Homelessness and the Muncie Mission: A Visual Ethnography

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

by

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Abstract

This thesis is a creative project combining anthropological research and photography in the form of a written text and a photographic essay, together creating a visual ethnography. First is the artist's statement and personal reflection that describes the motivation fueling this thesis as well as an explanation of the theory and methodology used in this thesis to discuss the homelessness situation in Muncie through the eyes of the Muncie Mission as well as the author. The history of anthropology and ethnography in the context of my project as an investigation into the daily life of the residents of the Muncie Mission and its relation to the homeless situation is then discussed. Next is the introduction of the process and methods used while creating the images and conducting the fieldwork. The photographs deliver insight into the Muncie Mission as a solution to the problem of homelessness and other issues in Muncie, Indiana and providing evidence to support that the mission is more than a soup kitchen, but ultimately the images are to be interpreted by the viewer for their own sake.

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Artist's Statement

I believe that using photographs in anthropological research enriches the study in a way that text is unable do alone. Photography and the camera deals honestly and realistically with the human condition and sensitivities of man in every environment where scientific structures fail (Collier 1995, 252). We are a visual culture now more so than we ever have been in the past and it is time to take advantage of this fact. We must move forward from word-and-sentence based thought to image-and-sequence based thought (McDougall 1997, 292). Visual ethnography is a research design with the potential to tell a story that has never been heard in such a way. Images bring with them emotion, vibrancy, and harsh realities that can persuade action in others. It is for these reasons that I believe visual anthropology has the potential to be an advocate for social change in the world; change that we desperately need to see.

Visual anthropology is an emerging discipline. There are only a handful of colleges that offer visual anthropology majors or graduate programs in the United States. I credit all of my anthropological skills to my incredible education I have experienced on the third floor of Burkhardt at Ball State, however, exploring visual ethnography was not a topic discussed in my classes because it is not a discipline with strong foundations in the anthropological scientific community. I am not even sure when I first heard the term visual anthropology, but when I discovered it I knew that this is what I was meant to do.

I chose to investigate homeless as it relates to the Muncie Mission because it interested me personally, challenged my skills and personal opinions,
as well as offered an opportunity to become involved in and share an experience with the local community. I chose this challenging topic because this isn't simply a thesis to complete the requirements of the Honors College. This is a step towards my future, a step towards introducing a new way to change the world and I wanted to use this project to explore the process of creating a visual ethnography advocating social change, to see what it has to offer, to experience the challenge, to investigate the strengths and limitations of such a project, and how to explore my place in the world of visual anthropology.

Ethnography is a research design aimed at investigating social and cultural phenomena. There is no single definition that describes ethnography in its entirety; there shouldn't be. Ethnography adapts and responds to fieldwork situations (UC Irvine, 2013). This ethnographic project includes several important literary topics that help the readers and viewers understand the context, methods, and purpose of the project. This ethnography discusses the historical context of photography and how it currently influences the modern world. A discussion of the history of visual ethnography as a discipline of anthropology is also included to position the reader in a current state of anthropological theory. It allows the reader to get an idea of the scientific and artistic discussions that exist in the anthropological community. The theory and methods used in the production of this project such as technology used and the process of creating the images, and subsequently the thesis are discussed. This ethnography ends with suggestions for the future and a conclusion of the importance of visual
anthropology in contemporary society. This thesis is a gateway to my future and the future of social change advocacy.

**Historical Context**

Exploring the origins of visual ethnography truly begins with investigating the onset of visual documentation using camera technology. The invention of the camera has proven to be one of the most impactful tools of the historic and modern eras allowing individuals to capture scenes and moments for later viewing and analysis and has opened the door for artists and scientists alike to greater inquiry.

