

DOING

Visual Ethnography

Images, Media and
Representation in
Research

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CHAPTER 1

The Visual in Ethnography: Photography, Video, Cultures and Individuals

Images are 'everywhere'. They permeate our academic work, everyday lives, conversations (see Pink 1997a: 3) and dreams (see Edgar 1997). They are inextricably interwoven with our personal identities, narratives, lifestyles, cultures and societies, as well as with definitions of history, space and truth. Ethnographic research is likewise intertwined with visual images and metaphors. When ethnographers produce photographs or video, these visual texts, as well as the experience of producing and discussing them, become part of their ethnographic knowledge. Just as images inspire conversations, conversation may invoke images; conversation visualizes and draws absent printed or electronic images into its narratives through verbal descriptions and references to them. In ethnography images are as inevitable as sounds, words or any other aspect of culture and society. Nevertheless, ethnographers should not be obliged to make the visual *central* to their work (see Morphy and Banks 1997: 14), but to explore its relation to other senses and discourses.

The visual has recently received much critical attention from scholars of the social 'sciences' and humanities. It is now commonly recognized that it is time to, as Crawford (1992: 66) recommended, depart from notions of 'pure image' and 'pure word' and instead to emphasize the constructedness of this distinction. In this sense even the term 'visual research methods' (see Banks n.d.), that refers to uses of visual technologies and images in research, places an undue stress on the visual. 'Visual research methods' are not purely visual. Rather, they pay particular attention to visual aspects of culture. Similarly, they cannot be used independently of other methods; neither a purely visual ethnography nor an exclusively visual approach to culture can exist. This chapter focuses on this interlinking of the visual with ethnography, culture and individuals.

Ethnography and ethnographic images

What is ethnography? How does one 'do' ethnography? What is it that makes a text, photograph or video ethnographic? Handbooks of

'traditional' research methods tend to represent ethnography as a mixture of participant observation and interviewing. For example, Hammersley and Atkinson define ethnography as 'a particular method or set of methods' that:

involves the ethnographer participating, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions – in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research. (1995: 1)

Such descriptions are limited on two counts. First, they restrict the range of things ethnographers may actually do. Secondly, their representations of ethnography as just another method or set of methods of 'data collection' wrongly assumes that ethnography entails a simple process of going to another place or culture, staying there for a period of time, collecting pieces of information and knowledge and then taking them home intact.

Instead, I shall define ethnography as a methodology (see Crotty 1998: 7); as an approach to experiencing, interpreting and representing culture and society that informs and is informed by sets of different disciplinary agendas and theoretical principles. Rather than being a method for the collection of 'data', ethnography is a process of creating and representing knowledge (about society, culture and individuals) that is based on ethnographers' own experiences. It does not claim to produce an objective or 'truthful' account of reality, but should aim to offer versions of ethnographers' experiences of reality that are as loyal as possible to the context, negotiations and intersubjectivities through which the knowledge was produced. This may entail reflexive, collaborative or participatory methods. It may involve informants in a variety of ways at different points of the research and representational stages of the project. It should account not only for the observable, recordable realities that may be translated into written notes and texts, but also for objects, visual images, the immaterial, and the sensory nature of human experience and knowledge. Finally, it should engage with issues of representation that question the right of the researcher to represent 'other' people, recognize the impossibility of 'knowing other minds' (Fernandez 1995: 25) and acknowledge that the sense we make of informants' words and actions is 'an expression of our own consciousness' (Cohen and Rapport 1995: 12).

There is, likewise, no simple answer or definition of what it is that makes an activity, image, text, idea, or piece of knowledge 'ethnographic'. No single action, artifact or representation is essentially in itself 'ethnographic', but will be defined as such through interpretation and context. Anthropologists have noted the absence of concrete boundaries between ethnographic and fictional texts (see Clifford and Marcus 1986), and between ethnographic, documentary and fictional film (see Loizos 1993: 7–8). Similarly, there is no clear-cut way of defining an individual

photograph as, for example, a tourist, documentary or journalistic photograph (see Chapter 3), or of deciding whether a piece of video footage is a home movie or ethnographic video (see Chapter 4). The same applies to the arbitrary nature of our distinctions between personal experience and ethnographic experience, autobiography and anthropology (see Okely 1996; Okely and Callaway 1992) and fieldwork and everyday life (Pink 1999a). Any experience, action, artifact, image or idea is never definitively *just one thing* but may be redefined differently in different situations, by different individuals and in terms of different discourses. It is impossible to measure the 'ethnographicness' of an image in terms of its form, content or potential as an observational document, visual record or piece of 'data'. Instead, the 'ethnographicness' of any image or representation is contingent on how it is situated, interpreted and used to invoke meanings and knowledge that are of ethnographic interest.

Reflexivity and subjectivity

In their critique of natural science approaches, authors of 'traditional' research methods texts have emphasized the constructedness of ethnographic knowledge (e.g. Burgess 1984; Ellen 1984), usually coupled with a stress on the central importance of reflexivity (see also Fortier 1998; Walsh 1998). A reflexive approach recognizes the centrality of the subjectivity of the researcher to the production and representation of ethnographic knowledge. Reflexivity goes beyond the researcher's concern with questions of 'bias' or how ethnographers observe the 'reality' of a society they actually 'distort' through their participation in it. Moreover, reflexivity is not simply a mechanism that neutralizes ethnographers' subjectivity as collectors of data through an engagement with how their presence may have affected the reality observed and the data collected. Indeed, the assumption that a reflexive approach will aid ethnographers to produce objective data represents only a token and cosmetic engagement with reflexivity that wrongly supposes subjectivity could (or should) be avoided or eradicated. Instead, subjectivity should be engaged with as a central aspect of ethnographic knowledge, interpretation and representation.

Postmodern thinkers have argued that ethnographic knowledge and text can only ever be a subjective construction, a 'fiction' that represents only the ethnographer's version of a reality, rather than an empirical truth. Some, like Walsh, proposed that such approaches take reflexivity too far. Walsh argues that the 'social and cultural world must be the ground and reference for ethnographic writing, and reflexive ethnography should involve a keen awareness of the interpenetration of reality and representation'. He insists that researchers should not 'abandon all forms of realism as the basis for doing ethnography' (Walsh 1998: 220).

Walsh's argument presents a tempting and balanced way of thinking about the experienced reality in which people live and the texts that ethnographers construct to represent this reality. Nevertheless it is also important to keep in mind the centrality of the subjectivity of the researcher to the production of ethnographic knowledge. Cohen and Rapport's point that our understandings of what informants say or do is solely 'an expression of our own consciousness' (see above), problematizes Walsh's proposition. If the researcher is the channel through which all ethnographic knowledge is produced and represented, then the only way reality and representation can 'interpenetrate' in ethnographic work is through the ethnographer's textual constructions of 'ethnographic fictions'. Rather than existing objectively and being accessible and recordable through 'scientific' research methods, reality is subjective and is known only as it is experienced by individuals. By focusing on how ethnographic knowledge about how individuals experience reality is produced, through the intersubjectivity between researchers and their research contexts, we may arrive at a closer understanding of the worlds that other people live in. It is not solely the subjectivity of the researcher that may 'shade' his or her understanding of 'reality', but the relationship between the subjectivities of researcher and informants that produces a negotiated version of reality (see, for example, Fortier 1998).

In relation to this, researchers should maintain an awareness of how different elements of their identities become significant during research. For example, gender, age, ethnicity, class and race are important in the way researchers are situated and situate themselves in ethnographic contexts. Ethnographers ought to be self-conscious about how they represent themselves to informants and they ought to consider how their identities are constructed and understood by the people with whom they work. These subjective understandings will have implications for the knowledge that is produced from the 'ethnographic encounter' between researcher and informants. For example, as I found during my research in Guinea Bissau, there were at the time many 'rich white development workers' in the area where I worked and I was classified as part of this group by many Guinea Bissauans (see Pink 1998a). Clearly their understandings of my identity and status had implications for the way I was able to interact with local people and the specific knowledge that our interactions produced. In this particular research context economic inequalities unavoidably formed a back-drop to my relationships with Guinea Bissauans (see, for example, Pink 1999b). My use of photography and video (technologies that are prohibitively costly for most Guinea Bissauans) therefore had to be situated in terms of the wider economic context as well as my own identity as a researcher. Similarly, as I describe in Chapter 3, during my fieldwork in Southern Spain, being 'a woman with a camera' was a significant aspect of my gendered identity as a researcher (see Pink 1998b, 1999c). Gendered and economic power relations implied in and by images and image production have an

inevitable influence on how visual images and technologies can be used in ethnographic research.

Gendered identities, technologies and images

In the 1990s gender became a central theme in discussions of ethnographic research methodology. This included a focus on the gendered identity of the researcher, the intersubjectivity of the gendered negotiations that ethnographers have with their informants, the sensuous, sexualized and erotic aspects of fieldwork and the gendered nature of the ethnographic research process, or of the 'ethnographic narrative' (see especially Bell et al. 1993; Kulick and Willson 1995). A consideration of gender and other aspects of identity also has implications for ethnographic research with images.

Recent developments in gender theory have had an important impact on ethnographic methodology. A stress on the plural, rather than binary, nature of gendered identities and thus on *multiple* femininities and masculinities (see, for example, Connell 1987, 1995; Cornwall and Lindisfarne 1994; Moore 1994) has meant that differences *among* as well as *between* men and women are accounted for. Moreover, the fixity of both gender and identity have been questioned as researchers and theorists have begun to explore how the same individual may both experience and represent his or her masculinity or femininity differently in different contexts and in relation to different people (see Pink 1997a). It has been argued that the gendered self is never fully defined in any absolute way, but that it is only in specific social interactions that the gender identity of any individual comes in to being *in relation to* the negotiations that it undertakes with other individuals. In this sense, as Kulick (1995: 29) has summarized, the gendered self is only ever completed in relation to other selves, subjectivities, discourses, representations or material objects. If we apply this to the fieldwork context, it implies that precisely how both researcher and informant experience themselves and one another as gendered individuals will depend on the specific negotiation into which they enter. If visual images and technologies are part of the research project, they will play a role in how both researcher and informant identities are constructed and interpreted. As part of most contemporary cultures photography, video and other media also form part of the broader context in which researcher and informant identities are situated.

An understanding of gender relations as relations of power and a concurrent gendering of power relations has been developed in existing literatures on visual image production, representation and ethnographic research. In some instances gendered power relations become an explicit aspect of fieldwork experience. Barndt demonstrates this through a memorable example: 'Ever since that moment in 1969 when I took my

first people picture and got threatened by my subject/victim (who in self-defense, wielded over me the butcher knife she had been using to carve her toe nails), I have understood that the act of photography is imbued with issues of power' (Barndt 1997: 9). In another project, photographing the staff of a sociology department, Barndt found also that the gendered and hierarchical power relations within the department corresponded with the access she had to different people:

It seemed much harder to get into the space of the powerful than into the space of the less powerful: the (primarily female) secretaries in the departmental office were easier prey, for example, than the (usually male) full professors; you had to pass through two doors and get their permission before you could photograph them. (1997: 13)

An understanding of the intersection between image production, image-producing technologies and the ethnic, racial, gendered and other elements of the identities of those who use or own them is crucial for a reflexive approach. In more abstract discussions it has been argued that the modern or 'conventional' ethnographic research process itself constitutes a masculine pursuit that oppresses a feminine approach to knowledge. Kulick has likened the traditional narrative structure of ethnography as an exploitative and repressive act where the masculine ethnographer penetrates the feminized 'field' generalizing, abstracting and oppressing the 'feminine' objects of his study. He has argued for a different (and more feminine) approach to ethnography that focuses on negotiation and intersubjectivity (Kulick 1995). This perspective thus develops a model of masculinity as exploitative and repressive. This does not mean that all types of masculinity are always repressive or exploitative; in everyday life and experience many different types of masculinity exist (see Connell 1995). Rather, the abstracted models of feminine and masculine approaches to ethnography are important in that they stand as metaphors for particular approaches to ethics, epistemology and subjectivity.

These gendered models of ethnography as masculine, exploitative, observational and objectifying or feminine, subjective, sensuous, negotiating and reflexive have parallels in film studies and photography. In particular, notions of the gendered gaze, as developed by Mulvey (1989) in film studies, and of the 'archive' developed by Sekula (1989) in photography, have suggested that women, or the less powerful, are oppressed by an objectifying masculine gaze that is implied by the way they are represented visually in both film and photography. Borrowed originally from Foucault, these ideas have been re-appropriated to discuss visual representations in other cultures (e.g. Pinney 1992a) and historically in western culture. For example, studies of colonial photography have characterized the 'colonial gaze' on other less powerful cultures as an exploitative and objectifying project to catalogue and

classify the colonized (see Edwards 1992, 1997b). As a response to this, feminist approaches to the production of ethnographic knowledge and of ethnographic images and the uses of technology have been developed in Chaplin's work with photography (1994) and Thomas's research with video (1997). These collaborative approaches that confront and attempt to resolve the gendered power relations of technology and representation are discussed further in Chapters 3 and 4.

Unobservable ethnography and visual culture

In the Introduction I have described the realist view of visual technologies as tools for creating visual records. This view persists in some social science research methods text books. For example, Flick refers to 'the use of visual media for research purposes' as 'second-hand observation' (1998: 151). While this may prove a useful means of undertaking some forms of social research, this 'observational' approach depends on the problematic assumption that reality is visible, observable and recordable in video or photography. However, as writers such as Fabian (1983) have suggested, the epistemological and ethical principles of the observational approach should be rethought. In particular two issues need to be addressed. First, is it possible to observe and record 'reality'? For instance, just because something appears to be visible, this does not necessarily mean it is true. Second, the observational approach implies that we can observe and extract objective information (data) about our informants. This can be problematized as an 'objectifying' approach that does research *on* but not *with* people.

The relationship between the visual, the visible and reality has been a recent theme in cultural studies as well as anthropology. As Jenks has argued, while material objects inevitably have a visual presence, the notion of 'visual culture' should not refer only to the material and observable, 'visible' aspects of culture (Jenks 1995: 16). Rather, the visual also forms part of human imaginations and conversations. As Strecker emphasizes, images play a central role in the human mind and in human discourse which is 'metaphorically grounded' (Tyler 1987; Lakoff and Johnson 1980, quoted in Strecker 1997). The 'material' and 'visual cultures' that we encounter when we do ethnographic fieldwork may therefore be understood from this perspective: material objects are unavoidably visual, but visual images are not, by definition, material. Nevertheless, the intangibility of an image that exists as verbal description or is imagined makes it no less 'real'. This approach to images presents a direct challenge to definitions of 'the real in terms of the material, which can be accessed through the visible' (Slater 1995: 221). This rupture between visibility and reality is significant for an ethnographic approach to the visual because it implies that reality cannot necessarily be observed visually. Therefore, rather than recording reality

on video tape or camera film, the most one can expect is to represent those aspects of experience that are visible. Moreover, these visible elements of experience will be given different meanings as different people use their own subjective knowledge to interpret them.

