Grounding Visual Sociology Research In Shooting Scripts[1]

Charles S. Suchar

This essay presents a method for integrating visual representations of social and cultural realities into sociological analysis. It unites strategies of documentary photography with those of grounded theory-based field research and demonstrates the consonant interactionist and interrogatory stance of the visual sociologist. The documentary photographic method of using "shooting scripts" to structure the visual field project is shown to have a complementary relationship to a grounded theory method, and both, together, offer the visual sociologist a structured way of initiating and sustaining photographic field work.

KEY WORDS: grounded theory; documentary photography; shooting scripts.

INTRODUCTION

The limited literature in visual sociology and visual anthropology suggests general field strategies, but lacks a detailed guide to using photographs as data in ethnographic field work.[2] Consequently, sociologists and documentary photographers working with visual topics have usually been forced to improvise appropriate research procedures and use "ad hoc" methods. Often, completed projects are presented with scant mention of how such methods were arrived at. As a result, specific techniques for teaching or doing visual sociology remain unrecorded and newcomers to the field have little guidance in how to do visual sociology.

In this paper, I draw from my own work to demonstrate procedures and approaches that I have found most productive as a field strategy for visual sociology. This method was refined during three years of study con-

Direct correspondence to Charles S. Suchar, DePaul University, Department of Sociology, Chicago, IL 60614.

cerning neighborhood change and gentrification in Chicago. Throughout the paper, I refer to this project to illustrate my methodological framework (Suchar 1988, 1992, 1994).

THE INTERROGATORY PRINCIPLE

Taking suggestions from statements by Becker (1974, 1978), Barthes (1981) and Berger (1932), I believe that the photography's documentary potential is not inherent in photographs, but rather lies in an interactive process whereby photographs are used as a way of answering or expanding on questions about a particular subject. I call this the interrogatory principle of documentary photography: "A photograph is documentary to the extent to which information within it can be argued as putative facts that are answers to particular questions" (Suchar 1989:52). This process of asking and answering questions—based on field observations or archival research, and engaging in a discovery process—is an essential characteristic of the meaning of documentary. My belief in the implications of the interrogatory principle led me to search for methodological procedures consonant with it.

In reviewing the literature and my own work, I found that two methods commonly used by visual social scientists—photo-elicitation and the use of shooting scripts—were popular and successful precisely because they offered particular ways in which photography could embody the interrogatory principle. Photo-elicitation is a method of using photographs to guide interviews and ask questions about social, cultural, and behavioral realities (Harper 1987; Collier and Collier 1986; Curry and Clark 1977). Shooting scripts are lists of research topics or questions which can be examined via photographic information (Rothstein 1989; Collier and Collier 1986). They provide a means by which photography can be grounded in a strategic and focused exploration of answers to particular theoretically-generated questions (Gold 1994).[3] While I have used photo elicitation extensively in my own research, for the purposes of this paper, I focus on shooting scripts as a basic approach for collecting photographic data (See Suchar 1992; 1994).

PHOTOGRAPHIC SEEING AND VISUAL SOCIOLOGY

I am convinced that what we call "seeing" in visual sociology is a function of our ability to find patterns in our photographic data. Many of us

have examined a particularly successful set of photographs from a field setting and have been overwhelmed by the quality of information contained therein. Even casual scrutiny of such work may bring on the accolade of "this photographer has really seen through to the 'essential' nature of a particular subject or issue". In this way, seeing involves the ability to reveal patterns, features or details in a research setting or topic—such as aspects of material culture, subjects' characteristics or behavior, etc.—that are not readily apparent in less acute observations of that reality.

In order to best utilize the kind of information available in visual documentation, we need a systematic means to bring this kind of insight into sociological analysis. However, as Becker (1974), Gold (1995a) and others have commented, seldom is there as rigorous and systematic an analysis of photographic images as there is of non-photographic field data. This depreciates the potential documentary value of photographic data. Seeing is thus largely a latent quality; it needs to be enhanced, developed, extracted, and given greater acuity through a rigorous application of methodology and the systematic interaction of the analyst with the data. By these comments, I do not mean to divorce seeing from its aesthetically rooted manifestation in the visual arts. Seeing also has much to do with a kind of vision that reveals form, pattern, essential nature, and underlying organization of the observed (and in art, imagined) world. Rather, I seek a field strategy or method that allows us to see patterns in our photographs, and permits us to create photographic records that can be used for social analysis. In my own field work, I have found that combining the use of shooting scripts with the procedures of grounded theory helps me to see and analyze patterns in photographic data (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Schatzman and Strauss 1973; Glaser 1978; Charmaz 1983; Strauss 1987; Strauss and Corbin 1990; Glaser 1992).

Shooting scripts work as guides for photographic and sociological seeing. Not only do they help structure daily field work and photography, but further, provide the flexibility needed for a sociological discovery process that draws from field observations to visually ground abstractive and conceptual development (Suchar 1989; Gold 1994). The process of constructing and reconstructing shooting scripts, based on daily field experience, allows for a strategic organization of field photography in order to establish a base of photographic information. From this, analysis, conceptualization, and further field work can proceed. This, in turn, permits the field worker to become more sensitive to the recognition of patterns and therefore, enhances seeing.