**History of Photography**

The word “photograph” literally means “light-writing” (Clarke 1997, 2). Clarke suggests that beneath the photograph is the underlying concern to control light and time, “The photograph not only signals a different relationship to and over nature, it speaks very much to a sense of power in the way we seek to order and construct the world around us” (Clarke, 1997, 11). Capturing an image allows the picture-taker to steal a moment of time, but the ability to steal an exact image, to take “...a hold on the past in which history is sealed...” (Clarke 1997, 12) was available and in use since the Renaissance, before the photograph as we know it. The camera obscura, and later camera Lucida was the first exact-image creator aiding artists by creating an inverted image that could be traced (Clarke 1997, 12).
In 1802, Sir Humphry Davy documented his ability to moisten a white paper with nitrate of silver to produce small objects, but these images were not permanent. A few years later in France, Joseph Nicéphore Niépce created the first fixed photograph taken from his attic window in 1826. He called this image a 'heliograph' and defined it as "the automatic reproduction, by the action of light, with their gradations of tones from black to white, of the images obtained in the camera obscura" (Clarke 1997, 13). This historical, blurry photograph took eight hours to expose and is accepted as the first official photograph ever created. Niépce did not stop there; few passionate minds ever find cause to end their curiosity. He was not satisfied with the blurry image of the heliograph and reached out to Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre. Although Niépce passed away in 1833, Daguerre finally produced and made public his new photographic process he called the 'daguerrotype' defined as "the spontaneous reproduction of the images of nature received in the camera obscura, a chemical and physical process while allowing nature to reproduce herself" (Clarke 1997, 13). The introduction of this photographic process was nothing less than revolutionary for society.

The daguerrotype was very popular in the United States and France and was considered a triumph of science by prominent individuals such as Edgar Allan Poe. The daguerrotype, while being breakthrough technology, still had its downfalls. Requiring long exposure times, subjects had to remain completely still for long periods of time resulting in stiff photographs that were still often blurry. Another major downside of the daguerrotype was that it could not be reproduced.
There was no negative/positive creation and therefore no way to be recreated (Clarke 1997, 9-15).

In 1840, Sir John Herschel released the calotype, the first negative/positive photographic process resulting in reproducible images. From this point on, the technology of the camera grew and changed rapidly with new improvements and innovations. Frederick Scott Archer produced the collodion process using a wet glass plate, which had to be used the moment after the image had been taken. In 1877, Richard Leach Maddox continued with that idea creating the gelatin dry plate. The process of photographing and the technology of the camera itself continued to evolve rapidly throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The camera that truly instigated the photographic craze was George Eastman’s Kodak camera in 1888. This camera was inexpensive, portable, and simple to use, “You press the button, we do the rest,” was the popular slogan (Clarke 1997, 18). From Kodak’s Brownie camera, we now have Canon and Nikon, amongst many other digital single reflex (dSLR) cameras with memory cards and pixels.

The value of the camera in modern society could not be overstated. It has allowed viewers to consider materials and information too complex or too baffling for the human mind-eye to encompass (Collier 1995, 235). But the photographer, as Clarke states, remains central to photography, “…and, inevitably, has dominated both the history of photography and the meaning of the photograph” (Clarke 1997, 118). It is how the photographer uses the images he has created that makes it significant.
History of Visual Ethnography

Anthropology was never ignorant to the influence of the visual on the cultural. Anthropology has always been a visual discipline as seen in hand made illustration, stills, and films. However, scientists become wary and more critical when visual mediums, such as photographs are used as the basis for ethnographies. Historically, ethnography has been almost completely a written discipline. Images that accompanied text were seen as visual redundancies and had little analytical potential (Freeman 2009, 55). Anthropologists were, and still are fueled by the motivation that if they do not record what exists now, soon it will be gone forever, as Margaret Mead points out:

There have never been enough workers to collect the remnants of these worlds, and just as each year several species of living creatures cease to exist, impoverishing our biological repertoire, so each year some language spoken by only one or two survivors disappears, forever with their deaths. This knowledge has provided a dynamic that has sustained the fieldworker taking notes with cold, cramped fingers in an arctic climate or making his own wet plates under the difficult condition of a torrid climate.
(Mead 1995, 3)

Franz Boas, commonly referred to by many as the “father of anthropology” is accredited for creating the primary methodology for the process of ethnographic fieldwork in the United States and always had a camera with him (Freeman 2009, 56). Bronislaw Malinowski is another important character with influence on the emergence of visual anthropology as a discipline. He proposed
new insights and methods on how physical images could add more depth to his ethnographies (Freeman 2009, 56). It is not the intention of the photograph's production, but how it's used to inform viewers ethnographically (Scherer 2009, 201). Anthropological scholars began asking more questions about the image and its scientific relevance. This debate, despite influential, analytical, and insightful visual research projects, continues today.

One of the most significant ethnographies that highlights the potential of the camera as a research tool is Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson's *Balinese Character* in 1942. After criticism from her previous works as "soft" or having "unverifiable data," Mead looked to photography for technical and technological support of her research in Bali and Iatmul (de Brigard 1995, 26). Mead credits this choice to utilize the camera as a documentary tool as a result of personal and intellectual factors. This breakthrough in ethnography joined with the "methodological originality" of *Balinese Character* was a direct influence in allowing photography to become an esteemed tool in anthropological research (de Brigard 1995, 26).