Strecker criticizes existing treatments of images in ethnography, pointing out that ethnographers have tended to 'stand between' their informants and audiences/readers by translating images into words. In doing so ethnographers impose one (their own) interpretation on the images, thus dismissing the possibility that the images may have more than one potential meaning. Instead, Strecker proposes that since ethnography is 'largely to do with the interpretation of images' it should pay greater attention to 'the rhetorical contexts in which they are embedded' (Strecker 1997: 217). This theme is taken up again in the following chapters (especially Chapter 5) as I consider how visual images are given new meanings in a range of different contexts. Just as reality is not solely 'visible' or observable, images have no fixed or single meanings and are not capable of capturing an objective 'reality'. The most one can expect is that observation and images will allow one only to interpret that which is visible.

Photography and video do nevertheless bear some relationship to 'reality'. However the connection between visual images and experienced reality is constructed through individual subjectivity and interpretation of images. As Wright points out, this may be because '[a]s products of a particular culture, they [in this case photographs] are only perceived as real by cultural convention: they only *appear* realistic because we have been taught to see them as such' (Wright 1999: 6 original italics). As ethnographers, we may suspend a belief in reality as an objective and observable experience, but we should also keep in mind that we too use images to refer to certain versions of reality and we treat images as referents of visible and observable phenomena: 'As Alan Sekula (1982: 86) has pointed out, it is the most natural thing in the world for someone to open their [*sic*] wallet and produce a photograph saying "this is my dog"' (Wright 1999: 2). Such 'realist' approaches to photography and video are embedded in the experience and everyday practices of most ethnographers. Indeed, as I argue later in this book, in some cases realist uses of photographic and video images may be appropriate in ethnographic research and representation. However, realist uses of the visual in ethnography should be qualified by a reflexive awareness of the intentions behind such uses and their limits as regards the representation of 'truth'.

Images, technologies, individuals

Photography and video have been appropriated in varying forms and degrees by many individuals in almost all cultures and societies.

However, visual images and technologies are not only elements of the cultures that academics 'study', they also pertain to the academic cultures and personal lifestyles and subject positions from which contemporary ethnographers approach their projects. As Chaplin has argued for sociology, ethnographic disciplines should not distance themselves from the topics they study (1994: 16). This means thinking not simply of 'the sociology of visual representation' but of sociology *and* visual representations as elements of the same cultural context. Thus ethnographers should treat visual representation as an aspect of the material culture and practice of social scientists as well as a practice and material culture that is researched *by* social scientists.

Most ethnographers, and an increasing number of informants (depending on the fieldwork context), own or have some access to still and video cameras. The inevitable interlinking between personal and professional understandings, agendas and intentions means that ethnographers' professional approaches to visual images and technologies cannot essentially be separated from their personal approaches and a reflexive approach to one's own visual practices is important for ethnographic and artistic work. Rather than there being a single corporate 'ethnographic approach' that all ethnographers take on, the practices of individual ethnographers are attached to a combination of personal and professional elements. Recent work in anthropology (e.g. Kulick and Willson 1995; Okely 1996; Okely and Callaway 1992) has stressed the inseparability of personal from professional identities and the importance of autobiography and personal experience in the production of ethnographic knowledge. Some existing work develops this in practice, showing that there are inevitably continuities between the different personal and professional uses to which visual images and technologies may be put. For example, Okely has written anthropological text that uses autobiographical information as what she has called 'retrospective fieldwork'. This article, based on Okely's experiences of attending a boarding school, uses her memories and photographs from this period of her life (1996: 147-74). Likewise, Strecker and Lydall's ethnographic film *Sweet Sorghum*, about their daughter's childhood experiences of living with the Hamar people in Ethiopia while her parents were doing fieldwork, cuts their own old 'home movie' footage with a recently shot interview with their daughter. In such ways personal uses and experiences of visual technologies as well as actual images may later become part of a piece of professional work. Here a reflexive awareness of not only the visual dimensions of the culture being researched, but also of ethnographers' own cultural and individual understandings and uses of visual images and technologies, is important.

In my own fieldwork I have had to recognize that I have been just as much a 'consumer' of photographic images and technologies as my informants (although maybe in different ways). Consumption and style have recently become the focus of multidisciplinary projects (e.g. Miller

1995; and preceding this Appadurai 1986), usually about the practices of 'other' people. However, ethnographers' subjectivity and fieldwork styles may be theorized similarly: ethnographers are also consumers and apply certain practices of consumption to their visual technologies and images. Ethnographers' photography or video making may be related equally to their professional fieldwork narratives or personal biographies. Moreover, photography and photographs can represent an explicit meeting point (or continuity) between personal and professional identities; as material objects they pass through, and are invested with new meanings in, situations where individuals may wish to express different aspects of their identities. For example, when is a photograph of one's informants/friends kept in a 'research archive'? And when does it remain in one's personal collection? When I first returned from fieldwork in Southern Spain in 1994 I had two sets of photographs: one of friends and one of 'research'. As time passed these photographs shifted between categories. They moved out of albums and eventually into a series of envelopes and folders. The personal/professional visual narratives into which I had initially divided them gradually became dissolved into other categories as I worked through the experience of fieldwork in an attempt to translate it into ethnographic knowledge. Thus my anthropological analysis began to appropriate my personal experience and possessions. Concurrently my informants and friends, both in 'the field' in Andalusia and 'at home' in the UK, appropriated my 'anthropological' and personal photographs, incorporating them into, and making them meaningful in terms of, their own material and visual cultures as they included them in their own photograph albums.

Consuming technology and practising photography

Photographers and video makers, whether or not they are ethnographers, are individuals with their own intentions working in specific social and cultural contexts. In order to understand the practices of both ethnographers and informants as image-makers it is important to consider how relationships develop between individuals, visual technologies, practices and images, society and culture. Bourdieu (1990) made an early attempt to theorize photographic practices and meanings to explain why individuals tend to perpetuate existing visual forms and styles in their visual work. Bourdieu proposed that while everything is potentially photographable, the photographic practice of individuals is governed by objective limitations. He argues that 'photography cannot be delivered over to the randomness of the individual imagination' but instead 'via the mediation of the *ethos*, the internalization of objective and common regularities, the group places this practice under its collective rule' (Bourdieu 1990: 6). According to this interpretation, images produced by individual photographers and video makers

would inevitably express the shared norms of that individual's society. Thus, Bourdieu argues 'that the most trivial photograph expresses, apart from the explicit intentions of the photographer, the system of schemes of perception, thought and appreciation common to a whole group' (1990: 6).

Individuals undoubtedly produce images that respond and refer to established conventions that have developed in and between existing 'visual cultures'. However, the implication of this is not necessarily that individual visual practices are dictated by an unconsciously held common set of beliefs. Bourdieu's explanation represents a problematic reduction of agency, subjectivity and individual creativity to external objective factors. It is difficult to reconcile with more recent and more convincing theories of agency and self-hood, such as Cohen's proposition that individuals are 'self-driven' (1992: 226) 'thinking selves' and the creators of culture (1994: 167), thus viewing 'society as composed of and by self-conscious individuals' (1994: 192). This focus on individual creativity (as opposed to Giddens's notion of the individual as the product of structure) has recently been brought to the forefront in some anthropological work. In particular, Rapport has argued in favour of a recognition of the individual 'as a seat of consciousness, as well-spring of creativity, as guarantor of meaning' as opposed to 'the *dissolved, decentered, deconstructed* individual actor and author as he or she appears in Durkheimian, Structuralist and Post-Structuralist schools of social science' (Rapport 1997a: 7, original italics). This suggests that while it is likely that individuals will reference known visual forms, styles, discourses and meanings through the content and form of their own visual images, this does not mean that they have internalized and are reproducing these formats. It is also probable that, as Evans and Hall have noted (1999: 3), their practices will intersect with camera and film manufacturing industries and developing and processing companies. Thus in creating images that reproduce or reference 'conventional' compositions and iconographies, individuals draw from personal and cultural resources of visual experience and knowledge. They thus compose images that they intend to represent particular objects or meanings; moreover they do so in particular social and material contexts. In the following chapters I emphasize the importance of attending to the intentionality of ethnographic photographers and video makers as creative individuals.

Images and image producers: breaking down the categories

Existing social scientific literature on photography tends to distinguish between family, snapshot, amateur and professional photographs. Similarly, distinctions are made between home movies and professional videos. For photographers themselves these categories and the

distinctions between them can be important. To mistakenly put a photographer/amateur/snapshotter in the 'wrong' category can imply problematic assumptions about his or her knowledge of both photographic technique and his or her subject matter. For instance, in Spain bullfight *aficionados* associate different types of bullfight photography with particular gendered identities and corresponding understandings of the bullfight (see Pink 1997a). Work on photography in North American and European cultures implies that similar categories of image and image producers often appear to be assumed by both informants and researchers, and are not usually questioned (e.g. Bourdieu 1990; Chalfen 1987; Pink 1997a; Slater 1995). However these, like all categories, are in fact culturally constructed, and individually understood and experienced. Individual photographers, video makers or visual images may not fit neatly into just one of the identities that is implied by the distinction between categories such as domestic, amateur, professional (or ethnographic) images and producers. No photographic or video image need have one single identity and, as I have noted above, no images are, for example, essentially 'ethnographic' but are given ethnographic meanings in relation to the discourses that people use to define them.

The categorization of different types of photography and photographer also raises issues concerning professional identity for ethnographers who use still photography or video. For example, if categories of 'domestic', 'tourist', 'documentary' or 'ethnographic' are used to define a fieldwork photograph, each implies different types of knowledge and intentionality for the photographer. Some criticisms of the value of ethnographers' photography have suggested that it is 'unlikely to be professional', 'mere vacation photography', 'unsuitable for exhibition' or less relevant as 'representation' than images produced by professional, commissioned photographers (all comments I have heard social scientists voice). These opinions assume there is an essential difference between professional ethnographic and personal leisure photographs or video. However, during ethnographic fieldwork the distinction between leisure and work is frequently ambiguous, for both ethnographers (especially anthropologists, for whom it raises the question is one ever 'off duty?') and 'informants' who may find it difficult to regard some 'research' activities as 'work'. Often an ethnographer's research is structured by other people's leisure time (among other things). Correspondingly, a proportion of 'ethnographic' photography may be centred on leisure activities in which the ethnographer participates. I found that in Spain, when photographing the professional and social life of bullfighting culture, many of my photographs and much of my photographic activity was structured simultaneously by my own work and leisure or my informants' leisure (see also Chapter 5). Thus the photographs I took at birthday parties, bullfights and official receptions were simultaneously ethnographic, anthropological, family and leisure photographs. While

fixed categories imply that if an ethnographer's photography or video is classified as 'tourist' or 'leisure' images, then they are not 'ethnographic'. My experiences indicate that a fieldwork photograph or video need never be fixed in any single category and that it would be mistaken to distinguish categorically between leisure and professional images and situate ethnographers' images accordingly. Ethnographers' own photographs are often worked into a range of different personal and professional narratives and subject positions (of ethnographers and their informants). They do not belong in any one fixed category and may be incorporated differently as the same individuals re-negotiate their gendered identities in different situations (see Chapter 2).

Fieldwork photographs often simultaneously belong to the different but connected material cultures of visual anthropology or sociology and of the culture being 'studied' (see Chapter 5). This may raise certain issues. For instance, what happens when ethnographers start to produce the very material culture they are studying; what impact do ethnographers have when they participate in and contribute to the visual discourses they are analysing; and what are the effects of informants' appropriations of ethnographers' images. I explore some of these scenarios in the following chapters.

Summary

Ethnographers themselves are members of societies in which photography and video are already practised and understood in particular ways. The ways in which individual ethnographers approach the visual in their research and representation is inevitably influenced by a range of factors, including theoretical beliefs, disciplinary agendas, personal experience, gendered identities and different visual cultures. Fundamental to understanding the significance of the visual in ethnographic work is a reflexive appreciation of how such elements combine to produce visual meanings and ethnographic knowledge.

CHAPTER 2

Planning and Practising Visual Methods: Appropriate Uses and Ethical Issues

Why use 'visual methods'?

It is impossible to predict, and mistaken to prescribe, precise methods for ethnographic research. Similarly, it would be unreasonable to 'require that visual methods be used in all contexts'. Rather, as Morphy and Banks suggest, 'they should be used where appropriate, with the rider that appropriateness will not always be obvious in advance' (1997: 14). In practice, decisions are best made once researchers are in a position to assess which specific visual methods will be appropriate or ethical in a particular research context, therefore allowing researchers to account for their relationships with informants and their experience and knowledge of local visual cultures. Nevertheless, certain decisions and indicators about the use of visual images and technologies in research usually need to be made before commencing fieldwork. Often research proposals, preparations and plans must be produced before fieldwork begins; the fieldwork may be in an area where technologies are difficult to purchase or hire; if the project is to be funded and equipment purchased from a research grant, technological needs must be anticipated and budgeted for.

The appropriateness of 'visual methods'

Banks divides visual research methods into three broad activities: 'making visual representations (studying society by producing images)'; 'examining pre-existing visual representations' (studying images for information about society); 'collaborating with social actors in the production of visual representations' (Banks n.d.). These can generally be planned and developed before fieldwork. However, more specific uses of visual images and technologies tend to develop as part of the social relationships and activities in which ethnographers engage during fieldwork. Some of these will be purposefully thought out and strategically applied. In Chapters 3 and 4 the specific applications of general models

of visual research methods are discussed in detail. In other cases unanticipated uses of the visual may be discovered by accident and retrospectively defined as 'visual methods'. Ethnographers might repeat such activities (sometimes in collaboration with informants), thus developing and refining the method throughout the research. However, methods developed within one research context may not be transferable to, or appropriate in, others. For example, when I started to research Spanish bullfighting culture I began photographing people at the many public receptions held to present trophies, exhibitions and book launches. After my first reception I showed my photographs to the organizers and participants and they asked me for copies of certain photos, some of which they gave to their colleagues. By keeping note of their requests and asking questions about the images I gained a sense of how individuals situated themselves in relation to other individuals in 'bullfighting culture'. As I attended more receptions I consciously repeated this 'method' and developed my use of the camera and the photographs in response to the relationship that developed between my informants, the technology, the images and myself as photographer (see Chapter 3; Pink 1998b, 1999c).

This method of researching with images was appropriate in bullfighting culture partly because it imitated and was incorporated into my informants' existing cultural and individual uses of photography. When I began to photograph during my next fieldwork in West Africa, I considered using a similar method. However I quickly realized that in Guinea Bissau I was working in an economic system where photographs were costly prestige items. For instance, commercially, a studio photograph would cost the price of ten loaves of bread – a large dent in most local people's budgets. Here I could not participate in local people's photographic culture in the same way, as any use of photographic equipment and images implied economic inequalities. In this context, other new methods had to be developed (see Chapter 3; Pink 1998d, 1999b).

