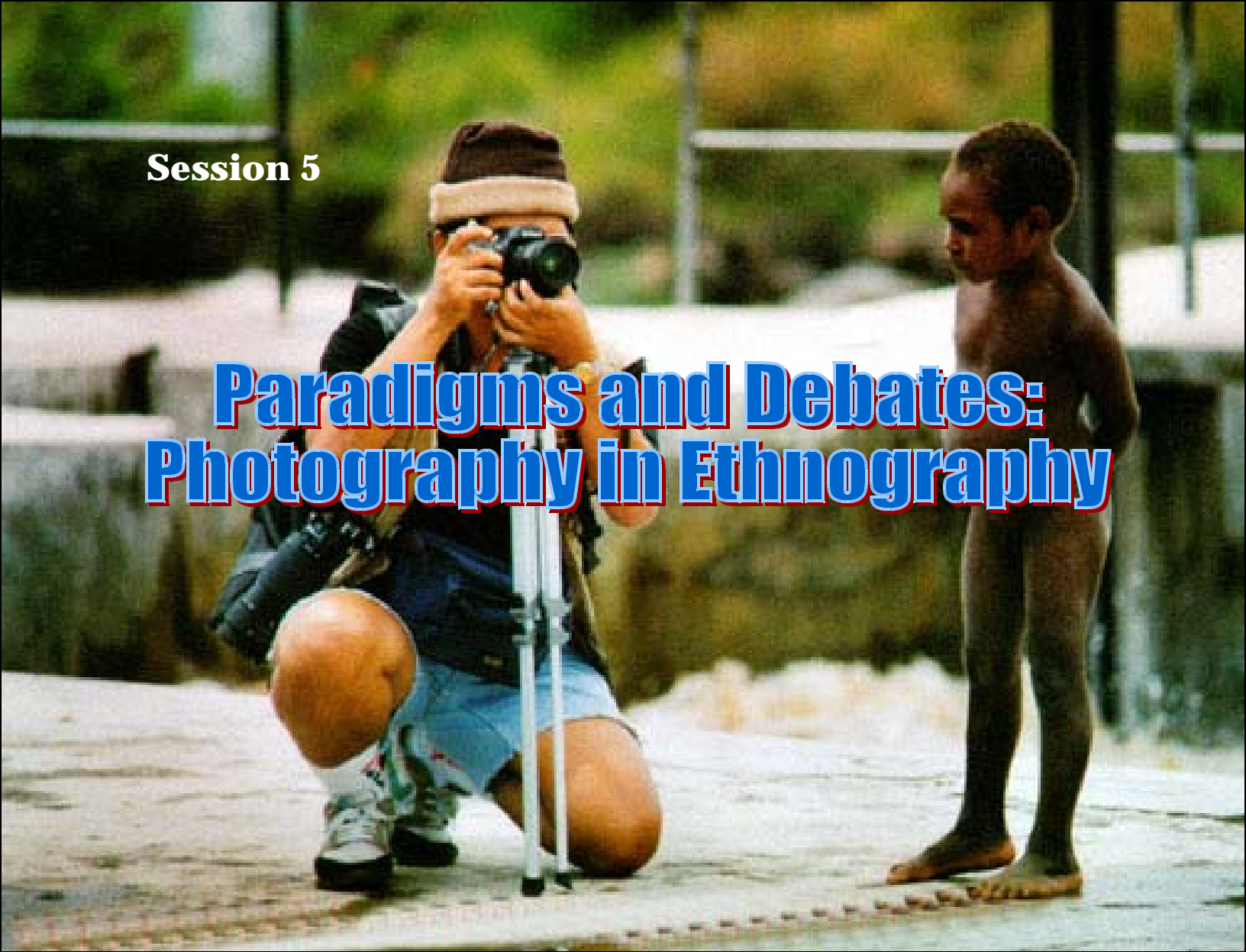


Session 5

**Paradigms and Debates:
Photography in Ethnography**



Images and Text: What is the Problem?

→ A hierarchy of formats?

Arguments in Favour of Captioning:

→ Photographs do not speak for themselves

→ Viewing is already a matter of training—culturally learned patterns...text does not “pollute”

→ Mead: telling viewers what they *should* look for

→ David MacDougall: “An uncaptioned photograph is full of undirected potential”

→ David MacDougall: “What was paradoxical about visual imagery, as against written text, was its apparent plenitude, which flooded the observer with concreteness and detail, yet revealed little in the absence of a surrounding discourse”

Arguments Against Captioning:

→ images, an equally meaningful element of ethnographic work

→ Text adds neither clarity nor objectivity

→ Authority:

- Does the caption derives its meaning from ethnographic realities?
- Does it represent the range of equally valid voices one encounters in fieldwork?
- Who does the text caption speak for?
- Can all knowledge be represented by and conveyed through words?

→ word-and-sentence to image-and-sequence

Objective versus Subjective: Anthropology between the Natural Sciences and the Humanities

→ Mead, the realist-scientist

→ Bateson, the subjectivist-artist

Bateson	...I think the photographic record should be an art form.
Mead	<i>if it's an art form, it has been <u>altered</u>.</i>
Bateson	It's undoubtedly been altered. I don't think it exists unaltered.
Mead	<i>I think it's very important, if you're going to be <u>scientific</u> about behavior, <u>to give other people access to the material</u>, as comparable as possible to the access you had. <u>You don't, then, alter the material</u>. There's a bunch of film makers now that are saying, "It should be art," and wrecking everything that we're trying to do. Why the hell should it be art?....</i>
Bateson	If you put the damn thing on a tripod, you don't get any relevance.
Mead	<i>No, <u>you get what happened</u></i>
Bateson	It <u>isn't</u> what happened.
Mead	<i>I don't want people leaping around thinking that a <u>profile at this moment would be beautiful</u>.</i>
Bateson	I wouldn't want beautiful.
Mead	<i>Well, <u>what's the leaping around for?</u></i>
Bateson	To get what's happening.
Mead	<i>What you <u>think</u> is happening.</i>
Bateson	Of the things that happen, <u>the camera is only going to record one percent anyway</u> .

- Subjectivity & the ‘new ethnography’
- ethnography as fiction

- Debates between realist approaches (Collier & Collier) vs. new ethnographic approaches (Clifford)

- Selectivity is inevitable, outcome of one’s cultural training

- Bourdieu:
“photography cannot be delivered over to the randomness of the individual imagination”—“via the mediation of the *ethos*, the internalization of objective and common realities”



Key suspect shown here in interview at crime scene



Native shaman explains the cultural significance of points along the landscape



Woman shown here is overjoyed at news of the conclusion of her divorce proceedings

- Reflexivity—monitor yourself, maintain awareness of your presence in a situation
- centrality of the subjectivity of the researcher

The Inevitability of Selectivity? Editing, Planned and Natural

→ subjective positioning manifested in selectivity

→ Framing the subject

- Post-production
- In-camera
- Pre-camera
- “In-body”

Controlling Images: Debates over Presentation

Naturalism (also see Erklarung from last week)

- against aesthetic distraction
- realistic portrayals of normal, natural fact
- facts need to be pointed out to the viewer—require captioning

Subjectivism (see Verstehen from last week)

- use the image to make a statement
- tell a story, many different stories
- reflexivity: emphasize the position of the researcher within the research setting