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Abstract
This essay offers a case study of applied video production and a theoretical investigation into strategies for successful video intervention design. It analyzes the challenges of collaboratively producing Maasai Migrants, a short video in the Maa language made to alert traditional and urban Maasai to the dangers of city life – unemployment, homelessness, racism and HIV. An analysis of how one maximizes the benefits of video production with in-country collaborators is complemented by an examination of post-screening, facilitated discussions with the audience: intervention films can be understood as Freirian codifications the discussion of which can be deeply analogous with crisis-group psychotherapy.
Collaboration in Conflict:
Strategies for an Applied Visual Anthropology

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Introduction

This essay presents the research and theoretical foundations for a project in applied, collaborative, visual anthropology. The project took place in Tanzania, through a collaboration with representatives of two Maasai-governed NGOs. Its goal was to design, script, produce, edit and screen a 22-minute video, *Maasai Migrants* (Biella 2009a). The primary audiences of the video are urban migrant and rural, homestead-bound Tanzania Maasai. I hope that the video and the present report of the project’s achievements and problems can also serve as a guide and case study for future related work.

The *Maasai Migrants Project* is an experiment in partnership and mutual education among in-country NGO board members, representative rural and urban Maasai, myself—an American visual anthropology professor—and my students. The idea was taken from Paulo Freire (1972, 1985) and a Southern African initiative in AIDS education films called *Steps for the Future* (Chislett et al. 2003). The first half of this paper, sections I and II, introduces the project’s ethnographic context and antecedents. Then follows a pragmatic discussion of the video’s pre-production and production stages, and the problems and solutions that the project collaborators worked out. I describe the practicalities of collaborative ethnographic filmmaking in these stages with the goal of offering suggestions that may help others, in part by warning them against making our mistakes.

We screened *Maasai Migrants* four times in the last week of the project, and the experience raised many unexpected practical and theoretical problems. I was forced to revise my understanding of collaboration in applied visual anthropology. The ideas presented in the second half of this paper, sections III and IV, explore collaboration with reference to *film viewers*. They consider post screening discussions from three theoretical perspectives, each of which throws different light on the possibilities of group activism in the screening room. The perspectives are Freire’s dialectical pedagogy, the facilitated-discussion of “trigger films,” and group psychotherapy.
I. Project Context

I-a. Ethnographic Overview

Maasai and other Tanzanian pastoralists constitute only 3% of the national population, yet East African cattle herders are famous throughout the world. Their image is borrowed, for example, by the national tourist industry in posters and billboards which present handsome leaping warriors as a metaphor for the attractions of the country as a whole. Yet, over the last thirty years, the image and reality have greatly diverged.

Doomsday predictions of “The Last of the Maasai” are more than a century old (Rigby 1992), but historical circumstances have recently congealed into a complex of crises that threaten the pastoralist lifestyle more seriously than ever before. Catastrophic events contributing to the destruction of pastoralism as the source of wealth include new cattle diseases and disease vectors, government sedentarization policies that forbid transhumant movement of cattle, and the increasing number of agricultural enclosures (May and McCabe 2004). The decreasing viability of pastoralism has also led to crises in the human sphere, notably in the last decade a massive migration of young men seeking employment, and the rise of average daily temperature (May and Ole Ikayo 2007). In urban contexts, the famous isolation, iconoclasm and “undeveloped” traditionalism – with which Maasai have mesmerized tourists – place the population in a precarious situation.
migrants at great risk. New urban contact with members of the dominant society has exposed Maasai to HIV. Infected young men return to the homestead, introducing the virus into the traditional sexual matrix which by Western standards is very promiscuous (Coast 2006, 2007; Talle 2007). Tuberculosis is the most common fatal conclusion to HIV among Maasai as in Tanzania generally. Maasai social order is also disrupted by rising birth rates, growing alcoholism, high incidence of intimate partner abuse and the decline of the age-set as the overarching principle of social organization.

The new crisis of the Maasai is also exacerbated by the long history of hostile détente between the once-wealthy and austere pastoralists and their relatively impoverished agricultural neighbors. Now that the worm has turned, with the wealth producing pastoralist lifestyle vanishing, farming peoples who have long been dominant politically and numerically find ample opportunities to take revenge for past injustices, imagined and real (cf. Beidelman 1964).

In cities, Maasai men find themselves untrained for almost all except marginal employment as night watchmen and hairdressers; urban Maasai women act as bead workers and sellers of traditional herbs. Although urban Maasai now feel the weight of economic marginalization, social ostracism and their vanishing patrimony, many men continue to preserve their image of cultural and even sexual otherness. This image is supported partly by their insistence on wearing ilkarash, the traditional togas in bright reds, blues and purples that distinguish them visually from the city’s dominant non-pastoralist ethnic groups (May and Ole Ikayo 2007).

Unprotected sexual encounters with city women are numerous and commonplace. Yet they pop the bubble of traditionalism and isolation that protected Maasai from the epidemic. The large-scale migration trend has existed for only the last fifteen years, and it brought the Maasai, later than most other sub-Saharan groups, into HIV’s exponential epidemic curve. Educational intervention is thus very important now.

1-b. Antecedents and Goals

Much of my earlier work has contributed to the Maasai Migrants Project. My dissertation was a multimedia exploration of conflict resolution among Maasai (Biella 1984, 1988). I have written on cross-cultural AIDS education media (Biella, Hennessy and Orth 2004) and applied visual anthropology (2008, 2009c), consulted on an applied multimedia initiative (Ridington and Hennessy 2006) and shot several other applied films (Biella 1987, 2006, 2008b; Biella and Drufovka 1989; Jackson 1992) before the recent spate of Maasai works (Biella 2009a, 2009b; Biella, Kamerling and Meigaro forthcoming). In addition, over the last ten years, I have taught a course in applied anthropological film production at San Francisco State University (Biella 2008a).

In this paper I describe three characteristics of the Maasai Migrants Project – collaboration, facilitated screenings and message longevity. My understanding of collaboration emerged from the theories of Paulo Freire, whose Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1972) and subsequent writings champion liberatory collaboration among the poor in Latin America. Like Freire’s work, and like many
current instances of community-based participatory research, the current project seeks a collaborative – non-hierarchical, grassroots-generated – educational strategy.

The second characteristic of the *Maasai Migrants Project*, *facilitated screenings*, takes inspiration from several bodies of literature, first from the *Steps for the Future* films made in Southern Africa. There, facilitated discussions transform post-screening conversations into activist interventions (Englehart 2003, Levine 2003, Stadler 2003). In a similar way, my students and I have produced a number of indigenous language films for use as catalysts, what Freire (1985) calls *codifications*. Facilitated screenings share many properties with photo elicitation techniques described by Collier and Collier (1987), Vacheret (2005), and Bessell, Deese and Medina (2007). A particularly useful group of essays describes audience discussion of “trigger films,” half-story vignettes in which an open-ended plot and the absence of moralizing evoke strong audience response (Ber and Alroy 2001, 2002; Fisch 1972). The project’s idea of post-screening, facilitated discussions is also modeled on group psychotherapy (Bion 1959, MacKenzie 1997, Wheelan 1997, Yalom and Leszcz 2005).

The *Maasai Migrants Project* seeks *longevity*. I am developing long-term relationships with Tanzania Maasai NGOs, and expect to continue bringing graduate students to an applied visual field school I’ve established in Dar es Salaam (Biella 2009c). I hope that our work will inspire similar projects.

In the following, I offer ethnographic vignettes from the history of the *Maasai Migrants* collaborative process, our strategies and errors. I do so because I believe that the ethnographic details of this narrative are memorable, and may allow useful comparisons with the readers’ own applied experience. Within this narrative, I will also embed general observations about collaboration, film collaboration, facilitated screenings and project longevity.