Before attempting visual research it is useful to read up on visual methods used by other ethnographers. However, it is also crucial to evaluate their appropriateness for a new project. This includes considering how visual methods, images and technologies will be interpreted by individuals in the cultures where research will be done, in addition to assessing how well visual methods suit the aims of specific projects. In some situations visual methods appear inappropriate. For example, in Guinea Bissau I undertook a research project to assess people's willingness and ability to pay for health services and medicines in the region in which I was living. This included a series of focus group discussions in rural areas and a European colleague suggested I video record the discussions and interviews. I recalled a case study in which Freudenthal (1992) describes how he used video recordings of group discussions with rural villagers in a development research project in

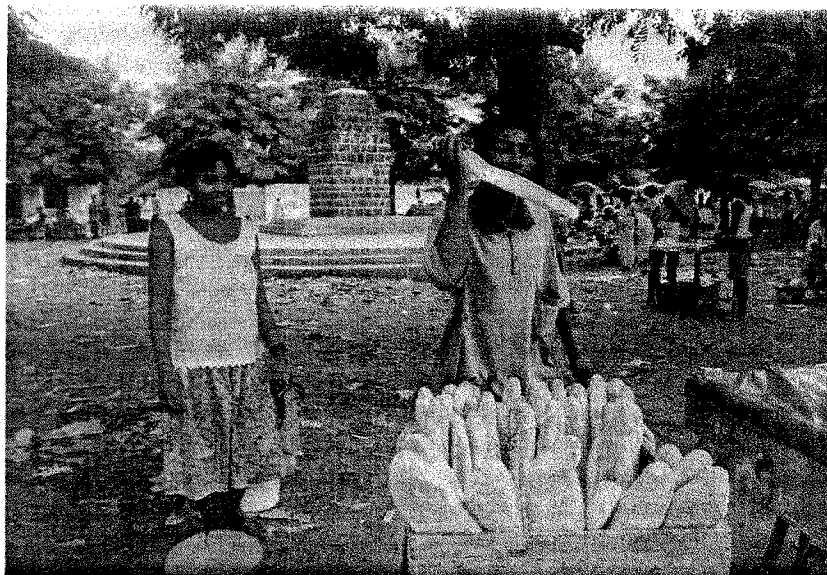


Figure 2.1 When I first asked these Guinea Bissauan bread sellers if I could photograph them, they said 'no', thinking that I was a commercial photographer who would charge them for the images. When I explained that I was not and that I wanted the photographs for my work they were happy to pose. In Guinea Bissau one studio or location photograph taken by a local commercial photographer costs several times the price of one locally baked fresh loaf of bread.

Tanzania. His method succeeded in creating a participatory approach to the production of knowledge about the evaluation of a small local forestry project. However, basing my opinion on my prior knowledge of the culture I was working with and the limited time that I would spend in each village (approximately two days) I felt using video would be inappropriate. I discussed the methods with a local health director who agreed that the time and resources available to the project were insufficient to allow us to develop an appropriate context of trust and collaboration for the use of video.

Researchers should not have fixed, preconceived expectations of what it will be possible to achieve by using visual research methods in a given situation. Sometimes visual methods will not support the researcher's aims. Hastrup's (1992) description of her attempt as a woman anthropologist to photograph an exclusively male Icelandic sheep market demonstrates this well. She describes the difficulty and discomfort she experienced while photographing this event but notes that having accomplished the task she felt a sense of satisfaction 'to have been there and to have been able to document this remarkable event' (1992: 9). She had left with the sensation that she 'even had photos from the sacred grove of a male secret society' (1992: 9). However her photographic

method was not appropriate for recording the type of information she had anticipated and she writes of the disappointment she experienced on later seeing the printed photographs: 'they were hopeless. Ill-focused, badly lit, lopsided and showing nothing but the completely uninteresting backs of men and rams' (1992: 9). She emphasizes the difference between her experience of photographing and the end results. While I was taking them I had the impression that I was making an almost pornographic record of a secret ritual. They showed me nothing of the sort but bore the marks of my own inhibition, resulting from my transgression of the boundary between gender categories' (1992: 9). Hastrup's expectations of what she may obtain by using this visual research method were not met. She anticipated that her photographs would represent ethnographic 'evidence' of her experience of the event: 'a record of a secret ritual'. To assess why this was not achieved she generalizes that 'pictures have a limited value as ethnographic "evidence"', and the 'secret' of informants' experiences can only be told in words (1992: 9). While I would agree that as ethnographic 'evidence' photographs indeed have limited value (see Chapter 1), this does not necessarily indicate that one may only represent ethnographic knowledge with words (see especially Chapters 6–8). The potential of photography or video as a realist recording device or a way of exploring individual subjectivities and creative collaboration will be realized differently in every application.

Sometimes using cameras and making images of informants is inappropriate for ethical reasons (see below). In some situations photographs or videos of informants may put them in political danger, or subject them to moral criticism. The appropriateness of visual methods should not simply be judged on questions of whether the methods suit the objectives of the research question and if they fit well with the local culture in which one is working. Rather, such evaluations should be informed by an ethnographic appreciation of how visual knowledge is interpreted in a cross-cultural context. Therefore decisions about the particular methodologies and modes of representation to be used should pay attention to intersections between local visual cultures, the ways in which the visual is treated by wider users or audiences of the research and ethnographers' own knowledge, experience and sensitivity. By thinking through the implications of image production and visual representation in this way ethnographers should be able to evaluate how their 'ethnographic' images would be invested with different meanings by different political, local and academic discourses.

Planning visual research

Without good knowledge of the context in which one is planning to do ethnographic research it is very difficult to predict how and to what extent visual images and technologies may be used. Similarly, the basis upon

which one may judge if visual methods will be ethical, appropriate, or a useful way to participate or collaborate with the people with whom one is working, will be contingent on the particular research context. Plans to use visual methods made before commencing the research may appear unnecessary or out of place once the research has begun. For example, my original proposal to do research about women and bullfighting in Southern Spain anticipated the extensive use of video. However, once in the field I found my informants only occasionally used video cameras. I was working in a culture where photography was a dominant source of knowledge and representation about bullfighting. In this situation it was usually more appropriate to participate in local events as a 'photographer' than as a 'video maker'. Since some of my informants also participated in their 'bullfighting culture' as amateur photographers, I was able to 'share' an activity with them as well as producing images which interested them. At the time photography fitted the demands of the project. However, retrospectively, I was able to identify ways in which video could have supported the research, fitted into the local bullfighting culture and also served my informants' interests. Such insights could be used as the basis of future research plans.

Usually ethnographers with some experience of working in a particular culture and society already have a sense of the visual and technological cultures of the people with whom they plan to work. Ethnographers should have an idea of how their photographic/video research practices will develop in relation to local practices, and a sense of how they may learn through the interface between their own and local visual practices. Such background knowledge makes it easier to present a research proposal that defines quite specifically how and to what ends visual technologies and images are to be employed. This may entail developing insights from prior research in the same culture, doing a short 'pilot study', or researching aspects of visual cultures from library and museum sources, ethnographic film and the internet. This need not be solely a 'traditional' literature review about visual culture. The first stage of the research process may be an interactive exploration of websites and e-mail contacts where elements of the visual culture of a research area are represented. For instance, if I was to begin research into the visual representations of bullfighting culture now, at the beginning of 2000 rather than the early 1990s, an ideal starting point from my base in the United Kingdom would be an exploration of the now numerous bullfighting websites and on-line magazines. Similarly, before beginning fieldwork in Guinea Bissau, few internet resources were available. However in summer 1998, one year after my return, a website with photographic images and text had been built. E-mail communications and electronic exchanges of digital images are also options for researchers working with informants who are technology users themselves. The internet should not be ignored as an aspect of some contemporary ethnographic fields (see Pink 1999a).

Pre-fieldwork surveys of literature, electronic and other visual texts and examples of how other ethnographers have successfully worked with visual images and technologies in specific cultures can indicate the potential for using visual methods in particular fieldwork contexts. Combined with some considered guesswork about people's visual practices and discourses, this can form a basis from which to develop a research proposal. However, neither a researcher's own preparation, nor other ethnographers' accounts can predict how a 'visual method' will develop in a new project. Just as ethnography can only really be learnt in practice, ethnographic uses of visual images and technologies develop from practice-based knowledge. Moreover, as projects evolve novel uses of photography or video may develop to explore and represent unexpected issues. Chapters 3 and 4 are intended to represent sources of examples, ideas and inspirations through which ethnographers may develop their own styles.

Choosing the technology for the project

Like images, and any material object, technologies are also interpreted differently by individuals in different cultures. If possible, ethnographers should explore the meanings informants give to different visual technologies before purchasing equipment.

The selection of a digital or 'traditional' camera, a semi-professional video camera or the cheapest hand-held VHS model may be related to economic factors, but should also account for how the equipment one uses will become part of one's identity both during fieldwork and in academic circles. Individuals constantly re-situate themselves and construct their self-identities in relation to not only other individuals but also to material objects and cultural discourses. The visual technologies that ethnographers use, like the images they produce and view, will be invested with meanings, inspire responses and are likely to become a topic of conversation. Some informants may have a 'shared' interest in photography or video (in some cases they will have better cameras and skills than the researcher). For example, in Spain my amateur interest in bullfight photography was shared with several local people. This led us to discuss technical as well as aesthetic aspects of bullfighting photography, such as the best film speeds, zoom lenses and seating in the arena. In a recent video interviewing project in the United Kingdom and Spain, interviewees appeared relaxed with my domestic digital video camera simply seeing it as one of the latest pieces of new video technology. In comparison to solitary field diary writing, photography and video making can appear more 'visible', comprehensible activities to informants, and may link more closely with their own experience. Photographs and video-tapes themselves become commodities for exchange and the sites of negotiation, for example, among

informants, between researchers and informants, between researchers and their families and friends 'at home' and among researchers. In short, the visual technologies and images associated with ethnographers will also be implicated in the way other people construct their identities and thus impact on their social relationships and experiences.

Therefore, when selecting and applying for funding for technology it is important to remember that a camera will be part of the research context and an element of the ethnographer's identity. It will impinge on the social relationships in which he or she becomes involved and on how informants represent themselves. Different technologies impact on these relationships and identities in different ways. In some cases image quality may have to be forsaken to produce images that represent the type of ethnographic knowledge sought. For example, the relationship between ethnographer and subjects that can develop in a photographic or filmic situation created by the use of professional lighting and sound equipment will differ from when the ethnographer is working alone with just a small hand-held camcorder or stills camera. The images may be darker and grainier, the sound less sharp, but the ethnographic knowledge they invoke may be more useful to the project.

In tandem with the social and cultural implications of the use of visual technologies, practical and technical issues also arise. How will a camera and other equipment be powered and transported? (Will there even be electricity?) What post-production resources will be available? Finally, what resources will be available for showing the images to informants? In some locations cameras can be connected to TV monitors and video recorders. In others, a solar-powered lap-top computer might be used to screen digital still and video images. When purchasing equipment it is important to keep track of technological developments and also of post-fieldwork equipment requirements. Will it be necessary to have the technology to transfer digital images on to a computer for analysis, or on to another tape format for editing? As Ratcliffe (n.d.) points out, most up-to-date information on video and photographic technology can be found in specialist consumer report magazines. These can be purchased in most high-street newsagents. Both equipment and production can be costly and it is important to budget realistically for the cost of tape transfer using editing facilities, printing and computing equipment.

Ethics and ethnographic research

A consideration of the ethical implications of ethnographic research and representation should underpin any research project. Most guides and courses on research methods dedicate a section to ethics. Such texts usually cover a standard set of issues such as informed consent, covert research, confidentiality, harm to informants, exploitation and 'giving something back', ownership of 'data', and protection of informants.

These indisputably relevant issues are critically reviewed later in this chapter. However, the issue of ethics in ethnographic work refers to more than simply the ethical conduct of the researcher. Rather, it demands that ethnographers develop an understanding of the ethical context(s) in which they work, a reflexive approach to their own ethical beliefs, and a critical approach to the idea that *one* ethical code of conduct could be hierarchically superior to all others. Because ethics are so embedded in the specific research contexts in which ethnographers work, like decisions about which visual research methods to employ in a project, ethical decisions cannot be concluded until the researcher is actually in the field.

In practice, ethics are bound up with power relations between ethnographers, informants, professionals, sponsors, gatekeepers, governments, the media and other institutions (see Ellen 1984: 134). Ethical decisions are ultimately made by individual ethnographers, usually with reference to personal and professional codes (often laid out by professional organizations) of ethical conduct and the intentionalities of other parties. The personal dimension of ethnographic research, the moral and philosophical beliefs of the researcher and his or her view of reality impinges greatly on the ethical practices that he or she applies in research and representation.

Ethics are also bound up with the epistemological concerns of academic disciplines – they both inform and are informed by theory and methodology. For instance, a research methodology that is informed by a relativist approach requires that ethics becomes not simply a matter of ensuring that research is done in an ethical way (i.e. conforms to a fixed ethical code or set of rules), but that ethics becomes an area of philosophical debate in itself. If difference denotes plurality and equality rather than hierarchy, then it would seem unreasonable to argue that one ethical code would be superior to another. This problematizes the idea that there is one set of rules that defines *the* ethical way to undertake ethnographic research and challenges the assumption that ethnographic research may be guided by one code of ethical conduct rather than by another. However, such a relativist approach to ethics raises difficult questions. For instance, how relativist can ethnographic research and representation afford to be in relation to ethics while remaining an 'ethical' activity? Should ethnographers accept all ethical codes as being equally permissible? Clearly there are some activities that ethnographers would wish to render 'unethical'.

Rapport has suggested that the inadequacy of a relativist approach for dealing with ethics may be resolved by a focus on the individual. He argues that '[i]nstead of relativistic making of allowances for different cultures maintaining different traditions – whatever the consequences to their individual members – I want to outline a liberal basis for social science which recognises individuals as universal human agents above whom there is no greater good, without whom there is no cultural

tradition' (Rapport 1997a: 181). For Rapport the ethical approach of social science should be one that responds against 'the violation of individual integrity, the threat to the individual's conscious potential, the ideological prioritising of community above and beyond the individuals who at any one moment constitute it' (1997a: 181). Therefore he is able to argue that social scientists should be able to see a number of practices (such as 'Naziism, religious fundamentalism, female circumcision, infanticide and *suttee*') as unethical 'because of the hurt they cause to individuals, because of the harm which accrues in those social milieux where an ethic of interpersonal tolerance is not managed' (1997a: 181).