SHOOTING SCRIPTS

Shooting scripts are a series of questions about the subject matter oɪ a photo documentary project. The most famous use of shooting scripts was by Roy E. Stryker's Farm Security Administration (FSA) photographic staff during the 1930s and 1940s. While the FSA photographers—including Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange and Arthur Rothstein—had some difficulty using the scripts, they managed to follow them for at least some portion of their assignments. Arguably, shooting scripts deserve credit or making the FSA one of the most important visual studies of society ever undertaken. What is not so well known is that Columbia University sociologist Robert Lynd of *Middletown* fame, was the initiator of the FSA shooting scripts (Hurley 1972; Rothstein 1986; Stange 1989). So, the sociological origins of shooting scripts for documentary photography are clear. Specifically, the shooting scripts for documenting small town America included such general questions as "Where can people meet?", "Do women have as many meeting places as men?", "How do people look?", "How much different do people look and act when they are on the job than when they are off?", "How do the homes look inside and outside?", etc. (Rothstein 1986:163-168).

While evolving out of the shooting scripts used by documentary photographers and photojournalists, those used by visual sociologists and anthropologists have different purposes. Explicitly linked to social theories, they can be structured according to the parameters of a grounded theoretical discovery process. In fact, it is the close affinity with grounded theory field methods that makes the shooting script an ideal means for integrating photographic data collection with sociological field work. Both shooting scripts and grounded theory rely on a common conceptual feature: the creation of categories for the collection, organization and analysis of observational data. In *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967:23), Glaser and Strauss posit "In discovering theory, one generates conceptual categories or their properties from evidence; then the evidence from which the category emerged is used to illustrate the concept." Similarly, shooting scripts involve the creation of a series of categories of photographic evidence to be collected and questions to be explored. Hence, these two tools are well suited for each other. Combined, they offer a means of organizing and interpreting the rich and complex amalgam of data visual sociologists encounter when in the field. In this essay, I offer a general model of working with a shooting script/grounded theory approach and suggest the possible conceptual outcomes of such a process of photographic engagement.

A GROUNDED THEORY APPROACH TO USING SHOOTING SCRIPTS

Establishing an Initial Shooting Script

Most field workers know at least something about their subject matter before entering the field. The total suspension of judgment and understanding in favor of pure induction is difficult to achieve in any case, so we usually begin the photographic field project with initial working hunches and theories about our subject matter. This is important, because our general understandings allow us to frame general questions for which we will try to obtain photographic answers.

In my study of a community undergoing gentrification, I was specifically interested in the effect of commercial changes on the physical, cultural, and social class transformation that were taking place. My initial shooting script, which involved doing a photographic inventory of shops and commercial establishments along the major market strip areas in the community, contained the following questions:

1. What variety of stores or businesses are to be found in different market strips, located in different areas of the community?
2. What do they sell or what services do they provide?
3. Who are the customers or clients who are served by these establishments? Are they locals or people from outside the neighborhood?
4. Who works, owns, or manages these establishments?

Logging/Writing Descriptive Narratives/Open Coding

I worked with this initial shooting script for several months. For each question, I shot several rolls of film to provide "answers" or "responses" to the questions asked. At the same time, drawing from my daily observations, I wrote descriptive field notes. Based on this experience, I suggest that for each roll of film, the following procedures be followed:

1. The film is processed/contact sheets are made for each roll;
2. a logging procedure is followed: a descriptive narrative is written for each significant frame identifying the way in which the frame is a response to the shooting script question(s).[4] This account is entered in a "logging book" or into a word processing file.[5] Initial interpretations of the meaning or significance of visual representations can be made at this point;

3. labels or names are attached to each descriptive narrative. This is a most important procedure and is referred to in the grounded theory literature as open coding (Glaser 1978:56-61; Strauss and Corbin 1990:61).

I found that it was essential to begin generating conceptual understandings of the content and meaning of the images that come back from the field. The logging of frames on the contact sheet puts the contents of the photograph into words and indicates how the photograph might be a response relevant to the shooting script questions. As in the following example, I typically wrote a paragraph or two description of the contents of the image in my log, with provisional notes on how the image responds to the question:

> This is a foodstore in the neighborhood that has been here for some time and seems to serve a local clientele. The store sells groceries to small number of clients and given that some of the signs in the windows are in Spanish, seems to be serving an indigenous group still present in the community, despite the rapid move toward gentrification [and so on]. The prices for products in the store are not inexpensive. The supermarket down the street seems to undersell some of these same products and therefore the vitality of this store is a question that comes to mind. Who still shops in this store? Need to interview the manager or owner about the competition with other shops.