**II. Collaborations**

**II-a. American university students as collaborators**

The problems posed by migration and HIV for any cultural group are so serious that a realistic effort at tackling them must include many media campaigns, many people, many organizations and many lifetimes. In fighting AIDS and in other applied struggles, we can only give what we have. The present study presents one strategy, one that is reasonable for me as a media-maker and teacher. I can maximize the contribution of my talents not only by producing HIV-educational films but also by doing so in collaboration with film students and other HIV educators.

The Freirian approach to development premises that students and educators are very much alike; both must learn through a sequence of exposures to the world they seek to change. Thus my graduate students – four of whom have accompanied me over the last two years, are my first collaborators in *Maasai Migrants* field school. As I do, they must experience exposure to the
problems and struggles in the field as well as first-hand reality-testing of possible interventions. What they learn will affect their own teaching in the future, and will keep the idea of applied collaborative filmmaking alive. Their commitment is part of my strategy for longevity.

Despite the relative economic security of American students compared with the insecurity of most of our Tanzanian collaborators, my students nevertheless face great difficulties. They have elected to be documentary filmmakers, to follow a career that entails incessant rejection and all but guarantees income expectations well below the norm of America’s educated elite. My students’ moral commitment, dedication to their art and global vision sustain them. I admire them, but also understand why they are few and why they are often anxious.

II-b. Selection of Maasai collaborators

In the literature of applied action research, the identification and selective involvement of representative stakeholders is fundamental (e.g. Chevalier 2007). In the Freirian model, however, the identification of teacher/learner collaborators is not the main issue of interest: we are here and here is how we try to understand and fight oppression. In the Maasai Migrants Project, given my Freirian prejudice and the limitations imposed by my summer funding, I did not have the means to create a team of stakeholders who were perfectly representative. In practice, applied anthropologists work with a determinate number of individuals whose individual qualities color the interventions undertaken and the constituencies served.

My commitment to the unscientific selection of collaborators began earlier, on an unrelated translation project: a friend in California asked his friend at the University of Dar es Salaam to screen potential translators for me. On the basis of a very strong recommendation, I hired Simon, a 27-year old olmurrani (a member of the so-called “warrior” age-grade) over the telephone. In addition to the element of chance in my selection, it was precisely the fact that Simon is not a typical Maasai migrant stakeholder that allowed me to find him. He is atypical not only because of his advanced degree, but because he is a devout Anglican. Religion made possible the education Simon needed to serve his people. At an early age in Arusha, he had been identified by a minister as being unusually adept in school. This recognition led to a place in a live-in grade school and eventually to a BS degree in development economics. Of course, to a large extent, Simon’s education removed him from daily involvement with his original community, just as his conversion to Christianity made him different from traditional Maasai.

I trusted Simon to make the key decisions about choosing our project collaborators, including the sponsoring NGO that the Tanzanian office of research, COSTECH, required us to have. Simon selected a very young organization presided over by his close friend from Arusha, Rosie Tureto. The two of them became chief project consultants in the first year.
Both collaborators were deeply committed to serving the communities of their birth, as well as the migrant communities in Dar es Salaam. They saw film first as a means to serve as a fundraising tool for Rosie’s NGO; eventually, after long talks, they also began to understand film’s potential as a rallying point for community solidarity.

Yet both Simon and Rosie were fresh out of the university, and their city experiences had focused them on the world of the ivory tower. As we were to discover, they did not command a full repertoire of the strategies and local knowledge that would have saved us considerable conflict in filming and screening in the city.

**II-c. Non-hierarchical collaboration in a hierarchical world**

The Freirian approach to education emphasizes the need for reciprocity and equality between “educator” and “learner.” Yet important lacunae in the vision of non-hierarchical collaboration emerged soon after we began our project’s five-week residence in Dar es Salaam. In the first place, my status as a European from whom money could be made to flow with little effort destabilized the non-hierarchy, creating difficulties I did not completely comprehend at first. My constant pilgrimages to the ATMs subverted aspects of our collaboration. When I finally protested that I was not the project’s sugar daddy, Rosie confessed to me a joke that circulated among her friends when she was in school:

*Girls are lipstick. Boys are ATM.*

Even before I learned how much I had been milked, this humor did not appeal to me. I was more annoyed when I learned six months later that my collaborators had unblushingly accepted three or four times the normal beginning salary for such services as they provided.¹

In addition to the fact that my ATM card kept me above equality and, like a Maasai cow, also below it and vulnerable to daily milking, other irreducible attributes of who I was and was perceived to be also influenced the tenor of the collaboration. Maasai society is strongly segmented by age and sex hierarchies. My status as a male elder (I was 58 that year), working with Maasai in their late twenties, unavoidably called up in them traditional attitudes of respect and sometimes unthinking subservience. I too unthinkingly asserted my own culture-bound attitudes and expectations. I found myself, for example, often nagging Rosie to assert herself, state her opinions and exercise in practice the feminist theory to which she had been exposed at the university. Yet long before taking her baccalaureate in women’s studies, Rosie had been thoroughly indoctrinated

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¹ When my linguist friend suggested that I offer a salary of $50 a day, I did not quibble because I could only think about how much less it was than one would reasonably pay for such services in the US. Difficulties with this attitude are discussed in the main text.
into the practices of modesty and silence before men. This training naturally influenced her performance as project collaborator. I never doubted her intelligence, but her first reply to most of my questions or appeals for advice was, “I don’t know, Peta. I don’t know anything about film. You are the expat.”

A breakthrough moment occurred two weeks into the project. My student Shamia, Rosie, Simon and I had just seated ourselves at the dinner table, our female cook having brought us the serving bowls of vegetables and stew. I stood up, collected dishes and began to serve out individual portions. When I handed Rosie a plate, she nearly fell off her chair. After she recovered herself, she said, “I have never been served food by a man before.” Later, she added, “I learned more feminism that moment than in four years at university.”

This event led to other discussions and insights about the nature of egalitarian collaboration. Rosie told me that none of her university professors had ever asked her opinion about anything. They had never left important decisions to her. She said she was very grateful to me for showing her something that she had not known was possible.

Rosie was the chairperson of the NGO with which I had engaged to collaborate. I sometimes saw her take a firm hand with the male members of her board of directors, men her own age. More often I saw in her a reluctance to criticize when in my opinion criticism would have been appropriate. Thus, my vision – or Freire’s – of collaborative equality with this Maasai woman was often frustrated.

Simon and I usually worked very well together. I appreciated his strong work ethic. He was also very ambitious. At the university, he spent a great deal of time cultivating leadership qualities that would serve his lifetime goal of helping Maasai. In the more than five hundred hours Simon and I worked together, we were threatened by emotional clashes only a few times. In such times, I would revert to volatility and irritability, and he to touchiness and suppressed anger. I was most prone to useless anger when Simon kept me out of the loop too long or vanished in the middle of a shoot when he imagined he was not needed. On his side, Simon’s cultural training as a commanding and assertive “warrior” – and his subsequent academic achievement – made him most vulnerable to anger when he felt disrespected. Twice, when I too strongly criticized something he had done, he became resentful and seemed almost ready to abandon the project.

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2 Devoutly Lutheran, Rosie told us near the end of the project that she had never been inside a movie theater and had never seen a film. She had somehow formed the idea that the first film she saw would thoroughly corrupt her morals: she would become addicted to movies and waste the rest of her life watching them.

