieldworker to recognize what is relevant and make decisions about how and when fieldwork should progress.\(^2\)

When still photography is used as a research method, this theoretical foundation must be two-fold, including training in photographic theory as well. Training in photographic theory gives the fieldworker knowledge about what aspects of the research should be photographed and how to incorporate photography into the research process.

Discussing the use of photography in human behavior research, Judith Baxter and Frank Falk explain why this conceptual framework is especially important when photography is used in cultural research:

Photographing behavior leads to an enormous amount of data. Shots taken without the guidance of a clear conceptual framework compounds the problem of analysis. Additionally,

the behavior that occurs in real life situations is rich in its variety and complexity. Thus, capturing any given slice of behavior may lead to a very disjointed set of data. Photographers have often noted the difficulty in selecting the behavior to film (Thompson and Clarke: 1974). The more clearly the conceptual framework or problem is stated, the more clearly the question 'what do we photograph?' will be answered.

In folkloristic research, the question "what do we photograph?" will be answered differently each time a research project is initiated, but the decision about how photography can be used most effectively should be based on a tripartite scheme. The first part of this scheme is the overall goals of the research. Are the research aims ethnographic or analytical? Second, folklorists must consider the specific topic they are researching. What types of information are needed for the research to augment previous efforts in the genre or culture area? Finally, a decision must be made about the degree to which photography will be employed. Is photography to be the primary research method or a supplement to other information gathering methods? The answers to these questions will determine how still photography can be used most effectively and what technical preparations need to be made.

The answers to these questions will also partially determine how informants will be selected. When photography is a major research method in folkloric study, the informant(s) must be willing to be photographed. If the photographs are to be used for more than illustrations, the informant(s) must be comfortable in front of a camera and able to

go about their normal routine with minimal adjustments for the camera. No individual can totally ignore the presence of a camera, but when photographs are an important part of the research process, the informant's ability to be comfortable in front of a camera must be taken into consideration along with the informant(s) knowledge and willingness to share this knowledge.

B. Pre-Field Study

Because collecting folkloristic information with a camera is often very similar to collecting with a tape-recorder or other recording device, the same pre-field study is necessary. The knowledge and understanding of the culture which prior reading and research give a folklorist also benefits the folklore photographer. This knowledge allows the folklorist to ask insightful questions; it enables the folklorist using photography to take insightful photographs. To photograph a sporting event well, the photographer must be able to anticipate the action. To photograph the often subtle human interactions in folk culture, the photographer must be able to anticipate how the informant will react. Will the informant smile, frown or take some action? Although this is somewhat dependent upon the informant's personality, his or her reaction is also greatly affected by the culture. Knowledge of this culture helps the photographer anticipate the action, thus recording the most relevant and important moments on film.

To obtain maximum use from still photography, folklorists must

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also possess certain photographic skills and have an understanding of not only what the camera can do, but what it cannot do. Discussing photographic communication in general, Michael O'Leary points out what photographers need to do their job effectively:

First, his technical training must be so complete that his use of the machine is purely reflex; no conscious thought of the technicals should be required. He should react constantly and instantly to the technical requirements of the situation. Second, and most important, it is virtually impossible for a photographer to create meaningful images without a deep understanding of people....

For the use of photographic equipment to be reflexive so that the folklorist is able to concentrate on content rather than technique, field-workers should have an understanding of relevant photographic techniques and thrusts such as documentary and portrait photography and the effect of technical decisions such as varying focal lengths or the effect different angles have. This technical knowledge, added to an understanding of the culture, provides folklorists with a mental list of the types of photographs to take and allows them to concentrate on the specific situation.

Anthropologist Paul Byers further explains use of the camera in cultural research and the attitude toward photography social scientists need to use it effectively:

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We tend to suppose that cameras are inherently frightening or interfering instruments whereas notebooks, pencils, and observing anthropologists are not. It is not the camera itself that interferes or disturbs, it is the photographer using one who has not learned to put his camera actively into social situations easily and comfortably. If the photographer regards his cameras as a mechanical instrument that exists outside himself, he must interpose it between himself and his subjects. With this interposition he can interrupt, change, or destroy situations. He can ridicule, irritate or embarrass people. Or he can admire, support and reassure his subjects. What the photographer does with his camera is not essentially a matter of his technical facility, it is a matter of his feeling about the photographic process and how he communicates this to the subject. If the photographer feels that the camera is a privacy-invading machine, the subjects will respond accordingly. Anthropologists could, as some journalists do, frighten people or embarrass them with only notebooks and pencils. But they learn to present these things as extensions of themselves, and to the extent to which the anthropologist succeeds in relating himself to his subjects, his instrumentation can become related too. But if the anthropologist (or any camera-user) feels awkward about the use of his instrument, the instrument will relate badly to the subjects.