Bateson and Mead commented on their method and process:

> We tried to use the still and the moving picture cameras to get a record of Balinese behavior, and this is a very different matter from the preparation of a 'documentary' film or photographs. We tried to shoot what happened normally and spontaneously, rather than to decide upon the norms and then get the Balinese to go through these behaviors in suitable lighting. (Bateson and Mead in de Brigard 1973, 27)
The mountains of Bajoeng Gede were home away from home for Mead and Bateson during the two years of research, but on their way to the United States, they stopped and collected nearly six months work of comparable data from latmul (de Brigard 1995, 27). The photos taken were not intended to capture expression or environmental aspects, rather, they were straightforward and while incredibly ground breaking for visual anthropology, not particularly inspiring (Freeman, 59). The anthropologists created a total of 25,000 stills, choosing 759 images composed in 100 plates, intentionally arranged in related details “...without violating the context and the integrity of any one event” (Mead in de Brigard 1995, 27). Two major films were also created, *Trance and Dance in Bali* and *Childhood Rivalry in Bali and New Guinea*.

Unfortunately, WWII had a major impact on anthropologic research ultimately making any fieldwork impossible and altering priorities. Despite this, Bateson and Mead continued to prepare *Balinese Character* in addition to editing the films that were released after the war in the Character Formation in Different Culture Series of 1952 (de Brigard 1995, 27). The use of the camera as a tool that does not simply look out, but looks inside one's world has been the most prominent change in ethnography since the beginning of anthropology and since WWII (de Brigard 1995, 38).

Mead and Bateson's work in Bali is a fine example of how photography can aid in anthropological research. Using photography as a method of advocating social change is another important aspect of visual ethnography.
Lewis Hine (1874-1940) is one of the most historically prominent advocates for social change using photography to combat child labor, immigrants, and the sweat-shops in New York's Lower East Side in the early 20th century. Clarke highlights Hine's ability to never exploit his subjects and allow the subject "...to remain separate from, rather than be dominated by the camera" (Clarke 1977, 148). In the images of immigrants at Ellis Island, Hine allows the individuals to retain their own sense of self, according to Clarke:

He observes and allows the camera to soak up the dense structures and terms of reference of the subject before him. The figure remains central, not because of what it represents but because of what it is. The achievement is a visual text in which the merest detail has enormous power.... if they document the figure in relation to wider social and cultural questions, his images equally remain independent and true to themselves. (Clarke 1997, 148).

Hine's investigation into child labor prompted the National Labor Committee to take steps to end child labor.

Walker Evans is an American documentary photographer who used the camera as a tool for anthropological research. His works, Let Us Now Praise Famous Men (1941) and American Photographs (1938) are two of his most recognized works that reflect many aspects of American culture such as American localities, architecture, and iconography. His images mirror his affinity for the small-town life, shop fronts, and the "...basic artifacts and materials of an old America" (Clarke 1997, 153). The way Evans uses his photographs is more archaeological in essence. His photographs do not focus on people, but rather on objects reminiscent of past times (Clarke 1997, 154-155).
Leah King, an Australian photographer is an example of using photographic techniques to deconstruct a social definition as this thesis attempts to do, "...this photo-composition series is essentially about renewing white people's perceptions of aboriginal peoples" (Edwards 1997, 71). King uses contemporary photographic techniques to capture the indigenous Koor people in an Australian landscape of her making using her own aboriginal experience. She used the emotional power of the images to deconstruct definitions of Aboriginality that was constructed through previous colonial photography. She used photography to help the Koor people develop their own changing and different expressions of Aboriginality (Edwards 1997, 71).

Theory and Methods of Photography as Visual Anthropology

Visual anthropology is a multidisciplinary field that brings together the arts and humanities with the social and biological sciences. Individuals working within visual anthropology learn to communicate research findings through words and photography, as well as film, art, music, and other forms of expression (Strong and Wilder 2009, 1). However, successful visual anthropology that is accepted in any form by the scientific community must have a firm understanding in standard anthropological studies and must know what is meaningful and worth communicating. This requires specialization in cultural areas, verbal language fluency, as well as technical skill in a particular medium; in the case of this thesis, photography (Strong and Wilder 2009, 1). In order to communicate effectively with the public, it is a necessity to have social scientific and artistic knowledge.
(Biella 2009, 363). Viewers will not respond to the overly technical information that they cannot understand, nor can an overly abstract work communicate a precise point. Visual anthropology includes all phases of the process from recording to analysis, and finally dissemination of results (Banks and Morphy 1997, 1). A strong foundation in the scientific, artistic, anthropological, and photographic is essential in the success of this visual ethnography.

