

A NEW CIRCLE

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This reflexive documentary film explores the Alabama-Coushatta Indian Tribe of Texas and examines questions of cultural identity. The twenty-one minute film uses footage of cultural events, reservation landscape, photographs, and interviews to bring the viewer into the lives of the Alabama-Coushatta people.

The written portion of this thesis details the entire processes of making the film, from the proposal stage to the post-production stage. This includes an examination of the film's evolution from using a proposed ethnographic approach to one less scientific and more personal.

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CHAPTER I

APPROVED PROPOSAL

Update

The original title of this film, at the time of the proposal, was *Will Tomorrow Be the Same? A Contemporary Look at the Cultural Legacy of the Alabama-Coushatta Indians of East Texas*. The final title of the film is *A New Circle*. The theoretical approach I had originally proposed for the film also changed by the time I completed the final version of the film. The original plan for this film was to examine the Alabama-Coushatta people using an ethnographic approach. The final version of the film strays away from an ethnographic approach, becoming much more reflexive and less scientific. In this chapter, I am including the original proposal and will use the original title when referring to the film. However, I will update relevant sections with new information that reflect the changes that occurred between the proposal and the final version of the film.

Introduction

Will Tomorrow Be the Same? will be a video documentary that explores the rich cultural legacy of the Alabama-Coushatta people of East Texas. The film will examine the emerging factors that threaten to destroy that legacy as the 21st century unfolds.

Will Tomorrow Be the Same? will uncover historical information on the Alabama-Coushatta people, following their migration westward from the Mississippi River Valley through Louisiana, and onto their settlement in East Texas. This information will be supplemented with archival photographs to enrich the presentation. From there we will examine the life of the tribe as it exists today, raising questions as to what the future holds for this small group of American Indians. This documentary will reveal what programs are being implemented by the Alabama-Coushatta to ensure that their cultural legacy continues with the younger generation. On-camera interviews with tribal members will provide valuable information about the Alabama-Coushatta people. In addition to the on-camera interviews, my own perspective on the state of tribe's traditional culture will be provided in the form of voiceovers.

The purpose of this project is to create awareness of the Alabama-Coushatta people, and at the same time to generate awareness among tribal members of their own cultural heritage. For indigenous cultures in similar situations as the Alabama-Coushatta people, this documentary will provide a valuable example of how one culture is dealing with the challenges of rapid cultural change. On a broader level, this film will work to stimulate an interest in indigenous cultures throughout the world so that they may be documented and appreciated as sources of wisdom for future generations. On a more personal level, this film will explore questions of my own self-identity and seek to find answers to those questions that have shaped who I am today.

Will Tomorrow Be the Same? is designed for an audience interested in indigenous cultures, particularly, indigenous cultures of the North American continent. This audience may include, but is not limited to, anthropologists, students of anthropology, sociologists, folklorists, and historians. Texas historians, in particular, would benefit a great deal from this project. Another audience, and one for which this film may have the most importance, is the Alabama-Coushatta people themselves. For them, *Will Tomorrow Be the Same?*

will be a stimulating look at their own lives as it has changed from ages past to contemporary times.

Definition of Terms

American Indian: This term refers to a member of any of the peoples indigenous to the Western Hemisphere before European contact (The American Heritage Dictionary). This term is used interchangeably with the term Native American.

Ethnogenesis: The intentional introduction of cultural practices that lead to the creation of a new cultural identity (Hook 1997, 9).

Ethnographic film: The exact definition for this term is debatable. Most anthropologists have a differing opinion as to what constitutes a true ethnographic film. Some believe that emphasis on aesthetic elements reduce a film's "ethnographicness", while others state that without some aesthetic emphasis the film could not be appreciated by "individuals of varying levels of sophistication" (Rollwagen 1988, xiii). What can be agreed upon is that an ethnographic film should make some attempt to encode "reality" directly upon the filmstrip (Crawford and Turton 1992, 119). For this project, I will use the term in the broadest sense. This documentary will be influenced by my own opinions, as I am a member of the Alabama-Coushatta

tribe. Whether or not this fact takes away from its ethnographic validity is not important. In my opinion, it matters little what kind of label is placed on this documentary, or if there are questions of objectivity. What is more important to me is that this film works to make a worthwhile analysis of Alabama-Coushatta culture, while making room for my own personal experience. Aesthetics will play an important role in the production process, as it will allow for a more diverse audience, and thus create more value for the film as source for awareness of the Alabama-Coushatta people.

Film: The term will be used in this project to describe both celluloid film and videotape.

Reflexivity: There is no exact definition of reflexivity. Some anthropologists define reflexivity as the disturbing intrusion of the investigating observer, and believe photodocumentarians must be disciplined to avoid or correct these distractions (Rollwagen, 74). Other anthropologists, such as Jay Ruby, see reflexivity in a much more positive light. Ruby believes it is the responsibility of the anthropological filmmaker to “. . . systematically and rigorously reveal their methodology and themselves as the instrument of data generation” (Ruby 1980, 211). In this

proposal, I will use the term reflexivity to refer to any element of the film that reflects my personal perspective through aspects of the production process.

Regenesis: The reintroduction of cultural practices formerly observed by the group (Hook, 9).

Background

The Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas is actually made up of two tribal groups: the Alabama, who make up the majority of tribal members on the Alabama-Coushatta Reservation, and the Coushatta. Though these two groups do not share the same language, they do share similar cultural traditions, as both groups are descendants of a common Mississippian tradition.

Today, the Alabama and Coushatta are almost culturally indistinguishable. Intermarriage between the two tribes has resulted in a blurring of tribal traditions that were once specific to each tribe.

Presently, much of the tribe's income comes from the tourism and timber industries. Tourism is one factor that is leading to the breakdown of traditional culture.

At this time, several programs are being implemented to teach traditional culture to the youth. Some of these include language and art classes designed to allow

interaction between elders and youth. What is interesting about these programs, excluding the ones dealing directly with language, are that many of them are teaching cultural traditions that are of questionable authenticity. If the ultimate goal of these programs is to ensure the continuation of authentic Alabama-Coushatta traditions, then the teachers themselves must reevaluate what they are teaching. This documentary will work to act as a catalyst for such a rethinking.

Another factor that has probably played the largest role in the breakdown of traditional culture is Christianity. The Church is deeply rooted in the lives of most of the Alabama-Coushatta people. This institution replaced traditional religion in the early part of the 20th century and continues to thrive on the reservation. Whether or not Christianity combined with other factors will eventually lead to the complete destruction of traditional Alabama-Coushatta culture is unclear. What we do know is that the key to preserving it lies in educating the youth of their cultural legacy. We can only hope that it is not too late. For as each day passes so does a bit of that old legacy, lost forever, buried somewhere beneath the dirt of a Christian cemetery. These unrecoverable pieces of

a fading culture are the elder generations of the Alabama-Coushatta people. With them fade the memories of a different way of life, of myths and legends, of magic and gods. And what happened to that way of life? To the legends? To the gods? Can anyone answer that? For the Alabama-Coushatta people, will tomorrow be the same?

Literature and Media Review

There is very little documented information on the Alabama-Coushatta. What little information has been recorded exists only in a few severely outdated books. There is however, one recent book containing detailed information on Alabama-Coushatta history, and it has been a valuable resource for research into this project. This book is Jonathan Hook's *The Alabama-Coushatta Indians*. The book provides valuable information on the history of the tribe and confronts issues of American Indian identity. Other books used in researching this project include: *Myths & Folktales of the Alabama-Coushatta Indians of Texas* by Howard N. Martin, *The Alabama Indians of East Texas* by Mary Wade, *Koasati Dictionary* by Geoffrey D. Kimball, and *Journal of an Indian Trader* edited by Dan L. Flores. Other sources of information include photographs from the personal records of several Alabama-Coushatta people and

interviews with residents of the reservation and some Alabama-Coushatta people living outside the reservation boundaries. Research for this project also uncovered one filmstrip, containing a series of still photographs depicting the early life and contemporary life of the Alabama-Coushatta people. This filmstrip was produced in 1971 by the University of Texas Institute of Texan Cultures at San Antonio. The filmstrip presents itself more like an advertisement for tourists rather than a visual documentation of the Alabama-Coushatta culture; it lacks any sort of in-depth examination of tribal culture and only recapitulates basic historical facts. *Will Tomorrow Be the Same?* will be a valuable addition to the body of knowledge on the Alabama-Coushatta people because it will provide an updated visual, motion picture documentation of their culture, one that reaches far beyond the limits of still photography. This documentary will not just scan the surface of tribal life, but will peel it back to see what lies beneath; it will work to produce a useful analysis of the Alabama-Coushatta culture.

