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## Film Talk: Viewers Responses to a Film as a Socially Situated Event

George Frederick Custen

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## Film Talk: Viewers Responses to a Film as a Socially Situated Event

### Abstract

Taken from Introduction:

This study attempts to describe patterns of viewer interpretive engagement with a film. The film used in the study, Jonathan Demme's *CitizensBand* (1977), was selected because in most respects it was like the films viewers could see at commercial, first-run movie theatres. Informants were selected according to the frequency with which they reported attending films. This selection was done in line with a model of interpretive behavior developed by Sol Worth and Larry Gross. This model suggests that experience with a symbolic mode might lead to different ways of interpreting articulations within a mode. I thought that the degree to which informants used the medium might provide an analytic context for examining different patterns of interpretive engagement with a film. Thus, the main purpose of this study was to describe the kinds of interpretive acts and verbal responses actual viewers engage in (in self-selected groups) when discussing a film after a viewing.

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### Comments

FILM TALK: VIEWERS RESPONSES TO A FILM AS A SOCIALLY SITUATED EVENT

GEORGE FREDERICK CUSTEN


A DISSERTATION

in

COMMUNICATIONS

Presented to the Graduate Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania  
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of Philosophy.

1980

  
Supervisor of Dissertation

  
Graduate Group Chairperson

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In addition, I should like to thank several friends, notably Tobia Worth and Mary Moore Goodlett for their helpful suggestions.

Thanks must also go to Tim Clott of Paramount Pictures, who graciously provided me with a print of the film used in this study. George Gerbner, Dean of the Annenberg School of Communications, provided me with the more than ample facilities I needed for the not always peaceful scribblings done during this project.

Last, I should like to think that some of the ideas in this work do justice to the concepts I gleaned from my late, much-missed advisor Sol Worth. It was he who urged me to pursue the study of film in its social contexts. My debt to him is large. Through an unusual

combination of interpersonal skills, Sol always kept pushing me to pursue ideas farther than I always wished. He had the uncanny knack of almost always being insightfully prescient about such things. It is to Sol's memory, with thanks, that this work is dedicated.

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## Chapter

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## CHAPTER I

### I.1 Introduction

This study attempts to describe patterns of viewer interpretive engagement with a film. The film used in the study, Jonathan Demme's Citizens Band (1977), was selected because in most respects it was like the films viewers could see at commercial, first-run movie theatres. Informants were selected according to the frequency with which they reported attending films. This selection was done in line with a model of interpretive behavior developed by Sol Worth and Larry Gross. This model suggests that experience with a symbolic mode might lead to different ways of interpreting articulations within a mode. I thought that the degree to which informants used the medium might provide an analytic context for examining different patterns of interpretive engagement with a film. Thus, the main purpose of this study was to describe the kinds of interpretive acts and verbal responses actual viewers engage in (in self-selected groups) when discussing a film after a viewing.

Sol Worth, in a provocative paper, made a statement that frames one of my major concerns here. He noted,

It is not always the case that sign use or behavior fits into a social matrix, but it is always necessary for students of sign use to know whether or not we are dealing with a social matrix. (1977, p. 11)

That is, the investigation of meaning (and the variety of meanings) people make or do not make from a film must be studied within the contexts of that making, and to the extent that film behavior can

be viewed as a possible communicative event from the perspectives of actual participants involved in the process. Most models (and these will be illustrated later) of "how" "viewers" derive "meanings" from films (sometimes even in a specified setting) ignore the relevance of the variety of ways and reasons people attend to films. This is a crucial oversight.

Worth, somewhat later, notes, "There is cinema and the various ways people deal with it" (1977, p. 17). The present study, in looking at the acts of real participants confronting a film in a setting, can begin to isolate certain behavior as the focus of research; treating a kind of social behavior (responding to a film) as a way of understanding film as a socially situated event in which people participate to varying degrees.

This last point--treating the viewer's responses to a film as a type of socially situated event--is marked departure from previous modes of research which have dealt, in some way, with film meaning or viewer interaction with film.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"Film as a socially situated event" is here intentionally employed in its broadest usage. It might include the decision making process of what film to see with whom, what one attends to on the screen, the number and kinds of films seen, the kinds (and the weight) attached to making meanings from film, and the kind of talk about film which may take place to various ends. All of these acts done (or observed) by participants are seen as potential components, units of cultural meaning that might be part of a definition of film as a communicative event. As Hymes notes, ". . .no phenomenon can be defined in advance as never to be counted as constituting a message.

We deal here, in short, with the fact that the communicative

With the exception of "community" research (Warner and Lunt, 1941, or Lundberg, Komarovsky and McInerny, 1934), previous investigations have ignored the fact that films can be seen as communicationally relevant insofar as they qualify as but another arena for varying modes of conduct for participants involved in other forms of symbolic behavior. The relative weight given to film, as an evaluative and interpretive object of attention, has never truly been investigated.

Attending (and not attending to) films is not the same for all people. Some people go frequently to the movies and others do not. People go at different times, with different participants to see different films. For some, "going to the movies" is an event involving complex aesthetic norms and evaluations. For others, it is an activity pursued as an alternative to (or with the same weight) accorded to going to a massage parlor or a gin game. I am proposing that in investigating meaning in a film, we must assess how films

event is the metaphor, or perspective, basic to rendering experience intelligible. It is likely to be employed at any turn, if with varying modes of imputation of reality (believed, supposed, entertained in jest, etc.)." (1974, pp. 13, 15-16)

Thus, to limit the study of a film to the interpretation of a "text" by a person charged vocationally with that task (criticism) or, to see if a film is or is not "art" are only possible elements in searching for film as a socially situated event. The point here is not that everything is seen as somehow inherently significant to film, but rather to investigate from the perspective of kinds of participants who comprise the cultural scenes (Spradley, 1972, p. 24) where films are likely to figure, the knowledge and kinds of behavior they include as part of their use of a film.

figure in communication behavior in general, by investigating the various modes of response, assessment and interpretations accorded a film by different types of actual viewers.

As Worth notes, "I think it is time for us to consider the process of the interpretation of symbolic events in general; time to study how we understand and interpret rather than continue to provide more interpretations of specific works. And, it is time to compare the process of interpretation--of making meaning--across modes and across works. . .We need to see if making meaning of speech bears any relation to how we make meaning of pictures" (1977, p. 5).

This study is a first step in placing meaning in the hands of those participants who comprise the majority of the population of cultural scenes in which films figure, the viewers.

## I.2 The Research Problem

There are three main foci of investigation being proposed here. They are;

1. What are the kinds of verbal responses that viewers may make in regard to a film?

2. How do viewers make, or negotiate, meaning from a film through talk?

3. What is, broadly speaking, the social weight--the importance--accorded to film behavior (going to films, interpreting films and talking about films) in relation to other kinds of communications

behavior in general?

The three areas outlined above are presented as if they were distinct realms of action and analysis. The obverse is probably the case. What has been viewed as communications behavior (going to films, talking about films and making meaning from films) is but a portion of a stream of continuous action people engage in from day to day. However, for the purposes of clarifying the domain of the proposed research, the three areas are being presented as possible analytic configurations, useful for the researcher as possible figures which alternately stand out from the background of a rather vast researchable field.

The first area might be seen as a relationship between recognition of a film as belonging to a particular genre, and the concomitant ways this recognition shapes assessments and interpretations. Does recognition of a film, by a viewer, as being a certain "type" of film engender certain approaches to its interpretation and one's responses?

Second, I am concerned here with what has been called "uses and gratifications"--the purposes and interests served by a film for viewers.

Third, in connection with these two issues, I will examine how differential use of a medium (heavy and light viewing) is related to other differential aspects of film behavior, both in the functions and effects talk about film might serve for viewers, and in the

general significance accorded film as a realm of social behavior.

The study of how viewers use film and make meanings from film has been an area left in splendid isolation until recent years. While early in the history of film, there had been research on the thematic content of the movies (The Payne Fund Series in the early 1930's) or on the persuasive effects of film "messages" (Hovland, Lumsdaine and Sheffield, 1940) or on the composition of film audiences and their preferences (Handel, 1950), it was not until very recently that research has been done using actual viewers as informants responding to an actual film. Moreover, this recent research (Messaris, 1975; Aibel, 1976; Custen, 1976) conducted in terms of a model-in-progress formulated by Sol Worth and Larry Gross (1974) was primarily concerned with the differential capacities of viewers (e.g. with or without training as filmmakers or analysts) and the relationships these capacities had to their interpretations of film. This model posited a binary choice for viewers between strategies for assessing and interpreting symbolic events (attribution or communicational inference), rather than presenting a choice of the variety of meanings that might be generated in regard to a symbolic event. It is also the case that each of these studies utilized short, amateur films which were exhibited to a universe comprised largely of student informants. One would have to agree that these are not the common conditions under which most films are seen by viewers.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The term "film" will be used throughout this study to describe

Citizens Band and other symbolic events like it. This is done for purposes of clarity. While it appears that most informants prefer the term "movie," rather than "film," it would be interesting to see if the choice of a term, or the patterned use of one, rather than the other, sheds light on the social weight accorded film by viewers (i.e. Sontag (1964) refers to the objects of criticism as "film"; but objects of entertainment are "just movies").

The origin, and eventual validation by various groups in a culture of one term rather than another would also make an interesting study. When Edison first "invented" the symbolic form I call "film," it was referred to as "Mr. Edison's invention" (Jowett, 1976, p. 26). However, Edison's invention (the kinetoscope) lacked a projection system. The perfection, sometime in 1896, of a projection system gave rise to truly visible "moving pictures," although terms as diverse as "picture play" (Ramsaye, 1936, p. 96) in 1894, "photoplay" (1910) or "Life Motion Pictures" (1910) proliferated for some time. Thus, the term "movies," an apparent abbreviation for "moving pictures" has been extant at least since 1914 (see Jowett, 1976, p. 47), while "film" has been in use since 1896 (Ramsaye, 1926, pp. 137, 256, 261). It is not merely the apparent seniority of the term "film," which is the justification for its use throughout this study. Rather, to avoid confusion on the possible different social meanings readers might accord "film"/"movie" choice, I am using the former term.



CHAPTER II  
THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS AND SELECTIVE LITERATURE  
ON VIEWER RESPONSES TO FILM

A review of significant works which deal with models of meaning or interpretation of symbolic events would be beyond the scope of this study. Scholarly works in the philosophy of language, linguistics, semiotics, aesthetics, literary theory and different models of communication theory attest to the fact that investigations on the nature of "meaning" and "interpretation" are vast, various and currently very controversial. Rather than discussing what could only be a highly attenuated and selective review of this diverse literature, I have adopted as a starting point certain recent studies with goals congruent to the theoretical underpinnings of this study and which utilize definitions of "interpretation" and "meaning" proposed by Sol Worth and Larry Gross (1974).

I think that research which has as its goal the illumination of the different kinds of actual verbal responses viewers make in regard to a film is much needed at present. What Barbara Smith (1979) ironically refers to as interpretations and evaluations of "intrinsic worth" have for a long time been the primary way scholars have concerned themselves with viewer responses to film. It is a purpose of the present study to describe and compare "public", "non-academic" interpretive behavior performed through talk with "ideal interpreter" models like those espoused by Sergie Eisenstien (1949) and Ernst Kris (1953). In so doing, I hope to describe the presumably rich functions

and effects interpretations and other verbal responses, as speech acts, can have for individuals and groups in regard to a film.

Sol Worth and Larry Gross, in their paper "Symbolic Strategies" (1974) state,

The world does not present itself to us directly. In the process of becoming human, we learn to recognize the existence of the objects, persons, and events that we encounter, and to determine the strategies by which we may interpret and assign meaning to them.

The world they are discussing is made up of natural and symbolic events which can be rendered meaningful by our assessment of them as sign, or non-sign events. For a given event or object, "'signess' is always assigned by an observer who can tell the difference within his own cultural context between those events which are articulated, and thus treated as intentional and communicationally symbolic, and those events which are existential and natural" (1974, p. 87).

An observer's assignment of meaning to a symbolic event is embodied in our recognition of an event's structure, context and conventional usage. One assumes that a structure is "made, performed, or produced for the purpose of symbolizing and communication" (1974, p. 85). For Worth and Gross only in those cases where one recognizes the presence of implications through intentional structuring of an event can one use the words "communicational meaning". The Worth/Gross theory rests upon an agreement about "how" things can mean that is, in their words, "social". Communicational meaning depends upon an observer's (or interpreter's)

assumption of an intention on the part of some agent, or author who has arranged or manipulated forms or elements within an object or event in order to imply meaning. Such manipulation and arrangement can only occur when producer and observer share conventions and rules for both articulation and interpretation. A creator produces an object in such a way that others will be able to interpret it, making use of conventions and rules which he, as both a creator and interpreter of events believes he shares with other members of his culture. Thus, Worth and Gross use the term "communicational inference" in regard to those events in which a viewer, through recognition of an intentional ordering or manipulation, infers that a producer has done this in order to "mean." The inability to recognize this manipulation, for a variety of reasons, leads one to assess significant events as non-intentional, non-communicative. In such cases one treats events or objects in terms of assumptions of existence, as a natural event. This strategy they call "attribution." In their scheme this is a form of "interaction" that is not communication because the social part of the process (the sharing of rules of implication and the ability to recognize an intentionally created structure) is absent.

The nexus of the Worth/Gross theory is in the choice (and reasons for the choice) exercised by an observer in assessing an event to be either intentionally ordered for the purposes of creating meaning (communicational inference), or in perceiving it as not manipulated, and therefore without a man-made intention to communicate (attribution).

Thus, while a natural event can be assigned sign value (a tree bending in the wind is, in Peircian terms, an index of a coming storm), a film of a tree bending can give rise to either inferential or attributional strategies. If one feels that the film is somehow "naturalistic"--that is, one does not feel that it has been set up, or controlled by some author or agent in relation to aspects of a single shot (lighting, composition within the frame) or the relationships of preceding and antecedent shots, one assumes no agency, hence no assumption of intentionality to mean. On the other hand, a viewer who recognizes the manipulation and structuring of an event by an author for purposes of communicating (e.g. "This shot of a tree in Day of Wrath is like the shot of the witch being burned earlier. It must mean that somehow, they are connected, for the lighting and composition are the same.") might thereby choose to infer meaning by this recognition of control through agency.

In its broadest sense, then, the Worth/Gross theory asks the question, "What are some of the ways (and reasons for these ways) we learn to make meaning from different kinds of events in the world?" Attention here is focused particularly on the application of this model to mediated events, although the intention of Worth and Gross is potentially much broader.

Messaris' research (1975), which I view as an attempt to elaborate the Worth and Gross model in regard to mediated events (a film) indicated, "The ability to deal with film on a multiplicity

of levels need not be always a matter of alternatives. . . the act of interpretation may take place on a multiplicity of mutually supporting levels, which 'blend' with each other (rather than leading to differing or separate but coexistent, interpretations)" (1975, p. 28).

Messaris has indicated that the Worth/Gross model, with its binary system of alternatives, should be viewed as a first step in understanding how viewers make meaning throughout the course of a film.

The Worth/Gross theory shares some points in common with "attribution theory" of social psychology. Kelley, one of the major figures in this field, notes that "A major application of the theory concerns the process by which the typical observer infers a person's motivations from his actions" (1967, p. 193). However, most of the interest in attribution theory is not concerned with interpreting mediated events. Thus, the notions of the coercive powers of learned conventions of looking and interpreting man-made articulations are not emphasized. This literature is similar to the Worth/Gross theory in the emphasis it places on how one imputes or assigns agency and causality to a person, object or event.

One of the shortcomings of any theoretical work-in-progress (as I take the Worth/Gross model to be) is an initial simplification of the varieties of classes of behavior the model can assess. Thus, Gross, in "Art as the Communication of Competence" states, "The range of meanings and emotions which have been, or potentially can be implied and inferred is obviously vast and varied" (1974, p. 106). While

his paper deals largely with a domain called aesthetic communication (the assignment of the typology "aesthetic" being an assessment and an evaluation itself) his analytic scheme in which persons make meaning and learn to appreciate aesthetic events and objects is perhaps a fruitful counterpart to juxtapose with the Worth/Gross model.

Gross proposes a scheme of triangulation for assessing an event; "Both creation and appreciation of symbolic communication, . . . require competence in perception, discrimination and organization and this, in turn, arises out of experience in choosing, transforming and ordering" (1974, p. 108). Like the process proposed by Kelley (1967) for accounting for causality of effect, Gross' process of triangulation is a strategy through which a person seeks to validate his attributions of agency, judgments of competence, or evaluation by invoking previous works and performances, exposure over time, and the judgements of other persons in regard to an object or event. For both men, triangulation is a process in which an observer attempts to "check" his imputation of some characteristic of a work or event by bringing as much comparative knowledge and experience as he can to the situation of assessment or appreciation.

In Gross' scheme, the viewer of an event (like a film) is constantly utilizing information garnered in past experiences with similar events. Thus, a viewer of a film might ask questions of legitimacy ("Is it art?"), quality, ("is it good") and taste ("Do I

like it?") based on these past experiences in production or appreciation of an event in a given mode. He has at his disposal many of the potential criteria for evaluation (skill, labor, complexity, repeatability, novelty, sincerity) in looking at the choices - e.g. the selection of materials, their transformation and ordering made by an artist.

The fact that observers have this potential interpretive arsenal at their disposal does not, however, mean that they utilize it to the same degree or with the same consistency for all works at all times. It is part of the task of this research to investigate what questions observers do ask in regard to an articulated event, what criteria are used in assessing it, and the kinds of meanings they make.

None of these related models of meaning or interpretation pretend to be complete inventories of what all people do for most communicative events. They are theoretical paradigms meant to be fleshed out by research. What they seem to share is the importance assigned to agency, the search for a person or a cause to which responsibility (and, at times, intention) may be attributed or imputed. In so doing, they are in fundamental agreement on the important point of making meaning through the imputation of agency.

## II.1 Previous Film Studies

The great majority of the literature on film is "testimonial"

or atomistic in character. Andrew Tudor, British sociologist whose major interest is film, has suggested that a film theorist is anyone who attempts to make organized general statements about the cinema. For Tudor, "Film theory" is properly part of the domain of cognitive culture, and is concerned with descriptions of the operation of the medium itself. "Film aesthetics" is part of the domain of evaluative culture, and is thus concerned with the quality of a work. Often, these two approaches can be combined; Sergei Eisenstein is the most frequently cited example. (See Tudor, in Working Papers on the Cinema: Sociology and Semiology, Peter Wollen, ed.) Research focusing on actual viewers and their responses is nonexistent. (Freidson's research with children's responses to film in Reisman, 1953 seems to be a rare exception.)

For a number of years, students of Worth and Gross have been investigating how people make meaning from mediated events. As the Worth/Gross model is both developmental (age and experience) and hierarchical (degrees of complexity of what is attended to in an event), several of the studies testing strategies of interpretation have used groups of informants with either differential degrees of training and use in a particular medium, or different specialized interpretive skills.

Aibel (1976) was interested in two points. First, he investigated the imputation of authorship by two classes of viewers (anthropologists and filmmakers) to two films (one made by a Navajo Indian,



the other by an Anglo Anthropologist). Second, Aibel investigated, ". . . what is the nature of the viewing behavior, that is, what are the visual elements and the laws of their use that the viewer attends to and conceptualizes as the product of a member of his own culture as opposed to someone outside of it" (1976, p. 14). While Aibel's research did not deal with the varieties of meanings generated by different classes of viewers, it is significant to note the differences he perceived in the levels of a film attended to by each class of viewer. Thus, filmmakers were able to generate more levels of analysis for a film (particularly attending to cinematic form) with more reasons given for their responses at each level than were anthropologists. In addition, the filmmakers in his study were able to generate more sub-categories in their levels of analysis of a film than the anthropologists. Differential training (and use) of a medium did give rise to differential modes of analysis, as Worth and Gross postulate. The attention to formal elements on the part of the filmmakers might be cited as further evidence of the effects the use of a medium can have on the analysis of a particular event in that medium.

Aibel's research may be viewed as a first step towards illustrating the kinds of details within a film different classes of viewers attend to. The implications for this research would appear to be rather clear. If different training and use of a medium give rise to different analytic levels of an event in that medium, it might also be expected that these differences might also give rise

to differences in the kinds of responses generated.

Research by Custen (1976) had a somewhat different focus. This investigation looked at the relationship between different filmic structures (narrative, non-narrative and haphazard) and the selection by viewers of a strategy of interpretation posited as "logical" for each structure. Two findings in Custen's study stand out as germane here. First, both experienced and non-experienced film viewers primarily employed the strategy of attribution for the narrative film. Custen explained this unexpected finding by noting that because of the strength and familiarity of the narrative code for most viewers in our culture, "expectations of competency and complexity are higher for films that are clearly linear. If a film is narrative, but constructed without great sophistication, it shall be interpreted attributionally by most viewers" (1976, p. 124). Second, any film (even the haphazard version) because of its "man-made", "articulated quality" (it was clearly a mediated, not a natural event) can give rise to assumptions of intention, (regardless of its internal structure), because, for most viewers, a film is "supposed to mean."

The first finding points to some of the flaws in the research of Worth and Gross' students. For most persons (other than film specialists) a narrative film means a feature-length, "Hollywood" production. Although viewers are able to recognize a narrative structure in amateur films, deviation in "quality" from "Hollywood" standards gives rise to a special categorization ("amateur," "student") with attendant

judgments of expectation and "appropriate" interpretive "worth." The time has come to test some of the ideas raised by Worth and Gross with a film that is more like the "movies" most people see. In all of the studies employing the Worth/Gross model, the films used were made by amateur filmmakers. Thus it can be argued that these studies were testing evaluation of a code - amateur film- as much as meaning within a representative of that code. Assessment of a film, therefore, as having membership in a code (student, amateur) affects the kinds of responses made through expectations and judgments of competence at the level of the code itself, rather than the individual film. With the exception of Custen's study, this issue has not, to date, been dealt with directly.

Messaris' research was interested in, ". . .how viewers combine knowledge of real life with knowledge of cinematic conventions in interpreting film" (1975, p. 1). Messaris wondered if viewers with different degrees of training in the medium would respond to a film as a naturalistic event (therefore choosing attribution), or if training (in film analysis and filmmaking) had shaped viewer perception to attend to control by the filmmaker through a variety of articulated structures (hence, inference) within a film. Messaris discovered that there were differences in the selection of interpretive strategies, but only for certain sections of the film.

The first section of his film (described as Hollywood or TV) gave rise to a finding that, "regardless of training, the viewers

tended to disregard the staged, conventional aspects of this section of the film." This section was treated as a "naturalistic sequence of events, whose meaning was a 'natural' consequence of the relationships among these events, rather than the result of the filmmaker's intentional use of conventional structural devices."<sup>1</sup>

While training in a medium does make a difference in selection of an interpretive strategy (when the code "calls for it") the strength (and tacitness) of narrative cinematic conventions is an overriding factor in selection of an interpretive strategy, regardless of training. This finding is very much in line with that of Custen. However, Messaris glosses over the possibilities that the effect of the level of a film code ("student", "avant-garde") might have on a viewers' assessment or interpretation of a given film. While his study is an extremely valuable one, it still does not deal with two crucial issues. First, it ignores the previously discussed differences between short (ten to fifteen minutes) amateur films and

<sup>1</sup>On the issue of the "learned" aspect of film interpretation, an interesting early account of how nickelodian audiences had to be taught "rules" on how to "understand" what was happening on the screen, may be found in Edgar Wagenknecht's The Movies in the Age of Innocence (1963). Wagenknecht recalls that, prior to each screening, a person would explain to the audience how the novel medium "worked," how they should look at a film in order to render it understandable. This early account is in accord with Balazs' notion (1970, p. 33) that contemporary audiences have forgotten the extent to which understanding a film is a piece of learned behavior contingent upon the comprehension of established structural conventions. See also, Gross (1974) Gombrich (1960) and Polanyi (1967) for overviews on "transparency" or "tacitness" of perceptual and performatory codes once they have become familiarized in culture.

feature films as objects of interpretation and response. It seems that, with the exception of a viewer with the capacities of a mnemonist, it is easier to "replay" (and supply specific interpretations for) a short film than it is to cope with a feature length film. Second, one might say that in probing the dimensions of the consistency and relatedness of selection of an interpretive strategy, Messaris overlooked the specific foci of viewer attempts at making meaning. While inference/attribution are terms for types of processes of interpretation and response, the specific elements which comprise these "reasoned" utterances are, for the most part, ignored. While a viewer might use an inferential strategy for a particular code, (say, the non-narrative part of Messaris' film), it is also of interest to see what level and degree of agency a viewer attends to within a film (actor, writer, director, editor). It might well be the case that types of agency, as subcategories of specific interpretive processes, are strong unifiers of meaning for viewers, and that selection and knowledge of different levels of agency differs with either training or the degree of use of a medium.

While the above studies (particularly Messaris') expanded aspects of the Worth/Gross model, their use of "atypical" films and, for the most part, binary notions of interpretation lead one to search in other directions in regard to domains of meaning, processes of interpretation and viewer responses to film.

## II. 2 Uses and Gratifications of Film: The History of a Limited Paradigm

Film, despite its relative "senior" status as a medium of communication (as compared, say, to radio and television) has never received the research attention accorded to television. Jowett (1976, p. x) feels that the recent focus of most film research has been "aesthetic and biographical," noting, "The reason for this is clear, the introduction of television caused all interest in the study of media 'influence' to be focused to the newer, and certainly more pervasive, smaller screen." Thus, television usurped the researchers' attention before film ever really got its foot in the door of the laboratory.

Another reason for the paucity of certain kinds of film research, according to Jowett, was the lack of access to documentation. Film, as well as television as private industries, kept much of their important data out of the hands of researchers. Therefore, "Accurate statistics on the growth and development of the motion picture industry have always been difficult to find . . . However, even during the period of Hollywood's greatest hold on the American public such statistics were seldom made public" (1976, p. 45).

It might also be argued that the Supreme Court "divestiture" ruling (1948) and the dramatic drop in box office receipts in the 1950's changed the film market from a seller's to a buyer's. Thus, the industry, in the 1950's, for the first time, allowed access to their statistical inner sanctums (MPAA study, 1957). Even so, this was not done out of a spirit of public interest, but self interest.

Alarmed at their declining power, film companies turned to social scientists, hoping to find in their research procedures the technique to recapture the vanishing audience.<sup>2</sup>

Even prior to this interest in "audience" research, past film research had evinced a relatively clear pattern of priorities.

Movies at first were considered a mass art, or more accurately mass entertainment. They were in the period of their infancy all but ignored by both researchers and the popular press. When other media (newspapers, periodicals) started to take note of them, it was in regard to their "effects" engendered through the story "content and messages". (Jowett cites the scandal over Griffith's The Birth of a Nation as the seminal turning point in public notice of film.) Most past film studies were pursued from one of two perspectives.

1. Research which studied the "effects" of film on a special cultural group, looking for correlations between film content and its influence on audience behavior. Under this rubric one would find the uses and gratifications film served for a group.

<sup>2</sup> Pye and Myles (1979) argue that neither television nor the 1948 Supreme Court Divestiture ruling--which deprived studios of their distribution/booking monopoly--was the cause of the dramatic post World War II drop in film attendance. The true culprit, they note, was the rise of suburbia. For, as Margaret Mead has also noted, the growth of suburbia created a new class of homeowners whose leisure time was now passed in the newly purchased residence, not outside of it. Both analyses locate the social surround--film as a socially situated event--as crucial to their explanation of Hollywood's "lost audience."

2. A defensive maneuver (still present today) on the part of film partisans or specialists which tried to prove that film was "art".

3. We thus find ourselves presented with a simplistic binary scheme which, has dominated film research. It might be expressed in the statement, "Film is art or it is mass entertainment."

If film is art, one can focus on the characteristics of the medium that make it so. These analyses have taken a variety of shapes centering aesthetic concern on the "reality" captured on film (Bazin, 1967; Kracauer, 1960), or on the purposive manipulations of the imperfections of the medium (Eisenstein, 1949 and Arnheim, 1957), or the decision whether film is mass or high art (Panofsky, 1934; McDonald, 1962).

In general, a judgment that film is art seems to lead towards less empirical research (in the sense of using real people responding to actual films), and into more essay-like speculation and theory (i.e. Kracauer's "images in the dark" theory). Conversely, if film is "entertainment," one focuses on how people are affected by story content, the composition of the audience and their preferences and uses of the medium. In this perspective, one finds studies of the thematic content of motion pictures (The Payne Fund Series of

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<sup>3</sup> One of the earliest examples of this position was Vachel Lindsay's The Art of the Moving Picture (1915).



of the 1930's), or of mass persuasion (Hovland, Lumsdaine and Sheffield, 1940) or of the uses and gratifications of film (Haley, 1952; Lazarfeld, 1947; Maccoby and Wilson, 1957; Olsen, 1960).

Given the pattern presented above, it is unsurprising that most previous research ignored the notions of meanings and the social weight accorded to film. If the researchable universe is a binary one (art/not art, effects/not effects) the idea of the social weight and significance of types of meanings is either implicit in the acceptance of one category (art), or ignored as irrelevant to the other (effects).

Susan Sontag states this overview rather succinctly, noting,

The fact that films have not been overrun by interpreters is in part due simply to the newness of the cinema as art. It also owes to the happy accident that films for such a long time were just movies; in other words, that they were understood to be part of mass, as opposed to high culture, and were left alone by most people with minds (1969, p. 21).

Nevertheless, there has been a history--albeit, a sparse one--of research into the "uses and gratifications" issues defined earlier.

As early as 1910, researchers (mostly social workers) showed a paternalistic concern with the effects of the sources of public amusement for the "masses".<sup>4</sup> A 1910 survey, "The Amusement Situation in the City of Boston" (commissioned by the Twentieth Century Club

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<sup>4</sup> See Farris (1967, p. 7) for the early influence of social work and theology on American sociology.

of Boston) noted the primacy, at this early date, of the motion picture. The report looked with some alarm at the high attendance figures of young boys, fretting about the effects of film on such tabula rasa minds.<sup>5</sup>

Similarly, studies by the Reverend John Phelan in Toledo, Ohio (1919) and Alice Miller Mitchell in Chicago (1929) found the influence of film to be pervasive, particularly among the young. Attendance twice a week was not an uncommon occurrence.

What is salient about all three of the studies cited is that they all classified film-going as recreational behavior and were particularly concerned with the effects of film on the young.

There have been studies investigating films' "place" in the total range of the symbolic behavior of a community. The most famous of these community studies is, perhaps, Warner and Lunt's "Yankee City" research, conducted in Newburyport, Massachusetts (1941). Looking at film-going as part of the leisure infrastructure of a

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<sup>5</sup> The popular literature of this early period is filled with anecdotes about the deleterious effect of film on young minds. See Booth Tarkington's Jashper (1916, p. 417-18) for an example. In this novel the young hero, to the chagrin of his parents, decides to become a sleuth after being impressed by a series of detective films. Also of relevance to this anecdotal literature is Hortense Powdermaker's study, Hollywood: The Dream Factory (1950). Dr. Powdermaker comes up with the yet to be tested hypothesis that naive viewers' assumptions about unknown realms of experience are largely shaped by screen myths. The work of Gerbner and Gross (1976) is investigating this very issue of "cultivation" with television. However, film research has yet to do so.

community, a type of analysis never before performed, this research discovered that frequency of attendance at films was an activity stratified along social class lines. With the exception of the lowest class, movie attendance decreased the higher one moved socially. Unfortunately, it is not certain that Newburyport can be seen as representative of any but "small" communities. In addition, the town had only one movie theatre. Thus, the data obtained on audience attendance patterns is far from representative of other situations, even in 1941.

A study of Lundberg, Kamarovsky and McInerney, found that ". . . in Westchester, as elsewhere the movies constitute the most common form of commercial amusement . . . the movie has the field to itself" (1934, p. 76).

Margaret Thorp's America at the Movies (1939) was the last major study of film going as a social and cultural institution. Thorp examined the influence of films on material culture, and noted and overlooked use of the medium; movies as a source of common knowledge, a coin of cultural exchange in our day to day lives. She noted, "The movies are furnishing the nation with a common body of knowledge. What the classics once were in that respect, what the Bible once was, the cinema has become for the average man . . . they give the old something to talk about with the young" (Jowett, 1976, p. 266).

In addition to these studies, the famous Payne Fund Series (five volumes, 1933) came up with a formula of influence for film in rela-

tion to a viewer. This equation was "general influence X content X attendance = total influence".<sup>6</sup>

All of the studies cited admitted (and even feared) the primacy of film as a form of popular amusement, attending to its power as an "effective" medium of communication. During World War II numerous government sponsored studies investigated film as a tool of persuasion, or as a means to study "culture at a distance" (Mead and Metraux, 1953). After World War II, the research that had only sporadically begun, ceased almost entirely. While there have since been audience composition studies (Handel, 1950; MPAA, 1957) and even studies of "special interest audiences" (Smythe, et. al., 1953 on art house audiences) research in film, in the United States, was usurped by research interest in television. Thus, as the perception of the medium's power as a force of entertainment was seen to decline, ". . . interest in the examination of the medium's influence declined dramatically in the fifties, and has never really been revived" (Jowett, 1976, p. 374).

The fact that the uses of the medium noted by past research had

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<sup>6</sup> Research such as Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) tended to invalidate the simplistic foundations of much of the above research. Katz and Lazarsfeld came up with the now well known "two-step flow" influence model (persons as mediating factors to the effect of a message). They described a process by which opinion leaders (cosmopolitan and local), seekers (and later, avoiders) operate within a social matrix, placing symbolic behavior in some social surround, and out of the "hypodermic needle model" implied by the Payne Fund materials.

been limited almost exclusively to those of entertainment, and the gratifications aspect noted variously as wish fulfillment (Handel, 1950), the daydreams of a culture writ large upon the screens of America (Wolfenstein and Leites, 1950), or, less often, the social learning function served by films (Powdermaker, 1950; Thorp, 1939) leaves the contemporary researcher with a formidable task. One is confronted with an historically sparse research domain now almost deserted. By 1972, a study prepared by the Los Angeles Times Marketing Research Department found, "As a favorite activity, movie going ranked very low, with only 2% of the total sample mentioning it" (Jowett, 1976, p. 422-23).

Having predominantly been "weighted" as entertainment, movies were seldom investigated as anything but one of many devices available for persons in their leisure time. Much of the research was on "effects" of thematic content or attitude and opinion change, as perhaps befitted the climate of the war years. Later research concentrated on the "lost audience". As Burch noted (1973, p. 123) little research was directed to cinematic form. For, everyone assumed that a film's impact was verbal; the effect of a film could be encapsulated in a verbal retelling of its "messages". Content (and effects) were thus the primary levels of analysis. The notion of an interactive meaning/form/social weight issue was thus never remotely touched. (Although Gregory Bateson's analysis of the German film Hitlerjunge Quex, 1943, seemingly flirted with this approach weighed

down as it is by an overly "psychologistic" approach.) Audience or viewer research has never meant "meaning", in the sense of interpretation or social weight, but has signified demographics, preferences or attitude studies.

The work of Worth (1972) Gross (1974) and Worth and Gross (1974) and their students is among the first research to look at meanings and films as potential situations in which to investigate communication behavior and real people (rather than head counts and questionnaires) in assessing the role of film as a symbolic mode.

### II.3 On Types of Film

If meaning in film and the uses and gratifications of film has had a limited research history, the notion of a formulated film typology as a critical or research base presents one with another sort of dilemma. While there is much criticism and theoretical literature on types of film, there has been no research at all into how audiences classify film, except along parameters of taste or preference. While many audience studies (Handel, 1950; MPAA, 1957) asked viewers the question, "What kind of films do you like?", a formal taxonomic analysis, or even an initial classificatory grouping of kinds of films described by classes of viewers has never been done.