The next step in the process is identifying concepts or categories in the photograph, or what Strauss and Corbin (1990:61) call "open coding:" "The process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data." This is essentially a labeling process, whereby the descriptive and interpretive material from my photographs were summarized as useable and "retrievable-for-comparative-purposes" units of information. I gave each photograph several labels, allowing it to be used as an answer to different shooting script questions, or illustrating different characteristics of the subject.

As Charmaz (1983:112) indicates, this categorizing process does not merely involve the assignment of subject headings or topics to data. Rather, it is also a way of refining concepts: "[r]esearchers use codes to pull together and categorize a series of otherwise discrete events, statements, and observations which they identify in the data. Researchers make the codes fit the data, rather than forcing the data into codes. By doing so, they gain a clearer rendering of the materials and greater accuracy." The narrative logging statement above, for example, was given the label "Local-Client Service Store". It was also coded as "Ethnic Economic Stability".

The assignment of codes establishes the means by which I was able to compare images and attached descriptions on a whole variety of topics. I compared examples of "Local-Client Service Stores" to each other and

examined the visual and narrative representations for each: I considered similarities and differences between them as recorded in both images and descriptions. I also compared between categories, asking how the photographs and descriptions of "Local-Client Service Stores" square with those of "Stores for Tourists" or "Youth-Centered/Oriented Stores?" I evaluated storefronts, advertisements, and customers associated with each type of store. Finally, I assessed the racial, social class, and gender characteristics of each type of stores' workers and clientele.

These comparisons generated new categories (axial codes), concepts, and theoretical understandings. It is important to stress that the assignment of labels to the photographs and their attached narrative explanations is not just organizational. It also has the function of raising questions about the subject matter. The application of grounded theory that I am proposing here revolves around the writing of descriptive narratives guided by shooting script questions. The resulting narratives are then coded for their multiple summative meanings. These codes can be refined as the field photography and project develop. Consequently, the initial coding will give way to more focused coding in later stages (Charmaz 1983; Glaser 1978).

Do Shooting Scripts Introduce Bias?

Followers of the grounded theory method may wonder if the pre-determined topics of the shooting script limit the conceptual development or inductive process of discovery, thus inducing a bias at an early stage (Glaser 1992). I do not believe so. The process of interrogating images and examining field notes provides a means of intellectually interacting with documented observations. This is a creative and thought-provoking process. We can also "check" our interpretations against other data, including our observed subjects' interpretations, to reduce script-based bias (*in vivo* coding, Charmaz 1983:116; Strauss 1987:33-34). The hunches, speculations, and insights that come out of this process help us to take new directions in our field research. Most significantly, they help us to reformulate the photographic shooting script.

Reformulating the Shooting Script

At the completion of a coding session, I review the provisional labels, codes and attached narratives and ask the following basic questions: What possible answers to this question have yet to be explored? What other questions do these answers raise? Inevitably, new leads to answering original question arise and some new questions, either more focused than the first

or perhaps wholly different, direct the project to the next stage of photographic field work. Finally, it may be that the original questions asked in the script are still in need of more detailed photographic answers. I then revise the shooting script according to the grounded theoretical analysis in order to accommodate these questions.

These procedures, I believe, not only underscore the flexible character of the shooting script, but also characterize the entire photographic field process as an interactive and conceptually-based enterprise. The emerging conceptual model through the open coding and basic photographic logging-in technique is grounded in what might be termed a "thickening-descriptive" observational process guided by the shooting script. The accumulating narrative accounts, codes, and the visual representations become the basis for further comparative analysis.

Focused Coding

Charmaz (1983:116-120), Strauss (1987:64-68) and Strauss and Corbin (1990:96-142) define the next phases in grounded theory research as "axial" or "focused" coding. Axial coding is "a set of procedures whereby data are put back together in new ways after open coding, by making connections between categories." Such coding leads to a "process of selecting the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships, and filling in categories that need further refinement and development" (Strauss and Corbin 1990:116).

In the process of comparing images and related narratives across coded categories, and thus engaging in a "constant comparative process", the grounded theory method encourages the writing of analytical or theoretical memos. These are used to integrate the descriptive and analytic interpretations of visual data into more abstract conceptual understandings and statements. The resulting analytic memos can also direct us to return to the field in order to collect additional photographic data through theoretical sampling "sampling aimed toward the development of the emerging theory" (Charmaz 1983: 124). This is the embodiment of the "interrogatory stance" in visual documentary work.

AN EXAMPLE: STYLES OF GENTRIFICATION

It would take far too long to explain all the particulars of my coding procedures in this essay, but it is important to take a brief look at the way in which photographic data, attendant word narratives, and open coded

categories are used in an integrated fashion to generate new conceptual understandings.

In the first phase of my study of gentrification, lasting over a year, I photographed the material cultural changes to property in the community. Using a shooting script that focused questions on the nature of the renovations to property (i.e. additions to the fronts and backs of houses, the meaning of art work on front lawns, the significance of walls and gates erected around rehabed or renovated houses, the incorporation of "antique" features such as added stained glass, coach lamps, carved wooden doors, animal, religious, and mythological icons) I was able to generate dozens upon dozens of photographs. That is, I had dozens of photographs of animal icons, dozens of photographs of stylized "Victorian" changes to the fronts of houses, dozens upon dozens of photographs of art work on lawns and walls and security gates and fences around houses.