C. Ethical Concerns

Regardless of how photography is used, folklorists must establish basic ethical guidelines for the recording process and subsequent use of the photographs, especially if the activity is of an intimate nature. The ethical decisions that must be made will vary tremendously from situation to situation, and many of the problems will not arise until fieldwork has begun. However, two broad concerns—distortion and intent—should be addressed prior to fieldwork.

Distortion

Like verbal mediums, photographs can be distorted, decreasing their value as information sources. In an article examining the question

6Byers, p. 97.
of whether photographs tell the truth, Howard Becker lists what he considers the four major threats to the validity of photographic assertions. According to Becker, "the most obvious threat to the validity of a conclusion based on photographic evidence is the suspicion that the photograph was faked in some way." Second, the sociologist says the desire to "make art" causes some photographers to manipulate the content of their photographs for the sake of artistic composition. Third, Becker says some researchers question whether they can be sure everything relevant to the question has been photographed. Finally, he says, questions of censorship arise when photographs are edited. 7

Distortion can also be the result of unintentional manipulation. In fact, researchers using photographs have recently realized that unintentional distortion occurs to some extent in every photograph. To quote Jon Wagner,

> When students have come to realize that photographs owe something to the preconceptions of the photographer in selecting and framing the subject, and something to the situation in which they are viewed, and something as well to their own preconceptions in looking at them, they have taken a rather large step towards understanding the social construction of the world in which we live.


The degree to which informants change their behavior for the camera is also a concern although there is no agreement on how effectively individuals are capable of changing their behavior. Frederick Wiseman presented one view in a compendium of photographic criticism concerning photography within the humanities:

I don't really think the presence of the camera affects people's behavior because I don't think any of us has the capacity to suddenly change our behavior and become something we're not. If we did have that talent, we'd all be in the Old Vic, and most of us aren't such good actors. I think that if the camera equipment makes people nervous, the chances are that rather than try something new, they'll fall back on forms of behavior they're comfortable with, that they think are appropriate and natural for the situation.

The other viewpoint was presented by Edmund Carpenter in his description of a field experiment:

Using long lenses, we filmed people who were unaware of our presence. Then one of us stepped from concealment and stood watching, but not interrupting their activity. Finally, the cameraman set up his equipment in full view, urging everyone to go on with whatever he was doing. Almost invariably, body movements became faster, jerky, without poise or confidence. Faces that had been relaxed froze or alternated between twitching and rigidity.

Thus we had sequences showing people who, in their own minds, were: (1) unobserved, (2) being observed by a stranger, and (3) being recorded on film which they might later see. There was little difference between (1) and (2), but (3) was quite different.


Anthropologists using participant observation as a research method have faced similar problems. In an article on the methodology of participant observation, Seyeryn Bruyn lists eight guides to insure objectivity when participant observation methods are used in anthropological research. Five of these guides are applicable to folkloric research with still photography. They are: (1) relate the research problem to a larger social context, (2) examine and describe the participant observer's own status in the social system, (3) observe the subjects under contrasting social and isolated settings, (4) evaluate the information as a personal document, and (5) carefully specify the procedures used so that other investigators may follow and check the findings. In addition to these controls, folklorists should be careful to re-photograph each separate situation when possible as John Collier Jr. explains:

The single observation, like the single photograph, of a social demonstration holds only a few points of reliable data. One photograph, like the one ethnographic visit, tells only the way life is right now. Evaluation is static, dealing with a possible arbitrary schematic position. . . . It takes multiple views to observe what is the customary behavior as compared to eccentric behavior.

Intent

A clear understanding between fieldworker and informant on the

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use of photographs is imperative, particularly if the photographs will appear in public documents. Even if the photographs are to be used only for statistical purposes, the fieldworker has an obligation to the informant to explain what will be done with the photographs.

Release forms, a necessary part of all folkloristic fieldwork, are also an important consideration when photography is used. Folklorists using photography should make sure use of the photographs is spelled out in the release forms with both informant and fieldworker agreeing on the depth of photographic coverage and subsequent use of the photographs.

