

Photography in Anthropology: A Report on Two Experiments

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INTRODUCTION

CAN photography be a source of direct research in anthropology? This query motivated a study of the properties and methods by which photography could support social science research. The experiment was the collaborative effort of the writer, a professional documentary photographer with no formal training in the sciences, and Alexander H. Leighton, an anthropologist.¹

This research, extending over three years, examined practical ways in which photography could widen the field of scientific recognition and accelerate the processes of research. The areas examined included: photographic recording of direct observation; rapid surveying of ecological, technological, and sociocultural patterns; the use of photographs as an aid to interviewing; and the techniques and research possibilities of co-ordinating photographs with field notes. This report presents two instances, (1) an application of photographic surveying and (2) a more or less controlled experiment on the aid of photography in interviewing.

These studies were undertaken and completed while the author was a member of a group research team, Cornell's Stirling County Study, an interdisciplinary project on the relation of environment to mental health. Here the practical as well as the theoretical aspects could be developed and tested under field circumstances. Stirling is the research name for a county in the Maritimes of Canada; its population is of English and Acadian-French extraction, its economy a complex of farming, fishing, and lumbering. Aspects of this photographic experiment were later studied in an entirely different environment, among the Navaho of the American Southwest.²

Photography is a long-established tool in scientific research, and is widely used by anthropologists. Yet, there is a difference between its use in, let us say, astronomy, and in ethnography, for the physical scientist looks directly at photographs for research data, whereas anthropologists have generally used the camera solely to support their findings by illustration.³

From the outset of this study, two theoretical questions were encountered: "How can photographs function other than as illustration?" and "How can you apply photographic imagery to direct research?" We felt these queries struck at a major orientation of modern ethnography: its deep distrust of visual observation. For, perhaps in reaction to the earlier explorer-type ethnographers, the modern scholar considers that visual observation provides no more than an impression and affords no reliable measurement of the environment.

A factor that has discouraged the use of photography is the trend in anthropology away from the study of the shell of society inward to the emotional, psychic, and intellectual expressions of man. "We are not so much concerned with how a man looks as with what a man thinks." Can other material than the outer form of things be approached through graphic analysis?

Possibly methods could be developed within photography that could meet these requirements of research. The camera is an automative device which can permanently engrave the visual impression of an instant and can also compensate in various ways for the shortcomings attributed to human impression. The mechanical eye of the lens and the automatic memory of film are the camera's assets for accurate reportage. This automatic documentation appears to go beyond the literal image of environment. Photographs also catch many elements of the emotional currents within situations that are involved in a man's reactions to his cultural circumstance. Here is significant material that might be abstracted if methods of analysis were developed that could give us clues to the meanings as well as the photographic outlines of things. The complex material and social relationships that can be found in photographic recordings present a host of data within the concerns of anthropology.

The two experiments reported in this paper followed an initial period of the photographic project which I will mention briefly. This initial phase was the development of a three-thousand negative file on the natural and human environment of Stirling, paralleling the other efforts of the Project in which field workers were describing the various technologies. As the Stirling County Study was concerned with community development as well as psychiatric behavior, the question was not so much whether I could gather a large body of photographic information, but whether I could do so without disturbing the goodwill of the whole project. My activities were critically observed; Leighton and the research team decided that the work was not disruptive, and in the next field period I began to apply photography to more sensitive areas.

EXPERIMENT IN EVALUATION

In the meantime, the Stirling County Study moved from its descriptive phase into one of objective examination. A series of variables had been hypothesized as being related to the mental health of the area, and this particular year's research dealt directly with problems of adjustment within these social, economic, and physical variables.

A large number of field workers were in Stirling in the summer of 1951, and all shared concern with one aspect of the study: the geographic distribution of the hypothesized variables to enable correlations between the incidence of each variable and the anticipated results of later psychiatric studies. In this connection a housing survey had been planned to learn about the distribution of affluence and poverty. The plan was for the field personnel, in teams of two, to drive along the roads of communities randomly selected and rate each house on a three point scale of good, average, and poor, for the following criteria:

size of house; condition of roof and chimney; condition of walls; condition of yard; and condition of out-buildings. Ratings were then to be used as indices of the position of the various communities on a poverty-affluence continuum.

I was not at first involved in this activity. The teams set forth to make their first judgments, each team rating independently the same series of houses, in order to test the accuracy of their rating methods. When the teams returned and compared notes, the same house had too often been given different ratings. This had been expected, for the purpose of the trial run had been to coordinate bases for judgment. Models of the various typologies and standard scales had to be established to define a poor roof or an unkempt yard. The ensuing discussion revealed some significant points. Apparently the field workers were unconsciously judging houses in respect to their personal backgrounds. A poor house for an urban dweller was not necessarily considered a poor house by a man who had grown up in the country. Regional influences also gave a different interpretation to phrases like "well-painted" or "poor repair." Order, neatness, and repair are states that reflect conflicting values. The group still had no positive understanding after comparing their findings and trying to describe to one another just what each meant by a well kept-up house, and the teams must needs drive around in a body and examine each house on the spot. Obviously this was neither advisable nor economical. At this point photography was considered. I suggested that I tour the county and photograph every level of housing I could find. Perhaps the photographic results could throw light on their problem.

