

FIELD

ETHNOGRAPHY

A Manual for Doing
Cultural Anthropology

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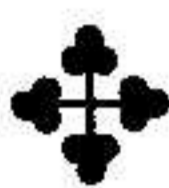
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Some students grasp assignments as springboards rather than obstacles to their flights of imagination. To them I dedicate this book and my thirty-five years of teaching.



Body Language

All animals—and, some argue, plants—communicate. Human animals use symbols (especially speech), but they still use the nonsymbolic ways of communicating that the species inherited. We have recognized body language explicitly for centuries; when Julius Caesar said, “Yon Cassius hath a lean and hungry look,” Shakespeare’s audience was presumably as accustomed as we are to a remark about body-as-statement. Today the formal study of nonverbal communication is a staple of all of the behavioral sciences, including biology.

PURPOSE

Body language is an extensive and complex topic, but the purpose of the present assignment is modest: to provide a brief introduction and to heighten your awareness of the extent to which people communicate with their bodies. This awareness will make you a better student of ritual and of the ethnographic scene in the two final assignments.

PROCEDURE

Either (1) record a communication exchange between two or more people that does not involve words, or (2) record the nonverbal portion of a communication exchange which does involve words. As before, in a separate section of your paper, clearly marked off from the first, analyze the communication including its social, cultural, and emotional context. You may want to entertain the question, “To what extent was this nonverbal communication culturally mediated? To what extent is it identical or very similar to communication among nonhuman animals?” And also, “To what

extent did the participants invent the communication, to what extent is it culturally stereotypical?” This paper is also short, from three to five pages.

PITFALLS TO AVOID

1. Sign languages are nonoral but not nonverbal. They are gesture substitutes for words, hence verbal communications that don’t happen to use the aural-oral channel. We’re seeking genuinely nonverbal communications, including zeros (i.e., the significance of not communicating when a communication would normally be expected). You may want to look at physical distance between people who are communicating: for example, lovers and Latins and Arabs stand closer, haters and Puritans and other Northern Europeans stand farther apart.
2. Contact sports don’t usually work well for this assignment, although they fit the definition. Most communication in a fast-moving game is nonverbal, but one cannot see subtleties from the audience. The spectators, in contrast, provide material for observation as their interest waxes and wanes, focuses on the playing field or on their neighbors, and so on.
3. Avoid overconfidence in your analysis. Gesture is less specific than words and easily misinterpreted. One student decided that the body language a client of her employer used meant dissatisfaction with the service a clerk was giving him, only to discover later that he was describing a baseball player he didn’t like. A paper describing misunderstandings of body language would be an interesting way to do this assignment.

FURTHER IN THE SAME DIRECTION

Not many professional anthropologists specialize in nonverbal communication, although all of us are sufficiently aware of it to note it as we do our ethnographic work, and its formal study is a staple of several behavioral sciences. Two who have devoted themselves to the topic are Edward T. Hall and Ray L. Birdwhistell. The former invented the term *proxemics*, or the study of cultural systems of using space, including interpersonal distance, and the latter invented *kinesics*, which is the study of cultural systems of body movement (see Hall, 1959, 1966, 1974, 1976, 1983, and Birdwhistell, 1952, 1970). Hall has had more influence than Birdwhistell, in part because he usually avoids technical discussion and writes for lay audiences. Both cite works by ethologists in biology and psychology, thus establishing connections between human and nonhuman communication without words. More recently, feminist scholars have focused on the gender of body language;

two such reports by psychologists are Clara Mayo and Nancy Henley (eds.), *Gender and Nonverbal Behavior* (1981), and Judith Hall, *Nonverbal Sex Differences* (1984).

Isolation and the Pickup

by Chris Lawler

This example of nonverbal communication is notable in two respects beyond the inherent interest of the topic. First, each actor on the stage is described concretely, and the setting comes vividly to life. The author wastes few words on the description, but his few words tell. Second, in the analysis section he teases out varieties of meaning concerning the situation developing between Mary and Joe, and also the resolution of Jack's relation to the other two. Initially we suspect that Jack may have been the catalyst who brought Mary and Joe together, but then we find him to be a considerate friend who realizes when he is one too many. The author discovers that he understands this social encounter almost better without hearing words than if he had eavesdropped.

Lawler is sensitive enough to body language to have promise as a trial attorney, but he decided to give up politics for medicine.

DATA

The nonverbal exchange described here occurred at the FJJI house on April 2, 1991, around 11:30 P.M. Three participants were involved, two males and a female. The first male, whom we'll call Joe, was wearing a black and blue thin-striped mock turtle-neck with the sleeves rolled up, tan cotton pants rolled up at the ankles, and brown moccasins. Joe's brown hair was short on the sides and spiked on the top (about an inch high). Jack, the second male, was wearing a black v-neck sweater, madras shorts that came to his knees, and white sneakers with fluorescent stripes (Nike cross-trainers, I believe). On Jack's head was a white baseball cap with Mountain Chalet printed on it. Mary, the female, was wearing a white button-down shirt tucked into a pair of black knee-length shorts. On her feet she wore black flats. The only makeup she had on appeared to be pink lipstick. Mary had her shoulder-length black hair pulled back in a ponytail, which was fastened by a red bow.