**D. Technical Preparations**

Besides beginning with a fundamental understanding of the culture and how a camera can be employed to study this culture, folklorists must make basic technical preparations. The choice of photographic equipment and supplies is one of the most important technical decisions to be made. Photographic equipment is immensely varied today with each type offering certain advantages and disadvantages. Selection, therefore, should be based on intended use of the equipment, cost, durability, and final presentation of the photographs. While the types of equipment used in past fieldwork projects may serve as a guide, selection of equipment should not be made on precedent but on current research needs.

**E. Initial Visit With Informant(s)**

When photography is used as the primary research method, at least a minimal interview should be conducted with the informant(s). This interview provides material that cannot be recorded on film, such
as the life history of the informant or specific information such as names of siblings or children. The interview also invariably brings possible photographic opportunities to the photographer's attention, allowing him or her time for adequate technical preparation.

F. Photographic Documentation

In folkloristic study with photography, the question of how to operate the camera is overshadowed by the more complex question of what to aim it at, a problem that has equally perplexed other social scientists. Because each field situation is unique, no list of what should be photographed will ever be entirely complete or accurate. However, the types of photographs folklorists should include in a photographic inquiry can be categorized under four broad headings: identification, process, context, and interaction.

Identification photographs are visual records of the people or items being studied. These photographs include portraits of informants and significant other persons; photographs of relevant artifacts, structures or other material artifacts; copies of informant-made photographs; photographs of any markers or signs associated with events; and copies of relevant verbal materials. These photographs can be visually sterile as long as the important information is included. Anyone with a modest amount of photographic experience can produce photographs of this type.

Process photographs are a visual breakdown and enumeration of folklife subject matters. They include genre processes, the steps in folklife research, and photographs that detail traditional lifestyles. This type of photography requires a two-pronged understanding of
photographic technique and the subject matter being photographed. Many times, knowledge of photographic lighting or use of a motorized film advance is required.

Contextual photographs establish place. They include overall photographs of the physical setting as well as photographs of significant areas, the question of significance being determined by the fieldworker. These photographs run the gambit from fairly simple ones such as those taken with wide-angle lenses of the grounds at a folk-life festival to extremely difficult shots such as the inside of a dimly lit general store.

Photographs of social interactions include a variety of gestures, facial expressions and body movements. Because of their brevity and irregularity, interactions are the most difficult to photograph. To obtain ethnographically valid photographs, fieldworkers need to be technically proficient with camera equipment and be able to anticipate non-verbal clues.

As information documents, such photographs can yield important data. According to folklorist Jan Brunvand, regardless of which theoretical approach a folklorist chooses, the goal of folklore research is the answer to one of ten fundamental questions: definition, classification, source, origin, transmission, variation, structure, function, meaning and purpose, and use and application. Photographs alone cannot provide complete answers to these questions, but they can add new and varied information to the present data base.

Identification photographs, for instance, can provide information

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on the source and meaning of folklore. Portraits of informants provide clues regarding similarities in physical characteristics such as dress, hairstyle or expression, a parallel to studies done on regional speech and diet patterns. The very simple requests that usually result from a portrait session also give folklorists insight into questions about meaning. Which photographs does the informant want a copy of? Which ones does he or she dislike? Informants generally request photographs that convey the appearance they intended to present or show them involved in an activity they enjoy doing or want to be associated with--activities that have meaning to them.

As previously noted, process photography offers folklorists a method of studying variation and genre classification. The question of what constitutes folklore, as old as the discipline itself, cannot be answered by one photograph or even several, but most folklorists agree that folklore involves a communicative process. Photography offers a method of breaking this often complex communicative process down into parts.

By showing the physical setting where folkloric events occur, photographs can add detail to verbal questions about where activities take place and who participates in these activities. The answers to these questions are part of the answer to larger questions of transmission, variation and meaning.

Photographs are also one of the most useful items folklorists can supply scholars in other disciplines. Although photographs, like all human products, are not entirely objective, they do provide specific and detailed data. What the anthropologist sees in a photograph may differ from what the psychologist or sociologist sees, but the information
is available in a structured form for any number of scholars to examine. The chart on page one hundred seventeen summarizes the types of folkloristic photographs and the information they can yield.

G. Verbal Documentation

In addition to pre-field study and an understanding of photography and the culture, adequate documentation must accompany photographs if they are to be of maximum use to folklorists and other social scientists. The forms on pages one hundred eighteen through one hundred twenty-one are samples of the information that should be obtained to accompany photographs.