3 In the subsequent three years of the field school, Simon and I became more accepting of each other’s foibles. Simon was beginning to see filmmaking as part of a strategy he wanted to pursue in his own life work.
The most frequent threats to the equilibrium of our collaboration rose from the fact that we did not all share the same expertise. Such problems included an emotional element, but were usually resolved dispassionately. Shamia and I were firmly resolved to follow whatever ethnographic/content suggestions for the film Rosie and Simon proposed. I was the acknowledged filmmaking expert. Simon knew little or nothing about filmmaking apart from what I had taught him, and he sometimes took my offhand suggestions literally. He sometimes complained if I changed my mind and in the heat of battle – i.e., in the midst of vérité shooting – and pursued what I correctly judged to be an alternative superior to the plan we had earlier agreed upon. Similarly, my Maasai book-knowledge, inexperience and impetuousness occasionally caused me to try to contravene my Maasai colleagues’ expert opinions. I would, for example, propose to keep filming or ask more questions after Simon or Rosie told me it was definitely time to stop. Despite the fact that project members agree in the abstract to honor one another’s expert knowledge and competences, the practice of doing so is surprisingly difficult.

Let’s consider these observations in terms of the following definition: collaborators are people who, in pursuit of a common project and goal, join together to overcome sometimes unpredictable challenges because they believe each can contribute unique capacities and expertise necessary for success. The accounts given above show that conflicts in collaboration arise because expertise requires, on different occasions, both assertiveness and meekness. First, when salaries are paid to make collaboration possible, as often occurs when projects are initiated by outside applied anthropologists, the capacity to control the purse strings invites the paymaster to become stingy and the payees to pad their expenses. Second, team members may resist asserting their expertise because assertiveness in the past was forbidden, whether for reasons of gender, age or ethnic discrimination. Third, since some project tasks must be performed in the heat of battle, and without the opportunity to confer or explain, collaborators may be left in the dark for long periods of time, possibly grumbling that prior agreements have not been kept. This can tap emotions concerning fear and betrayal. And fourth, the task that one team member is selected to perform on the basis of his or her expertise may be criticized from the expert vantage point of another. This may cause feelings of wounded pride, tension and anger.

A shakedown period is thus necessary at the beginning of each collaboration: in this period, people come to understand the consequences of their agreement to work together, to learn what kinds of courage are required by their commitment, weathering the painful and the unexpected and honoring the sometimes difficult consequences of exercising and accepting expertise.
II-d. Collaborating in selecting the film topic

On the previous trip, I had discussed with Simon the need for films in the Maa language – didactic films on Maasai civil rights, HIV, and the illegal and often poisonous home-brewed alcohol called *gongo*. When Shamia and I arrived the next summer to begin what I anticipated would be a five-year process of producing and distributing these and related films, I was anxious to let the subject of the first be selected by Simon and Rosie, in consultation with our other advisors.\(^4\) I would have preferred to begin by making a Maa language film on the dangers of HIV. Yet I was happy to accept the decision of Rosie and Simon that we should instead produce an overview of harsh conditions faced by Maasai who migrated to Dar es Salaam. Such a film, they argued, could be used as a fundraiser for their NGO – and also be a prudent, doable choice for our first film.

The entire project would last only five weeks – I’d assigned one for settling in and deciding on the film topic, two for filming and translating, two for editing and one for screening. The success of a film about alcoholism or HIV, they believed, would require our subjects to give painful autobiographical accounts: we all believed that we could not inspire behavior change with baldly didactic messages (“Don’t drink – Don’t be promiscuous”): difficult topics needed to be buttressed

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\(^4\) Our selection process is documented in Sandles’ film, *Subject to Change* (2010).
with personal stories. Simon and Rosie felt awkward in asking to record intimate stories from migrants they hardly knew: they doubted that they would be able win enough confidence in the little time we had. Further, Simon and Rosie feared that films about taboo subjects like sex or alcoholism would seem so inappropriate that Maasai viewers would refuse to engage in the post-screening discussions on which we based so much hope.  

**II-e. Maasai collaborators in the field, preparing the way for filming**

Before the project began, Simon, Rosie and I had agreed by email and telephone that we would work with migrants who spent their days beside a garbage dump near Mwenge, one of Dar es Salaam’s huge, open-air markets. Mwenge was near the university, and Simon said he knew it well. A month before Shamia and I arrived, I asked him and Rosie to begin conversing with Maasai members of the market community, explaining our purpose, gaining whatever permissions would be necessary for us to film. Up until that time, I had only filmed Maasai in a wealthy rural community, where the age-set organization and kin-groups were functioning well (Biella 1984). I did not anticipate the complications (obvious in retrospect) of filming an acephalous collection of individuals, bereft of family members, each one grindingly, desperately poor.

So, when Simon and Rosie assured me in emails that everything was ready and we would have no problem filming in the market, I believed them. As it turned out, Simon had not visited the market at all and Rosie had done so only once, casually mentioning to a single individual that someone with a camera might come by. Her preparation, of course, was entirely inadequate. I should have been much more cautious, reconnoitering the situation myself, in advance. I did not do so because I did not realize how university life might deprive Simon and Rosie of street smarts. I did not do so because I trusted that my collaborators would figure out what was needed and would do it, because I was anxious to begin, and because (as we have seen) I’m impetuous. When we showed up in the Mwenge market on the first day, none of us anticipated the sensation that the arrival of a white film crew would make.

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5 In the next year’s field school, we did manage to achieve such intimacy through a month long stay in the rural homesteads of two Ilparakuyo men I first knew in 1980. Films made in the season of 2009 by my students Michael Crammond and Kellen Prandini (2010), and Megan Alldis – and by Biella, Kamerling and Meigaro (forthcoming) – did focus on alcohol, spousal abuse and HIV. I discuss ethical and practical aspects of our cinematic assault on these homesteads in Biella (forthcoming).

6 Shamia is African American, but to the Maasai she was just one more strange European.
Shamia, Simon and I arrived as Rosie’s entourage, burdened – in fact, hamstrung – with cameras, headphones, boom and mike. The man with whom Rosie once chatted had left the city. While the rest of us stood by, she conversed with several other Maasai men and women, all sitting on collapsed boxes in the dirt by the garbage piles, offering snuff and beads for sale. Everyone demanded to be paid if they were to be filmed. Finally, Rosie found a junior elder named Daudi, a man who had authority to speak for the group. He was assertive, even belligerent. European tourists had money, he said, and they must pay. They must pay him, and he would distribute to the group.

Rosie retorted that she was not European. She was Maasai. She headed a Maasai NGO, and our film would benefit Maasai. We were not tourists – why would tourists want to photograph garbage? We were all researchers, from the university. None of Rosie’s truths made any impression. Daudi simply said, I’m sure quite truthfully, that he’d heard it all before: people claiming that their research would help Maasai, taking information, taking pictures, never being seen again, never giving anything back. We could pay or leave.

I watched Rosie’s efforts at persuasion escalate into a shouting match, irrationally feeling in the process increasingly infantilized. The argument had become rapid-fire, preventing any effort to translate for me or even act as if I ought to be kept in the loop. Why should I be? My function was ATM. It wasn’t much later that I started getting angry at Rosie for not having done her job weeks earlier. Of course, it was impossible for Rosie to argue the merits or negotiate with the money-laden film crew standing right there. Yet I could not stay mad at Rosie for very long. It was obvious why no one here wanted a film showing that poverty had forced them not only out of their rural homesteads but also out of the market itself, only permitted to sell their trinkets by the garbage dump.

The reality of the situation was beginning to sink in on me. I was mentally transforming Daudi into tens of thousands of others who had also been displaced and were suffering the same fate. I was allowing myself to feel horror and mortification at my impotence before the catastrophe that had hit the Maasai, people whose image of wealth and beauty I had preserved in the amber of my mind and photographs for thirty years.