Approach

Update

The original plan for this film was to use an ethnographic approach to visually document the Alabama-Coushatta people. I was aware that my personal biases would influence the production and that there would be questions as to the ethnographic purity of the film. However, I felt that an ethnographic approach would be the best way to produce an effective analysis of the Alabama-Coushatta culture. The next section provides background information for my original ethnographic approach.

Original

There has been much discussion regarding the purity of ethnographic film and what constitutes a true visual ethnographic documentation. Because of today's push for higher production standards and the desire to market ethnographic film to a television audience, many of these ethnographic films are losing validity in the discipline of anthropological study (Crawford and Turton, 116). Marcus Banks, in *Film as Ethnography*, writes of this growing trend, ". . . 'ethnographic' films are produced for anthropologists by others, the anthropologists merely

acting to set a seal of authenticity upon the finished product. . . it is time to challenge this tendency and for anthropologists to redefine what it is they consider to be important in film" (Crawford and Turton, 116). Many anthropologists feel that the only true ethnographic films are open-ended, non-dramatized, raw footage of whole events, much like basic descriptive ethnographic writing (Rollwagen, 81). I would agree that an approach like this would produce a film that would be closer to reality, but it would be much more beneficial if there was some effort put forth to produce an analysis of the material.

Other anthropologists argue that without adding some cinematographic elements an ethnographic film cannot stand alone, as it has no way to express some form of internal analysis (Crawford and Turton, 119). They argue that adding analysis within the film is no different than a written analysis that would be created from the raw footage (Rollwagen, 78). I absolutely agree with Rollwagen on this point.

In both written and visual ethnography it is widely accepted that it is the responsibility of the observer to avoid reflexivity. Adding personal values into an ethnographic study or altering the purity of an event as a

result of observing it are both actions that are usually frowned upon within the discipline of anthropology. However, these actions are sometimes unavoidable or sometimes happen without the observer being aware. There are anthropologists, such as Jay Ruby, who believe it is important for the filmmaker to use reflexivity to produce insight into the methodology and production of a film. In the case of this documentary, I am aware that my opinions will undoubtedly influence the production. However, I am still going to approach this film in an anthropological and ethnographic manner.

The reason I have chosen an ethnographic approach for this film, rather than a purely historical or narrative approach, is that a visual ethnography of the Alabama-Coushatta culture provides a greater wealth of information for present and future study. It allows for greater detail in studying tribal regeneration and ethnogenesis by actually showing these processes occurring visually, going far beyond the limitations of written documentation. For example, ethnogenesis occurring at a tribal "pow-wow" is an intricate process and can be better illustrated visually, because it shows the process as it is happening. Also, an ethnographic film may be more appealing to audiences who

would otherwise never take the time to read an ethnography on the Alabama-Coushatta people.

Production Issues

Update

In the original proposal for this film, I had planned to shoot interviews in a formal style. The interviews would have the subjects facing the camera and sitting in an aesthetically pleasing manner. In the actual production stage, I abandoned that plan and began shooting many of the interviews in an informal style. Interviews were not setup using any lighting equipment or related devices. Several interviews were shot handheld as I followed the subjects moving about the area. The reason I abandoned the formal style is discussed in Chapter Five. The following section explains my original production plan.

Original

The number of shooting locations will be minimal with the majority of them being on the Alabama-Coushatta Indian Reservation and the surrounding community. As a member of the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe, I have easy access to locations on the reservation. This fact will also make it easier to secure interviews with tribal members and

schedule video shoots for key events. Some of these events will include tribal dances, sports competitions, religious ceremonies, and tribal council meetings.

Interviews will be a significant part of this documentary. Specific interviews will include the tribal "Chief", religious leaders (Christian and traditional), tribal youth, tourists, and non-Indians living both in and outside the reservation boundaries. Interviews will be shot so that the interviewee will appear to be looking towards the camera. Michael Rabiger believes this style of camera placement gives the audience a face-to-face relationship with the interviewee (Rabiger 1998, 183). This interview style is also one example of how this documentary will not follow the widely accepted rules of ethnographic film. The reason I have chosen to use this style is that I want to be able to have total control over camera placement. When dealing with camera placement a decision must be made as to whether or not the visibility of the camera will cause the subject of the shot to react abnormally. This problem is especially troublesome in an interview situation. If aesthetic quality concerns the filmmaker to any degree, then the camera will be prominently displayed. In addition, lights must be placed to ensure proper illumination of the

subject. These factors without a doubt alter the subject's normal behavior, but the question is to what degree has it distorted the truth. In my opinion, using this style of interview will not challenge the film's validity as an analysis of tribal culture.

Will Tomorrow Be the Same? will not require extensive equipment. Most of the needed footage will be easily acquired with the use of a single camera. Audio equipment and lighting equipment will be kept to a minimum to ensure easy access to all possible locations. Archival photographs will have to be located, but will be kept to a minimum, as the focus of this film is on contemporary Alabama-Coushatta culture and not an in-depth historical exploration.

Budget

The original budget is provided in Appendix A. Also included in Appendix A is an explanation for the differences that resulted between the original and actual budgets.

Timeline

Additional Research

June 2000: This will involve a review of films that utilize a similar approach to the one I have proposed for

this film. I will use this time to review related literature in greater detail and develop questions for interviews.

Initial Interviews

July and August 2000: This will involve meeting with potential interviewees to determine which ones to focus on, notes will be taken, and certain interviews may be recorded on audiocassette.

Locating Archival Photographs

September 2000: This will involve a thorough search for archival photographs of the Alabama-Coushatta people and cultural events. Sources of photographs may include personal photos, photos from interviewees, and libraries, including the archives of the Alabama-Coushatta Reservation.

Pre-Location Scouting and Scheduling

October and November 2000: I will use this time to plan for specific shoots. This includes looking at potential locations to decide the best possible way to approach them. At this time, I will also set specific times to meet with interviewees.

Location Shooting

December and January 2000-2001: This will be the time that I get most of the major shooting out of the way. With this time of year being the Christmas season, it will provide the perfect opportunity to capture examples of ethnogenesis on the reservation.

Additional Location Shooting

January and February 2001: This time will be used to get any additional footage or interviews that may have been rescheduled.

Post-production

March and April 2001: Editing will take up most of this time. Also, additional footage may be shot during the middle of March, when the tourists visit the reservation in greater numbers.

Estimated Time for Completion

I estimate the film, following this schedule, will take eleven to twelve months to complete.

CHAPTER II

PRE-PRODUCTION RESEARCH

Subject Matter Research

There are a few different explanations for the origin of the Alabama and Coushatta people. One of those stories claims that the people emerged from a cavern running deep beneath the earth. As the people emerged from the mouth of the cave, they came upon a giant tree. Some of the people moved around the left side of the tree, becoming Alabama, while the others went to the right of the tree, becoming Coushatta. This creation story helps to explain why the two tribes are so similar, but still retain some distinct cultural differences (Martin 1977, 3).

There is another account, told by many of the tribal elders, that explains the regional origins of the Alabama and Coushatta people. The elders claim that the ancient ancestors of the Alabama-Coushatta people originally came from somewhere in the south, beyond the borders of present day North America, migrating up and around the coast of what is now the Gulf of Mexico. This story goes directly

against the popular migration theory that indigenous people of the Americas are descendents of a people who migrated across the Bering land bridge during the last few ice ages (Kottak 1994, 209). It is the claim of many of these elders that the people moved east, heading towards the region containing the most powerful magical power, or *hollo*. It would be from this point, somewhere in the Florida peninsula, that these ancient ancestors of the Alabama and Coushatta people would sow the seeds of what would become the Muskogean culture. The descendents of these ancient people would take the basic Muskogean tradition, modify it, splinter into separate tribal groups, and expand back across the southeastern region of what is today the United States. Two of those groups became the Alabama and Coushatta tribes (Celestine 2001).