Two aims were in my mind as I gathered a wide variety of housing types in communities of varying economic levels: to gather photographs that could be studied almost as completely as the houses themselves, and to do so as rapidly as possible without causing alarm in the communities through which I would pass. This was one circumstance in which we were forced to operate without permission, but we would be photographing from an area of public domain, the public right of way. Still, there was a chance that even this superficial survey might cause anxiety, so I operated as discreetly as possible. I took pictures from the window of my car in about the same perspective as the teams' judgments would be made, and from a considerable distance (with a long lens) so that bystanders and people within the houses would probably not be certain just what I was photographing. I traveled fast, barely stopping in my documentation, and in a day gathered over fifty housing samples of all classes. I developed the film and made eight-by-ten enlargements of the range of housing represented. Forty-eight hours after the beginning of the housing survey, the photographic samples were in hand, and the teams gathered again to discuss the models for the typology.

The research workers sat in a circle and the photographs were passed around. Each member of the team studied the numbered photograph, wrote down his rating, and passed it on to the next, who in turn rated it independently, until everyone had rated the complete sample. The ratings were then compared. In general discussion, and by turning to the photographs as precise

examples of what was meant, the group was able to define their criteria and co-ordinate their judgments. Not only was the photographic image sufficiently defined to permit critical examination of all characteristics visible from the road, but also the houses could in this way be compared critically with each other. The material could be analyzed with a comparability that was not otherwise feasible in such a rapid survey. When the prints were laid out together, each component could be viewed and measured simultaneously throughout the graphic sample. Further, the graphic evidence insured that quality would not be measured by some previously inculcated criteria, but in its own realistic environmental relationship.

Here was a working demonstration of the camera's ability to record visual impression so reliably that it could be carried into the laboratory for refined analysis. After the definition of values, the teams were able to complete their sampling without further confusion. In this instance, photography was used only to establish the typology, and the field workers completed the survey by direct observation of the houses. The whole study could have been made photographically; such a technique would be especially valuable when the factors to be surveyed were too complex for reliable direct observation, or when a comparative analysis after a time interval was anticipated.

A host of other circumstances particularly adapted to photographic inspection are suggested by the housing survey. In theory, not only can studies of physical properties be supported by graphic records, but studies of social situations as well. Bateson and Mead (1942) did just this in Bali. Sociometric designs of many kinds might be understood further through photo-analysis.

EXPERIMENT IN INTERVIEWING

It was evident from this experiment that we could interpret the data in photographs of houses or other similar abstractions. But we would still be burdened by the initial limitations of human impression; a situation not understood at the time a photograph was made would not be any more understandable in the photographic print. To use photography in the analysis of complex sociometric situations we must find a way to read from photographs evidence that was not understandable to the camera-observer. One of the Stirling field workers had discovered the year before that local people could read a great deal of content into a map and that by interviewing with it he learned a lot without having to cover the ground himself. Why could we not consider the photograph a cultural map that could be read with equal clarity by the knowing informant? Could this process allow us to analyze the content of photographs—and therefore of situations—that we had not previously understood?

We decided to make controlled tests of this semiprojective technique. We chose a problem that overlapped almost everyone's research, the acculturation and migration of the French-Acadians to the English industrial town of Bristol, thereby adding to knowledge as well as testing technique. We hoped to gain clues to the Acadian acculturation process. How did the Acadian

migrants adjust to the English environment? What were the goals of this movement? And were there intermediary "stepping stone" communities between the Acadian half of the county and the English town of Bristol?

Our research design involved four Acadian informants, two interviewed with photographs and two interviewed solely with verbal questions, to serve as a control. The interviewing was to be done by two Stirling field workers; one, William A. Magill, was studying the English social structure, and the other, Marc-Adélarde Tremblay, was studying Acadian acculturation. The interviews were to be with matched informants—two living in what we presumed was a migratory belt midway between the Acadian half of the county and Bristol (the largest town and most important industrial and commercial center, predominantly English), and two living in Bristol itself. As a further control, the interviewers were to change position; the one who interviewed with photographs in the first set of tests would interview without them in the second, and vice versa. We planned three complete interviews with each informant, structured around three levels of personal experience: knowledge about wage work in Bristol, knowledge about their home communities, and sentiments about their personal lives. A "check" interview with photographs would be made with informants previously interviewed without photographs, to observe how the introduction of pictures might affect the character of their responses.