Mary, Jack, and Joe were standing behind a big table against a wall. The table was laden with potato chips and punch. Loud dance music could be heard filtering up from the basement. Mary, Jack, and Joe all had brightly colored 8-ounce cups in their hands that presumably held beer. The din of other students talking/partying combined with the music made it impossible for me to hear the three subjects' conversation. However, this made it easier to pay attention to their body language.

Joe—leaning against the wall with one leg propped up on a chair, looking directly and intently at Mary, with thumbs inside of pants and hands resting over pants pockets.

Mary—standing about 2½ feet away from Joe. Hands are on hips. Mary is smiling, and looks animated. She is sticking her chest out. Her body is turned toward Joe.

Jack—standing about 4½ feet away from both Mary and Joe. Jack is swaying back and forth on his feet, his hands are in his pockets and there is a smirk on his face.

Mary, Jack, and Joe are engaged in conversation with each other, probably something funny, since they're all laughing.

Joe—brings eyebrows down, stops smiling, and looks down at his shoes (a look of bewilderment crosses Jack's and Mary's faces). Joe looks up quickly and bursts out laughing (Mary and Joe look relieved and start smiling).

Jack—looks around, then looks at Mary and Joe. Jack then says something, reaches out and shakes Joe's hand, then gives a short wave to Mary (Mary smiles and gives a quick wave back). Jack walks away. As he leaves he looks back at Joe and gives him a big cheese-eating grin and the "thumbs-up" signal (Mary doesn't see any of this).

Joe—looks at Jack as he walks away and frowns at him, then smiles and looks back at Mary. Joe puffs his chest out a little.

Mary—reaches behind her head, undoes her ponytail, and shakes her head back and forth. She then moves about a foot and a half closer to Joe and puts her hand on his thigh.

ANALYSIS

The segment of nonverbal communication just described contains many different gestures. Some of these gestures carry symbolic meaning, such as Jack's thumbs-up sign, which means good luck. However, most of these gestures are postures that carry nonsymbolic meaning. In the segment there are two things I would like to take a look at: the "pickup" and the "isolation."

The "pickup" occurs between Joe and Mary. In my mind, most pickups are usually males coming on to females. But in this case the female was coming on to the male. To begin with, look at Mary's posture—hands on hips, chest stuck out, and she is facing Joe. The hands on the hips to me appears

to be an aggressive stance, as if Mary is saying, "Here I am. Come look at me . . . but beware. I'm going to stand my ground." The fact that her chest is stuck out makes this sexual aggression, almost as if Mary is saying, "These are my breasts. Look at them." Personally, if I'm talking to a female and she is thrusting her chest out, I tend to look at her chest. Sooner or later "typical male" thoughts cross my mind (like I'd rather be doing something with these female breasts other than having a conversation with them). The expansion of a female chest could be interpreted by males as a mating call. Furthermore, Mary is facing Joe, instead of facing Joe and Jack. This shows she is paying attention to Joe and wants Joe to pay attention to her.

Joe responds to Mary's body language by semireclining against a wall and looking intently at Mary. By reclining, Joe shows that he is relaxed and not threatened by Mary's sexual aggressiveness. Furthermore, Joe shows Mary that he is interested in her because he is looking her in the eyes as she speaks and apparently paying attention to what she is saying. These postures indicate to me (and probably to Mary) that Joe is interested in Mary, but for the moment is not willing to respond to Mary's sexual aggression, and is making her do all the work. But these attitudes begin to change as time passes. When Joe frowns and looks down at his shoes, he is playing coy and showing that he feels hurt by what was just said. However, since he looks back up and bursts out laughing he shows that he was only joking. After Jack leaves, Joe puffs his chest. This gesture directed at Mary shows he is a strong and virile male. This is not unlike some male birds who puff their chest out in mating season to show their colors.

The last part of the pickup takes place after Jack leaves. Mary, not having to worry about two males, moves in for the kill. To start with, Mary unfastens her hair and shakes it about. This is a very sexy gesture. It implies that "I'm unburdened, loosened up (sort of like undressing) and ready to relax." The release of her hair also suggests to me a lowering of her guard. Mary then moves in closer to talk to Joe ("Latinos and lovers stand closer together"). Finally, Mary places her hand on Joe's thigh. Touching someone is not necessarily sexual. However, in this instance, putting her hand on Joe's thigh (so near his groin) is most definitely sexual.

The second segment I would like to describe is the "isolation." Jack is the one who is being isolated. Although Jack may be friends with both Joe and Mary, his presence is annoying to Mary, who wishes to focus on Joe. Jack's isolation is imposed by himself as well as by Joe and Mary. Joe and Mary isolate Jack by looking at each other and not him; Mary further isolates Jack by turning her body toward Joe instead of facing both Jack and Joe. Not having seen the beginning of the conversation, one could speculate that Jack walked up to and interrupted Mary and Joe. Once Jack realized that Mary was stalking Joe, Jack began to isolate himself so he could leave the conversation and avoid making a faux pas. Jack isolated himself by standing farther away from Joe and Mary than they were from each other.