Soon after the first Europeans began arriving in the east, the Alabama and Coushatta people began a slow migration westward, ending up in the present day region of Alabama. Eventually, the two tribes would be forced once again to move farther westward, as the number of European settlers continued to increase. This migration occurred in the latter part of the eighteenth century, with the two tribes moving through southern Louisiana and into East

Texas (Martin, xvii). Most of the Coushatta decided to end their migration in Western Louisiana, but a small group continued across the Texas border.

After several years of living in temporary settlements along the Texas-Louisiana border, the two tribes finally received some help from the Texas legislature. The Alabama were granted 1,280 acres of land, while the smaller number of Coushatta were granted 640 acres. However, the land given to the Coushatta was already occupied by Anglo settlers who refused to recognize the decision made by the Texas legislature. The Coushatta were once again forced to look elsewhere for a home. The Alabama decided to invite the Coushatta to join them on their 1,280 acres of land (Hook, 32).

Today, the two tribes live as one on a 4,600-acre reservation a few miles east of Livingston, Texas. Language is one of the few cultural distinctions left between the two tribes. But, even that is being threatened as fewer and fewer youth are being taught to speak the Alabama and Coushatta languages. Besides a few traditional dances and bits and pieces of traditional religion, traditional culture is completely lost.

In the early 1960s, the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe implemented a plan to attract tourists to their reservation. Since that time, tourism has become the main source of income for the tribe. But tourism has also been a factor in the breakdown of traditional culture. To attract the tourists, the tribe brought in Indians from other tribes to teach them how to perform more colorful and elaborate dances, which ultimately ended up overshadowing traditional ones. A gift shop was also built, which was filled with items that only perpetuated stereotypes of American Indians. Some of those items included toy tomahawks and teepees, toy bows and arrows, and item after item covered with images of feathered warriors.

Beyond the destructive effects of tourism, Christianity is perhaps the greatest factor that has led to a breakdown in traditional Alabama-Coushatta culture. Christianity replaced traditional religion early in the 20th century. Today, the majority of tribal members living on the reservation belong to a Christian denomination of some sort. There are very few tribal members who still possess any knowledge of traditional religion, and most of these people are elders.

The tribe has developed a few programs to teach traditional culture to the youth. One of these programs is a language class, which is teaching the Alabama language to the children. Another program has older members of the tribe teaching the youth how to perform traditional dances. Hopefully, these programs will continue indefinitely, and eventually, expand into other areas of reservation life. Traditional Alabama-Coushatta culture is sitting on the edge of extinction. Without programs like these, its fate seems all too clear.

Most of the preliminary knowledge I gathered on the Alabama-Coushatta people and culture came from researching books and from what I knew personally as a member of the tribe. One of the most informative books on the Alabama-Coushatta people was Jonathan Hook's book *The Alabama-Coushatta Indians*. This book provided specific details on the history of the tribe as they migrated into Texas and began life on the reservation. Identity is one of the major issues that Hook's book deals with. At the time of my research I did not have any plans to make identity a major part of my film. Hook's book raised some interesting points about the self-perceptions of American Indian people, and conveyed the frustration of mixed-blood children perfectly.

I would like to think of my film as a visual and more personal account of that same frustration over identity. Other books that I used in my research into the culture of the Alabama-Coushatta included Howard N. Martin's book *Myths and Folktales of the Alabama-Coushatta Indians*, *The Alabama Indians of East Texas* by Mary Wade, *Koasati Dictionary* by Geoffrey D. Kimball, and *Journal of an Indian Trader* edited by Dan L. Flores.

Another valuable source of information on the Alabama-Coushatta people was my own mother. My mother, Gladys Shutt, grew up on the reservation as a child. She provided me with many details about life before the tourism programs were implemented. I spent a lot of time on the reservation myself as a child. Much of my knowledge of reservation life came from firsthand experience.

To gather more knowledge about the present day life on the reservation, I talked to many tribal members in person. These initial meetings with members of the tribe also helped me to prepare for my return with the camera.

Finally, during my pre-production research I reviewed one film that explored the Alabama-Coushatta people. This was a filmstrip produced by the University of Texas Institute of Texan Cultures at San Antonio in 1971. This

filmstrip does not delve very deeply into the internal workings of tribal life or identity, but rather, briefly recounts the history of the tribe.

Production Research

The bulk of my research for the production stage of my film came from interviewing members of the tribe. Understanding how the people would react to my questions and what information they would be willing to provide guided me as I worked on a production strategy. I also believe it is this research that first planted the idea in my head that my film might become more personal and reflexive. As I talked to more members and heard conflicting stories and experiences, I felt it might be necessary to speak for myself in order convey my own perspective as a mixed blood member of the tribe.

Originally, I had planned on letting the tribal members speak for themselves. I wanted the information in the film to come directly from the mouths of the Alabama-Coushatta people and avoid using my own voice to relay any information. This was still the approach I was going to follow moving into the production stage, but I feel now that I may have subconsciously been making room to fit my own ideas into the film at some later point. In fact, doing

the research for this film reopened some of the issues of identity that I had wrestled with in my youth. I began to notice that the Alabama-Coushatta people did not have a real grasp of their own identity because of the rapid cultural changes that had occurred in the last century. As I began to speak with people, I began to develop a plan to convey this idea in my film.

Equipment and Crew Research

I knew that I would be going into an area that was personal and emotionally unsettling for me, so I felt it would be better to keep the amount of production equipment to a minimum. I felt that the size of the crew would also have to be small, so that I could retain complete control of the production process. In addition to that, I did not feel it would be comfortable for the subjects or myself to have an outsider or non-Indian with me. It was my hope that this would help me gather more honest answers to questions about the culture and life on the reservation.

Funding

For this film, I sought no outside funding. The reason I chose this route was that I wanted to have total control over the film. I did not want to be held down to any concrete plans. I knew at the time of my original proposal

that there was a slight chance that the final film might become more personal. It was not until the production and post-production stages that I realized the film would be completely different from what I had originally conceived. There were probably avenues of funding that I could have explored but I am happy with my final film. I am satisfied with the way I was able to express myself through this film, and equally satisfied knowing that I produced it at my own expense.

Distribution Possibilities and Audience

The issue of self-identity is a something that nearly everyone must deal with at some point in their life, possibly at multiple points in their life. I think this film provides an interesting and intimate look into my personal experience of trying to come to terms with my mixed cultural background. Specifically, this film would be valuable for any American Indian youth who is dealing with a similar situation. It would also apply to any mixed race person that might be having a difficult time dealing with his or her own identity. I would hope that this film could stimulate those viewers to examine their own experiences and find solutions to their questions of identity. A more general audience who might appreciate this film would be

anyone with an interest in American Indian cultures or other indigenous cultures throughout the world. Also, folklorists, historians, anthropologists and other social scientists may find this film to be of some value. Because this film involves an Indian tribe within the State of Texas, Texas historians may find it to be a valuable source of information. The Alabama-Coushatta people themselves may find this film to be of interest and value. By examining themselves and the experience of one of their own tribal members, it may stimulate some interest in preserving their culture. It would also give them a rare opportunity to view themselves from the perspective of someone who lives off the reservation.

Because this film is neither too scientific nor too abstract, I think it would fit well into a general or short film category of most film festivals that accept documentaries. But I think it would do much better in film festivals that emphasize indigenous people and cultures. Possibly, festivals that deal with interracial issues. Educational programs that deal with problems of self-identity and racial tolerance might also be possible areas of distribution, as well as, programs that involve the study of indigenous people.

Goals of the Film

The ultimate goal of this film is to use my own experience dealing with questions of identity to stimulate thinking among viewers as to what truly defines a person's identity. Another goal of this film is to create awareness of the Alabama-Coushatta people, and at the same time generate self-awareness among tribal members. By doing this, it is my hope that the Alabama-Coushatta people will put more emphasis on preserving their traditional culture before it is lost forever. Many indigenous cultures around the world are also facing the same threat. I hope this film will bring that issue into the minds and hearts of anyone who is willing to help preserve those tradition cultures that are on the edge of extinction.