I gathered the pictures for the first interview, a rapid file on all the town's industries—lumber milling, clam packing, and fish processing plants. The documentation concentrated on three features: the nature of the individual industries, the conditions under which men worked, and the people who were employed in each plant. It was our goal to find out how our informants felt about their work and whom they could recognize in the various plants; this last information was valuable to our study, for if large numbers of people could be recognized we would have evidence on where Acadians worked and where they came from. A set of standard questions was composed around the photographs to structure the questioning and to allow for greater comparability between interviews made with photographs and control interviews made without them.

The Acadians chosen for the first interviews lived across the road from each other in the straggling community of Robertsville, midway between Bristol and the Acadian half of the county. The men's names were Plenn and Chiasson. Both worked in Bristol in the Morris sawmill and box factory; both were married to English girls; both had settled on land acquired through marriage. Both wives worked, Mrs. Plenn in the box factory, along with her daughter by a former marriage, and Mrs. Chiasson in the Post Office at Robertsville. Both Plenn and Chiasson maintained small farms on which they worked in their spare time.

Tremblay was to interview Chiasson without photographic aids, while Magill interviewed Plenn with photographs. It was important that I follow closely the development of the photographic interviewing in order to plan the content of the following tests and to write up the experiment. Therefore,

despite the imbalance, it was decided that I should be present at all picture interviews.

As Magill and I drove into Robertsville on the evening of the first interview with George Plenn, we saw Tremblay's car parked in front of Chiasson's mail box. The Plenns met us at the door in their work clothes. Hospitable but tense, Mrs. Plenn led us through a darkened kitchen to a brightly lit dining room. We all sat down around the table, and there was a moment of embarrassed silence until we explained again the purpose of our investigation. Then, with Violet and George Plenn on one side of the table and Magill and myself on the other, the pictures were passed in a circle and Magill noted the comments carefully in his note book, conspicuously open on the table. Each print was numbered but uncaptioned. The interview was of a directive type and proceeded according to our previously formulated questions; however, there was flexibility, and new questions were expected to emerge as personal experiences and feelings were recounted.

The first photograph was a panoramic vista of the Morris mill, the second a close-up of the mill with more detail. On first inspection George had difficulty orienting himself, and finally turned the picture compass-wise (correctly), locating north, east, south, and west. Without hesitation he then named the main structures of the mill, including smaller units such as the bunkhouse and cookshed. He gave information on who lived in the bunkhouse and where they came from. These photographs were followed by detailed studies of all parts of the plant. Violet and George quickly identified all visible details and machines and talked at length about the different jobs shown in the pictures. They also exclaimed over the dangerous piles of scrap heaped about the machines, and admitted that the refuse was a source of annoyance and a danger to life. They identified most of the workers and told where they came from.

After the Morris pictures, we showed them the fish plant; they looked with interest but had nothing to say. We then showed them the clam-digging and clam-processing photographs; they were also unable to comment on these, and it became clear that they knew only the Morris mill and only the people who worked there. This suggested the possibility that each Bristol plant tended to draw its help from a distinct area. Then we showed them the streets of Bristol. Here also they knew no one, and it was evident that they rarely went into the town itself. They exclaimed, "When we are through work we are sick of Bristol and want to come right home. . . . When we want something during the week we buy it at the corner store, and on Saturday night we always do our shopping in Portsmouth" (a town on the edge of the Acadian half of the county, in the opposite direction from Bristol). The interview lasted more than an hour. The session was probably tiring for the Plenns, as they had to get up very early to do their farm chores and arrive for work in Bristol at seven, but they studied each picture with great interest throughout the interview.

Across the road Tremblay had been interviewing Chiasson on the same subjects. A shrewder and more independent man than Plenn, Chiasson spoke with fluency and offered many intelligent observations on his life. Plenn seemed

a limited person, unimpressed by circumstances beyond his immediate pattern; he seemed anxious to oblige but expressed himself poorly.

The quality of data gleaned from each interview was excellent, though quite different in character. Each covered the same material, but with different perspective and depth. The photographic interview got considerably more concrete information on the structure and processes of the Morris mill, more emphatic expressions of dislike for certain aspects of this industrial work, and much more specific information on the other workers. The non-photo interviews strayed from the course of the research to include more distantly related associations and data; the informant talked more about himself and much of the interview was semi-autobiographical. In this the two interviews differed, for the Plenn interview stayed on the track of the picture probes—which no doubt cut down on the introspective observations we might have obtained by allowing our informant to choose his way.

Another difference was that the note book caused no concern with Plenn, while it apparently upset Chiasson's composure. We feel that this was because the pictures served as a second subject; both interviewer and informant fastened their attention on the pictures, which relieved the strain of being questioned directly. In spirit, both parties were questioning the photographs.