I came to realize that I had the photographic and narrative data for a comparative examination of the stylistic quality of physical transformations to property. I assumed that these changes revealed deeper values held by Lincoln Park residents. Some values were related to social class differences in the community, some were age differentiated, but all revealed material cultural considerations that served to distinguish groups of residents in what was becoming, clearly, a more heterogeneous neighborhood than I, or the literature on gentrification, would have predicted. How did I find patterns in these data?

I subjected the various images with attached narratives to the open-coding process described briefly above, gave the images provisional labels, and began comparing categories as suggested by grounded theory. This comparative analysis began to generate a number of insights about the iconography of gentrification. By examining my narrative characterizations of the images, I began to identify particular value sets embedded in the presentation of material culture. One value set that I discovered through examining photos was "urban romanticism." (At a later stage in the project, I further specified the urban romantic outlook via photo-elicitation interviews and environmental portrait photographs completed with 50 families in the neighborhood).

URBAN ROMANTIC CHARACTERISTICS

Urban romantics perceived their neighborhoods as combining the best of the "old city neighborhoods" (a friendly, quaint, "village-like" place where gemeinschaft relationships were still to be found) and the "new city neighborhood" (the youthful, with-it, exciting place of entertainment, chic

shops, and contemporary and pop urban culture). The urban romantic concept was reflected in the "Victorian" sense of style to rehabed and renovated house exteriors. It could also be seen in a number of other photographic series depicting such themes as animal iconography and art work as exterior embellishments to property.

Victorian Styled Housing Exteriors

Figures 1 through 3 illustrate various characteristics of one dimension of the urban romantic value set.[6] The maintenance or construction of house facades to reflect a "Victorian" sense of style includes such details as multi-
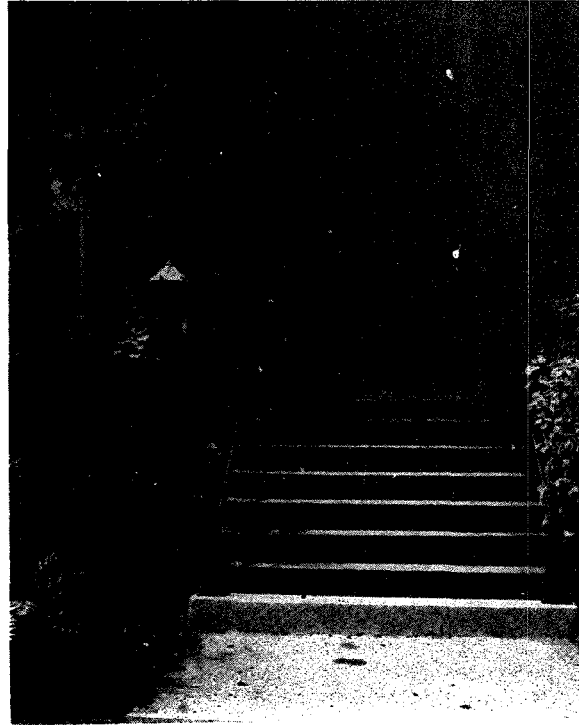

Fig. 1. Victorian styled housing exteriors.

Fig. 2. Victorian styled housing exteriors.

colored exterior painting and elaborate metal work on fences, doorways, and porches as seen in Figure 1. The carved, wooden door, coachlamp, and stained glass "#271" depicted in Figure 2 are all non-original additions to this particular house. Figure 3 reveals a house with wrought-iron gates, an ornamental griffin and a park bench (well-secured to the gate). The combination of animal icon, wrought-iron and ivy reflect one interpretation of the Victorian sense of style and taste frequently seen in house renovation and decoration in Lincoln Park. The following is a sample of the narrative descriptions given to this coded sub-category:

Figure 1:
1836 N. Lincoln Park West. This house reflects the stately elegance of restored and renovated woodframe, stone, and brick houses in the Old Town Triangle Area. The pennant in the window signifies membership in the local neighborhood association. Restoration and renovation often reflect differences in stylistic preferences, philosophies of lifestyle, architectural sophistication and economic means as well as the availability of materials and services. Certain restorations and renovations

Fig. 3. Victorian styled housing exteriors.

establish interpretations of achievable changes to property and are used by others as basis for further transformation. The custom paint job on this house, the fancy wooden jigsaw cut piece over the doorway and ornate wrought-iron gate and ornamental piece over the front porch are illustrative of what residents have called a Victorian "look" or "style". (Variably coded as "Houses-Woodframed, Special Decoration")

Animal Iconography

Figures 4 and 5 reflect one additional and extremely common feature seen to grace the fronts of many houses in the neighborhood. Dogs along with cats, birds, and lions are among the growing menagerie of plaster, concrete, and stone animal icons that were commonly seen in the neighborhood. Perhaps they reflect an affinity for particular animals and pets, but one cannot help but see the heraldic symbols that were also represented. The ubiquitous lion, whether singular or in matched sets, painted