However … it seemed clear that Daudi and a couple of his age-mates who were standing near him were opportunists – men whose decisions influenced group behavior but who were not finally answerable to the group. They were certainly not legitimate age-set spokesmen (ilaiguuenak) or they would have said they were. Despite this, and against long-standing policy, I acquiesced to the demand. If I intended this film to be shot in the next two weeks, the ATM would have to make up for the lack of proper preproduction work. Eventually I admitted to myself that giving money in these circumstances was the only ethical thing to do.7 We paid Daudi, and also paid each of the individuals we interviewed,

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7 I had never filmed people who were so desperately in need of money. I had always before been able to believe that if people who knew what I was doing
assuming rightly that they would see little of what Daudi and his friends took for
themselves.

Our local collaborators should not have assumed that indigenous
leadership could be ignored. What our best preproduction strategy should have
been was clear in retrospect. In a rural homestead the correct thing would have
been for us to approach senior elders, long in advance, men who would
traditionally have vetted such requests. Unfortunately, senior elders are
conspicuously absent in urban migrant populations. Acting in their stead are
elected ilmurran age-set spokesmen, several of whom, we discovered, were
present in Dar es Salaam. They lead monthly meetings which hundreds of
Maasai night watchmen attend. These men should have been our primary
contacts; they should have been courted, shown films of the kind we wanted to
make, and convinced that film education could be a benefit to Maasai. In the
absence of senior elders and age-set leaders, a poor third choice and the only
other source of authority for these migrant splinters in an already acephalous
society were leaders in Christian ministries. They exercise great influence over
urban Maasai. We did later seek help from these men, but our intentions were
drowned in the shouts of religious proselytizing (Sandles 2010).

II-f. Maasai as collaborators during shooting

I would like now to turn attention to a series of pragmatic suggestions for
working with inexperienced local people in the production or shooting stage of
anthropological filmmaking. Like the other stages of collaborative filmmaking,
production requires 100% participation from key personnel. When shooting the
sort of project described here, in-country team members may well have
responsibility for interviewing and providing at least partial, ongoing translation.

Interviewing, like the other major components of collaborative expertise,
involves subtleties that easily go unrecognized. I’ll discuss two qualities that
collaborators should discuss before beginning to film. The first is knowing how
to stay on point; second is knowing when to wander off point.

A good interviewer keeps the broad narrative conversation of the film in
mind while directing the interviewee to provide small building blocks and details.
The interviewee does not need be aware of her role in the conversation, but the
interviewer does. The interviewer must therefore be trained to work in a state of

asked for money in exchange for speaking to the camera, someone else who
believed in what I was doing would speak for free.

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8 Many useful commentaries on documentary interviewing are available (e.g.
double consciousness, seeking testimony that is locally meaningful and also completely on point. When interview statements reverberate with deep themes of the film, they become larger than themselves and attain a crucial artistic quality that Langer (1958; cited in Goffman 1974) calls *dense significance*. In the documentary, this means that they satisfy the implicit contract between filmmaker and film interpreters: the details are not only implied by filmmakers and inferred by viewers to be in some sense real but also representative of something legitimate and important.⁹ Seeing the type in the token is the first requirement of documentary filmmaking.

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⁹ In Biella (2009c), I discuss illusions that Barthes (1977) argues together create the *realism effect*. My purpose here is to describe how, by implicit agreement, viewers understand filmmakers to have explained things, not how things really are.
Beginning interviewers must also learn sufficient presence of mind to know when to allow an interview answer to wander from the anticipated topic. Here too, a state of double consciousness is needed to sense when seemingly off-topic material may serve the broad goals of the film in an unexpected but important way. Of course, the benefits of vérité double-consciousness go well beyond permitting sensitive interviews. Simultaneous co-presence in the moment of shooting and in the editing room becomes a part of all filming. Especially in early phases of production, makers often follow a hunch and diverge from the plan, intuiting that some latent nuance may later become more conscious, an inherent double meaning made more apparent through supplemental footage. Simon and I called hunch-based shooting “thinking on our feet,” and doing it well is, for me, the most gratifying part of documentary filmmaking.10

The production stage of filming will also go more smoothly between collaborators with advance lessons in the physical nuts and bolts of film recording. Such lessons need to be practiced more than once to be mastered. In the following, I offer a list of valuable production crew lessons, some less obvious and intuitive than others.

The interviewer must remain still while the subject is speaking, using exaggerated nonverbal gestures in place of spoken confirmations. Additional crew should not talk or make eye contact with the interviewee during filming. The interviewer should encourage brief answers and insure that whatever question has been asked is implied in the answer. Moreover, according to some film conventions, the interviewer needs to stay outside the picture frame, aware of the requirements of mike placement and eye-line matches.

When shooting interviews, if a crew has the luxury of four members, three are assigned specific roles: camera, sound and interviewer. The fourth crew member does everything else – but may be tempted to wander off, if it seems that there is nothing to do when filming is going well. Yet moments often arise when a fourth crew member is needed immediately, during interviews and other kinds of shooting. In addition to retrieving film gear as needed, that person should keep an eye on the visual space being recorded, dissuading, for example, gawkers from entering the shot. The fourth person can also help prevent mistakes by listening to the interview and insuring that needed information has

10 The following description of Galileo’s research method, taken from a novel by Robinson (2009), gives the sense of vérité’s non-scientific method: “Galileo was not quite sure what change was having what effect, but it was too interesting to slow down and isolate the variables to make sure of things, except when pursuing a crucial point. The epistemology of the hunt was to follow one thing after another, without much of an overall plan.” Only once the interesting data were collated might the hunches be considered scientifically.
actually been recorded. Finally, the fourth member can sometimes record a simultaneous translation.

When shooting is in the vérité documentary style, the close proximity of a fourth crew member is even more valuable. Vérité filmmakers are sure to need the attentive help of collaborators much of the time. This is particularly true when filmmakers do not understand the language or context well.

Local collaborators do not always remember to provide the updates that are needed to keep non-fluent filmmakers competent. Native speakers have comparatively little trouble understanding new situations and new people, and may believe that the shooters comprehend the situation as well as they do. In fact, the outsiders need remedial care and guidance: for example, the camera operator must be told the roles of the key participants in the scene and the plot of the event being filmed. The best policy is for the native speaker to state the obvious, who is who, what is going on, and what is likely to happen.

The local collaborators’ attention in vérité shooting must also focus on technical assistance. When, for example, shooting conditions are so hurried that there is no time to set up a tripod, an available crew member should without instruction get the tripod ready. As a general rule, extra crew members should maintain regular eye contact with the camera and sound operators. This is essential because the sound person may need a boom, a wind screen, a second mike and cable. The camera person may need a chair, lens cleaner or something more unusual – like a biscuit or jacket.

Finally, as much as possible, non-shooting collaborators can help the project by thinking about the needs of the film, proposing new things to shoot, new ideas to consider. Learning to think like a filmmaker is more difficult than recognizing when a tripod or mike is required, and such learning only comes with experience. Yet the local collaborators’ sensitivity and initiative will flourish with encouragement from more experienced members of the crew.

All types of filmmaking depend on effective, often long-distance communication. Confirmed meetings fall through, potential film subjects change their minds at the last moment. Film collaborators can fight this entropy by keeping cell phones turned on and supplied with credit. (In Tanzania, cell phone access is provided on a pay-as-you go basis.) These are elemental components of readiness, and may be difficult for collaborators who have lived so close to the edge that they ordinarily purchase only enough phone credit to last a few hours at a time.

**II-g. Maasai as collaborating film subjects**

Because our film concerned urban Maasai migrants, we sought collaboration with representative members of that community. We created a focus group whose floating membership was paid each day we met. They did not give fresh filming ideas, but lent their support to ideas proposed by the educated members of Rosie’s NGO. On the ground, they gave informed moral support when describing our goals to others in the market. One paved the way
for our filming in the ghastly sleeping quarters that appear in the film (depicted in Figure 1), and discusses the fate of sick and elderly Maasai women in Dar es Salaam. Board members of Rosie’s NGO arranged for us to shoot various scenes. Mama Ana’s connections with the local Lutheran church made it possible for us to film the Maasai women’s chorus; Mark, the entrepreneur, led us to the restaurant where *ilmurran* played pool; John, the board’s only night watchman, was our most important liaison with the Mwenge community. He told us about the incident of chopping down shade trees to drive Maasai away, introduced us to hairdressers, and discovered for us the story of the young night watchman whose stores were robbed. John also became the film’s narrator.