The first test revealed still another function of the photo-interview. In non-photo interviewing, statements of ignorance are difficult to appraise: has the informant forgotten, has he misunderstood the question, or is he holding back? We feel that the photographic probes sharpened Plenn's memory, reduced the area of misunderstanding, and compelled him to stick to the truth. We could be confident that Violet and George really had no contact with the other industries or the people who worked there, for reviewing the pictures with the Plenns to some extent approximated visiting the plants with them in person. The negativity of their response to the Bristol photos suggested the group isolation of Acadian wage workers, who form islands with little or no interaction with the culture of this English town. Wage work in Bristol seemed less influential in the acculturation process than we had presumed, for Plenn gave evidence of retaining his roots in the Acadian area and even in the backwoods village from which he came. The non-photo interviews did not present this picture clearly; it left us with a hazy picture of Chiasson's knowledge of and interaction in Bristol. Many of his verbalizations were impressionistic, and we had no way of checking whether he really knew much about the information he offered.

The second interviews were structured around the home values of the Acadians, to appraise the depth of satisfaction they felt toward their traditional mode of life and the sense of independence gained by a diversified pattern of farming and lumbering or fishing. This variety and independence would normally be lost upon migration to urban Bristol. If their sentiments were deeply rooted, could the frustration be a cause of serious disturbance?

We made a complete document of the Plenns' farm and family interaction to serve as a graphic basis for the study of home values. Gathering this material was different from photographing house types for it required the utmost co-

operation of the family. They had either to enjoy it or to feel that their sacrifice of privacy was being made for a worthy cause. I presented the proposal to Plenn by stating that we were interested in life on a farm as compared with life in Bristol, and that we hoped photographs of their home might help us understand these two ways of life more clearly. This explanation was accepted.

The depth of this photographic study must have made great demands on the Plenns. In return for the privilege, we knew we must conduct ourselves sincerely and openly, and operate on as equal a plane as possible, so I decided to make the photographic occasion a family visit. The first photograph was made of George and Violet and Violet's daughter pulling up to the door in their truck on their return from their morning's work. Violet seemed pleased that I had brought along my wife and three-year-old son. They all grinned broadly as they climbed out of the truck, and the women went into the kitchen while George and I set off to see the farm.

It was evident that George was enjoying himself and that the farm was the center of his life. When we returned to the kitchen for a late lunch, he told Violet that I had photographed everything, and sat down to lunch as if he were very pleased. I continued my photography, explaining that food made the most important picture of all. Violet's face lit with a smile when I made a close-up of some home-grown vegetables. She laughed and said, "Sure, those people in Bristol never get such food. We get everything from our farm but sugar—flour, sugar, and tea, and such things."

The afternoon passed in much the same mood, as I depicted the family working the garden, milking the cows, rounding up the geese, etc. My own family had a very good time, and I believe the Plenns did too. They remained jovial and asked us to stay on to supper.

Magill and I returned for the second interview in which we would be showing the Plenns pictures of themselves, sitting in the very location where the pictures had been made. This was an entirely different sort of test than identifying pictures of the Morris mill. In effect, we would be holding up a mirror to the Plenns and asking them what they saw. When we arrived, Violet ushered us rapidly into the dining room, and all eyes were on the folio of pictures. The atmosphere had changed from our first interview. Everyone knew what to expect, and the family was impatient to get started. The first picture of the series was of the Plenns arriving home.

Magill: Here you are returning home on Saturday. How do you feel as you drive home?

Violet: I'm just tickled!

Plenn, with a broad grin: I feel good.

Magill: Are you tired after work?

Plenn: Yes, I'm tired.

Violet: Ennis [the foreman] just drives you till you're crawling. Yes, it's very tiring.⁴

At this point we observed a curious development: while George, Violet, and Violet's daughter looked through the pictures of home scenes with great intensity and amusement, their comments were just as often about the work of the mill. They seemed more anxious to express their feelings about their work

than they had been in the first interview. One had the impression that as they looked at the homely scenes, the harshness of the mill environment was brought to mind. It was as if they were unconsciously comparing their farm, which gave them great satisfaction, with this industrial environment which appeared more and more as the interview progressed to be distasteful to them all. As they looked at the pictures of the farm they spoke of quitting work, saying that they could make a good living on their farm if they were fired. They talked about other workers who had no farms. In answer to a query as to what they thought about as they worked at the mill, Plenn said, "I plan all day." Violet said, "We think about the farm and what we are going to do when we get home." When asked what the others thought about, George added, "They go home to sleep, that's all." Violet: "No, there is nothing to do but sleep."

When we questioned them about the central topic of our investigation—would they move to town—they gave us a highly charged picture of their concept of life in Bristol, adding, "What would we think about all day at the Morris mill if we didn't have the animals on our minds?"

This was a fairly short interview, but completely to the point. There was little doubt that the Plenns strongly resisted moving to Bristol under any circumstances.