Technical information is important for future researchers. The types of equipment being used today are immensely varied, each with advantages, disadvantages and inherent consequences. Artificial lighting, filters or additional technical equipment can even alter the entire scene. These technical considerations affect the final product and thus research conclusions drawn from photographs.

Background information is necessary to keep negatives organized and provide researchers with basic identification on who the individual is, where he lives and what he is doing in the photographs. Photographs alone cannot provide such specifics except through the use of signs or markers. The question of prior exposure to photographic equipment also gives researchers some insight into the individual. If the person has been interviewed or photographed by journalists or other professionals, his expectations and subsequent behavior may be altered.

Contextual information adds depth to photographic documentation of the physical situation. From the photograph, researchers may be
### FOLKLORISTIC PHOTOGRAPHY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Photographs of</th>
<th>Should Include</th>
<th>Provides Information On</th>
<th>Technical Considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **The Contextual Situation** | Overall physical setting inside and outside  
| | Separate photographs of significant regions | Definition  
| | | Meaning  
| | | Transmission process  
| | | Variation  
| | | Application | Aerial or overall photographs require wide angle lenses and the use of small apertures  
| | | | Overall photographs should include some object to use as a reference scale |
| **Interactions and Body Position** | Expressions  
| | Kinesics  
| | Gestures  
| | Proxemics  
| | Hand positions on artifacts and instruments | Individual personality  
| | | Relationships  
| | | Variation  
| | | Transmission process  
| | | Application | Fast shutter speeds are needed to stop movement  
| | | Long lenses are useful to avoid interfering with normal interaction |
| **Processes** | Genre related folk art and craft processes, etc.  
| | Lifestyle daily routine, etc.  
| | Fieldwork progress of data collection | Application  
| | | Variation  
| | | Classification  
| | | Meaning  
| | | Individual style | Rapid film advance helpful for isolating steps  
| | | Special lighting and/or equipment required for some indoor photography |
| **Identifying Aspects** | Portraits of informant and significant others  
| | Photographs of material items and structures  
| | Photographs of signs and markers  
| | Copies of relevant informant-made photographs | Source  
| | | Structure  
| | | Meaning | Proper lighting is crucial for emphasizing proper elements and photographing detail |
INFORMANT ______________________

Technical Information

Photographer ____________________________________________________________

Other Fieldworker(s) ______________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Date ______________________________ Time _________________________________

Camera Used __________________________ Film Used _________________________

Lenses Used __________________________

Other Equipment Used ____________________________________________________

Film Reference Nos. ______________________________________________________

Release Obtained Y__ N__ Restrictions ______________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Photo Promised Y__ N__ Photo Supplied Y__ N__ Date _________________________

Interviewed __ Recorded __ Filmed __ Other _________________________________

Background Information

General Topic _____________________________________________________________

Country __________ State __________ County __________

City/Town ______________________________ Community ____________________

Mailing Address __________________________________________________________

Prior Exposure

Had The Person Been Photographed, Etc. Before? Y____ N____

By Whom? ___________________________________ When? ______________________

How Did It Affect This Session? ____________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Contextual Information

Specific Location (i.e. kitchen, front yard, etc.)

Discuss The Location
Who Decided Where The Session Took Place?

Why Was This Location Chosen?

What Advantages or Disadvantages Did It Present?

Persons Present During Session

Discuss Any Relevant Information Not In Camera Range
Background Information On Photographer

Name ____________________________ Sex ______
Mailing Address ____________________________
Birthdate _______ Birthplace _____________
Academic Training ____________________________

Work Experience ____________________________

Group Memberships ____________________________

Research Objectives ____________________________
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame Number(s)</th>
<th>Description of Action</th>
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<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>
able to ascertain that it was taken outdoors, but was it taken in the front yard to a vacant lot? In some if not most situations this additional information may change the meaning derived from the photograph. The answers to why the location was chosen and who made this decision also gives researchers information on meaning. If the room choice was made by the informant, it may be because this is the room where the activity normally takes place or even because that particular room is reserved for company. The photographer may use completely different reasoning if he or she chooses the site; perhaps the room has ample lighting or a particular background that is visually interesting.

These decisions also illustrate that both photographer and informant affect the final photographs. This dual effect on the final product points to the need for information on the photographer, his/her background and motives. Academic training often makes a profound difference in the manner a photographer uses his or her equipment. Goals and visual aesthetics are also affected by prior training and experience. While personal data on the photographer does not eliminate or mitigate his/her effect on the final product, it does help explain the photographic goals and therefore some aspects on content of the photographs.