Rapport's principle offers a basis upon which ethnographers may evaluate the ethical practices of themselves as researchers, their informants and other individuals, agencies and institutions with whom they come into contact during research. Ultimately, the decision will be a personal one for each ethnographer has to decide whether his or her research practices and representations are ethical before these are held up to the scrutiny of others who will then interpret this question for themselves. Similarly, the question of the ethics of those whom we study, and the ethics of studying and/or making moral judgements about them, is one that individual ethnographers must address for themselves at some stage in their research. It will also be addressed by those who read or view their representations at another stage. During my research about bullfighting I was often confronted with the question 'was bullfighting morally right or wrong?' While carrying out this research I felt morally able to 'stand on the fence'. I did not commit myself to a moral judgement either way, and still maintain that I don't. However, I was aware that some of my Spanish informants and some acquaintances in the United Kingdom felt that not only bullfighting, but also my research and my participation in bullfighting culture by attending (and sometimes enjoying) bullfights was unethical. They felt that by researching and writing on the subject I was effectively condoning what they regarded an unethical practice. On occasion I could empathize with their subject position, but I felt I was doing nothing more than shifting subject positions; I was never making a personal commitment to either standpoint. Aware that some people, especially animal rights activists, would judge my informants' practices as unethical, and having heard their views that bullfighting fans were 'blood thirsty', 'violent' and 'barbaric', I felt obliged to 'protect' my informants by attempting to represent them as sensitive and moral human beings and to describe their understanding of bullfighting in a way that indicated they did not fit the unethical profile others had associated with them. The ethics that guide ethnographers may be a critical discourse on the ethics of the people they study, or of an individual or institution who has power over them. Rapport admits that his perspective on ethics (see above) is personal. Similarly, my own approach to the ethics of bullfighting was based on a personal conviction. Another ethnographer might argue that any activity

that causes harm or hurt to animals is unethical, thus taking a different approach to the representation of ethnographic work on bullfighting.

As Pels has pointed out for anthropology, in the contemporary world:

Globalising movements have resulted in a situation in which the ethics of anthropology can no longer be thought of simply in term of the dyad between researcher and researched: anthropology is placed squarely within a more complex field of governmentality, cross-cultural conflict and global mobility. Some of these developments seem threatening to anthropology, others seem to provide new opportunities, and all raise novel questions about the ethics of anthropological research. (Pels 1996: 18)

It is not solely ethnographers and informants who are implicated in the ethical issues researchers confront during fieldwork. Indeed, there may be a whole range of other interested parties and agendas that shape the ethical conduct of ethnographers and their informants either by enforcing their own guidelines, or by posing a threat to the safety of those represented in ethnographic work. Ethnographers therefore need to understand how plural moralities are at play in any ethnographic situation, and the extent to which these different ethical codes are constructed and interpreted in relation to one another. Ethnographers should seek to identify where the ethics of the research fit in with these other ethical codes with which it intersects. Ultimately, ethics in ethnography is concerned with making decisions based on interpretations of the moralities and intentionalities of other people and the institutions they may represent.

Visual research methods and ethical ethnography

The theoretical underpinning of my approach to ethics and visual research methods is based on the relationship between vision and reality discussed in Chapter 1. This emphasizes the specificity of the visual meanings that operate in the different cultures and societies in which ethnographers work and in the different ways ethnographers' images can be interpreted by other bodies such as academics, informants, professionals, sponsors, gatekeepers, governments, the media and other institutions. However conscious ethnographers are of the arbitrary nature of photographic meanings, ethnographic images are still likely to be treated as 'truthful recordings' or 'evidence' by non-academic viewers. Ethnographers should pay particular attention to how different approaches to the visual and different meanings given to the same images may coincide or collide in the domains in which we research and represent our work.

Below I critically review existing approaches to ethics in ethnographic research methodology, to consider their implications for the use of visual images.

Covert research and the question of informed consent

As a scientific-realist strategy, covert research was assumed to enable ethnographers to better observe an 'objective truth'. In the case of the covert use of video recording and photography the same principle was applied: the use of a hidden camera was thought to allow researchers to produce images of an objective reality, less 'distorted' by their own subjectivity (see Chapter 1). In Chapter 1 I have noted that such objectivity can never actually be achieved. Moreover, in my opinion, any type of covert research requires a careful consideration of ethics. This does not mean all covert research is necessarily unethical (see, for example, Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 263–8), but that ethical decisions should be made according to the specific research context.

The approach to photography and video in ethnographic research I propose in Chapters 3 and 4 emphasizes the idea of collaboration between researcher and informant. Covert research implies the researcher videoing and photographing the behaviour of informants in a secretive rather than collaborative way, for example, using a hidden camera or using the camera under the guise of a role other than that of researcher. A collaborative method, in contrast, assumes that researcher and informant are consciously working together to produce visual images and specific types of knowledge through technological procedures and discussions. However, there may be occasions where covert image-making becomes part of a collaboration, for example, if an ethnographer collaborates with informants to photograph others who are not aware they are being photographed. The ethical implications of such work need to be reviewed for each project and on the terms of each individual researcher. If a researcher considers the very act of recording covertly a violation of the integrity of their informants, and thus unethical, then covert work will be ruled out. In other situations an ethnographer may feel that to record or photograph an activity secretly is ethical because he or she will be able to take personal responsibility for the images and not to violate the integrity of those covertly recorded.

The distinction between overt and covert research is, however, further complicated by challenging the notion of 'informed consent'. First, because cross-culturally consent may take different forms, involve different individuals and relationships and have different meanings. Secondly, informants may be keen to collaborate without actually engaging fully with *why* a researcher would want to video record certain activities. Even if informants collaborate or participate in the production of ethnographic video and photography, it is unlikely that their understanding or intentions *vis-à-vis* the project will coincide exactly with the ethnographer's. In such cases it could be argued that even if consent is given, it is not *informed* consent, and the researcher is (even if unintentionally) keeping his or her real agenda hidden from the informants.

The ethical implications of covertly shot video or photography vary at different stages of the project at which the images may become accessible to different parties. If the ethnographer is to publish covertly produced images, this raises a range of new issues (see below).

Permission and the 'right' to photograph/video at public events

It is good practice to ask permission to photograph in any public context or event, as well as seeking the consent of the individuals photographed, and in some situations official permission is required. Permission to photograph and video at public events may be granted in a variety of ways. During my fieldwork in Spain, like many of my informants, I often photographed the bullfight. While it was not allowed to video record a bullfight without formal permission, photography was usually freely permitted. Much of this involves photographing individual performers, however their permission is rarely asked and their fans tend to assume their right to photograph a public figure. Bullfighters are frequently photographed before and after as well as during their performances. Fans queue up at their hotels, hoping for a chance to pose with the performer, while the arena is packed with many aspiring bullfight photographers with a range of different types of camera and skills. In this research context public photography was freely permitted and acceptable. In other field contexts formal permission is needed before photographing in any public place or event. During my first weeks of fieldwork in Guinea Bissau I began to research the forthcoming carnival. With the idea of eventually photographing aspects of carnival, I started researching local people's photographs of previous carnivals and seeking out public photographic records or exhibitions. I later photographed some of my neighbours preparing their hair for carnival and the carnival masks that had won previous competitions. My informants told me that to photograph or video carnival in the capital city, Bissau, a photography or video permit must be purchased. Knowing this, I approached the regional office of the Ministry of Culture in Canchungo, the town I was living in; it seemed polite to ask the head of the local office for permission to photograph in the town. He told me that as far as he was concerned I was allowed to photograph during carnival and instructed me that if anyone challenged me I should tell them he had given me permission. This raised several issues for me, since it seemed that I had been given permission to photograph carnival participants without their consent. In practice, I photographed only those individuals who agreed to be photographed (usually people I already knew), or those participating in activities that they knew were likely to be photographed.

The question of whether an ethnographer has permission to photograph or video differs from situation to situation and according to whom we listen. Often it seems obligatory initially to negotiate official permission to video or photograph with institutional gatekeepers. However,

permission to video or photograph individuals in their capacity as participants in events is usually best negotiated with each individual or group. The ethics of obtaining permissions vary in different research contexts, according to project aims and the agendas of researchers, informants and other interested parties.

Harm to informants

While ethnographic research is unlikely to cause harm as, for example, drugs trials may, it can lead to emotional distress or anxiety (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 268). Sensitivity to how individuals in different cultures may experience anxiety or stress through their involvement in research is important in any ethnographic project. However, rather than prescribing actual methods of preventing harm to informants in visual research, my intention is to suggest a way of thinking about how research, anxiety and harm are understood and experienced in different ethnographic contexts. General methods of preventing harm to informants may not be locally applicable. First, there are culturally different ways of understanding harm and of causing it with images. Therefore, in order to prevent harm being caused, a researcher needs a good understanding of local notions of harm and anxiety, how these may be experienced and how they relate to images. Secondly, the idea that informants may find the research process distressing is usually based on the assumption that the informants are having the research *done to them*. In this scenario the researcher is supposed to be in control of the research situation and therefore also assumes responsibility for the potential harm that may be done to the informants. This approach requires that in taking responsibility to protect their informants, researchers should be sensitive to the visual culture and experience of the individuals with whom they are working. For instance, ethnographers need to judge, or ask (if appropriate), if there are personal or cultural reasons why some people may find particular photographs shown to them in interviews or discussions offensive, disturbing or distressing, or if being photographed or videoed themselves would be stressful.

Anxiety and harm to informants can often be avoided through a collaborative approach to visual research and joint ownership of visual materials. Here researchers and informants should maintain some degree of control over the content of the materials and their subsequent uses.

Harm, representation and permission to publish

Above I have discussed the issue of permission to video or photograph during ethnographic research. The publication of the research raises new issues. Sometimes this is already a concern when the images are shot, especially if the ethnographer's project is to produce a documentary or

photographic exhibition. These intentions should be made clear to the subjects of the images. Some ethnographic filmmakers ask the subjects of their films to sign consent forms (see Barbash and Taylor 1997). However, if this is not done, moral and legal issues of ownership of the images and of consent may arise. If the images were produced covertly, without the permission of their subjects, the moral right of the video maker or photographer to publish them could be questioned. Moreover, it cannot be assumed that people have consented to being in a publicly screened video or to have large images of themselves exhibited in a gallery simply because they have allowed the images to be taken or have responded to the camera. This raises questions such as should the subjects of photographs and video be allowed to see printed or edited copies before they consent to their images entering a public domain? Different filmmakers, photographers and ethnographers have their own opinions and practices regarding this. Much of ethnography is about making private aspects of people's lives public. Therefore, who should be responsible for deciding the content of the visual representation of other people's lives?

Questions of harm to individuals, or institutions become pressing when it comes to publication. For photography and video this is particularly important since it is usually impossible to preserve anonymity of people and places. Ethnographers have to make choices regarding if and how video footage will be incorporated into the final publication of the research. This requires a serious consideration of ethical issues and possibly the participation of the informants or the subjects of the images. The publication of certain photographic and video images may damage individuals' reputations; they may not want certain aspects of their identities revealed or their personal opinions to be made public. People express certain things in one context that they would not say in another, and in the apparent intimacy of a video interview an informant may make comments that he or she would not make elsewhere. Institutions may also be damaged by irresponsible publication of images. The public front of any institution is often a veneer that holds fast the conflicts and organizational problems that are part of its everyday order.

Finally, once visual and other representations of ethnographic work have been produced and disseminated publicly neither author nor subjects of the work can control the ways in which these representations are interpreted and given meanings by their readers, viewers or audiences. In Chapters 6, 7 and 8 these issues are raised in a discussion of the visual representation of ethnographic work.

Exploitation and 'giving something back'

Usually ethnographers stand to gain personally from their interactions with informants, through an undergraduate or masters degree project, PhD thesis, consultancy project or other publication that will enhance

their career. In contrast, informants may not accrue similar benefits from their participation in research projects. Conventional responses to this ethical problem focus on how ethnographers may 'give something back'; how the participants in the research may be empowered through their involvement in the project, or that research should be directed at the powerful rather than the weak (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 274–5). None of these responses, however, provide satisfactory solutions to the exploitative nature of research (see Hammersley and Atkinson 1995).

The idea of 'giving something back' implies that the ethnographer extracts something (usually the data) and then makes a gift of something else to the people from whom he or she has got the information. Rather than making research any less exploitative, this approach merely tries to compensate for it by 'giving something back'. Ironically, this may benefit the ethnographer, who will feel ethically virtuous, while the informants may be left wondering why they have been given whatever it was they 'got back', and what precisely they got it in return for. Rather than try to redress the inequalities after the event, it would seem better advised to attempt to undertake ethnography that is less exploitative. If ethnography is seen as a process of negotiation and collaboration with informants, through which they too stand to achieve their own objectives, rather than as an act of taking information away from them, the ethical agenda also shifts. By focusing on collaboration and the idea of 'creating something together', agency becomes shared between the researcher and informant. Rather than the researcher being the active party who both extracts data and gives something else back, in this model both researcher and informant invest in, and are rewarded by, the project. Recent work with video and photography shows how these media can be used to develop very successful collaborative projects. In some cases this has empowered informants/subjects and can serve to challenge existing power structures that impinge on the lives of informants and ethnographers. In a project developed by Barnes, Taylor-Brown and Weiner (1997), a group of HIV-positive women collaborated with the researchers to produce a set of video-tapes which contained messages for their children. This use of video allowed the women to represent themselves on video-tapes to be screened in the future. Simultaneously, the agreement allowed the researchers to use the tapes as research materials (see Chapter 4).

As I have suggested above, the concept of 'giving something back' often depends on the idea of ethnography as a 'hit and run' act: the ethnographer spends a number of months in the field gathering 'data' before leaving for home where this data will be written up. Very little remains once ethnographers leave their field sites, apart from (in the case of overseas fieldwork) those domestic and other things that did not fit into a suitcase. Field notes and papers are of little use or interest to most informants, and at any rate researchers may feel these are personal documents. However, video-tapes and photographs are usually of

interest to the people featured in them and the people who were involved in their production. If an ethnographer is working on the 'giving something back' principle, copies of video and photography of individuals and activities that informants value could be an appropriate return for the favours they have performed during fieldwork. However, a collaborative approach to ethnographic image production may do more to redress the inequalities that inevitably exist between informants and researchers. Engelbrecht's collaborative work with ethnographic film shows how visual work can become a product in which both informants and ethnographer invest. Engelbrecht (1996) describes a number of filmmaking projects that involved the collaboration of local people in both filmmaking and editing. In some cases people wanted their traditional festivities or rituals to be documented, and were pleased to work with the filmmakers to achieve these ends. Others realized the commercial potential of their participation in film projects. For example, Engelbrecht notes how the artisans who were represented in her film *Copper Working* participated actively in the film and 'were also thinking of the potential of film as a marketing instrument [for their copper artifacts]' (1996: 167). In this case, the subjects of the film had their own agenda and were able to exploit the project of the filmmakers for their own purposes: 'it was agreed upon that one copy of the film should be given to the local museum exhibiting the best of the recent copper work of the village so as to use it for tourist information' (1996: 167).