CHAPTER III

RECONCEPTUALIZATION BEFORE PRODUCTION

After completing additional research on the subject matter of my film and the approach I planned on using, I began to develop a detailed production plan that took into account the additional knowledge I had gathered. In my original proposal, I made room for the possibility that my film would contain a minimum number of reflexive elements. At this stage, I believed that the reflexive elements would not be overwhelming. It was my plan to produce a film that would convey to the audience the current status of the Alabama-Coushatta culture by using their thoughts and voices. I believed my own feelings on the subject would not be expressed in any straightforward manner, such as voiceovers, but rather, would be expressed through the way I shot footage and placed those pieces of footage together. I definitely did not have any plans to have myself appear anywhere in the film.

Part of the additional research I did on the subject matter of my film was meeting with tribal members to gather firsthand information on the Alabama-Coushatta culture and

determine which people would be best to interview on-camera. During these initial meetings, I had to overcome a lot of anxiety I had about meeting other tribal members who I had never met before in person. Much of my anxiety had to deal with personal issues of identity. I was not sure how these tribal members, most of them full-blooded American Indians, would receive me. I felt like an outsider because I was only half Coushatta and I did not grow up on the reservation. In terms of community, I was an outsider. I would be asking these people about our culture, about our past, things that to me were extremely important. I did not want them to perceive me as just another outsider who was interested in their culture, or who was looking for the same old stereotypes. I was not a tourist or a social scientist. I was a member of their tribe.

After meeting with the first few tribal members, I started to feel much more at ease. All of the people I interviewed knew my mother and her family, which made me feel much more at ease going into these interviews. At the same time, I believe it gave me more validity to the people I was interviewing. I was not someone who was trying to capitalize on their culture or potentially misrepresent them. Because of this understanding, I feel like many of

them were more open and honest in the initial interviews than they would have been to a non-tribal member or someone outside of their community. Their openness to answer questions produced some very interesting dialogue. For that reason, I felt like I was still on track with my plan to produce a film that would involve less personal issues and be more representative of the tribe's experience. I still planned on letting the tribe speak for itself through on-camera interviews. However, in the back of my mind, there was a growing idea that I might want to introduce some of my own personal ideas about the state of the Alabama-Coushatta culture. This occurred to me after I became more involved with the people, talking to them, comparing different perspectives, and realizing that there were some questions about the culture for which nobody had any answers. But for the time being, I was satisfied with the information I was gathering and going into the production stage, I still believed that the film would be less about my experience and more about the state of the Alabama-Coushatta people as described through their own voices.

CHAPTER IV

THE INTEGRATION OF THEORY AND PRODUCTION

Theories, Rationales, and Approaches

In the proposal for this film, I put forth a plan to visually document the Alabama-Coushatta people using an ethnographic approach. I chose an ethnographic approach for this film because it was my desire to produce a film that would have more validity as a document of scientific study. Whether or not a film can be called scientific is a blurry and ultimately relative decision. In order to produce an effective analysis of the Alabama-Coushatta culture, I believed that I would have to use an ethnographic approach. I was confident that I could produce an ethnographic film without having my personal biases threaten its scientific validity.

In the field of visual anthropology and related disciplines, there is much debate as to what constitutes a true ethnographic film. Jay Ruby, for example, does not feel that reflexive elements in a film take away from its ability to produce an effective scientific study. In fact, Ruby believes that a film made by an anthropologist must

contain reflexive elements and an explanation for why those elements exist within a film (Rollwagen, 51). In his book *Picturing Culture*, Ruby writes, ". . . all serious filmmakers and anthropologists have ethical, aesthetic, and scholarly obligations to be reflexive and self-critical about their work" (Ruby 2000, 153). I agree with Ruby that an ethnographic or anthropological film, which expresses to some degree the process of the film's construction, adds a wealth of valuable information for the viewer. However, I would not agree that self-reflexivity is absolutely necessary. I believe reflexivity in any anthropological film is unavoidable. Whether or not reflexivity in a film is easy to spot, it is important that the filmmaker not try to hide from the fact that his or her perspective is ultimately reflected in the final form of a film. Even a social scientist who goes to great lengths to remove any and all elements of reflexivity from their final film, in the end, only reflects their own perspective. If I were to view a film utilizing long takes, total synchronous sound, and wide shots of complete events, I would infer that the filmmaker did that on purpose to avoid having their own perspective influence the subjects or the experience of the event filmed. As a viewer, I would then question whether or

not their mere presence during filming altered the purity of what appears on film.

Some social scientists, such as Karl Heider, argue that a film's "ethnographicness" depends on its ability to greatly minimize the use of stylistic filmmaking techniques (Rollwagen, 48). Many anthropologists share Heider's view that true ethnographic films are open-ended, non-dramatized, raw footage of whole events (Rollwagen, 81). A film produced in this way would be closer to reality, but no matter what lengths are taken to avoid reflexivity, the film will never be reality. Heider does believe that ethnographic films, as he views them, cannot stand on their own and must be supported by a written analysis (Crawford and Turton, 119). If that is the case, then I see no reason why an analysis incorporated into the structure of the film would be any different. In both methods, the anthropologist is making a personal interpretation of the events unfolding on film. Both methods of analysis have an equal chance to have their scientific validity threatened by personal biases. For some reason, many social scientists feel that a written analysis is more valid than one incorporated into a film. I would argue that there is little difference between stylistic production techniques used in an ethnographic

film and the stylistic choices made by a scientist when designing a written analysis of the same subject. Both methods are valuable tools for ethnographic research. A written analysis can go into specific details and cover a wide range of material, while a film can provide visual information that cannot be found in written material. However, in either method the audience is receiving information in a form that was chosen by the author. In a reflexive film, it is easier to see the influence of the author. In an ethnographic film, it is much more difficult to spot the influence of the author, and may lead some viewers to naively accept whatever they see as the absolute truth. Therefore, the author of an ethnographic film must provide the audience with as much information as possible on the methods of research and data collection, so that the viewers can determine their own conclusions from the data presented.

The reason I originally intended to make an ethnographic film about the Alabama-Coushatta people was that I felt that it would be more valid as a source of information for those interested in learning about the culture. Even though I made room for a few reflexive

elements, I wanted to keep them to a minimum to preserve the "ethnographicness" of my film.

After doing further research for my film, I came to the conclusion that "ethnographicness" is something that can only be defined personally. I feel that arguing over the whole issue is a complete waste of time and energy. From that perspective, I do not consider my final film to be an ethnographic film and do not wish for it be defined as such. I realize, that regardless of my opinion, viewers will define it as they see fit. I leave that decision to them, even if I may not agree with it.

As I moved through the production and post-production stages of my film and began to encounter some of the personal issues of identity from my past, I felt my film was crossing a definite boundary. The space I was leaving behind was scientific, rigid, and based on logical thinking. The area I was moving into was a less defined space, an area of personal emotions and interpretations. I had to set aside my original belief that the film, in order to have some value to viewers, had to maintain ethnographic purity, or even be ethnographic for that matter. In my opinion, a documentary film is valuable, if it stimulates viewers to take information provided by a film and process

it into some sort of conclusion, rather than just entertain viewers on a superficial level. I decided that I could produce a film that expressed my personal opinions about the Alabama-Coushatta people and culture, and still maintain value for viewers.

Review of Additional Research

Soon after I began production, I learned of a documentary film produced in the 1980s that examined the Alabama-Coushatta culture. That twenty-four minute documentary is *Circle of Life: The Alabama-Coushattas*. *Circle of Life* does an excellent job of explaining the history of the Alabama-Coushatta tribe. The video also explores the reservation as it was in the 1980s. However, I feel the video only explores the Alabama-Coushatta people on the surface and does not uncover anything of real substance that reflects the true issues facing the Alabama-Coushatta people during that period of time. It does, however, delve deeper into the Alabama-Coushatta culture than does the filmstrip produced in 1971 by the University of Texas Institute of Texan Cultures at San Antonio, *The Alabama-Coushatta Indians*.