Rosie and Simon were probably correct in predicting that we would find more Maasai willing to participate in a film about urban poverty than about alcohol abuse or AIDS. Yet poverty, too, was a deeply repugnant topic and, for the people who spoke about it, both painful and shameful. The fact that we paid individuals to speak about it acknowledged their expertise and gave their testimony more dignity. Yet when we filmed migrants in conditions about which they were proud or happy – the church, the pool hall, and the hairdressing corner – no one requested payment, and we had to be told to provide snacks as a return gift. In such situations, the thresholds of suspicion were lower, and the goals of the project, along with the credentials of our Maasai collaborators, were judged to be legitimate. The obvious fact that Shamia and I really were not – and did not behave like – tourists was not questioned.

When I came to understand that street interviewees would need payment, I thought first of contributing a gift that would serve many people at once – a cow, apartment rent for six months. Elder and Kamerling provide a useful model in this regard, as they offered collectively valuable gifts to reciprocate the privilege of filming in Eskimo villages (Elder 1995). Unfortunately, given the mobility of the migrant population, no one approved of a gift whose value was only realized over time and would be shared communally. The migrants were trapped in a war of all against all.11

11 A Maasai elder with decades of experience as an NGO consultant told me that he is opposed to making any payments for services rendered on legitimate development projects. Though he provides sodas and bus fare to focus group participants, he says that larger payment will make later projects impossible. After the Americans have gone home, his clients will continue to expect American-sized wages from him. He says that even the gift of a cow would be detrimental in the long run, since a cow as resource is “owned and managed” by a family, not an entire community. This tough love idea of development is painful to accept, but I see wisdom in it. In any event, the idea of a community-centered gift can only succeed if proposed by highly credible advocates who enjoy a long-term presence in the community.
Alluding briefly to an issue that I discuss more thoroughly elsewhere (Biella forthcoming), I want to mention the role of payments (spoken of as gifts) in the second, 2009, project season. At that time, my students, translators, Kamerling and I filmed in two rural Ilparakuyo homesteads. There, I offered money to the male homestead elders, two of my “brothers” from my 1980 fieldwork. I was led to understand that they would pass on a portion of my gift to their wives, alleviating the costs of food which their wives would have to purchase and prepare for us. I eventually realized, however, that the wives of one brother received little or no money from their husband. He had forced them, on their own, to scrape together enough extra food to feed four more people, while he drank the proceeds. This not only affected the nutritional content of my students’ and colleagues’ meals, but also added to the wives’ long-standing resentment against the husband, and even contributed to an incident of wife beating.

In hindsight, I see that I should have told the male heads of household from the outset that we wanted to offer regular gifts of money both to him and to each of his wives responsible for providing us with food and care. We could not propose to “pay” them for the difficulty of caring for a guest, since that runs contrary to traditional notion of hospitality and role of the hostess. But even providing gifts to women is problematic, since the Ilparakuyo husbands I know were not pleased about their wives having money of their own. Still, the invasion of a non-contributing film crew is already so contrary to tradition that contributing to a little more marital turmoil is justified if it can ease the suffering of the wives.

III. Facilitated screenings

III-a. Maasai film viewers as collaborators

In the United States, seekers of public television funding for documentaries are told that they must have an audience of twenty million viewers. Little more than watching the commercials along with the program content is asked of this audience. The educational impact of any one program – for example, a PBS special – is hardly more than a rivulet in the American public’s six-hour television viewing tsunami, 365 days a year. By contrast, in the applied visual anthropological productions that I envision, the audience goal is met if we have only twenty viewers per screening, a total perhaps of five thousand viewers over several years. Because of the difficulty of arranging screenings, we cannot deliver our “full educational service” (film screenings and discussions) to more. Yet, too, because of the special circumstances after screenings, we do expect much more from those who view the films. The goal of this project is for post-screening facilitators to create a memorable relationship with the audience and, most important, for audience members to realize opportunities for future collaborative relationships among themselves.

Our films are memorable and unprecedented for Maasai, not only because the pastoralists are unaccustomed to seeing any films at all, but because almost no films address their own problems in their own language. The goal of these
works is to win viewers’ attention with the conditions they see on screen, then
develop progressive dialogue in post-screening discussions. Ideally, afterwards
in their communities, they put what they have discussed into practice.

My inspiration for this activist use of film comes from writings by Englehart
(2004), Levine (2004) and Stadler (2004). They discuss the reactions of
Southern African audiences to AIDS educations films produced in the Steps for
the Future Film Project (Chislett et al. 2004). Their accounts of transformed
hearts – crowds empowered to the point of ousting gang members from the
screening room, expectant mothers choosing against precedent to be tested for
HIV – inspired me to emulate the model.

Yet we had great difficulty showing our work. Religious leaders attempted
to co-opt the purpose of facilitated screening in our first public presentation of
Maasai Migrants, in a Dar es Salaam Lutheran church. The discussion was
dominated by evangelical proselytizers. Hardly a sentence was uttered about
Maasai migrants, urban poverty, ethnic discrimination or the need for strength
and solidarity. A few days later, a hostile migrant leader tried to transform our
second screening into a reverse parody of pay-for-view. Yet many people came,
and since the gathering took place in a school house, where the atmosphere was
secular, important statements – though not discussions – found listeners (see
Figure 5). A third showing in a rural homestead sparked discussions that were
particularly sympathetic to the plight of city women and focused on advantages of
rural mixed production (Figure 3). Despite difficulties, then, we did reach about
120 viewers and began to hear collaborative, activist rhetoric. Sandles’ (2010)
documentary depicts the process.
Educators who use films for applied purposes theorize the efficacy of their activity in different ways. In the following, I will first discuss Paulo Freire’s concept of *codifications*, the collaborative use of imagery theorized to educate and politicize. I will then introduce two perspectives in which the task of post-screening discussions is understood to spark emotional insight and challenge dangerous behavior. I’ll show how the concept of trigger films has developed experimentally over the last thirty years and how an amalgam of post-screening techniques offer an experience analogous to group psychotherapy.

**Ill-b. Facilitated screenings as Freirian pedagogy**

Post-screening discussions can be interpreted as opportunities for psychological catharsis, self-discovery and solidarity. In addition, however, they also create the opportunity for very powerful educational insights. Paulo Freire (1972, 1985) shows a close relationship between the pain of self discovery – and the group therapeutic discovery of self in others – with the pain of pedagogical revelation: the political discovery of self-defeating attitudes and practices.

The *Steps/Maasai Migrants* screenings, followed by facilitated discussions, are examples of a classic Freirian pedagogical strategy called *codification* (Freire 1985:51). The term refers both to texts which educators bring to be discussed and to the process by which learners discuss and deconstruct them. Codifications as texts are described by Freire as pictures or representations of *concrete* reality that can be used to stimulate *theoretical* interpretations of reality. Codification images are selected by educators on the basis of their potential to enlighten and underscore the catastrophic, dialectical nature of the “normal.”

[Codifications] problematize situations, present the challenge of reality that the learners confront every day. These texts must embody a challenge in themselves and as such they should be regarded dialectically by the learners and the educator (Freire 1985:22).

The footage of *Maasai Migrants* is “documentary.” Its scenes quote specific occurrences of the social concrete. Because they exemplify much more than they depict, they are quite disturbing.