Previous research has made a serious omission by ignoring viewer classification schemes. For, classification schemes and namings can be viewed as a significant way persons describe and assess an object

or event within their culture. This approach -- of generating cultural meanings from informants namings -- can be seen to ". . . discern the characteristic ways a people categorize, code and define their own experience" (Spradley, 1972, p. viii). In addition, as Blumer notes, ". . . human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings which these things have for them. Category systems not only divide up the world, they also define it" (1969, p. 2).

An investigation of names for movies, and the vocabulary used to describe certain aspects of looking at films generated by different classes of viewers, will shed some light on the "social weight" issue. Hymes puts the point most succinctly;

Film seems likely to be more like gulls than kinship, as taxonomies go. That is, most everyone in a society is involved in kinship and has to know the taxonomy to a considerable degree; not everyone in our society has to know that much about gulls or films. There are close observers of gulls who are amateurs; observers and/or knowers (not necessarily the same) who are scientists; and many who just want gulls to keep a proper distance. I imagine something of the sort may obtain with film--amateurs who are attentive; specialists; and people not aware of much more than there is such a thing (Personal communication, December, 1977).

A preliminary investigation of a taxonomy of films and of the vocabulary used by different classes of viewers in talking about film is a way of understanding the way film figures as a socially situated event. Spradley notes, "Since culture is what people know, it will always be necessary to gather data by deciphering the symbolic codes people are using" (1972, p. 45). A study which combines the

kinds of responses generated by different kinds of film viewers in conjunction with an investigation of how talk is used to describe the code under investigation would seem to be a first step in improving our understanding of certain aspects of communications behavior, and the code(s) being attended to by members of a culture.

#### II.4 The Social Weight of Communications Events

The social weight issue, broached earlier, can now be more fully discussed. Previously, I talked about the need to elaborate the Worth/Gross model's definition of meaning by fleshing out specific components used in either inference or attribution. Thus, a person who imputes agency in making an interpretation of a scene, to actors, directors or writers might still use the same strategy, inference. Conversely, it might appear that when one attends to actors, one attributes meaning to their behavior rather than infers meaning from the signals they give that they are in control of their roles. (See Kareda, 1974 for this position; that actors should somehow signal to an audience that they are, indeed, the authors of their own behavior.)

Thus, by social weight I mean, that the cultural focus on ideas leads to patterned ways of integrating and using film in ones life. Spradley's work in Ethnographic Semantics illustrates the point I would like to make. He notes;

The various regions of a person's cognitive map



are his cultural scenes. Just as a city map can have small sections included in larger ones, which are grouped together into the total area of the city, the cultural scenes that make up a persons cognitive map can vary in size (1972, p. 27).

Thus, one might restructure the question in this fashion, "On some imaginary map of the domain of communications behavior, how large a portion does film occupy?" In addition, one might further ask, "Are its components the same for all members of this cultural scene?" Film might be considered very important to a member of a culture, but he attends solely to acting. Or, it might be that this activity is deemed rather insignificant compared to other activities, but costumes and fashions within a film are extremely important, not the film itself.

While some of the uses and gratifications studies and the community studies of leisure activity assessed film in comparison to other events, the indicator they used to determine films' importance were ordinarily frequency of attendance. While this index would seem to be a rather good starting point in an investigation, other categories strike me as being potentially significant.

Research by Suzanne Jeffries-Fox (1977) noted that while many Junior High School students attend films often, there is a very small group that concerns itself with issues of cinematic form. For the most part, viewers utilize film and film talk as a coin of social exchange, as a socially current topic of mention important

to possess for integration into a peer group.<sup>7</sup>

While the issue of social weight can only be broadly addressed in the proposed research, it can nevertheless be seen as an important theoretical underpinning running throughout. The work of what has been called "ethnographic semantics" or "the new ethnography" (Spradley 1972, Sturtevant, 1967) draws heavily on the social weight issue in their studies. The position held here is that the importance accorded film as a form of communications behavior can be assessed by looking at the specifics of what viewers attend to.

<sup>7</sup> For fuller explication of the term "social coin", see Smith, "Some Uses of the Mass Media by Fourteen Year Olds," in Journal of Broadcasting, Vol. XVI, No. 1 (Winter 1971-72) pp. 37-50.

## CHAPTER III

### METHOD

The research methods used were selected to investigate three central questions about viewer responses to film. First, what are the different kind of verbal responses viewers make in regard to a film? Since I am interested in the kinds of verbal responses viewers make after seeing a film, verbal promptings from a researcher present during group discussions would largely vitiate the goals of this study--seeing how viewers respond to a film in their own terms, not those of the researcher. Thus, the form of data collection employed (a group discussion without the researcher participating) is preferable to a coercive "replaying". If one wishes to describe the agenda set by the informants for what they attend to in a film--or if they attend to the film at all--the procedure just discussed is the most congruent with the goals of the study. Since movie-going is ordinarily a group activity, this study used self-selected groups rather than an agglomerate of individual viewers to investigate the kinds of responses viewers make in regard to a film, Citizens Band. By analyzing certain foci of these group discussions I would be able to see if "interpretation" and "communicational meaning", as defined by Worth and Gross, were the predominant verbal responses viewers made to CB; or, if responses to the film took other forms and served different interests for viewers. My hunch was that meaning (in the sense of Worth and Gross) is something that largely occurs for filmmakers discussing a film, or occurs when persons are

involved in a coercive verbal replaying of a film when asked to supply interpretations for specific parts of a film. Verbal responses to a film are seen as being far richer than the confines of a given speech act, an interpretation.

A second question this study seeks to answer is, "What are viewers self-reported attitudes towards, and interests in, film as a class of social behavior?" Interest in film might be measured by attendance patterns (heavy versus light viewers). I presumed, however, that other pre and post interpretive rules reported by informants would be significant determinants of the actual responses made in group discussions concerning CB. To discover the possible uses and gratifications film might serve for viewers, single, in-depth interviews were obtained from each informant.

Third, since "viewer response" here means the post-hoc verbal response of informants, I was interested in discovering the possible functions "film talk" serves for viewers. This question encompasses both the kinds of response made in regard to CB (i.e. an "inference" in regard to and a "story" told about the film are both "responses" to the film; however, they probably attend to different aspects of film and indeed indicate that viewers "use" the content of a film, as reported in talk, to different ends). In addition, I am concerned with the possible relationships between the kinds of responses viewers make in regard to CB, and the vocabulary or "ways of making film talk" used by different viewers. It

is probable that differences in media use (attendance at films) and interest in film will give rise to different orders of speaking. Is "film-talk" a loose affair, rife with descriptive phrases that could adhere to any domain of culture; or, is there a specific terminology used in talking about film?

By investigating the focus of film talk, this research is in fundamental agreement with Hymes' notion that, ". . . inquiring into speaking--just into occasions in which speech is required, optional or prescribed--discloses patterns of importance in culture" (1974, p. 108).

### III.1 The Informants

In describing the research methods employed here, I shall make use of two sources of data. The first are from pre-tests for the present study, the second were generated from the actual informants used in the research.

A recent survey prepared by the Opinion Research Corporation for the MPAA indicated that 72% of a given film audience is comprised of persons between the ages of eighteen and forty (in International Motion Picture Almanac, 1978, p. 32A). Many different surveys (Handel, 1950; MPAA Study IV, 1972) have also shown that movie going is predominantly a group activity. (Some 87% in the 1957 study attended with groups of two persons, or more. Groups of two, three or four accounted for 73% of paid admissions. In Jowett, 1976, p. 478)

Table 3:1

Composition of Informants Used in the Study;  
Group Discussions

INITIAL HEAVY CONTACT			INITIAL LIGHT CONTACT		
Actual Composition			Actual Composition		
Group #	Heavy	Light	Group #	Heavy	Light
1	2	2	7	0	3
2	4	0	8	0	4
3	3	1	9	0	4
4	1	3	10	0	4
5	2	2	11	1	2
6	1	1	12	1	2
	N=13	N=9		N=2	N=19
	TOTAL LIGHT N=28			TOTAL HEAVY N=15	

In addition, the age pattern for attendance by sex was approximately the same in terms of total paid admissions (51% male, 49% females).

In getting a group of informants for this study, pains were taken to get persons who were representative of feature film audiences in general. Thus, most informants were between the ages of eighteen and forty (N=35/43) and were equally divided by sex (M=22, F=21). They viewed the film in groups, as past studies have indicated is the norm for feature films.

It has been noted that previous research emphasized degree and kind of training in film appreciation (Messaris, 1975), and training in specific evaluative domains (Aibel, 1976) in regard to the film viewer. This study, then is using degree of media use in line with the Worth/Gross model of developmental and hierarchical levels of skill and appreciation. It is assumed that expression of interest in film based on frequency of attendance will be reflected in viewer interpretive engagement with the film.

Gerbner and Gross' research has used the heavy/light viewer difference as a key concept in investigating images cultivated by the "world" of television programs. They note, "The crucial boundaries of the future may be not so much between nations and classes, as between heavy and light (or non) TV viewers" (1976, p. 190).

When studying the images cultivated by television (and, it is here argued that the same could hold true for the study of meanings and

uses), he notes that one should inquire, ". . . into the conceptual differences between those who are more, and those who are less immersed in the cultural mainstream in which most people swim or drift" (1976, p. 194). That is, one should investigate a medium along the lines of degree of use. Gerbner has also found that degree of television use has an effect in "biasing" conceptions of ". . . social reality within most age, sex, educational and other groupings, including those presumably most 'immune' to its effects" (1976, p. 197). Differences in effects are found then both within groups and across groups.

It is thus assumed that the heavy/light distinction, so fruitful in Gerbner's work, might be applied to film research. If the degree of media use affects conceptions of social reality within and across classes of television viewers, it is assumed that it is at least worth investigating the same conceptualization for film.

### III.2 Heavy/Light Viewers: How to Derive the Classes

Previous studies have operationalized the distinction (heavy/light) in various ways. Smythe's studies (1955) of art-house and first-run audiences divided viewers into "regulars" and "casuals" on the basis of degree of attendance at a particular theatre. Attendance once a week or more defined a patron as a regular. Similarly, the MPAA survey defined frequent movie goers as those who attended on the average of once a week or more (1957, p. 109). Thus, the



unit of analysis, in regard to class of viewers, seems to have been movies attended per week. The data from the MPAA study also indicated that, while frequent movie goers comprised only 15% of the adult population, they accounted for 62% of paid admissions in the sample week.

Based on previous studies then (and from pre-test data), I am assuming that for the purposes of this study, attending movies four times a month, or more, defines a viewer as being a heavy user. Attendance, on the average, of once a month or less defines, for the purposes of this study, a viewer as a light user of film. This calculation does not include movies viewed on television (although, in the general research, this distinction will not be ignored). Neither does it include persons whose vocation or training charges them with attending movies as part of their career. Thus, in this study, heavy and light viewers are persons who are nonprofessional lookers, who go to films either four times a month, or more, or once a month, or less, on the average.

Informants were obtained through "middlemen". Through other persons I obtained the names of people who either went to the movies "a lot" (but were not professionals), or "not that much". When contact was made with these persons (by telephone) they were initially screened for frequency of attendance and vocational training in filmmaking. If they met these criteria, during the course of the pre-screening, they were asked two questions, "How many movies do

you see?", and "Do you know any people who go to the movies often?" The first question could be seen as a self-report to ascertain the validity of the constructed categories. The second, might be seen as a kind of projective technique to ascertain an informant's notion of what constituted going "often", and how the informant "fit in" in regard to attendance patterns.

Initially, the study had been conceived using educational level as a variable, in addition to attendance for dividing the informants. However, attempts to obtain informants with a High School education or less proved nonfeasible. While contact was made with several possible informants with less than a High School education, all of them were unable (or unwilling) to come to the research site and view the film. The possible significance of this occurrence in relation to the "social weight" issue accorded film will be discussed later.<sup>1</sup>

The final division of classes of viewers was therefore done on the basis of media use alone. In addition, three of the informants in the Light class would not grant the single follow up interview, even by telephone. Persistent phone calls yielded no results. It was perhaps the case that these Light viewers, having seen the film

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<sup>1</sup> For the difficulty of formulating categories of social class based on behavior, rather than a priori assumptions, the reader is advised to see, Warner, Meeker, and Eells, Social Class in America: A Manual of Procedure for the Measurement of Social Status. New York: Harper Torchbook, 1960.

and participated in the group discussion, felt that their time commitment, in regard to film, had been more than fulfilled. It could appear that the Light viewers refusal, or inability, to grant the second interview was not unlike the refusal of high school educated persons to participate at all. This casts a preliminary light both on the social weight accorded film and/or research about film, by those informants whose attendance is less than frequent. The number of cases at my disposal however make me hesitant to treat such data as anything other than ancillary footnotes to the final configuration of the social weight accorded the medium by the two groups in the final analysis. Thus, the final distribution of informants for the single interview is Heavy (N=15) Light (N=25).<sup>2</sup> (See Table 3:1)

### III.3 The Film

The study was carried out in three stages. First, contact informants were pre-screened, by telephone, to see if they met the criteria for categorization as either a heavy or light viewer. If informants met the criteria, they were asked to come to a film

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<sup>2</sup> Perhaps the final distribution of the informants into the two classes, and the posited reflection this interest in the research might shed on the social weight issue, is something more than mere chance. A recent survey (1972) conducted by the MPAA divides frequency of attendance into almost the precise percentage configuration as the informants obtained for the study. (See Opinion Research Corporation, "Frequency of Movie Going by Education" in Jowett, 1976, p. 485)

screening, bringing "two or three friends who you might go to the movies with". It was explained that they would see a film, and "talk about it with your friends" after the screening. Screenings were held in the Visual Communications Laboratory at the Annenberg School. Group discussions took place immediately following the screenings. At a time after the group had seen the film, all members were interviewed singly. I thus obtained forty (40) single interviews on informants' general attitudes towards film and twelve (12) group discussions in which informants discussed the film amongst themselves. Analytic comparisons of verbal responses to the film and attitudes towards film then can be made between classes of viewers and within classes (i.e. comparing self-reports from the single interviews with statements made in the group discussions).

The film selected for this study was Citizens Band (U.S., 1977).<sup>3</sup> It is a ninety-six minute, sound, color film. It is also a narrative film which, though receiving favorable reviews (notably from sources as different as Variety and the New York Times) and nation-wide distribution (by Paramount) did not fare well at the box office. In most respects, then, it is "a kind of film" that many persons might go to see at a first-run movie theatre.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See Appendix I for a plot synopsis of the film.

<sup>4</sup> It might be argued that every film gives rise to some expectation based on the degree of familiarity a viewer has with a particular code. Nevertheless, at the broadest level, (narrative, feature length) this film could be considered more like the films people are likely to see than those used in other studies.

### III.4 Interview Procedure; Pre-Tests

The formulation of the specific questions in the single interview, and the subsequent categories for analyzing these data were generated from a Pilot study using the feature film Hester Street (U.S., 1975). Because this procedure appeared to be a productive source of data collection and analysis, it was utilized, with some modifications, as the method for collecting and analyzing the data in this study. As one of the points of the pretests was to define the problem area and method more definitively, some questions were added after the analysis of that data as certain unanticipated issues emerged as relevant; other questions were eliminated as being "unmanageable" in the context of the proposed research.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, eleven basic questions were asked in the single interviews.

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<sup>5</sup> Initially, I was interested in viewer's observations of what went on in movie theatres. That is, I was trying to find out what they defined as significant components of a cultural scene (Spradley, 1972, p. 24). However, this task proved to be rather unmanageable, for it gave rise to anecdotal investigation of events which took place in the dark. (Although this data could still be of some use) For some interesting observations on audience behavior at movies, see Goffman (1974, pp. 367-68) and an article "A Horror Show with Audience Participation" in the Philadelphia Inquirer (11/20/77). In this article, an extreme case of audience behavior is cited. Persons who have seen the Rocky Horror Picture Show innumerable times, dress up in costumes for the "midnight show" of this film. They perform "along" with the film, mimicking behavior on the screen, anticipating dialogue, and inserting dialogue in learned places in the film.

In addition, see Sari Thomas' (untitled) paper on coughing and paraverbal interaction at movies (1975).

Most questions were followed by a probe to illuminate the full dimensions of a response. The questions which were asked, and the primary foci of interest for each question, are;

Question 1: How many movies do you see?

The response to this question, in conjunction with Question 11 (Do you know any people who go to the movies often?) helps define, from the participant's perspective, light versus heavy viewers. It is also of interest to see if viewing television movies is mentioned by participants in response to this question. That is, do TV movies (or movies seen on television) count as "seeing movies," or, are movies something one views only in a theatre, outside a home. It also investigates patterns of attendance at movies. Do people go regularly, in cycles, etc?

Question 2: What do you do when you want to go to the movies?

This question investigates both the notion of a loose "network" (who do you go with for what kind of film) of film viewers, and the uses of other media (newspapers, television, periodicals) and sources (friends' opinions) as factors in attending movies.

The notion of "information seeking" is also being investigated. Do people use other channels of communication to "find out" about a movie before going; or, is movie going something one does, say, as one browses in a bookstore or looks at shop windows.

Question 3: When do you go the movies? (days, times); Are there

any social occasions you go to the movies?

Are movies something one sees only on weekends? At night? If so, why? What are some other activities one might do when not at the movies? What is the weight given to movie going as an activity one attends?

Question 4: What movies have you seen recently?

What kinds of films do viewers attend? Is movie going a regular activity? An informant who states, in response to Question 1, that he/she goes on the average of four times a month, may here state that they haven't seen a movie in two months; or, have seen six this week. This investigates the pattern alluded to in Question 1. It also might throw some light on reasons people do, or do not, attend movies, and therefore, the weight given to movie going as an activity, in general.

Question 5: What kinds of movies do you like to see? Why? Are there any movies you wouldn't go to? Why?

This pair of questions in addition to the data from group discussion investigates participants' taxonomies of film. Are movies categorized along gross evaluational lines (good/bad), or do people name specific clusters of films with distinctive features? What difference might seeing a film as a Western make, in terms of meanings generated, from seeing the film as say, a Comedy? (i.e. Destry Rides Again)

Thus, the initial analysis of terms used may give rise to a number

of different categories of films and users.

Question 6: Can you tell me how you decided to go to "X" movie?  
(mentioned in Question 4)

This question attempts to construct the possible processes of negotiation that occur in deciding to see a movie. Are others involved? Who gives advice to whom, along what parameters (so-called, "influentials")? Are other sources of advice (where available and known) attended to?

Question 7: Do you ever talk about films with anyone? Who? Any particular people? What kinds of things do you talk about? When do you talk?

This question (in conjunction with an analysis of actual talk in regard to a specific film) is seminal for uncovering the nature and weight given to talk about film. Jeffries-Fox noted that talk about television was divided into categories of "mention" ("Did you see Laverne and Shirley last night?"), description, selection ("good parts," "gory parts") and criticism (1977, pp. 59-60). These are just some of the types and ends to which people might talk.

What is this talk like? Is it done with special friends? Before, during or after a film? Is there a vocabulary, a taxonomy for films? If so, for what aspects of film, and who uses it?

To the point is Hymes' observation (regarding Bloomfield and the case of an Indian, White Thunder, who, according to Bloomfield, "spoke no language tolerably"), that, "There is a fundamental difference



between what is not said because there is no occasion to say it, and what is not said because one has not, and does not find a way to say it. (1974, p. 72).

Hymes' approach takes into account the patterns of importance of types and genres of speech in a culture, and, for this research, the role of speech in reference to certain communicative events, films.

Question 8: Do you ever read movie reviews, or watch and listen to critics on the TV or the radio? Do you subscribe to any periodicals about film, or that deal with film? When do you use them? Why?

This question investigates the comparative uses and possible gratifications of other media of communication in relation to film. It also begins to get at the norms for movie evaluation. Is criticism something one attends to? What aspects of a film, or type of film? When is this done (before, after), and with what regularity?

Question 9: Do you ever leave before a movie is over? Why, or why not?

This question is a general probe on participants' rules for an aspect of appropriate movie going behavior. Do participants sit through a bad film because they have paid money to see it? Because they are with friends? Because, as in the theatre, it is considered (barring intermissions) rude to walk out? Or, does this behavior have some connection with evaluating a film, having to experience it in totality in order to criticize it, talk about it?

Question 10: Do you ever go to the movies alone? When? Why, or why not?

This attempts to investigate some of the possible uses and gratifications served by movies. Smith (1972, p. 39) posed four possible uses of the mass media (TV, film, radio, books and records) by fourteen year old Scottish school children. He hypothesized, that children may use the media as (1) a situation of interaction with peers, (2) a situation of withdrawal from interaction, (3) as a situation of problem avoidance, and (4) as a situation of lack of meaningful activity (boredom).

It is likely that there might be more than four situations for film use. Is solitary attendance, in and of itself, a behavior that is subject to negative sanctions? (As one of the informants in the pre-test, who does go alone, put it; "It's like solitary eating, an index of loneliness.")

How often do people go alone? In what situations, and with what feelings about their behavior?

Question 11: Do you know any people who go to the movies often?

This helps define, in relation to Question 1, heavy versus light viewers. In addition, how appropriate is this kind of behavior in the eyes of informants? Who goes often? How are these people characterized? Is there a special name for such people?

### III. 5 The Group Discussions

The Group Discussions were designed to be less overtly structured by the presence of the researcher than were the single interviews.

Pre-Tests were conducted with the researcher present during the group discussions. These gave rise to "promptings," on my part, and a sense of "strain" in the informant/researcher interaction. It was difficult to be a visible presence while being an invisible participant. Hymes (1976, p. 80) addressing this issue of the degree of "interference" resulting from the presence of a researcher during the collection of "spontaneous" speech, notes;

What is a strain for people, what produces signs of interference with the flow of speech, self-consciousness about what is happening, is what happens when one tries to accomplish a so-called 'spontaneous' interview, that he tries to have the other person forget that an interview is going on and a tape recorder is there. The interviewer tries to be friendly and non-directive, to elicit speech that is spontaneous for the speaker, get the other person to tell a story. But people know the situation is an interview, and that the interviewer (usually) is not an intimate. They can become upset that the interviewer doesn't seem to know what questions he wants to ask, and prompt him. As to people forgetting the presence of the tape recorder: Wolfson has some nice instances of people turning to talk to the tape recorder, as if it were an additional participant.

In regard to the absence of a researcher from an interview "assuring" so-called "natural" speech, Hymes notes,

The presence of an investigator may or may not interfere; it depends. And absence of an investigator may or may not be equivalent to absence or interference. Not everything that happens when an investigator is present should be considered 'natural' (op. cit., p. 81).

Informants at times, did indeed, treat the proceedings with a degree of self-consciousness. One group (Heavy) noted, in the midst of their

discussion;

- #1 Well, I think we're being a little self-conscious.
- #2 I think we're a little scholarly. (laughs) Much more articulate than usual.
- #1 If you could hear this tape, you wouldn't believe it. I think we're rising down.
- #2 It might not seem possible.
- #1 How do you say goodbye on the . . . (CB) 10-4?
- #3 10-4.

Another group (Light) made note of the fact that their talk about film might be tinged with self-consciousness. However, they also noted the strong presence of talk after a film as the norm;

- #1 Usually, when we go to a movie, we don't sit around and discuss it like this afterwards.
- #2 No, no, it's pretty weird to do that, actually. We always talk about it, but I mean . . .

Both groups here exhibit some degree of self-consciousness about the discussions being taped and the format of the speech event in the context of their "natural" procedure regarding talk about a film. However, the considerable amount of time informant spent talking about events not within the cinematic frame, or the time passed "telling stories" to each other suggests that either, (1) there was some confusion as to the "genre" of the speech event required of the situation or, (2) that "self-consciousness" about the event and the taping, while present, eventually is absorbed by the flow of the interaction with one another. This latter explanation seemingly occurred in the second example above, where, after a two-minute talk about an informant's ceramic animal collection, the informant noted, "Hey. Are we talking about the movie, or what?"

Before the screening of the film, informants in groups were all told the following:

First, instructions were given on how to use the tape recorder, so that when I transcribed the discussions, rumbles and other distracting sounds caused by excessive handling of the machine would be avoided. To counteract informants who "played," fidgeted and manipulated the microphone, an additional built-in condenser microphone was used. This kind of microphone picks up less distortion than that caused by manipulation of the hand-held variety. Informants could either place the microphone on a stand provided for that purpose or negotiate among themselves the manner in which they would record the talk.

Second, I restated what I had told each of the informants upon initial contact; that they could talk about the film, or anything else, for as long or short a duration as they wished. Informants, however, often attempted to get a clearer definition of the "rules" for what their talk should concentrate on. The opening minutes of two groups below were not atypical of the attempt to either clarify exactly what was the speech event informants were expected to "perform" or were attempts to get the researcher to participate in the discussions;

#1 What are we supposed to talk about?

R Talk about whatever you want to talk about.

#2 There's no scenario?

R There's no scenario, exactly. Talk for as long or as short as you like. When you're done,

I'll be in there (points to projection room).  
So, just tap on the window.

#### Example #2

- #1 What phase of the film are you interested in?  
R What phase? Oh, you can talk about anything you want to. Whatever you feel like talking about, you talk about.  
#2 A free monologue?  
R Yeah, it is. It really is. I'll be in this (next) room, so, when you're finished, wave, or tap or something so I'll know.

(Note: "R" = Researcher)

An abortive attempt, during the pre-test, was made to activate the tape recorder during the last five minutes of the film. However, the talk that was occurring was indecipherable during transcription. Group talks ranged from a little more than six minutes, in one instance (Light) to a little over thirty-eight minutes in another (Heavy).

All interviews were taped and transcribed. After each interview, I talked with the informants about the goals of the study. Most replied with a variation of "That's interesting," or stated (similar to Bartlett's study on the verbal recall of narratives, in Maccoby, et. al., 1958, pp. 47-54) that they had "left something out," or had intended to raise certain issues, but had forgotten.

### III.6 Analysis

The procedure just discussed resulted in fifty-two (52) taped and transcribed interviews (40 single, 12 group). All transcriptions were performed by myself. In the next chapter, when discussing the

results of this investigation, the analytic category headings shall be used for purposes of organization of the data. Although, in the single interviews, specific questions are subsumed under one of these theoretical categories, on the whole informants seemed unaware of the general conceptual outline. Since the single interviews were somewhat open-ended, the responses to questions under a particular analytic section (i.e. "sources of influence in decision making") were not always the only responses applicable to the specific purpose an analytic category was created to investigate. For example, when asked "Do you ever go to the movies alone?" (a question "formally" located in the "social weight" section) an informant might discuss the fact that there are particular occasions when he/she likes to go alone, or that movie-going is always a group event, a part of a "social" evening out. This response might be seen as being germane in regard to question 3, "Are there any social occasions that you might go to the movies?" In analyzing these data, it would be a misuse of the potential richness of such material to limit the coding of responses to a given question or series of questions "specifically" constructed to address an issue only to instances where such responses fit the "appropriate" categories constructed for analysis. Rather, all responses throughout the single interview that were germane to a given category were considered applicable, even if raised in the course of responding to a "different" issue. The entire set of single interviews should be viewed as potentially open to analysis for any given

issue. In addition, the same response or set of responses may be used to raise different levels of analysis; therefore, they might be subject to more than one coding scheme.

Every transcript was coded using the same procedure. (See Appendix V for the coding instrument.) Coding units for a given issue were, for the most part, derived post facto from the transcript materials themselves. That is, utilizing extensive pre-test data, categories were formed from the variations in informants' responses per se rather than from a rigidly pre-determined set of categories constructed before the fact of the research. For example, in analyzing "reasons for going to the movies alone," all the possibilities mentioned by informants were recorded. Some of the possibilities were then "collapsed" where it seemed to aid in organizing the data (i.e. the coding possibility "attending movies to kill time" might include browsing downtown on a Saturday or being away from home on a business trip).

In order to test the reliability of the inferences drawn from the rather complex, open-ended sessions, four transcripts (two from each category heavy/light) were coded a minimum of two times. One coding was performed by myself. The second coding was performed by my teaching assistant, who was shown the film and familiarized with the coding procedure. There was a 90% correspondance between each set of coding operations.



### III.7 The Group Discussions: Coding Procedure and Analysis

The group discussions were conducted to test the 3 research problems; first, the kinds of verbal responses viewers make in regard to a film; second, what are viewers attitudes towards film as a kind of social behavior; and third, what are some functions post hoc talk about film serves for viewers. I will attend specifically to the kinds of responses which viewers make through talk, as seen in the following points.

1. Kinds of interpretations made (in terms of the whole film, or in terms of specific parts of the film).
2. Reasons given for the interpretations.
3. The imputation of authorship for the film.
4. The nature of the focus of talk about film (in frame/out of frame in regard to the film).

What I shall present as coding categories are kinds of issues attended to, not absolute a priori classes. One of the premises of this study is that ones' category system (as is the case here) should be refined through exposure to empirical evidence.

Thus, from these pre-test data, the following categories can be seen as an outline for kinds of responses viewers make. The conceptual framework owes much to the Worth/Gross model, and the research of Messaris.

#### I. Part/Whole

Do people interpret the film "writ large"; that is, do they make statements about the film as a whole ("It's about communication"); or,

do they discuss individual parts or "events" ("The sequence with the mobile home showed that our society must go mobile").

All transcripts were coded several times. Arbitrary "signs" were assigned to each analytic category and were notated in the transcribed texts of the group discussions. This was done so the overall analysis of the group discussions could be organized and assessed for retrieval and discussion. Thus, in interpreting the film, one might discuss it in the following terms.

Ia. Whole film (  )

Ib.1 Shot--The term "shot" is used by informant. (  )

Ib.2 Sequence--The term "sequence" is used by informant. (  )

Ib.3 Narrative Slice--Here, informants attend to some narrative (  ) event within the film. They do not, however, use either of the terms "shot" or "sequence". A narrative slice could be a part of a sequence or several sequences. The point made here is that informants discuss the film as a series of "events", rather than using "structural" terminology in their speech.

Ib.4 Character--informants discuss a character, either by fictive name or by description. (  )

Ib.5 Other--Some other part of the film is discussed (i.e. "Music" or a particular song). (  )

II. Kind of Interpretation:

1. A descriptive interpretation is a response concerning some activity, or plot, that does not go beyond a statement made in the film.

As Messaris (1975, pp. 11-13) found, "A large number of films elicit overall non-literal interpretations." Implicit in Messaris' category non-literal, (here; "descriptive") is the fact that few films elicit overall descriptive responses. For Citizens Band, an example of a descriptive response (for the whole film) would be "young man rescues people with the aid of a CB radio." It is arguable whether this is an interpretation, since it does not go beyond what has been literally presented on the screen. However, the possibility of a literal description as a kind of response viewers made for the whole film cannot be dismissed. ( L )

2. Non-literal: A statement (usually in terms of "theme", as Messaris discovered) that goes beyond mere description of narrative, or plot line. As an example of this, I cite the following exchange from a group discussion from the pre-test date (Heavy viewers).

Q: What is the film about, do you think?

A1: It's about change, I thought.

A2: It seems like a revisionist view of the movement. That the community assimilates everything. This process of assimilated through...I guess the point of it was, you're assimilated through the community you have in a new place. Not through the whole. . . I mean, Jake's point about America--I mean, at the end, it's just a big hollow thing, America. That it's the community that you live in, in New York City in this instance. That's what's being assimilated, not the individual.

The concept of America being "just a big hollow thing", and that the "community. . .that's being assimilated" is not shown happening, in the concrete sense. It is an interpretation created

by constructing meaning on notions of "community", "America", etc.

( **L** )

3. Attributional: A statement about the film based explicitly on informants' prior personal knowledge or experience, or derived from knowledge of the real world, not the world portrayed within the frames. ( **\*** )

4. Evaluation/assessment--A statement about the film, or part of the film, framed not in terms of one of the kinds of responses discussed above, but concerning, instead, judgments about "quality", "legitimacy", etc. These could range from "I liked it", to "I think the director was an amateur because his montage was reminiscent of early Eisenstein". (-----)

5. Guesses/Expectations/Reworkings

Guesses/Expectations: Here informants interpretation of the film is accomplished primarily through discussion of some kind of expectation engendered by the film, or by "guessing" at what "should have happened" in the film. ( **!** )

Reworkings: This category pertains to informants' suggestions in regard to changing or "reworking" some aspect of the film. ( **R** )

6. Framings/Questions: This category refers to attempts by informants to literally "pin down" problematic areas in the film. Thus, specific interpretations of this kind could concern issues related to the world within the film ("Why do you suppose there was a basketball game in the film?") presented in the form of a question;

or, informants could be concerned with an issue not directly related to an interpretation, in the Worth/Gross scheme, but which nevertheless are attempts to ground the film within some frame (i.e. "How do you suppose Chrome Angel supported two wives and a mistress on a truckdriver's salary?") ( Q )

Categories 4, 5, 6 above are all types of verbal responses viewers made from the film (in pre-tests). Yet, it can be said that none of these interpretations are "inferences" in the Worth/Gross scheme because they are not concerned with the "author", or intended message behind an event.

7. Audience: Here, informants discuss the film in light of its intended audience. Such acts are not, in the Worth/Gross sense, attempts to interpret the film. Rather, viewers here attempt to place the film as a kind of socially situated event, recognizing viewers other than themselves as possibly important to the overall meaning of the film. ( A )

### III. Justifications for Statements

It is necessary to see what justifications persons cite as being the "logical data" upon which they base their interpretations. Thus, I perceive several possible classes of justifications, or reasons for interpretations and responses.

1. None--No reason is given for an interpretation or evaluation. It is possibly self-evident, transparent.

2. Generic--references to other films (or standard film terms,

cliches, and so on) intertextual references.

3. References to structure of the film--Relationship of shots to each other, of aspects of a shot, or elements in the scene, intratextual references.

4. Technical/Formal--Informant cites technical or formal (i.e. "the lighting made me think it meant 'x'") reasons for an interpretation or evaluation.

5. Author -- Refers to perceptions of intent, or imputation of response to a agent/source. Messaris only refers to the film-maker as the source. This is a curious parallel to the "auteur" theory (c.f. Sarris, 1968, pp. 19-37), in imputing authorship to a source. It is highly likely that other sources of collective authorship may be mentioned. Thus, one should consider,

- (a) None
- (b) Director--Mention by name or title. (//////)
- (c) Actor--Mention by role name or fictive name.
- (d) Writer
- (e) Editor
- (f) Producer
- (g) Cameraman
- (h) Combinations
- (i) No source explicitly mentioned, but authorship discerned ("It's clear that that shot was there for a reason.").

6. Conditions of production--Refers to (1) budget constraints,

etc. as a factor in why a certain thing appeared in the film, or  
 (2) other "production" reasons.

Several exchanges raised another level of analysis. That is,  
 what is the focus of discussion? As Goffman has suggested,

Much of informal talk seems not to be closely geared into extensive social projects, but rather occurs as a means by which the actor handles himself during passing moments; and these handlings of self are very often somewhat optional, involving quite fleeting strips of activity only loosely interconnected to surrounding events (1974, p. 501).

Thus, I coded all discussions to see the general focus (what is attended to) in terms of In Frame (in which case one refers to elements or activities, or meanings that come from the world within the film) or Out of Frame (in which one focuses on events outside of the frame of the film). Note, that although the initial level of entry will most likely be In Frame, or at least suggested by events in the film, the focus (and possible shift) between IN and OUT frame issues will be attended to in order to get at the focus of talk about film. As previously discussed, it might be that meaning (in the sense of Worth and Gross) is something that only occurs for film-makers discussing a film, or persons involved in a coercive replaying of a film, where they are being asked to supply meanings in regard to specific parts of a film.

To summarize, there are five main foci of analysis in the group interviews.

### I. Part/Whole Interpretation

- II. Descriptive/Non-literal Interpretations
- III. Justifications for responses
- IV. Processes of making meaning (Negotiated, Non-negotiated, Accorded)
- V. The focus to talk (In Frame/Out of Frame)

These analytic categories are arbitrary and finite to the extent that I make no claims that they encompass all--or even most-- of the responses viewers might make to a film. Rather, these categories have been selected on the principles that the definitions of "meaning" and "interpretation" proposed by Worth and Gross are only one kind of response viewers make in regard to a film. The categories were selected to expand the model postulated by Worth and Gross, and to investigate some functions different kinds of verbal responses serve for viewers.