Ethnographic photography is defined as using photos for the recording and understanding of culture of both the subject and photographer (Scherer 2009, 201). This project was created working with the theory that photography combined with ethnography is an incredibly useful tool in advocating social change. In understanding the importance of photography in communication, Helmut Gersheim comments,

"Photography is the only "language" understood in all parts of the world, and bridging all nations and cultures, it links the family of man. Independent of political influence—where people are free—it reflects truthfully life and events, allows us to share in the hopes and despair of others, and illuminates political and social conditions. We become the eye-witnesses of the humanity and inhumanity of mankind..." (Sontag 1977)

A visual anthropologist working for social change must have the "...ability to have sympathy for each man and to understand the man he is photographing" (Newman in Freeman 2009, 69). This is not a theory that can necessarily be taught. It is realized with passion, compassion, and a motivation to change the world by illuminating the niches of human culture that we cannot see or from which we choose to advert our gaze (Freeman 2009, 69). Visual ethnography
forces readers to look upon what we fear—pain, sorrow, or simply the unknown and become advocates for social change. Without the knowledge and information visual anthropologists provide, mankind will never know real knowledge and true potential and how they can become advocates for world change.

If you live in the city, it becomes easier to look past the homeless men and women on the corner with their cardboard signs. "The photographer is always trying to colonize new experiences or find new ways to look at familiar subjects—to fight against boredom. For boredom is just the reverse side of fascination: both depending on being outside rather than inside a situation, and one leads to the other" (Sontag 1977, 42). It becomes a daily event, and you become bored of being asked for money or food or alcohol. We become immune to the photographs of the homeless man bundled in blankets dusted with dirt with his skinny mutt nestled beside him. I have taken on the challenge of bringing new sensations to homeless photography. I am determined to ignite fascination in the hearts and minds of those who are viewing the images I have created at the Muncie Mission. I am shedding new light, creating renewed allure to what it means to be in a homeless situation and the beauty of receiving assistance in a solution-based facility like the Muncie Mission.

As aforementioned, in order to have a successful project, there must be a balance of artistic and technical knowledge. Visual records must be shaped by scientific methodology: interpretability, verifiability, and credibility are key factors (Sorenson 1995, 496). Photographs as research turns raw circumstance into
data. These photographs can then be endlessly duplicated, enlarged, reduced, fitted into diagrams, or statistical designs, (Collier 1967, 4-5) which adds much needed emphasis and depth in anthropological works.

Malcolm Collier (2009) outlines the ways in which photographs are used as records of research. To create photographs as records there must be a mix of wide, medium, and details of subject, a variety of angles and distances, shots of the mundane as well as the dramatic, and always accompanied with good notes and annotations to provide background information. When making photographs Collier suggests the anthropologist should shoot before and after the focal activity and create images at regular intervals despite the lack of activity. The images should be composed in terms of frame edges in order to maximize information content and finally the photos should be created and presented in sets and sequences to tell a story and not simply single shots (Collier 2009, 17-18).

Collier continues his analysis of the value of photographs as information. He stresses that the anthropologist must begin a formal analysis of the photographs with open immersion and discovery (Collier 2009, 19). With an open mind during the study of the photos, new details and patterns being to appear and can be explored more deeply. During this formal analysis, the strengths and limitations of photos can be understood and give direction to the anthropologist in future fieldwork. The images, during analysis should also be inventoried. Once this formal analysis has taken place, a more detailed and structured study should begin where the anthropologist can become aware of the real insight and
knowledge the photographs provide and acknowledge the limitation of the "facts" as presented in the photographs. Collier reminds us that photos do not themselves provide us with insight or real knowledge—only partial records of the conditions they reflect (Collier 2009, 19-20). It is the final step in Collier’s outline to search for meaning and significance by observing the visual record holistically. Laying out the photos, observing them, and then looking again provides opportunities for new details to appear and new references to be drawn from the photographs (Collier 2009, 19-20). Mead and Bateson support this vital step in visual ethnography creation, “…intangible relationships among different types of culturally standardized behavior [are seen] by placing side by side mutually relevant photographs” (Freeman 2009, 57).