A further problem with the notion of 'giving something back' is that it neglects the interlinkages between the researcher's personal autobiographical narrative and the research narrative. Fieldwork, everyday life and writing-up may not necessarily be separated either spatially or temporally in the ethnographer's life and experience (see Chapter 1). Ethnographic research may not entail the researcher going somewhere, taking something away and being morally obliged to 'give something back'. Instead, the ethnography may be part of a researcher's everyday interactions. There may be a continuous flow of information and objects between the ethnographer and informants. This might include the exchange of images, of ideas, emotional and practical exchanges and support, each of which are valued in different ways.

Ownership of research materials

In some cases visual research materials are jointly owned by a set of different parties such as the researcher, informants/subjects, funding bodies, bodies involved in post-production and other institutions and universities or organizations. While researchers may consider their own practices to be ethical, this may be challenged by any joint owners of the photographs or tapes. Such problems may arise if a project is sponsored by an institution that claims ownership of the data, or the project has involved team-work and photographs or video-tapes are joint

possessions of the members of the project team. Moreover, if video or photographic images have been produced in collaboration with informants, the collaborators may wish to use the images in ways that the researcher feels are unethical. To attempt to avoid such problems it is advisable to clarify rights of use and ownership of video and photographic images before their production. This will inevitably bear on the ethical decisions taken during the research and may influence the types of images that are produced. In some cases it is appropriate to use a written agreement that states who will use the video or photographic materials; the purposes for which it will be used; and whether the participants have consented to its use.

Summary

Preparing for ethnographic research is a complex task. It is impossible to predict exactly how fieldwork will proceed and many decisions about using visual methods and the ethical questions they raise are taken during research. Often ethnographers cannot answer the questions that inform the use of photography and video in particular social and cultural contexts, until they have experience of the visual culture and social relationships with which they will be working.

PART 2

PRODUCING KNOWLEDGE

Actually doing fieldwork is a unique and personal experience and while ethnographers may purport to be using the same methods, they will in fact be doing so in different ways. In Chapters 3 and 4 I draw from some of my own and other ethnographers' experiences of doing research with photography and video to offer some ideas and possibilities for a reflexive approach to visual methods. Analysis can take place at any point in the research process, and may be combined with some of the methods described in Chapters 3 and 4. In Chapter 5 I focus more specifically on the storage, analysis and interpretation of research materials.

Photography in Ethnographic Research

Photography has a long and varied history in ethnography. Supported by different methodological paradigms, a camera has been an almost mandatory element of the 'tool kit' for research for several generations of ethnographers. During the colonial period in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, photography, seen as an objective recording device, flourished as a method for the 'scientific' documentation of cultural and physical difference (see Edwards 1992, 1997b). For example, Major Powell-Cotton, an explorer and hunter, produced a large collection of photographs in Africa and Asia, some of which are exhibited at <http://www.era.anthropology.ukc.ac.uk/index.html>. At the end of the nineteenth century Haddon, a British anthropologist, used photography and film (see Chapter 4) in his anthropological research. These materials are exhibited on-line at www.rsl.ox.ac.uk/isca/haddon/HADD_home.html. Later, in the mid twentieth century, the anthropologists Mead and Bateson used photography as a method of recording and representing Balinese culture (Bateson and Mead 1942; and see Chaplin 1994: 207ff). Since the 1970s photography has been employed to fit the needs of, first, scientific-realist and, later, reflexive approaches to ethnography. In this chapter I draw from my own and other ethnographers' experiences to explore two aspects of the relationship between photography and ethnography: the study of local photographic cultures and uses of photographic images and technologies in ethnographic research.

The study of photographic 'cultures', technologies and practices has developed in anthropology, sociology and cultural studies. In the 1990s anthropologists turned their critical gaze on the history of their own discipline, highlighting the ethnocentric, oppressive agendas in which scientific anthropological uses of photography during the colonial period were implicated (see Edwards 1992, 1997b). Other critiques have revealed the primitivizing agenda of later photography in, for example, ethnographic representations of Spain of the 1950s to 1970s (Brandes 1997). Studies of photographic practices have focused on photography in consumer culture (see Chapter 1) (e.g. Bourdieu 1990 [1965]), family photography (e.g. Chalfen 1987), tourist photography (e.g. Chaney 1993; Crawshaw and Urry 1997; Edensor 1998; Hutnyk 1996; Urry 1990), the

relationship between digital and 'traditional' photography (e.g. Lister 1995; T. Wright 1998) and ethnographic studies of local or ethnic photographic cultures such as Pinney's (1997) work on photography in India and my own on the photographic culture of bullfighting (Pink 1996, 1997b, 1998b and 1999c). Recent projects about photographic culture have also been produced in the form of ethnographic films. For example, *Photo Wallahs* (MacDougall and MacDougall 1991) represents photography in an Indian hill town, while *Future Remembrance* (Wendl and Du Plessis 1998) is a study of studio photography in Ghana. These two films represent existing photographic practices in specific localities. In contrast, Martinez Perez's *Cronotopo* (1997) represents the photographic activities and images of individuals invited to photograph a street in Madrid called the Gran Vía as part of an ethnographic research project.

In Chapter 2 I proposed that visual research methods should be informed by ethnographers' knowledge of the visual cultures in which they work, including knowledge about local and academic uses of photographs. In my opinion, using photography in ethnographic research is not simply a matter of studying visual culture on the one hand, and on the other adding to disciplinary and personal resources of visual materials by photographing exotic situations and persons. Instead, ethnographic photography can potentially construct continuities between the visual culture of an academic discipline and that of the subjects or collaborators in the research. Thus ethnographers can hope to create photographic representations that refer to 'local' visual cultures and simultaneously respond to the interests of academic disciplines. To do so involves a certain amount of research into uses and understandings of photography in the culture and society of the fieldwork location. In some cases this could mean using recent theoretical studies such as Lury's (1998) work on photography, identity and memory in modern western societies (see Chapter 1) or studies like those cited above. However, researchers may often find that the photographic dimension of the culture they are working in has been virtually undocumented.

The 'ethnographicness' of photography

Anthropologists and sociologists have argued that no image or photographic practice is essentially ethnographic 'by nature', but the 'ethnographicness' of photography is determined by discourse and content (see Chapter 1). Edwards has noted how 'an anthropological photograph is any photograph from which an anthropologist could gain useful, meaningful visual information' (Edwards 1992: 13). She emphasizes how viewers subjectively determine when or if a photograph is anthropological, pointing out that '[t]he defining essence of an anthropological photograph is not the subject-matter as such, but the consumer's classification of that knowledge or "reality" which the photograph appears to

convey' (1992: 13). Similarly, using as his example the categories of visual sociology, documentary photography and photo-journalism, Becker notes that the definition of the genre of a photograph depends more on the context in which it is viewed than it pertaining to any one (socially constructed) category (Becker 1995: 5).

Therefore the same photograph may be put to a range of different personal and 'ethnographic' uses; it may even be invested with seemingly contradictory meanings. As Edwards notes, '[m]aterial can move in and out of the anthropological sphere and photographs that were not created with anthropological intent or specifically informed by ethnographic understanding may nevertheless be appropriated to anthropological ends' (1992: 13). Similarly, a photograph created by a researcher with a particular ethnographic agenda in mind may travel out of 'the research' and into the personal collections of informants or other individuals, therefore being appropriated for *their* own ends (see Pink 1996; 1998b). For example, one photographic slide that I took of Encarni, a friend and informant during fieldwork, was duplicated as a print and used in a variety of ways, in her personal collection and family album, in my discussions with other informants, in my PhD thesis (Pink 1996), my book (Pink 1997a), in a conference paper (Pink 1996), as well as being part of my own personal collection of photographs of friends (see Chapter 5). Similarly, as I show in the CD ROM *The Bullfighter's Braid* (Pink 1998b), the photograph of the same name was an 'ethnographic photograph' that appeared on the front cover of my book *Women and Bullfighting* (1997a). This photograph also won a prize for artistic journalistic photography, was used to publicize the visit of a female bullfighter to Córdoba and became part of the personal collections and wall displays of my informants. Therefore, during the fieldwork this photograph had no single meaning, but it was re-appropriated and given new significance and uses in each context. As I outline in Chapter 5, the diversity of meanings invested in these two images was fundamental to my subsequent analysis of them and informed the academic meanings I gave to them.

Thus there are no fixed criteria that determine which photographs are ethnographic. Any photograph may have ethnographic interest, significance or meanings at a particular time or for a specific reason. The meanings of photographs are arbitrary and subjective; they depend on who is looking. The same photographic image may have a variety of (perhaps conflicting) meanings invested in it at different stages of ethnographic research and representation, as it is viewed by different eyes and audiences in diverse temporal historical, spatial and cultural contexts. Therefore it seems important that ethnographers seek to understand the individual, local, and broader cultural discourses in which photographs are made meaningful, in both fieldwork situations and academic discourses (see Chapter 6). Photographs produced as part of an ethnographic project will be given different meanings by the

subjects of those images, local people in that context, the researcher, and other (sometimes critical) audiences. Edwards's work on historical photography (1992, 1997b) is a good example of this. The contributors to her edited collections discuss mainly colonial archival photography. They critically deconstruct the theories, philosophies and political agendas that informed the intentions of those who produced and used these images. By revealing the historical meanings that these photographs were given, the authors thus give them new meanings by embedding them in new discourses. At the turn of the twentieth century such images were assumed to represent objectively-collected scientific knowledge about 'inferior', dominated peoples. Almost 100 years later, the contributors to Edwards's collections largely view them as documents that represent the subjectivity of a particular theoretical 'scientific' perspective on reality and the ethnocentric, racist and oppressive ramifications of this. Re-situated, the images have been made to represent a critique of the intellectual and 'scientific' environment and framework of beliefs in which they were produced (see also Chapter 5).

However, it is not only historically that the meanings given to photographs may be renegotiated. When I showed a class of students a series of slides of a woman bullfighter's performance, some members of the group reacted by interpreting them in terms of an anti-bullfighting discourse. The meanings they invested in them were quite different from the ways in which they were interpreted by bullfight *aficionados*, who focused on the details of the bullfighter's technique and her female body. Other students in the group situated the images in another moral discourse. Taking a more relativist approach, they argued that we should try to understand what the photographs would mean in a Spanish cultural context. For me, however, the slides are also ethnographic photographs. They were shot as part of ethnographic fieldwork with dual intentions that related to my research; as an attempt to document the performance of a woman bullfighter and as part of my project to learn the art of bullfight photography.



Once she had finished performing with the pink cape Cristina switched to the red *muleta* and sword.



She tossed her hat over her head to signify that she was dedicating her bull to the audience.



Then she performed with the red *muleta* . . .



. . . using the same cape passes and poses that are practised by her male colleagues . . .



. . . and holding the audience's attention.



Just before the end of the performance Cristina's cape was caught by the bull's horns, she was tossed in the air, and fell to the ground . . .



. . . but got up, kicked off her shoes and went on successfully to kill the bull.



In recognition of her success she was awarded one of the bull's ears as a trophy . . . and was thrown flowers from the audience.

Figure 3.1 These slides were taken at Cristina Sanchez's performance in Valdemorillo in 1993. They are usually projected in sequence. Bullfight *aficionados* interpretations of them would focus on the women bullfighter as performer – her poses, her performance skills and achievements – thus understanding them in terms of specific gendered narratives on bullfighting. Some UK viewers invested quite different meanings in the images, understanding them in relation to a narrative on animal rights and cruelty. One viewer situated this further in terms of her personal narrative as a vegetarian. Each viewer used his or her own cultural and experienced-based knowledge and moral values to give meanings to the images. For bullfight *aficionados* this was often concerned with the question of whether or not women should be bullfighters; for others it referred to whether bullfighting should be allowed at all.

Ethnographer as photographer

When ethnographers take photographs, like any professional or 'lay' photographer, they do so with reference to specific theories of photography and in the context of particular social relationships. As Wright has pointed out, 'anyone who uses a camera or views a photograph, will most probably be subscribing, albeit unwittingly, to some or other theory of representation' (1999: 9). A reflexive approach to ethnographic photography means researchers being aware of the theories that inform their own photographic practice, of their relationships with their photographic subjects, and of the theories that inform their subjects' approaches to photography. This is an important issue for portrait photography, as Lury notes (citing Homberger 1992), 'at the heart of the photographic portrait is a contract between the subject and the photographer, a contract in which the former negotiates the term of the latter's appropriation of his or her property rights in the self' (Lury 1998: 45). Yet the nature of this 'contract' varies. For example, Lury describes, on the one hand, the commercial contract whereby the photographer 'makes especially clear the rights of the individual to self-possession created in portraiture: so for example the individual has the right to accept or reject the portrait' (1998: 45). On the other hand, in different circumstances 'other epistemological and judicial principles . . . provided the authority for the abandonment of the contract

and undermined the function of the uniqueness of the self as a possession of the individual' (1998: 46). These principles were those that operated in the construction of the photographic archives (see Chapter 5) of government bureaucracies and colonial systems.

Therefore, it is useful to pay attention to the subjectivities and intentionalities of individual photographers, coupled with the cultural discourses, social relationships and broader political, economic and historical contexts to which these refer and in which they are enmeshed. Edwards's (1992) volume contains historical examples of this (e.g. Hockings 1992; Tayler 1992). Macintyre and Mackenzie demonstrate how in Papua New Guinea the 'cultural distance' between different colonial photographers and their local subjects varied according to 'the range of photographic genres and the varying degrees of control exerted by those behind the lens' (Macintyre and Mackenzie, 1992: 163). Their comments remind us that for both historical and contemporary photography, '[t]he experience, the motivations and the social positions of the photographers are intrinsic to the images' (1992: 163). Archival research about vintage photographs should therefore investigate not solely the content of the image, but also the personal and professional intentions of photographers and of other institutions and individuals with whom they negotiated. Ethnographic research into local photographic cultures should refer to the same principles. Therefore, when possible, analysis of the content or iconography of photographs should be informed by a consideration of the photographers' personal and professional intentions, the institutional agendas to which they were obliged to respond, how they have used photography to refer to specific cultural discourses and construct particular aspects of self identity, and the theories of representation that informed their practice. Ethnographic photographers may create their own photographs as a critical response or vindication of the power relations represented in such existing bodies of photographic work.