Fig. 4. Animal iconography.

or left unadorned, assumes the status marking functions that were formerly reserved for the nobility and taken over by the gentry of the upper-middle class. My contact sheets included dozens upon dozens of images of different animal statuary. Subsequent interviews with residents particularly confirmed the patterning evident in my field photography and the comparative examination of coded narrative statements. An example of the narrative description to photographs in this coded sub-category of "animal iconography" included the following:

Figure 4:
While lions are the most commonly found examples of animal statuary, dogs and cat statues follow behind. This dog statue in the Wrightwood neighborhood of Lincoln Park is an example of the growing menagerie of concrete, plaster, and stone animal icons. I have seen this particular statue on sale at two establishments in the area—on Halsted St. and Lincoln Ave.—(both plant and gardening centers), it is not unique. As noticed in other instances, does this carry some heraldic meaning, the memory of a beloved lost pet, a current one?...Not sure.. (Variably coded as "Exterior Art Work")

Fig. 5. Animal iconography.

Exterior Art Work

Another dimension of this urban romantic aesthetic was the penchant for the display of other forms of art work at the front or back of houses. Classical statuary and decorations, commissioned sculptures and murals as depicted in Figures 6 and 7 were also commonly seen and photographed during this early stage of the documentary project. The art work was particularly effective in establishing the feeling or atmosphere that one respondent later described as "eclectica": a sense of style that combined unusual art pieces in a setting with some degree of contrast (although statues of Venus are obviously not particularly unusual in and of themselves). The photographs of these art pieces, revealed great concern for their placement, arrangement, and the "statement" made about the premises and, ostensibly, the residents within. Again, later interviews confirmed many of these more speculative "patterns" noticed during the early stages of the

Fig. 6. Exterior artwork.

field photography. The following is a sample of an attached narrative to a photograph from this coded category:

Figure 7:
I remember seeing this piece of artwork during the Sheffield Neighbors Garden Walk (local festival/event) and came back the following Wednesday to photograph it (with permission of the owner since it was in a private yard). This black and white garage piece is very intricate and was commissioned by the owners and executed by an artist friend of theirs. The owners were quite proud of this piece and felt that it gave additional character to the rest of their landscaped backyard. The coachlamp, black-painted garage door, plantings and art work, with exposed brickwork on the ground and garage, were not unlike other decorative treatments to the fronts and backs of houses in Lincoln Park. (Variably coded as "Sheffield Garden Walk" and "Garden Art")

After a comparative analysis of the field photography within these coded categories and between coded categories (e.g. "Victorian Styled Housing", "Animal Iconography", "Exterior Art Work") I began to write a series of "analytical or theoretical memos" that tried to integrate the insights and understandings that I had come to from examining this visual and descriptive data. These were narratives that combined the many characteristics already mentioned and tried to make some sense of the emergent

Fig. 7. Exterior artwork.

theoretical significance of this information. For example, the following ana-
lytic memo was written early in this process and is a sample of the type
of interpretation that led, later, to the more focused theoretical concept
of "urban romantic":

> Houses in Lincoln Park have interesting add-on or embellished features that speak
> a Victorian sense of style. The addition of coach lights, carved wooden doors,
> stained glass windows, ivy on the brick exteriors, among other things, are
> characteristic of this urban romantic stylistic voice. The iconography of gentrification
> develops as a language to communicate to others that a certain style and taste have
> been assumed by the property owner or leasee. It becomes part of the presentation
> of self, part of the communication of class culture and neighborhood identification.
> Woven together are personal and social needs that reflect transformation of values
> and resident characteristics. There are distinct recurring thematics to this sense of
> style and taste. Wrought-iron gates, animal icons, classical and modern art work,
> decorative park benches, fancy staircases, architectural parts of old buildings, and
> so on, are commonly found. These are combined in many instances with an
> "eclectic" look, as if they were part of a collection. This melange often has a main
> piece that centers the display, such as a piece of art or an animal icon. The

symbolism of social class presentation is apparent in these status markers. The town "gentry" have developed a readable set of symbols to communicate status identification and presentation.

There are, no doubt, different ways of reading these visible samples of material culture that raise some interesting and complex layers of meaning regarding the relationship these people have to their built environment. I realized that until I interviewed residents, I would not be able to understand the meanings these physical things and viewable manifestations had for members of the community. I was better prepared, however, to ask very particular things of residents about the physical transformations that were observable within the community.

After some debate about what to call this complex of characteristics, I came to the conclusion that, above all, these features added up to a "romantic" and socially quite self-conscious set of attributes. "Urban Romantic" seemed to me to be a way of summarizing this particular set of attributes. I was later to find out that it also correlated with a particular attitude set about the nature of the community and the residents identification with that community.