A Note on Subjectivity

"In an initial period, Photography, in order to surprise, photographs the notable; but soon, by a familiar reversal, it decrees notable whatever it photographs" (Barthes 1980, 34).

It is not the camera that is subjective, the camera eye is not confused by the unfamiliar and doesn’t suffer from exhaustion, it is the photographer that creates the bias (Collier 1995, 248). You will not find an anthropological work free from bias. Viewers are cautioned to look at images with a critical eye considering the photographer’s assumptions and opinions and to distinguish these from “facts.” As an anthropology student, I do my best to leave bias at the door when conducting fieldwork. One major way to avoid bias is to work collaboratively with
the subjects; this erases the distance required by scientific objectivity, but it is also the job of the viewer to examine their own biases when viewing an anthropological work (Strong and Wilder 2009, 4-6).

I do operate under a specific objective and this bias must be taken into consideration when viewing the project. A photographer and visual anthropologist universalize the human condition with photography, assuming a human nature shared by everyone. On one hand the photographer can universalize the human condition into joy, and on the other hand a photographer can universalize it into horror (Sontag, 1977, 33). I have chosen to universalize the human condition into joy because that it what I have seen through the camera, but as there are shades of hope, there still remains shades of hardship and I tried to bring both into the images. Susan Sontag suggests that ideally, a photographer makes the two realities, horror and joy, cognate like Lewis Hine's advocacy of ending child labor as "Treating Labor Artistically" (Sontag, 1977, 64).

Margaret Mead also acknowledges that there were arguments suggesting that using technologies leads to subjective selective materials, but she argues that those who trust their own senses and capacity to integrate experiences can provide masses of objective materials that can be evaluated in light of changing theory (Mead 1995, 9-10). I am advocating social change through illuminating the positive results of aiding individuals who are homeless or addicted to negative behaviors and are asking for help. I have chosen to show the solution so that viewers will know that there is a way to help through avenues like the Muncie
Mission. See, here in my photographs, there is hope. There is a way. It's right here and now you know what you can do- that is my objective.

Methods

"Life itself is not the reality. We are the ones who put life into stones and pebbles." – Frederick Sommer

Most anthropologists spend months or even years just doing fieldwork. I had three and a half months to complete the fieldwork as well as the finished ethnography itself and it was no easy task. To get the project completed in a timely manner, it was pertinent I develop a detailed outline and plan of action. The approach I chose to work from consists of five major steps: Prewriting, introductions, secondary data analysis, fieldwork and participant observation, drafts and rewrites of ethnography, and polishing the final product (Kahn 2011, 177).

The prewriting process took place on a Hobby Lobby 17x23 inch chalkboard decorated with various colors of chalk writing. At the top of the board hanging delicately on my wall, I wrote, “Allison’s Brainstorming Board.” That is exactly what took place. I simply wanted to visualize the ideas taking up residence in my cramped cranium so I wrote and erased and wrote and wiped the sweat from my brow with a chalky hand.

The prewriting stage also included reflections on what I already knew about the topic I chose and the questions I would like to consider and try to answer in the process of the ethnography. What did I want to communicate to
society? After choosing homelessness in Central Indiana I narrowed it down to the Muncie Mission. Central Indiana is a large area and with the allotted amount of time and my limited resources, I encouraged myself to sharpen my focus to gain a more penetrating study (Collier 1967, 7). I wanted to investigate how the residents at the Muncie Mission were helping themselves or in general, what it is like for the men at the Mission. I wanted to answer questions such as “What is it like to live at the Mission,” and “what does it mean to be a part of the solution?” I began with this idea and proceeded with the next step.

I needed to consider the type of information I wanted to communicate through the camera including: people, locations, and activities (Wilder 2009, 43). I created a “shot list,” a list of images I wanted to create from observing the architecture, exterior and interior of the building, transportation, gender roles, religious practices, workplace environment, etc (Wilder 2009, 43).

Following prewriting is introductions. I contacted Ray Raines at the Muncie Mission via telephone and left a message. I explained what my intention was and created a resume to present to Ray and his volunteer coordinator, Missy so they could get to know a little more about me. I had a meeting with Ray and Missy to discuss the project in person and they accepted me into the Mission. They both had separate objectives they wished for me to touch on in my ethnography. Ray wanted some more photographs for the website and Missy wanted the community to know that the Muncie Mission is not just a soup kitchen. I wanted to convey these thoughts as well, but as an ethnographer I
needed to be as unbiased as possible and document the real. This was a lot to take on.