After old issues of personal identity were reopened in the process of making this film, I felt it was a good

idea to reexamine Jonathan Hook's book, *The Alabama-Coushatta Indians*. Because Hook focused much of his attention in the book on the frustration that many mixed blood Indians have with their own identity, I felt it would be interesting to see how much my experience mirrored those examples contained in his book. One particular story in the book, though it was a fictional account, echoed my feelings exactly:

The dancer finished adjusting his intricately embroidered sash. He sat down on the bench and glanced over at the "head" gourd dancer. . . Turning his head to smile at a friend sitting behind him, the dancer heard the last words of the woman's remark:

". . . really sad. I thought the dancers were going to be real Indians. Half of these guys are white." The words ripped at his heart. . . Every time he thought he had come to grips with his own identity, something happened to reopen the wound. (Hook, xi).

Hook's book was not received well by many of the Alabama-Coushatta people. Hook's critics claim that his book contains inaccurate information about the history of the two tribes before they began their migration to Texas.

Other tribal members criticize Hook for his method of research. Many of them were upset that Hook befriended the tribe, gained their trust, and then disappeared after gathering the information he needed to complete his book. In my situation, since I am a member of the tribe, I think the people were not as concerned that I might be trying to exploit or potentially misrepresent the Alabama-Coushatta tribe. After I talked with the tribal council and the interviewees, they all seemed to appreciate the fact that a younger member of their tribe was interested in exploring traditional culture. In the case of Jack Battise, the spiritual elder of the tribe, I left the interview feeling like I had made a new friend. Jack and I seemed to share a similar perspective about the past and future of traditional culture.

In terms of Hook's book, I found it to be a very valuable source of information on the Alabama-Coushatta people. I cannot be sure that everything in the book is completely accurate, but I do know that Hook conveyed the frustration of mixed blood identity perfectly.

CHAPTER V

PRODUCTION

Overview

The production stage of this film lasted from November 1999 to August 2001. I began shooting footage in November 1999 even as I was still in the process of developing my proposal. The footage I shot that November consisted of general shots of the reservation landscape, which I knew would be needed no matter what direction the film might take. I would not fully enter the production stage until the summer of 2000. Most of the footage I gathered consisted of on-camera interviews. The reason why I shot so many on-camera interviews is that I wanted to have as many different people speaking in front of the camera as possible to give me many options to choose from in post-production. Though only a few interviewees made it to the final cut, the information I gathered from the interviews helped shape my perceptions of the Alabama-Coushatta people and culture, and ultimately the film itself. Shooting footage for this film was difficult in the beginning, because I was unsure of how I would ultimately be received

by the people. Even though I am a tribal member, I did not grow up on the reservation, so most of the people I was interviewing did not know me personally. Also, I was unsure what I would discover, which made me somewhat nervous going in. Once I had completed the first few interviews, however, I became more comfortable with the process. A lot of the non-interview footage that I shot consisted of ceremonial dances and the events surrounding them. Some of the most significant footage that I shot was of a language class. The language class provided an example of tribal elders interacting with the youth, and showed how the tribe is working to preserve the language. Though I used very little of the language class footage in the final film, the information I gathered from it had a significant impact on the final form of the film. One of the last things I recorded in the production stage was the creation story of the Alabama-Coushatta people, in which I had my mother read in the Coushatta Language. Overall, I would say that the production stage proved to be the most satisfying part of the whole process; it brought me closer to my culture and cleared up misconceptions I had created about the Alabama-Coushatta people. The next section goes into more detail about each stage of the production process.

Schedule

Shooting for this film began in November of 1999. It was around this time that I began developing a list of potential issues that would be addressed in the film. There were certain images that would be required, such as, images of the reservation, interviews, ceremonies, and examples of the Alabama-Coushatta people in their daily lives. However, during those few days in November I only gathered footage of the environment: the forest, the lake and streams, the animals, the old wood homes that were slowly dissolving back into the ground from which they came. Even though the plan for this film was not completely worked out, I felt that the footage gathered at that time would be general enough to work with any specific issues that would be addressed in the film.

By December, I had developed a rough draft of a proposal for my film, which would be reworked over the coming months. Through the spring of 2000, I had to put work on this film on hold, while I concentrated on other responsibilities.

In the summer of 2000, I prepared an updated proposal for my film and presented it to the members of my thesis committee. Once my thesis committee approved the proposal,

I began shooting more footage on the reservation. In the early part of June, I captured footage of the Annual Alabama-Coushatta Pow-Wow, which lasted for three consecutive days. At this time, I was also reviewing films that utilized an approach similar to the one I was proposing for my film, and reviewing literature related to issues in ethnographic filmmaking. In my original proposal, I had planned on taking an ethnographic approach to the film, but it would be around this time that I began to realize that my film would definitely have some reflexive elements, elements that might threaten its validity as an ethnographic film.

Through July and August of 2000, I gathered a list of potential interviewees and met with them to determine if they would be a good source of information on the Alabama-Coushatta tribe. My mother was helpful in creating the list of interviewees because of her familiarity with many of the residents living on the reservation. Most of the interviewees were older members of the tribe. I chose to focus on them because I felt they would have a better perspective of how tribal life has changed over the past century. However, I also included a few younger tribal members on the list in order to get the perspective of the

younger generation. After meeting with most of the interviewees in person, I determined which ones I would return to for an on-camera interview. My original plan was to shoot the interviews in a formal manner, with appropriate lighting and audio equipment. I soon abandoned that plan and proceeded to shoot the interviews in an informal style. This change occurred after I decided that I did not want to have any other crewmembers accompany me to the interviews. Knowing that I was entering territory that was deeply personal for me, I felt that it would be less stressful to shoot the interviews alone. Using this approach, I could concentrate on gathering information that I felt was important. Also, I believed that by shooting the interviews myself, the people would be more open to answering intimate questions concerning our tribe. Having no other crewmembers would make it too difficult to carry certain pieces of equipment, such as bulky lighting equipment and additional microphones, and for that reason I did not setup aesthetically pleasing interviews. Instead, I tried to take advantage of the situation by doing several walking interviews. The walking interviews were interesting because they magnified the spatial relationships between the interviewees and myself. In anthropology, it is the

responsibility of the observer of a particular culture to understand and respect their subjects' cultural codes; spatial relationships are a significant part of those cultural codes. They set the rules for how individuals communicate within a shared space. In the interviews I conducted you can see that I did not have a clear understanding of the Alabama-Coushatta spatial codes. Because of this, much of the interview footage I shot had an uncomfortable and uncommitted look to it. However, the walking interview I shot with my mother does not show this. The spatial relationship between my mother and myself is well defined and is reflected in the look of that interview. I believe that part of the reason I eventually moved away from trying to produce an ethnographic film had to do with the fact that I was still learning the cultural codes of the Alabama-Coushatta people. Though I did not consciously recognize it at the time, the interviewing process was a major turning point in transforming the film into a much more personal piece.

From September to November of 2000, I determined specific events that I wanted to capture on video, and visited several locations on the reservation where I planned to shoot. Some of those events included the

children's initiation dance, at which the youngest members of the tribe would be introduced to the rituals of the dance circle. Another event was the language class, where elders of the tribe would be interacting with the tribal youth, teaching them the language and the importance of preserving it. I believed the language class would be the most important event that I would capture because it dealt directly with one of the major issues I was exploring in the film: the disappearance of traditional culture. I also used this time to secure dates for some of the on-camera interviews that I wanted to capture.

December and January is when I actually returned to the reservation to begin shooting the interviews. I also gathered footage of the events I had prepared for earlier. I missed one very important event during the month of December, which was the language class. This occurred because I was unaware that the language classes had been rescheduled. At the time, I was upset, because I felt this was the most important event I had planned to capture. I would get another chance to film a language class in June.

February through April, I began reviewing the footage I had gathered thus far, to determine if there was anything specific that I had failed to capture. I realized that I

needed to get more footage of normal reservation life, not just ceremonies and specific events. At this time, I was also completing a few more on-camera interviews.