#### Units for the Group Interview

If there was a degree of "agenda setting" by the researcher in the open-ended single interview part of the research, there is a different problem presented in the analysis of group discussions. While single questions can be seen as representing theoretical categories under investigation, the lack of a series of standardized questions in the group discussions makes them more difficult to "unitize" for purposes of analysis. Therefore, I used the following.

Each group interview will be divided into a series of time matrices of two minute duration. During the boundaries of these intervals, the five coding areas discussed in Section III.3 can be charted



as they occur over time. This is done for purposes of economy and clarity. I am not proposing a micro-analysis (like that of Hockett, Pittenger and Dannehy, 1960, in dealing with psychiatric interviews on film) in which "rule-governed" units of interaction are seen as a part of the communicational structure of talk as a kind of interaction. Rather, dividing up the interviews into arbitrary temporal slices enables me to deal with what otherwise would be (at least) a half hour long corpus in which participants interrupt one another, focus in and out of topic, and do all those things talk is so efficient at expressing. Division into temporal units enables me to organize the data so that it may be presented to illustrate salient points of interest under investigation. This is not to say that talk is organized in strict temporal units. Rather, in order to make sense (and a particular kind of sense) out of what people say about film, it has been necessary to artificially construct units of analysis out of what is ordinarily a stream of continuous behavior.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> A nice distinction is made by Birdwhistell (1962, pp.3-5) between what he calls clocking and timing. Timing refers to, ". . . those operations which relate abstracted events in an explicitly defined sequence to other events within that sequence." He is not "attempting to place the data in calendrical or horological frames," but instead is "attempting to isolate the structure of continua". That is, "timing" refers to communications system time, the internal rules of organization of events. "Clocking" on the other hand, are those arbitrary distinctions imposed by a researcher in managing to talk or write about "when", or with what frequency events occur.

As Birdwhistell notes, the distinction can be quite clearly drawn when one thinks of the "duration" of lovemaking. He states, "It's harder to imagine anything duller than a clock-watching lover."

This type of analysis is of a very different order from Messaris'. In his study, he employed a short film (which he had constructed) and directed his informants to go through it sequence by sequence for meanings. At the end of this process, he asked them to supply an overall interpretation for the film.

The difficulties in doing this for a feature length film of ninety-seven minutes duration are staggering. From my own past research (Custen, 1976) and from personal teaching experience, it is almost impossible, unless you supply a shot list, for informants to retell the film with any great degree of accuracy. This is in accord with Bartlett's research with verbal narrative.

Yet, this may not be an impediment to the research. It is perhaps most intriguing to see if viewers talk about meaning (with a minimum of prompting) and, if so, in what terms (focus) for a feature length film. The arguments for selecting a feature length, rather than a short film were explicated earlier. Thus, what one misses at the "micro" level by using a feature film, one gains at the macro. That is, it is time someone tested the "weight" given to meaning (as

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He prefers to use the term "interval" when the researcher is aware that time is a dimension of the phenomena under investigation; "moment" refers to any subdivision of an interval.

Although I recognize time to be a factor in all of communication, it is not under investigation here. In Birdwhistell's terminology, I am "clocking" interviews for purposes of clarification. Intervals and moments are seen as being of potential import here, but are not under investigation.

defined by Worth/Gross) by seeing if viewers do employ this kind of strategy without being explicitly prompted to do so. One may discover that meaning should be rephrased to "meaningful"--the way people attend to film as a way of anchoring it by selective attention through talk. By looking at the kinds of meanings and the focus of talk people make in regard to a feature film, we can begin to understand what people do with a mediated event (when not explicitly asked to do so by an interviewer) and investigate the significance they accord a class of mediated events (film) in their daily lives.

Each group talk was first transcribed by myself. It was then analysed and coded, using the "signs" presented earlier. These were placed in the margins and within the body of the transcript to demarcate the presence of certain analytic categories. Colored pens were used for each analytic category to make the task of quantification and retrieval easier for the analyst.

Each group transcript, once coded as a written text, was then encoded onto a separate master coding sheet.

Below is an example of the coding process for a group discussion.

→

#1 Gentlemen of the jury.

#2 What is the verdict? I thought it was a neat show. ■

#1 (It was) entertaining. It was alright. ■

#3 At least it had a happy ending. ✓ I thought he was going to be dead. ☹️ ❌

- #1 I thought lots of people were going to be dead. 😊  
I thought the Fat Guy (Cochise) was going to get  
blown away by the Red Baron. 😊 (26) ✓
- #4 Don't you think if you had a truck on you that  
long, your arm would be more than broken? (2) ✓ \* Q
- #1 Broken? I'd think he'd be dead. \* 😊
- #4 I thought he would be amputated. ! 😊
- #2 He would have been in shock. \* 😊
- #1 That was what he was in. \* 😊
- #3 And, it wasn't from the accident <sup>(i)</sup> They should have  
gotten rid of the guy, the trucker. ! 😊
- #2 That was too easily worked out. ✓ I thought <sup>(i)</sup> they  
should have. . . . !
- #4 Gotten rid of him. !
- #2 How? Q
- #1 I don't know, and gone off together, and started  
living together. ✓ !
- #4 The wives? Q 😊
- #1 The two, uh.., the wives.
- #4 Oh. The lesbian lovers. \* 😊
- #1 Yeah.
- #2 I thought they were headed towards that when they  
were in the motel room. ! (32) ✓ 😊
- #1 They were drunk, looking deep into each others eyes. \* ✓

1  
2"  
1

→ In the two minute segment, there are several examples of the kinds of verbal responses to the film outlined by the coding procedure. For example,

1. There are four instances of evaluation, two pertaining to the film as a whole ("I thought it was a neat show.") and two pertaining to parts of the film ("At least it had a happy ending.").

2. All the talk is "In-Frame." That is, all discussion refers to events within the cinematic frame.

3. The only interpretation here is an attribution. ("Don't you think if you had a truck on you that long your arm would be more than broken?") That is, viewer #3 is treating a narrative slice of the film (which can specifically be located in Sequence#2) in which Chrome Angel's arm is shown being pinned beneath his truck, according to what she "knows" about real trucks and accidents. It might also be argued that the imputation of a lesbian relationship between Chrome Angel's two wives is a kind of attribution, for the reasons supplied, again are based on real-life assumptions of what constituted a lesbian relationship. No notion of intent, or author is implied. However, the "lesbian" relationship attributed by the informant is more a case of an "expectation," one in accord with the reworking that the wives "should have gone off together, and started living together."

4. The units of analyses, explicitly mentioned here are the whole film (N=2), narrative slices (N=7), character (N=11). It should be noted that although three distinguishable sequences are mentioned implicitly (#2, 26, and 32), the unit of analysis, for the most part is some "part" of the film.

Unless informants used the terms "sequence" or "shot" when discussing a part of the film, it was coded as a narrative slice.

5. Expectations and Reworkings are present in nine instances ("I thought he was going to be dead." = expectation, or "They should have gotten rid of the guy, the trucker." = reworking)

6. Authorship is implicitly mentioned twice, both times in regard to reworkings. One must assume that the "they" referred to in the resorking refers to a vague authorial "they" (coded as "unclear") rather than a specific author (i.e. director, editor, etc.).

Thus, I (unit of analysis), II (Interpretation), III (reasons for Interpretation) and V (Talk: In/Out frame) have been coded here. Issue IV (type of interpretation within the group) was coded separately,

largely for purposes of legibility in reading the transcripts. It should be noted that while there is a great deal of negotiation occurring among informants (particularly in regard to "how to" rework the film), there is also an instance of accorded evaluation, where informants #1 and #2 agree that the film was "entertaining".

This rather laborious procedure was performed on each two-minute segment of the group discussion. Counts of the kind of interpretation were then tabulated on a coding sheet. They were also encoded onto the master coding sheet, thereby cross-referencing each two-minute segment of talk. Thus, one can see that if an attribution is made, what unit it was made in reference to, the kind of reason supplied for this interpretation and, if possible, if it was located within a sequence of the film. One can read the columns, of the master coding sheets for types and instances of interpretation over a given time segment and, additionally see if interpretation with the film is "located" within particular parts of the film (i.e. beginnings or ends, etc.).

In this way, one gets both description of the four levels of interpretation with the film through the analytic categories constructed for that purpose, and a frequency count of types of interpretations, unit analysis, etc.

Multiple interpretations (i.e. an expectation that was also an attribution) were tabulated. Again, as was the case with the single interviews, four groups were coded by another person to check on

the reliability of the coding scheme. There was an 85% correspondence.

### Analysis of Talk About Film

An interesting ethnolinguistic issue can be raised throughout any study that relies on verbal data. In this case, we are investigating one issue. That is, to what degree is a technical vocabulary employed in discussing a film?

Here are excerpts from two group discussions of the same sequence from the pre-test film, Hester Street.

#1

A1: Yeah. The other thing I find that was interesting was, every-time they were dealing with aspirations, it was mostly shot... the stairs were always there.

I: Can you get into that a little more? (general laughter) No, no. I think I know what you mean, but...

A1: Allright. They kept, they used the stairs as a reinforcing image. When things were going bad and in trouble, everybody was running down the stairs. And, they would...

A2: Yeah.

A1: And, when they were doing good things, they were going up the stairs. It sort of, ummm....

A3: Was Gittl ever going up the stairs?

A1: It was mostly the men. It was much more prevalent in the beginning of the film. Cause, I was thinking, this guy's just discovered stairs and is going to shoot the entire film from them, because you can get nice effects. But, They used them well, though they used them alot. That may have been a factor of budget, because stairways don't require a lot...any old slum you can shoot in. (laughter)

#2

A1: That one shot of the stairwell, where he's running down?  
That seemed to me very obtrusive and sort of nonsensical.

A2: Yeah.

A1: Sort of like Fritz Lang without any atmosphere surrounding it.  
You know, where Jake is running down after Mamie Fein. She's  
leaving, and he takes a shot of that stairwell.

A2: There was the one other time on the stairway, when there was  
--Iforget whether it was looking up the stairway, or down the  
stairway--but the stairway seemed very long, and very steep.  
And there was a similar one with...

A1: Berstein? Ah.

A3: Oh yeah.

A2: It was a similar sort of thing. Those were like the only two  
shots where, somehow the shots called attention to themselves.

A1: See, I think the film could have used more of that. But, given  
that the director, the filmmaker was not going to invest a  
lot of time in that sort of thing, when he did go to that, it  
seemed obtrusive, like "Here's a weird shot."

A2/A3: Yeah.

I: What did you make of that, when you see a couple of shots that  
are different, somehow, you think they were just thrown in?

A1: I tempted, to like, just say, "Well, I'll just ignore them, or  
something. That that was a sort of lapse in the movie. It  
broke up the continuity, putting it together in a different way.

I: Why do you think they were put there?

A2: They were there. (laughter) I've seen Hitchcock movies (laughter)

A1: It's hard to say.

A3: Well, I don't know about the one where he's chasing her down  
the stairwell, but the other one, where he was going to ask  
her for money and she was standing all the way on top and he  
was all the way down on the bottom, it was sort of like he was



embarrassed by what he was doing, but yet he really couldn't conceal it, because she wasn't going to come any closer. And, there was that woman, with her ear cocked, listening in on the whole thing. And then, you had all that space. Maybe, well ...what I thought was that space was used more for his embarrassment and for his feeling uncomfortable. It just exaggerated that. It was a very good way of exaggerating that.

I: By showing that kind of a shot?

A3: Yeah.

A2: On the fire escape?

A3: On the fire escape.

I: Do you think that's a possibility?

A1, A2: Oh yeah.

Note, in the first discussion, there is an attempt to equate the use of low angle shots of stairways (shot with a wide angle lens) as a "cue" from which one may infer that the director was trying to imply something about character aspiration. The first group discusses it in rather general terms ("nice effects"), although agency is generally imputed.

The second group, however, refers to a noted director (Fritz Lang) famed for his "visual" treatment, compares this shot to others in the film ("the director was not going to invest a lot of time in that sort of thing?) and through negotiation, comes up with a meaning ("embarrassment") imputing this explicitly to the director.

Neither group, however, employed the terms available (wide angle lens, low angle shot, fast film stock) in description, but chose to describe the effects the shot had on them. As discussed earlier, it is this order of specific terminology versus descriptive phrases

that will be evaluated for the two classes of viewers to see if differences in media use give rise to a shared vocabulary for talking about film.

### III.8 Summation of Method and Analytic Categories

At the outset, there were three major issues under investigation. Since this study seeks to investigate some ways people respond verbally to a film, it was understood that a particular kind of interpretation--inference--would be the primary focus of analysis.<sup>7</sup> This focus was conceptualized using the Worth/Gross model, which had been utilized in several previous studies involving viewers and their interpretations with film, as a template outlining some ways viewers might make meaning from a film. Therefore, certain analytic categories congruent with this model initially were felt to be the most germane descriptive indicators of what viewers might do when confronted with a film. However, because of the relatively unfocused nature of the group talks after the film screenings, several larger issues in addition to those present in the inference/attribution model emerged from the data. In addition to those categories already mentioned as possibly significant in analyzing viewer

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<sup>7</sup> "Interpretation" is used here in the sense defined by Worth and Gross (1974). However, it might be said that one of the items on the hidden agenda of this study is to make public the boundaries of what heretofore has been a rather limited investigation of notions of interpretation and meaning in both symbolic and natural events.

interpretations of a film, six additional foci were developed from a preliminary analysis of pretest data. These foci are:

1. Reality/Fiction: Similar to Thomas' study of daytime serial viewers (1977) the question posed here is, "Do different classes of film viewers assess or interpret a film, or a part of a film, using what Metz (1974) has termed the "plausibility criterion"? In other words, do viewers discuss portions of a mediated event utilizing the "rules of the real world", rather than the created and structured aspects present in a symbolic articulation, in their attempts to interpret the visual and verbal text? This discussion, by viewers, can take several specific forms. Thus, a viewer can search for cues to ground the film's locale by perusing the frame for evidence of state license plates on cars, or question the "real" ability of a fictive character (Chrome Angel) to support three women (two wives and a mistress) on a truck driver's salary. While it could be argued that the kinds of issues raised by the two examples (drawn from group transcripts) address different issues, they are nevertheless united by a single factor; both do not use the concept of authorial intent, control or manipulation of elements within the limits of an articulated event as a central organizing principle in interpreting the symbolic event. Instead, the film is discussed as if it were a non-manipulated event, utilizing criteria of the world outside the frame as a basis for assessment. That is, they are seen as products of our own (rather than some author's) desires and designs.

2. What is assessed: In interpreting a film, what is the unit of assessment through which viewers enter the world inside the frame? Is it a character in the film, a divisible production unit of the film's construction (shot, sequence, narrative "part"), an overall level of the codes used within the film (spoken dialogue, costume, music, behavioral acts), or the film as a whole? By investigating the frequency with which heavy and light viewers enter the film, we can get an idea of which aspects of the film they deem the most significant in their interpretations and responses.

3. What is the focus of verbal response: Assuming (as previous studies have assumed) that the majority of talk about a film is what I have defined as "In frame" (and this shall be investigated), what, precisely, do viewers do with the film, or part of the film, when discussing it after the screening? Is assessment or evaluation the primary focus of their verbal exchanges, or, are other kinds of assessments the foci in talk about the film? Talk about the role CB radio played in the film should be differentiated from talk about a viewer's own experience with CB radios. Here, one is searching for what Goffman (1976) has referred to as the potential reach of talk as a form of symbolic action. The reach can be relatively restricted to attention to an issue within a narrowly defined world (CB radio as presented in Citizens Band), or can be seen as extending far beyond the confines of a particular context (in this case, a film) and refer to times and places not connected with the boundaries of

the symbolic event. Both are ways informants responded to the film Citizens Band. But attending to aspects within the frame and those not strictly presented by the film are different ways of dealing with the event.

4. Is authorship or intent a primary concern for viewers; As viewer recognition of authorial control over a mediated event is a central concern of the Worth/Gross theory, this study seeks to investigate if viewers respond to the mediated and controlled nature of the film. If this is the case, is this manifested in verbal responses? Is it a vague and presumably collective authorial "they", or can viewer response be further broken down into overt mention of specific categories of authors and authorship which are presented as part of the list of credits for any film.

5. Viewer awareness of "rules" for audience interpretation: Do viewers conceive of themselves as being members of an audience or network in which there are "appropriate" forms of response for a film? If so, what are these relationships, and how are they operationalized in talk about film? Do rules for membership encompass the knowledge and use of film criticism, or other films as a common factor in being a part of an audience for an event, or are the criteria for "membership" either less specific or not uniquely attached to the domain of film as a special form of symbolic communication?

The preceding issues focused on the degree to which viewers attend to the world within the frame of the film. However, informants

often discussed the film in ways which cannot, strictly speaking, be called interpretations. Thus, Thomas (1977, p. 115) asked her informants what changes they would make, if so empowered, in their favorite daytime serials. She noted that either these changes were "narrative", and took the form of viewer advice to the characters without an awareness of the scripted, created nature of the tale, or changes were oriented at the level of structure, indicating notions of script, writer; in short, notions of authorial control. While Thomas' study explicitly asked this question of informants, this study seeks to discover whether such manipulations by informants are a commonplace occurrence when dealing with a film. Such attempts to manage the film through informant generated attempts to modify the event shall be called "Reworkings". Below, is a sample exchange from a group discussion (Light Viewers).

- Inf. #1: ...They should have gotten rid of the guy,  
the trucker.
- Inf. #2: That was too easily worked out. I thought they  
would have...
- Inf. #1: Gotten rid of him.
- Inf. #2: How?
- Inf. #3: I don't know, maybe gone off together, and  
started living together.
- Inf. #4: The wives?
- Inf. #3: The two, uh, the wives.
- Inf. #4: Oh. The lesbian lovers?
- Inf. #3: Yeah.

While this excerpt is also a case of evaluation of part of a film ("That was too easily worked out)), the reworking of the plot, presumably on the part of a course of action that the wives should

have followed as sage advice, is present in many of the group discussions. It is yet another way of dealing with the film which extends one of the kinds of interpretation proposed in the Worth/Gross model. The frequency of occurrences of this kind has to be attended to. For, it is a kind, albeit one not anticipated by the initial scheme nor dealt with in most studies, of manipulation of the film by viewers. These reworkings attain a heightened degree of importance if they are present, because informants have raised these kinds of issues themselves.

6. Framings/Questions: It was also the case that informants, in the group discussions, asked questions about the film that apparently were not concerned with interpreting the symbolic meaning of the action within the frame. Nor are these questions attempts to ground issues that take place within the fictive world presented by the film. For the most part, these questions appear to have another focus. For example, the participants in one group (Light) asked,

- #1: Did you see that, Ellie? It (the credits) said, "The voice of Arthur Godfrey."  
 #2: What does that sign say that he's dragging around?  
 #3: It says something about "Happy Wedding Electra."  
 #1: Do you know that? Do you know that it says that?  
 #3: Yeah, yeah. Spider and Electra.  
 #1: It did say "Voice of Arthur Godfrey", didn't it?  
 #4: Yes.  
 #1: See, everyone.  
 #3: Whose voice was Arthur Godfrey?  
 #2: Where was he voice?  
 #4: I think he was the one at the end, when he said "We gone." It was the very last voice.  
 #1: He came out of retirement, I see.

It is of import to note that these questions, while dealing with events within the frame, are not interpretations. No attempt is made to integrate either the presence of the sign "Happy Wedding Electra and Spider" (carried by the pilot whose life Spider had saved earlier in the film) or Godfrey's voice (the first and last voices one hears in the film are mediated; that is the film is framed with communicative events on the CB radio) with a part of the film. Examples such as these are merely attempts to clarify "confusing" or unclear events in the film without further attempts to utilize this knowledge in integrating the possible significance of their placement as objects of meaning. Such attempts to frame events in the film through questions, therefore, should be taken into consideration. Minimally, they seem to be attempts to understand events within the frame, without attempting to associate these issues with what the filmmaker might have connoted.

To avoid the pitfalls of "over interpretation" and extension of the data to all films and interpreters, several other films and samples of interpreters would be necessary to lay claims to external validity. Thus, while it is realized that any given film might shape the data due to the individuality of the various kinds of codes employed in its production, this does not vitiate the goals of this study. Rather, by using only one film, one can ascertain the kinds of verbal responses made by some informants in a group discussion and treat these specific actions as potential members of a class of



actions which could at a later time, be investigated across a broader spectrum of films and informants. As Worth (1977) has noted, it is time that communication research began to describe the process of "lay" interpreters (i.e. non-professional critics) to everyday events, such as a film if we are to understand both the set of acts which comprise how people manage events, and some of the possible functions served by the symbolic events to which people respond.

Data from the single interviews shall be analyzed first. With these "viewer profiles" in mind, the group discussion can then be discussed, first in terms of the kinds of responses viewers make and, second if these responses are shaped by the differential weight accorded the medium, code and interpretive act, relative to other films, viewers, and viewers experiences with other symbolic events.

## CHAPTER IV

### DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF THE SINGLE INTERVIEWS

#### IV.1 What "Going to the Movies" Means

Question 1 "How many moview do you see?"

Distinction of informants, by class: 40% of the heavy viewers made a distinction between movies seen in theatres, and movies seen on television. One informant (heavy) declared, "I don't think of (watching movies on) television as being movies." Light viewers made this distinction far less often (20%).

The term "movies" seems to mean going out to a theatre to see a movie. Not one informant made a distinction between movies made for television and movies shown on television. These initial data indicate two things. First, that "seeing movies" is part of a social situated event in which other participants will be involved, possibly in a decision making process. This is true for both classes of viewers. Second, heavy viewers had a greater awareness of the possible distinctions to which the term "seeing movies" might adhere. This initial distinction between the two classes (at the level of defining a part of the social event that is called seeing movies) indicates that heavy viewers describe the domain of film in more elaborated terms than the light viewers.

Unit of Seeing: Heavy viewers used the week as their "unit of seeing". (93%) A unit used less often by heavies was the month (27%). None of the heavy viewers used the year as their unit of seeing

Light viewers, conversely, chose the year (48%) or month (44%)

as their unit of seeing. Only a few (8%) light viewers used the week as their unit. The differences, between the groups (and to a lesser extent, within the groups) again indicate a difference in the social weight the different groups accorded film. The relative homogeneity of the unit of seeing among the heavies, in addition to functioning as an index of frequency of attendance, also illuminates a possible shared network of norms for attendance and ways of verbally describing or reporting attendance patterns. There exists far less uniformity of expression in the light group, reflecting perhaps the lesser social weight accorded film.

*Viewer Awareness of Movie-Going as Behavior:* Several informants evinced an awareness of movie-going as a special kind of behavior, one with rules that might be seen as domain specific. This was not limited to either class of viewers, but was present in both. This report of movie-going as a particular kind of rule governed activity was not a common occurrence. When it was present, it more often than not expressed rules of appropriateness for quantitative attendance at movies.

Thus, one informant (heavy) noted of his fidelity to frequent movie attendance:

I think that sometimes when I'm unable to go to a movie on the weekend, because I've been invited to parties, or whatever, then I feel, "My God. I didn't see a movie. I won't be able to see a movie this Friday or Saturday." So I'll go during the week...So, there is a notion of ratio and it goes with the notion of regularity and habit.

Another informant (heavy) noted, "And if I haven't seen a movie for a long time, I probably feel some sense of movie deprivation." This informant also talked of being "movie hot", "horny for movies", and compared his attendance at, and desire towards film to teenage sex. (Apparently, the urge is often present, but the logistics of fulfillment are not constantly possible.) "So, it's a little episodic. It's not something like eating or sex that one does on a regular basis. It's more like teenage sex." Still another informant (heavy) labeled her attendance as largely contingent upon others opinions. "Usually I'm a fairly passive movie goer, in the sense that I don't read reviews to know what I should be going to see. I rely on my husband and friends, and to an increasing extent my children, although with a somewhat guarded acceptance of their opinions."

Light viewers mentioned similar notions of "quota", "ratio" and "desire" in regard to movie attendance. However, these expressed the limits of appropriate attendance rather than filling a desired and desirable goal. One informant (light) noted that he had seen two movies in the past month, "...so, I had, I more than reached my quota." Another light viewer, who sees four or five movies a year, stated, "If we go to the movies, it's a big event."

Devotion to the movies, expressed by most of the heavy viewers was conversely articulated by those informants whose attendance (and, largely, interest) was infrequent. One informant (light) noted, "I am not really a movie goer. I just don't take to it too much."

It was also the case that several of the light viewers over the age of thirty-five reported that there had been a change in their movie-going patterns as they grew older. An informant (light) a woman in her early sixties, noted, "My God, before TV I used to go every week practically, to the theatre, to the movies. And I suppose once you start having kids, and then you get tied down, you don't go out at night."

While the awareness of movie-going as rule-governed was evinced more by heavy viewers (60%) than light (24%), the direction of these rules seemed to parallel the weight accorded the movies as an activity worthy of attention. Although the notions of "ratio", "quota" and "desire" were mentioned by both classes of viewers, the heavy viewers see attendance almost in terms of prescriptive norms. Light viewers take note of attendance at films as one of many ways to spend an evening. There is a distinction in kind between "being hot for movies" or realizing that one cannot attend one's usual weekend movie (instead, making plans to go during the week to fulfill one's quota) and realizing that, as other activities evolve in one's life (raising a family), one's leisure time, or the existence of television, have altered one's attendance patterns. The first examples are illustrative of movies as a distinct domain, which, while possibly being embedded in other social events, nevertheless merit a set of rules for attendance which can be reported. The second instance is more likely the case of movies being but a choice of equally important evening leisure

events. It appears to be far less the case of the domain itself being the principle reason for the possession of special behavior. While awareness of rules for attendance at movies are held by all viewers and data indicate some differences heavy viewers are more aware of such rules than their light counterparts. The rules for the heavies seem to adhere primarily to the domain itself, not the domain as a subset of another form of social activity, as is the case with the light viewers. This issue--the degree of "embeddedness" of film in other spheres of social behavior--will be discussed at length in the "social weight" section. However, for the moment, the data indicate that heavy viewers exhibit a reflexive awareness of movie-going as a special kind of behavior far more than their light counterparts. This awareness is directed towards the domain sui generis.

#### IV.2 Film-Going as a Negotiated Event

Question two: "How do you decide to go to the movies?"

Heavy viewers are more likely to have a specific movie in mind (73%) than light viewers (36%). They are also more likely to make special plans to see a film (47%). A heavy viewer will arrange or modify his schedule to see a film. Light viewers rarely do this (20%). Light viewers were far more likely to go to the movies "on the spur of the moment" (28%) than heavy viewers (7%). Light viewers (36%) are also more inclined to include movie going as part of some other

specialized social activity (business meeting, "icebreaker" between companions, as a prelude to dinner) than heavy viewers (27%).

A key issue emerged here and elsewhere in these data on the "uses and gratifications" served by movies for the two classes of viewers. Several of the heavy viewers (33%) felt that regular attendance at films was a necessity for them in their daily interaction with others. One informant (heavy) noted that keeping up with movies is "a kind of self-improvement". Another informant noted,

I guess I see movies for social currency, they're part of the social currency in the world in which I operate. For the same reasons that I read The New York Times. Other people are going to talk about it, so I am going to want to talk about it, too. (heavy viewer)

The use of film, in these cases, illustrates what Smith (1972) had referred to as a "coin of exchange". This was articulated only by heavy viewers. While it is not doubted that light viewers discuss, in some capacity, the films they have seen, the heavy viewers seem to feel, as Jeffries-Fox (1977) has pointed out with respect to adolescents' use of TV, that they shall in some sense be held responsible for discussing the content, or other aspects, of the films they have seen. For some of the heavy viewers, film is something that figures as a significant event in their lives. It is both as an activity to attend to and an event figuring prominently in their verbal interaction with peers. In order to be a well-informed member of one of the social networks in which these informants are members, participation in a film scene is important.

Light viewers are less likely to select a film because of an interest in the domain, or often a specific film in the domain. Movie selection for light viewers is primarily part of social activity in general. A film is perceived as one of many alternatives in the domain of leisure, a form of activity to pursue with others. Plans that are movie specific are not often made. It is more likely than not that the decision to attend a movie can be a spur of the moment choice.<sup>1</sup>

The Role of Other People: Light viewers were far more likely to be the recipients of some form of advice on what movies to attend (64%) than heavy viewers (40%). While only 8% of the light viewers reported filling the role of what has been referred to as an "opinion leader" in regard to films, 40% of the heavy viewers reported that they had been, at times, "proselytisers" in regard to films. This finding--that light viewers, although not according the domain extensive importance in and of itself, are the recipients of advice (whether passive or active)--is not surprising. For, of the initial

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<sup>1</sup> There do appear to exist certain films whose "coin of exchange" has been so inflated to the public at large, that the notion of "responsibility" adheres to these films, regardless of how one might treat the domain of film. This issue--those films both classes of viewers felt they had some sense of duty to see--shall be discussed later in the chapter. One might, at this point, raise Gaye Tuchman's (1972) notion that certain cultural products are so highly marketed--co-opted by other media as part of a mutual love/exchange society, that to not see them could be interpreted as a sign of marginal membership or lack of the conventional social wisdom required for membership in one's social group(s).



sample contact groups conceptualized as "heavy", more than a third (41%) of the population were light viewers. Although preliminary data seem to indicate the existence of a specific interest accorded film by heavies, there is no reason to assume that lights, as part of other networks in which the heavies operate, would not be included in plans to see a film, or to receive or seek advice about a film from their "heavy" peers.

Of all possible sources of information leading to a decision making process regarding film attendance, newspaper advertisements were by far the most prevalent in both groups. Some (12%) of the light viewers also attended to television and radio advertisements for a film. This was not reported at all by heavy viewers.

Although newspapers may be the initial source of information concerning a film, personal contacts appear to be the most powerful arbiters of decision making (H=60%, L=72%). Katz and Lazarsfeld's previous findings along this line would appear to be most germane. They noted:

Almost everyone consults a newspaper for some detail before going to a movie, but no special weight is given to the impact of such information in the final decision. . . Personal contact again has considerably greater effectiveness than any of the other media (1955, p. 180).

For the light viewer, the newspaper is viewed primarily as a source of information on location, time and availability of a film or films. In the words of one informant, while personal contact provides him with the critical information needed to make a decision,

"...the newspaper would be the arbiter of what you could see, when."  
(light viewer)

A number (40%) of heavy viewers reported seeking advice from acknowledged "movie experts", persons whose vocation charged them with attending movies in some professional capacity. The members of this group appear to be what Katz and Lazarsfeld have called "local", or possibly "monomorphic" influentials, persons who are recognized as opinion leaders in a given domain. It is perhaps to this class (not reported in this sample) that some of the heavy viewers turn for advice. Other possible forms of influence--film reviews, previews, adherence to a certain "genre", director or actress' work--will be discussed more fully in regard to question six. For both groups, newspapers are the primary source of information about a film. However, other factors which influence decision making appear to be dominated by interpersonal contacts, with light viewers being the recipients of advice far more often than heavy viewers.

#### IV.3 Attendance Norms: Social Occasions and Movie-Going

Question Three: "When do you usually go the movies? Are there any social occasions that you find yourself going to a movie?"

Light viewers predominantly attend the movies on weekend evenings (72%). Some of these informants (40%) said that they occasionally

went during weeknights, although this behavior was largely contingent upon situational variables (i.e. Holiday season, mother in town for a visit). Attendance during the day, either weekend or weekday, was a rare occurrence (20%) for lights. Typical of a kind of reason light viewers offered for attending on weekend nights is the following:

Q: When do you go to the movies, usually?

A: Weekends.

Q: Any particular reasons for that?

A: As a more or less entertainment, or social type of thing.

Heavy viewers, on the other hand, were almost as likely to go on weekdays (40%) as they were on weekends (60%). Here too, attendance during the day (33%) was an uncommon occurrence for heavies, although they do so more frequently than do light viewers. A common response by a heavy viewer to this question was the following:

Q: When do you usually go to the movies?

A: Most often on the weekends. And that's in part because movies are a form of entertainment. And I, like most people, concentrate my entertainment on the weekends. But not infrequently on a weekday we'll go to the movies. More likely in the Summer than the Winter. More likely when I'm not teaching than when I am teaching. And, or more likely when there's a particular movie, or a series of movies that I want to see...Other times I'll see movies because I want to be, you know, the same reason I might go to a museum.

While the relation of leisure time and entertainment to non-work days is noted by this informant, two additional factors seem of import. First, even though both mention a function of film as being a use of one's leisure time, the heavy viewer's rules for attendance are far more elaborated than the light viewers. Second, the pattern of his

attendance can be seen at times to be movie-specific. He will go on a weeknight (or day) if there is a particular film or series of films that interest him. While the entertainment factor is present it appears that film provides for this informant and many other heavy viewers a particular kind of gratification not unlike the special interests one seeks when attending museums. One finds a certain kind of pleasure at the movies that simply cannot be satisfied elsewhere.

Another heavy viewer, similarly, attends movies on weekends, but will make special plans if a specific movie is playing during the week.

Q: When do you go to the movies, usually?

A: Usually on weekends, Friday or Saturday. Sometimes for a series like the TLA series, or the French movie series they have, Wednesday or Thursday. Very rarely in the afternoon. Though I always feel it would be great, because then it would be like childhood, you go at two o'clock, three o'clock, so it costs less. I would say during the weekend, mainly.

This devotion to films can range from making special plans to see a series, to being mesmerized by the mere presence of the image itself thrown upon the screen. Like Barthes' essay on the face of Garbo (1970, pp. 56-57), this informant states,

...there are so many things in the movies, even a beautiful face. It's enough to spend ten or twenty minutes looking at a beautiful face...

Heavy viewers go at different times than lights, because the "mere entertainment" value of the domain is subsumed in a devotion

to more specific pleasurable aspects of events within the domain. They will, therefore, alter their plans to encompass film going because it is more than just a way to pass leisure time.

### Social Occasions in Which Film Might Figure

The term "social occasion" is used here to designate attendance at the movies either within a specified frame of other activity ("date", "icebreaker", "holiday") or as a relatively autonomous activity in which other-embeddedness, while present, takes a back seat to the events upon the screen. In the former, it can be argued that the event of going to the movies is the present incumbent or a general leisure slot, one which could just as easily be filled by attending a Bingo game or massage parlor. In the latter, whatever other possible social activities exist attending a film is the present leisure slot filled by the permanent activity of film going. While the position taken here is that all attendance at films can be deemed "social behavior," this question seeks to investigate where in the spectrum of possible reported behavior viewers place film going.<sup>2</sup>

Family: Both groups reported that they attend films with their family (H=40%, L=24%). The boundaries of this activity, however,

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<sup>2</sup> It is in this argument--the degree of embeddedness of film within other social activities--that the work of Christian Metz, whatever its other weaknesses, seems most useful in understanding how films and film going figure as shared "codes" of culture. Thus, in Language and Cinema, Metz's notion that films are so difficult to

seem to be limited by the age of the children. One informant (light) with teenage children noted, "Sometimes I go with my kids. They've gotten older now, too old, so they don't want to go with me. For something special, they used to (go to the movies as a family) when they were younger." Another informant (light) noted similarly, that while she might go with her children, attendance is, "...not that often because they're both teenagers. That might be once a year that we can all agree on one movie." Finally, one informant might be viewed as encapsulating light viewers' attitude towards film going as a family social occasion. She noted that she no longer attends the movies with her family, "not since I have adult children. When the children were little, we used to have birthday parties and end up going to the movies. There were pictures I thought they'd like to see, and so we went to the movies. Usually with ten children."