In Chapter 1 I discussed the difficulty of distinguishing between ethnographers' personal and professional lives and activities. It is similarly problematic to define a researcher's intentions as being 'purely ethnographic'. The photographs I take during fieldwork are usually neither distinctly 'research' or 'personal' photographs but could easily fit in to both categories. Since it is often difficult to distinguish between parts of one's life that are strictly 'research', 'leisure' or 'social life', it is hard to say whether such photographs were taken during 'work' or 'leisure'. Much of my fieldwork in Córdoba in Southern Spain was at social events, festivities and celebrations, where it was difficult for my informants to comprehend what I was doing as 'work'. Thus I frequently took 'ethnographic' photographs while socializing. For me these photographs are ethnographic because I was interested in people's visual self-representation, and I usually photographed informants on their request. These photographs were simultaneously visual representations of my own social experience and personal documents that helped to

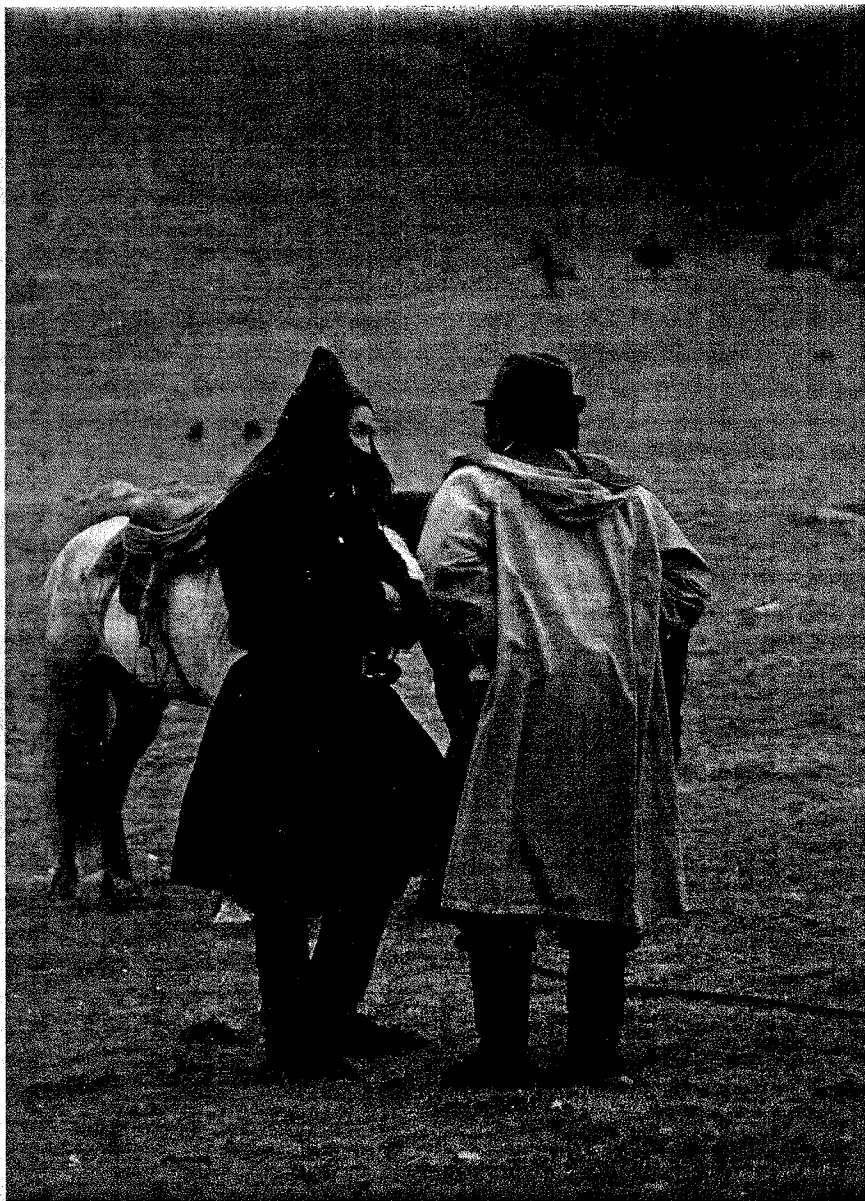


Figure 3.2 Conversation between a Kazakh herdsman and a Mongolian camel man. The situation is represented as neither exotic nor degenerate, but of the everyday and 'co-eval' (Fabian 1983) with the time of the photographer. (Bayan-Olgii, Summer 1994 © Barbara Hind).

Barbara Hind's photography seeks to represent Mongolians in ways that depart from the exoticism and objectifying approaches of historical and colonial representations.

my own collection and those friends for whom I copied them. Ethnographers can have dual (or multiple) intentions when photographing during fieldwork. For example, these intentions could be personal, artistic or ethnographic, and could combine to determine the content of the image, possibly in collaboration with the subjects of the photograph. To understand how these personal and professional intentions intersect, inform each other and combine to produce and represent ethnographic knowledge visually, a reflexive approach is necessary. This involves: first, developing a consciousness of how ethnographers play their roles as photographers in particular cultural settings, how they frame particular images, and why they choose particular subjects; second, a consideration of how these choices are related to the expectations of both academic disciplines and local visual cultures; and third, an awareness of the theories of representation that inform their photography. Sometimes it is useful to keep a reflexive diary about the development of one's photographic practice and the intentions and ideas that informed taking each image.

Below I consider some 'classic' uses of photography as a research method: photography as a visual recording method; photographic interviewing; and collaborative photography. These 'methods' may interlink and overlap at different stages of a research project.

Photography as a recording device: the potential of the photographic survey

The photographic survey has a long history in social science, from the colonial archive and the archives of photographs of criminals produced in the early twentieth century, to more recent studies where ethnographers have collaborated with informants photographically to document aspects of their culture. The creation of photographic records has often been based on the assumption that the artifacts photographed have finite, fixed symbolic meanings. For example, Collier and Collier propose a 'cultural inventory', where, for example, by producing a systematic photographic survey of visual aspects of the material content and organization of a home, one may answer questions relating to the economic level of the household, its style, decor, activities, the character of its order and its signs of hospitality and relaxation (Collier and Collier 1986: 47–50). Collier and Collier's approach provides a way of visually comparing specific material aspects of different households or even cultures. However, such photographic records are limited because they do not indicate how these objects are experienced or made meaningful by those individuals in whose lives they figure. In recent years this photographic survey approach has been employed mainly by visual sociologists. For example, Secundulfo's (1997) study of the symbolism of material items within the home and Pauwels's (1996) study of the

material environment of the Brussels office of a Norwegian chemical multinational. Pauwels has sought to contextualize his visual survey through interviews and an analysis of other aspects of office life. However, in my opinion, these studies, based on a realist approach to photographic representation, do not fully develop the potential of survey photography for ethnographic work because they seek to document visual facts and in doing so neglect the idea that photographs are in fact subjective representations.

Schwartz's (1992) approach to photographic survey work in the North American Waucoma farming community is an example of closer collaboration with informants. Schwartz defines her survey photographs as neither 'objective visual documents' nor 'photographic truth'. Rather, they 'represent a point of view' – in this case her 'initial inferences about life in Waucoma' (1992: 14). She used her survey images of the Waucoma physical environment, together with old photographs of the same places, in interviews with local people. Rather than basing her analysis of the images on their content, her interpretation 'is informed by insights gained through ethnographic fieldwork and informant's responses to them'. In this work Schwartz assumed that her photographs 'would prompt multiple responses'. She 'sought to study the range of meaning they held for different members of the community' (1992: 14). Therefore, she made the idea that visual meanings are arbitrary a key element of her research method.

Photographic surveys or attempts to represent physical environments, objects, events or performances can form part of a reflexive ethnography. However, such photographs should be treated as representations of *aspects* of culture; not recordings of whole cultures or of symbols that will have complete or fixed meanings. This also has implications for the way ethnographers store, categorize and analyse photographs (see Chapter 5).

Participatory and collaborative photography

Ethnographers collaborate with informants to produce photographs in a variety of ways. Existing examples involve working alone with a single informant (e.g. Collier and Collier 1986), with groups involved in a particular set of creative (e.g. Chaplin 1994) or ceremonial (e.g. Larson 1988) activities, or in eclectic ways at different occasions and events as part of a wider ethnographic project (e.g. Banks n.d.; Pink 1998b). If photographs are produced 'collaboratively', they combine the intentions of both ethnographer/photographer and informant and should represent the outcome of their negotiations.

Collaborative photography usually involves ethnographers engaging in some way with the photographic culture of their informants. In some cases this could involve an attempt to reproduce the kinds of images that

are popular in informants' photographic cultures. In other projects, ethnographers may want to produce photographs that refer to local photographic conventions, but that also conform to the demands of an academic discipline. The intentions and objectives of researchers and informants combine in their negotiations to determine the content of the photographs in ways that of course vary in different projects. For instance, informants may seek family photographs, images that will provide legal evidence, documentation of local 'traditions' or of work processes, artistic exhibits, souvenirs or photographs that may be used for publicity. Ethnographers may wish to produce images that they can publish with academic text or exhibit. They may wish to learn local photographic styles, conform to the conventions of their academic discipline, or produce images that follow a particular photographic tradition, such as realist documentary, expressive or art photography.

Existing ethnographic examples indicate that people are usually quick to teach a potential photographer what kinds of images they would like to have taken. Sometimes the photographs informants request challenge the assumptions behind the ethnographer's original intentions and initiate a shift in the anticipated use of photography as a research method. For instance, my Guinea Bissauan neighbours were keen for me to photograph them and often asked me when I was going to their houses to take a picture. But when I arrived at their verandas during the morning, when the light was good, they were not prepared to have their photographs taken. Busy working, the local women were wearing their old clothes and had not arranged their hair. 'Later, later', they would put me off, telling me that they would come to my house when they had dressed up for the photography. My neighbour arrived at my house one evening, having changed the torn African dress (that she had been wearing to carry water) for a smart imported European T-shirt and skirt, wearing her gold earrings and having combed her hair. She sat at the table in my house, where I had been writing my 'field diary' a few minutes earlier, and (as I had never seen her before) posed holding my pen as if writing in my notebook. I could not take the 'documentary' images of everyday life that I had anticipated; instead, I learned how local women wanted to represent themselves, through a particular local style of portraiture practised in photographic studios and at public events and festivities (similar to that practised in Ghana, see *Future Remembrance* (Wendl and Du Plessis 1998)). This method of photographing taught me about the prestige items that women valued locally, and how people represented their aspirations through their visual self-representations.

Pinney also describes how, during his first fieldwork in India in 1982, he learnt how local people wanted to be represented through his attempts to photograph his informants in terms of his own aesthetic designs. He notes how he took a photograph of his neighbour that fitted the type of image he wanted to produce: 'candid, revealing, expressive of the people I



Figure 3.3 When I was doing fieldwork in Guinea Bissau my neighbour, Jacqueline, had been asking me to take a photograph of her new baby ever since she had been born. When I stepped out of my house one day with my camera I spotted them sitting on the veranda and offered to take the photograph. Jacqueline said she could not be photographed as she had no gold earrings or good clothes to wear for the photograph, but she still wanted a photo of her baby. She called over Potcho, another neighbour, who was always well dressed, and asked her to pose with the baby. This, like many other instances, became part of my experience of learning about the way local women felt comfortable about representing themselves visually in photographs.

was living among' (Pinney 1997: 8). This photograph was a half-length image taken around 5pm in the fields: 'a good time to catch the mellowing sun' (1997: 8). But his informant was not satisfied with the image. He 'complained about the shadow and darkness it cast over his face and the absence of the lower half of his body. The image was of no use to him' (1997: 9). Pinney's informants wanted a different type of photograph, one that was taken according to another procedure. These photographs 'could not be taken quickly since there were more lengthy preparations to be made: clothes to be changed, hair to be brushed and oiled (and, in the case of 'upper-caste women, the application of talcum powder to lighten the skin)' (1997: 9). Moreover, their content and symbolism conformed to different expectations: 'These photos had to be full-length and symmetrical, and the passive, expressionless faces and body poses symbolised for me, at that time, the extinguishing of precisely that quality I wished to capture on film' (1997: 9).

In these examples the portraits indicated informants' existing expectations of photography and their personal and cultural uses of images. In my research I began to pay greater attention to the personal photograph collections women showed me in order to interpret how they wanted me to photograph them. My adoption of local people's photographic expectations *vis-à-vis* portrait photography guided my own photographic practice. For example, I realized if I developed my photographs in the costly (about three times more expensive than in the United Kingdom) Taiwanese shop in Bissau, the capital city, my informants' images would be over-exposed, representing them with the lighter skins that they desired (as seemed to be the laboratory's policy). Thus my 'visual research method' was shaped out of my interactions with the local people and institutions, rather than being preconceived.

Ethnographers often photograph ritual or other cultural activities. For example, Banks found that during his fieldwork in urban India much of his photography was at communal ritual events. Sometimes his informants actively 'directed' his photography. Banks describes how at one event his informants insisted that he 'took a pre-posed photograph of the woman who had paid for the feast, ladling a dollop of a rich yoghurt-based dessert on to the tray of one of the feasters' (Banks n.d.). Interpreting this photographic event, Banks shows how this collaborative photography was informed by his own and his informants' knowledge, writing that

It was composed and framed according to my own (largely unconscious) visual aesthetic and is part of my own corpus of documentary images of that feast. But it is also a legitimization and concretization of social facts as my friends saw them: the fact that the feast had a social origin in the agency of one person (the feast donor) as well as by virtue of the religiously and calendrically prescribed fasting period that preceded it; the fact that this was a good feast during which we ate the expensive and highly-valued yoghurt desert (Banks n.d.).

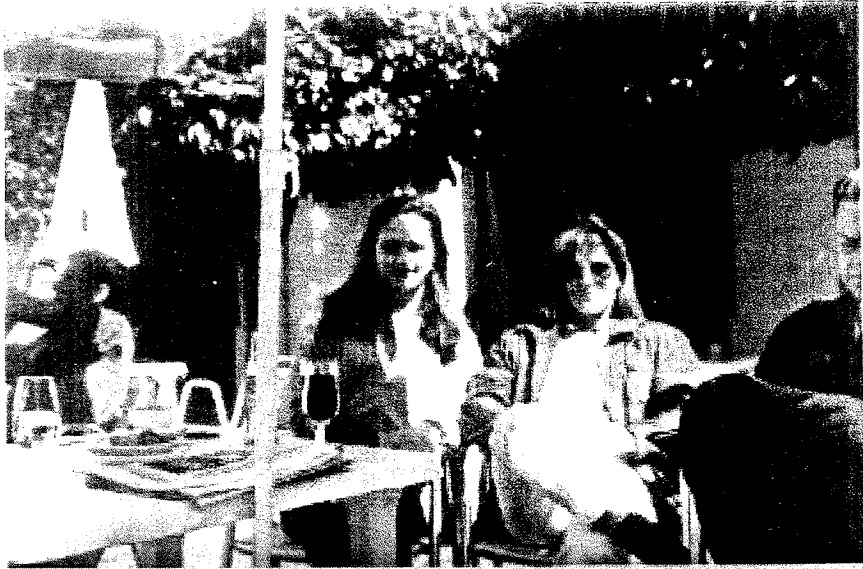


Figure 3.4 This photograph was taken of me with Cristina Sanchez by the Director of the Bullfighting Museum. I was accompanying him, Cristina Sanchez, her father and a bullfight journalist, to photograph her day in Córdoba. When the Director took my camera to take this photograph for me, it confirmed the knowledge I had already been developing about the images that bullfight *aficionados* tend to collect. This image was the photograph I was meant to want to have: an image that situated me in relation to the 'star'.