By swaying back and forth, Jack showed that he was either drunk or uncomfortable and felt the need to move. Feeling it was time to leave (being isolated pointed this out to him), Jack looked around to see if there was anyone else he could talk to and left.

Not having heard the conversation, I find it amazing how much one can deduce from watching the body language and gestures of people. Body language added a whole dimension to Joe, Jack, and Mary's conversation. If there had been no posturing in the episode, things might have turned out differently. For instance, Jack might not have taken the clues to get lost. Perhaps Mary would have had to tell Joe outright that she was attracted to him and wished to copulate. Maybe she would have said, "Take me to bed or lose me forever."

A Drug Buy

by *Paul Thompson*

At least three aspects of this paper are noteworthy: first, the author's keen observation of an exchange which is not only nonverbal but also somewhat hidden; second, his explicit consideration of cultural mediation and stereotype; third, his speculative discussion of the cultural significance of what he has just described. In an exchange lasting only a minute or two, he sees a good part of the power tension between young whites and blacks.

The nonverbal exchange described here occurred in the spring of my junior year at Evanston Township High School. My friends and I witnessed the event from Gee's, a hamburger joint across the street from school. It is in a lower-middle-class, predominantly black neighborhood on the border between Chicago and Skokie. The participants are a white teenage male with long bushy black hair, wearing blue jeans and a Slayer T-shirt, and a black teenage male wearing a full-length Charlotte Hornets' winter jacket, blue jeans, and a pair of Air Jordans.

INCIDENT

White male—walks slowly up the sidewalk, gradually slowing down as he gets closer to the black male. He makes eye contact several times.

Black male—glances at the white male, does a quick check of the surrounding area. He then looks back at the white male and reaches up, touching his own left nostril.

White male—nods, glances around quickly, stops walking, and stands next to the black male. He then reaches into his pocket, pulls out a closed fist, and stretches his arm out to the black male.

Black male—glances around again, sticks his palm out, receives what's in the white male's fist, and closes his fist around it. He then turns his palm toward himself, opens it briefly, then puts it in his pocket. He then reaches in another pocket, glances around again, and extends his closed fist to the white male.

White male—extends palm and closes fist on object offered by the black male. He then glances around, looks at the object, appears to fiddle with it, and then sticks his pinky finger in his mouth. Then he smiles and gives the peace sign with his hand to the black male and continues down the block.

Black male—nods and grins at the white male, walks in the other direction for about 30 yards, and then stops to lean against a lamppost.

ANALYSIS

The segment of nonverbal communication just described contains a variety of gestures. Some of these gestures have a very specific meaning (such as the touching of the nostril to ask "you want cocaine?"); others are just the effects of the situation on the individuals (such as the constant glances around for police), which tend to communicate the nature of the situation to the observer.

In a way, the black male begins the interaction and the nonverbal communication simply by wearing a full-length Charlotte Hornets' winter jacket in the middle of spring, and standing around idly. In the neighborhood my high school was in (partly just because the school is there), this communicated the fact that one had something illegal to sell. The white male receives this communication and communicates his interest in making a purchase by slowing down his walking speed as he nears the black male. The black male then attempts to get the white male to stop and buy drugs from him by touching his nostril. The white male then confirms he wished to purchase cocaine by nodding.

The next few steps of the exchange contain nonverbal communication, but not between the two participants. The fact that they exchange fistfuls of objects (one presumably cocaine and the other cash), being careful not to let them be seen, and the fact that they look around constantly, communicates to anyone watching them that they are engaging in illegal activity. For

the drug dealer, however, this communication to those around him is effort, as long as there are no police officers nearby. That way he can communicate to others that he is the man to buy drugs from.

The final communication from the white male is when he touches cocaine with his pinky finger and nods. This shows that he is happy with the purchase he made. (The method of discovery of the potency of cocaine taste. If it numbs your tongue, it is supposedly very good.) The final communication from the black male is the grin and the nod, which shows also happy with the exchange, and seems to say, "I'll be around if you more."

Although some parts of our society are becoming more liberal some drugs that are currently illegal, you will not find many who will late that cocaine doesn't kill. This situation is of special concern for in the United States because the sale is happening at lunchtime across street from a school. As a result of the highly illegal nature of the situation, the white male's and the black male's communication was done in a different emotional contexts. The white male's communication was motivated by the fear of getting arrested. The black male's communication was motivated by the fear of getting arrested, plus the emotional need to appear afraid of getting arrested to those around him.

The nonverbal communication in this situation is definitely culturally mediated. One aspect of the cultural mediation is the fact that cocaine is legal and frowned upon. The communication is sneaky and speeds the process by not having to speak. Another way in which the communication is culturally mediated is the fact that our culture has in many ways young black teenagers into the position where they have to sell drugs in order to keep up the lifestyle they think they must have. Somehow in goods, such as the \$400 Hornets' jacket and the \$150 Air Jordan basketball shoes, have become a necessity for them, so much so that they will kill for a pair of shoes, or sell drugs to someone else, and kill the person though society can't be completely responsible, it does deserve some blame.