The third and last interview with the Plenns was structured around their home community and their contact with Portsmouth, where they did their weekly shopping. We particularly wanted to know whether Robertsville, midway between the Acadian half of the county and the town of Bristol, was a stepping-stone in migration. The method we developed was to make a complete housing survey of Robertsville, to identify all its inhabitants, and to track the Plenns' social contact throughout the community. I photographed every house in sequence, so that we could obtain the complete sociometric picture. Though Robertsville is two miles long, all the houses are visible from the road, and I completed the survey in an hour, snapping pictures from the car window. I added pictures of a picnic at the Catholic Church in Port Harmony, to which parish Robertsville belongs, and a set of photographs of Saturday evening in Portsmouth when the Plenns were doing their weekly shopping.

On the evening of our third interview we found George very tired after his day at the mill, but Violet was brisk and cheerful. She seemed anxious to see the pictures and made room for us around the table, calling in George and her daughter. We started the interview with the housing survey. Houses were identified slowly and with great care, moving in an orderly fashion down the road. The names of the occupants were always given, where the head of the household worked (if he worked), and then usually something about the family's history.

Picture 23: That's Willy Chiasson's house [owns]. He's the one with the whiskers. He rents it to a widow woman. [How much?] \$5.00 a month. She gets a pension from the States.

Picture 24: Willy Chiasson's house. He owns half of Robertsville. He bought it from

Capt. Campeau. He's got lots of money. He has a wife and four children. He owns a big farm at Pulp Creek. He has a store and woodland. He has lots of cows. One man looks after the place, and one man drives the truck. Russell Hawley works in the woods with him.

Picture 25: Richard Mouser's house. He stays home. He has cows. Sells cream. He has some hens. He works on the road on and off.

House by house, we learned about Robertsville. They told us of its farming economy, and its position between the Acadian area and Bristol. It was not a transient or migratory community; its population was fairly stationary, with family names in some cases going back three generations. It was a marginal community that had once been predominantly English, whereas today it was predominantly French; though many men worked in Bristol, many others were farmers or retired people. It had little influence on the migration of the Acadians. We had hoped to find points of social interaction between the Plenns and the community, but to our surprise there were almost none. Most of their social relationships were with George's family in the backwoods of the Acadian region.

We next showed the Catholic Church picnic in Port Harmony, a few miles from the Plenns' home. Was this crowded gathering evidence of a growing Acadian population in this area? The Plenns knew many people at the picnic, but their identification told us that the majority of the crowd came from other parts of the county.

In the pictures of Saturday evening in Portsmouth, our informants were able to recognize a great many people and tell where they came from. Two points emerged. From the way Violet could recognize people—giving their names, occupations, and origins—we could assume that with several informants we could construct a rough index of who came to Portsmouth on Saturday night and arrive at a pattern of French-English participation. At the same time, the number of people that could not be recognized offered clues to the extent of the Plenns' interaction in the area. Both the positive and negative responses served to show the pattern more closely.

This interview was the longest; though George became very tired, Violet's attention never flagged. Scores of personalities had been identified and added to our file, and very revealing insights given on the Robertsville, Port Harmony, and Portsmouth ethnic structure.

Meanwhile, Tremblay returned for a second interview with Chiasson. While Tremblay considered the first had been "an above-average interview," he felt the second was "quite a different matter." His notes state, "I realized he was not too talkative. . . . The answers to my questions were short and vague." Though the interview ranged over wide territory, from Chiasson's war experiences to proposed improvements on his home, Tremblay could not hold Chiasson within the planned structure of the tests, the subject of home values and his reasons for living in Robertsville rather than Bristol. In these areas his responses fell far below those of the Plenns; it must be borne in mind that we were testing for information on precise subjects.

This "diminishing return" in interviewing is not uncommon; where the first interview may be good, the second may be indifferent, and a third repetitive or impossible. An interview can empty the outer mind of its more absorbing preoccupations, so that it may require time for new feelings to gather. It appeared that photographs stimulated a restoration of expression. The imagery opened doors of memory and released emotions about forgotten circumstances, which allowed a second interview to be as rewarding as the first.

At this point an unforeseen element entered the experiment and upset the balance of our tests. Photographs can be objects of consuming curiosity. This attraction had helped us throughout the Plenn interviews, but it operated in reverse in the Chiasson test. Robertsville was a tiny settlement; Chiasson had seen me taking pictures and had heard that the Plenns had seen them. At the end of the second interview he made it clear that he wanted to see the pictures too, and that Tremblay had better bring them if he wanted to come again. This sudden demand, plus the less satisfactory response to the second interview, made Tremblay feel the third non-photo interview should be cancelled, and that he should proceed at once to the "check" interview with photographs. This was agreed upon, and henceforth we limited the test to two visits, with and without pictures, with a "check" interview following the latter.