For Banks, the 'directed' photography became a way of visualizing and reinforcing his existing ethnographic knowledge because 'I "knew" these social facts, because I had been told them on other occasions, but by being directed to capture them on film I was made aware not only of their strength and value but of the power of photography to legitimize them' (Banks n.d.).

Although in some situations researchers may ask informants to 'direct' the photography, in others 'directed' photography develops through informants' initiatives. While I was researching in Spain, the Director of Museums invited me to accompany him during a woman bullfighter's official visit to the city. My role was to photograph their day in Córdoba and the Director often told me what to photograph. Once he asked for my camera to photograph me sitting in a bar with the woman bullfighter. He took the photograph that, according to the usual standards of the visual culture of bullfighting photography, I should have wanted to have (see Pink 1997a).

Like Banks, I connected this photography to my existing knowledge. I had already studied bullfighting fans' personal photographic collections and knew that this was a recurring image composition. Later in the day,



(a)



(b)

Figure 3.5 A group of students from the University Aula Taurina (photo (a)) asked me to take their photograph with the woman bullfighter, Cristina Sanchez (centre). In the photograph they are holding copies of the journal edited by the Aula Taurina, which has my photograph, 'The Bullfighter's Braid', on the back cover. In photo (b) Cristina Sanchez is signing the photograph.

at an evening reception for the woman bullfighter, I was asked to take more photographs of a similar kind.

On another occasion I was in the audience of a bullfight with a young woman informant. During the performance she instructed me which standard stages I should photograph, as well the stages of her personalized narrative of the event such as when her favourite bullfighter waved to the part of the ring where she and the other members of his supporters' club were sitting. During his performance, she asked for my camera to photograph him performing the kill herself. Most bullfight fans regard the kill as the most important stage of the performance, and thus also the key photographic moment. Through her actions my informant had not only shown me the importance of this, but had also used the camera to express her own knowledge of the bullfight. In these two situations my informants had already imagined the photographs they wanted me to take and those they wanted to take themselves: they were constructing them in response to an existing visual culture, the discourses of which they were conversant in. By analysing the context in which the images were taken and the local photographic conventions to which their composition complied, I gained a deeper understanding and a more informed visual representation of the significance of particular social relationships, representations of self, and of stages of the bullfight.

Collaborating with informants to produce images need not involve the ethnographer taking the lead as photographer. 'Native' photography has also been used in some studies where ethnographers have asked informants to photograph for or with them. The sociologist Cavin has used children's photography to research 'children's perspectives' by giving children Polaroid cameras with which to produce images. Cavin points out it is not so much the content of the images that indicates how children see the world (as the images tended to represent 'the world blurrily at odd angles'), but that a child's use of the camera would be 'based on a clearly defined and consistent framing of the world' (Cavin 1994: 39). Martinez Perez also used 'native' photography in her project about the Gran Vía in Madrid. As her film *Cronotopo* (1997) shows Martinez Perez asked her informants to photograph this street and then discuss their images with her.

Getting started: taking the first picture

The question of when to take the first photograph varies from project to project. Sometimes photographing can form a way of getting the research off the ground and establishing relationships with informants. In other situations researchers may have to wait several months before beginning to photograph. I have stressed above the importance of developing knowledge about the visual culture in which one works. This knowledge

should inform such decisions. For ethical reasons ethnographers should consider not only where their photography fits into local visual cultures, but also how their photographic practices may affect local economies and other individuals (see Chapter 2).

Several examples demonstrate how photography may serve as a way to initiate and support research. Collier and Collier (1986) write about the idea of the camera as a 'can-opener' in two ways, both of which they see as means of establishing rapport with one's informants. First, they note how playing a 'photographer' role can put researchers in an ideal position to 'observe' the culture or groups they are researching. Secondly, showing photographs to their subjects can provide both feedback on the images and their content while also forging connections with members of the 'community'. This can provide excuses for further meetings and photography and may be a reason to visit informants in their homes. While it will not always be appropriate to use photography in this way, ethnographers often find that photographing and photographs provide a useful method of representing their own identities and communicating with informants at the early stages of fieldwork. Taking the first images with a Polaroid or a digital camera may speed up the process, allowing informants to gain an idea of what the ethnographer is doing almost instantly, and (hopefully) to engender their trust and interest.

Sometimes, in order to be able to photograph the activities in which they are interested, ethnographers will first have to establish themselves locally as someone who is trusted to take photographs. Shanklin (1979) describes how she worked as ethnographer/photographer during research in rural Ireland. She had intended to take photographs of people at work that she could subsequently discuss with her informants, but initially she found this impossible. However, she learnt, through her observations of her informants' displays of family photography in their homes, that photographing children would be an appropriate activity that would provide parents with valued images: 'Just as I had to learn something about patterns of social interaction in order to become more a member of the culture I studied, so too I had to learn something about their use of photographs in order to integrate my own picture taking into the roles to which I had been assigned' (Shanklin 1979: 143). Once she had established herself as someone who took photographs within the local community, she found that she was then able to proceed and photograph agricultural workers at work and combine this with the interviews as she had originally intended.

In some projects photographing may come first and can be a means of making contact with local people. This was the case in Schwartz's (1992) research. Following Collier she began her research by photographing the physical environment of Waucoma, the town that she was studying. On arrival, she began to photograph buildings to let the residents know of her presence, and at the same time to observe the goings on of everyday life. This provided her with a good entry into local interaction as seeing a

stranger photographing the town made many people curious enough to approach her and ask what she was doing. The local people became interested in and supportive of Schwartz's work and the photographic aspect of the project became a key point of communication between her and her informants.

In my research in Spain I was able to begin to photograph as soon as I made contact with the groups I was interested in working with. My initial photographic work in Spain provided me with an appropriate activity to be involved in at the beginning of my research into bullfighting culture. As an unaccompanied woman at bullfighting receptions and public occasions and, at the time, still learning the language and unable to engage in any detailed conversation, I was grateful to have a role as 'photographer'. My photography was endorsed by the organizers and was not problematic for participants since at any such public event a number of press photographers were expected to be present. Once my photographs of the receptions were printed, I showed them to the organizers and other participants with whom I was in contact. We discussed the event and the people who were present, and my informants often asked me for copies of particular images, usually of themselves with particular people, so that they could pass them on to their friends, colleagues or contacts within the bullfighting world. In this way I was able not only to gain feedback about the events that I had participated in as a photographer, but also to get a sense of the way that social relationships and alliances were mapped out and constructed within the bullfighting world. I did this by studying who wanted to be photographed with who during the events, and by tracking the collection and distribution of the copies of the images that my informants asked for (see Pink 1998b).

Building on the success of this way of making local contacts at the beginning of my research in Spain, I tried to use photography to make links with local people on my arrival in Guinea Bissau. During my first visit of two weeks in Canchungo, the town in which I lived for eight months, I asked two of the women market traders who had been friendly to me if I could photograph them, promising that I would give them the photos when I returned to Guinea Bissau two weeks later. They were pleased that I had really returned and fulfilled my promise and from then on I always had a friend in the market. However, as I have noted in Chapter 2, in Guinea Bissau it was not appropriate for me to use this method as extensively as I had in Spain.

Viewing ethnographers' photographs: interviewing with images

In this section I explore the roles that photographs may play in interviews or conversations. In Chapters 1 and 2 I argued that visual images are made meaningful through the subjective gaze of the viewer, and that each individual produces these photographic meanings by relating the

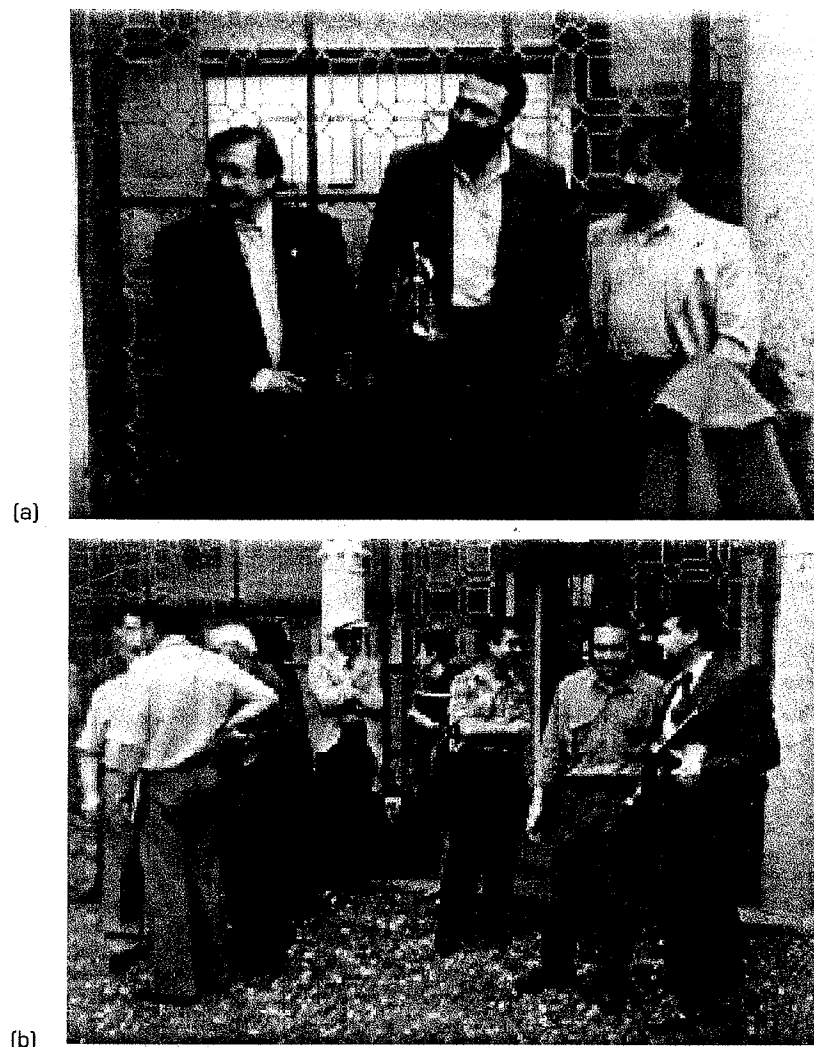


Figure 3.6 When I attended receptions, still unable to speak good Spanish, my camera became a means of being occupied, photographing details of who was present, the sequence of events, and taking the photos that people asked for. In this way I was able to produce a set of images that allowed me to represent the sequence and participants of the event and to collaborate with some of the subjects of my photographs to produce images in which they represented particular social relationships. Once the photographs were developed, I discussed them with certain key informants. This helped me to learn more about the participants in the event, their social networks and how they situated themselves in the 'bullfighting world'. When people asked for copies of certain photographs, both for themselves and to give to other participants in the event, I was able to learn about their own social networks and the links that an individual may be trying to forge or strengthen by passing an image of himself or herself with another participant to that person.

image to his or her existing personal experience, knowledge and wider cultural discourses. This approach critiques the assumption that 'photographs can be *tools* with which to *obtain* knowledge' (Collier and Collier 1986: 99, second italics are mine) in order to argue that photographs are visual objects through which people reference aspects of their experience and knowledge. Therefore, when photographs become the focus of discussion between ethnographers and informants, certain questions arise. For instance, how do ethnographers and informants situate themselves and each other in relation to the photograph? How does the intersubjectivity between ethnographers, informants and the material/visual images 'complete' the identity of an informant during an interview? How do informants create narratives with and around photographs and ethnographers? It is not simply a matter of asking how informants provide 'information' in 'response' to the content of images. Rather, ethnographers should be interested in how informants use the content of the images as vessels in which to invest meanings and through which to produce and represent their knowledge, self-identities, experiences and emotions.

In the past the term most used to refer to photographic interviewing has been the rather problematic 'photo-elicitation'. This concept implies using photographs to elicit responses from informants, to 'draw out' or 'evoke' an 'admission, answer *from* a person' (*Concise Oxford Dictionary* 1982, my italics). Collier provides good examples of this technique. Researching farming families who were also employed in urban factories, Collier used his photographs of both work locations as reference points in photographic interviews to examine his informants' attitudes to city life, factory work and migration to the city. His work provides a useful example of how his informants talked about the images and of how a photographic research project may evolve over time. However, Collier's analysis is based on the assumption that 'the facts are in the pictures' (Collier and Collier 1986: 106) and the idea that I have questioned above that the ethnographer may elicit knowledge about the visual content from informants.

More recently, Harper has developed a new approach that attempts to integrate photo-elicitation with the 'new ethnography' by redefining it as 'a model of collaboration in research' (1998a: 35). For Harper, photographs are not simply visual records of reality, but are representations that are interpreted in terms of different understandings of reality. When informants view photographs taken by an ethnographer they will actually be engaged in interpreting the ethnographer/photographer's visualization of reality. In a photographic interview, therefore, ethnographer and informant will be able to discuss their different understandings of images, thus collaborating to determine each other's views. Schwartz has developed a similar approach. She identifies her own photographs of a Waucoma community as representations of her own vision of the physical and social environment. Basing her analysis on the principle that 'the

photograph prompts personal narratives generated by the content of the image', she describes how her use of photographs in interviews 'was informed by the unique and contradictory nature of the medium . . . photographs elicit multiple perceptions and interpretations' (Schwartz 1992: 13). Photographic interviews can allow ethnographers and informants to discuss images in ways that may create a 'bridge' between their different experiences of reality. A photograph may become a reference point through which an informant can represent aspects of his or her reality to an ethnographer and vice versa.

In Guinea Bissau I used photographs in this type of creative dialogue with informants. A set of photographs that I had taken of Tomas, a local weaver, his son and Alberto Martinez, who was working as a VSO Maths and Science teacher in Guinea Bissau became central to a series of conversations between Alberto, Tomas and I (some of which I video recorded (see Chapter 4)). During Tomas's five-week stay of weaving traditional cloth in our garden, I took five films of colour prints, mainly of him and his son at work. We often spent evenings looking through and talking about the photographs and the events, activities and individuals they represented. This case study is represented with video clips, transcripts and photographs in the CD ROM *Interweaving Lives* (Pink 1998d). Elsewhere (Pink 1999b) I have interpreted the conversations that Alberto and Tomas had about/with these photographs as a series of ongoing negotiations. In these conversations the photographs become reference points in which both men interpret and invest meanings in terms of their own realities. My analysis of these photographic conversations or interviews examined how individuals interpret the content of images differently and how they used the photographs to construct continuities between their different realities. For example, one evening, we discussed my photographs of a chameleon. In response to these images, Tomas explained an element of his view of reality. His story made us aware of the differences between our respective beliefs and attitudes to this small animal. The photographs of the chameleon also served as a common point of reference through which our different interpretations, beliefs and experiences could be connected.