For light viewers movie going as a family activity is largely relegated to a "special" event status, something one does at holiday times with young children. The possible implications of this particular "weighting" of movies--as a form of entertainment associated

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to describe using linguistic/semiotic models because they are, or appear to be so easily understandable to all viewers, is explained by the existence and use of a series of codes present in each film. Some of these codes are specific to the domain of cinema, some film specific, some merely present in the culture. Thus, one "understands" the "shower murder" sequence in *Psycho* not because one is an expert on the code of montage, or the syntagmas used there, but because in addition one "knows" the code of showers (in film and the natural world).

primarily with some other festive occasion--could be manifold. Attitudes learned from parents on the importance or place of movies could cultivate longitudinal norms for assessing individual films and the domain of film overall.<sup>3</sup>

In contrast with the light viewers use of film for family occasions, heavy viewers see family film attendance in a different light. One informant (heavy) noted, "...another reason for going to the movies (is) I sometimes take my children to entertain them. Because they want to see the movie for their own social currency... So, and certainly that's true of my children. Sometimes I accompany them to the movies that they want to talk about with their friends." Thus, this informant goes with his family even though some of the films he sees in this capacity were described as "awful". He would not have seen them on his own motivation. Film figures as a significant domain in his life, and to an extent, he assumes the same configuration for his children.

Another informant (heavy) noted,

Yeah, we do go to the movies with our children, and when we do it's nice, but it's not a family thing. Except occasionally, like before the Wiz came to town, one of my daughters has, um, she and a good friend of hers, and a particular good friend of hers who's Black, they had been talking about wanting to see the Wiz. And so I promised them, that when it

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<sup>3</sup> Messaris (1977) points out that one of the biases of uses and gratifications research has been the failure to conduct longitudinal studies along the lines mentioned above.

came to town, I'd take them. So, there's that kind of occasion that becomes an occasion, but it's not a habitual thing...it's more in the Mother category.

Similarly, another heavy viewer noted, "My pattern is usually if one of my boys is home--all my boys like movies. My wife likes them occasionally--and so I will go with them, and they'll go. So, it's that kind of thing."

Here we are presented with a slightly different set of attitudes. While the notion of entertainment is not entirely absent from the family outings of these heavy viewers, there are at least two contrasts between these informants and the light viewers who go as a family. First, attendance is not strictly limited to special occasions, but integrated into the general life of the family.

I might even go with the kids to one of our neighborhood movie theatres. For instance, I live in Merion, and the town next to us is called Narberth. And so, a five minute drive away, or a twenty minute walk, there's the Narberth Movie Theatre which shows movies for a dollar, okay? And, starting tonight, I happen to know, they have Death on the Nile. Now, that's not a great movie, but it has, I'm sure it has some good acting in it, you know. I think it has Peter Ustinov playing Hercule Poirot, and so on. And they have a seven and a nine thirty showing. So it would be tempting for me to go home, take all the kids, and say "Let's get a hamburger and then we'll see Death on the Nile at the seven o'clock showing." And that's the kind of thing I'm tempted to do. (Heavy viewer)

Second, the possible stated functions served by film going (social currency) comprises a different constellation to the social weight accorded film. Frequent family attendance with shared discussion could form attitudes in which film is regarded as more than



an adjunct to a birthday party. These viewers go with their families because they value film viewing and going as pleasurable activities in themselves. This is not the case with light viewers. While in-depth longitudinal studies would have to be done to see if different familial attitudes and attendance patterns "cultivated" a generation of heavy movie-goers, the differences between the two groups, indicate a difference in the weight viewers accord film as a family activity and thereby as a domain of symbolic value and evaluation.

#### Friends And Other Social Occasions

80% of the heavy viewers reported having a "steady companion" with whom they would go to the movies. All of these informants were married, and ordinarily attended with their partner. The other three informants attended with friends, but disclaimed involvement in a social group that went regularly to the movies. One heavy viewer, not married, nevertheless told of a temporary marriage-type situation in which film figured prominently. "Yeah, I was going with a guy who really went to the movies every night. And when I was going with him--this was just a couple of months I went with him--and we went to the movies almost every night."

Of those heavy viewers who stated that they belonged to a network, or group who attended movies with regularity, attendance with the members of the "network" was a fairly commonplace situation. As one informant stated, "A typical thing is, that would be for N\_\_\_\_ (spouse) and myself on a...it would not be unusual with some close

friends, certain friends...Well, for instance, the F\_\_\_\_s, with whom we saw the CB movie, it would be typical of the four of us to go to the movies..."

Two of the heavy viewers, because of their self-proclaimed "unusual" taste in films, only go as a dyad. "We're both not inclined to go and see Hollywood-type movies at all." Thus, the one time an attempt was made to go with friends in a group, "Once, I can think of offhand that we tried that. Nobody could agree on the same movie, so it was an absolute loss. We went to a bar and got drunk, instead... I mean, I haven't gone to see a movie with anyone but (husband) since we've been in Philadelphia, excepting to go by myself."

The case for the heavy film goers attending with a "steady companion" who shares a devotion to film, then, seems to be the rule rather than the exception. One informant (heavy) neatly summarized this perspective by noting, "I live with somebody who would go to any movie, basically, on a moment's notice...he'll always go to a movie."

Light viewers, while often going with another couple, apparently do not go consistently with the same group. That is, the network is not formed about movies, but occasionally is manifested through attendance at them. Minimally, then, attendance at a movie seems strongly tied in with membership in a dyadic relationship.

Well, if I go with a friend...But, um, I don't have a gang of people that get together and go to a movie every so often, if that's what you mean. It's no regular thing. (light viewer)

Another light viewer--not in a dyad--stated,

Yeah, I guess maybe I do (go with other people). I usually don't make a date, or anything out of it. But maybe once in a while that might be an ice-breaker between myself and somebody else, or... yeah, I guess I do go socially, to keep in touch with people. We'll see a movie, and then get a drink or something afterwards. So, I guess I do, really.

Thus, membership in a dyad--usually one's "steady (movie-going) companion" determines, first, who one typically attends with. Second, if one is involved with a social network in which film plays a significant part, there is a strong likelihood that one will go with one's spouse and some other members of this established network. These conditions appear to be met in the majority (80%) of the heavy viewers, but not (44%) in the light population.

#### Taste Cultures, Memory and Film Attendance

Question Four: "What movies have you seen recently?"

Twenty-five light viewers saw a total of 30 films. Several of the films were seen by more than one viewer in this class (N=11). Thus, the weighted total of films seen by lights (total times attending "x" total number of films) was 48. Heavy viewers saw a total of 31 films. Weighted, this number was fifty-four. Thus, the average number of times viewers of either class attended per month was 1.5 for lights and 3.2 for heavies. It should be recalled that viewers reported seeing "x" films per week. However, since the majority of light viewers reported seeing "x" films per month, attendance for

all viewers shall be discussed using this unit (month). This is being done so that a common basis of comparison can be made. These figures, however, are somewhat misleading, as the recall portion of the question might indicate. Most of the light viewers (88%) had difficulty recalling movies they had seen recently. Since several of these light viewers (32%) had not seen a movie for six months or longer, the actual number of films seen per temporal unit of seeing is probably far smaller than the numbers indicate.

Heavy viewers, on the other hand, had far less difficulty recalling films seen recently. Less than a third (27%) had difficulty recalling titles, sometimes attributing this loss of memory to the presence of the tape recorder rather than to other factors. Moreover, their unit of "recency" was predominantly the month (80%). They did not have to reach back for extended periods, as did one light viewer who could only recall a film seen in 1976.

It was also of interest to note the kinds of recall errors made by the two classes of viewers. While it might be typically the case that a heavy viewer either misquoted a title (Slave for Love rather than Slave of Love), or fumbled about for a title ("that Simone Signoret film"), several of the light viewers attempted to use rather rough content descriptions to recall films ("that lovely picture about ballet" [The Turning Point], "the one about the two women" [Julia]). Several times, light viewers named films in terms of the characters' names rather, than was the case with heavy viewers, the actors' names.

Thus, one informant (light) trying to recall a film she had seen (The Goodbye Girl), noted,

A: Yes, I saw the one with Marcia Mason...

Q: The Goodbye Girl?

A: Goodbye Girl before it came to Philadelphia. I saw the film with Duddy, uh...Duddy

A: Duddy Kravitz?

A: I'm trying to think of the name. The film with Duddy Kravitz before it came to Philadelphia.

Here, while there is the not uncommon fumbling for names, there is also the confusion of the fictive character portrayed by an actor in another film with the same actor (here, Richard Dreyfus) appearing in The Goodbye Girl.

Eleven films were named by members of both groups. (See Appendix II for a list of films named by both groups) Light viewers shared twelve instances in which members of the group saw the same film. Heavy viewers had fourteen cases where this occurred. In both classes, there were seven different films seen by more than one viewer that were not seen by the other class of viewers. Thus, a preliminary frame for what Herbert Gans has called "taste culture" might be revealed by the universe of films seen by the two classes of viewers. Lights shared 37%, heavies 42% of their movie choices. The films shared by both "taste cultures" (N=11) were headed by the film Superman (L=5, H=3). The remaining shared universe was comprised of six American films and four foreign films. Within each class of viewers, the "shared films" exhibit somewhat of a different paradigm. Of the films attended by both groups, light viewers were more likely to see box office successes (57%) than were heavy viewers (48%).

Moreover, lights saw what Variety might call "block-busters" whose grosses place such films on Variety's list of "All-Time Film Rental Champs" (i.e. Star Wars, \$127,000,000; Animal House, \$52,368,000; Heaven Can Wait, \$42,517,000). Excluding Superman, the film which appeared to function as a "coin of exchange" for all viewers, heavy viewers, when seeing "popular" films attended those films which were not nearly as "boffo" as light viewers (i.e. Revenge of the Pink Panther, \$25,000,000; A Wedding, \$3,600,000; Madame Rosa, \$1,680,000) (See Appendix II for a list of films seen by both classes of viewers and the gross revenues of these films in their first year of release as a kind of indicator of the "popular" films viewed by each group) Lights saw films such as Star Wars or Heaven Can Wait. Heavies saw Slave of Love, A Wedding, Girlfriends; that is, films which at first glance are somewhat out of the mainstream of the Hollywood tradition. While there are not enough data to securely predict the specific boundaries or composition of these taste cultures --or even what succinctly comprises the members of the categories of different taste cultures--with the exception of the must-see films (referred to earlier as highly inflated coins of cultural exchange), the universe of films seen by each group differs in quantity and minimally, in kind, whether one uses country of origin or box office success as a criterion.

What we have emerging are heavies and lights attending certain must-see films (Superman, Wiz). However, each group attends different

films which reflect a different set of what is representative for each group. If one uses box office receipts as an indicator of degree of popularity, lights tend to see films that appeal to a large segment of the public audience, while heavies' tastes, deduced from the success of the films they attend are less broadly based.

I am intuitively tempted to state that the enormously successful Star Wars could be a paradigm for the kind of films light viewers see, and that the critically successful Madame Rosa might be the "representative" film for heavies. The percentage--and gross receipts--of popular films seen by each class perhaps makes such an abbreviated statement unnecessary.

#### Sources of Information in Film Selection

Question six: "How did you decide to see "x" film?"

The issues operationalized in this question fulfill several research goals. That is, as previously discussed, a viewer's "weighting" of film--its embeddedness in other activities or its centrality as the activity being attended to--can be seen as factors both affecting film choice and, at the same time, being part of the very act of selecting a film. This question, then, seeks to make explicit the general self-reports for criteria of movie selection discussed in regard to question two. It has already been noted that the two classes of viewers differ not only in the initial operationalized definition of frequency of attendance (L=1.5, H=3.2), but in attitudes toward film itself. These can be seen at the level of

vocabulary in naming the act of viewing film (unit of seeing), in times for attendance, in the desire to reschedule one's routine to see a film and in the variety or primacy of the kinds of social occasions in which film might figure. It appears from an extrapolation of these data that separate--albeit, rather amorphous--taste cultures could be said to exist for the two groups. An investigation then into the possible sources of information about film and sources of influence about the domain would be of significance.

For both groups, interpersonal contacts are the cohesive factors in a process of selection which ordinarily includes the use of other media as part of a chain of decision making. The marked differences between the two groups, at the level of information about film, pertains to the use of critical reviews from other media in film selection.

Since all of the data in this chapter are self-reported, criticisms of the use of such data should now be addressed. In an excellent overview of the pitfalls of "uses and gratification" studies, Messaris (1977, p. 327) notes three general points worth attending to. First, since much media use is determined by habit or social conditioning, and therefore "tacit" in the observation of specific self-reports, an informant's explanation of his/her media use may end up providing "...ex-post-facto (invented) or, more likely, 'borrowed', but in any case invalid rationalizations." Second, since "naive" informants share the conventional wisdom that the effects of a medium



are related to specific instances of use of that medium, their accounts are likely to ignore the longitudinal impact of cumulative exposure to a medium. Third, Messaris notes, the use of self-reported data is likely to lead to non-critical acceptance, on the analyst's part, of the veracity of such data. Birdwhistell's dictum, "The informant is a member of, not an expert on his behavior..." (1973, p. 24) can be seen as emblematic of this line of criticism.

While it is difficult to refute Messaris' first contention, every care has been taken here to cross-check interviews for "contradictory" data. In addition, the group discussions provide a set of non self-reported (although probably somewhat self-conscious) data against which one can check the individual self-reports. Finally, as this study is not longitudinal, but seeks instead to compare self-reported data with a non-self-reported base (group discussions) a statement by Paul Kay, paraphrasing Quine, seems apt here. Kay noted, "The informant's most careful statements about the nature of his world may not be all the data, but they are admirable examples" (1970, p. 19). This, then is the position taken here. The use of self-reported verbal data cannot be said to be without dangers. However, with the careful system of checks and balances included here, I hope to delineate broad patterns which, at the least, are conventionalized characteristics informants feel the situation "demands", or at best, allude to patterns for the use of the media which can be validated in the group discussions.

Thus, in question eight ("Do you ever read movie reviews, or watch and listen to critics on the radio or TV?"), the issue of whether informants "trust" advice from critics was not raised by me, but by the informants. While this may be taken as an example of ex-post-facto or invented conventionalized wisdom on the part of the informants, the fact that they raised the issue and often recounted elaborate rules for their use of the different media as critical sources of advice, raises issues germane to the "reach" of mediated events outside of the domain itself. It is not the specific instance here that is of import, but the general description of uses and gratifications that this small profile seeks to establish. These data can later be compared to the non-self-reported interactions in investigating the weaknesses Messaris and others have noted.

The responses presented in table 4 :1 indicate not just self-reported regular or non-regular use of critical reviews in a medium, but also those cases where informants either did not report using a medium, or did not raise the issue of reliability or trust in the use of a medium as a source of critical reviews. Heavy viewers use newspapers regularly, reporting a relatively high degree of trust in that medium. Along the lines posited by Katz and Lazarsfeld, the heavy viewers are more likely to be regular users of specific media, in general. While light viewers use a greater variety of media, the regularity of use is markedly lower than that of the heavy group.

MEDIUM USED	HEAVY N=15			LIGHT N=25		
	(No)Report	Use Regularly	Use Irregularly	(No)Report	Use Regularly	Use Irregularly
TV	7	0	8	9	2	14
RADIO	10	0	5	17	1	7
NEWSPAPERS	5	8	2	4	5	16
MAGAZINES	8	4	3	11	2	12
	(No)Report	Trust	Distrust	(No)Report	Trust	Distrust
TV	12	1	2	13	3	9
RADIO	14	0	1	21	0	4
NEWSPAPERS	10	4	1	12	4	9
MAGAZINES	13	1	1	17	2	6

Table 4 :1 Use of Critical Reviews and Their Reliability

The light viewer appears to have a lessened "degree of trust" in using media as sources of critical information. In addition, this general issue of "trust" was raised almost to an equal degree by both classes (9%=L, 10%=H). Light viewers were far more likely to mistrust a critical review (N=28%) than heavy viewers (8%). Apparently, the interpersonal source of influence is the most trustworthy critical tie for light viewers. While this may also be the case for heavy viewers, they are still more likely than lights to attend to critical reviews (particularly in newspapers and magazines) as part of their chain of decision.

The somewhat patterned use of a medium for seeking critical reviews about film on the part of heavy viewers does not mean that Lights do not possess rules for selection. It might be said that both groups have loosely constructed "rules" that govern selection and attendance at films contingent upon other media as sources of information. The rules, however, are not the same for the two groups.

For example, one light viewer stated she would seek out a review for a film she was interested in. But generally she reads the film reviews as part of her general reading of periodicals.

I listen to Gene Shallit. I don't read much of the Philadelphia reviews in...I like the New Yorker, and the New York Times...I don't even read the paper regularly when it comes in. When I sit down and read the magazine, I'll read the reviews.

Another light viewer reads reviews to see if critical opinion is favorable for a movie she is thinking of seeing, or has heard about from friends, "I'll read the film reviews in the paper if there's a

movie that's going to open that for some reason or other I think I might want to see."

Still another light viewer exhibits a similar use of reviewers as "agenda setters",

Gene Shallit. I don't agree with a lot of the stuff that he does. If he likes a movie, then I'll generally go with it. I think he goes for funny movies, too. He really appreciates good humor, too. Yeah, so I like his stuff. Whenever I catch it on the radio or the Today show, I'll go see a movie that he likes.

What was striking about the light viewers was the extent to which they utilized reviewers on television and radio as influentials. (44%) Gene Shallit (N=6), Dennis Cunningham (N=3) and Rona Barret (N=2) were regarded not just as sources of opinion, but as sources of entertainment, as well. As one informant (light) stated, "Dennis Cunningham is on, we'll watch him because he's funny." All of the specific media oriented influentials named by the lights are from television and radio (N=11).

Heavy viewers, conversely, when mentioning specific critics (66%) as influentials, overwhelmingly favored print critics (N=8/10), with Pauline Kael the most frequently mentioned (N=4). This preference was followed by Penelope Gilliat (N=2) and others, such as Roger Greenspun or Vincent Canby. One heavy viewer, who is a regular user of print criticism stated, "I think I'd be far more influenced by reading a good or bad assessment of a movie than by hearing on the radio or by seeing Gene Shallit tell me."

Another heavy viewer echoes the sentiment for print over other forms of criticism stating, "I've watched a couple of times the Channel 12 team that reviews films and shows clips, which is kind of fun. Cause you can almost tell immediately whether you're likely to want to see the film. I'm not awfully impressed with their reviews."

While both groups are likely to attend to reviews in some medium to varying degrees, the media of choice--and the individual critic in that medium--differs for individuals across classes. Thus, to summarize the use of reviews by the two classes

1. Both attend to some form of review in a medium or media.
2. Heavies, however, favor print oriented reviewers with a greater degree of regularity and trust. Lights are more television oriented, for purposes of entertainment and with a degree of skepticism of the opinions these television performers express.<sup>4</sup>
3. Heavy viewers seem to use reviews with greater regularity (20%)--and trust--than lights (10%).

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<sup>4</sup> It might well be the case that light film viewers are heavy television viewers. This was the conventional wisdom that prevailed in Hollywood in the 1950's and was used to "explain" the decline in movie attendance. If this indeed were the case, heavy television viewers would "naturally" be more inclined to attend to reviewers on their medium of choice. However, I have no data here on general media use other than that which can be extrapolated from informants' responses on the use of critical reviews in the media as a criterion for film selection.

4. Several of the heavy informants (33%) utilize what Gross (1974) refers to as "triangulation" in assessing a film. That is, they approach the selection situation with more classes of comparative events or experiences than light viewers.

I won't see a movie that's if I read a review of a movie that, where I can tell that I won't like it, because the reviewer favors it for reasons that I ...they aren't exactly the reasons I would like it. If I know that it's been made by someone who's made other movies that I thought were stupid. If it's reviewed by friends whose opinions I trust, I won't see it. (Heavy viewer)

This informant also noted that a friend of his, "...does a lot of filtering of movies. I think that was the...usually, he gets there first...There's obviously an exchange network that goes on. A trading information about films."

This heavy viewer attends to reviews, compares the previous work of the director (when possible), criticizes the critic and exchanges information with a "film network," attending particularly to a friend who, in all likelihood, is an opinion leader in the domain of film. Thus, a complexity of choice exists here not manifested anywhere by the light viewers.

While this "filtering" process referred to exists in both groups, the heavy viewers utilized both interpersonal contacts and a more variegated source of critical opinion. Most intriguingly, they were often "repeat viewers" of a film for the sake of aesthetic evaluation, one of the principles mentioned by Gross in the process of triangulation. As one heavy viewer noted, he will go to a movie,

"(as a) kind of self-improvement, in quotes. I don't mean the particular movie. But even sometimes, something like Force Ten from Navarone, a feeling that I've heard a lot about this movie, and perhaps I should see it. Or, it did bring me a lot the first time I saw it. I'm speaking of the Pagnol trilogy, which I've seen already. And, I should see it again."

Attendance at a film because one is familiar with a director's work, or a 'genre' of film gives rise to the impression that evaluation for the heavies, at least at the level of film selection--is more complex, with more comparative elements present, than it is for the lights.

#### Solitary Attendance and Leaving Before a Movie is Over

Most studies on movie attendance (notably Friedson, 1953, and the series of studies conducted by the Opinion Research Corporation for the MPAA) have noted that going to the movies is a group event. Question nine ("Do you ever leave before a movie is over?") and question ten ("Do you ever go to the movies alone?") attempt to define, in descriptive terms, the influences the presence of others could have on movie attendance, prior to, during and after the fact of movie-going and watching.

It was in these two questions that the differences in viewer attitude towards film were most clear. More than half (53%) of the heavy viewers said they would, or had left before the film ended; less than a third (28%) of the light viewers would do this.



	YES	NO
HEAVY (N=15)	54	46
LIGHT (N=25)	28	72

Table 4 :2 "Ever Leave Before Over?" (in %)

The predominant reason given for walking out of a film was the same for both groups; the film was evaluated as not worth watching until the end. Both groups also had instances (N=1 for each class) where the social surround itself was a reason for leaving. That is, the setting required for the complete attention to view and hear the events on the screen was not optimal. Poor sound quality (N=1 for each class) or a disruptive audience were ordinarily the reasons cited.

Informants who wouldn't leave before the film ended, supplied class distinctive reasons for remaining. Only a very small number of lights felt sitting through a "bad" film (11%) was worth doing for a more complete evaluation of the film. Heavy viewers (57%) felt that in order to fully evaluate the event, the complete work had to be viewed. As one heavy viewer noted, he would not leave before the film ended because,

The movie theatre is something special. When you go to the movies, it would be a crime like not finishing your meal, or something when you're a child, it would be a crime to leave before the end...It's simply if you go, you go and want to see it all. That's enough.

Several of the informants stated that they had--and would continue to--walk out on other kinds of non-film performances evaluated as "bad".<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> The fact of no intermissions was raised by several informants as a possible reason for failure to leave before the end. This structured nature of film also might shed some light on the role of talk about film. That is, without those structured breaks where, amongst other things, the event is assessed, talk after the film might serve the crucial function of presenting a legitimized time in which to assess the event, for those so inclined.

One heavy viewer noted this point,

I'll turn off the TV in the middle of a movie, but...Oh, I know one (film) that I wanted to leave in the middle of, but didn't.

Q: Because?

Probably because of E \_\_\_\_\_ (husband). It was El Topo though I don't think I would have sat through that completely or not, when it finally came to a close, I guess it didn't hurt me and I was sort of glad I did finish it. Because it gave me more of a chance. I may have gone away with a more biased opinion of the violence, and everything, if I hadn't seen the whole movie. But, I did sit through it not wanting to. (Heavy viewer)

Another heavy viewer stated,

We generally sit it out to the bitter end, and we don't as a rule see too many dogs. So, even if a film isn't great, we'll see it to the end to see if it improves, or to see what's going to happen. Walking out on a film is, that's a major thing. (emphasis mine)

In addition to evaluational reasons, or the desire to see expectations fulfilled, there was another reason that heavies remain at a film. Heavy viewers carefully pre-screen their films. They often select a film prior to actual attendance. While 47% of all heavy viewers noted that they had obtained critical information about the film in advance of attendance, using a variety of sources, only 8% of the light viewers prescreened films in enough depth to prevent the "dog" syndrome. While the social nature of group attendance at a film (presence of others) was a factor for both classes remaining until the end (H=38%, L=47%) only the light group felt that financial consideration was a significant determinant in staying (41%=L, 0%=H).

I always think of a movie as like a really social thing. And, if I go it'd always be because I'm with somebody, and we went to see something. Like I said before, movies are a thing of last resort...I've been with people who wanted to walk out of movies, and I kind of just grabbed 'em and pulled 'em back in their chairs. I think I'm basically just cheap. I figured if I already paid for the movie, I'm gonna stick around for it. (Light viewer)

Q: Do you ever leave before a movie is over?

A: No, I've never done that.

Q. Any reason why you haven't?

A. The inertia. Save my money, and (I've ) gone to the trouble of going there, I'm going to sit through it. (Light viewer)

Thus,

1. While both groups were willing to leave before the film had ended, this was found far more (53%) amongst heavy viewers than lights (28%). It is perhaps the case, as Leonard Meyer (1956) has noted of musical audiences, that these viewers have a more diverse and complex "preparatory set" in regard to film. At times, then, waiting to the end to see expectations played out is not necessary if one is watching yet another (bad) variation on a very familiar theme.

2. Light viewers stay at a film for predominantly a social or financial consideration. Staying is not incumbent in the act of evaluating the film itself.

3. The more complex "pre-screening" process manifested by heavy viewers would seem to indicate that a film, while also being

part of a larger social event, exists as a realm with rules of its own. Rules for behavior, there, are not merely constrained or coerced by the social surround, but are present for the film as a separate domain; carefully attending to films, not just going to the movies.

Question ten: "Do you ever go to the movies alone?"

According to the Opinion Research Corporation study, "The Public Appraises the Movies" (1957), film-going is predominantly a group activity. Solitary attendance and admissions account for only 13% of total admissions (1957, p. 11). There have been, however, no data relating solitary attendance to frequency of attendance. Thus, data on frequency, or willingness to attend movies alone could be both a potential index of interest in the domain and illuminative of some of the uses and gratifications movie-going (both as "typical" group event or as a solitary event) might serve.

There are actually two issues being discussed here. First, will the social weight accorded the domain give rise to different solitary attendance patterns? Second, what are some of the possible uses and gratifications served by this non-group activity?

These data are the most illustrative of the differences between the two groups. While it is a relatively rare possibility for lights to attend movies alone (28%) it is not at all rare for heavies to go to the movies alone (87%). For lights, the significance of the events upon the screen of secondary importance to the social activity

that ordinarily surrounds film-going.

I always think of movie going as like really a social thing. It's just something where you're with people, and you want to...it's like a happening, kind of. You just construct something to talk about and have a good time at." <sup>6</sup> (light viewer)

Another informant (light) noting a crucial aspect of group movie-going, stated.

I don't go very often alone. I think it is kind of lonely when you come out, because you don't have anybody to talk to about the film. It's like it's not finished. It isn't that you need someone to sit next to you. You could watch it perfectly well alone. But it's afterwards--the discussion and the interpretation--your sharing the interpretation is a good part of it.

Finally, to summarize the predominant view of light viewers' solitary film-going, one informant stated,

I guess it's sort of a social...I don't know...I guess (going with others) it just seems more fun. It's like eating alone is no fun. If you have to, you can do it. But you don't have to go to a movie, so, alone, so...

Again, in response to the question of solitary attendance, one light viewer stated, "I mostly (don't go alone) because I'm not enthusiastic about them, and secondly, time doesn't work that way." Another light viewer stated what is perhaps the heart of this issue, noting, "I'm just not really comfortable in that."

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<sup>6</sup> That the function of attending to symbolic events--or as Goffman might have it, any event (1975)--is but one of a variety of possible contexts for presentational talk about the self in regard to such events, will be discussed in the chapter "Film Talk."

Two issues seem to be prevalent in lights not attending alone. First, as films are ordinarily a social, group-oriented event, going alone would appear to vitiate the very nature of participating in group activity. Second, there appears to be a degree of stigma attached to solitary movie attendance. The comparison to solitary eating (almost a conventionalized image of non-desired "aloneness" in the natural and the mediated world c.f. Billy Wilder's The Apartment) was mentioned by at least four informants. There appears to be, for some viewers, a stigma attached to the solitary moviegoer. As one informant (light) stated,

No (I don't go alone). Because I'm not...I have a hard time doing that, too. I would like to, though. Because I go to the movies and I see all these people alone. And, they don't look like perverts, or they don't...I mean, they look like nice, normal people, you know with nothing to do, with a little time on their hands.

The predominant reason for going alone mentioned by those light viewers who do attend was "time to kill", or as one informant stated, "lack of something to do". This often appears to be situationally located (in a strange location on a trip, etc). One light viewer, a retired businessman, noted,

Well, (going alone) that would be a situation where I would be in the city and had some time to kill, and had been to the library, had looked some things up there, and gone to Freedmans, an auction place, and just for something to do, either go to the movies or go home.

Attending the movies alone is equated by this informant with other forms of "passing time". Like the majority of light viewers, film

is seen predominantly in terms of its non-evaluational uses. Solitary attendance, when it occurs, serves the function of passing time in general.

Heavy viewers see the domain of film differently. They, therefore, attend alone for different uses and gratifications. While the time to kill phenomenon is, to an extent, present in this group, and the experience of movie-going as a group activity is also common, there exist other reasons for solitary attendance which reflect a different weighting of the domain of film. As a heavy viewer noted, "Yes, if no one is around and I wanted to see it, I would go. So I have nothing against that."

This differential weight accorded the medium led one heavy viewer to compare movie-going to going to an art gallery. ("It's like going to a gallery, or whatever. It's just, you wouldn't mind going to the gallery alone, would you?") Another heavy viewer actually extolled the pleasure of solitary movie going.

Okay. Why (I go alone) is simply because there is a movie I want to see and E\_\_\_\_\_ (wife) doesn't want to see. I have free time and I feel like going out ...For the experience, I don't think it's that different to me. I don't like to talk when I'm watching the movie. And so, whether I'm with people or not, it doesn't matter to me at all. And, I think that one of the pleasures is...Well, sometimes it's a pleasure to be alone in a movie theatre. I mean, really alone.

While the most preferred form of attendance at films is with a group, solitary going is not, as in the light group, a stigmatized



form of behavior for the heavy viewers. The large majority (87%) do at times attend alone. While, as in the case of the lights, the motivations for going alone are situational (time to kill, away on a business trip), from these data on solitary attendance one could infer,

1. For heavy viewers, the activity of solitary going is not negatively sanctioned, although with two exceptions, the preferred form of attendance is with a group.

2. The primary focus of attention during movie-viewing is the activity on the screen, not those events which transpire in the social surround. One heavy viewer summarized this perspective, the distinction or balance between attending film primarily as a social outing and attending film primarily as an evaluational event embedded in a social outing, by noting,

...even though it's a solitary activity in a very real sense, I like the companionship of being with warm, friendly bodies. But, I don't have anything against it.

Historically, Edison's original conception of film as a solitary event (the Kinetoscope) rather quickly gave way to societal conventions or movies as a communal experience (Monaco, 1977, p. 198).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> It is an intriguing, and unanswered question, why film as a medium should give rise almost immediately after its inception to a large scale communal form of communication rather than the more intimate forms another Edison invention, the phonograph, invented nearly the same time gave rise to. While part of the answer lies enmeshed in the economics and logistics of ownership and access to

It has also been persuasively argued, by several film historians (Jowett, 1976; Fell, 1970; Vardac, 1949) that Edison's original intent--to capture reality far better than any of his predecessors--was the logical culmination of a nineteenth century movement towards the depiction of various codes of realism in different symbolic modes. In this light, Edison's first films are the heirs more to a tradition of nineteenth century realism based on a largely private mode of representation (photography) than they are the heirs to a more public mode of presentation, the theatre. As Fell (1970, p. 23) has noted, Edison's invention incorporated yet another crucial feature--movement--which "contemporary photographs, graphics, prose, even the comic strip" had attempted through simulation to incorporate as features in their strivings towards realism. Thus, although the ever-pragmatic Edison conceived moving pictures as another level of realism to be used in the home with the phonograph, the obvious superiority of film over theatre to produce events for a mass public was recognized almost immediately by the press. Hilary Bell, writing in December, 1899 noted of the stage play Ben Hur:

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necessary movie apparatus, the initial, and immediate shift from solitary to communal viewing apparently has not changed since its first powerful inception. For an intriguing look at Edison's original notion of film as a monadic form of communication, see Robert Conot's A Streak of Luck (Bantam Books, 1979). Here, the genesis of Edison's concept of film as a cultural form is discussed, with some surprising revelations on the shift from monadic to communal viewing.

In the play we see merely several horses galloping on a moving platform. They make no headway, and the moving scenery behind them does not delude the spectators into the belief that they are actually racing ...The only way to secure the exact scene of action for this incident in a theater is to represent it by Mr. Edison's invention (Jowett, 1976, p. 26).

Thus, it was the public, and not the "inventor", which urged on by reviews such as Bell's, demanded a non-private mode of depicting realism through film. The avaricious Edison complied at once. Conjecturally then, the sheer weight of cultural norms points toward film as a communal experience. Nevertheless, heavy viewers see the domain as part of a social act which, like certain other symbolic forms can at times be best apprehended in relative isolation.

#### IV.4 Conclusions

It was originally posited in Chapter I that frequency of attendance at films would be correlated with the informants' attitudes toward film. Thus, as well as serving as descriptive of the informants' general notions about film, these data would also help delineate the differences between the two groups in regard to the uses and gratifications served by film. The summary of the final profile--that combination of responses to the questions and issues raised by the forty single interviews--can be seen in the following points.

Attendance: In these date, most heavy viewers (as operationalized in this study) reported seeing nearly twice the number of films as

light viewers. Their unit of seeing, moreover was movies per week. For light viewers, the unit was either the month or year(s). The ability to distinguish between films seen on television or films seen at a theatre was reported by 66% of the heavy viewers, but only 20% of the lights.

While awareness of movie-going as patterned behavior was present in both groups (L=6/25, H=8/15), for heavy viewers, these rules refer to prescriptive norms obtaining to the significance accorded the domain of film as a relatively autonomous part of culture. The light viewers were less reflexive of their movie going. They were less prescriptive and more often merely made statements of general degrees of interest in film as but one domain of leisure among many.

Decisions to attend films: In a previous major study of film audiences, the concept "decision to attend film" was placed beneath the umbrella term "motivation" (see *The Public Appraises the Movies*, 1975, p. 79). Motivations, there, ranged from "recreation" (57%) to a place "to cool off during the summer."<sup>8</sup> Only 9% in the MPAA study claimed they went to see a specific film, while 7% went to see a specific "star". Thus, the MPAA profile presents attendance as primarily recreational behavior, with less than 10% of their sample going to

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<sup>8</sup> Interestingly, two of the light viewers, both over fifty years of age, mentioned the presence of air-conditioning as a reason they used to attend films. This was, of course, before home air conditioners became financially accessible to a large part of the consumer population.

films for "educational or cultural purposes". The term, "motivation", as previously conceived, can be seen as here encompassing questions two, three, six and eight. Each of these questions deals with issues of the social nature of the decision making process (questions two and six), the means or logistics of choosing a film (question three) and the (partial) sources of knowledge and information used in selection which all add up to what has previously been referred to as "motivation".

#### IV.5 Summary

For both groups in this study, film-going was a group activity. However, heavy viewers were more likely to be part of a "movie-network", to make use of film reviews and a variety of sources of critical information for comparative purposes prior to attending a specific film, to attend both on weekends and weekdays, day or night. In short, the desire to see a film qua film (although this desire was often embedded in a social situation) was the primary focus for heavy viewers. Light viewers were more likely to go to the movies as a group form of leisure. Moreover, this group existed outside of the concept of a shared network of opinion about film. Light viewers were likely to attend on weekend nights, often with the desire to "go out" which manifested itself in the option of seeing a movie. The significance of the primacy of film as event, contrasted to film-going as a leisure event, can be seen in the fact

that 66% of the heavy viewers have a specific film selected through a relatively complex process (interpersonal filtering, use of reviews, schedules of theatres and special programs) in mind when attending. Light viewers showed this "movie specific" behavior in 36% of the reported cases. In addition, 60% of the heavy viewers would make special plans to see a specific film, while only 20% of the lights would do this.