When Tremblay returned for the "check" interview, using the Bristol industry and street scenes, the tone of the interaction changed. Chiasson greeted Tremblay with spirit and called his wife from her ironing to see the photographs. She looked at the pictures with interest and listened to the interview (which she had not done in the first two visits), though she made few verbal contributions. The interview proceeded in a fashion similar to the Plenn tests. Chiasson identified people and processes as George had done, and like the Plenns he could identify almost nothing in pictures of other plants or on the streets of Bristol. Like the Plenns, the Chiassons evidently had little contact with the English town. This interview was significant for its similarity to the first Plenn interview; the number of responses on the industrial picture was comparable, and the quality of the information much the same. Both Plenn and Chiasson had identified all that they recognized, and the nature of the photographs dictated both the depth and scope of the information.

The second pair of informants for our tests were drawn from workers employed in the Scotia fish processing plant in Bristol. Both men had migrated to a suburb of Bristol from the area between Robertsville and Bristol, and both had married English girls whom they had met in the fish plant. One, Lawrence Dumas, had worked many years in the plant, owned his home, and had six children. The second, John Campeau, was a younger man with a wife and small baby, lived in a rented flat, and worked on and off at the plant.

According to our design, at this point we switched interviewers. Magill, who had worked with the photographic probes, interviewed Campeau without pictures, while Tremblay interviewed Dumas with pictures.

Our reception at the Dumas home was markedly different from the open reception of the Plenn household. Dumas was a silent man whose face was

marked with strain, and though his wife was less reserved, she too seemed to be feeling unexpressed anxiety. As previously, we started the interview with photographs of the plant in which the informant worked, in this case the Scotia fish plant. When we laid a photograph before Dumas, he would talk; when we took it away, he sat silent. Despite his reticence, he and his wife were able to identify most of the workers and to describe clearly what was happening in each picture.

When we showed pictures of the other plants, they revealed that they knew little about them. Only when we showed the Morris mill did Dumas come alert, explaining that he had worked there eighteen years ago. Then we showed the street scenes of Bristol on a Saturday night. In five of these pictures they recognized no one, commenting that most of them must be from out of town. In the sixth picture they named three people.

Because we had to compress our material into two sessions, we had added to the first photo-interview a set of pictures of a Bristol Catholic Church bazaar, comparable to those on the Port Harmony Church picnic used in the third Plenn interview. We had assumed from Dumas' Acadian background that they were Catholics, but when we showed these pictures, Lawrence "manifested a sense of acute embarrassment." Tremblay, himself a Catholic, was conscious that we had moved in on very emotional ground. The couple finally told us with some agitation that they had been married in the United Church, of which Mrs. Dumas had been a member. This information was given in an emotional manner, as if it were something they would have preferred not to discuss.

This demonstrated another potential. Photographs can trigger responses that might lie submerged in verbal interviewing. Visual reminders can shatter the composure of a guarded reply and cause the informant to blurt out submerged feelings or to reveal his emotional state by embarrassed silence, either of which can be eloquent to the sensitive field worker.

Although the situation thus uncovered was more delicate than anything we had encountered in Robertsville, we decided to go ahead with the home photographs in the same way we had with the Plenn family. In taking the pictures, we discovered that the children's major interest was working at the Golf Club nearby, so we covered these activities too. We also repeated the survey of houses in the community in the hope of tracing the pattern of the family's social interaction, which we felt important to understanding Dumas' adjustment as a recent migrant to an English community. And we added pictures of a supper at the United Church, suspecting that Mrs. Dumas might also have gone through strain and adjustment in marrying an Acadian, and hoping she would tell us of her social relations and contact within the church group. Thus the pictures for the second Dumas interview were comparable to those of the second and third Plenn interviews combined.

We returned for the second interview prepared to find a continuation of tension accumulated from the first session. Instead, we were met cordially with an air of expectation. It was evident that the family was excited to see the photo-

graphs of their home life, that this had gratified them, and that whatever reluctance they had about further questioning was overcome by curiosity about the pictures.

As at the Plenns', the photographs were shown one at a time, and the family's elation made us wonder whether they had ever before seen pictures of themselves except in fuzzy snapshots. They could hardly contain themselves as they waited for the next picture.

These home studies revealed the process of urbanization. Dumas loved his garden, but only he and his wife worked it. Mrs. Dumas was an accomplished seamstress and cook, but her teen-age daughter scarcely knew the rudiments of these arts—she was learning to sew in school, her mother said.

We showed the pictures of the Bristol Golf Club, and the children quickly identified all the caddies and talked with warmth about the various personalities. There was no reference to other children coming to the house to play. The children's interaction seemed outside the family and centered about the links where they played and caddied whenever they had free time.

Tremblay: Do you think the links are a good place for the children to work?

Dumas: It gets them out of doors and makes them walk around.