Tomas: What is this you have got here? a chameleon?

Alberto: This is a real chameleon. Its nice isn't it?

Tomas: Very nice, very nice, it has gone up a stick.

Alberto: I had the stick in my hand.

Tomas: Ah, in your hand.

Alberto: After that I put it here.

Tomas: Oh Alberto! How did you dare?

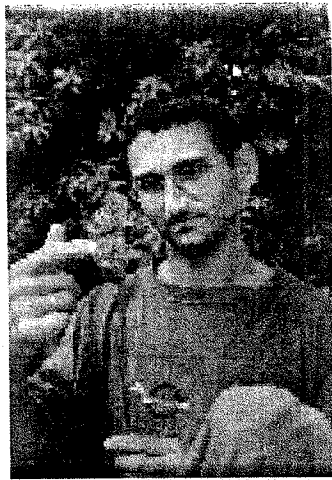
Alberto: It doesn't do any harm.

Tomas: It may not do anything, but me! Catch it, put it in my hand,

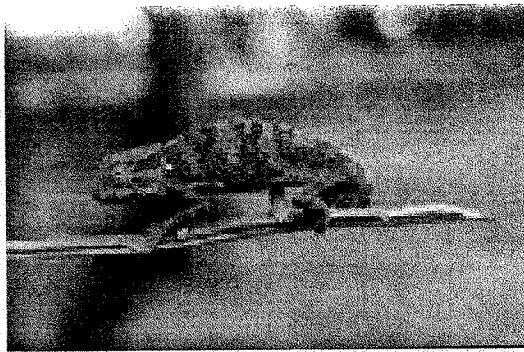
I wouldn't dare.

Alberto: Why not?

Tomas: I am scared of them.



(a)



(b)

Figure 3.7

Alberto: But it is very small.

Tomas: People say that if you see the chameleon's house you get very rich.

Alberto: Why?

Tomas: Because if you know where he lives, where he has his children, you can rest in this world, you will be very rich . . . you will have a lot of money. . . . The money would fill the whole room.

Alberto: And all this because of the chameleon? Tomas, are you making fun of me?

Tomas: No! It's true!

The photographic image, embedded in this conversation, connected our different realities. Tomas linked it to his reality of chameleon wealth. He used the image to construct continuity between the reality of the wealth associated with the chameleon and the theme of wealth in our previous conversations (see Pink 1999b).



Figure 3.8 These photographs of Cristina Sanchez (above) and *Finito de Córdoba* (below) became part of the way I discussed bullfighting during my fieldwork in Spain. Informants used these photographs to comment on the bullfighters' performance skills and on the development of my own skills in learning to take the photograph at the 'right' moments of the bullfight. In doing so, they were able to represent their own expert knowledge of the bullfight. From these discussions I was able to learn about the knowledge that was meant to inform appropriate bullfight photography as well as the values and knowledge that my informants used to inform their commentaries on the images.

During fieldwork in Spain I made a different use of my own bullfighting photography. By attempting to learn how to photograph the bullfight myself, I produced photographs that allowed my informants to comment on my knowledge of the bullfight and at the same time express their own.

Viewing informants' photographs: interviewing with images

Conversation is filled with verbal references to images and icons. People use verbal description to visualize particular moralities, activities and versions of social order (or disorder). Sometimes informants refer to absent images (including photographs) or they might introduce material images or objects into a conversation. During my fieldwork in Europe and Africa people have often brought or shown me photographs as part of the stories they have been telling me about their lives. During my first

fieldwork in Northern Ireland, I sat with a Protestant woman, at the time in her forties, talking at her kitchen table. Long before we had met, she had married a man who had converted his own religion from being a Catholic to becoming a Protestant. He had remained friends with some Catholics and because of the religious tensions in Northern Ireland this made some complications in their social life. His wife was seeking a way to express this religious divide to me and, although she had not been speaking of their wedding at the time, she told me she would show me a wedding photograph. As I waited for her to fetch the photograph I expected to see a 'white wedding' – the couple and the confetti – but she handed me a photograph taken from the back of a church. One side of the photograph was filled with people but the other was empty. She explained how her husband's family couldn't attend the Protestant service because they were Catholics, so his side of the church was empty. They were waiting outside the church and after the service all went to the reception. It seemed that this beginning had become symbolic of a continuing state of affairs for her. She had not been talking about her wedding, or showing her wedding photos, but they had become a visual reference point in a narrative about other boundaries and the way her life was currently affected by the religious divisions that the photograph symbolized so powerfully for her.

Other researchers have had similar experiences. For example, Riches and Dawson (1998) found that bereaved parents often showed them photographs of their dead child during interviews. The parents tended to incorporate the photographs of their dead child into personal narratives of their experiences of the death and used images as ways of representing self-identities. As Riches and Dawson demonstrate, their informants' uses of photographs in the interviews linked with their existing practices, whereby photographs become 'an object of personal internal conversation *with* the deceased and . . . a vehicle for conversations between surviving relatives and others *about* the deceased' (1998: 124).

Okely describes how her informants' own photograph collections became an important part of her research about the 'changing conditions and experience of the aged in rural France' (Okely 1994: 45). When an elderly woman informant in a nursing home led her to her room and took out a box of old photographs Okely 'found a route to her past through images' that stood for 'profound recreations of her past' (1994: 50). For Okely, these images were not merely illustrations of her informant's oral narrative, but themselves were evocative descriptions and comments. She argues that the introduction of the photographs into their conversation enhanced the sensory dimension of the interview: 'A mere tape recording of her speaking in a formalised interview could not have conjured up the greater sense of her past which we mutually created with the aid of visual images' (1994: 50–1). Okely notes that a history related through a series of 'selective images of the past', and captioned by a verbal narrative, is inevitably subjective, selective and fragmented. Nevertheless, she also

shows how this collaborative research allowed her and her informant to work together to create a particular version of the past that extended beyond the limitations set by the linearity of a verbal or textual narrative:

Both of us pieced together the memories from whatever was picked up from the box, and created a synthesized whole. In reacting to the visual images, randomly stored, the woman was freed of linear chronology, any set piece for a life history and a purely verbalised description. The images did some of the work for both of us in ways which adjectives and other vocabulary could not supply. (1994: 51)

Okely emphasizes the need for reflection on how researchers experience informants' photographs. She notes how in her own experience she was 'watching, listening and resonating with the emotions and energy of her living through the photographs' (1994: 50). It is important for ethnographers to be aware of their own contributions to collaboratively produced narratives. For example, when I later analysed my personal feelings and field diary notes about photographs I had been shown when I first arrived to do research in Guinea Bissau, I was able to understand how my initial interpretations had been informed. For instance, one evening Miranda, a young Guinea Bissauan woman who later became my friend and informant, began to tell me the story of her affair with a white development worker who was the father of her daughter. My attitude to her 'story' was already shaped by a version of it that my partner had told me. He had represented it as an unequal and exploitative relationship with a man who had now deserted her. I suggested to Miranda that he must be a *bandido* (bastard). 'No!' she had contradicted me, telling me that he cared very much, but it was just difficult to send money. She proposed to return the next evening to show me her photographs of him. On seeing the photograph collection I was struck by a sense of the bizarre. I found myself viewing not what I considered to be Miranda's own photograph collection, but a collection of photographs that *he* had left in Guinea Bissau. It contained European studio portraits of him, his wife and his adult children in Europe, distant people whom Miranda had never met and who had no idea of her existence. Other photographs were taken in Guinea Bissau of Miranda, and her daughter and lover, during carnival and other parties. Through the photographs she recounted events in the life she had shared with this man and her contacts with other white people. Our conversations around the photographs led us on to many topics and stories such as when his wife had visited and Miranda had remained, like any respectful lover, silent, not acknowledging their affair. Through these narratives with which the photographic images were interwoven, I learned how her view of her relationship with this white man differed from my own understanding. Our discussions of the portraits helped me understand how Miranda situated herself in relation to these different characters.

While in the ethnographic literature such examples of people 'talking with photographs' are infrequently described, ethnographic films often include scenes in which informants show and discuss photographs with the filmmaker. Examples of this can be found in *Photo Wallahs* (MacDougall and MacDougall 1991) and *Faces in the Crowd* (Hénley 1994).

Displays and exhibitions: viewing photographs with informants

Viewing photographic displays or exhibitions with informants offers further ways of exploring and creating relationships between visual and verbal knowledge. This may involve visiting public exhibitions, viewing sets of photographs displayed publicly (for example, in schools, club houses, or bars), or simply talking around the photographs displayed on the wall or mantelpiece of someone's home. By paying attention to how people interweave such images with verbal narratives, researchers may learn about how these individuals construct their lives and histories. Okely found that her elderly informants drew the photographs they had on display into their conversations with her: 'The selected icons of photos which the aged displayed at institutional bedside or on familiar sideboard in their own home were both cultural and individual presentations' (Okely 1994: 51). In Spain I discussed individual collections and public displays of images to explore my informants' visual representation of their 'bullfighting world' and its history, and to see how individuals used these visual representations to situate themselves within that bullfighting world. In photographic displays individuals and groups often used photographs to establish identities and to imply relationships. Most bullfighting bars and clubs owned permanent exhibitions that mapped out a local version of the history of bullfighting. When informants took me to see 'their own' bullfighting bar or club, I was frequently given a guided tour of the bar's photographic display. As I was led through these photographic wall displays, narratives of history, place and kinship were developed as informants emphasized family relationships between different bullfighters, their historical authenticity and their local links. The histories I was told when viewing the images were, as in the case of the box of images that Okely's informant drew her faded prints from, multilinear. The chronological history of bullfighting that my informants outlined was intersected with family histories as links between fathers, sons, nephews and great uncles formed particular routes across the various different photographic maps of the bullfighting world that I was shown. For a bullfighter, it was especially important to be situated in this world by having his photograph included in the exhibition, since inclusion in a display and the social relations involved in achieving this are crucial for a bullfighter's career. The cultural construction of history and the contemporary configuration of the bullfighting world depends on

the strategic inclusion and exclusion of photographs of certain people (Pink 1997b: 56). Bullfight *aficionados* used similar strategies in their semi-public displays at home. These include photographs of themselves in amateur performances, or photographed with famous bullfighters, and thus mapped personal versions of the 'bullfighting world' that placed the owner of the exhibition at their centre.

I was also invited to the openings of many exhibitions of bullfight photography during my research in Spain. At these events I discussed photographs with informants as we milled around the exhibition spaces. Their comments about the content and style of photographs gave me a better understanding of how different photographic representations fitted with each person's vision of the contemporary and historical world of bullfighting and of how they constructed their own place and identity in that world (see Pink 1997b).

Absent photographs

In Chapter 1 I introduced the idea that sometimes people speak about absent images. This may mean describing a famous photograph, a photograph seen in yesterday's newspaper, a photograph of a child or relative, a photograph that they hated so much that it was torn up and thrown away, or simply a photograph that is somewhere else. For example, during my research in Guinea Bissau, one of my informants often spoke of a photograph that hung on the wall in one of the offices of one of the NGOs working in the area. It was a group photograph of a project team in which she was included due to the connections she had with the development workers. These links formed an important part of her identity and she used her references to the photograph to endorse these relationships and her representation of her self. A few months later when I visited the office I saw the photograph and recognized how it had been used as a way of representing her identity and social status.

While in many instances ethnographers may never actually see the photographs informants describe, they provide interesting examples of how informants may visualize certain emotions, values and experiences. It is also important to pay attention to how informants speak about images that they have hidden or thrown away: it is not only the photographs that people keep that are of interest, but those that they reject and their reasons for doing so may be of equal interest.

Summary: image producers, visual cultures and visualizing conversations

This chapter has emphasized two dimensions of ethnographic research with photographic images and technologies: an appreciation of both the

local and academic visual cultures in which ethnographers work and how researchers may employ photography and photographs in the production of knowledge. Ethnographic image production and discussions of images both respond and refer to local and academic visual cultures. Ethnographers should recognize that neither local nor academic visual and written cultures are superior to the other. As the individual through which the experience of each is mediated, photographers/ethnographers should attempt to maintain a reflexive awareness of how the demands of each inform their work.

More often than not the processes of learning about local visual cultures and the production of one's own images go together. However, in different projects photographing and interviewing with/talking about images will inevitably develop in different ways. Therefore the ways of doing photographic research described above are not intended to be comprehensive; they are intended to present a series of ideas and examples of existing work and of the potential for photography in ethnographic research. Variations in the methods developed in different projects are not just contingent on 'the culture' in which researchers work, but also on the personal styles of ethnographers and the social relationships in which they are involved. Therefore, the key to successful photographic research is an understanding of the social relations and subjective agendas through which they are produced and the discourses through which they are made meaningful.

CHAPTER 4

Video in Ethnographic Research

Many ethnographers and their informants produce and view video in their personal lives and professional work. However video is normally allowed only cursory (if any) mention in ethnographic texts on research methods (with the exception of Ratcliff n.d.) and published discussion of ethnographic video as a method, genre or medium for ethnographic research or representation has been limited. Visual sociologists have largely concentrated on photography, rarely considering the potential of video in the research process (see Lomax and Casey 1998: 2). Visual anthropologists became interested in video in the 1980s, applauding new developments in video technology for the convenience, economy, durability and utility they offered. In comparison with film, which was used extensively in anthropological research in the 1970s (see Morphy and Banks 1997: 5), video was cheap and could record for a considerably longer period of time. During this period the potential of video was often harnessed to serve a scientific-realist approach. For example, Collier and Collier saw the idea that a video camera may be left running continuously for several hours as an advantage compared to the relative selectivity imposed by both the cost of film and the need to reload a camera more frequently (1986: 146).

As video technology advances, film and video continue to offer rather different possibilities in ethnographic research. These developments, combined with shifts away from a scientific approach, imply that the specificity of video needs to be engaged with anew. In the 1990s some researchers have begun to explore reflexive uses of video in ethnography, using video images and technologies not simply to record 'data', but as media through which ethnographic knowledge is created. Simultaneously, technological developments, especially in digital video, invite new practical possibilities for video in research and in electronic representation (see Chapter 8). In Chapter 2 I discussed how particular cameras may be interpreted by video subjects, thus impacting on their strategies of self-representation. It is also worth reflecting on the design of the video technology used and how this affects the researchers' or video makers' strategies. Chris Wright describes how the Sony PC7 digital video camera differs from more conventional cameras. In place