The decision making process to see a film is distinctly different for the two groups. Light viewers see this as primarily a social event, as entertainment. Heavy viewers, while often viewing film as a pleasurable or social event, see attendance as part of an evaluational frame. The comparison of film-going to museum going, or the significance of film as a coin of cultural exchange was present only for heavy viewers.

While it could be argued that film can also serve a multitude of other uses and gratifications (i.e. a thing to do in a strange town, an icebreaker in a social engagement, a way of coping with "moods") the primary distinction--clearly thrown into relief by the informants in this study--was the distinction between focusing on film viewing as an evaluational situation or, film-going as yet another social situation.

As the two groups presented different uses and gratifications, different criteria in selecting representative films, and norms for attending to film, it could be inferred from these data that the

primary distinction--the binary one of film as evaluative event or film-going as social event--is, for analytic purposes, the distinctive feature of the social weight issue which distinguishes the groups. This distinction, then, should be manifested in viewer verbal responses in regard to a specific film, Citizens Band.

CHAPTER V  
ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE GROUP TALKS

V.1 Coding the Groups

In Chapter III, some of the methodological difficulties encountered in analyzing the group talks were discussed. Because of the unfocused, and at times unpredictable nature of the informants' talk about Citizens Band, two guidelines were constructed to segment the talk into units of analysis.

First, each two minutes of talk was segmented and marked on both the transcripts and the coding sheets. This enabled me to construct a point of reference into which kinds of interpretations of the film could be placed for easy retrieval. Second, the group talks were also cross-referenced in relation to a sequence division of the film. These two kinds of segmentation--one temporal, the other "artifact" oriented made the tasks of coding and analysis of the group discussions more manageable. They also enabled me to locate specific sequences of the film which were the focus of interpretation. The pretest data (from the film Hester Street) had indicated that several "parts" of the film had given rise to more interpretation and "questioning" than others. Rather than raising questions of intent, implication/inference, etc., these parts had been key indicators of an interpreter's orientation towards evaluating the film using either reality or fiction as a basis for comment. At the time of the pretests, all I could do was note these "parts" and atomistically describe what viewers did with them. Now, with a coding scheme based on data which



had hinted at possible patterns of talk about certain parts of a film, I was able to assess both the parts and the kinds of issues informants accorded significance.

## V.2 Informants' Evaluative Rules; Explicit

During some of the group discussions (33%) informants mentioned explicit ways they evaluated film. Jeffries-Fox (1977, p. 60) noted that adolescents' "critical" discussions about television programs occurred 24% of the time in peer groups. "Aesthetic" judgments occurred 20% of the time. Jeffries-Fox' definition of "critical" refers to recommendations about a television program (i.e. Would you tell a friend to watch this program?) "Aesthetic" refers to judgments concerning "...plausibility of the plot and action, the appropriateness of the scripted behavior and the actor's interpretation (compared to either television or real-life norms) and judgments about the quality of the production, writing or performance". Her account does not consider those larger rules that might adhere when evaluating television as a distinctive medium of communication. What I am alluding to here are issues raised by a variety of scholars (Najder 1975, Mukarovsky 1970, 1978 and Morawski 1970) regarding the relationship of general rules an informant might hold for a symbolic mode to an overall frame or context for making specific evaluative or interpretive acts in that mode. Smith (1979, p 16) articulates these concerns regarding the larger evaluative frames

or contexts which shape specific acts of evaluation.

Our interpretation of a work and our experience of its value are mutually dependent, and each depends upon what might be called the psychological 'set' of our encounters with it: not the 'setting' of the work or, in the narrow sense, its context, but rather the nature and potency of our assumptions, expectations, capacities and interests with respect to it...

It has been shown above that what Smith refers to as "psychological 'sets'" or, Leonard Meyer calls a "preparatory set" differ markedly for kinds of viewers. However, as many of these data (obtained in single interviews) were "self-reported", their appearance in a group discussion merits attention. For these issues or rules for general evaluation of film as a symbolic form have been raised by informants. I am, therefore, treating them as significant ways viewers evaluate and interpret both a specific film and in certain instances, films in general.

The set of rules for film evaluation, explicitly raised, seemed finite. First, there are general evaluative rules, seemingly prescriptive, which a viewer must possess in order to "critically" understand a film. A way to express these issues is to paraphrase them by noting two questions raised by informants. First, "Is there a necessary set of knowledge or skill one must bring to a film in order to understand it?"; if there is, second, "What is the function(s) of this "preparatory 'set' in providing a context or frame in making specific evaluative judgments?" The examples below, from two groups, illustrate these points.

## Example #1 (Heavy)

- #1 I just realized, in talking about this...
- #2 Did you see that (refers to a film mentioned earlier)?
- #1 How much it's like eating. That you compare it with other meals.
- #3 With past meals.
- #1 Yeah. It really is. It's almost like you can't get a reference for a movie without having to watch (pause) all films, I think.

## Example #2 (Light)

- #1 Did anyone see Nashville? I didn't see it, but I was wondering if this was similar to Nashville.
- #2 Well, it may be. It may be similar to other movies that we haven't seen. That's possible.
- #1 That's...how can we be the critics of the current film scene when we don't see the films? I stop with 1952, myself. (laughs)

Both groups deem knowledge of the current "film scene" essential to a critical understanding of film. Light viewers limit this knowledge to some of the "current" films, while Heavy viewers deem "all" films essential for a critical approach. Reports of a "preparatory set" appeared explicitly in half of the "Heavy" groups, but only one of the "Light" groups. This issue can be further illuminated by describing the particular components informants report as part of their rules for the film scene(s). If the first tenet of these rules is "Knowledge of the scene through extensive viewing of films", the second tenet appears to be the particular frame or context within which one situates film as an object of evaluation. That is, one either views film as an "aesthetic"/evaluative experience, or as an "entertainment" evaluative event. These issues raised by the "art/entertainment" dichotomy have been bruited about as a conventionalized

piece of critical wisdom for some time (e.g. McDonald, 1962). It is not surprising, then, that such a dichotomy should be accorded significance by informants. I do not mean to imply here that the complex notion of the "function" of a symbolic event can be analytically and absolutely dichotomized by an either/or orientation in regard to art/entertainment. Some informants felt that "art" could be entertaining, and that entertainment need not exclude the possibility that a film assessed as "just a movie, mere entertainment" might have an aesthetic function as well. However, informants did hold evaluative norms oriented towards either art or entertainment. These evaluations shaped individual perceptions in regard to a film. Here are examples from three groups addressing this issue.

Example #1 (Heavy)

#1 Well, it was also very similar to...I don't think, I think that I didn't see this with anybody, but there was a double feature of Hospital and a movie about a disc jockey in Los Angeles (FM) and it was very similar (to CB) with the same idea that communication is, is was the same metaphor of communication will solve all the problems.

#2 Was that the message?

#1 I think that was the message.

#2 You always get messages. I just thought (it was about) folks helping each other out. (my emphasis)

Example #2 (Light)

#1 And the acting, it was so obvious. I mean, you knew right from the beginning, you knew within seconds, that the woman (Pam) was Electra. But I mean, maybe they wanted you to. Maybe for some reason they wanted it to be a very obvious movie. Of course, I don't think they particularly sat down and said, "We are going to attempt to do thus and so like Bergman, or maybe like

someone like Altman does." I mean, they just got a story and they put it together and they hoped it made money. And I think that people tend to analyze movies too much. It's just a movie, that's all.

#2 Bull!

#1 Entertainment, that's all it was made for. Make a buck.

#1 No, 'cause I think...I don't think they did what they set out to do. And I'm not sure what that was. 'cause if I knew what that was, then they would have done it. But I got the feeling that there was something there.

#1 That they were trying to get across?

#2 Yeah.

(my emphasis. Informant #1 Light, Informant #2 Heavy)

In these examples members of both groups hold opposing views regarding film evaluation. Those viewers oriented towards "entertainment" seem to feel that meaning, in a medium as commercially oriented as film, is transparent. A message in their case is that one be entertained. Other viewers, while not explicitly claiming "film is art", assume a context in which one always evaluates and interprets a work in terms that go beyond the single function implied by the evaluative context "entertainment".

The third group, below, illustrates another instance of the different contexts in which viewers place film as an object of evaluation!

#### Example #3 (Heavy)

#1 The two things (art/entertainment) rarely meet in the same plot. People don't do it that much. Either it's so hokey you don't even care, you don't even think about the theme. You know, the stuff that's on TV that might be about something, like divorces or Vietnam Vets. You just struggle through the picture.

#2 That's true. Well, this was sort of just an

entertaining movie. Maybe it's like a Charles Bronson movie, or something. I don't know.

#1 I don't know if it's really all that powerful having all that entertainment. Because I don't know if it will stick with you long after you look at it.

#2 The communications theme? (mentioned earlier)

#3 There are some very entertaining films that give you a very powerful message, you know. I don't think that was one of them.

#1 Yeah? I've never seen one.

#2 Like what? Name me one. I mean, I can't think of one right off the bat.

#3 No, neither can I. But, I'm sure we've seen them.

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#2 When you go to the movies, do you always look for something?

#3 Yeah, yeah. Usually just what you see.

(Informant #1, #2 Heavy, Inf. #3 Light)

Thus, for many viewers, if film is evaluated as "entertainment" it means, as the informant in Example three noted, "just what you see." The art/entertainment context for evaluation was present in all group discussions. However, the "art" or "intentional message" frame for evaluating film was explicitly raised by Heavy viewers in half their group discussions. None of the Light viewers appeared to hold the "art/evaluation" rule. In fact, the statement, "I think that people tend to analyze movies too much. It's just a movie, that's all" might be seen as encapsulating the position of viewers who possess an entertainment oriented context in regard to evaluating film. Therefore, one could logically assume that different evaluative contexts for film would give rise to different ways of interpreting Citizens Band.

### V.3 Implicit Evaluations

Prior to presenting the analysis of the responses viewers made in regard to Citizens Band (hereafter referred to as CB), I would like to note a second kind of evaluative context mentioned by informants in their group discussions. One can see these rules as a set of "pre-consumption" acts which function as norms for film selection. Thus, statements--say, recommendations whether to attend a film--might be viewed as Smith (1979, p. 9) ironically notes of literary evaluations, as implicit evaluative acts which precede what traditionally (but, as Smith notes, incorrectly) have been called "...real literary evaluation, the assessment of intrinsic worth".<sup>1</sup>

The most frequently mentioned "type of evaluation was "Would you recommend it to someone?" (N=7), with four Heavy viewers and 3 Light viewers stating they tended to serve this role of "influential". Evaluation in terms of cost ("Would you pay 3.50 to see it?")

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<sup>1</sup> These acts which can be seen as "implicit" evaluations of literary texts (publishing, printing, purchasing and preserving) are not unlike the Russian theorist and filmmaker Dziga Vertov's concept of three periods of film montage. While only his third period corresponds to the act of "intrinsic" creation persons often refer to as "montage" (the physical assemblage of visual constructs into a finished film) Vertov's first and second periods ("Montage evaluation" and "Montage synthesis") are implicit acts of evaluation occurring before the actual fact of physical assemblage. Both Smith and Vertov seem to be noting that the social reach of evaluative acts extends beyond the moments of the "assessment of intrinsic worth" or any one particular action. For Smith and Vertov all of these acts are evaluations. (See, "The Writings of Dziga Vertov", in Film Culture 1967, Summer, pp. 60-65.)

and site "I wouldn't go see this downtown.") appeared to be closely related. Those informants with mixed or negative critical feelings about CB, in hindsight, would have seen it at a "neighborhood" or "second-run" theatre where admission charges are ordinarily less than those at first-run movie houses. The issue of cost was raised 6 times (N=4 Light, 2 Heavy). As two informants (Light) stated, "It's the kind of movie you say, 'I'm glad I only paid a dollar to see it.'" and "I wouldn't pay 3.50 for it."

Repeated screenings of the same film, part of the process of critical triangulation mentioned in Chapter Four, were mentioned by four informants (3 Heavy, 1 Light). In one discussion, an informant noted, "Before I decide anything, I think I'd have to see it again." (Heavy)

An interesting issue, in implicit evaluations, was the significance accorded the film's title (Light viewers). Heavy viewers mentioned the title, interpreting it's verbal play on words (i.e. Citizens Band as the way people are "banded" together by the frequencies of the CB channels). Light viewers (24%) saw the title in a different light. They often asked, "Would you go see a movie with a title like that?" Simonet (1980, p. 68) quotes the director of Audience Research at Warner Brothers as saying, "The title alone is not going to make or break a film." But, Simonet notes, "it can make a difference." At the level of pre-consumption rules, Lights appear to use the title of a film as a descriptive evaluative index



of the film's content. For example:

Example #1 (Light)

#1 I'd never go to see it. Would you go to see a picture with that title, if you didn't...

#2 Probably not.

Example #2 (Light)

#1 A friend who wants to see it, who is in Boston when it came out in Boston. And she said it came out with the name CB, or Citizens Band, or something, and they... it, people said, "Who wants to go see a movie about that. That's just for, that's not my kind of movie. We wouldn't go see a movie named Citizens Band."

Example #3 (Informant #1 Light, #2 Heavy)

#1 Yeah, but if you want to see a movie that has a message, though, you pretty much know what the message is that you want to hear. And you go to the movie that would, that the title would sound like that.

#2 I gotta know a little bit about it, a little background, maybe.

Lights had two categories for pre-screening (title, 24% , actor, 24% ) that Heavy viewers did not report as part of their evaluative process. It has previously been noted that Heavy viewers possess a more complex set of film selection norms. Because of these norms, they were less likely than Light viewers to see a "bad" film. The focus of pre-screening for Lights is largely title and casting. Nearly half of the Light informants evaluated CB with these criteria. They noted that the presence of one of their favorite "stars" would have enhanced the film. ("I mean, the one guy looked like Brian Keith, and the other guy looked like Jon Voight. And the one woman looked like Linda Lavin. I don't think they did as good a job.")

It will later be argued that both title and recognizable stars can be seen as having a marked effect on expectations (and, therefore, evaluations) of a film. The issue to attend to at this point is that Light viewers use indices of evaluation (title, actor) which differ than those used by most Heavy viewers. While Heavy viewers might "use" a title as part of their pre-screening evaluations, their preparatory set is more likely to include specific mention of critical reviews (27%) or familiarity with a director's previous work (20%). For example:

You have an idea (of content) sometimes, if the director has a broad range of work...Yeah, I'll still go sometimes without knowing it (the film) at all if I think its going to be an intesting director, or something like that. (Heavy)

If the pre-screening evaluative rules appear to be different for different viewers (title/actor vs. director/critic) the set of expectations engendered by these different critical and evaluative contexts should shape viewers' interpretations of a film. Smith (1979, p. 19) presents the case for the inter-relatedness of preparatory sets and subsequent evaluations clearly.

...when we allude to a work as great, good, bad or middling, we usually imply great, good, bad or middling for something and also, thereby, as something; that is, with respect to whatever functions or effects works of that kind might be expected or desired to serve or produce. The functions and effects are usually not made explicit; they may not be recognized or even covertly formulated by the evaluator as what is desired or expected; and they are likely to differ from one community of audiences to another. Nevertheless, the assumption of certain characteristic functions and effects will not only direct the evaluator's judg-

ment of the work but will also be part of what constitutes, for him and presumably for his community, the classification of the work as whatever it is classified as:

In forming implicit evaluations, evaluators of varying competencies, vocations and attitudes towards literature (or film) additionally "...are implying that it is good as whatever they mean by 'literature' and for whatever they believe such works can or should be good for." (Op. cit., p. 21)

Implicite evaluations--those sometimes loose and shifting behaviors that accompany overt evaluative acts--exert a good deal of influence on a group's consensus and criteria of evaluation and value in a work.

#### V.4 Foci of Discussion for the Film

The predominant unit of discussion for the film was the film as a whole (49.5%) See Table 5:1. That is, the focus of viewer discussion about the film was expressed in terms of the entire film more often than any one part of the film. However, by combining all references of the several analytic "parts" of the film, one sees that the film is as likely to be discussed in terms of parts as it is as a whole. The most parts of the film most frequently discussed were either a narrative slice ("I liked the part about how he did something that he only did on her birthday.") 22% , or individual characters within the film ("I love Spider. He's cool.") 20%. Viewers seldom (2%) discussed a part by designating it as a "sequence"

Table 5:1

Unit of Discussion for Citizens Band;  
All Viewers

UNIT OF DISCUSSION	N	%
Shot	7	2
Sequence	8	2
Narrative Slice	80	22
Character	75	20
Whole Film	184	49.5
Other*	17	4.5
	N=371	%-100

(\*Other=7 Dialogue, 3 Title, 3 Objects  
2 Song, 1 Voice)

or "scene" per se.

At this point, an interesting ethnolinguistic issue can be raised. It could be argued that informants who I have designated as attending to narrative slices rather than a film's structural units are indeed referring to structure, but do so with different choice of words. For example, one viewer (Light) noted, "I liked the dog when he was going to step into his dish, his food." This attention to an event (the dog stepping into his food) rather than to its placement by an author in the structure of the film might not indicate a lack of awareness of such events being part of an ordered sequence of events. Rather, such attention may indicate a choice or inability to talk about film with a vocabulary that designated units of film structure ("sequence", "shot", and so on).

However, I view such instances as more than a problem of word choice. It will be argued in Chapter Six that word choice and vocabulary can be seen as a reflection of the kinds of knowledge informants have about how a film is constructed, or even if one attends to structure at all. Certain informants talked about events and objects within the film, attending neither to the ways these events were placed in relation to other events in the film, nor to the temporal or spatial properties which demarcate "parts" of a film from one another. I am assuming that such attention solely to actors and events without any reference to structure or intent are indicative of foci which elevate the events themselves to importance

apart from a knowledge of structure.

There were only 15 instances in which technical-structural terms such as "shot", "sequence" and so on were used when discussing the film. Such use of structural terms was associated with Heavy viewers (73%).

The likelihood that an event or character within the film will be the focus of discussion is in line with Jeffries-Fox' study of adolescents' reported discussions of television programs.

The most frequent way of talking about TV with friends (N=204) was to allude to some particular events in a program--for example, the 'good parts', 'gory parts', or 'scary parts'. This activity was engaged in by 55% of the students and seems to function as a means of affirming their adherence to a viewing norm, since no information about the program is usually involved. (1977, pp. 59-60)

While it would be premature to state that the use of structural or non-structural units as foci for discussing a film function in the same way Jeffries-Fox notes in regard to television, this difference in informants' discursive styles raises several interesting points.

First, a point raised by Hymes (1977) is germane. The existence of a vocabulary for talking about mediated, structured events need not always suggest that it is appropriate to use such a discursive style. Hymes notes, "Maybe significance will inhere, not in words or even descriptive phrases, but recurrent expressions about films that on reflection will appear 'strange' or needing explication. As Burke once wrote, and Sacks discovered, a classification or naming can be implicit in an utterance much longer than the usual term."

(personal communication) Therefore, the use of metaphor in discussing the rather lengthy "parts" of the film need not mean that viewers are not aware of the terms for structure in film. However, this suggests that events and characters, and not their structuring by an author, are what most viewers attend to in their discourse about film. Later in this chapter, the ramifications of attention by viewers to events rather than structure will become critical in assessing the extent to which viewers treat events in a film as slices of reality or structured purposive units.

Second, it could be argued that what one sees in these structural/event orientations is a consequence of the lack of formal education or exposure to critical analyses of mediated events. In discussing the relationship between viewers' education and their treatment of an event as reality or fiction, Thomas notes:

...while the critically untrained individual is generally permitted to discuss novels, fiction films, poetry, dramatic television, etc. exclusively in terms of the content of these events (i.e. what the story is about) the critically trained individual has, as part of her training, been required to take recourse to an author 'behind' a creation and to therefore deal with intentions, messages, symbolism and the like. (1977, p. 146)

The data on the units of discussion for the film can be explained in three ways: either (1) as a result of the viewers being untrained in film analysis specifically, or (2) because their educational backgrounds did not provide a context in which they developed a structural orientation towards mediated events in general, or

(3) because in a context, it is not appropriate to talk about film "like that". Viewers who discussed the film in terms of characters or events, without noting the structure within which such events have been ordered, display an orientation towards a mediated event ordinarily used in dealing with non-mediated events. Their way of talking about the film, the discursive style they display in response to the situations depicted, the problems of the characters and so on, is similar to the orientation usually reserved for dealing with events in real, everyday life. Gombrich (1960, pp. 114-115) raises this point--viewers attending to the "content" of a mediated event and not its authored structure. He tells of a woman who visits Matisse's studio. Looking at a figure in one of his pictures, she notes that the arm of the woman-figure--a "part" of an event--is "too long". Matisse reportedly replied, "'Madame, you are mistaken. This is not a woman, this is a picture.'" Thus, this anecdote, in which an evaluator talks about a part of an event in, what was for Matisse inappropriate terms, is not unlike viewers who discuss parts of a film without recourse to the concept of author or the units an author uses when structuring an event.

All informants, however, were college educated, providing at least the possible context for an "academic" approach to recognizing structural units in a film. The fact that so few informants used these units suggests that without specific training in film (which none of the informants possessed), relatively few viewers--perhaps



through attention to critical reviews or talks with trained peers-- use those structural units of analysis often taught in filmmaking or film analysis courses.<sup>2</sup> Despite at least forty instances within the film of specific structural devices and transitions (freeze frames, dissolves, fades, etc.) which demarcate "parts" of the film from one another, only one informant used a structural unit which trained viewers may typically focus upon in discussing a mediated event.

One last point should be made on informants' unit of discussion about the film. As noted, almost half the instances of discussion used the whole film as a unit of discussion. A tentative explanation is offered regarding this point. Unlike much of television, film appears to be treated by viewers as a discrete event. In television, where continuing episodes and an episodic structure are built in to the nature of the (commercial) medium, discussion of "parts", as Jeffries-fox notes, may take precedence over discussion of the whole.

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<sup>2</sup> This parsimonious explanation--that critical reviews could be a source of discursive style that attends to structural units rather than content descriptions--is, as Swartz (1978, p. 33) discovered, not necessarily the case. Although there have been few studies of the discursive styles of film critics, Swartz notes that "Some critics are better versed in the literary and dramatic aspects of film rather than the purely formal, or cinematic features (and therefore are) more likely to focus their attributions of accountability to those actions or intentions with which they are competent in assessing, i.e. the acting, the narrative, thematic elements, etc." It would not be surprising, then, if this bias extended to "lay" viewers' discursive styles, and not just those of professional critics.

Film, however, is both seen and ordinarily marketed on the basis of stories: discrete narrative entities. Each viewing might, therefore, be as likely to be treated as "one long series of characters involved in events" as it would be discussed at the "lower" level of its parts.

The social weight accorded film, the different preparatory sets, general evaluative rules and evaluative contexts viewers possess should all affect responses viewers have in regard to the film. The data indicate that the frames in which the viewers place film for evaluative purposes will be associated with the kinds of events, structure, notions of authorship and the interpretations viewers make in regard to the film.

#### V.5 Kinds of Viewer Responses to the Film

Table 5:2, shows that the most frequent responses to the film were instances of evaluation/assessment (54%). This type of response could be as simple as an evaluative statement concerning an object in the film (i.e. "That was a nice truck" Light ) to the more complex evaluation below.

- #1 I wouldn't pay 3.50 for it.
- #2 It was entertaining, yeah. I wouldn't pay 3.50 for it. (I'd pay) a dollar.
- #3 No, I wouldn't pay either. It's a good TV movie. It's a real good TV movie.
- #2 Yeah.
- #3 It would be terrible with commercials.
- #2 It would lose a lot with commercials, 'cause...
- #3 I think if I was watching it on television, I wouldn't stay to see the end.

Table 5:2

Kinds of Responses for Citizens Band;

All Viewers

KIND OF INTERPRETATION	N	%
Literal Description	9	2
Non-Literal (Inferential)	55	11
Attributional	44	9
Evaluation/Assessment	278	54
Guesses/Expectations/ Reworkings	47	9
Framings/Questions	47	9
Audience	31	6
	N=511	%=100

#2 I would. I would. It's for different reasons.  
 #1 I wouldn't. Would you, John?  
 #3 Yes. John would  
 #4 Are you answering for me, teacher?  
 #2 I would.  
 #3 I wouldn't.  
 #2 I would stay to see almost any movie, though.  
 #4 Well, you missed one tonight.  
 #2 No, that was made for commercials, in a way. See the way when they faded? That's perfect for the break in a commercial. But, the thing with that...  
 #3 Maybe they're doing that with moview now. Knowing it's going to fail, but knowing it's going to get on TV.  
 (Informant #1, 3, 4=Light, Informant #2=Heavy) <sup>3</sup>

Here, there are several criteria used for evaluating the film. These range from paying to see the film to (implicitly) noting that while it is not a good "theatre" or "first-run" film, it is a "real good TV movie". Further, in the course of an evaluation, possible reasons are raised as to why the film has an episodic structure, punctuated with dissolves, fades (technical vocabulary), etc. The most complex evaluations (comparing the film to TV movies, providing justifications for its structure, using the technical term "fade") were offered by a Heavy viewer.

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<sup>3</sup> Indeed, this informant may be correct in his estimation that television has coopted "failed" films, absorbing them as part of their content. Citizens Band, although a favorite of New York Times critic Vincent Canby, failed to reach the one million dollar gross receipts mark necessary to make Variety's list of the most successful films of the year. The film was shown on CBS-TV on February 16, 1980, receiving a very low 57th place rating. The local newspaper (Kalamazoo Gazette) gave it a poor "two-star" rating, describing it as a tale of "A small town Citizen's Band addict gets involved with a tossed salad of characters including his trouble-making father, his former girlfriend who is now dating his brother and a philandering truckdriver."

Looking at Table 5:3, one sees that most evaluations took the simple form (noted by Jeffries-Fox earlier in regard to television) of mentioning and evaluating either "parts" of the film (26%) or characters within them (28%). The film as a whole was evaluated 38% of the time.

If one combines all the kinds of possible "parts" except structural units (shot, sequence, etc.), viewers tend to evaluate parts (57%) more than the film as a whole (38%). In most cases, evaluations took the form of "mentions" rather than being articulated as complex critical statements. Both groups had many instances of evaluative "mentions" (similar to Jeffries-Fox' "good parts", etc.). Heavy viewers were more likely to engage in more complex evaluative acts than Light viewers. For example, below are two group discussions concerning the same part of the film. Example #1 is from a group comprised of four Light viewers; Example #2 is from a group of four Heavy viewers.

Example #1 (Light)

#1 I just wanted to say that the beginning of the film, the beginning of the film, as the colors came on, before the actual film started, I had the feeling that the whole thing would be a very psychadelic approach.

#2 Hmmm.

#1 The bright colors, the jumble and voices that flashed on and the music they played. And I thought that the whole picture would follow through in that way. So that the picture really didn't follow that approach to it. Or, the approach didn't suggest what the rest of the picture showed...

.

Table 5:3

Unit of the Film Evaluated;  
All Viewers

UNIT EVALUATED	N	%
Shot	1	-1
Sequence	11	4
Narrative Slice	73	26
Character	78	28
Whole Film	107	38
Other	8	3
	N=278	%=100

#2 But, uh, after the initial glaring color, or what should I say, the modern picture sound combinations that flashed on the screen, it was relatively easy to follow the story. (my emphasis)

Both viewers in this Light group assess the opening as "dis-jointed", "jumble(d)", and then appear somewhat relieved that the remainder of the film didn't "follow that way". In addition, this excerpt also deals with viewer expectation engendered by the form of the opening montage. However, informant #1 does not treat this sequence as part of the film proper ("before the actual film started"). Both Light viewers have described, and I think implicitly evaluated the opening sequence as confusing and not structurally related to the rest of the film.<sup>4</sup>

In example #2, several Heavy viewers treat this sequence differently:

Example #2 (Heavy)

#1 I liked the beginning of it, the film, very much.  
 #2 With all the mechanical wizardry, and stuff?  
 #1 Yeah. Star Wars. Well, it sort of introduced all the themes of the film. All those characters later appeared.  
 #3 Yeah, you heard those lines.  
 #1 You heard the lines and it was an introduction to the film.

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<sup>4</sup> This "non-interpretation" of a film's titles is not unexpected. For, it is a fairly recent phenomenon (circa 1940) for filmmakers to use the title as part of the narrative content of a film. This "convention", started by either Nicholas Ray in They Live by Night or Orson Welles, is now a part of mainstream filmmaking. However, it might appear odd for viewers whose notions of movies and conventions predate either Ray, Welles or a host of contemporary directors who utilize it.

Here, the evaluative act opens with an explicit statement ("I liked the beginning of it, the film, very much.") These Heavy viewers not only treat the opening montage as part of the film proper, they integrate it into the structure of the entire filmic narrative. This particular instance of evaluation goes beyond mere description: it names other films like CB, and integrates the opening montage credits with the rest of the film's narrative structure and themes.<sup>5</sup>

Evaluation/assessment as the primary type of verbal response viewers make warrants further scrutiny. First, there is almost an equal degree of evaluation for some part of the film as there was for evaluating the film as a whole. Second, "mention" or a short description was the predominant form of evaluation. A viewer either "liked" or "disliked" a part of the film. Heavy viewers intended to go beyond mere mention or description more often than Lights. However, overall, this was an infrequent occurrence.

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<sup>5</sup> Variety, in reviewing CB, noted "Pablo Ferro's titles get the film off to an outstanding start, and from there, the uniformly excellent cast and direction carry the ball most of the way." (Wed., April 20, 1977, p. 24) That is, there is an implicit evaluation in this review that treats the title/montage sequence as something more than a source of information on the cast, crew, etc.

In addition, several filmmakers today, most notably Bruce Conner are strongly inclined to subvert this very convention of where a film "officially" starts. Thus, in Conner's A Movie, title credits and universal leader appear and reappear between images which ordinarily comprise the "official" start of a film. The film Steelyard Blues, less consciously "avant-garde" than A Movie, also utilizes this form.



The rarest evaluative act was the analysis of an individual shot.

This specific "structural" evaluation was performed by one group:

- #1 That sequence was very interesting, wasn't it?  
When he...that one shot of him when he suddenly looked like a Gestapo man, in a black raincoat and hat? He looked just like the Gestapo types you see in all the films. And, looking at Blaine...
- #2 His face?
- #1 Through the rain.
- #2 Tucked in under his hood, too.
- #1 That was fascinating.
- #3 I might find some criticism of that sort of thing, 'cause I think that was reaching kind of.
- #1 Well, it was a bit obvious.
- #4 I didn't find it...it was perfectly OK with me, even though it seemed reaching.
- #1 It really seemed to me that was his fantasy, you know. I think he saw himself as a Gestapo-type man, and they're showing how he dressed the part.
- #4 Yeah. Everyone there is projecting, psychologically. They're projecting and they're projecting verbally through the CB, as well.

(Informant #1, 3=Heavy, Informant #2, 4=Light)

Here, both the terms and units "sequence" and "shot" are initially evaluated ("interesting", "fascinating"), then questioned ("a bit obvious") and eventually negotiated and interpreted through reference to an authorial intention ("They're showing how he dressed the part.")

Contrast the discussion above with the following evaluation of the same sequence and, implicitly, shot.

- #1 There's no way. The thing I thought weird was the Commie guy (referred to as "Gestapo", above) was out there. Ain't no way he would have been out there to look for the dude.
- #2 Well, they had to have everybody in the whole movie out there.
- #1 That looked dumb, really dumb.
- (Informant #1=Light, Informant #2=Heavy)

Here, the narrative slice or piece of behavior within it is evaluated as "dumb" by informant #1. This is an attribution on his part to the character and personality of "Red Baron". Informant #2 alludes to possible reasons that might explain an author's decision to place Red Baron in this sequence. ("They had to have everybody in the whole film out there.") However, in its descriptive units, complexity of evaluation and ability to relate a specific "part" to an author's plan for the whole film, the latter exchange (Light) is less complex than the former evaluative act. (Heavy) This difference between light and heavy viewers was characteristic of the overall pattern in the discussions.

#### V.6 Inference (Non-Literal) as a Kind of Response

After evaluation/assessment, the most frequent form of response was non-literal interpretation. Worth and Gross call this kind of interpretation "communicational inference". This occurred in 11% of all responses. Table 5:4 indicates the unit of analysis likely to be the context for inferences.

There was an equal likelihood that some part of the film (49%) would be the focus of an inference as would the whole film (51)). Below are examples from two homogeneous groups which illustrate the different patterns of inference viewers made in regard either to parts of CB or the whole film.

#1 There was a bit I was trying to think about. There

Table 5:4

Unit of Inference:

All Viewers

UNIT	N	%
Shot	1	2
Sequence	5	9
Narrative Slice	8	14
Character	12	22
Whole Film	28	51
Other	1	2
	N=55	%=100

was a message in the movie that everybody had his own hidden personality. You know, they were all alright, normal people. Then, the Priest came out, and then the Nazi came out, and the schoolteacher turns out to be Electra.

#2 Right.

#1 Everybody got his...the Coach is Blood. Everybody had his own little hangups. And you can be whoever you want. You can be your whole fantasy person on the CB.

#2 Yeah, sure.

#1 (You can be) somebody completely different. I'd never thought about that.

#### Example #2 (Heavy)

#1 Why did he (Blaine) not react to the breathing, to her (Electra) I mean. He was supposed to care about the real values, his brother...He was completely indifferent to that.

#2 Why shouldn't Blain, Spider, react to finding out that she's Electra?

#3 Except that she had to take a chance at the end, and really try... 'cause she said she couldn't talk...she had two boyfriends but she couldn't talk to them the way she talked to him (Warlock). But she really took a chance, 'cause she started talking to him (Blaine) the way she talked to them.

#1 That's right! That was so funny with his father, when he couldn't wake his father up, and he talked (on the CB), with the birthday cake...

#2 On the CB radio (he talked) and then he (Papa) popped up.

#1 It was really, the CB radio is...

#4 It's the only hope

#1 That's right. Modern technology will do it. (Note: Earlier, this informant stated that the message of the film was that "Communication is, the same metaphor that communication will solve all the problems.")

Now both groups offer interpretations for the whole film, basing these on incidents from within the film. However, in the Heavy group, inferences are derived through active negotiation; all four participants actively modify statements, ask questions, and so on.

Further, in interpreting the film, the inferences refer to at least three related sequences (32, #39 and #41). The Heavy group relates parts of the film to other parts, discerning a thematic pattern implied by the filmmaker through this ordering of events in sequence. The Light group is less actively involved when interpreting the film; there is less negotiation among the members of the group. In addition, the Light group relates events contiguously ("and then...") rather than inferring the (implicit) structural relationships present in the Heavy group's interpretation. Heavy viewers tended to negotiate meaning more within their groups and were more likely to make inferences (60%) than Light viewers (40%). Only Heavy viewers used a particular shot or an explicitly named sequence in making inferences.

The data suggest that when inferences are made, they are most likely to be made in terms of the whole film rather than in terms of a specific part of the film. This is true for all viewers in this study. Heavy viewers are more likely than Lights, when inferring meaning, to use structural units in the film, actively negotiating meanings in reference to these structural relationships. Light viewers' inferences are characterized by less negotiation, and focus on characters or narrative slices in contiguous relation rather than structural relations.

The Heavy viewers' "structural" approach to inference is likely a result of shared norms held by this type of viewer in regard to

film. That is, the "community" of Heavy filmgoers, in addition to interpreting a film as a "story" have also developed the ability to attend to the way a film has been structured. This attention to structure may be learned through repeated viewings of similar kinds of films. Through a film-going network, a norm might be established for the kind of film one attends to, and one might learn ways of approaching such films as objects of interpretation. This claim is supported for this particular group; for, they made reference to nine other films in the course of their attempts to interpret CB.