Finally, frame identification is essential to the use of photography for research purposes. Without data on the photographs, researchers can only guess about much of the content. While they may be acceptable if the photographs are produced for artistic purposes, the lack of verbal identification eliminates many possible uses researchers may want to make of the photographs.
H. Ability To Integrate The Camera Into Cultural Settings

Finally, one of the most important considerations folklorists using photography must deal with is a problem they share with folklorists using pencils or tape-recorders -- the ability to use the tool in the field. To quote Eugenia Shanklin,

In the social sciences, the worth of a photograph depends very much on the social roles that researcher-photographers establish for themselves and on their ability to become part of the ongoing scene, and not an intrusive or disruptive element within it.

In this regard, photography in the social sciences is considerably more difficult than in other fields. A naturalist who wants to photograph animals in a natural state hopes, like the social scientist, not to intrude on the scene. Unlike the social scientist, however, the naturalist can build a blind to disguise his presence or take advantage of natural cover. Social scientists have to create a different kind of blind. They do not aim for 'invisibility' but for unobtrusiveness, for acceptance as part of the ongoing social scene. For the social scientist, the establishment of social roles is a major task, and one that demands considerable ingenuity and flexibility.

I. Data Analysis

Folkloristic analysis of photographs was discussed in detail in chapter three, but two additional points should be considered by folklorists using photographs as data. First, like participant observations, most photographic research is carried on sequentially. This means that the latter stages of photographic work come after earlier photographs have been viewed and analyzed. The effect of this type of analysis should be described in field notes since it will reveal much about the direction photographic sessions took and why. Second, like much ethnographic work, photography is not generally reliable in the

---

strictest scientific sense where reliability is measured by the repeatability of observations. This does not negate the importance of photographic data; but unless the photographs are taken under controlled situations, photographic assertions should be tempered with information about the conditions under which the photographs were taken and the possibility of another researcher obtaining similar photographs. 15

Editing

When large numbers of photographs are taken during the research process, the photographs must be edited for presentation. Ultimate use of the photographs will dictate selection in most cases. For example, photographs chosen to visually explain the terrain of a site would be different from those that were to be used to quantify use of a specific gesture. When the photographs are edited, fieldworkers should provide information about the total number of photographs taken, why the particular photographs were chosen and who made the selection.

J. Presentation of Research Findings

The final presentation of photographic research will also be dependent upon the audience and purpose of the message; but regardless of how the findings are presented, the important point is that photographs and words should be used together as equal though different methods of conveying information. John Szarowski emphasized

this point in an article contained in Photography Within The Humanities:

Most of the attempts to use photographs and words together are failures because people try to say the same thing both ways. If you try to do that, you are either relegating the photographs to the function of illustrations or you are relegating the words to the function of captions. Either one of these things makes impossible the real kind of collaborative, separate but equal, independent status that the pictures and the text should both have.

Some researchers have taken the stand that photographs should not be included in final presentations. They argue that because information is the ultimate goal, photographs, like tape transcriptions and field notes, are a means to an end and presenting them in a final presentation is the same as offering a rough draft for inspection. Others argue that inclusion of photographs relegates them to the role of illustrations. Unlike tape transcriptions or field notes, however, the impact and veracity of a photograph varies greatly from individual to individual. Therefore, photographs are closer to other types of qualitative data such as the conclusions of a fieldworker using participation observation as a primary research method. The ultimate goal of using photography in field research is information, but much of the information contained in photographs cannot be quantified. Pertti and Gretel Pelto explain this point in their book on anthropological research. While arguing for a judicious mixing of quantitative and qualitative data, the anthropologists insist that because the goal of research is to develop useful and credible information, not all the data gathered on this search can be reduced to numerical analysis:

---

Credibility, in matters of human behavior, can never rest finally on purified numerical analysis. Nor can it depend wholly on rich verbal description that ignores the underlying questions of quantity and intensity. As we examine some of the most refined statistical or mathematical analysis of anthropological data, we often find them losing their anchorage to live, human subject matter.

In summary, it is these "live human subjects" that make folkloristic fieldwork both challenging and rewarding. These same individuals make use of these suggestions for folkloristic fieldwork with photography exactly that—suggestions. Modifications will have to be made at various points in the fieldwork.

In the final analysis then, what is it that makes one photograph superior to another for use in folklore and folklife research? Although the answer will vary with particular research needs, there are four qualities that can be discerned.