In May, after logging much of my footage, I returned to the reservation to gather more footage of everyday life. By this time, I had already gathered several ceremonial dances and interviews, but lacked anything that showed normal everyday life as it occurred on the reservation. The reason I had not gathered much of that type of footage was due to the fact that I was spending the majority of my time focusing on my schoolwork and did not have the opportunity to spend any substantial amount of time visiting the reservation. When I returned to the reservation in May, I gathered footage of tribal meetings, automobile traffic along the reservations roads, and the youth center.

In June, I received a second chance to gather footage from a new language class. The language class lasted for nearly a week, with the students meeting daily to learn the Alabama language. The students ranged in age from approximately five to fourteen years old. At this time, I also began a paper edit, working out some of the major decisions before I began editing digitally on non-linear video editing computer. As I began to construct the paper

edit, I came to realize that this film would be more valuable if I included reflexive elements. I believed that by adding these reflexive elements I could more effectively convey to viewers that this film was not just an exploration of the Alabama-Coushatta people, but also an exploration of my own identity.

As July turned to August, I began a rough edit of the film on my personal non-linear editing system. For technical specifications on the non-linear editing system, see Appendix C. Earlier in July, I had recorded my mother telling the Alabama-Coushatta creation story in the Coushatta language. I began editing with the creation story and worked out some of the first few minutes of my film. By the end of August, I had completed about one third of my rough edit. This first third of the film basically explains to the viewer that the film is a personal exploration of identity and culture. It includes shots of the reservation landscape, a dance, and a brief background sequence that explains my connection to the Alabama-Coushatta tribe.

By the second week of September I had completed a complete rough edit of my film. The final film included voiceover segments, which allowed me to encapsulate the

whole experience of making the film. Chapter Six goes into more detail about the post-production process.

Crew

There were not many crewmembers for this film. Other than my mother, Gladys Shutt, who setup a few of the interviews, I was the sole crewmember behind the entire production. Because of this, I had to exclude equipment that would necessitate more than one person. Even though this may have hurt the film in terms of aesthetics, it allowed me to approach the film in a much more personal and intimate way. I controlled all aspects of production so I knew that the footage I was collecting was exactly what I wanted. By having total control of the equipment, I could take full responsibility for any decision made in the production process. The reason I was the only crewmember was that I was entering territory where I was not at ease, a personal area that I wanted to remain personal, at least through the production process. I did not want to risk bringing in other crewmembers who did not understand that this was not just a film, but a search for my own identity. Another reason for not having other crewmembers was that I felt it would be more beneficial to go into the interviews alone. I hoped that by doing this, the interviewees would

be more willing to give me information I was seeking. Though these interviewees did not know me personally, they did know that I was a member of their tribe, which I hoped would help convince them that I was not there to exploit or misrepresent their culture.

Equipment

The equipment for this film was kept to a minimum. This was due mainly to the fact that I was the only crewmember. I used one Canon XL1 DV Camera to capture my footage. Occasionally, I would use a tripod to steady the camera during long events, but for the most part I tried to keep everything handheld to give me more freedom to move around quickly. For capturing audio, I used either the on-camera omnidirectional microphone or an external lavalier microphone. The lavalier microphone was used primarily during the interviews. If I were given a chance to redo the production stage of this film, I would most likely use a shotgun microphone in appropriate settings. However, I am satisfied with the audio that I captured, knowing that it added to the personal theme of my completed film. For a complete and detailed list of the equipment used in the production of this film, see Appendix C.

Releases, Copyright and

License Agreements

Before I began shooting footage on the reservation, I spoke to the tribal chairman, Kevin Battise, and explained to him and other members of the Alabama-Coushatta Tribal Council exactly what it was I was planning on documenting. The council agreed unanimously that I could continue filming on the reservation. A few of them were cautious because they felt they had been misrepresented in the past by people working on projects related to the Alabama-Coushatta culture. Being a member of the tribe, however, I feel like I was in a unique position. I asked permission from the council because I felt it was right thing to do. It was not something that was required.

For each interview that I shot I obtained a signed release form. I also tried to obtain a signed release form from any person that was on camera for an extended period of time. To view the individual release forms, see Appendix D.

Budget

This film was produced on a small budget. Because I was the only crewmember and equipment was kept to a minimum, the cost of producing this film was relatively

low. Also, I already owned the equipment I would be using for the production and post-production stages. That equipment included the Canon XL1 DV camera, an Audio-Technica wireless microphone, and a non-linear editing system equipped with Adobe Premiere 6.0. Much of the cost for this film came from traveling between Denton and Livingston, Texas. The traveling expenses not only include gasoline, but also hotel and food costs. Besides travel expenses the only other major cost was purchasing 60-minute DV tapes. By the end of the production stage I had used a total of 20 hour-long DV tapes, each tape costing an average of ten dollars. To examine the budget in detail, see Appendix B.

CHAPTER VI

POST-PRODUCTION

Schedule

Post-production began in the early half of February and continued through October. There is a lot of crossover between the production and post-production stages. This is due to the radical change that occurred in the way I began to approach the film. As I realized the film would be much more personal and self-reflexive, I had to adjust my production and post-production schedules to fit its new shape.

February through April, I began reviewing the footage I had gathered thus far, to determine if there was anything specific that I had failed to capture. I decided that I would need to return to the reservation to capture footage of normal reservation life. I already had a lot of footage of specific events, mainly ceremonial dances, but I needed to capture footage that expressed the communal relationship on the reservation. I wanted to get scenes of tribal members interacting with each other. One of the ideas I came up with was to attend a tribal council meeting. At the

council meeting tribal members would discuss and debate important issues facing the tribe. Another area that I needed more footage of was the life of tribal youth. I contacted the reservation's Youth Programs Director, Herbert Johnson, Jr., and setup a time to visit one of the reservations after-school programs. At this time, I was also completing a few of the on-camera interviews I had yet to get on video.

Through May and June, I spent a lot of time reviewing and logging the rest of my footage. For each hour-long tape, I tried to describe what was happening in minute-to-minute detail. Since most of my footage was interviews, the transcription of dialogue between the subjects and myself took the most time. Logging the footage helped me make some decisions on how I wanted to approach the editing process. I decided to construct a paper edit with the intention of producing an ethnographic film. By this time, I knew that my final film would not be ethnographic, but I felt that constructing a paper edit using an ethnographic approach would give me a good base from which to expand. After finishing the paper edit, I began to mark areas where I could include self-reflexive elements and comments reflecting my personal perspective.

I moved my rough edit to the computer in July, digitally capturing segments of footage that I felt would work best with the plan I had devised in my paper edit. Once I had captured most of the footage to the computer's hard-drive, I began laying down sequences in Adobe Premiere. This was a very basic structure, without any transitions or other digital effects. At this time, I also began working on the voiceover narration, not recording any narration, but working it out on paper.

By August, I had worked out much of what I wanted to get across in the voiceover narration, but I was still not sure how well it would work with the visual footage. For the moment, I stopped working on how to incorporate the voiceover, and concentrated on creating the introduction to the film. I decided that the Alabama-Coushatta creation story would be a good way to introduce the film because it would represent both the beginning of the tribe and the start of my film. A few weeks earlier, I had already shot the footage that would go along with the creation story. However, I had yet to record the story's narration. I chose to let my mother tell the story in the Coushatta language. This was important because I wanted the film to start out with a traditional feel; English subtitles were included

for translation. After the creation story, I added shots of the reservation's natural landscape and slowly moved to more modern shots, including an abandoned log cabin and an intertribal dance. In this section I was trying to show a transition between the past and the present. I ended the section with my first voiceover, which I hoped would express that the tribe had undergone some profound changes over the last century. After the introduction to the film, I used my mother's life to show the changes that had occurred on the reservation and also as a means of introducing my own experience as the child of an interracial couple. The voiceover narration in this section was extremely personal, but I felt it was necessary to convey the idea that I would be exploring my culture, as well as, my own identity. By the end of August I had completed about one-third of my rough edit, and began working on the next two-thirds of the film.

The first two weeks of September I worked at a fast pace to complete a full rough-cut of the film. Using the paper edit as a guide, it was not too difficult to construct the rest of the film. At this time, the hardest part was deciding how much more voiceover narration to include. I wanted to include a brief history of the tribe.