Heavy viewers, then, more than their Light counterparts, seem more likely to use triangulation, to put into interpretive action the tenets of their general evaluative rules about film, to look for evidence within a film and across a body of films in making interpretations. Light viewers are less likely to see "all" films (or even many films) or to attend to film literature. Lights are likely to focus on narrative parts and characters in the process of interpreting a film. These units of analysis used by Light viewers are not film specific, but are present in a variety of narrative forms. Heavy viewers seem more attuned to "rules for film" in addition to "rules for narrative". Light viewers attend more to rules that adhere to narrative and apply them to film. It should not be forgotten, however, that inference, as a kind of interpretive act in which viewers engaged with CB comprised less than 11% of all responses. As noted Heavy viewers inferred meaning in more cases (60%) than Light viewers (40%).

It follows from the Worth/Gross model of interpretation that those viewers will be treating the film as a non-mediated event. That is, they will, therefore, evaluate or interpret CB in terms of real-life rules rather than those "set up" by an author through the creation of structures.

#### V.7 Attributional Responses to the Film; Their Relation to Reality/Fiction Orientations

In the Worth/Gross model, an attributional interpretation is one that demonstrates that a viewer treats events in a film as "natural" or present without authorship (in the sense of their not being intended as messages). In such cases, a viewer will attribute meanings largely in terms of what he/she has learned prior to the real-life events depicted in a film.

Without other information about the film, the title Citizens Band alone may have lead viewers to infer that the film was "about" CB radios and their use. Many (85%) of the groups had varying degrees of exposure to CB radio prior to seeing the film. Five informants owned CB radios (Heavy = 1, Light = 4). This representation of CB "owners of knowers" in the research sample becomes particularly important in regard to the kinds of interpretation a viewer might make from the film. Because of their prior experiences with CB radio, viewers who are also CB owners might treat a film containing events that are familiar to them in the same way they treat such events in the natural world. Several informants

thought the depiction of CB radio in the film was "wrong" or "unrealistic". The degree of verisimilitude of the film, then, became an important way these viewers interpreted CB. For example:

Example #1 (Light)

#1 As far as the picture is concerned, it seems to me it covered so many facets of life, some which I thought were realistic and down-to-earth, others a little bit far fetched. But, it made interesting viewing; and the picture should be of interest to the movie-going public.

#2 I guess I'm different than anybody else. I have a CB in my car. And, I've had a CB in my car for two years now. And I have friends who have CBs in their cars. None of them fit into this category of CB user. Most of the people that I know who have them either to keep them company on the road or to keep them from getting into problems when they travel alone for a long distance. It is very useful to have one.

Example #2 (Heavy)

#1 I like the line in the movie about "With the 55 mile per hour speed limit, nobody has time to do anything anymore."

#2 You have to go mobile.

#3 Iknew he was going to buy her a mobile home.

ALL Yeah.

#2 Is that what the Winnebago thing is all about? That enormous boom a couple of years ago, on campers? All the prostitutes taking to the road?

#4 (CB owner and former truckdriver) There's a lot of women out there trying to seduce people. Not even to try and get them to stop, but just to...We ran into that a few times. Like, the women would try to get us off the road to try and talk to us. And, of course, Barefooter (CB name of his partner) was not into it. He was into making time. So, he really didn't indulge.

In the first example, the film is evaluated according to its verisimilitude to the informant's own knowledge of CB (Note: She



remained virtually silent throughout the remainder of the discussion). The second example contains an interpretation about a character's purchase of a mobile home, with the informant using personal knowledge of CB radio to discuss events outside the film. That is, the truth/fiction of director Jonathan Demme's "message" vis a vis Hot Coffee and her mobile prostitution unit are not specifically discussed for purposes of interpretation. Rather, an event in the film is used to clarify an issue in real life that has been suggested by a sequence in the film. The inference "you have to go mobile" was made prior to the question about Winnebago-owning prostitutes.

While the reality/fiction issue will be discussed in more depth later in this chapter, a distinction should be made between using knowledge of CB radio to interpret events within the film, and knowledge of CB radio used to discuss events around the film. The former case is an attribution. The latter instance concerns events like those shown in the film, but is not used in making an interpretation of events within the film. These "surrounding" attributions appear to function as a kind of primary frame for certain viewers. They are used for evaluating the content of the film in regard to some similar incidents or episodes in their lives. Such "evidence" is not being used in interpreting the events within the film. For example, this exchange:

#1 I wouldn't have paid to see it in the first place. I'd never pay to see a movie about CB.

It would just never occur to me to pay money to see a movie about CB.

#2 Why?

#1 And I wouldn't have turned it on on TV. Just because it's CB.

#2 But didn't you like it?

#1 Yes. But I wouldn't pay to see something like that. Because I think CBs are stupid and I think people who talk on CB are stupid. And it's not something that I would do. And, therefore, I wouldn't pay to do it.

(Informant #1=L, #2=H)

In the example below, there appears to be less of an instance of viewers evaluating the legitimacy of CB radio as a theme for a film. Yet, knowledge about CB radio seems to function in this example, too as an evaluative frame in which one places events in the film.

#1 It's interesting, because we have absolutely no connection with CB radio at all.

#2 No.

#1 I mean, I don't know anything about CB.

#3 Not only do we not have any connections, but I certainly kind of look down on the...

#4 Um hmm.

#1 Oh yeah.

#3 I mean you really...To have made such a clever, witty film out of a subject that I almost can't stand...

(Informants #1, 3=H, #2, 4=L)

Knowledge, or opinion about CB (or any event) alters one's interpretive and evaluative context, thereby altering a specific interpretation of the film. Such knowledge about events in the film may not necessarily be used as either an inferential or attributional way of approaching the film. It is more likely that such knowledge will form the basis from which evaluations are made.

CB, however, proved to be only one issue related to the reality/fiction orientations towards Citizens Band. There were almost as many attributions (9%) as there were inferences (11%). More than half of all attributions were made in regard to characters in the film (52%). Table 5:5 shows the distribution of attributions by unit of analysis. The majority of attributions (62.5%) were made by Light viewers. These attributions were made about characters in situations. It was difficult to "separate" an attribution about a character that was longer than "mention" (i.e. "He's a bastard.") from a narrative sequence in which the character was embedded. Thus, characters in some context of action was the basis viewers used to attribute motives, characteristics, values, etc. For example, this discussion from a Light group:

The two bigamous wives, I thought handled their situations realistically, considering the fact that they probably were of the kind of community that accepts this sort of thing in their own social relationships. The truckdrivers have traditionally been known to be, uh, not well, in a moderate way philanderers, because they're on the road for a long time at a stretch. And these gals seem to have been more or less groomed for this kind of situation. And when they were actually faced with it, it struck them rather hard, but they accommodated to it (laughs) with relative ease as time passed.

The informant's statement about the two wives is based on his knowledge of the mores, etc., of their alleged "community", and the "well-known" philandering nature of truckdrivers. This interpretation is strictly attributional. There were no scenes or sequences

Table 5:5

Unit of Attribution;  
All Viewers

UNIT	N	%
Shot	0	0
Sequence	1	2
Narrative Slice	15	31
Character	25	52
Whole Film	6	13
Other	1	2
	N=48	%=100

showing the wives' "community". Nor were any facts presented in the film about other truckdrivers, or, say the childhoods of protagonists or other potential sources of information from which one might infer the qualities and motivations this informant attributes to the characters. His attributions, then, are based entirely on his own stereotypical "knowledge" of truckdrivers, women from Texas and so on.

Certain sequences in the film (#2, #35, #4, #43) proved to be litmus tests of viewers' orientation either to reality or to fiction in responding to the film. The four sequences and one narrative slice which both aroused critical ire (largely on the part of Light viewers) and gave rise to attributions were:

#2 The probability of Chrome Angel sustaining only a broken arm after being pinned beneath his truck.

#35 The ability of the wives to let the cattle out of Chrome Angel's trailer without being detected by the police. Informants also noted that this was an "impossible" display of physical skill for those not trained in the ways of cattle, trailers, etc.

#40 The "compromise" arranged between Chrome Angel and his wives (Dallas and Portland Angel), and the problem their agreement to have both families live under one roof might raise for the nuclear family.

#43 The presence of all the characters in the film (particularly the misanthropic "Red Baron") in the search for Papa Thermodyne.

These questions, and the issue of Chrome Angel's ability to support two wives and a mistress on his truckdriver's salary gave rise to

the majority of attributions made by informants. They also provided most of the impetus for discussions of reality/fiction in regard to the film. It is interesting at this point to note that (1) these 4 sequences were the focus of almost one-third of all responses to the film, (2) the majority of these responses were concerned with the degree to which the film deviated from viewers' prior concepts of reality. In the last chapter, the significance of both this "reality criterion" on the part of viewers will be discussed and its apparent location in limited portions of the film.

The above sequences and parts also gave rise to other kinds of responses which, while closely related to attributions, also served other purposes for informants.

#### V.8 Framings and Questions and Their Relation to Reality/Fiction Orientations

In the process of interpreting CB, viewers posed questions to one another in the group discussions. Many of these questions concerned the perceived authenticity of events in the film. Such questions were attempts at creating an interpretive context or frame for the film in terms of prior real-life and not authorial orientations. Many theorists have noted that all acts of categorizing, evaluating and interpreting involve active, shifting processes selected by interpreters. Interpretations and evaluations are not

arrived at through conjury. Nor are they presented in their entirety as fais accomplis. Interpretations involve viewers' actively selecting a variety of strategies, shifting solutions, etc., in order to arrive at an understanding of an event. Whether this ongoing activity occurs at the level of "mere" perception (Neisser: 1967) or appears to be more oriented towards the synthesis of an explicit interpretation, the concepts of "frames" (Goffman: 1974, Aiken: 1950), "paradigms" (Kuhn: 1970) or "perspectives" (Mannheim: 1952) all make use of similar concepts concerning the nature of interpreters and the events they interpret. Knowledge is actively constructed by an interpreter and is specifically shaped by the schema selected in interpreting. Thus, the kinds of questions posed by informants and attempts at interpretation made through shifting and negotiation should shed light on the kinds of analytic frames this group of informants bring to the act of interpretation.

Framings and questions comprised 9% of all responses made by informants. The majority (64%) concerned comparisons of events in the film with comparable real-life situations. Frequently, viewers attempted to "ground" the film, to render it understandable by resorting to the rules and logic utilized in their own previous real-life dealings. Viewers imposed this kind of frame over any "rules" an author might have established within the film. For example, this exchange, from a group of Light viewers:

- #1 Where's Union?
- #2 Union, Tennessee?

#3 Union, where? I don't know. I didn't see any license plates, come to think of it.

#1 No. But I did notice, the day he went to his girlfriend's house, Spider went to Electra's house...

#2 Yeah...

#1 There was a palm-like banana tree growing by her door.

#2 Oh, I didn't see that.

#3 Wasn't that like bamboo, or something like that, growing outside of the Nazi's house?

#1 It was kind of tall, and...

#2 Was it a palm?

#1 It was definitely one of those big, fat banana leaves.

#2 They didn't have marked accents, see. They didn't have a marked accent. That sounded like Tennessee or Arkansas.

#1 And, it was very flat terrain there, wasn't it?

#3 No.

#1 Sure was ugly.

#3 They didn't give you a lot of...

#1 It was flat, whatever you saw.

#3 You didn't see much landscape. They went in the woods. It was just a woods anywhere. It could have been...

#2 Yeah, but you see, they didn't have much of an accent to be in the South. I couldn't figure it out.

#1 People don't have accents there. Oh, I guess they do.

#2 Where? In Texas they do. Oh year, they drawl.

#2 Well, the hooker had an accent. And the wife had one.

#2 The hooker was more Tennessee, wasn't it?

#3 Or Arkansas, maybe, or Oklahoma, something around there.

#2 Yeah. That's what I was thinking, in that part. Maybe Oklahoma is too much.

#3 Or Kentucky.

#1 And the father kept saying, "All you have to do is go across the woods, and you'll be in Canada." And yet, I saw this banana plant growing by the door.

Here, the group attempts to "ground" the film's locale by looking for accents, flora and so on. The data they use is based largely upon



their own knowledge of "accents" and flora "appropriate" to a locale presumed to be near Canada. There is a brief hint that, perhaps, an author did not want the viewer to know the specific locale ("They didn't give you a lot."). However, the whole issue of where the film is set is framed without any recognition of authorial intent. It appears that these viewers just want to know, as one is wont to do in real life, "Where are we?"

Here is another example (Light) of a group attempting, through questions, to ground the film's locale. The attempt, again, is not made with any notion of authorial intent. Viewers use real-life rules in their attempts to locate the film's venue. Such rules are detached from any concept of authorial "message" and are not used in response to the question "What did the filmmaker mean".

- #1 Anybody know what state it took place in?
- #2 Where Union is?
- #3 Portland.
- #2 I think it was in California.
- #3 Union, California?
- #4 How could he (Papa) go from Canada through the woods from where he was, down the woods to Canada?
- #2 Must have been Oregon.
- #3 It could have been two different places. You've got a Portland on both sides of the country.
- #2 I would think it's possible to truck from Washington to Northern California.
- #4 He (Papa) said you just had to walk right through the woods to get to Canada.
- #2 I think it must be Portland, 'cause Portland's supposed to have a lot of rain. It was definitely West Coast, it wasn't Portland, Maine.
- #3 Most of the trucking like that would be West Coast.
- #1 I don't know. Cattle up near Oregon? Well, they have a lot of cattle in Canada.
- #3 And Washington?

#1 Yeah. I don't know too much about there. It doesn't snow a whole lot up there.

#1 Nah. It's all trees.

#2 What else have you got in forests. (laughs)

#1 You might convince me to go crazy. I don't know. I couldn't figure it being in the Northern Eastern part of the country.

#2 Nah. It was Northwest, I think.

#1 It would have to be. Also, you couldn't walk to Canada. You'd have to swim to it. True?

Both groups (Light) attempt through their questions to ground the film's locale without trying to integrate these groundings with any concept of the film's message, authorial intent, and so on. In the example above, most reasons used to support the issue of where Union is located are drawn from real-life experience ("Well, they have cattle in Washington."), or use the criteria established by ones' knowledge of the real-world ("You couldn't walk to Canada. You'd have to swim.") No attempt is made to address the possibility that a "meaning" or significance accorded Union's location is yet another example of the author's message of "banding together", implied in the title "Citizens Band". There are numerous instances of "union" within the film; the compromise worked out with the wives and two families (sharing a duplex), the re-union of father with estranged son, brother with brother and that which occurs between estranged lovers. In fact, the film ends with one of the ultimate metaphors of union, a marriage ceremony at which all the characters in the film participate. All these instances might lead one to infer that the town "union" is a metaphor for the entire process of attaining unity through a "banding" that runs through the film.

Instead, there is a strong tendency for certain viewers to frame the film in literal terms, forcing it to conform to a reality which individual viewers hold in common with one another.

The examples above address rather specific matters that were explicitly mentioned in the film (i.e. Chrome Angel, when simultaneously calling his two wives on two pay telephones states that he is in Union.) However, informants also attempted to ground the film in the real world by addressing matters that were not explicitly mentioned in the film, but are apparently important to their own lives. For example, one Light group addressed this matter:

- #1 What did the boy do (for a living)?
- #2 Nothing.
- #1 Well, at one point it said "CBs fixed", doesn't it?
- #2 Oh yeah.
- #3 I hope he doesn't fix cars. Did you see those cars around there? You suppose the father just lived there, and never went out, and just stayed there? How awful!
- #2 There are people like that, sure.
- #3 Maybe they collected welfare.
- #1 Well, he probably did.

In this instance, no attempt is made to integrate these issues with any concept of author, structure, intent, etc. The informants look at the characters in the film and assess them by rules which they might use in their own routine behavior. In such a frame, people have jobs. If they do not, income must come from another source. Thus, an attribution of a source of income is raised; that Papa and Blaine subsist on welfare, as such people are wont to do. Since

nothing in the film indicates that this is the case, these informants rely on their own knowledge of the world, treating the characters as stereotypes ("There are people like that.") They answer the questions they have raised with familiar solutions from the world outside the film.

The majority of these framings/questions concerned matters germane to informants' "reality" quotient for the film. In the context of a "realistic" film like CB, it might be expected that viewers would assume that the film should conform to rules of the real-world (though not necessarily theirs).<sup>6</sup> However, these results suggest a difference between viewers assuming "conventions" of realism in film and interpreting a film "as if" they were peering into the proverbial "window on the world". The data indicate that viewers remove the frame which signals "This is a film", and roam about the terrain, spying on neighbors and commenting to one another on the behavior of "people" rather than "characters" they see. The issue of why film, as a mediated event, has been created so that it

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<sup>6</sup> "Realistic" as used here means that the characters, historical setting, locales, actions and so on of the film while possibly not being part of the lives of informants, nevertheless are not presented within an impossible or fantastic frame. There are no monsters, death rays or demons, devices so popular of late which are often shown in "realistic" surrounds (i.e. The Exorcist, Halloween). While events in CB might appear "alien" to some informants, they nevertheless obey laws of physical reality. When they do not (sequences #2 and 35), questions concerning the film's authenticity are raised by viewers.

apparently violates or conforms to certain real-world rules was raised largely by Heavy viewers. Thus, in discussing another way to frame the film "in reality", i.e. "How could all the events shown in the film really have occurred in so short a period of time?", a Heavy viewer noted, "I don't think the timing makes too much difference, actually." This viewer is implicitly noting that real-world rules need not be applied to all events in all films.

Finally, in light of the orientation of viewers either towards an authentic or authorial frame for the film in their interpretations, a Light viewer noted:

There was one thing that struck me as I watched the picture. They took a lot of theatrical liberties. For instance, one that was outstanding to me, you can't convince me that two girls can come out there and open a truck holding a load of cattle without at least using a stick or something to help them. Also, that truck would be very well locked. And, for them to open it and watch the cattle come by, that's stretching it a little bit. But, that's the way of the movies, I guess. (my emphasis)

This informant, while still questioning the capability of the wives to deal with trucks and cattle, notes that perhaps, after all, movies are a realm of improbable circumstances where one expects the violation of real-life rules may occur.

A point of caution is warranted. It would be misleading to conclude that a dichotomous situation obtains for individual viewers or for classes of viewers. It should be recalled, however, that inferences comprise only 11% of all responses to the film. For

example, although Heavy viewers tended to infer rather than attribute meaning (60% + 40%) more often than Light viewers (40% + 60%), none of the informants believed the film they saw was "completely" real (i.e. filmed with any of the codes our culture validates as "documentary"). Unlike Thomas (1977, p. 125) who uncovered instances of actors receiving "hate mail" (addressed to their fictive persona) from daytime serial watchers, this order of inability to make distinctions between reality and fiction is not supported by this data. Light viewers at times referred to "actor" or the vague authorial "they" behind the "story"; conversely, Heavy viewers occasionally used real-life criteria when interpreting some aspect of the film. For example:

#1 How much money do you suppose he made? (Chrome Angel) He's paying, he has two families...  
 #2 Those truckers do alright. They do alright.  
 #1 And he also made the downpayment on her (Hot Coffee) trailer.  
 #3 Well, they own their own cabs, see.  
 #2 They might earn as much as 25 or 30 thousand.  
 #3 And then, they pick up the other end of it. And the cabs...they do pretty well. It depends on how much they want to work.  
 #1 Yeah.  
 #2 But I know they do well. I really...about, think they do around 25 or 30 thousand.  
 (Informant #1, #2=Heavy, Informant #3=Light)

Heavy viewers, however, used real-life rules less often than their Light counterparts (Heavy=33%, Light=66%).

If directly confronted with the question, all informants would have been able to note that Citizens Band was an acted, scripted and controlled event.

The pattern that emerges from the above analysis reveals that, regardless of the basic assumptions each viewer "knows" about the mediated nature of the film, certain viewers tend to treat events within the film and the entire film "as if" they were real. They seem to utilize the attributional strategy Worth and Gross suggest interpreters use in real-life contexts, or in cases where they treat structured material as if it were non-manipulated. Other viewers (predominantly Heavy) do not apply real life rules when interpreting the film. These viewers are oriented towards interpretations which recognize the authored, structured aspects of a film. They therefore apply a different set of interpretive rules to Citizens Band.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> If one hopes to locate some of the reasons for this tendency on the part of certain interpreters (orientations either to fiction or to reality in regard to a symbolic event) data on how various interpreters treat other symbolic forms would be of the highest interest. For example, if it is discovered that Light film viewers attend predominantly to television programs, rather than written discourse, Levy (1979, p. 176) has noted that television "rarely receives any published criticism after the first installment". As a result, viewers who attend to such critically "ignored" events are forced to become "their own critics". Perhaps such interpreters establish different norms and critical values than those validated by published critics who write for a different audience which does not share the same interpretive norms or attention to the same kinds of symbolic events. See, "The Role of the Critic: Theater in Israel, 1918-1968", in the Journal of Communication, Autumn 1979, Vol. 29, Number 4, pp. 175-183.

### V.9 Guesses/Expectations/Reworkings and the Perceived Role of the Audience in Interpretation

In his discussion of the process auditors use in interpreting music, Meyer (1956, p. 43) places paramount importance on the function of their prior expectations. Both music and film are perceived and performed "over time". Comparisons between how viewers and auditors approach interpretation in these forms seem apt. Meyer notes, "... an analysis of the process of expectation is clearly a prerequisite for the understanding of how musical meaning...arises in any particular instance". Understanding music, or any symbolic event, is at least partially contingent upon the different frames in which a perceiver, for the purposes of interpretation, can place a particular articulation. In music, when one is familiar with a system of sound relationships used conventionally and in common one can use the frame "style"--whether it be the style of a general class of events (i.e. 19th century Italian opera) a particular communicator's work within this class (i.e. the operas of Giuseppe Verdi) or, specific alterations or mutations occurring within a communicator's work (i.e. Verdi's "late" period works, such as Othello, compared to "early" Verdi in I Lombardi). Variable knowledge of "style", then, might be expected to alter auditors' expectations in regard to any specific performance framed within an interpreter's perceptions and notions of style. Several points raised by Meyer with respect to music apply to film. First, the actual act of interpreting a film--viewing--like other



intentional acts is one that is learned over time. The intentional act of listening or viewing is preceded by a series of adjustments based on responses viewers have learned to use when attending to a film. An interpreter brings a variety of knowledge about music, or film, to the act of intentional listening or viewing and to the act of "intrinsic" interpretation. In Meyer's terms, these adjustments are:

1. the viewer's belief about aesthetic experience in general and filmic experience in particular.
2. previous experience and knowledge acquired in viewing and studying film,
3. information gathered on the particular occasion in question.

In regard to point #1, we have seen that different types of viewers conceptualize film differently. Simply stated, this difference takes the form of the art/entertainment dichotomy viewers hold in regard to film as an object of interpretive worth. In addition, viewer evaluation about "hollywood films" or specific codes or genres within Hollywood give rise to certain normative expectations of what is probable, and therefore (normatively) possible in these films or film in general. To apply Meyer to the film under study: "Our feeling of what a Hollywood form or theme...is does not derive from our experience of this or that particular Hollywood film, but from our experience of a host of works in such forms" That is, experience with a variety of films, or a particular kind of film, will

shape and alter our expectations of how one approaches and interprets such events.

Thus, "perception of and response to the probability relationships obtaining within any style system are not naive reflex reactions", but are instead dependent upon learned habit responses. As Meyer notes (1956, p. 61), "Understanding (film) is not a matter of dictionary definitions, of knowing this, that or the other rules of (film) construction, rather it is a matter of habits correctly acquired in ones self and properly presumed in the particular work." Expectation, then, affects both the evaluation and interpretation of the "internal" level of code (e.g. rules of construction) and its external use by some group (non-narrative film construction means a bad film or, a good film is one with many "stars").

In light of the role Meyer sees expectation and learning playing in regard to interpreters and interpretation, we now turn to the last means in which viewers responded to Citizens Band. These responses are concerned both with expectations viewers perceive as intentionally engendered by the film and those which might be seen as "surrounding" the film as a socially situated event (i.e. the kind of film an audience would "like"). Expectations concerning the film or the presumed audiences for the film comprised 15% of all responses. In Table 5:6, one sees that the predominant unit of expectation was the narrative slice. In most cases, the narrative slice was discussed as violating implicit dramatic rules

Table 5:6

Unit of Expectation:  
All Viewers

UNIT	N	%
Shot	0	0
Sequence	0	0
Narrative Slice	24	71
Character	3	9
Whole Film	7	20
	34	= 100%

that viewers felt CB or films like it had created. For example, this exchange from a Light group:

- #1 I thought for a minute it was gonna...when he (Spider) started doing his rampage...  
 #2 The crusade? That's what I thought it was gonna be.  
 #1 And that those guys were going to come and get him.  
 #3 I thought a lot of different things than (what actually) happened. I thought the brother (Dean) was going to get him with the bottle.  
 #1 Yeah, I thought that was going to happen.  
 #3 I thought the guy (Papa) was going to be hanged. Everything worked out right.  
 #4 I thought the dog was going to be hanged.  
 #3 At least it had a happy ending. I thought he was going to be dead.  
 #2 I thought a lot of people were going to be dead. I thought the fat guy (Cochise) was going to get blown away by the Red Baron.

The above instances reveal informants who discuss narrative slices strictly in terms of "dramatic" (as opposed to "structural") expectations. While the mention of "happy ending" could refer implicitly to expectations engendered by the construction of many Hollywood films, they more likely refer to events within the film in narrative terms. No attempt is made to ascertain either the reasons for ones "incorrect" expectations, nor the "rules for the existence of similar events in other films.

An example from another Light group gives further support to this claim.

- #1 The end was really very different than the beginning.  
 #2 It became cohesive.  
 #1 Yeah.  
 #2 There was some...before, there was just a bit here and a bit there.

- #3 It seemed like little cameo pictures the way it was put together. Then later on it became a...
- #2 Chinese checkers. Not Chinese checkers, but...
- #3 It was billed as a kind of, as a comedy. And some of the things, like the fellow getting his hand caught in the under the wheels, whatever it was, some of the things...
- #2 But I think...No, I think maybe it just became... we're not used to things being off here and there and everywhere.
- #4 It was very disjointed.
- #2 And when it got tied up with pretty pink ribbons at the end, then what we're used to--the same old crap--then we could understand it. We could get hold of it.

Here, the film is assessed in structural terms ("the way it was put together"), is compared to other films like it in "genre" ("it was billed as a comedy"), is seen as violating the expectations for that genre ("the fellow getting his hands caught under the wheels") and is eventually compared to the rules for films "like" it in the informants' experience ("We're not used to things being off here and there").

Keeping these structural and genre expectations (as opposed to strictly dramatic ones) in mind, here is an example of the same groups' discussion of narrative expectations:

- #2 Well, I felt it got to be a regular Hollywood, and everybody comes in and helps after they're all off doing their own kinky things. And suddenly, they all come in and they're all being really nice, normal people, and doing the regular thing. The good all-American thing. And it ends happily, with a marriage and everything. That was a bunch of shit, I thought. It seems to me that the...he didn't know what to do with the end. They thought maybe this old man out in the woods would get a lot of people

into the act, and it would be a good way to finish out the movie.<sup>8</sup>

Here, expectations are discussed in regard to both the internal ("endings", etc.) and external ("regular Hollywood") levels of the code. Also, the notion of authorship ("he didn't know what to do with the end") is crucial in accounting for the "regular", and here unexpected and unappreciated, ending.

However, with two exceptions all expectations expressed by Light viewers were discussed in narrative/dramatic terms. There were few explicit attempts to ground these expectations in either structural terms or in a body of works with a structure or motif like CB. Instead, informants' expectations seemed to be largely based on ideas about proper endings for story or narrative forms, or were based on character stereotyping present in such stories (i.e. all characters in certain narratives must appear in the "last act"--viz. or sequence--tying together any loose narrative threads in the tale with a communal event such as a wedding, or funeral.) In addition, so-called "Hollywood

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<sup>8</sup> Interestingly, the critic for Variety leveled the same criticism against the ending, noting, "...suddenly there's a missing person search and a climactic wedding which cover the final eight minutes (though when all this anticlimax begins, there's the usual fear that it might run two reels longer). Right here is the crucial post-production chore ahead--somehow reconstructing the ending. In this process, it should be kept in mind that, unlike some sappy TV programming decision, paying audiences these days don't necessarily need an onerously joyous fadeout." (Variety, 4/20/77, p. 24) This critic also appears to be saying that audience expectations--for different media and for different eras--have changed, altering what is probable or possible in film.

rules" of story content were also strong determinants of viewer expectations of CB.

Heavy viewers tended to view their altered expectations in light of the film's structure or intended message. For example:

#1 It gets you up high, at certain points with... and it just injects a little anxiety, just a little bit of anxiety. Then it relieves it, keeps on relieving it at every point.

#2 It's like Nashville. Except at the end, it almost didn't relieve it.

#1 It really goes against, it really turns all the sex and violence around and kind of makes them into...

#3 You see, I really believe in all the horrors they're alluding to.

#1 Yes, but it turns them around and makes them sort of much more benign and makes you laugh at all the sex... and all the sex becomes kind of comradeship, it dissolves into comradeship.

The expectations of violence are discussed in regard to the film's structure ("it gets you high at certain points") and are compared with another films' use of similar conventions and structures. In addition, the expectations noted initially are then "reassembled" and a message is inferred from their use ("all the sex becomes kind of comradeship").

Below is another example of a discussion of CB's structure engendering certain expectations. Note informant #1's familiarity with presumed audience rules for "expected" behavior gleaned through repeated exposure to film.

#1 I thought the ending was sort of...I mean, the only thing that was not predictable about it, the ending, was the guy with the cows. And that was cute. That was a nice little piece stuck in there. Everybody thought he was going to be dead, or he was going to be something. And to have him with the cows...everybody has sort of

forgotten about the cows. And, uh, I thought that was nice.

#2 I thought it was a little weird. I mean, every-time you thought...I mean, it set you up for violence.

#1 Yes it did.

#2 It sets you up for violence several times.

#1 Yes, yes.

#2 And, it never came through.

#1 That's true, that's true. And that's interesting. It does. It's very interesting. Because we're so conditioned, it sets us up to expect it. And there really wasn't any violence in it.

#2 No, there wasn't any in it at all.

#1 Well, I think the most interesting thing that you've said, which is rightly said, is that it sets you up for violence several times. I mean, I think that's really fascinating if you think about it.

#2 Yeah. It's like Taxi Driver, except in Taxi Driver...

#1 Taxi Driver? Oh yeah.

#2 Taxi, it set you up for violence right along the line. And you always got it.

#1 Yeah.

#2 But with this one, you never did. (Heavy)

Finally, a last example from a Heavy group which underlines the distinction between Heavy and Light viewers in the role expectation plays in their responses:

#1 I thought the Nazi was going to be the father. I was a bit disappointed in that.

#2 Yeah. He was sort of a red herring, 'cause he never really fit into the whole thing.

#1 Yeah. But he got animated on his CB or with his cattle.

#3 Yeah, but that was...

#2 Yeah, but the cattle thing was...The nazi guy was not...

#3 No, I think that was also a little too pat.

#4 I think there was a little bit of confusion with, umm, there was maybe too many subplots. Because you had trouble, I had trouble...There was a lot of good ideas that weren't really followed through. And there was, uh, it got confusing to remember what everything was, all the different trips that were coming down.

#1 That's true. They could have left out the one about the Nazi. They could have gotten that in...



#4 The aerial sequence...  
 #2 If they could bring in the aerial sequence in some other way.  
 #4 That was for...  
 #2 They could have gotten rid of the priest.  
 #1 Okay. We can remake it. Leave out the Nazi, have him pull the antenna off the church.  
 (Heavy)

In this example, expectations are discussed both structurally and dramatically. But of greater import is the active attempt to restructure the film, to literally "edit" it so that it is less confusing. This leads to the last kind of interpretation of the film, the attempt to "rework" the film in line with a perceived audience's expectations.

Expectations about the whole film were ordinarily engendered by the title's perceived function as an index of the film's content ("I thought it was going to be for kids. you know, to instruct them in CB radio"). With the exception of the case above, reworkings of the entire film were non-existent. What was usually involved in a reworking was the elimination of excess "padding" in the narrative (11%) or the elimination or alteration of a character (6%). An important distinction between viewers can be seen in their orientations towards reworking the film. At the narrative level Lights performed this more than Heavies, while at the structural level this was done by Heavies alone. There was an either/or orientation towards the film as either reality/fiction in the proposed reworkings. Thus, certain viewers (largely Light) were more inclined to offer narrative solutions

involving problematic aspects of character behavior (38%). These solutions were offered without any recourse to the impact such proposed changes might have on the message, etc., implied by the filmmaker. Heavy viewers reworked the film narratively in only 13% of such responses. For example, here is an exchange from a Light group:

#1 They should have gotten rid of him, the trucker.  
 #2 That was too easily worked out. I thought they should have divorced.  
 #1 Gotten rid of him.  
 #2 How?  
 #3 I don't know. Gone off and started living together.

Here, vicarious advice is being offered to the people in the film, along narrative lines, concerning a "problem" characters are facing. In further discussion of this proposed reworking, the group noted some additional problems that might be created if the characters followed the course of advice being offered to them in their proposed reworking:

#4 Well, what are you going to tell the kids when they get home?  
 #3 Meet your fathers and your brothers and your mothers...  
 #4 Here's your aunt and (laughs)  
 #1 What is it called? Your step brother?  
 #4 Your half brother, yeah.  
 #3 Your blood brother.  
 #2 Maybe they just won't introduce themselves. Didn't one have two girls and one have two guys?  
 #1 Three.  
 #2 Boy, he could run into trouble if they came across each other.  
 (Light)

This empathic narrative reworking involves no presumption of

structure, author or script. Advice is offered for the problems the characters will face in the real-world (e.g. naming and introducing the half siblings.)

When this response is compared with the Heavy group's (cited previously) it appears that Heavy viewers treat the film as a script in need of modification. Noting that it contains too many sub-plots, they verbally reassemble the film, changing the order of certain sequences and proposing the elimination of others. The process they use ("If they could bring in the aerial sequence in some other way") is strikingly similar to the experience of editing film in its "rough cut" stage.

#### The Perceived Role of the Audience in Interpretation

Informants' attempts to frame the film in regard to its "proper" audience strongly suggest a relation to their a priori expectations. In so doing, they posited a set or community of viewers whose normative evaluations about "genre" would be satisfied by perceptions of the film engendered by such presumed knowledge. Smith (1979, p. 19) has noted this relation between statements of value in regard to a work and the "significant others" in some audience to which they might pertain.

If not otherwise indicated, however, that implicitly defined audience would presumably consist of people who are like ourselves in the pertinent respects--thought it is perhaps worth remarking that some evaluators evidently believe that everybody is (or should be) like themselves in those respects.

A different kind of expectation mentioned by informants was one

that could be seen as "surrounding" the film. That is, statements were made concerning how audiences with different evaluative sets might presumably be expected to respond to the film.

#1 You can see why it wasn't successful, though.  
I mean...

#2 All the people who would go to see it...

#1 It has that kind of quasi-documentary...

#3 But you have the feeling that with just a little bit more, it could be very successful, you know.

#4 You have to be a real snob, because it's really a two level vision of some smutty people.

#2 If it had one name in the cast. Because you look at the cast, and you don't know who they are.

#3 If Spider had been played by Richard Dreyfuss...

#1 No, because it's also, there was a movie, Carwash, and this had some of that quality.

#2 It's too tongue in cheek for people who would take it seriously to like it. And, too serious for people like us, who would go to see it. It's like the movie, The Madonna on the Second Floor where people...in a lot of ways you have the feeling that the people who made it really took it seriously. And, the whole reason that we liked it is that we didn't take it seriously.

#1 No, but they meant it to be...It was playful throughout. But there was a level you could kind of relate it to.

#2 I could believe, have thought that if half the people in that movie were really off the street. I mean, if anybody told me that they went out and found real people to play that movie, and they told them to do it straight, that's what they would have gotten, you know. We just laughed at that 'cause we're snobs.

#1 It probably would be more appealing in Okalahoma, or something like that. It's really not a movie that you would...