The individuals involved in this communication didn't invent it means. It is rather the "official" nonverbal communication of the dealer. All over the city you can see glimpses of drug deals going down which symbols similar to those I saw that day are used. As for the question of stereotypical communication, I don't think I could have picked a different more so. One of the strongest stereotypes in our society is the one all young, black male teenagers in the city are drug dealers. Sadly, the things are going today it doesn't look as if that stereotype will ever change.

Eyes to Heaven

by Gay Boyer

This eye blink of communication is used both by the older and the younger generations of one family. The author occupies the middle generation and sees "the look" both up and down the family tree. Boyer is a nontraditional student at Grand Valley State University in Michigan; her paper demonstrates that what preoccupies late teenagers is different from what grandparents see and take note of.

There is a "look," which includes raised eyebrows and eyes rolled to the sky, that seems to be used to communicate various messages, such as disbelief, disrespect, and boredom. Sometimes it denotes ridicule.

This "look" is often in evidence when persons of different generations are gathered together. For example: Grandmother is enthroned at the festive holiday table. Seated also around the table are her children and grandchildren. Someone always says, "I can't eat another bite . . . I'm stuffed!" The grandmother (who tips the scales at close to 300 lbs.) agrees, but then as the children are clearing away the remains of the feast to facilitate presentation of dessert, the grandmother says, "I believe I'll have a bit more of that dressing . . . just a dab." Out of her line of vision, two or more of the older children exchange the "look": Eyebrows are raised and eyes roll heavenward in silent amusement at the old lady's gluttony.

A teenaged daughter, upon being told by her parents that she may not attend a party where her parents know that the parents of the party giver will not be home will wail, "You never let me do anything . . . you hate me!" The parents will exchange the "look," and it's an expression of shared . . . endurance.

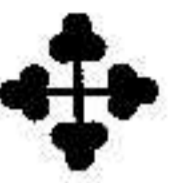
Since the "look" is not meant to be seen by its subject, it is an expression of solidarity against some aspect of the subject. It's a polite way of agreeing to disagree, without verbalizing.

To tell Grandma she's already had three servings of dressing and will doubtless have at least two servings of pie—"Both kinds look sooooo good . . . give me just a smidgen of each"—would be futile. Grandma is in her very late 70s. She won't change her eating habits for her health's sake, and certainly not for the sake of her children's approval. So behind her back, the "look" is exchanged as a substitute for confronting Grandma.

The "look" is a substitute for verbal and direct confrontation. It acknowledges a shared opinion or feeling concerning another person, often when it would be unkind or futile to express it directly.

It also expresses a lack of power. When used in the presence of a superior or an authority figure, it defuses the frustration, and perhaps anger of those who are powerless to effect change of the "official" attitude.

When I am with my daughters, I sometimes feel the silent "look" exchanged at some terribly wise pronouncement of mine, and I realize that my statement was doubtless inappropriate, or repetitive . . . and I sigh and give the "look" to my . . . self.



Ritual

This assignment is bigger than any of the previous three and should incorporate what you learned from each. You are to record a ritual event, preferably freshly, but if not, then from memory.

From the map assignment: Observe accurately and minutely, including costuming and decorations.

From the private language assignment: Note the *exact words* used in the event. Thomas Mann said of language, "Language itself is a criticism of life; it calls by name, hits things off, characterizes, and passes judgements . . ." (in Angell, 1950:409). Every person who describes a given event defines it differently, and what you are seeking in this assignment, as well as in the big ethnography, is your informants' definitions, not your own. You will find this point reemphasized in the next chapter in the quotes by Sir Richard Burton and Samuel Johnson.

From the nonverbal communication assignment: Record the body language of participants. Does it reinforce or contradict what is said? Keep in mind that while telling lies is one of the survival techniques which language facilitates, it is harder (but not impossible) to lie with the body.

What is a ritual? You will find a detailed definition later. Consult it carefully and use it explicitly. The essence of this definition is the symbol. A ritual is almost always a collection of symbols, which a good analysis separates out and considers one by one. You may find an event that is entirely ritual, for instance, initiations, weddings, funerals, and other rites of passage, and rites of intensification like Christmas, Hanukkah, Thanksgiving, and the pledge of allegiance to the flag. The Roman Catholic mass, described by Dana Curtis in this section, is entirely ritual. You may, on the contrary, describe the ritual aspect of an event that is basically nonritual—for instance Joshua Keilty's analysis of the ritual imbedded in saying goodbye to a close friend or Renato Rosaldo's parody of a family breakfast. Meals, business meetings, sessions of college classes, and countless other cultural events and situations have ritual aspects even though they cannot be labeled primarily as rituals. Although most of the events described in the illustra-

tions in this section are informal and private, you can learn a great deal by choosing an obvious public event and analyzing it thoroughly.

PURPOSE

Cultural systems are not just rules for behavior, ways of surviving, or strait-jackets to constrict free expression, as we remarked in the section on private language. All cultures, no matter how simple or sophisticated, are also rhythms, music, architecture, the dances of living. To look at culture as style applies particularly to the patterning of each language, as linguist Kenneth Pike used to tell his students—more broadly to cultural patterns themselves as ways to sing and to dance one's life. To look at culture as style is to look at ritual. (For a few years students and I experimented with adding an antiritual, or "ex-stasis" assignment, by way of contrast. The exercise threw rituals into perspective and was exciting to write and to read. But we decided that ecstasy is private by nature and that to write about it as an assignment was an invasion. You may, after you have become accustomed to the idea of ritual, want to write an antiritual for your own interest.)