To do this I used some of the interview footage to explain the tribe's history, but I had to add my own narration to fill in the gaps. After the history section, I moved straight into the most important part of the film, the disappearance of traditional culture. I focused on two areas: religion and language. I felt these two areas contained the most tangible examples of the disappearance of traditional culture. Christianity replaced traditional Alabama and Coushatta religion early in the 20th century. Very few tribal members today know anything about their traditional religion. One person who does is Jack Battise, an elder of the tribe. I included segments of my interview with Jack, so he could explain the role of traditional religion in the tribe. I contrasted Jack's perspective with that of Clayton Sylestine, the tribe's chief, who is a devout Christian. For the language segment, I included Zetha Battise, an elder and former schoolteacher who is concerned that the traditional language is disappearing. In this section, I also used shots from the language class. Not being able to speak the language myself, I added some voiceover narration giving my perspective on the situation. The last major section of the film was the most personal for me. It dealt with identity and cultural stereotypes.

The voiceover narration in this section reflects how deeply these subjects affect me emotionally. The final section wraps up the film, repeating some of the major issues that are addressed within the film, such as traditional culture and identity. I end the film with a recent picture of myself, to give the viewer a face to the voice that has been speaking to them throughout the film.

Equipment

The non-linear editing for this film was done on my personal computer, which was built strictly for editing digital video. It is a PC based system, equipped with Adobe Premiere Version 6.0, a 70-gigabyte SCSI hard-drive, and a Pinnacle Systems DV500 capture card. The voiceover narration was recorded with a handheld Audio-Technica microphone attached to the PC. I used an audio program called CoolEdit2000 to work with the recorded voiceover files. To play the DV tapes I used a JVC HR-DVS1U DV/SVHS deck. For a complete and detailed list of the equipment used in the post-production stage of this film, see Appendix C.

Reconceptualization of Film

During Post-production

During post-production the film underwent a complete reconceptualization. In the original proposal, I made room for the possibility that the film would possess a limited amount of reflexive elements, but overall I was conceptualizing a film that would be relatively objective. I began to realize that the film was taking on a different shape during the production stage, but I was too busy shooting footage to really think in-depth about the direction the film was starting to take. In the last few weeks of the production stage, I fully began to understand how different and much more personal the film would be in its final form.

After beginning the post-production stage, logging footage and starting a paper edit, I started to rethink in detail how to structure my film to express my personal ideas. I wanted to make it a personal film because that was the one way I felt I could effectively get across the experience I had while making the film. I felt that expressing my experience was important because it also reflected what is occurring within the lives of all Alabama-Coushatta people. In some way, each tribal member

is dealing with the fact that his or her culture is disappearing, or at least, changing dramatically. Also, the members of the tribe living off the reservation, especially the youth, are most likely dealing with issues of identity as they try to find their place among various people and cultures. To convey my experience in the film, I chose to include personal voiceovers to help express my thoughts and opinions on the Alabama-Coushatta culture. This film became an exploration of my own identity, making me rethink issues that I had thought were already solved years earlier.

CHAPTER VII

EVALUATION OF COMPLETED WORK

Pre-Production

If had to redo the film, I would hesitate to approach it with the intention of making an ethnographic film. That may have been the biggest flaw in the conceptualization of the film. My concern for making a film that would hold up under the scrutiny of social science threatened my creativity. However, I do concede that it may have also worked to balance the film, to keep it from becoming too abstract. The film reached a nice medium between science and self-expression. Because of this, it may help the film reach a wider audience. There were specific areas of the Alabama-Coushatta culture that I wanted to cover in this film, such as the history of the tribe, the disappearance of cultural traditions, and the level of awareness among tribal members that their traditional culture has almost disappeared. By beginning this film with the intention of producing an ethnographic film, I think it may have kept me focused on gathering information I needed to explore those areas of the tribe that I felt were important.

Production

The production stage of this film was the most important stage of the whole process. During this stage, I learned a great deal about myself. I learned that I still had lingering questions and doubts about my identity. It was a stressful time, but in the end it was well worth the temporary pain. As I began talking to people on the reservation, I felt less like an outsider and more like an accepted member of the tribe. I made some valuable friends, including Jack Battise, who I hope to learn more from about traditional culture in the coming years.

I think the production methods I used were not the best in terms of aesthetic quality. I could have used some help filming certain events and interviews, but overall, it was better that I went into this process alone. I needed that space to help me deal with some of the emotional issues that I had to face, both as a mixed-race member of the tribe and as a documentary filmmaker.

Post-Production

The post-production stage is when the film finally came together for me. After the paper edit and the rough edit I was finally certain that this film would not be ethnographic. Of course, it would have some elements of an

ethnographic film, but it was too biased by my own perspective to be considered scientific. Understanding this, I did not hold back on what I wanted to get across in the film. The voiceover narration had to be added. Otherwise, I would have always looked back at this film with regret for not speaking my mind when I had the opportunity. During the post-production stage I was totally immersed in my culture. Hearing myself talk about issues of identity made me realize that this film way have subconsciously been a way to force myself to confront unresolved issues of my past. Whether or not that is true, I am completely satisfied with the experience of making the film and the finished product.

It is interesting to wonder what kind of film I would have produced if I were not a member of the tribe. Most likely, it would not have involved any exploration of self-identity, which would have resulted in an entirely different film.

Success in Integrating

Proposed Theories

I was not successful in integrating my proposed ethnographic theory, because the film made a shift from being scientific to a personal piece. However, I think my

film was successful in meeting many of the goals I set out to reach. The value of my film does not come from its ability to maintain or express any sense of "ethnographicness", but rather, its value comes from expressing my personal experience growing up as a mixed-blood member of the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe. For people who have dealt with questions concerning self-identity, the value of this film may be a realization that they are not alone. And I hope this film can be helpful to them as they try and make some sense of their own identity.

APPENDIX A
ORIGINAL BUDGET

Original Budget

	CASH	IN-KIND	TOTAL
<i>PRE-PRODUCTION</i>	-	-	-
Researcher	-	50	50
Office Materials	50	-	50
Writer/Script	-	25	25
<i>PRODUCTION CREW</i>	-	-	-
Producer	-	50x10days	500
Director	-	50x10days	500
Assistant Producer	25x10days	-	250
Videographer	-	50x10days	500
Still Photographer	25x10days	-	250
Production Assistant	25x10days	-	250
Audio	25x10days	-	250
Translator	-	25x10days	250
<i>PRODUCTION SUPPLIES</i>	-	-	-
Digital Video Camera	-	250x10days	2500
Camera Supplies	50	-	50
Lighting Equipment	150x10days	-	1500
Sound Equipment	100x10days	-	1000
Camera Tapes	10x15tapes	-	150
Master Tapes	105x2tapes	-	210
Distribution Tapes	5x20tapes	-	100
Transportation	450(.28/mile)	-	450
Archival Photographs	100	-	100
Music Licensing	50	-	50
Food	50x10days	-	500
Other Expendables	50	-	50
<i>POST-PRODUCTION CREW</i>	-	-	-
Editor	-	50x10days	500
Translator	-	25x10days	250
Video Off-line Edit	-	30x10days	300
Sound Edit	-	25x10days	250
ADR/Foley	-	25x10days	250
Music/Score	-	25x10days	250
Sound Mix	-	25x10days	250
On-line Edit	-	50x10days	500
Tape Logging	-	25x10days	250
<i>DISTRIBUTION</i>	-	-	-
Video Dubs/Packaging	250	-	250
Press Kits/Marketing	150	-	150
Postage/FAX/Phone	45	-	45

Festival Entry	250	-	250
Travel	400	-	400
<i>OTHER</i>	-	-	-
Legal	200	-	200
Clearance/Rights	100	-	100
Insurance	50	-	50
<i>CONTINGENCY</i>	400	-	400
	REQUIRED	IN-KIND	TOTAL
TOTALS:	\$7055	\$7125	\$14180

The original budget, created during the pre-production stage, was designed with the intention of producing an ethnographic film. For that reason, I planned to have a small crew with me during production. That crew included an assistant producer, production assistant, still photographer, and an audio person. Also, the amount of equipment used during production was originally going to be much greater. I intended to use lighting equipment during the interviews, and planned to use a shotgun microphone, which would have been operated by someone other than myself. Because I later decided not to use other crewmembers and extensive equipment during the production stage, the actual budget was considerably smaller (See Appendix B).