#3 Maybe not. But on the other hand, it's the kind of movie that I could imagine being a big success at the Brattle theatre, for instance. (Note: The Brattle is a second-run or revival movie theatre)

#1 Well, it could come back.

#3 Or in Central Square. I mean one of those Art, you know in a place like Harvard. There was always this kind of...

#1 Double function. This has, this is meant to be funny. It has that kind of double, double method of humor.

(Heavy)

Here, audience expectation is linked to directorial intent. That is, informants saw the film as possessing, in the words of a member of the group, "a double function", a "double method of humor" that, in light of certain audience's preparatory sets, could either be interpreted "correctly" or incorrectly; inferring the director's intent, or failing to see the perceived intended humor. Implicitly, however, with "their" kind of an audience ("...in a place like Harvard") the perceived intended function would be aptly received. Audiences with different preparatory sets (the entire state of Oklahoma, apparently) would interpret the film differently, treating it as a unilevel message rather than as one with the imputed double function. Further refining his notion of the relation an audience for CB and the expectations audiences of different compositions might have for the film, a member of the group noted:

#1 You think kids would like this movie? No, they wouldn't. It's all, it really, you really have to enjoy the movie as a kind of play, as a humorous movie. Or otherwise, if you don't understand the jokes, it really could be quite painful. Because you wouldn't understand why anything was happening.

Light viewers, largely, when discussing audiences, noted that "CB people" might enjoy it. They failed to note the relationship between an intended audience and their presumed interpretive ability to understand film within a variety of "meaning" contexts, as Heavy viewers had. That is, Light viewers perceptions of an audience, and its relation to a film is based largely on the congruence of a film's content with some personal interest of an audience member. Heavy

viewers attend more to the ability different audiences might bring to the interpretation of content.

These data on viewer expectations for CB are all retrospective reports constructed after groups had viewed the film. It, therefore, could be argued that expectations reported post hoc are different than those actually experienced during a viewing of the film. Along these lines, Bartlett (1958, p. 53) has noted that group pressures can influence the kinds of "remembering" an individual is likely to report; "What is beyond dispute is that remembering, in a group, is influenced, as to its manner, directly by the preferred persistent tendencies of that group."

Whether one presumes that they are ad or post hoc examples of viewers' expectations in regard to Citizens Band, the data are still valid. For, if they are not the "actual" expectations viewers experienced during their viewing, they may still be seen as reflective of the social conventions and beliefs concerning expectations about a film, or film code, currently held by groups of viewers with similar attitudes toward film.

#### Conclusions: Guesses/Expectations and Reworkings

In sum, expectations, guesses and reworkings are seen as an important form of viewer response to the film. They comprise 13.75% of the total responses viewers made. Expectations are used differently by different viewers. Light viewers take a more narrative approach, in regard to expectations, than Heavy viewers. (L=34%, H=4%).

Light viewers reworkings and expectations tended to take the form of advice offered to characters. This advice was based more upon real-world rules than those the director might have implied in the film. Heavy viewers perceive expectations in line with structures implied and created by an author, comparing parts of CB to other films "like" it and in line with other structures articulated within the film. That is, expectations, for Heavy viewers were a consequence of explicitly recognized implications created by an author. Reworkings of CB, for Heavy viewers, were largely at the structural level. Little advice was proffered to the characters. Rather, these viewers were aware of the scripted nature of the film. They approach it as a socially situated event, attending to audiences and authors as part of the social context for interpretive acts.

#### V.10 Viewer Perception of Authorship for the Film; All Viewers

There were some 500 verbal responses made in regard to CB. Although para-lexical articulations, indeed, are a form in interpretation, only verbalized utterances were counted as instances of interpretation.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Many scholars, notably Najder (1975, p. 16) have noted that evaluations of an event, contrasted with descriptions, need not take the form of a completed statement. "The product of an evaluation, even when it is verbal, does not have to be in the form of a statement, but may consist of an exclamation like "wonderful', 'horrible', 'faugh', 'fie', 'bravo', and so on." The position taken here is that verbal

In Table 5:7 one notes that the most frequently mentioned author in regard to the film was the vague authorial "they". (42%) The director was mentioned 18% of the time, though only once by name. Ordinarily, this author was referred to as "he", or "the director" or the descriptive "the guy that made the movie". In descending order of frequency the other communicational authors mentioned by viewers were actor (24%) writer (7%), cameraman (5%) and producer (4%).

The unit from which authorship was ordinarily inferred was the whole film (49%). The author held accountable for responses made in regard to the whole film was the vague authorial "they" (44%), followed by director (30%), writer (11%) and producer and cameraman (9% each). Only one informant (Heavy) mentioned the director by name rather than occupational role.

However, the single person (as opposed to a possibly communal "they") held accountable, either for a part of the film or the whole film, was the actor (24%). This may be explained by the fact that the majority of informants who explicitly named the actor as author

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utterances only shall be the common ground used to analyze viewer responses to CB. Najder, like Goffman (1976) notes that para-verbal acts or gestures are indeed significant components of evaluative acts. (i.e. the "thumbs down" gesture, or the hurling of tea roses--or radishes--at a performer). Although this focus of specific utterances narrows the scope of the investigation, this should be taken neither as a taken of non-awareness nor as a deprecation of other verbal, kinesic and para-verbal acts in communication.



Table 5:7

Unit of Analysis and Perceived Author;  
All Viewers

<u>AUTHOR</u>	<u>UNIT</u>						N	%
	Shot	Sequence	Narrative Slice	Character	Whole Film	Other		
Director	1	-	1	-	8	-	10	18
Actor	-	-	-	13	-	-	13	24
Writer	-	-	1	-	3	-	4	7
Editor	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0
Producer	-	-	-	-	2	-	2	4
Cameraman	-	-	1	-	2	-	3	5
Combinations	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0
Unclear ("They")	-	-	5	6	12	-	23	42
							55=100%	
							(0%)	

were Light viewers (77%). Since it has been shown that the presence of "stars" is a significant part of Light viewers general evaluative rules, and since in the group discussions there were more Light viewers (N=25) than Heavy viewers (N=15), the fact that actors should emerge as important communicational authors is not surprising.

There was a paucity of total mentions of authorship in all discussion (10%). Informants, then, are not overly concerned with the person behind the manipulations of a film. The use of the term "they" to designate an author could presumably refer to a collective and unknown "powers that be" as easily as it could refer to a single person. With the exception of certain "star" directors who are known cultural figures (e.g. Alfred Hitchcock), I think most movie goers have only the vaguest notions of both the presence and roles of a director. The significance attached to a film director as author--particularly, as is the case with Jonathan Demme, where he is rather unknown outside "film" circles--is, I think uncertain in need of further clarification. It is certain that the viewers in this study realized that CB was created by some power(s) of agency; however, the place such knowledge has in their talk about film is unclear and in need of elaboration. It is possible that the concept of author has become, through long-standing cultural tradition, transparent. That is, it is assumed that most works of fiction--or at least those "that count" as works worth discussing "seriously"--

are the product of some creator's manipulations.<sup>10</sup> Specific mentions of author, then in certain cases are regarded as superfluous. For these individuals assume that a film is not a natural event, but one made by some creator. Few would mistake the mediated "map" of a film for the actual territory recorded on such maps. However, since I have no way of testing this assumption--that "author" has become a transparent concept for viewers--I shall concentrate, instead, on the significance informants' concept of author has on their interpretive abilities.

These data concerning authors, and the reasons for inferences made by informants in regard to CB warrant examination. First, informants use "author" more in terms of evaluations (64%) than in making inferences (36%). This finding is in accord with the overall pattern of viewer response to the film, where the number of evaluations made

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<sup>10</sup> It should be noted that the assignment of a mediated event to "fictive" status need not carry with it the recognition of an "author" to such an assignment. Thus, "greeting cards", while clearly "fictive" are not usually assigned authors. On the other hand, a mediated event viewers might perceive as a "natural" one (i.e. filmed with a hidden camera) if placed in a certain context can have an author (i.e. "Allen Funt's Candid Camera"). However, other events often interpreted naturalistically are ordinarily not accorded an "author" except in exceptional circumstances (i.e. The Zapruder footage of John F. Kennedy's assassination is an example of this). The point being made here is that the categorization of a mediated event as either "fictive" or "natural" discourse though a powerful context for assignment of such events as possessing "authorial" status, are not the only contexts in which such an assignment is made. Thus, certain modes of discourse (literary versus film) might give rise to interpreters according one rather than the other "authorial" status due to the esteem or significance in which one holds articulations in a particular mode.

was nearly six times the number of inferences. The recognition that the film was constructed rather than a series of contiguous narrative slices was mentioned by 6 informants (H=5 L=1) in their responses to a particular author inferences based on thematic or metaphoric reasons without recourse occurred 20 times. Technical/formal elements and their non-particular authored structuring were noted in 9 cases. The majority of inferences were based largely on a "thematic" (57%) reading of "messages" in the film, using units of "theme" as a kind of structure. For example:

#1 There's an interesting question, an interesting communication question here we have about the fact that people's personalities maybe in our modern society, can only find expression in this kind of way, where they are basically anonymous.

#2 Uh huh.

#1 You know, and then, so you have a bunch of very alienated people who are communicating, and still being able to maintain complete anonymity for each other. It's probably the extreme. Can you visualize society where we only talk to each other through radios?

#3 But they could also act out, like the Priest. There he was, shown with a practically empty church, probably day after day. And yet, with the CB, he could reach everybody.

#2 The, what about that little kid, the Hustler?

#1 Oh yes.

#2 Who was going out with all those fantasies, uh, all those extraordinary erotic fantasies.

#1 There was a lot of messages in the film.

#4 Yeah. (Heavy)

Here, characters and themes ("communications question", "anonymous society") are used to infer a message from the film. The message inferred is like that one might perceive in a written text. There is no discussion of temporal ordering, structuring of sequences,

relations of elements within the shot, all ways, in addition to a written script, by which a film's meaning is conveyed. Instead, what one sees, for the large part, are informants inferring "motifs" or "themes". They then compare the configuration of such motifs present within the film to a unity or pattern that can be said to "equal" a message.

Compare the above thematic inference, one detached from a notion of filmic structure, with the following case of a structural inference:

#1 Maybe the filmmaker wanted it even more confusing. Maybe they couldn't make it more confusing because the audience they were trying to reach.  
 #2 Hmm. I thought it was simple.  
 #3 There was a time when it was pretty straightforward.  
 #1 Yeah, but perhaps he was trying to have a confusing pattern.  
 #2 Yeah.  
 #1 Just like, or it's like thinking about it, or, what happens to the plot is like a form, you know. And CB radio is a form. He was saying how it's used, and how people can't communicate. And then, like showing you this confusing form in a movie, you know? Being the same thing, you see?  
 (Informant #1, #3=H, Informant #2-L)

Here, the informant (Heavy) connects the message "communications problem" with the film's formal structure (i.e. bad communication is implied through a confusing editing pattern), explicitly imputing authorship to the filmmaker.

Thus, Francois Truffaut's famous outcry in "A Certain Tendency of the French Cineam" (against certain "abject" authors such as scriptwriters), lays the blame for this tendency of "literary" films'

(and implicitly, literary interpretations) dominance of the field of cinema at what he considered the proper doorstep. Almost as an aside, Truffaut then cites several directors incapable of creating textual banalities, and ironically notes "that they are auteurs who often write their dialogue and some of them themselves invent the stories they direct." Here Truffaut is implicitly noting what this investigation has discovered. French script writers, and the themes they created in their written texts were walking off with the lion's share of credit as the "authors" of a film. In addition, audiences, too, view films as a structure of themes, not as a structure of images, words and sounds which when ordered create, as Barthes (1976) notes, a narrative. Truffaut's polemic concludes with, "I do not believe in the peaceful co-existence of the 'Tradition of Quality' (script) and an 'auteur's cinema'." In the visual work of several directors--Tati, Ophuls, Renoir--"You will have understood...audacities...of men of cinema and no longer of scenarists, directors and literateurs." (in Nichols, ed., 1976, pp. 233-234.)

Truffaut's article suggests that if the issue of authorial accountability in film has been dominated by writers, viewers inclined to interpret do so in line with previously acquired literary models; that is, in terms of theme, character and so on. Therefore, in light of the cultural weight accorded written texts and narrative forms as opposed to visual forms, it is hardly surprising that thematic

and character analysis should comprise the majority of the informants' inferences from the film.

What emerges from this evidence, is that non-particular authorial inferences are the predominant kind of inference viewers make from a film. The data presented in Table 5:7 indicate an awareness of authorship on some informants' parts, but often these discussions of authorship are used in making evaluations (64%). The fact that inferences, when made at all, are most often made with invisible authors hidden behind some invisible editing table then, should not be a startling discovery. It merely points to the fact that in those rare cases where inferences are made, informants without training or knowledge of the variety of authors who construct a film resort to conventional wisdom about the accountability of content in a narrative form. They treat the special way a film is made as yet another way of telling a story, one rife with themes, conflicts and other conventions.

Michael Foucault arrives at the heart of this issue regarding viewer interpretation and how knowledge of an author's function is used in making interpretations.

...these aspects of an individual, which we designate as an author (or which comprise an individual as an author) are projections in terms always more or less psychological of our way of handling texts: in the comparisons we make, the traits we extract as pertinent, the continuities we assign or the exclusions we practise. In addition, all these operations vary according to the period and the form of discourse concerned. (1979, p. 21)

Using Foucault's notions of the function of an author as a template for the data from the group discussion about CB, one can clearly see that without prompting from a researcher (i.e. asking informants to replay parts of a film and supply interpretations for each part), viewers, in the Worth/Gross scheme, "interact" with film. Interpretations, in the form of inferences, are rara avis. Still more unusual is an inference that is tied to a particular communicational author or structure.

To an extent, the pattern seen in these data from the group discussions--broadly stated now as the fact that viewers, in the Worth/Gross sense, "interact" with a film rather than "interpret" it--might be a consequence of the research method employed. That is, unlike the work of Messaris (1975) where questions were specifically asked of informants in investigating certain issues raised by the inference/attribution model (i.e. informants were supplied with terms like "filmmaker's intention" and so on) this research investigated and described ways viewers set their own interpretive agendas in regard to a film. Thus, the sparsity of inferences might have been the result of the researcher failing to elicit "inferences" from informants. In addition, these data may illuminate Polanyi's (1967) notion that persons seldom supply specific reasons for what they know about an event. Knowledge about an aspect of interpretation, while socially constructed is not always available for verbal retrieval.



The exclusions Foucault notes, described here, might also be seen as "performance glosses". To explain; the ways viewers in this study "interacted" with, rather than "interpreted" CB might be viewed as consequence of the context of informants' "performance skill" in participating in research rather than a lack of knowledge in identifying authors, intent and so on. However, there is at present no other way to test knowledge about an event beyond some level of performance.

The next chapter investigates the discursive styles used by informants in their interpretive engagements with Citizens Band.

## CHAPTER VI

### FILM TALK

Erving Goffman feels that talk plays a (perhaps the) significant role in the analysis of most behavior. For "...in a sense, the analysis of these strips of behavior was also the analysis of the act of saying things." (1974, p. 496) I am in intuitive accord with Goffman on the importance talk plays in the analysis of experience. However, it is important to investigate the shape and ends in which talk about film might occur.

Hymes has noted, "Differences in background can involve quite different kinds of classification." (Personal communication) Differences in the backgrounds of film viewers (along the dimensions of media use and membership in a social network in which film figures) could be expected to produce different discursive styles for film talk. The focus of this chapter will be the kinds of taxonomies viewers generate in regard to film and the degree to which a technical vocabulary is used in discussion events within the cinematic frame. While the literature on film taxonomies is extremely sparse, several writers have noted the limited and non-systematic terms used in critical writing and talk about film. In his study of imputations of agency by film critics, Eric Swartz found that "It is rare for a critic to couch his language in terms that refer to the cinematic operations that take place on the screen." (1977, p. 197) While there have been several film studies in recent years that have made use of verbal data (interviews) these investigations have

treated these data as evidence of the existence of a category of behavior (i.e. form of interpretation). These verbal data were not looked at specifically to study the kinds of talk or the vocabulary used by viewers.

Tyler, pointing to the significance of informants' taxonomies notes, "These names are thus both an index to what is significant in the environment of some other people, and a means of discovering how these people organize their perceptions. Naming is seen as one of the chief methods for imposing order on perception." (1969, p.6)

Initially, I am forced to ask rather general questions about the nature of talk about a film. There exists a fairly extensive technical vocabulary dealing with the formal and production aspects of filmmaking. (See, for example, Independent Filmmaking, Lenny Lipton, 1972, A Primer for Film-Making, Roberts and Sharples, 1971 and The Cinema as Art, Stephenson and Debrix, 1965, pp. 238-41 for fairly consistent examples of explicit terms used by filmmakers to describe what they do.) The extent to which this vocabulary is used in the discourse of persons other than filmmakers or authors of books on film production remains unknown but not unknowable.

A study by Lehrer investigated similar issues in regard to the shared event of talking about wine tasting. Lehrer noted, "... a legitimate area of scientific research is the investigation of how people apply language to the world of things they talk about." (1975, p. 901) Her study of the terms people used in talking about wine

noted that, "...different subjects found different aspects of the wine salient." (op. cit. p. 915) These differences were reflected in a lack of uniformity in descriptive terms for wine along many dimensions. As could be expected, a person with a high degree of interest in wine (wine taster) used terms which were "...more precise than the ordinary wine drinker because it was necessary for him to communicate precisely." (Op. cit. p. 918)

Lehrer concludes that "...discussions about wine are probably like those of most other aesthetic conversations--of art, music, books, film, etc. In addition, by talking about wine and attaching words to its properties, one is more likely to remember the experience." (Op. cit., p. 920)

Many of the questions Lehrer poses of talk about wine could be asked of talk about film. Indeed, the "Ethnography of Communication" paradigm outlined by Hymes (1964) could be used as a preliminary template for investigating a number of issues of film talk as a socially situated event. Talk about film could involve genres, speech events or series of routines which are sensitive to a variety of social features; the time of the talk (before, during or immediately after seeing a film), the ages and statuses of the participants, the social event in which a particular speech event might occur, or the "appropriateness" of "talking technically" about film in a particular setting with a particular group. Here, however, the investigation of talk about film will be limited to two areas, film

taxonomies and the selection of a discursive style in talking about film.

### VI.1 Some Uses Served by Talk about Film

Braudy feels that talk about film "demands to exist with an insistence that is not evident in painting, sculpture or literature. Only dance and music rival film in the peculiar role talk plays in making the experience last beyond a particular performance."

Several of the informants noted that they ordinarily did not recall films they had seen recently. Because they discussed Citizens Band they were able to preserve the memory through a particular instance of talk. "I can't remember the movies that I've seen, other than yours because we sat around and talked about it for an hour."<sup>1</sup> It was not unusual for heavy viewers to report, as Braudy notes, that there was a need to talk about a film immediately after viewing. One heavy viewer will not go to films alone, stating, "It is fun to go with somebody else. Cause you need to talk about it when you come out." A light viewer voiced a similar opinion on the role of talk, "I don't go very often alone. I think it's kind of lonely

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<sup>1</sup> The group discussion in which this particular informant took part actually lasted 18 minutes. Perhaps because she is a light viewer who ordinarily only mentions films in the context of other topics, extended talk focusing on film is a rare event. Her recollection of her talk might therefore be disproportionately long compared to its actual time.

when you come out, because you don't have anybody to talk to about the film. It's like it's not finished." (My emphasis) Talk about film was reported in the lives of all informants. However, the significance accorded such talk shall only be addressed through the two issues mentioned previously.

While all informants reported talking about film, the ends to which such talk occurred seemed different. It was not unusual for a light film viewer to also be a light talker. Talk about film could emerge at any point and was reported as being short-lived. Heavy groups averaged twenty-four minutes during their discussion, while light groups talked for an average of fourteen minutes. Mere length of talk, however, is not always a reliable index of the significance accorded talk. The following examples from different light viewers indicate that talk about film is not particularly important to them as a conversational topic.

Example #1 (light)

Q: Do you ever talk about films with anyone?

A: Once in a while. If you're sitting at dinner, or something with some friends and they happen to say 'I saw this movie', or something, you would either say it was good or bad or whatever.

Q: Are there any particular people that you'll talk to about movies?

A: I wouldn't say particular. If it comes up in conversation, we'll talk. If not, I could easily live without it.

Example #2 (light)

Q: Do you ever talk about films with anyone?

A: Umm, usually I see a movie, if I see E\_\_\_\_\_ (wife)

later, I'll tell her what I saw or what it was generally about or whether I liked it or not. The whole conversation might last about two minutes, and then we'll go on to something else.

Q: I was going to ask you if there are any particular people that you talk to about film?

A: Just my wife, basically. And then the subject doesn't come up with other people I talk to.

Example #3 (light)

Q: Do you ever talk about films with anyone?

A: Non really. Because I don't really watch a lot. I don't go to the movies an awful lot. So, I really don't talk about them that much.

Example #4 (light)

Q: Do you ever talk about films with anyone?

A: Uh, not really. It's just like any other subject. It could come up at any time. No, not really.

Now note the role talk about film seems to play in the life of different heavy viewers:

Example #1 (heavy)

Q: Do you ever talk about films with anyone?

A: Yeah. Yeah.

Q: Any particular people?

A: Yeah. There are certain people if I'm with them I'm more likely to talk about films than other people. L or T are more likely to talk about comparing An Unmarried Woman and Girlfriends, something like that. And the kind of differences of treatment of single women in films, and how Hollywood can do it in a variety of ways.

Q: Are there particular people that you might talk about films with?

A: Yeah. That forms one of the great topics of our conversations, ranking right up there with gossip.

Example #2 (heavy)

Q: Do you ever talk about films with anyone?

A: Yes, we talk almost always after a film. Particularly that interesting business of if the film is good.

Almost always we will talk about a good film for at least an hour after it's over. And the interesting thing about a lousy film, when neither of us has anything to say at all, we frequently don't talk much about bad films. But, we'll always talk at length about a good film. We talk about film frequently at dinner, or almost any time of the evening simply because we both enjoy it.

Example #3 (heavy)

Q: Do you ever talk about films with anyone?

A: Yeah.

Q: Are there any particular people you talk to about them?

A: Well, mostly my husband. I live with somebody who would go to any movie, basically, on a moment's notice. But friends, one couple in particular, you haven't met them, J\_\_\_\_\_ and M\_\_\_\_\_, they go to the movies a lot. I just discovered this week something I never knew. That is, our graduate students, middle twenties, never went to the movies as children. They didn't go to the movies until they were in college, and they were shocked that I went as a child. But, I always talk about movies. And I always get blank stares from people because nobody else goes to the movies.

Example #4 (heavy)

Q: Do you ever talk about films with anyone?

A: Yeah. I do.

Q: Any particular people?

A: There are some people I don't talk to about it at all. Because I know their interests aren't in the same place on that particular subject. And E\_\_\_\_\_ (husband) and I sit around at home and talk about films a lot, especially right after we saw one. Well, like last night, he saw some films, and he came home and related a lot of information to me, and I was very interested. So we sat and talked about it at least for an hour. And, we converse a lot about film.

Not only is film a popular topic of talk for heavy viewers, but the topics they attend to in this talk are different from those mentioned by light viewers. These self-reports seem to indicate



that light viewers, who are not part of a network in which film figures prominently, attend to actors' performances, whether they "liked" or "disliked" a film or the extent to which it told a good tale. For example, the response of this informant (light) is not unusual of what light viewers say they attend to when talking about film?

Q: What kinds of things do you talk about?

A: Oh, whether it was good or bad. Or whether you thought it had a plot or you just thought it was a waste of time or a waste of money. You thought the plot was good or the acting was bad or the whatever.

Compare this light viewer's response to that of a heavy viewer;

Q: What kinds of things do you talk about?

A: Well, we talk about generally how we felt about it. We talk about the performances, the acting. We'll talk about whether or not we feel that the dialogue was in character, whether the actual, the venue is real for what they're trying to do. Discuss certain, maybe sequences that we liked very much. We'll repeat them to each other, you know, or repeat the dialogue if we liked the dialogue, or repeat the sequence. And I am more aware of the technical aspects of the film than G\_\_ (husband) is. But I find the first time I see a film, I am not at all aware of the technical things. I have to see it a second time, and then I get aware of what they're doing technically, you know. But the first time if I like a film, I get really involved with it, and I don't look at what the camera is doing, and I don't look at how they're handling the lighting, or anything like that. I have to see it a couple of times before I do that.

Two informants report that they attend to different kinds of events within the frame. There is an overlap of possible topics of discussion (actors and their performances) or of kinds of statements being made about film (evaluations). The heavy viewer, however,

reports that she attends to "technical" aspects of the film ("what the camera is doing", "lighting")--at least at a second viewing--an attention that is more attuned to specifically cinematic elements than to general statements about events in the frame. Moreover, this heavy viewer reports that in talking about film, she often goes through a series of routines in regard to some aspect of the film. In the group discussions, routines such as "re-editing" a sequence were only done by heavy viewers.

## VI.2 Film Taxonomies

All informants could generate verbal responses on kinds of films they "liked" or "disliked". The preliminary taxonomy constructed from the single interviews with informants consists of the cover term "film" and seventeen (17) categories of kinds of films present in the universe of these informants. In some instances, these main categories contain subclasses. For example, if an informant classifies a film through a naming using a person who, in some capacity is associated with a film (i.e. an Alfred Hitchcock film), this was classified in a category of "persona". It is important, however, to note the kinds of people and their capacity or roles named by informants in regard to a film. Hitchcock's North by Northwest at the taxonomic level of persona, could also be a "Cary Grant film" for viewers whose naming scheme reflects an interest in actors. It could also be called a "Saul Bass film", named, by

those viewers so inclined, for the designer of the animated titles that introduce the film and its participants. It might also be the case that an informant might refer to the film as "American Hitchcock", displaying a classification scheme based on persona and country of origin. In every instance, subclasses and multiple categories were noted.

The categories were derived in the following way; all transcriptions were read several times for reference or mention of film types. Since I was not certain, before the fact of analysis, what precisely could constitute a "naming" (as the work of Burke and Sacks noted), care was taken to not count beforehand what could or could not "count" as a naming of a kind of film. While there was a specific question constructed to tap this construct ("What kinds of movies do you like to see?", "Are there any moview you won't see?") references to film type emerged at various points in the interviews, and were thus counted and coded accordingly.

The instances of films mentioned were then grouped according to parameters of inclusion within a broader generic class. Categories were not developed a priori, but emerged from the units mentioned by informants in the interviews. These mentions were then analyzed and grouped based on principles of inclusion within a class of films which shared similar features for membership. The classes which emerged from the data were (in order of frequency of mentions):

1. genre: Refers to inclusion within some historically validated grouping employed in television and movie guides, film catalogues and film criticism. While the construction of a taxonomy may be seen as a series of operations which discover genres or codes within a larger corpus of films, the label as used here represents holistic groupings traditionally recognized in texts and models (e.g. "Western" "Gangster film"). In addition, the term "genre" was used by a number (N=5) of informants. 23%
2. content: Refers to inclusion in two ways. First, by a description of story content ("That film where the two women are involved with ballet.") Second, by a description of thematic content ("Films about power and politics.") 22%
3. persona: Refers to classification of a film through identification of a person in a particular capacity (director, writer, actor, fictive role portrayed, producer). 14%
4. evaluation: Refers to inclusion based on evaluation of a film. This can range from the relatively simple utterance "A masterpiece", to more complex statements. 8%
5. national origin: Classification of a film based on the country of production (e.g. "Foreign films", "American films". This can, of course, be explicit. "Foreign" can refer to a specific country of origin.) 8%
6. age: Refers to classifications of a film in terms of its period or stage of production or release. (e.g. "First run", "Old movies," etc.) 5%
7. effect/function/use: Classification of a film based on the reported purpose or use it serves in the life of an informant. For example, one informant (light) noted, "I like a movie I can go to and relax and enjoy myself and not necessarily have to go away and think about it. I don't want to see movies that are going to depress men, 'cause I work with that stuff all the time. I want an enjoyable, relaxing movie. I go to the movies primarily for relaxation. 4%
8. theatre/site: Films defined by the location of viewing. (e.g. "A movie at the Ritz?", "a movie on TV", but not "movies made for TV" which is a classification based on "source".) 4%
9. audience: Refers to identification of a film in regard to the presumed or imagined audience for a film (e.g. "films oriented towards the youth market.") (2%)

10. booking: Refers to films seen as belonging to a unit of other films (e.g. "Series films", "double features" or "programs".) 2%
11. source: Refers to the original medium of conception or presentation as the principle taxonomic procedure. (e.g. Films based on novel or plays, films made for television.) 2%
12. Price: Classification based on the cost of admission (i.e. "Movies you pay 3.50 for" or "dollar movies") 2%
13. model: A classification based on a comparison to an informant's notion of a model film "for its kind". (i.e. "A Jaws-type film") Here, certain films' values as coins of cultural exchange serve as templates for purposes of classification. 1%
14. ratings: Films defined by the rating they receive from the MPAA. (e.g. "X-rated", "PG", etc.) 1%
15. form/structure: Films classified or named according to their formal properties and elements ('films which use a lot of moving camera') or, classification according to a film's structure (i.e. "narrative movies"). 1%
16. source of knowledge: Films defined by the initial source of information obtained by informants. For example, one informant stated, "Any film advertised on TV I automatically don't go to see it." (heavy) Another informant noted, "Well, my sister is like a reverse barometer. If she likes a film, then I definitely don't go to see it." (light) .5%
17. studio: Refers to the studio of production or distribution as the means of classification. (e.g. "A Warner Brothers film".) .5%

The most frequent instances of naming were those at the level of description of evaluation of content (30%), When asked to name films in the single interview, or when talking about film in the discussions, almost one-fourth of all classification was done on the basis of rather lengthy references to content. For example, this response from a light viewer queried about the kinds of movies he likes to see;

Well, let's see. I don't like violence, for example. A lot of big violence. If that's involved with a movie, I'm just not interested. If it's a social message..racism, that sort of thing, well, I've been through the mill on that, and have my own convictions, which are sort of liberal--live and let live, that kind of thing. And I'm not open to any more social messages. I'm not going to see anymore in that area.

Such lengthy descriptions occurred more often with light viewers than with heavy viewers. (L=74%, H=26)). If one could infer from the "lot of big violence" reference that this informant does not like films with violent content, it was not unusual for a heavy viewer to talk about the same kind of film in more succinct terms. Thus, one heavy viewer stated, "I generally try to avoid the Peckinpaw-type film. You know, the violent ones." This heavy viewer then, is equating content (violence) with a film director noted for his consistent use of violence.

In addition to content description, other informants categories were oriented towards lengthy descriptions in namings. Short utterances locating a film within an explicit genre were, at times, used by all viewers (L=51%, H=49%). There were, overall, more instances of descriptive rather than explicit namings for all categories and for all viewers. Examples of lengthier descriptions include categorizations of films by site or theatre ("I like those movies they show at the Ritz?), by a film's effect upon informants or the use it might have in their lives, and by the intended or presumed audience ("Movies that are very oriented towards the youth culture, I don't like.")

Those instances in which shorter namings were used were located largely within four categories, genre, persona, national origin and age. It is in these shorter namings that patterned differences emerged between heavy and light viewers. Heavy viewers were able to name more kinds of "genres" (N=14) than Light viewers (N=8). Within the category of persona, light viewers attended primarily to actors (67.5%), mentioning directors in only 10 instances. Heavy viewers categorized films by directors some fifty percent within the category of persona. Heavies named actors less than 25% of the time. In the category "national origin", heavy viewers were also more likely to explicitly name specific countries of origin (87%) rather than the broader cover term "foreign" used by light viewers (80%).

Overall, the categories generated by heavy viewers were (discursively) more succinct than were those named by light viewers. Key words were used rather than long descriptive phrases. (e.g. "Independent films" rather than "Those weird movies they show at Annenberg.") This explicit naming might suggest a familiar and learned taxonomy or discursive style for naming films that has been bred by familiarity with the domain of film. It also suggests that there might be appropriate ways of speaking about films in social networks that are organized about film-going. If talking about film is an activity one values and engages in frequently, knowing the terms for film that a group has selected could be a pre-requisite

for membership in a network of film talkers and goers. This last point is in accord with Lehrer's findings regarding terms for talking about wine. Noting the higher degree of uniformity of terms applied by "experts" and knowers of wine, Lehrer wondered if "...prolonged casual contact and conversation among speakers will eventually produce some uniformity in applying words to wine, or whether standardized application must be the result of formal tutoring or some similar process." (1975, p. 917)

To investigate Lehrer's hypotheses (that either prolonged contact and interest in a domain, or formal tutoring might give rise to uniformity in applying words to film) two avenues of data were analyzed. First, I reasoned that the terms informants used to describe heavy movie-goers might indicate the presence and significance accorded a network in which film is an important factor. Second, verbal data from the group discussions were analyzed to see how informants apply words (technical versus descriptive) when talking about the world inside the cinematic frame. While the notion of a film network (of lookers and talkers) can only loosely be inferred from self-reports, the names used by group members who attend films together might be informative as to the existence and strength of such a network.

### VI.3 Naming the Viewers

If film is a domain which to a large extent gives rise to tax-



onomies based upon description rather than explicit namings, what are those persons who attend films regularly called? Question 11 in the single interview asked, "Do you know any people who go to the movies often?" In addition to operationalizing informants' definitions of what "often" means, in regard to film, this question also attempted to tap informants' namings for such people. Implicit in the forms of such namings are, as Tyler (1969) has noted, evaluations accorded such activity by persons who engage in it.

All informants had a kind of naming for people who went to the movies often. However, as the work of Sacks and Schegloff has noted, "locating" and describing a kind of behavior can take the form of namings longer than those often implied by a "mere" label. That is, rather than naming the participants in a communicative event I might call "movie going" with explicit labels such as "film buff" or "movie goer", informants often located this behavior in the context of some larger social situation. Light viewers often referred to heavy viewers in terms which situated the act of viewing in a larger frame. This order of naming could range from "certain people that like to go to the movies a lot" to the following response:

Q. Do you know any people who go to the movies often?

A: I don't think I do. You know as one sometimes drives by a Center City theatre on a Saturday night or a Friday night or a Sunday night, there are rafts of people who are waiting to get in. And you just feel that they're doing this because this is their night out, and they're taking a date, and this is what there is to do. And this is what we're going to do tonight. And next week, we'll do the same thing again,

you know, with another girl maybe or with the same girl, and see another film. And I would imagine that those are the people who go to films regularly.  
(light viewer)

Two features in the example strike me as salient in regard to the significance of the "namings" informants accord heavy viewers. This informant's taxonomy of "viewers" is not as verbally explicit as, say, another informant (heavy) who referred to himself as "as real cineaste".<sup>2</sup> However, by combining the light viewer's apparently sparse knowledge of a domain (film) with her knowledge of what Spradley (1972) calls cultural scenes--such as "weekend entertainment in Center City"--a rather complex naming appears. This complexity, it should be noted, only appears when knowledge of the two domains is considered together.

The issues above raise an important distinction between viewers who use a vocabulary that appears to be somewhat domain-specific to film and those who do not. Because film varies in importance in the lives of informants, lexically explicit concepts might only be used by members of a network in which film, and certain kinds of talk about film figures prominently. Those who regularly attend films and talk about film might need, in certain situations, an explicit code for communicating with other members of this network. None of

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<sup>2</sup> The term "cineaste" technically means "filmmaker", not film enthusiast. From my own experience with the writings of critics, however, their use of the term is such that many readers would think cineaste was yet another way to name frequent or devoted viewers of film.

the light viewers reported the existence of such a network in regard to film. However, their network of "knowledge of Center City life" or other domains in which film might figure could be quite elaborate. Thus, when talking about movie-goers, informants who do not attend films frequently are apt to use a vocabulary from some other domain with which they are familiar. This is apparent in the previous description of movie-goers, by a light viewer, and in the following naming of movie-goers. "Yeah. They're always talking about the last film they saw at the Ritz." (light) One might infer from this naming that the informant is referring to those viewers who Smythe (1955) has called "art house audiences". Because light viewers' domain of film viewing is not, by self-report, organized about film qua film, their descriptions of films and film-goers might inhere not in verbally explicit namings or even sentence long descriptive phrases. Instead, their namings will be embedded in lengthy talk about other domains in which film is but a component. It appears that film alone is not a very large territory on light viewers' cultural scenes.