After the meeting, I was introduced to John, the kitchen supervisor who I would be working with first. The kitchen had open availabilities and Missy suggested this be where I start. John's enthusiasm to have me aboard was comforting and the nerves slowly subsided.

After introductions, I promptly began the fieldwork. I spent two to three days a week at the Muncie Mission for three hours per day for the first several weeks. I was very nervous, never having volunteered at the Mission or having volunteered with adult males in a residential situation before, but I was ready for the challenge.

I first wanted to become familiar with the residents and the work in the kitchen, so I left my safety net at home—no camera to hide behind, just the residents and me. This step of becoming familiar with the subjects is absolutely vital to a successful project. I needed collaboration in order to facilitate communication over cultural, economic, and age lines (Wilder 2009, 43). My origin as a young, middle-class, Caucasian girl, set me apart from many of the residents I was working with. There were major bridges to cross. I began simply by getting to know the individuals who were more eager to associate with me and allow them to control the conversation. Most times it was about what we were doing, cooking or cleaning. Soon, however, I began learning about their lives and the bridges I had to cross seemed smaller and smaller.
While volunteering, cooking, cleaning, and serving food I was also observing the daily activities of the residents and witnessing how they interacted with each other. Fieldwork is the essence of ethnography. Understanding a culture happens through experience as well as observation. During my time, I had conversations with residents and just experienced time with them.

I also spent time at the Attic Window, observing another aspect of the Mission that involved the residents and the community.

After about two weeks of simply volunteering and observing, I chose to introduce the camera to the residents I was working with. I shoot with a basic dslr camera I have owned for 5 years. It is a Canon Rebel T2i. I began shooting with my favorite lens, a 55mm portraiture lens. This lens creates clear, crisp images with depth when taken in close proximity. I knew I would be taking several portraits so I began with this lens, but also carried a standard 18-55mm lens and an 18-135mm telephoto lens. I asked permission to take any photographs and was warmly received. As photographer Diane Arbus says about her works of photographing 'freaks', "...there was the thrill of having won their confidence, of not being afraid of them, of having mastered one's aversion" (Sontag, 1977, 38). I felt great satisfaction that I had become a friend to the residents and that my nerves had finally subsided. Now there was only excitement. I look forward to every day I am able to spend with them.

There was one individual who preferred to keep his face from the camera, but always offered me his back. I am thankful when individuals are honest about their feelings towards the camera and I always oblige. This is very important to
me. There is no paper, project, scholarship, or other reason that would prompt me to violate one’s personal choice to not be photographed. Patricia Hitcock emphasizes the importance of sensitivity to subjects, “If a man’s research plan involves the people he wishes to photograph he has to consider their feelings. He is not a tourist or press photographer whose aim is to get a picture and get out, broken camera or no” (Hitchcock in Collier 1967, 13). In some cases, residents warmed up to the idea the more I was around and became more comfortable with the camera. Eventually the camera and me became a somewhat synonymous entity, most residents knew about the project and were very willing to help me in any way. I spent several weeks working in the kitchen, the Attic Window, as well as going to other daily events such as haircuts. I simply wanted to observe the every day. Some aspects of the every day were considered private, such as worship. This is an incredibly important aspect of life at the mission and I was passionate about including this in the ethnography, however, first and foremost I wanted to respect the personal space of the residents. Without them, this would have been impossible and after all, I am here to help make a difference. We are partners in social change and we worked together. It is a special relationship between me and the subjects I am photographing and Barthes explains it well, “A sort of umbilical cord links the body of the photographed thing to my gaze: light, though impalpable, is here a carnal medium, a skin I share with anyone who has been photographed” (Barthes 1980, 81).
While participating in the fieldwork, I was also working on secondary data analysis. According to the outline, this should have been the second step, but I jumped right into volunteering to make sure I had enough time to conduct the analysis. Secondary data analysis is a fancy way of saying research. I looked into previous studies of homelessness in central Indiana as well as what the Muncie community in particular is doing about it and I took this information into account in the drafts of my ethnography.