If you become genuinely involved with this assignment, you will learn, as Josh Keilty says in his ritual of goodbye, that "almost every act in life is ritualistic" and ritual can be an instrumental act "charged with a special energy." By doing a good job, you will learn much about the heart of culture.

PROCEDURE

Divide this paper, like exercises 2 and 3, into two clearly marked sections. The second section should receive more attention than the first, and is often longer.

Section 1: Ethnography. Describe the setting and tell the events in their proper order. Describe the church and the weather and the stadium, the size and mood of the crowd. Don't start with "Here Comes the Bride" or with the opening kickoff.

As well as you are able, avoid interpretation. Instead of "the bride was nervous," go to the trouble of saying, "She twisted the bouquet as she stood at the altar; the veins in her hands stood out." *In short, do not label the emotions, but communicate them through your descriptive statements.* This is a difficult part of the assignment, designed to reduce the bias of ethnocentrism insofar as possible.

Section 2: Ethnographic Analysis. Your first task in this section is to defend the proposition that the events you have just described are in fact ritual and not merely habit. Once you have satisfied the definition, analyze your ethnographic data in terms of the typology offered later. What kinds of functions were performed? If the bride was nervous, why? Why did her

mother cry? What may have made the groom drop the ring? If it is the wake after a funeral of an elderly person who died "in the fullness of time," how come sober faces gave way to good spirits and camaraderie? Aside from sadism, what made some fraternity boys wield the paddles and others meekly present their bare backsides? How come Casper Milquetoast became the life of the party? This part of the paper is the more important part, as it will demonstrate your subtlety, your ability to probe into the data you have collected, and your ability to stand back from your own culture and understand it as if it were foreign and you the visiting ethnographer. You will probably find that while your ritual fits best under one label, other labels fit subordinate aspects of the event (e.g., deference to the most important individual at a rite of intensification, or the intensification of a social group at the gathering following a rite of passage).

Limitations. You must have been either a participant or eyewitness to the event. If you are describing the ritual of a foreign culture, be prepared to supplement your own analysis by reading or asking questions of those who know the ritual better than you.

Range. Good papers have been submitted on topics ranging in size from a couple having a cup of coffee and a cigarette to a presidential inauguration. It matters relatively little what ritual you describe, and relatively much how sensitively you observe what transpired and analyze what needs were served. A sense of perspective (i.e., a sense of humor) is not essential, but it may help you do a good job if you use it with restraint. Papers for this assignment run about ten pages.

When casting about for a ritual to analyze, keep in mind that rituals can be both formal and informal, conservative and innovative. The examples here start with two descriptions of one of the most formal and conservative of Euro-American rituals—the Roman Catholic mass. The first description, by Dana Curtis, straightforwardly explains what is symbolized by various parts of a standard mass. Conservative rituals help to maintain the integrity of cultures. The second description of the mass is by Alan Stewart, a non-Catholic who brushes lightly over that part of the ceremony to focus on the military forms that honor a comrade fallen in the line of duty. The moral of the contrast between the two papers is that the study of ritual depends both on the ritual itself and on what the observer brings to it.

Alice Reich comments, in the context of women's spirituality, that rituals "create connections with larger communities of belief," and then she opens the door to individual creativity: "While many institutionalized rituals require hierarchy and authority for their performance, women's spirituality emphasizes the ability of each person to create and participate in ritual" (1993b:435). Men can be equally creative: Tony Muñoz's football ritual contains little hierarchy and perhaps no authority; Bill Dunbar's ritual of drinking simply invents itself as it goes along. Each student's part in creating and interpreting meaning is central to the sort of education that this field manual aims to promote.

DEFINITION AND ANALYSIS

There are many definitions of ritual. Some limit ritual to public ceremony. Several limit ritual to religion. The definition used here sets no limits on context, but insists instead on the functions performed by the event.

Our definition comes from several sources, the most important of which is John J. Honigmann, *The World of Man* (1959), Chapter 31, "Ritual," pp. 509–29, as reinterpreted by three decades of my students.

Definition

"Confucian philosophers of the second and third pre-Christian centuries spoke of ritual as the orderly expression of feelings appropriate to a social situation. . . . To rephrase this, ritual refers to the *symbolic expression of the sentiments which are attached to a given situation*. The term 'situation' should be taken to include person, place, time, conception, thing, or occasion. Marriage, death, Christmas, and Easter are prominent ceremonial occasions in Europe and America" (Honigmann, 1959:509; emphasis added). You will have no trouble distinguishing between symbolic and literal actions if you keep in mind that, by definition, symbols stand for other concepts, events, or emotions.