APPENDIX B
REVISED BUDGET

Revised Budget

	CASH	IN-KIND	TOTAL
<i>PRE-PRODUCTION</i>	-	-	-
Researcher	-	50	50
Office Materials	50	-	50
Writer/Script	-	25	25
<i>PRODUCTION CREW</i>	-	-	-
Producer	-	50x10days	500
Director	-	50x10days	500
Assistant Producer	-	25x10days	250
Videographer	-	50x10days	500
Still Photographer	-	25x10days	250
Production Assistant	-	25x10days	250
Audio	-	25x10days	250
Translator	-	25x10days	250
<i>PRODUCTION SUPPLIES</i>	-	-	-
Digital Video Camera	-	250x10days	2500
Camera Supplies	50	-	50
Sound Equipment	-	100x10days	1000
Camera Tapes	10x20tapes	-	200
Master Tapes	105x2tapes	-	210
Distribution Tapes	5x20tapes	-	100
Transportation	450(.28/mile)	-	450
Archival Photographs	-	100	100
Food	50x10days	-	500
Other Expendables	50	-	50
<i>POST-PRODUCTION CREW</i>	-	-	-
Editor	-	50x10days	500
Translator	-	25x10days	250
Video Off-line Edit	-	30x10days	300
Sound Edit	-	25x10days	250
ADR/Foley	-	25x10days	250
Music/Score	-	25x10days	250
Sound Mix	-	25x10days	250
On-line Edit	-	50x10days	500
Tape Logging	-	25x10days	250
<i>DISTRIBUTION</i>	-	-	-
Video Dubs/Packaging	250	-	250
Press Kits/Marketing	150	-	150
Postage/FAX/Phone	50	-	50
Festival Entry	300	-	300
Travel	400	-	400

<i>OTHER</i>	-	-	-
Legal	200	-	200
Clearance/Rights	100	-	100
Insurance	50	-	50
<i>CONTINGENCY</i>	400	-	400
	REQUIRED	IN-KIND	TOTAL
TOTALS :	\$3510	\$7225	\$12735

APPENDIX C
EQUIPMENT

Video Equipment:

Canon XL1 digital video camera

Canon 16x lens

Canon 3x wide-angle lens

SONY DVM60 60-minute digital videocassette

Audio Equipment:

Canon on-camera omnidirectional microphone

Audio-Technica Pro 88W/R wireless lavalier microphone

Audio-Technica handheld microphone

Post-Production Equipment:

Non-linear editing computer system

Intel PIII 1000mhz 512RAM

70GB SCSI Ultra160 harddrive

Pinnacle Systems DV500 capture card

Adobe Premiere 6.0 software

JVC HR-DVS1U MiniDV/S-VHS videocassette recorder

Miscellaneous:

Slik tripod

Canon XL1 camera shoulder mount

12hr Battery Belt

APPENDIX D
RELEASE FORMS

RELEASE FORM

I, (print name) FRANCES BATTISE, in consideration of 0 dollar(s) and without any further consideration, do hereby assign unto Jason Shutt, all rights in and to any photographs, motion pictures, video tapes and/or audio recordings taken of me this day.

I hereby authorize Jason Shutt to reproduce, copy, exhibit, publish, distribute, or edit in any way all such photographs, motion pictures, video tapes and/or audio tapes.

I understand and agree that Jason Shutt will be held free and clear of any claims for damages for libel, slander, invasion of the right of privacy, or any other claims based on the use of said material.

I certify that I am over the age of eighteen (18).

Frances Battise
signed

Glenn Shutt
witness

2/3/01
date

Livingston, TX
place

RELEASE FORM

I, (print name) JACK A. BATTISE Sr., in consideration of 0 dollar(s) and without any further consideration, do hereby assign unto Jason Shutt, all rights in and to any photographs, motion pictures, video tapes and/or audio recordings taken of me this day.

I hereby authorize Jason Shutt to reproduce, copy, exhibit, publish, distribute, or edit in any way all such photographs, motion pictures, video tapes and/or audio tapes.

I understand and agree that Jason Shutt will be held free and clear of any claims for damages for libel, slander, invasion of the right of privacy, or any other claims based on the use of said material.

I certify that I am over the age of eighteen (18).

Jack A. Battise Sr.
signed

2/22/01
date

Jason Shutt
witness

Livingston, TX
place

RELEASE FORM

I, (print name) Zetha N. Battise, in consideration of 0 dollar(s) and without any further consideration, do hereby assign unto Jason Shutt, all rights in and to any photographs, motion pictures, video tapes and/or audio recordings taken of me this day.

I hereby authorize Jason Shutt to reproduce, copy, exhibit, publish, distribute, or edit in any way all such photographs, motion pictures, video tapes and/or audio tapes.

I understand and agree that Jason Shutt will be held free and clear of any claims for damages for libel, slander, invasion of the right of privacy, or any other claims based on the use of said material.

I certify that I am over the age of eighteen (18).

Zetha N. Battise
signed

Jason Shutt
witness

2-2-01
date

Livingston, TX
place

RELEASE FORM

I, (print name) Walter W. Byrd, in consideration of 0 dollar(s) and without any further consideration, do hereby assign unto Jason Shutt, all rights in and to any photographs, motion pictures, video tapes and/or audio recordings taken of me this day.

I hereby authorize Jason Shutt to reproduce, copy, exhibit, publish, distribute, or edit in any way all such photographs, motion pictures, video tapes and/or audio tapes.

I understand and agree that Jason Shutt will be held free and clear of any claims for damages for libel, slander, invasion of the right of privacy, or any other claims based on the use of said material.

I certify that I am over the age of eighteen (18).

Frank Byrd
Walter W. Byrd
signed

3/21/07
date

Gladya Shutt
witness

1011 Alston, Livingston TX 77357
place


RELEASE FORM

I, (print name) Roland Poncho, in consideration of 0 dollar(s) and without any further consideration, do hereby assign unto Jason Shutt, all rights in and to any photographs, motion pictures, video tapes and/or audio recordings taken of me this day.

I hereby authorize Jason Shutt to reproduce, copy, exhibit, publish, distribute, or edit in any way all such photographs, motion pictures, video tapes and/or audio tapes.

I understand and agree that Jason Shutt will be held free and clear of any claims for damages for libel, slander, invasion of the right of privacy, or any other claims based on the use of said material.

I certify that I am over the age of eighteen (18).


signed


witness

2/23/01
date

Livingston, Tt
place

RELEASE FORM

I, (print name) Yolanda Poncho, in consideration of 0 dollar(s) and without any further consideration, do hereby assign unto Jason Shutt, all rights in and to any photographs, motion pictures, video tapes and/or audio recordings taken of me this day.

I hereby authorize Jason Shutt to reproduce, copy, exhibit, publish, distribute, or edit in any way all such photographs, motion pictures, video tapes and/or audio tapes.

I understand and agree that Jason Shutt will be held free and clear of any claims for damages for libel, slander, invasion of the right of privacy, or any other claims based on the use of said material.

I certify that I am over the age of eighteen (18).

Yolanda Poncho
signed
2/5/01
date

Gladya Shutt
witness
Livingston, TX
place

RELEASE FORM

I, (print name) Clayton M. Salyer, in consideration of 0 dollar(s) and without any further consideration, do hereby assign unto Jason Shutt, all rights in and to any photographs, motion pictures, video tapes and/or audio recordings taken of me this day.

I hereby authorize Jason Shutt to reproduce, copy, exhibit, publish, distribute, or edit in any way all such photographs, motion pictures, video tapes and/or audio tapes.

I understand and agree that Jason Shutt will be held free and clear of any claims for damages for libel, slander, invasion of the right of privacy, or any other claims based on the use of said material.

I certify that I am over the age of eighteen (18).

Clayton M. Salyer
signed

Jason Shutt
witness

2/23/01
date

Livingston, TX
place

REFERENCE LIST

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