Consider the first scene of the film, an example of the common situation in which migrant Maasai women in cities are dependent on unrelated older men for their survival. The women are shown waking up, half sheltered by the wall of a dingy urban factory (Figure 1). A junior elder joins them, making jokes at the expense of one whom, we learned, he hardly knows and who is too ill to react to his overtures. She always pushed him off before, he says on camera, when she was well. Now she is too sick to prevent it, and if she tries, he says, he will make her sicker.

Peirce (1931-58) provides vocabulary that is useful in understanding documentary messages of this kind. He suggests a distinction between *tokens*
and *types*. The *token* is like Freire’s *codification*, a physical instance, a concrete example, of a typical condition, the *type*. Types are abstractions and cannot be seen, but they are known through empirical examples. In the scene described, the *token* sexual behavior of the elder contains the essence of the *type*, an urban variation of Maasai urban sexual culture in which the utter economic dependence of women and the widespread incidence of HIV have new, deadly consequences.

The film does not pretend to explain the exact motives of the individuals: this depiction of a concrete event allows many potential interpretations. For example, the scene need not be read as sexual power tactics; the cohort of women present simply laugh uncomfortably at the elder’s brazenness. The ambiguity of the *concrete*, multivalent leakiness of documentary images invites the audience to discuss conditions of migration, gender inequality and poverty from a theoretical point of view.12

The scene is complex because of its ambiguity. It can also present psycho-cultural difficulties for facilitators who are themselves Maasai men. They may be so invested in what Western viewers might consider their sexual privilege that they see only the humor in the token and no consequences in the type. Looked at from an angle less influenced by feminism, they and the women in the scene may be equally invested in traditional Maasai culture in which pre- and post-marriage sexual liaisons are normal (Coast 2007). A commitment to confronting Maasai HIV thus requires of Maasai facilitators substantial self-knowledge. They must be self-critical and courageous – admitting (like everyone else) that they are at risk for HIV, and that certain common actions put others at risk. Their battle is to break through the illusion that token examples of sexual dominance are inconsequential. For the facilitator, as for the audience, any critique or move beyond the level of the token is immediately hampered by dominant gender ideologies that disguise the dangers of the type. Thus, Freire frequently speaks of the need to educate the educator as well as the learner, to help all parties unlearn to be what they have been. Then, leaders can cleverly move the audience’s discussion of a mundane, surface event to a recognition of the fatal, underlying reality. This recognition is Freire’s dialectical moment, the

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12 Ann May, who with Francis Ole Ikayo conducted HIV/AIDS education among Tanzania Maasai, interpreted this scene from *Maasai Migrants* differently. She writes: “My reading of the film (viewed perhaps three or four times now) was that the man was joking with the sick woman to distract her or cheer her up. Could this have been the case rather than the darker scenario you describe?” (Ann May, email, March 23, 2009) The key point is this: audience members do not need to know or agree on what was in the man’s heart in order for the scene to serve as a valuable Freirian codification. Discussion and disagreements about the man’s motives will allow participants to investigate the economic dependence of urban Maasai women.
gestalt – painful and difficult to attain – unforgettable and life-changing once attained.

**III-c. Facilitated screenings as Trigger Films**

The theory of trigger films as sketched by its proponents begins with the assumption that split-second choices lead to dangerous behavior. False beliefs and unexamined feelings contribute to the fateful choice. The first part of trigger film strategy is to show a brief film story-vignette that depicts a fateful choice. The story is open-ended, an incomplete narrative. 13 The depiction of an interrupted fateful choice is designed to problematize the audience’s desire for the narrative arc to close in an expected way, and to heighten the sense of narrative anxiety and emotion. The fact that no conclusion follows from story’s fateful choice is designed to interrupt and problematize split-second choices and hence focus unusual attention on choice-related feelings. 14 Consistent with leaving their storylines unresolved, trigger films also forsake the opportunity to provide moral closure: they offer no sermon that might save audience members the trouble of thinking for themselves.

The second feature of trigger film practice concerns the use of facilitated, post-screening discussions. After screening, audience members are encouraged to examine their feelings, disclose their emotions and evaluate the moral choices raised by the incomplete story. The story’s avoidance of moralizing encourages viewers to be honest when describing their own feelings and the choices they would make in similar circumstances.

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13 Fisch (1972:287) points out that even the briefest trigger films take longer to screen than the situations they depict. The truth of this insight was brought home to me by a powerful film that investigates the snap-decision to use a condom (Makhatini 2001): brevity insulates actors from awareness of the feelings and emotions that lead to fateful decisions. Advocates agree that trigger films should be brief – usually no longer than four minutes (Fisch 1972:288; Ber and Alroy 2002). They should be simple stylistically, depict relatively straightforward situations, and emphasize only one or two main points (Alroy and Ber 1982:335).

14 Trigger films are argued to succeed in evoking unexplored emotion and in changing behavior precisely because their stories are open-ended. This argument is foreshadowed by Bertolt Brecht (1964:189; cf. Benjamin 1973, Biella 2009:151). Brecht proposes that when narrative storylines are interrupted – that is, when they are denied a traditional cathartic closure – the frustration an audience feels leads it to unprecedented political engagement with the real-world issues depicted in the narrative. Fisch, the most subtle advocate of trigger films, seems to concur, arguing that traditional narrative closure leaves “little left for the viewer to do or feel” (1972:287).
The primary assumption of the trigger film advocates is that behavior will change when fateful choices are examined and informed.\textsuperscript{15} Two kinds of information must be examined for an informed choice:

The first is \textit{objective} – an accurate description of facts associated with behavior choices – in the case of AIDS education, for example, that sperm contains HIV. In order for these facts to have consequence, they must be used to query, combat and prevail over common false beliefs, prejudice and misinformation.\textsuperscript{16} Maasai have many false beliefs (Biella 2009b):

- HIV is airborne;
- Maasai have a cure for HIV;
- Maasai do not have HIV;
- Condoms transmit HIV;
- HIV is cured by having sex with babies and virgins.

The second kind of information is \textit{subjective} – access to one’s feelings and emotions that influence choice. Examples might include these thoughts, taken from Biella, Kamerling and Meigaro (forthcoming):

\begin{itemize}
  \item I am a person for whom multiple-partner sex is normal and necessary;
  \item I am so poor and/or close to death that I have nothing to lose by selling my body and being exposed to this disease;
  \item I don’t care how my choices will affect my family.
\end{itemize}

In order for these affective components to play a role in behavior change, they must first be acknowledged (so that they will replace knee-jerk denial or joking platitudes), then carefully scrutinized and queried.\textsuperscript{17}

In post-screening discussions, the facilitator is responsible for focusing the group and its queries on both kinds of information, facts and feelings, the foundations of informed choice.

\textsuperscript{15} Amsel (1987) argues that trigger film viewers’ reluctance to speak will be strongest if they believe that their listeners will judge their feelings harshly.

\textsuperscript{16} Stadler (2004) criticizes all AIDS education films that leave their viewers with false medical information, never challenged and corrected. Stadler’s argument, however, does not concern itself with the learning possibilities enhanced by post-screening discussions. Complexities in the transference of knowledge in AIDS education films are explored in Biella, Hennessy and Orth (2004).

\textsuperscript{17} Part of the facilitator’s task is to remind viewers of key elements in the film that they did not notice or failed to mention (Ber and Alroy 2002:529). Alroy and Ber (1982:334) point out the occasional advantages of multiple screenings: this allows viewers to improve observational skills, particularly those that may have been impaired by prejudice or troubled emotions. A similar effect might more parsimoniously be achieved with a flip chart composed of screen grabs.
The facilitator should contend with the power of ignorance by allowing widely-shared false beliefs to be aired and discussed; only then should the facilitator present what he or she understands to be the most correct information available. An argument that presents the medical facts may involve pointing out contradictions in false beliefs, supplying empirical evidence, or appealing to the authority of rightly-informed, recognized authorities (such as elders, age-set spokesmen and religious seers, *oloiboni*).