The second to last step included drafts and rewrites of the ethnography as well as printing and editing the pictures. I viewed the images I had created and allowed them to teach me; I observed body language, expression, lens choice, depth of field, distance from the subject, and composition of the overall images (Wilder 2009, 43). I set aside images that didn’t work and analyzed why those images didn’t work. What could I do to improve this image to communicate more effectively? I was noticing in several of my images that my lens choice was not appropriate. I was shooting with a 55mm lens, a lens best used for portraiture, however I was taking environmental shots or shots from distance and these photos were not as clear and did not have as much depth. I went pack to the mission and began using my standard 18-55mm lens when I wasn't taking close-up images. This process of evaluation ignited new ideas or new ways of making images and I went back to the mission to gather new information and new photos based on what I had learned from evaluating closely the photos I had already created.
Next, I had to decide how I wanted to synthesize my research into final conclusions. Like all other anthropological works, my photographs needed to be abstracted like all other data, verbalized, translated, and computed (Collier 1967, 7). This was a long, difficult process. I had never had to analyze a visual artifact like a photograph in an anthropological manner before so I followed Collier's (1967) phases for analyzing photographs in a cultural context.

I had to choose a layout for the photographs and then have them printed. Did I want them within the ethnography or as a separate document to refer to after reading the ethnography? This step allowed me to reflect on all of the fieldwork I had done and organize it into an ethnography for the academic and public community to view. I chose to print the images one per page on an 8.5x11 sheet of photo paper. Printing the images one per page allowed me to organize them however I chose so I could rearrange them later if I needed to without altering the flow of the ethnography. The printer used was a Xerox Phaser 8560DB that uses solid, wax-like ink onto thicker photo paper creating a smooth image. Unfortunately, it seemed the printer required cleaning because a faint blue line showed up in every image. The line is so faint that I did not feel the need to waste more ink or paper by reprinting the images. I do not feel that it alters the composition of the photograph enough to hinder viewers from interpreting the images.

Background on The Homelessness Situation in Muncie
The term chronically homeless is defined by the federal government as an individual who has been continuously homeless for more than one year or who has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years (Farguheson 2011). The chronically homeless, however, only accounts for 10%-15% of the overall homeless population. It is unknown how many individuals are considered homeless in the Muncie area. According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's National Homeless Day, there were 447 homeless men, women and children in 2010 (theindychannel). Michael Hurst, the program director for the Coalition for homeless Intervention and Prevention in Indianapolis comments, "People can understand that a family may be down on their luck due to the economy and may want to contribute to that cause. It's terribly difficult for people to do the same for a group of men who may be addicts.... People have a hard time putting their arms around that" (Farguheson 2011). This is why visual ethnography is so important. It is vital to communicate the true essence of what is going on at the Muncie Mission, to show the faces of the men there and allow those outside of the Mission who have never looked in, to see for the first time the possibilities of hope and help for the homelessness situation.

The Photographs

The following photographic analysis uses theory and methods from Collier (1967).

Photographing the Overview
Design of habitation, layout of surrounding area, recreation, photo profiles of community culture and affluence using house types.
Figure 1a. Artistic interpretation of the Muncie Mission, main office, front facing.

Figure 1b. Alternate image outside of the Muncie Mission main office, front facing. Photographs of the buildings represent the Muncie Mission community as an organism. Shows how the building connects and its relation to surrounding buildings and environments.

Figure 2. Rightward continuation of main office, including residences.

Figure 3. Extension to the left including parking lot and warehouse. In back of photo a basketball hoop can be seen representing recreation opportunities. There are no visible benches for public.

Figure 4. House immediately opposite the main office across the street.

Figure 5. House and landscape to the left of house in Figure 4. Represents economic condition of surrounding community. Shows geologic features such as trees and shrubs.

Photographing Technology
Craft and industry by which people survive in environment. Typically the heart and pride of community. Place of activity. Photos show skills, tools used for work, inventory of some materials, process of work, and social interaction of community space.

Figure 6. Resident worker removing food from delivery truck. Truck is used almost every day to deliver donations from surrounding restaurants and groups.

Figure 7. Two residents working together to unload delivery truck. Shows labor and cooperation of residents.

Figure 8. Collection of canned food. Canned food is used as some part of every meal made at the mission.

Figure 9. Resident gathering canned food for meal for the day. This collection of canned items resides in the basement storage area.

Figure 10. Resident catching a can he tossed in the air to add to his collection.

Figure 11. Resident using produce to create salad for meal.

Figure 12. Resident using gloves to measure ingredients to add to salad.

Figure 13. Two residents laughing while one mixes soup for the day.
Figure 14. Resident holds oven mitts while stirring meal.

Figure 15. Resident adding ingredients to meal.

Figure 16. Resident using stove and large wooden spoon to stir meal.

Figure 17. Kitchen Supervisor giving pre-lunch sermon to community members attending free lunch.