Mrs. Dumas: If they are on the links we know they are not in trouble somewhere else.

The church supper pictures gave us only negative insight. Mrs. Dumas could recognize few people and couldn't even pick out the new preacher who had arrived a month or two before. It was clear the family rarely participated in United Church activities, and this intensified the picture of loneliness in which the parents lived.

We showed photographs of some seventy-five houses in the Dumas' neighborhood, taken in precise sequence. They moved from picture to picture, giving names, occupation, and length of residence in the area. As house after house passed with only a handful identified as either friends or relatives, we arrived at a fair understanding of the isolation associated with migration. Stepping from one social grouping to another is not an easy process. Mrs. Dumas shared the loneliness of her husband in his move from a semirural Acadian to an urban English environment.

Meanwhile, Magill was interviewing John Campeau with verbal questions. The first interview gathered reasonably good data about the life of the informant. Campeau was more outgoing than Dumas and welcomed the interview as a relief from boredom, whereas Dumas had not enjoyed the experience at first. Campeau gave fairly adequate answers, but the first Dumas interview was considerably more specific.

When Magill arrived for the second interview, Campeau and his wife were sitting in the same position in which he first found them. As in the first session, Campeau gave a good interview in the field of general information about his life, but in the area of our interest—the movement of people, where they lived and where they worked—his statements were generalized. Campeau had

worked around Bristol in various jobs over the past few years, and should have been able to give more explicit information. The surface of knowledge had apparently been skimmed, and the second interview leaned toward repetition.

The "check" interview with Campeau was the last in the experiment. Again the Campeaus were in the same chairs, as if they had never altered their preoccupations or positions throughout the week. But when the pictures were introduced, Mrs. Campeau for the first time laid down her *True Romance* and drew her chair up to the table to watch.

The interview lasted three hours, whereas the non-picture interviews had lasted scarcely two. Its content was compact and in direct response to the photographs and questions; it was primarily factual. Let us listen in on it:

Campeau: [Picture 11] (Laughter) Alfred Strong. It's not a good picture of him Henry Hagen. He lives upstairs. Billy Steen of Jonestown.

Magill: Do you visit upstairs?

Campeau: We go up every night, play cards, 500, rummy. The women talk. They're cooking fish there. There are nine racks. [Picture 12] They're cleaning fish out. Messy job. Men pick out big bones. Girls pick out small black stuff. Everything is on a belt that moves along slowly. That's in the cannery. Jim Short, the Point Road. Jane Cawkins, Jonestown. Yvonne Currey, Jonestown. Her husband works there too. Hyacinthe Blanchet [Mrs. Reuben Blanchet] a Campeau from Jonestown. She has five children. She has a house-keeper. Reuben Blanchet, Jonestown. Stella Eisenhower, Hilltop. Marie Campeau, Jonestown [a sister to John]. Sophie Campeau [not related].

Responses to the photographs were simple and in keeping with the type of evidence presented; it might be called "shorthand" on photographic content. When the data were assembled they offered a clear explanation of the research content of the pictures. The phenomenon which interested us most was the specificity of the information as compared to Campeau's response in the non-photo interviews to the question of where people in his plant came from: "Oh, my God, Jonestown, different places. Some from Bristol, some from the Point, Charleston, Great Cove!"

CONCLUSION AND FURTHER OBSERVATIONS

The characteristics of the two methods of interviewing can be simply stated. The material obtained with photographs was precise and at times even encyclopedic; the control interviews were less structured, rambling, and freer in association. Statements in the photo-interviews were in direct response to the graphic probes and differed in character as the content of the pictures differed, whereas the character of the control interviews seemed rather to be governed by the mood of the informants.

In an attempt to compare the interviews objectively, we devised a system of coding each statement according to content in one of ten categories: Work, People, Community, Family, Migration, Religion, Pleasure, Ethnic Relations, Interaction, and Associations. This supplied us with an approximate statistical picture of our results. The two techniques did not differ signifi-

cantly in total number of responses, but in distribution of responses they were very different indeed. The analysis showed clearly that the pictures dictated the content of the interview, and more effectively than did the verbal probes. Pictures of Bristol industries elicited technological information, details about fellow workers, and values in relation to work; home pictures centered the discussion on family patterns and values; and housing pictures brought information about the community. In these areas, the picture interviews were impressively longer and more complete than the non-picture interviews. Whenever the pictures covered a distinct area, we consistently obtained compact and definitive answers. This was especially true in the study of the home community; no information in the non-picture interviews could be compared to the flood of material obtained from the housing surveys.

Another point borne out by the analysis was that, while both of the second non-picture interviews had been less full than the first and showed a decline in the informants' responsiveness, the "check" interviews reversed the trend and produced more material. This can be interpreted as an indication that photographs can be stimulating and can help to overcome the fatigue and repetition often encountered in verbal interviews. It is also safe to assume that the photographs were an aid to rapport in opening the field of discussion, whereas in the control interviews we sometimes had to press against resistance and apathy.