Walls, Gates, and Fences

Finally, I would like to conclude with an example of how additional dimensions of an idea or concept, different patterns, become noticeable after continual sifting through the images and their narrative explanations. Repeated viewings of contact sheets began to reveal a very noticeable add-on feature to the renovations or rehabs to property: the addition of walls, gates, and fences. I had photographed dozens of these. Their relationship to the urban romantic concept became apparent only later.

What do these photographs of walls and gates and their physical presence reveal? After a comparative examination of the photographs, I came to the not very surprising conclusion that a concern for privacy and security were very apparent for members of this new urban gentry. An axial comparison across this and the other series above, however, raised some interesting issues. The extension of private space by erecting gates, fences, and walls, is a tradition of both the town and country gentry. The dual needs of space and privacy with the added requirement of security, are extremely modern urban themes. When juxtaposed with the "urban romantic" theme it dramatizes a tension that exists between some resident's attitudes toward living in this community. That tension is between wanting to live or experience the idealized gemeinschaft-like, old-fashioned "village-like" neighborhood lifestyle (where neighborliness and close-proximate living is

deemed valuable), and the modern realities of wanting to keep others out, at a distance, where one's own privacy, security, and additional need for space are valued over these more traditional interests.

Figures 8 and 9 are examples of field photography of these walls, gates and fences. They also reflect an aesthetic dimension that fits in very nicely with the photography of the other material and physical manifestations and characteristics discussed above. The following illustrates the attached narrative descriptions for photographs in this coded sub-category:

Figure 8:
A version of junkyard/odds-and-ends artwork set to a pragmatic purpose: enclosing a building's front space for private use by erecting a brick wall, but with definite aesthetic statements being made. This wall at 655 W. Wrightwood is a relatively new construction by the look of the brick and mortar. The wall is high enough to completely close in the front yard which has been converted to a private patio. The dual needs of increased space and privacy are, however, extremely modern urban themes that one encounters in Lincoln Park. In this case, it offers the owners an opportunity for communicating a little of their own unique creative abilities (radiator parts and sea shells seen here) utilizing the interesting shapes of
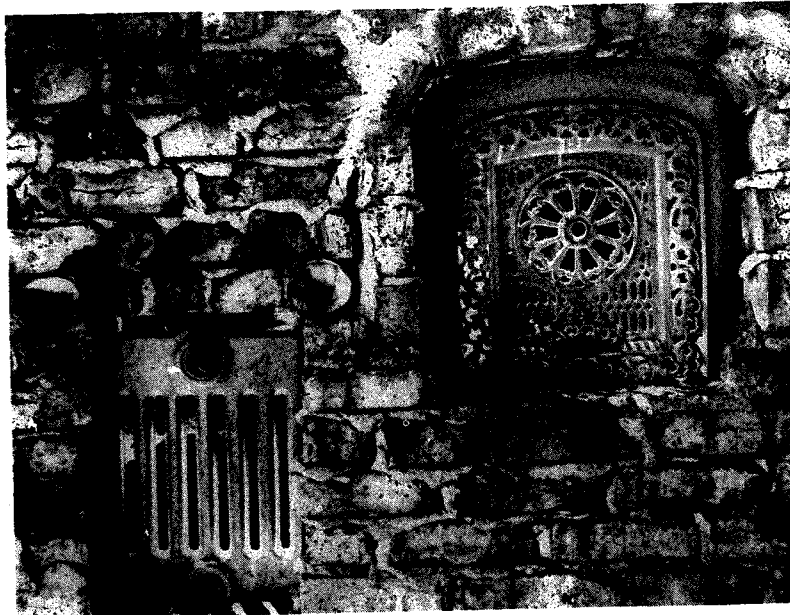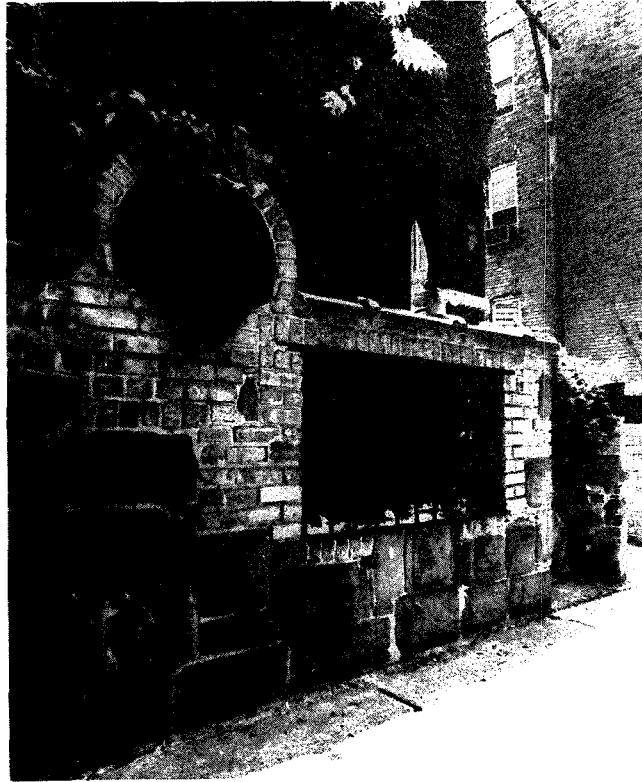

Fig. 8. Walls, gates, and fences.