The facilitator must also encourage open discussion of the feelings and emotions that arise from the film’s depicted choices and behaviors. In addition to asking people to speak about their feelings and the feelings that others describe, the facilitator may ask for role play, role reversal, and alternative endings to the film’s storyline. He or she focuses the viewers’ attention on the attitudes, prejudices, fears, wishes, memories – even old parental or peer instructions – that may prove to be decisive though unexamined determinants of a viewer’s fateful choice. Until these are acknowledged, they cannot be changed.

A final assumption of trigger film advocates is that viewers’ newly discovered feelings, insights and commitments are strengthened because they are reached through group discussion and consensus. This aspect of trigger film theory is explored only superficially by its advocates (cf. Alroy and Ber 1982:334-5, Amsel 1987, Ber and Alroy 2001:656, 2002:529). The psychological advantages of open discussions will be explored in the next sections on group therapy.
III-d. Facilitated screenings as group therapy

The first private screening of Maasai Migrants was to members of the NGO board of directors. Several members were close to tears by the end of the film, and, to my surprise, they suggested that I separate two scenes that were adjacent: the current juxtaposition, they said, was overwhelming. Mark, the tourist shop entrepreneur, said that the film had given him an epiphany. Despite the economic well-being he now enjoyed, he was, he suddenly realized, still a Maasai migrant, psychologically little different from the sufferers in the film. In the many screenings of my films that I have attended over forty years, that one was the most moving.

Seeing my tough warrior colleagues near tears made me realize that the film not only had important educational messages but also made a deep psychological impression. It touched the emotions. This realization started a train of thought that group screenings, properly facilitated, could be a form of group therapy.

Neither Englehart (2003) nor Levine (2003) describe the effect of their facilitated screenings of the Steps films in psychological terms. They write that viewers are inspired, empowered and take strength from one another. They do not interrogate the audience’s emotional reactions, nor do they model them in terms of group dynamics. Freire (1972, 1985) too hardly considers the parallels between group consciencization and group therapy: he describes his pedagogy of the oppressed in terms of political education. Yet parallels between the realization of painful political and psychological truths are deep. Because both kinds of insight are painful, they can stimulate denial, acting out, and resistance.

Given recent history, emotional suppression and denial seem to be almost inevitable for many Maasai. In the last fifteen years, Maasai political and economic losses – compounded by new health crises for people and their animals – have been monumental, unavoidably accompanied by the experience of deep psychological loss. Many of the avertable problems of the AIDS epidemic, addressed in our films, are made more serious because of viewers’ resistance to change. Post-screening group discussions, like group therapy, not only inspire change but give individual commitments to change an emotional reinforcement (Spindler 1999).

The strategy of post-screening discussions proposed below shares many features with group psychotherapy as characterized by Yalom and Leszcz (2005), leading theoreticians in the field. These factors, I believe, have great relevance to and potential in facilitated post-screening discussions. Through strategic contributions, facilitators can create environments in which these therapeutic factors can do their educational and emotional work. In the following, I will mention eight factors that have great relevance for applied visual anthropology.

Yalom and Leszcz (2005) list the dissemination of important information as a key contribution of group psychotherapy. I have discussed the passing of essential factual messages in connection to trigger films, and will not repeat the argument here.
Yalom and Leszcz (2005) also argue that group discussions offer a corrective recapitulation of the primary family group. Open conversation on difficult topics with group members and with expert facilitators resemble – but can be more beneficial than – discussions with parents and elders. May (2003) shows that pastoralists’ migration is often “circular,” that travelers to cities regularly bring information back to the homestead. But for stoic imurran, open discussion of their own suffering is rare. On the contrary, their reports are often bright, only belied by the fact that many return penniless, bringing back “not even a chicken” to contribute to the homestead economy.18 As May and McCabe (2004) have shown, social phenomena like migration, urban hardships and HIV are recent and are not well understood by most Maasai elders. They have little direct knowledge and cannot give sound advice. In addition, conflict is common between adjacent age-sets and top-down advice is likely to be resented. Further, the declining age of male circumcision has also tended to free boys earlier from control of their fathers and other elders. Yet vicarious experience and relevant discussion are available in facilitated post-screening discussions: films and discussion leaders can transmit information that is not likely to be available to most members of the older age-grades.

Yalom and Leszcz (2005) argue that self-disclosure creates hope and the awareness of universality, participants’ realization that many other people share problems like their own. The bravest – or most talkative – audience members reveal personal information that others recognize to be true of themselves. Group members gain hope and courage when they see that others have succeeded in trials they must themselves endure. The informational content of self-revelations and successes is communicable through video and lecture, but insights are more powerful when they come from age-mates and peers. Describing the first stage of a therapy group, Causey (2009:57) captures this aspect of facilitated screenings:

In the early phases of a group, members often feel alone and uniquely troubled. If, however, members learn that certain frightening problems, impulses, or thoughts are also experienced by other members, they can feel relief.

The awareness of universality not only helps to relieve a personal sense of shame (not uncommon, as Freire has shown, among the oppressed, as it is among carriers of infectious diseases). It also can bring on catharsis, emotional cleansing, which is another of the therapeutic factors described by Yalom and Leszcz (2005). This experience can result in behavior change when reinforced by the kind of cognitive learning that the video and a group consensus will give.

Group therapy, moreover, is an opportunity for interpersonal learning: unlike the feature of universality, in which one member of a dyad is passive, in interpersonal learning both are active, each person pointing out the other’s

18 This phrase was repeated to us many times in 2009 as our film crews asked questions about migration among Ilparakuyo Maasai homesteads of Tanzania’s Bagamoyo District.
contribution to difficulties, individual and shared. Such interpersonal frankness runs contrary to the style of respect and restraint typical of Maasai age-mates (when they are sober), and is also not characteristic of the early sessions of group therapy. MacKenzie 1997:284 writes, “Trying to push such groups forward into more conflictual or introspective work will prove destructive to the group.” Yet I think a skillful facilitator may sometimes be allowed such observations, pointing out a contradiction or the logical consequences of an action. Much of the AIDS education fight comes from the fact that silence is responsible for great suffering. When other group members dare to speak and even to disagree, their example offers a model for others and invites therapeutic imitative behavior.

Finally, Yalom and Leszcz (2005) argue that a sense of group cohesiveness is key to productive social change, because it generates a feeling of empowerment and commitment. All of the project’s efforts push toward this goal. This will strengthen not only the viewers of the video but the project team members themselves, those who are present and will become leaders of their communities.

III-e. Facilitation as Group Therapy Leadership

Good intentions cannot erase blunders, and facilitators must prepare the way politically before their interventions begin. This means that they must receive, in advance, the blessing and involvement of community elders, spokesmen, and religious seers (Windal 1997). Facilitators can also improve the quality of post-screening participation by a pre-group meeting with future audience members. In it, goals and expectations can be discussed, particularly the need for member involvement and group self-determination (Wheelan 1997:290).

Facilitators must be keenly aware of the traditional oratorical characterization of their groups. Women in traditional Maasai society may attend moots of male elders, but they must be silent. The fact of this gender inequality requires that post-screening discussion sessions be composed exclusively of men or of women (Sandles 2010). Traditionally, Maasai elders orate for as long as they please. Yet in conformance with the literature on group therapy, sessions characterized by dialog rather than oration are more successful. Ground rules and tact are needed. Young facilitators who interrupt or shift topics may be perceived as being disrespectful to their elders. But new ways must be found to fight for new premises of oratory to contend with the new dangers in the world.

Facilitators will need to contend with a spectrum of phenomena that have only distant analogies in group therapy: significant differences between the two intervention types exist. In rural homesteads, film screenings, facilitated or not, are unprecedented. Maasai viewers are likely to be enormously more excited by a video than television habitués would be.