By stressing appropriate sentiments, Honigmann means to imply that ritual is form. You may find it helpful to think of ritual as a vessel (form) holding wine (the appropriate sentiments). If the ritual is vital to its culture, then it is a beautifully formed vessel full of good wine. If it is no longer functional, it is a dry vessel, empty. If the emotion is so great that the ritual structure cannot contain it, then it is a cup running over and the situation gets messy. A similar observation is made in an unexpected source—*Miss Manners' Guide to Excruciatingly Correct Behavior* (Martin, 1982:694): "The great art of etiquette was invented to translate the incoherent jumble of human feelings to which we are all subject into something more presentable. When we cast it aside and let our emotions run around naked and exposed to public comment . . . everybody suffers."

Whether the emotion is sincerely felt is an interesting question to be considered in the analysis, but not part of the definition; standardization of behavior is part of "orderly expression." Use the terms *sentiment* and *emotion* in their broadest sense.

The Aim of Analysis

The first three assignments were like finger exercises on the piano, designed to acquire (or to remind you that you already possessed) skills needed in the description of culture. With this assignment, you begin to play the music itself. You have by this point carefully and thoroughly described an event or series of events, and you have *explicitly* defended that event as ritual (your first analytic task). Now the real fun begins. Use the following classification of types systematically to exhaust the analytic possibilities. But don't stop there

What is wanted is a probing analysis of the nuances of the ritual you have described. It is worth repeating that what you choose to describe is a comparatively trivial decision, but how well and delicately you tease apart the elements of the event and their implications is the critical part of the assignment and will help you to learn what ethnography can accomplish at its best.

There is also a dimension to analyzing a ritual that is *not* illustrated in the papers which follow, although the ambivalence Renato Rosaldo reports brings us close: Rituals are supposed to give symbolic expression to appropriate emotions, but the emotions people actually feel may be inappropriate and may actually be disruptive to the event. In short, the ritual (or any part of it) may not work. Despite the tendency of ethnographic writing of the past to depict all cultural systems as functional, sometimes they are dysfunctional. So in this assignment, look for the greed or glee that may accompany grief at a funeral, the jealousy at a wedding, the personal rivalries at a drinking bout (see Bill Dunbar's paper). One student paper, which cannot be published because there would be no way to mask identities, described how a broken and taped-back-together family constructed the funeral of its patriarch by inventing new rules for seating individuals who hated each other, for allowing alcoholic members to drink without destroying the proceedings, and small ways to symbolize the disapproval of the more moral participants against the choice of clothing of those who lived by looser codes. People do not have to be respectable in order to act ritually. How does the ritual you describe paper over, or accommodate, or fail in the face of "wrong" emotions? These tensions are the stuff of novels of manners like Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, William Makepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, or Edith Wharton's *Age of Innocence*. Amy Lowell in her poem "Patterns" (1916:3-9) jogs along for several pages with the underplayed tragedy of a noblewoman in her whaleboned and brocaded gown whose lover has just been killed "in a pattern called a war," and then shrieks out "Christ! What are patterns for?" These tensions are also the stuff of good analyses of ritual. (We return to the theme of dysfunction later, number 4 under "Pitfalls to Avoid.")

Classification of Types (Not Mutually Exclusive)

1. *Rites of Deference*: rituals that show difference in status, ranging from tipping a hat to a lady to prostrating oneself before a throne. These can be indirect, such as the right to interrupt another in conversation or to arrive late for an appointment.

2. *Rites of Passage*: rituals associated with the change of status of an individual or group of individuals—for example, christening, marriage, funeral, initiation. Functions of such rituals are as follows:

a. *Closure*. Rites of passage mark the end of stages of life or of situations. The more public and conscious the ritual, the more those involved are enabled to proceed to the next stage.

b. *Stressing Responsibility*. The new responsibilities taken on by those changing status are stressed—usually by stern injunctions, often by formal speeches. The more elaborate the ritual, the easier it is (ideally) for the individual to forget old habits and learn new ones appropriate to the new role.

c. *Promotion of Familiarity*. "The initiation ceremony . . . promotes stepped up social interaction between the new member and others in the association" (Honigsmann, 1959:513). The wedding reception is sometimes the initial meeting and interaction between the family of the bride and the family of the groom, and (perhaps with the relaxation induced by alcohol) promotes their socializing.

d. *Aid in Readjustment*. Rites of passage almost always disrupt previously existing relations. The ceremony assists those concerned to restore equilibrium in the new arrangement. This function is particularly characteristic of the wake following the death and burial of a prominent and powerful individual. For example, after John F. Kennedy's funeral in 1963, the new president, Lyndon Johnson, held a reception for heads of state of all of the world's principal nations to reassure them that the U.S. government was stable and unshaken.

e. *Solidarity Is Enhanced*. The disrupted portion of society pulls together again and asserts that it is still viable and intact. Most poignant after funerals, but also characteristic of weddings, commencement parties, and so on.