First, above all else, the content of a photograph determines its usefulness in the study of traditional culture. As John Whiting notes in his book *Photograph Is A Language*, "The main function of a photograph--to convey some specific information--must be fulfilled if the picture is to be in the top rank." Whiting goes on to say that good photographs emphasize the specific details that the photographer wishes to show.¹ Thus, although the arguments are interesting, decisions about the use of close-ups or overall photographs cannot be made by invoking some arbitrary rule. If a folklorist is studying the hand positions used with an instrument or a narrator's use of gestures, close-up photographs may contain more points of information. If that same folklorist is concerned with questions about context, overall photographs will contain more information.

Photographs must be evaluated by the amount of information they provide, but as Carl Heider points out about ethnographic films, one photograph cannot say everything about a subject. Heider says this means that there must be selection and omission and concludes that

the value of a film cannot be judged on the basis of whether or not it has omitted things. Rather, he says, it must be judged on the appropriateness of what is included and how it is handled.\textsuperscript{2} For the folkloristic photographer this means that a thorough understanding of traditional culture must precede use of the camera. Ideally, knowledge of the subject matter and competence with photographic equipment are interwoven, but without an understanding of the subject, it is impossible for a photographer to consistently include and emphasize the details that folklorists are most interested in.

Besides details, photographs for folkloristic research should also include elements that evoke the flavor and feel of a situation when possible. For example, what is it like to participate in a fiddling contest? What atmosphere prevails in a country store? In addition to the information scholars themselves can discern from the photograph, this type of photograph is especially useful for eliciting additional information from informants, especially evaluative statements.

Along these same lines, folkloristic photographers should attempt to convey some of the universal truths about traditional culture through the content of their photographs. For instance, are there typical contexts in which specific folkloristic activities occur? Do farming techniques or quilting bees or molasses making bear similarities from individual to individual and from one geographical area to another? These universal elements, when blended with details, make the photographs useful even outside the academic realm.

The second most important quality of a photograph that is to be

used in folkloristic research concerns the verbal documentation that accompanies it. Some types of information simply cannot be adequately recorded on film. The time of day, names of people in the photographs, the specific location—these types of information must be recorded through another medium, but it is extremely important that this documentation accompany the photograph. Otherwise, problems such as the ones Joanna Scherer details in her article about the inaccuracies of photographs about North American Indians will continue to plague folkloristic research with still photography. ³

This documentation should also describe as much as possible about the circumstances surrounding the photograph. In his book on photoanalysis, Robert Akeret admits that it is impossible to collect unlimited amounts of information about every photograph, but he says the more hard, factual knowledge available, the more accurate photoanalysis becomes. ⁴ Recently, this line of inquiry has led to numerous questions about the photographer's presence. Information about the photographer's background becomes increasingly important when the photographs are examined by other scholars, an extremely common practice in folkloristic research.

The third test of a photograph for research purposes concerns the technical aspects of the photograph. Is the photograph in focus? Is it correctly exposed, and, although not as important, what about the


composition? Does the composition enhance the photograph? Extremes in the technical quality of a photograph can make major differences in its possible use. Poor technical quality can render the photograph virtually useless. If the researcher cannot discern the details, the photograph is no better than a tape that was recorded on the wrong speed. On the other extreme, superior technical quality, coupled with the proper content, can lead to widespread use of the photograph outside the discipline and a consequent increase in the awareness and understanding of traditional culture.

Finally, how the photograph is displayed can determine its usefulness in folklore and folklife research. For example, what happens to the message of a photograph when it is juxtaposed beside another photograph in a book or display? If the photograph is used without any supporting information, how valuable is it? What happens to the photographer's message if an editor crops the photo? Michael Owen Jones has encountered some of these problems when using photographs for publication and warns that "one ought to give a great deal of thought to this matter, considering some of the possible consequences of including photos in publication, and only after much reflection agree to submit images if one agrees at all."5

With these four qualities in mind, the photograph must ultimately be judged as any piece of folkloristic research would be. Simply, did it accomplish the intended folkloristic goal and, secondly, did it accomplish this goal as well or better than another method? It is this ultimate synthesis of folklore and folklife theory with photographic

---

5 Personal letter to author from Michael Owen Jones, 18 December 1980.
technique that will produce new and varied information for folkloristic study.
1. What is the official name of the journal? ____________________________