Fig. 9. Walls, gates, and fences.

man-made and natural refuse. (Variably coded as "Exterior Art Work" and "Material Presentation of Self")

Such patterns of information began to emerge and helped inform the interviewing and analysis of the next stage of the research project: the photographic study and photo-elicitation interviewing of fifty residents and resident families in the community. The shooting scripts and consequent photography helped generate some of the more significant initial conceptual categories that gave meaning to the importance of the material culture and physical environment in understanding underlying values, beliefs, community identification, and resident behavior. The grounded theoretical ap-

proach that these shooting scripts allowed, helped concentrate and integrate the photography and subsequent sociological analysis.

CONCLUSIONS

Howard Becker (1974 [1986]:245-250), in one of the most significant statements of the relationship between documentary photography and sociology, has pointed out that the practitioners of each discipline have much to learn from the best techniques of the other. For example, the photographer can learn from the longer time perspective of the sociological field worker and the depth and intensiveness of the analysis of her/his ethnographic description. On the other hand, the sociologist has much to gain from the documentary photographer's intensive visual coverage and the "get-to-the-visual-heart-of-the-story" nature of decisive images that capture essential facets of the subject matter. Both the economy of work, acuity of vision, and conceptual focus of resultant images is aided by the use of a shooting script. This essay has attempted to show the manner in which these methods can be integrated by the sociologist who wishes to profit from the best practices of both traditions.

This integration of the use of a shooting script and a grounded theory approach for photographic field work has a strong degree of philosophical, theoretical, and pragmatic unity. When documentary is seen as an interrogatory and interactive process of asking questions of the observable world and refining both the answers and further questioning of subject matter, the approach outlined here offers a structured, systematic, and strategic method for extracting meaning.

Furthermore, this integration of methods also allows for a synergy of field strategies that relate conceptualization to particular observational experiences. In many ways, this synergy is due to a grounding of very specific visual information in the evolving conceptual understanding of subject matter. The field worker, through the shooting script and grounded theory approach, is able to be open to a flowing process of discovery, and also able to organize these specific discoveries in a broader framework: a union of specificity and creativity.

I also argue that the grounding of conceptualization in specific visual referents qualitatively enhances the grounding process itself. I have found that reference to very detailed visual documents, and the information they contain, allows for a closer link between the abstractive process of conceptualizing and experientially derived observations. The photographs, I believe, allow for a preciseness of recall which give the resultant conceptualizations an enhanced richness of texture and detail. Grounded theorists need to se-

riously consider the advantages that a shooting script and photography based upon it have as complementary strategies in field work.

The combined use of shooting scripts and a grounded theory approach is philosophically and pragmatically consonant with other methods used by visual sociologists such as photo-elicitation interviewing. In fact, the grounded theoretical analysis of the results of such interviewing in my study of neighborhood change in Lincoln Park, allowed me to "triangulate" the understanding and conceptual discoveries of the earlier photographic exploration of the community.

Finally, for those of us who teach documentary photography and visual sociology methods, I suggest that this approach, when combined with training in other field methods and techniques, presents a systematic and structured way of initiating others into field research. It offers a viable alternative to more casual, informal, or intuitively-based approaches to documentary photography and field work. (Not to say that the latter do not also have their rightful place, especially in the early phases of work.) My experience with teaching the methodology discussed in this essay—in both full-length courses and shorter workshop formats—tells me that students take well to this approach. It allows documentary photography to be integrated both theoretically and practically with other forms of qualitative methodology and field work training and practice.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ENDNOTES

1. This essay was first presented as a paper at the Annual Meeting of the International Visual Sociology Association. July, 1995 al the University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario, Canada.
2. The standard methodological guides used by visual sociologists have been Collier and Collier (1986); Wagner (1979) and Curry and Clark (1977) cited below In addition, the occasional articles on methodology that have appeared in the journals *Visual Sociology, Visual Anthropology,* and *Studies in Visual Communication* have also been influential.
3. Steve Gold (1994) provides an example of such a strategy in his photographic study of Israeli immigrants. Gold also has discussed the use of what he terms "style scripts" different photographic styles of work determined by such things as "composition, juxtaposition,

inclusion of text, framing, lens use, lighting. contrast. etc..." See Gold (1995b) "Shooting Scripts. Style Scripts and Photographic Depictions of Recent Immigrants In Los Angeles".

4. What I mean by a "significant frame," is a photograph that the researcher finds to be a relevant response to the shooting script questions The danger lies in not providing some labeling or description for frames and thus losing, in some cases, the potential meaning that these may have later in the research process. The best practice is to log as many frames as possible if not all frames.