The manner in which we carried out these photo-interviews created a situation that could at one point limit an intensive investigation and at another greatly accelerate it. The presence of the pictures invited group participation. This was a spontaneous circumstance, unanticipated, and beyond our control. All the photo-interviews involved the complete family, and this resulted in two things: first, it dictated the plane of response, and statements were of a more public nature than they might have been had we interviewed one adult alone; and second, group participation accelerated the pace of the interview. At times it took on the character of a quiz program, with one vying against another to give the clearest and most correct identification of the pictures. The result was to supply us with precise encyclopedic information; at the same time, it cut down on more submerged and more freely associated material, which we found later we could obtain from confidential photo-interviews with one informant. The photographs proved to be a useful tool for guiding group discussion when such a study might be necessary, but we realize that this group participation weighed heavily against the strict comparability of our results.

Of course, our project was more in the nature of an exploration than a conclusive test. The qualities we found in photo-interviewing do not necessarily make it a better method than the other, but they do show that photographs can influence the color and structure of an interview. In our limited experience, the photograph as an interview aid seems well adapted to the rapid gathering of precise information on method and on identification of geography and personality. A second potentially significant application lies in the area of

psychological response where the graphic image can stimulate expression of values or release submerged reactions. This element seems to be unpredictable, and it would require more refined testing before its true value could be appraised.

The method of photo-interviewing described was only the first we tried; it merely touched on possibilities. We feel that photographs used at a different pace or with other subject matter might gather broader and freer expression. Photo-interviews at other points of the Stirling County Study indicated that photos were capable of reaching deeper centers of reaction, triggering spontaneous revelations of a highly-charged emotional nature. The number of photographs, the speed with which they are presented, the size of enlargement, the quantity of detail, the familiarity and intimacy of the subject, and even the photographic quality, are variables which can affect the quality of an interview. We look upon the use of photographs as an interview aid, rather than as an infallible technique. Pictures may be vitally useful at one point of an interview, and impeding at another. To use graphics skillfully, we feel they should not be pressed upon the informant but should be used judiciously to control the drift of thought, to stimulate memory, or to recover some precise fact.

One of the foremost services of photographs as a research aid was their function as a language bridge. The graphic image can assist an informant who lacks fluency of words to make clear statements about complex processes and situations. It was also demonstrated that by means of photographs a field worker can rapidly appraise and explore a technology with which he has had no experience, for the photographic record can supply detail that could otherwise be obtained only by lengthy first-hand experience. For example, photographs of commercial fishing could supply the imagery to enable a fisherman to explain his processes by following them directly through a series of pictures, without the impasse of technical reference.

A second element observed was a more subtle function of graphic imagery. This was its compelling effect upon the informant, its ability to prod latent memory, to stimulate and release emotional statements about the informant's life. Rural dwellers and small town folk may be especially responsive to this kind of stimulus—people such as the farmer who has lived his life in one valley, plowed the same fields, walked the same road, and met the same people year after year, so that time is marked for him only by disasters and breath-taking circumstances. Such a person might well find difficulty in remembering smaller events or the sequence of history; one interview may appear to tap all he knows and a second interview may be a frustration and an embarrassment. Or the reverse may be true. Similar environmental circumstances may have left the informant so starved for verbal expression that it is difficult to get him to stop talking, difficult to deflect his winding course through events that are of no concern to the investigation. Often, the informant won't be fazed by a question intended to steer the conversation; he will give a brief answer and then return to his whirlpool of recitation. In this situation also,

we found that a photograph commands interest, deflects digression, and helps the interview to proceed on its meaningful way.

We feel that the stimulation of a photograph stems from its very nature. A photograph is an abstraction. No matter how familiar the object or situation portrayed may be, a photograph is a restatement of reality; it presents life around us in new, objective, and arresting dimensions, and can stimulate the informant to discuss the world about him as if observing it for the first time. Erskine Caldwell, in *Journeyman*, sums up the character of this experience. Country folk are gathered against a barn wall, eagerly waiting their turn to look through a crack in the boards. However, their excitement is not at looking *in* at some forbidden thing, but rather at looking *out* at everyday life. The crack in the boards creates for the viewers a new arrangement of reality, an abstraction of the part from the whole, so that the most familiar landmark is viewed with a sense of discovery.

NOTES

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² See Tremblay et al (1954). This aspect is not reported in the present paper.

³ Bateson and Mead's work in Bali (1942) is an obvious exception. An example of the exhaustive use of photographs by a psychologist is Gesell's monumental work (1934), which reproduces 3200 action stills from movies, so arranged that selected children can be followed individually or compared with their peers as they go through a number of specific normal and test routines.

⁴ Direct quotations are from the field notes of Magill and Tremblay.

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