2. How often is it published? (Check one)
   Yearly ___ Quarterly ___ Bi-Monthly ___ Monthly ___ Bi-Weekly ___
   Other (please explain) ____________________________________________

3. What is your policy on the use of photographs? (Check relevant response)
   a. Will not accept photographs for publication ___
   b. Will accept photographs for publication ___

4. If your journal does publish photographs, do you: (Check relevant responses)
   a. Use photographs on the cover only ___
   b. Use photographs as illustrations or supplements to articles ___
   c. Use photographic essays (text supplements the photographs ___
   d. Other (please explain) ______________________________________________

5. When was the first photograph published? Date ______________________
   Journal No. ______

6. Was it used on the cover? Y ___ N ___ In conjunction with an article? Y ___ N ___
   Other (please explain) ______________________________________________

7. If your journal does not publish photographs, what is the reason for this policy?
   a. Printing company will not accept ___
   b. Policy/Preference ___
   c. Other (explain) ________________________________________________

8. Has this always been the policy? Y ___ N ___

9. If not, when did the policy change? _________________________________

10. Why did the policy change? ________________________________________

12. Please elaborate as much as possible on the future and past use of photographs in the journal. Thank you for your time and information.
1. a. Please list any theses or dissertations done within the department that discuss the use of still photography in folklife research. (Please include complete bibliographic information)

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

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________________________________________________________________________

b. Please list any theses or dissertations done within the department that use still photography as a research method.

________________________________________________________________________

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________________________________________________________________________

c. Please list any other relevant papers or projects done by either professors or students.

________________________________________________________________________

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________________________________________________________________________
2. a. DO THE DEPARTMENT DEGREE REQUIREMENTS MANDATE ANY COURSE(S) COMPLETELY DEVOTED TO HOW TO USE STILL PHOTOGRAPHY IN FOLKLIFE RESEARCH? YES ___ NO ___

b. If so, what is the course called? ____________________________

c. When was it first taught? ____________________________ 19 ___

d. Who teaches the course?
folklore professor ____
a photography professor ____
other _____ ____________________________

e. Please elaborate as much as possible on the course (i.e. content, assignments, textbooks, etc.)

f. If not, why?
not relevant to curriculum ____
no demand for the course ____
too expensive ____
professors not trained to teach visual techniques ____
other (please explain) ____________________________

g. Do you anticipate adding a course of this nature in the future?
Yes ___ No ___
3. a. DOES YOUR DEPARTMENT OFFER ANY COURSES COMPLETELY DEVOTED TO USING STILL PHOTOGRAPHY IN FOLKLIFE RESEARCH?  
YES ____ NO ____  

b. If so, what is the course called? ____________________________________________  

c. When was it first taught? _________________________________________________ 19  

d. Who teaches the course?  
folklore professor ____  
a photography professor ____  
other ______________________  

e. Please elaborate as much as possible on the course (i.e. content, assignments, textbooks, etc.)  

f. If not, why?  
not relevant to curriculum ____  
no demand for the course ____  
too expensive ____
professors not trained to teach visual techniques ____
other (please explain) ____________________________________________
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________

g. Do you anticipate adding a course of this nature in the future?
Yes ____ No ____

h. Please elaborate.
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________

4. a. DOES THE DEPARTMENT OFFER ANY COURSES THAT INCLUDE
SECTIONS ON HOW TO USE STILL PHOTOGRAPHY IN FOLKLIFE
RESEARCH?
YES ____ NO ____

b. If so, what is the course called? _____________________________

 _____________________________

 _____________________________

 _____________________________

 _____________________________

 _____________________________

 _____________________________

 _____________________________

 _____________________________

c. When was it first taught? _____________________________ 19 _

d. Who teaches the course?
folklore professor ____
a photography professor ____
other _____________________________

e. Please elaborate as much as possible on the course (i.e.
content, assignments, textbooks, etc.)

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 ______________________________________

 ______________________________________
f. If not, why?

not relevant to curriculum ____
no demand for the course ____
too expensive ____
professors not trained to teach visual techniques ____
other (please explain) ____________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

g. Do you anticipate adding a course of this nature in the future?

Yes ____ No ____

h. Please elaborate.

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

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________________________________________________________

5. a. DOES THE DEPARTMENT OFFER ANY COURSES THAT INCLUDE PHOTOGRAPHY PROJECTS AS PART OF THE COURSE REQUIREMENTS?

YES ____ NO ____

b. If so, what is the course called?