Figure 18. Resident and volunteer serving lunch.

Figure 19. Resident receiving lunch.

Figure 20. Resident removing lunch from kitchen.

Figure 21. Cleaning after lunch.

*Photographing Social Culture*
This includes relationships, social interaction, public spheres, and private spheres.

Figure 22. Volunteer working with residents to make meal.

Figure 23. Volunteer shredding carrots for salad.

Figure 24. Volunteer listening to resident's lunch request.

Figure 25. SVS volunteer making muffins.

Figure 26. Herbs and spices cabinet above head of volunteer.

Figure 27. Two SVS volunteers cooking.

Figure 28. Residents waiting to participate in Walk-a-Mile in My Shoes fundraiser.

Figure 29. Resident walking in Walk-a-Mile in My Shoes fundraiser.

Figure 30. Resident walking amongst community members.

Figure 31. Resident's shoes.

Figure 32. Moving into Private Sphere. Pharmacists distribution medication for the week.
Figure 33. Pill containers highlighting private aspect of the process of medicinal healing in the homeless situation.

Figures 34-41. Residents receiving haircut. Moving into very private event at the mission.

Figure 42. Portrait of resident in kitchen. Tattoos represent aspect of personality, smile is welcoming, shows environment of kitchen.

Figure 43. Portrait of community member receiving free lunch.

Figure 44. Portrait of resident during lunch.

Figure 45. Portrait of resident folding aprons.

Figure 46. Portrait of resident at Walk-a-Mile in My Shoes fundraiser.

Figure 47. Portrait of two residents at Walk-a-Mile in My Shoes fundraiser.

Figure 48. Author, Allison Troutner. Photos taken by resident.

Figure 49. Artifacts representing overall philosophy of mission.
Challenges

As with any challenging and experimental project, there were many issues I encountered along the way. One of the main challenges I faced was finding that balance I have referred to between the artistic and technical in creating this project. Like most students, I was intrigued by anthropology as a people-centered discipline, one of its most distinct qualities. However, I have experienced it in many ways as a series of dry academic texts (Grimshaw 2001, 2). This is what seemed to be most accepted by the scientific community, solid technical and academic writing. But this idea is out-of-date as Anna Grimshaw describes, “The stubborn persistence of a particular literary form, indeed its reification in the current climate of academic auditing, seem increasingly archaic” (Grimshaw 2001, 2). In our modern world, visual media dominates. This is still an idea that many scholars haven’t become comfortable with. Thankfully, there are the anthropologists and photographers who understand this and have printed literature to guide me through this obstacle. I am completely confident digital media is the avenue anthropologists need to take to communicate effectively, combining this with traditional anthropological knowledge, the world can change and by continuing to create visual ethnographies, I am helping the anthropology community and global community to ease into this change.

Another challenge I continually face is creating lasting images. To me, this is a more difficult task that writing an anthropological text.

Socially concerned photographers assume that their work can convey some kind of stable meaning, can reveal truth. But partly because the photograph is, always, an object in a context, this
meaning is bound to drain away; that is, the context which shapes whatever immediate-in particular, political-uses the photograph may have is inevitably succeeded by contexts in which such uses are weakened and become progressively less relevant. (Sontag 1977, 106)

Technological is evolving rapidly. The images I create now may become obsolete in five, ten, twenty years. It is a challenge to continually keep up with technology and continue to produce images that have significance in society. I am not sure what the solution is for this challenge, but I am aware that I have to keep up with the times and continue to produce images no matter what.

Future Studies

In future ethnographies, I would incorporate more involved photographs of activities. It is difficult to know what boundaries are present and I believe that I allowed that to hold me back in the capturing of images. For future studies I take part in, I would like to get more involved in the culture and spend more time with that particular group in a way I was unable to accomplish in this project.

Conclusion

Visual ethnographies contribute much to anthropology and society. Exploratory fieldwork improves descriptive anthropology by increasing the quality and quantity of observations, provides data for comparative studies, and provides a relatively objective view of culture that somewhat contrasts a preexisting belief (Sorenson 1995, 514). This visual ethnography contrasts the belief that the Muncie Mission is simply a soup kitchen. The residents of the mission are so
much more than that as seen in the photographs of daily life. This thesis also
adds data to ethnographies for social change advocacy. The experimental
fieldwork I have conducted at the Muncie Mission adds another perspective and
more data to the homelessness situation with the potential to change society’s
construction of homelessness.
Works Cited