3. *Rites of Intensification*: rituals, for which the main purpose is to reassert social relations, to intensify social bonds. Functions of such rituals are as follows:

a. *Solidarity Is Enhanced*. Most rites of passage are also rites of intensification. See 2e. Hannukah, Thanksgiving, Memorial Day, and weekly religious services are prominent examples of rites of intensification that are not rites of passage.

b. *Activation of Status Relationships*. Helps maintain status systems by giving them the excuse to operate (e.g., Rex and Commus at New Orleans Mardi Gras; inauguration of a president, coronation of a monarch). See also "Defiance" (number 1). The four-day purification of Cherokee hunters or warriors as they return to the village marks their change of status, providing the decompression chamber during which men switch from red (war) to white (peace) organization of the village. See also 3d.

c. *Value Retention*. Patriotic (including academic) ceremony promotes loyalty and also the particular values for which the institution prides itself. Reaffirmations like the pledge of allegiance to the flag and the repetition of wedding vows by everyone in the congregation at a wedding are clear-cut examples. Similar but not identical to 3b.

d. *Achievement of New Adjustments*. See 3b. and 2d. In relation to a seasonal cycle, for instance, ritual helps a community switch from the activities appropriate to the growing portion of the year to those appropriate to the saving portion. Among the Chukchee, when the young men and women return seasonally with their reindeer herds to base camp, ritual helps them adjust back to stricter parental control.

4. *Rites of Reversal*: prohibitions normally enforced are lifted according to rules of their own—what we have called rules for breaking rules. The grand occasion is the Latin *carnaval*, as celebrated in New Orleans and Rio de Janeiro on the eve of Lent. Smaller occasions are found in smaller circumstances, for example, when the counselors wait on the campers or when (as in the 1950s and 1960s at Colorado College) the graduating seniors kidnap the faculty shortly before commencement, take them to a secluded campground, and get them drunk. One important function is catharsis.

5. *Instrumental Rites*: include magical incantations. Such rites are tricky because actions that to an outsider appear as ritual are likely to be seen by the actors as simply instrumental steps without symbolism (i.e., nonritual). Horace Miner's famous "Body Ritual Among the Nacirema" (1956) uses such contrary interpretations of what people do in the privacy of their bathrooms as material for cultural satire.

MISCELLANEOUS FUNCTIONS SERVED BY RITUAL

1. *Enhancement of Patriotism*: similar to 3c., but going further. For example, "... [in] segmentary tribes of Africa (for example, the Tallensi) each [clan] segment possesses crucial roles in a cycle of rituals that must be completed if *all* the segments are to prosper" (Honigsmann, 1959:516). In Hopi, each clan is responsible for the dance rituals that it performs on behalf of the whole village—rain, good crops, and so on.

2. *Avoidance of Conflict*: often associated with kin (e.g., avoidance of mother-in-law among the Navajo to keep relations smooth). These are "zero rituals" because they symbolically express appropriate sentiments by *inactions*.

3. *Symbolic Suppression of Evil*: "Step on a crack, break you mother's back." Rites of purification, exorcism, expiation after crisis. "The gods are offended, we must propitiate them." In Western culture, the Lord's Prayer, the jail sentence, the fine, and the religious penance are important examples.

4. *Allaying Anxiety*: the psychosomatic aspect of ritual. The Hopi village feels better after the rain dance, whether rain comes or not. The athlete is not so disheartened after losing a game if he has done his psyching-up ritual correctly. "We have done all we mortals could do."

PITFALLS TO AVOID

1. Ritual and habit are conceptually different, although the performance of a familiar ritual can become habitual. One ties shoelaces the same way each time, cooks, perhaps even gets up and goes to work in the same sequence every morning, simply because repetition saves time and saves the energy of rethinking familiar tasks. No particular sentiments, no symbolic expression. If you are in doubt whether the event you want to describe is ritual or mere habit, return to the definition and ask whether sentiments are being symbolically expressed.

2. The more emotional the situation, the more wine and the less vessel. For example, two students in three decades of ritual papers described coitus as a ritual. Both papers were failures because although the sentiments were abundant, their symbolic, orderly, publicly expected expression was absent. All wine, no vessel. (Sexual congress can be ritualized, but the sexual culture of young Americans is usually private and experimental, hence unlikely to convey the symbols of expected sentiment.)

The opposite, however (all vessel, no wine), is an opportunity and not a pitfall. If you find that the performers of the event you witness are only going through the motions without believing in the emotion or thing symbolized, the openings for analysis are rich. Why do people no longer believe? What cultural change has occurred to crack the vessel and/or evaporate the wine of emotion? We can generalize that cultural form lags somewhat behind changes in sentiment, whether we are talking ritual or some other aspect of culture. Two examples close to home will illustrate: Fathers traditionally escort brides down the wedding aisle, and the bride wears white. The historical significance of the first is that daughters must be protected by their fathers, who hand over that responsibility to husbands at the moment of marriage. As daughter and also as wife, a woman's chastity reflects on the good repute of her family. The historical significance of wearing white is virginity. Why do these customs persist in an age of gender equality, when a woman's marriageability is more likely to depend on her earning power than on her sexual decorum, and when if she is still a virgin by her mid-20s she is suspected of frigidity rather than virtue? The answers at this moment must be tentative: The first custom seems to be slipping away, in favor of rituals that better express not only the independence of young women but the equality of her parents (and of them with the parents of the groom); couples more frequently write their own rituals than they used to. The second custom is, I believe, more resistant to change: The form tends to remain the same, but wearing white is coming to symbolize not sexual purity but purity of soul or something else as nebulous. (But note that brides are still criticized if they wear white at subsequent weddings.) The moral for the student of ritual is that the interplay between form and function is as slippery as the interpretation of poetry.