________________________________________________________

c. When was it first taught? ____________________ 19 ______

d. Who teaches the course?

folklore professor ____
a photography professor ____
other __________________________

e. Please elaborate as much as possible on the course (i.e., content, assignments, textbooks, etc.)

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________
f. If not, why?

not relevant to curriculum _____
no demand for the course _____
too expensive _____
professors not trained to teach visual techniques _____
other (please explain) _______________________________________

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g. Do you anticipate adding a course of this nature in the future?  

Yes _____  No _____

h. Please elaborate.  ________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

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Appendix B
Information About The Photographs

Most of the photographs included in this thesis were taken as part of a two-semester independent study entitled "Women of the Upper Cumberland: A Photographic Study." During the course of this study, I concentrated on traditional aspects of culture, recording activities that would be drastically altered or completely discontinued in the coming years. This led me to the quilter in Monroe County, Kentucky, pictured on pages fifty-three and fifty-five who still uses quilting frames that hang from the ceiling, the 80-year-old widow pictured on pages seventy-eight through eighty-six, and the general store owner pictured on page thirty-eight. However, the area is changing, yielding slowly to technological advances. Therefore, I photographed women who represent this change including the woman doctor pictured on page fifty-six, and the young mother pictured on pages forty-six through fifty.

The subjects were chosen by occupation, geographical location and age. When I began, I intended to photograph a large number of women, several in each of the ten selected counties. However, after working with a few women, I decided that in-depth work with fewer women would result in a more accurate and sensitive portrayal of their lives. Because the women became increasingly relaxed with the camera each visit, I was able to photograph more intimate daily scenes such as the photographs of Ona Barton putting her hair up on page eighty-three.

A complete list of subjects, their home county and occupation is listed below to provide an idea of this project's scope:
Kentucky Subjects

Jane Balliew, Clinton County, Elementary School Teacher
Judy Branham, Cumberland County, Newspaper Publisher
Golda Cary, Cumberland County, Housekeeper
Cheryl Greer, Pulaski County, University Student
Lennie King, Cumberland County, Farmer
Annette Norfleet, Wayne County, Mother
Irene Shearer, Russell County, Factory Worker
Flossie Williams, Monroe County, Quilter

Tennessee Subjects

Ona Barton, Fentress County, Widow
Theresa Bishop, Putnam County, Pharmacist
Jimmie Bullock, Overton County, Postmaster
Bertha Key, Overton County, General Store Owner
Wanda Page, Clay County, Cook
Katharine Wolfe, Putnam County, Doctor

The only photographs not taken as part of this project are the ones on pages forty, seventy and forty-two. The photograph on page forty was taken for a fieldwork project on Dovie’s Cafe, a small family-run restaurant in Tompkinsville, Kentucky. The fieldwork project was one requirement for a graduate folklore course in fieldwork and oral history. The photographs on page seventy, originally in color, were taken as part of a photo essay for an undergraduate photojournalism course in color photography, and the photographs on page forty-two were taken for a folklore professor during a videotape session for educational television.

How The Photographs Were Edited

Three criteria were used to select the specific negatives. Content of the photograph was most important. Each photograph selected contained the most points of information possible. When the content was virtually identical, frames that displayed action were chosen over more static ones. The photographs on page one hundred forty-four are an
Dark Documents

"May not film well."

WELL.
example of this choice. Both photographs contain the same information except for the movement displayed in photograph two. Therefore, photograph two was chosen over photograph one. This decision was made because the action adds an additional element of information to the photograph. Third, technical quality was used to determine which of several frames on the same subject would be printed. If one negative was exposed or focused better than another, the technically superior frame was chosen. This practice helps insure that the photographs which convey information best are chosen.

**Technical Information**

All of the photographs in this thesis were taken with Nikon F2 cameras equipped with motor drives. A variety of Nikkor lenses were used including focal lengths of 24, 50, 85, 200 and 55mm. A majority of the photographs were taken with the 85mm lens, very few with the 200mm. No special effect devices were used.

The photographs were taken with Kodak Tri-X film exposed at 400 and 1600 ASA. The film was developed in Kodak D-76 and Acufine. The negatives were printed on Kodabromide and Ilfospread photographic paper. Only minimal retouching was done with Spotone, at no time affecting the content of the photographs. No alterations were made to the negatives during the printing process.
Appendix C
# REFERENCE BIBLIOGRAPHY

**FOLKLORE, FOLKLIFE AND STILL PHOTOGRAPHY: A SYNERGETIC APPROACH**

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