5. Within the last few years, several software programs capable of incorporating photographs with attached narrative descriptions have been made available. I am currently exploring the advantages and potentialities of these technological additions and applications to documentary photography.

6. A technical note on the photographs: The photos/negatives for this study were made with three camera formats 6 × 7 cm roll film 4 × 5 in and 8 × 10 in sheet film sizes The larger formats produced the kind of detailed images that I feel are extremely helpful for documenting material cultural artifacts The cameras were always outfitted with wide-angle lenses—the equivalent of a 28 mm lens on a 35 mm camera format. Having been a professional photographer before receiving the doctorate in sociology I was experienced in the use of large-format photography, and advanced darkroom technique. The images were all self-processed contact sheets made and final 11 × 14 in prints made (on Oriental Seagull paper, grades 2 and 3) of selected images.

REFERENCES

Barthes, Roland. 1981. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, New York: Hill and Wang.

Becker, Howard S. 1974 (1986). "Photography and Sociology", pp. 223-271 in Howard S. Becker *Doing Things Together*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1986. Originally published in *Studies in The Anthropology of Visual Communications* 3:26 1974.

_____. 1978 (1986). "Do Photographs Tell the Truth?", pp. 273-292 in Howard S. Becker, *Doing Things Together*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1986. Originally published in *Afterimage* Vol. 7 Feb. 1978, pp. 9-13.

Berger, John. 1982. "Appearances" in Berger, J. and J. Mohr (eds.) *Another Way of Telling*, Pantheon Books, pp. 81-129.

Charmaz, Kathy. 1983. "The Grounded Theory Method: An Explication and Interpretation" in R. M. Emerson, *Contemporary Field Research: A Collection of Readings*, Boston: Little, Brown and Co.

Collier, John and Malcolm Collier. 1986. *Visual Anthropology: Photography as a Research Method*, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Curry, Timothy J. and Alfred C. Clarke. 1977. *Introducing Visual Sociology*, Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Co.

Edey, Maitland and Constance Sullivan. 1978. *Great Photographic Essays From Life*, Boston: New York Graphic Society.

Glaser, Barney G. 1978. *Theoretical Sensitivity*, Mill Valley, California: The Sociology Press.

_____. 1992. *Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis: Emergence vs. Forcing*, Mill Valley, California: The Sociology Press.

Glaser, Barney G. and Anselm L. Strauss. 1967. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*, Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co.

Gold, Steven J. 1994. "Israeli Immigrants in the United States: The Question of Community", *Qualitative Sociology*, Vol. 17, No. 4, pp. 325-363.

_____. 1995a. "New York/L.A.: A Visual Comparison of Public Life in Two Cities", *Visual Sociology*, Vol. 10, No. 1-2, pp. 85-105.

_____. 1995b. "Shooting Scripts, Style Scripts and Photographic Depictions of Recent Immigrants in Los Angeles", paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Visual Sociology Association, Windsor, Ontario, July, 1995.

Harper, Douglas. 1987. *Working Knowledge:* Skill and Community in a Small Shop, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

_____. 1988. "Visual Sociology: Expanding Sociological Vision", pp. 54-70, *The American Sociologist,* Spring, 1988.

Hicks, Wilson. 1973. *Words and Pictures,* New York: ARNO Press.

Hurley, F. Jack. 1972. *Portrait of a Decade: Roy Stryker and The Development of Documentary Photography in the Thirties,* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press.

Rothstein, Arthur. 1979. *Photojournalism,* Garden City: AMPHOTO.

_____. 1986. *Documentary Photography,* Boston: Focal Press.

Schatzman, Leonard, and Anselm L. Strauss. 1973. *Field Research: Strategies for a Natural Society,* Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Solomon-Godeau, Abigail. 1991. *Photography At The Dock: Essays on Photographic History, Institutions and Practices,* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Stange, Maren. 1989. *Symbols of Life: Social Documentary Photography in America 1890-1950,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Strauss, Anselm L. 1987. *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Strauss, Anselm L. and Juliet Corbin. 1990. *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques,* Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications.

Suchar, Charles S. 1988. "Photographing The Changing Material Culture of Gentrified Community", *Visual Sociology Review,* Fall, 1988, Vol. 3 #2.

_____. 1989. "The Sociological Imagination and Documentary Still Photography: The Interrogatory Stance" pp. 51-62 in *Eyes Across The Water I,* edited by Robert M. Boonzajer Flaes. The University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis.

_____. 1992. "Icons and Images of Gentrification: The Changed Material Culture of An Urban Community" pp. 165-192 in *Gentrification and Urban Channel Research in Urban Sociology Vol. 2.,* edited by Ray Hutchison. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, Inc.

Suchar, Charles S. and Robert Rotenberg. 1994. "Judging The Adequacy of Shelter: A Case From Lincoln Park", *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research,* 11:2 (Summer, 1994) pp. 149-165.

Wagner, Jon, (ed.). 1979. *Images of Information: Still Photography in the Social Sciences,* Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.

Willumson, Glenn G. 1992. *W. Eugene Smith and The Photographic Essay.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.