3. Following logically on number 2, watch out lest the emotions that you as participant experienced during, leading up to, or as a result of, the ritual overwhelm your analysis. Discussion of your own emotions is permissible and may help clarify the analysis, but it is not the core of the task. That core is to discover the symbols used in the ritual to express expected emotions. Use your own emotions as the key to discovering what emotions are expected. But this is anthropology, not autobiography; reflexivity, not navel gazing. Your idiosyncratic life history is not the same thing as cultural interpretation.

4. Because anthropologists usually study what works rather than what doesn't—functions rather than dysfunctions—it would be natural to assume that every ritual works well and that if the analysis doesn't demonstrate how well it works, the student is doing a bad job. Not necessarily. To explain this problem, we shift our metaphor from a wine vessel to theater. I believe the desire to see human life as an art form is programmed in our genes (although I don't think I could prove the point to a sceptic). Certainly every language has its own music. Consistently, we should like all rituals to be harmonious and beautiful and to make their dramatic points with Shakespearean eloquence. But sadly, many dramatists have a poor sense of theater, and many rituals are just badly done. Here are two simple examples: College commencements are supposed to symbolize the best and the highest achievements of academic labor, and academic costuming harks back to our monastic beginnings. Yet many professors wear their regalia sloppily, with jeans and scuffed shoes protruding below their gowns, and some deans stumble over the names of the graduating seniors and can't even pronounce "summa cum laude" with the round sonority which highest honor deserves. (I decline the next obvious step, of complaining about graduating seniors who wear shorts under their gowns and pop champagne bottles as they walk across the podium, because they are often doing good theater of a different kind.) A second example is a court trial in Santa Fe which I both observed and participated in, late in 1967 while doing ethnography on a Spanish village in the Rio Arriba (Kutsche and Van Ness, 1981:166-83). We in the village were the defendants, and I wanted the enemy (the district attorney) to make his case with melodramatic flourishes. He disappointed us by mumbling and mumbling and showing so little preparation that the judge had to provide the case citations of precedents for him. The defense attorney wasn't much better. I felt cheated out of one of the great moments of theater of my professional life.

How are you to handle your ritual if you decide it makes bad theater? (None of the students whose papers are in this volume had to confront this problem.) First, state why you chose it despite its flaws. Second, explain how it lacks the appropriate expression of sentiments. And third, write the scenario it should have followed to express the appropriate sentiments well and memorably. To paraphrase what I have said in other contexts, one can learn as much from cultural forms that don't work as from those that do.

5. The most frequent error students make in this assignment is to get so caught up in telling a tale that they forget to analyze. Long rituals take many pages to describe adequately, and when one has written these pages it is easy to think that the job is done. The best strategy if you are describing, for instance, a wedding with all of its preparatory ceremonies, or the series of events that make a memorable childhood holiday, is to write a fast draft of the whole event, then pick the one portion of it which you want to focus on, writing up in detail only that portion and analyzing it exhaustively, using

the foregoing classification as your framework. Description without analysis is not ethnology at all, but an exercise in creative writing.

FURTHER IN THE SAME DIRECTION

In the long sweep of anthropology's short history, few questions have gripped more of us more deeply than the nature of ritual and its connections with religion, magic, myths, and symbols. In case this assignment whets your appetite, you may pursue the topic in an enormous literature. Useful starting places are two books: Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (1909), and Barbara Myerhoff, *Number Our Days* (1978); and two articles in the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (1968): "Ritual" by Edmund Leach and "Myth and Symbol" by Victor Turner.

Turner's article is curious in that it labels myth a "liminal phenomenon" which marks permanent cultural changes, each with its sequence of status, loss of status, assumption of new status (death/rebirth, infancy/adulthood, etc.), and then depends heavily on van Gennep and Mircea Eliade concerning rites of passage. Leach considers ritual almost exclusively as an aspect of religion. His approach to culture focuses on its public areas and its stability, in contrast to Honigmann's more flexible definition, applicable equally to public and private behavior. Unlike such feminists as Alice Reich, Leach says nothing about each individual's ability to create. For Leach, the sacred seems to occupy much the same place in the dynamics of ritual that the emotions do for Honigmann.

If your interest in ritual turns toward the reversals contained in Mardi Gras and other carnivals, then your best starting point is Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (1968). Rituals themselves, as well as the analysis of ritual, sometimes criticize social structures in poignant ways.

Finally, going "further in the same direction" may lead you to do original research on a topic which, as far as I know, has not been touched by scholars: changes in ritual style during a normal life cycle. People in their late teens and early twenties are usually more interested in rituals that they invent, while older people find that traditional ceremonies fit them better. An alumnus of my introductory course, now in his mid-forties, brought this dichotomy to my attention in 1997. He had been inventive and creative as an undergraduate. Now a business executive with a wife and two children, he travels frequently over much of the globe and must adapt himself to a variety of cultures, one after another—a classically postmodern situation. He told me that he began to experience difficulty finding his way back to domestic life in the suburbs of a big American city. He turned to his ancestral religion and found structure and predictability in its traditional rituals. As he understated it, "Now I know where my family and I will be at the end of every week."