At one extreme, because documentary images leak so much information, they will prompt excited discussion of trivia, matters that are not on the therapeutic/educational agenda – “Oh! What funny southern accents they have!” and the like. At the other extreme, documentary images may strike such
powerful chords as to transport viewers to highly emotional states, as happened to the Emburis board of directors. I can think of no analogous shock in group therapy to that which images of depraved city life in Maasai Migrants might give to pastoralists who have heard only rumors and have seen only the countryside. Either of these film-specific extremes might disrupt the semi-structured agenda of a facilitator.

The most significant difference, however, stems from the number of sessions available to traditional psychotherapy groups. Film screeners do not have the luxury of many sessions. For that reason, their therapeutic strategies are most like those of crisis intervention groups: meeting just once or twice, they can usefully undertake only strategies characteristic of Engagement, the first of four normal stages in long-term group therapy (MacKenzie 1997:284).

In one-shot or short-term interventions, the facilitator should be relatively active, keeping the group relatively engaged and “encouraging early stage tasks that make full use of the supportive cluster of therapeutic factors that encourage group interactions and promote cohesion around addressing problems that are external to the group itself” (MacKenzie 1997:284).

Given the weight of traditional sexual culture, the comfort of unsafe past practices and rampant medical misinformation, AIDS film facilitators will be sure to encounter psychological resistance, often displaced expressions of dependence, hostility and shame. Bion (1959) identifies three techniques by which groups avoid tackling therapeutic work by reverting to “primitive drives and affectively charged reactions” (MacKenzie 1997:276). The first of these techniques is Dependency. What Bion calls the group’s implicit basic assumption in this technique is that it cannot lead itself or function without wise guidance, usually by the designated facilitator. In the Fight-Flight assumption, a threat is attributed to outside dangers or inside malefactors. Alternating themes of fear and revenge displace the groups responsibility for setting its own direction and taking action. When a group is distracted by Bion’s Pairing assumption, members inflate the significance of issues that concern two of its members, as if their resolution would allow the group to satisfy its overall responsibility, one that is of a different order of magnitude. Facilitators can expect that manifestations of displaced dependency, hostility and shame will occasionally arise in times of group discomfort.
III-f. Facilitation and cultural relativity

Regardless of whether facilitators see their role as Freirian, as trigger film facilitators or as group therapists, they must be discreet, during post screening discussions, when presenting their own beliefs, feelings, ethics and the facts. Ber and Alroy (2001:658) advise facilitators to downplay the authority of their formal role as educators by stating that their opinions are equal to those of everyone else. The same authors also point out that the best choice in any situation is dependent on the characteristics of the people involved. Sensitivity and cultural relativity notwithstanding, facilitators must eventually present the truth as they know it, even if doing so alienates some viewers and prevents others from daring to announce their feelings. But Ber and Alroy also argue that trigger film facilitators must assert the authority of their profession’s rules of ethics (2002:530). An even more aggressive intervention is necessary when facilitators are called on to present medical facts. AIDS educators would be mistaken to downplay the authority of conclusions supported by overwhelming evidence, what I call essential medical messages (Biella, Hennessy and Orth 2003).19

19 I have to marvel at the similarity between cross-cultural AIDS education activists and religious missionaries. Like proselytizers, we enter distant cultures aflame with the desire to transform the ways of death, justifying our interventions
Airhihenbuwa (1989) offers another insight into how facilitators should deal with cultural relativity and indigenous opinions, and when they should correct falsehoods that are locally defined as true. He proposes a pragmatic triage: cross-cultural AIDS educators should encourage the spectrum of indigenous practices and beliefs that have beneficial health consequences; they should criticize practices and beliefs whose consequences are dangerous and harmful; and they should simply remain neutral about all other beliefs, falsehoods and local morals.

As someone who has considered AIDS education for many years, I’d like to offer one more observation on the topic of the facilitators’ interventions. Educators sometimes make mistakes, tread on toes, present facts in a less than ideal light, and drive themselves too hard to improve their technique. But however much one may wish to believe that a perfect method and delivery will save lives, they will not always achieve this. Lives are saved only when behavior changes. High-risk AIDS related behavior is so well defended, so entrenched, and so shrouded in shame and secrecy that often nothing can stop it. Educators have to accept this fact – placidly if possible – and move on to the next class.

**IV. Message Longevity**

**IV-a. Essential Messages**

Media campaigns must be savvy locally. As demonstrated in the *Maasai Speak Out* video (Biella 2009b), many Maasai women know of AIDS through pamphlets in Swahili. Yet some of these same women are perfectly convinced that the disease – postulated by Western medicine – either does not exist at all, is absent among Maasai, or has been confused by Western doctors with *enamuratuni*, a real disease well known to Maasai and easily cured by local healers (May and McCabe 2004). This culturally-specific conviction, which might be called *indigenous denial rhetoric*, is unfamiliar to most Tanzanian health educators but is persuasive among many Maasai. How much more powerful can AIDS medical education be for Maasai if the educator acknowledges *enamuratuni* beliefs! An effective indigenous AIDS education campaign must begin with intensive field work in order to contend with the false beliefs specific to the community. It must anticipate local prejudices and take countermeasures.

In addition to providing accurate medical education – like the existence of viruses and the array of common HIV vectors – a media campaign must also provide powerful behavioral education. This entails describing the psychological, gender-specific and cultural barriers to safety. Teaching that HIV is found in sperm and that condoms prevent transmission requires a different set of lessons than suggesting how a woman might effectively insist on condom use, or

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with incontrovertible textual evidence (the Bible, the *JAMA*). We too are convinced that nothing is more important than saving lives even if it means wholesale trashing of indigenous beliefs and practices.
suggesting to everyone that community health in the new biosphere demands some alteration of traditional sexual culture.

**IV-b. Cost-per-viewer and the idea of a field school**

Films presented in the field, made explicitly for small, sex-segregated audiences, scripted in “obscure” local languages, facilitated one on one, are far more expensive per recipient than other media - radio, leaflets, billboards, and even conversations with Maa-speaking health educators. Many authors cited above have found that the techniques are effective, but their cost remains determinant. One way to overcome the annihilating restrictions caused by the expense of indigenous-language videos is a field school for applied visual anthropology. Such a school can increase the benefits and lower the cost per viewer in two ways. First, it takes advantage of the fact that a continuing number of advanced visual anthropology students are anxious to learn their trade, to produce portfolio-quality work, and to make a meaningful contribution to public health. They recognize the advantages of supervised field experience, and paying for it is part of the anticipated expenses of their education. Because they are students, they can produce films with very little overhead. Because a field school can exist for many years, it can continue to produce and find use for a growing body of educational films. This increasing number of films can enhance health media collections and provide choices for educators in the field.

From the point of view of in-country collaborators, a field school offers income at an advantageous rate of exchange, offers education in media production and health-education design, and creates new tools for the public health of their people. These benefits – the advanced education of future health care educators and the low cost of the high-quality films – must be subtracted from the perceived cost-per-viewer of the films.

Film screenings in local languages draw in audiences that other media – especially those in mass-market languages like Swahili – entirely miss. Moreover, the production of videos can provide media for use in other campaigns. Thirty-second radio or TV spots in a local language can be drawn inexpensively from videos. Flip boards with images taken from local health videos can assist post-screening discussions and be used for independent lectures.

Research indicates that successful media challenges to entrenched values must be waged on multiple fronts. Although the danger of AIDS-message fatigue is familiar in advanced industrial societies, the paucity of AIDS messaging is much more dangerous in the rest of the world. People must hear the drumbeat so often, and in media sufficiently diverse, that it becomes part of the rhythm of daily conversation.
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