Most heavy viewers reported membership in a regular network of film-goers and talkers (73%). They therefore could possess a context in which explicit namings were possible. For example, the following statement was not unusual for heavy viewers;

Well, probably of my inner circle of close friends, they're all movie-goers. And in fact, they've been movie-goers all their lives the same

way I am. So, that it's something we talk  
about fairly routinely.  
(heavy)

Heavy viewers who declared themselves members of a group in which film figured prominently used explicit namings such as "avid film-goer", "practically professional critics" or "movie fan" to describe their own interest in movies as well as that of others who attend films frequently.

Knowledge and interest in the cultural scene can be seen not only in these namings for heavy viewers, but in the complexity of the taxonomies such viewers have for kinds of film. While explicit namings for films were not that common, when they did occur, it was from heavy viewers. In their discussions in the interviews, when turning to the significant (but slippery) issue of authorship of a film, heavy viewers named directors (31%) or writers (5%) as the agents responsible for a film. In contrast, light viewers tended to not only categorize films by actors (49%), but by fictive characters as well ("Sherlock Holmes movies"). This is in accord with the data from the group discussions, where light viewers tended to evaluate and select films along lines of "stars" or sympathetic characters.

Overall, there were differences between the two classes of viewers in knowledge of variety of film types, agents who make films, and in the complexity of the taxonomies viewers have for films. These verbal features appear to be affected by knowledge, membership

and the boundaries of the cultural scenes in which film figures.

#### VI.4 Technical Vocabulary and Film Talk

Conventional wisdom could lead one to conclude that film critics, like film-makers, possess a special vocabulary for writing about film. Swartz, however, in investigating the writings of three critics in regard to a common body of three films discovered "...what is primarily characteristic of both groups of critics is their reliance on a critical language that is oriented towards the viewers' perspective rather than the screen. In other words, critical explanation of visceral forms and structures are more often evaluated in terms of the effects they have on the viewers and on the quality of the viewing experience, i.e. it is dynamic, it is beautiful, it is boring, etc." (1977, p. 197)

In a similar light, Custen's analysis of opera critics found that, "...in vocal music, it is just those very elements which cannot be notated (timbre, attack, articulation) which are ordinarily focused in on by critics armed with the 'vernacular of ignorance'. Thus, one singer's timbre is 'velvet', another's 'gold'. One's attacks are like 'buzz-saws', while another's are 'effortless'. One voice is 'part oboe, part clarinet', while Birgitt Nilsson, according to the critic in the Philadelphia Evening Bulletin, '...has a silver trumpet in her throat'. (which must make it rather difficult for even the gifted Swedish soprano to sing.)" (1977,p.13)

It is intriguing to note that both music and film criticism often give rise to similar discursive vagaries. There exists in both modes of technical vocabulary describing (and defining) various articulations (grupetti and close-up, roulade and tracking shot). Yet, talk about an event in either mode is likely to resort to non-technical terms. Whether this is due, in part, to the lack of a notation system (in film) or the limitations of this system (in music), or to the fact that most criticism is dealing with a "live event" rather than a text are intriguing notions beyond the scope of this research.

One of the most difficult general problems about a vocabulary is what gives rise to the use, by a social group, of lexically explicit concepts. Early in the "pre-history" of ethno-linguistics, the French linguist Meillet noted that one of the consequences of an explicit vocabulary, or specialized language, was proclaiming and maintaining solidarity within a social group or network organized about some "non-linguistic" fact (the language of butchers or film critics; some feel there might be little difference between the two). The search for a "prime cause" of the existence or use of a technical or specialized vocabulary by a group is beyond the scope of this research. It has been noted that informants' membership in a loose social network in which film figures prominently appears to provide a possible context for the use of explicit namings for film. The sources for such a vocabulary and its

and its use can here only loosely be hinted at, with great caution, by looking at possible other domains in which film figures.

A parsimonious preliminary point for investigating sources of vocabulary used in film talk might be the writings of persons charged vocationally with discourse about film. What would seem to occur in the case of film writing in newspapers, periodicals and books, or in film talk on television and radio is that persons charged vocationally with discourse about film are communicating to people with no such vocation, but with varying degrees of interest. However, there is almost no literature on film taxonomies or kinds of film code used in such cases. Swartz's study of critics' imputation of agency broaches the issue of how critics write about the events within the cinematic frame. His findings about critics are in accord with the data here showing a preference, for most viewers, for using descriptive namings rather than a technical or explicit vocabulary when talking or writing about film. Future research on a linguistic community of "film talkers" should, at first, distinguish among the different participants, roles, interests, contexts, knowledge of and relation to each other as film talkers. Since film going and talk about film are both socially situated events, a preliminary description of the participants and ends to which language is used would be important. For example, even though a Shakespearean scholar could, presumably, refer to a sonnet in terms

of octaves, sestets, caesuras, feminine endings and Petrarchian caucetti, etc., one would do so only to another Shakespearean scholar who it was presumed had the same arsenal of terms. Otherwise, to students (and even in private when alluding to sonnets in the course of a more general point) one would avoid the specialized language for the simple reason that one couldn't count on an audience's knowing it.<sup>3</sup>

Until studies such as Lehrer's on wine-talk have been done with film talk, investigations of the possible sources of explicit vocabularies for film will have to start at the level of description of ways informants talk about film, rather than imputing sources for such talk using the data of conventional wisdom.

The degree to which informants "talk technically" about film is worth addressing further. Christian Metz (1974, p. 60-69) in his attempt to formulate a semiotics of narrative film has noted that understanding a film (and possibly sharing understanding through talk) involves selection of certain elements within a film which may or may not be part of the domain of film proper. Using an analogy borrowed from mathematic set theory, Metz notes that often there are many domains of culture represented and present in a film. These domains can be quite separate or they can intersect at points. In

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<sup>3</sup> Barbara Smith pointed this--as well as many other cogent points--out to me in the course of her criticisms.



a given film, one can have elements from the domain of general culture (i.e. narration), elements from the domain of film (i.e. montage) or elements from "borrowed" domains (i.e. mis en scene, which is also used in theatre). Moreover, within the domain of film, there are 'elements of signification...which nevertheless are realized only in films (which is why they are cinematic).'" (Op, cit., p. 62) Thus, in the domain of film, one has a code of montage which might also consist of subcodes (i.e. flashback, accelerated montage). A viewer then, might choose from any one of these three primary domains in attempting to understand a film. In the heavy viewer's use of the term "technical", or in references to "what the camera is doing" one might have, in the former case an attention to either borrowed or filmic codes, and in the latter, focus on specifically cinematic codes ("what the camera is doing"). Metz's scheme, which can be conceptualized as a series of Venn-like diagrams of the different domains present in a film, could be instructive here in assessing the discursive styles used by viewers in discussing a film. That is, to what extent are elements say, in the domain Metz has called "specific to film", referred to in talk compared to elements from the domain of general culture. In addition, one would like to see the extent to which "cinematic" elements are talked about utilizing a specialized technical vocabulary. Attention to elements from one domain, discussed with a certain degree of specificity might shed light on the knowledge of film viewer and

talker has of specific domains present in a film. For, the utterance "what the camera does" could refer to any number of cinematic operations (i.e. the difference between a tracking shot and a zoom); it might also refer to "that beautiful gliding movement like a swan" in regard to the camera. Thus, reference to "technical" elements must be considered in conjunction with ways of talking technically about a film. In light of this, Goffman (1976, p. 80) feels that talk about still photographs is characterized by "systematic ambiguities". There is no reason to feel that film might not give rise to similar kinds of talk. I will, therefore, look at two groups of viewers talking about the same sequence from the film, attending to 1) if a technical vocabulary is used, and 2) if the vocabulary is seemingly shaped by the cinematic domain or some other domain of culture.

Example #1 (informants #1,4=heavy; #2,3-light)

#1 You know what I thought was interesting in the birthday scene, where the old man doesn't respond until his boy starts talking to him on the CB.

#2,3 Yes.

#2 Yeah. I think that was a very important point. That they were really showing that that was the only way he really could communicate, 'cause that was the only way he ever talked to anybody.

#3 Yeah. He had been a trucker all those years.

#4 Something I didn't quite understand is, that particular scene that you mentioned was photographed beautifully. I thought...

#3 Oh, gorgeous.

#4 The light of the candles. It was just a cake, and two people sitting in a room. What did they do to make it so beautiful? Every scene was...

#1 Oh yeah. I can't remember who was the cameraman.

- #4 The most common things made into beautiful artwork.  
 #3 Yes. Uh huh.

In this example, as in Swartz's research, informants describe both the unit of filmic construction (scene) and its impact in terms of the effect it has upon them (i.e. it is beautiful, gorgeous) There is no mention that this effect was achieved with a soft-focus lens or extremely low key lighting. "Technical" in this sense, then means a notice of some element within the domain of film that is discussed in terms not specific to that domain.

When this same sequence was discussed by four light viewers, they noted that the locale "looked real", offering this explanation;

- #1 I think one of the things that made it look really real was the type of color film, don't you?  
 #2 Yeah. It was all rather hazy. I think they used vaseline to cover the lens.

Here, "technical" reasons are used to explain the effect ("realism"). However, informants resort to a conventionalized piece of mythology in order to explain the soft-focus lens effect ("vaseline over the lens"). In addition to being "incorrect" (vaseline is seldom used to achieve an effect which can be accomplished through means less harmful to the equipment), these descriptions again use terms imported from non-cinematic domains ("hazy"). In fact, there was not a single instance where an informant described events which Metz would refer to as "domain-specific to the cinema" in the terms available for such events. Descriptions of the film employed terms

such as "hazy", "real", "meaty", "crappy", "disjointed" or longer variations of such terms. All of these terms could as easily apply to a description of a day spent at the beach as they could obtain to describing a film. It appears that persons use metaphor (or terms borrowed from other domains) when they do not have a shared domain-specific lexicon. c.f. The lexicon I might use in describing my symptoms to my doctor; and my doctor describing these to another doctor.

Descriptions (often quite long) that refer to the effect a part of the film had upon a viewer appear to be the way viewers refer to elements within the cinematic frame. Technical or specific vocabularies were used only by heavy viewers in discussing units of structure for the film (shot, sequence). However, discussion of what went on within these units was also descriptive, largely general, metaphoric and non-technical. Informants, regardless of their degree of interest in the domain of film, resorted to a vocabulary that could be as easily used to describe events within non-cinematic domains as it could to describing the world within the frame of the film.

What Goffman refers to as the "systematic ambiguities" that characterize talk about pictures or film can be tentatively explained by drawing upon the present data and upon my experiences of talking about film production and analysis in my capacity as an instructor of college film courses. First, unless explicitly trained to "name"

the events and techniques that are present within a cinematic frame, most informants borrow vocabulary from domains outside the film. Gross' (1973) "competence through performance" model, in which actual performance or formal tutoring in symbolic modes leads to an understanding of how others articulate in the mode, might well obtain for film. Since few people are vocationally trained as filmmakers (though many have experience in what Chalfen, 1976, calls the "home mode"), the contexts are rare in which one would need to know a language of specific description. Informants therefore resort either to a vocabulary gleaned informally from critical sources--in which case, there is a certainty that a technical vocabulary is not present--or to the use of metaphoric terms from domains of culture with which they have a day-to-day familiarity. In addition, according to Gross (in Messaris, 1975, p. 58) "film...is the only artistic medium which beginning aesthetic students are readily able to discuss." Along similar lines, Sol Worth also noted that "various teenage magazines have film discussions and have had them for the past ten years or more. College and High School newspapers discuss films, and dating discussions about film are the most common subject matter." (personal communication) What both Worth and Gross are separately noting is that film, and talk about film, is a kind of talk that is often around us with, apparently, loose restrictions about expertise in such matters.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> In light of these observations, it is interesting to note that

Unless one has a situational need to communicate with an explicit vocabulary (making a film or teaching filmmaking) description can be readily done through the domain with which one has the most familiarity. Such talk is also shaped by the weight accorded film by the networks or groups to which a viewer might belong.

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several recent feature films have sequences in which "informed" and "uninformed" talkers are presented in different lights. In Woody Allen's Annie Hall Alvy Singer confronts, with the miraculous aid of Marshall Mc Luhan, an "uninformed" talker who is holding forth on Ingmar Bergman. Mc Luhan and Alvy triumph over the unfortunate Columbia professor who, in Mc Luhan's words "...knows nothing of my work." Similarly, an "informed" talker in Bernardo Bertolucci's Before the Revolution carries film talk to perhaps another extreme, noting, "You can't live without Rossellini." In either case, it appears that film talk should be taken (at least by Allen and Bertolucci) as a serious affair.

## CHAPTER VII

### Conclusions

In this chapter, I want to review the results of the present investigation. This will be done in conjunction with a discussion of possible parallels with other studies and my own informal observations. This concluding chapter will deal with three issues;

1. patterns of viewer verbal responses to Citizens Band,
2. the social weight accorded film by viewers and,
3. a general discussion of the uses and gratifications a film provides for viewers.

#### VII.1 Patterns of Viewer Interpretive Engagement with the Film

In terms of the Worth/Gross model, all viewers in this study "interacted" with the film far more than they "interpreted" it. That is, of those statements made by informants in the group discussions, less than 11% were concerned with the film's communicational "meaning" as the term is defined by Worth and Gross.

What viewers did in the majority of interpretive engagements was evaluate the film. Statements were made--usually along a binary "like/dislike" line--about what "counted" as objects of value for interpreters. For most viewers, regardless of the frequency with which they attended films, the focus of most evaluative statements was a "piece of behavior" within some part of the film. These parts were evaluated in terms congruent with values used to interpret events in the world outside the film. As G. H. Mead notes of

symbolic forms, these viewers use this particular symbolic form in "a selective process by which is picked out what is common". (1934, p. 65) The viewer, as a social being, "goes out and determines what (he) is going to respond to, and organizes that world." (Ibid. p. 25)

The Worth/Gross theory requires attention to the reasons given for interpretive statements in order to properly assess them. Consequently, an interview procedure is ordinarily employed. A researcher, in order to obtain the "reasons" for a particular statement, will often employ probes in seeking the rationale behind an informant's response. Since I did not use this procedure in this study, I am not certain that what I have cited as examples of "attributions" or "inferences" are indeed what Worth and Gross meant by the use of those terms. A statement coded here as an attribution might, upon further questioning, actually be an inference. For example, the following exchange was coded as an attribution:

#1 It's never going to work out with those two wives and the one husband living together, and the five kids.  
 #2 The one in Portland?  
 #1 What's he going to do on Monday, Wednesday and Friday? He stays downstairs? Tuesdays and Thursdays he's upstairs?  
 #2 Three days. He'll be there for three days. Then he'll be on the road for three weeks. He'll be up there for three days. Then, whoop, didn't work.  
 #3 It could work. The only problem was  
 #4 It worked before.  
 #3 They found out. See, it worked before they knew it.  
 #1 Yeah, but once you know, there's a jealousy and



everything. You can't help being suspicious all the time. So, that's why it wouldn't work.  
(Light)

Here, the reasons supplied for the attribution "It's never going to work" are drawn from the informant's knowledge of the real-world and the ways of jealous lovers ("You can't help being suspicious all the time. So, that's why it wouldn't work.") Now, suppose I had asked this informant, as other studies using the Worth/Gross theory have, "Why do you think it won't work?" This informant might have replied that all other relationships in the film which were based on "cheating" had failed, and therefore, the filmmaker was telling her that "Honest monogamy is what works." Or, the informant might have replied that other films with similar situations never work out; so CB would probably follow previous cinematic models. Thus, had I asked questions of the informant, it is possible that she might have supplied reasons that suggested a familiarity with cinematic conventions, filmmaker's intentions and so on. Had I carried out my study in this way, like other studies using the Worth/Gross model as a theoretical underpinning, this study would have been investigating the "social re-construction" of a social process (interpretation) through follow up probes, and so on.

The point made here is that viewers in this study seldom gave explicit reasons for interpretive statements. Thus, it could be said that I am really investigating how viewers talk about film rather than how a specific act of talk, an interpretation, is made

in regard to a film. As in much other natural conversation, specific reasons for a statement are not always supplied by a speaker, nor sought by a listener. Thus, the fact that speakers here responded as speakers are apt to do--challenging statements, agreeing with statement or glossing over statements and moving on to other topics of talk--makes it difficult to know with a great deal of certainty if this particular informant could have supplied "inferential" reasons for her apparently attributional interpretation in regard to the film had she been asked to do so.

However, a significant finding of this study might be just this very difference between my application of the inference/attribution model and the way it has been tested in previous research. These data show that without promptings or probes, informants do not discuss communicational meaning in the Worth/Gross sense. Rather, they discuss how a film is meaningful to them in some real-life context. The "reasons" supplied for a verbal statement are often drawn from their own worlds and familiar situations, not from within the film. As Mead noted, they organize the symbolic world in terms that are "common" to them through selection of a strategy that holds the film up to the mirror of their familiar realities.

Viewers in this study organized the symbolic world of CB in a variety of ways. A minority interpreted the film as an authored event. These viewers attended to messages they perceived as being placed in the film with the intent to communicate. However, the

communicator ordinarily held accountable for such messages--a particular author--was glossed over by most viewers. Inferences were made, as Messaris (1975) discovered, in terms of "theme" or "motif", and not in terms of formal or visual structures.

The majority of informants treated CB in terms of real-world rules rather than rules set up within the film by a filmmaker. Not only did most viewers treat the film as a non-mediated event; they seemed to hold an implicit norm that CB should conform to real-world views. Thus, even when viewers discussed making changes in the film, they did so in terms that would make the film conform more to their notions of reality. Modifications suggested at the structural level were unusual and were largely confined to Heavy viewers.

## VII.2 Integrational Aspects of Film Behavior

In this part of the conclusions, there are two issues raised by the data that must be addressed. First, why did viewers "interact" with Citizens Band rather than, say, interpret it in terms of message? Second, why do most viewers display an interpretive bent oriented more towards reality than towards fiction?

Let me address the first issue by stating that at the outset of this study, I noted that viewer interpretive engagements with the film were to be seen as socially situated acts. That is, specific statements about the film were but a part of what I called "film behavior". It would therefore be both naive and limiting to conceive

of inference or attribution as the only kinds of meanings that might inhere in viewer interpretive engagement with the film.

Goodlett, following Birdwhistell, takes a similar position:

A prevailing viewpoint in the literature on film is that film is 'one-way communication (sic)'... The 'one-way' (sometimes called 'hypodermic') viewpoint has confused the duration of contact with the duration of interaction. The sender/receiver model of 'communication' is based primarily upon the assumption that the communication process is built up out of particles of meaning, encapsulated into discrete forms. A different approach to communication sees that the passage of new information is a statistical rarity, and that the integrational aspect is at least as important. (1978, p. 4)

That is, a film, its structure, and those persons who attend to it must be analyzed in social terms, since the larger context within which film figures is human society.

Film, and talk about film, are only one among numerous other kinds of communication systems present in a society. Similarly, Malinowski (1923) (1956, p. 315) noted that the "integrative" aspect of communication is both a consequence and a necessary condition for group viability. Malinowski attended largely to one infra-communication system, speech. It, nevertheless, could be said that what Malinowski labeled "phatic communion" in which "ties of union are created through the mere exchange of words 'could be applied to film and peoples' talk about film. Thus, what I see in these data--in which viewers interact with a film rather than interpret it--is a way such "ties of union" are socially realized through talk about a particular event in a particular medium. Talk

about film provides yet another way persons socially integrate their communicative needs, both as individuals and members of groups.

Viewer interpretive engagement with the film might be explained by this social function film serves--of providing ties of union for groups of viewers. I again turn to Goodlett for support in regard to this position:

Films may provide ties of union among societies at several levels. Movie-going may offer opportunities for small groups to establish and re-affirm relationships--examples might be couples going out on a 'movie-date', families attending a movie as a group, etc. (1978, p.9)

The findings in this study, however, go further than merely exhuming Malinowski's pioneering work on the socially integrative aspects of speech. Verbal responses to film are more than "ties of union" and more than "mere exchange of (any old?) words". Film talk seems to have more specific and richer functions and effects than the term "phatic communion" indicates. Film going and talk provide the settings for the selection of other topics germane to individuals and groups.

Charles Hockett noted that phatic communion serves the function of informing all concerned that communication channels are in good working order for the transmission of more "important" (read "other") messages. That is, unless film figures very prominently in one's life, messages about film, while present to a degree, will take a secondary position to social interaction through a film.

It is almost certain that phatic communion plays a major role in those human activities usually classed as artistic--painting, sculpture, the dance, literature and so on--which seem to have certain communicative-like features but which are had to deal with completely in communicative terms. (1958, pp. 584-585)

Although films indeed were seen as containing messages from which inferences were made, these data show that one cannot approach their significance in "message" or "meaning" terms alone. Informants entered the marketplace of social discourse through the film. They emerged in their discourse concerning CB with items more "important" to them in their lives outside of a film viewing. It is significant that those viewers who "interpreted" rather than "interacted" with the film were Heavy viewers. These are persons, as data in Chapter IV indicated, who accord film a significant role in their social lives (i.e. making special plans to see a film, reporting membership in a network of people organized about film-going).

If one looks at all the group talks about CB, more than one-third of the duration of discussions were concerned with events totally outside the world of the film. For example, this exchange:

#1 Didn't his brother (Dean) look like someone I know? I was just thinking he sure looks like somebody.

#2 Actually, the brother turned out better than he started out to be.

#1 He does look like somebody I know. And I can't think of who it is.

#2 E \_\_\_\_\_ D \_\_\_\_\_?

#1 No, no. He doesn't look like E \_\_\_\_\_. He looks like somebody around here, who's a little different, bigger than he is.

- #3 Right. Kind of a heavy jaw...  
 #1 But a bigger man, a taller man.  
 #2 Well, E\_\_\_ is skinny, but his face...  
 #3 Talk about thinking of somebody, I had the weirdest experience this weekend. I kept saying to J\_\_\_, "Didn't you have an acting teacher who was about sixty years old. Who was funny." I said. You know, "At school, didn't I see your acting teacher, wasn't she about sixty--didn't you have one who was about sixty." Cause I had met his acting teacher. They had put the play on at Connecticut College, when the NTI was at Connecticut College. That's where we were this weekend, okay? And his drama teacher, one of his drama teachers was at the performance.  
 #1 Uh huh.  
 #3 And, he introduced us. And she was, you know, forty years old, thirty-five, thirty. Thirty-five. Thirty-five. And I kept saying, "You had a plump, old, sixty-year old big bosomed woman as a teacher, didn't you?" And he said, "No. I don't know what you're talking about." I couldn't think who this was. It turns out it was my teacher.  
 #1 Oh, how funny.  
 #3 Isn't that incredible.  
 #1 Well, all the teachers I have are like that, sixty years old.  
 #2 We all thought she was dreaming.  
 #3 Yeah. They all thought I was crazy, Cause I could see her plain as day, you know. And I was sure it was his teacher.  
 #2 It's one of those Wild Strawberries.<sup>1</sup>  
 #1 Was it a good play?

This group (Light) then discussed a play informants #2 and #3's son had appeared in. They accorded the play a good deal more evaluation than they had Citizens Band.

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<sup>1</sup> This awareness of the "allusive" function of films was mentioned by several Heavy viewers. For example, when queried about what he talks about when discussing films, an informant (Heavy) noted "Experiences that you have that remind you of films tend to set off discussions about films."

In other discussions, events in the film suggested similar events in real-life which were then discussed at length.

#1 That's what it's being used for here, obviously, itself. This is the way social contacts are maintained.

#2 Well, that's what we heard when we were coming back from the shore. We heard people talking on the side, and obviously having little chats with each other. And not just asking about traffic, but...

#3 Yeah, 'cause I would assume that in that area you might get to know certain handles sufficiently so that you would get involved marginally perhaps, but involved with people.

#2 I don't know how far they can broadcast. They can't broadcast real far.

#1 They have a limited range.

#3 No.

#2 So that you would have to...

#3 So you would probably hear the same people in a town...

#2 If you were a housewife, or something like that.

#1 But they recently opened a lot more channels. So pretty soon the airwaves are going to be pretty crowded with this kind of stuff. (laughter)

#2 That's right. They have something like fifty or sixty now, don't they?

#4 Coming back from the shore, we didn't get much of anything. We came down with somebody, and we'd get a lot of static.

#2 Yes. We got a lot of static and we got a lot of extra noise.

#4 The communication was really rather difficult.

#2 And it was dumb, dumb, dumb.

#4 Oh it was just unbelievably...

#2 I mean, what can you say to someone who's traveling the same highway as you, only a quarter mile in front of you?

#3 Four cars in front.

#2 I mean, there's not a great deal to talk about. It was really stupid.

#3 How's the weather up there?

#2 Yeah. Just about. That's just about it.

#1 Hmmm. (Heavy)

Although both groups use CB as an entry point in their talk, the discussions shift to events totally outside the film (Example #1)



or events largely outside but suggested by some part of the film (Example #2). In addition, in Group #1, there is a "use" of film (their reference to B ergman's Wild Strawberries) that suggests a social "meaning" or use of a film (as an allusive object) which has little to do with inference/implication, but is nevertheless a "meaning" for the film derived by an informant.

Such "out of frame" discussions ranged from stories about CB rescues, to informants talking about venereal warts or ceramic elf collections. These in/out frame discussions suggest that viewers use film, and talk about film, in this social manner. Viewers are more likely to view film as "meaningful" than they are likely to infer specific meanings from it.

The classes Heavy and Light, by which viewers were divided, did not always emerge as significant predictors of how viewers interpreted the film to the degree anticipated in the proposal for this research. It is true that Heavy viewers tended to make more inferences than Lights, showed a greater concern for structural rather than narrative aspects of the film, and tended to view CB more in terms of fiction rather than reality. However, neither class of viewer consistently applied an interpretive strategy across the film. This is in accord with Messaris' findings. (1975)

### VII.3 The Significance of Viewer Interaction with, and Reality Orientation Towards the Film

I therefore conclude that most viewers in this study "interacted"

with the film rather than "interpreted" it for the following reasons:

First, like any other symbolic event, viewing a film is a socially situated act. Thus, it becomes a part of the stream of culture through which informants engage in social communication. Those viewers who seemed most "film oriented" in their interpretive engagements were Heavy viewers, whose interest in film led to norms which focused critical attention more within the film than viewers who had less interest in the domain.

Second, since viewers were not asked by the researcher to qualify their statements about the film--but instead, left such qualification to their peers--perhaps what these data show is how viewers talk about a film, with "interpretation" being but one of many speech acts an interpreter has in a repertoire. Had the discussions been more focused (by myself) a different kind of interpretive engagement (and speech genre) probably would have occurred.

However, I find it significant that without promptings or probes, talk about film is likely to be talk through film, in which the very situation for post-hoc talk serves as a context for many types of discussion. Interpreters are also story tellers, parents, gossips and so on. Thus, to assume that they should play the role of "interpreter", without specifically being asked to do so, indicates that unless specifically called for (either by vocation or research context) informants' notions of "meaning" inhere in the social use of

a film, and not merely it's "implied message."

I shall now address the second issue in regard to viewer interpretive engagement with CB; why most viewers displayed an interpretive bent oriented more towards non-manipulated mediated authenticity (read "reality") than manipulated authorial control (read "fiction").

There were three kinds of data which were used in classifying an informant's response as either "reality" or "fiction" oriented. We shall here concentrate on "reality-orientations". First, there were, in the Worth/Gross sense, attributions. For example, the statement, "The women were of the community that accepted that sort of thing in their social relationships" is based on an informant's personal knowledge of characters in the film, and not characteristics implied by the filmmaker. A second kind of reality orientation are the data from questions viewers asked in the group discussions. The question, "How could you make that much (money) by, wait, how could you make that much driving a truck to support two families and a hooker?" (Light), shows no indication of "message", and so on; instead, it attempts to ground the film in experiences familiar to the informant from her personal knowledge of the salaries of truck-drivers, etc. Third, informants, in their expectations and framings constantly tried to ground the film in a context familiar to them (i.e. venue, occupation, or laws of physical causality).

In attempting to understand some of the reasons for informants' use of a reality-oriented interpretive scheme, it might be instruc-

tive to take a selectively brief look at the social history of how film and photography have been treated as interpretive objects.

Photography, and later motion pictures, were considered by many scholars to be copies of and not manipulated interpretations of what they recoded.

Charles Peirce noted in 1893, just prior to the "official" invention of motion pictures:

Photographs, especially instantaneous photographs, are very instructive, because we know that they are in certain respects exactly like the objects they represent. But this resemblance is due to the photograph having been produced under such circumstances that they were physically forced to correspond point by point to nature.  
(1955, p. 106)

For Peirce, a photograph (and perhaps film) was an "index", whose meaning was inherent in the physical relationship established between signifier and signified. Such signs are proof of existence; meaning to Peirce, in such cases is, in the Worth and Gross sense, "existential".<sup>2</sup>

Dan Schiller, in an overview of the various functions accorded 19th century codes of realism notes that, "The nature of the belief in 'realism' is a historical problem, accessible to empirical analysis within particular cultural contexts." (1977, p. 86) The investigation

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<sup>2</sup> Worth and Gross do note that the signness of any object is contingent upon its placement in a context; "However, the signness of a natural event exists only and solely because, within some context, human beings treat the event as a sign." (1974, p. 29)

of what "realism meant" to a people during a time can be best approached "by inquiring as to the terms in which a given society poses and responds to the question, 'What is realism?'" (Ibid., p.87)

While we are sadly deficient in studies which investigate the validation of different cultures' definitions of what "realism" means in regard to film, there is no shortage of anecdotal materials in which persons have been reported treating mediated events with rules they would apply to the real world (C.f. Balazs 1970, Jowett 1976, Brownlow 1968).

Kevin Brownlow's The Parade's Gone By (interviews with film "pioneers" concerning the early days of film) provides data on early audiences' "demands" that films be realistic:

The alibi, "The audience will never notice" was given the lie early in Photoplay's 'Why Do They Do It' column--which was entirely devoted to blunders made in movies.

Audiences spotted every conceivable error, and specialists in various subjects had a field day when films appeared dealing with their favorite topic. (1968, p. 276)

Thus, the Art Departments of all major Hollywood studios became obsessed with the idea that audiences must be presented with "authentic" sets and furnishings--despite the fact that the goings on which took place on these sets were often patently absurd, unrealistic in many details.

There thus seems to have been an early demand that certain aspects of a film "appear realistic". Interestingly, early viewers--

and some in this study--can accept "unrealistic" stories while still admiring the "realism" of the sets; the obverse is also true.

The few studies which have specifically investigated viewers' "reality" vs. "fictive" orientations towards mediated fare indicate that education is a critical variable in viewer orientation towards either interpretive approach (c.f. Thomas, 1978).

In light of the fact that all informants in this study were college educated, how is one to explain these data--that most informants, either at some point in their interpretations treated CB as a "realistic" event? I can here only propose a few tentative reasons why this should be the case. These data do not merit historical conclusions, or any other conclusions save those which describe what viewers actually did when responding to a film. Since informants, in their group discussions, supplied few reasons why they chose to treat CB according to real-world views, I can only hazard guesses as to why this should be so, and propose future research directions which could further investigate these issues.

First, let me take a hint from G. H. Mead's statement that the perception of symbolic events is "a selective process by which that is picked out what is common." That is, informants evaluate the film using real-world criteria. When interpreting it--supplying meanings--they are more likely to infer than to attribute meaning. So, reality is an evaluative criterion more than an interpretive

one. It should not be overlooked, however, that inferences were rare occurrences (11%) among all interpretive engagements with film.

I can suggest two reasons why "reality" should be the dominant evaluative criteria for the film. First, the frame of the film is "naturalistic". Events are shown occurring in some ethnographic present with which informants have a degree of familiarity. Thus, those parts of the film most "criticized" because they violated reality were either specific instances informants "knew" could not be so (i.e. Chrome Angel sustaining only a broken arm after being pinned beneath his truck for five minutes of film time) or parts that violated or were alien to informants' norms and subjective knowledge of events (bigamy, "unplanned" chance meetings of all significant persons in one place at one time). Take, for example, this exchange:

#1 I mean, the two wives may have been corny,  
but it was good fun.  
#2 And it had a basis for good, serious thinking, too.  
I mean, those things do go on in a serious vein.  
#1 Do you know anybody with two wives, huh?  
#2 No.  
#1 Okay then.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> However, seemingly "fantastic" and "unfamiliar" events are daily given credence in the human interest columns of newspapers. For example, this excerpt from the Philadelphia Inquirer:

The place was Chase, Kan. The guests had taken their seats in the church. The bride and groom looked at each other lovingly. The minister cleared his throat. The ceremony was about to begin.

'Sportser Queen and Snow Blind', the Rev. Raymond Massey intoned solemnly, 'have you got your ears on?' And so

Realism in evaluation, then, is a function of both the frame set up by the film and informants' knowledge and familiarity with the events in a film. Had I chosen a "fantastic" film (i.e. Superman), I am sure that reality, as an evaluative criterion would not have been accorded the same significance it was here.

Second, although these data on reality/fiction orientations do not merit such an assertion, the historical validation of film as "the most realistic" of mediated forms could provide an overall context in which selected pieces of the film are evaluated using realism as a yardstick. When various frames have been presented to viewers that demarcate a film as "realistic", interpretations may vary in fictive/reality orientations according to both the strength of the conventions used in the film (and present in the viewers) and the degree of training viewers have had in filmmaking or analysis.

Mitch Block's film No Lies is an outstanding example of a scripted, fictive event which, because of the visual code employed ("cinema verite") often gives rise, in viewers untrained in either filmmaking or acting, to "attributions" rather than "inferences". Viewers without training in analysis almost always discuss the film

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began another everyday, garden-variety, trucker's wedding--  
 The wedding guests filled up the church parking lot  
 with their rigs, and everyone addressed each other  
 according to their CB handles. (June 7, 1979. p. 2A)  
 In addition, director Jonathan Demme has stated that the original  
 idea for the film was suggested by an article in a newspaper.  
 See "Demme Monde" in Film Comment, Vol. 16, No. 5, pp. 56-59.



as if it were real, because they perceive the code as standing for "documentary".

Yet another example of viewer "frame confusion" was made available to me by Sol Worth several years ago. Vincent Canby, in his review of Alan King's "documentary" Warrendale noted,

I wonder how we can criticize this very special kind of movie, except to say that it is beautifully photographed and edited. Otherwise like the life it records, it simply exists, beyond criticism. (My emphasis)

Canby's perception of the film as being shot within a documentary frame limits his evaluation and criticism of Warrendale to "reality" status. Thus, in this case, one interprets in terms of how one feels about emotionally disturbed children, and so on.

As a last piece of explanatory data concerning the existence of strong reality oriented evaluative frames for certain mediated events, I cite the well-known case of Orson Welles' radio broadcast of H.G. Wells' War of the Worlds. Welles in radio, as Mitch Block had in film, manipulated audio codes assumed to be "documentary" while creating a fictive event. Thus many listeners believed a "fantastic" event (the invasion of Earth by Martians) was, indeed, occurring because of the very strength and recognition of the "documentary" code of radio. Despite the fact that Welles frequently framed his performance with statements informing the audience that they were listening to "The Mercury Theatre on the Air's adaptation of H. G. Wells' War of the Worlds", and although regular radio pro-

gramming continued "as normal" (providing a conflicting frame for those unsure of the veracity of the Welles' broadcast) many listeners in the audience were convinced, for some period of time, that the Welles' broadcast was "reality". The Welles case also illustrated possible differences between a given code ("documentary") and the weight accorded the medium in which the code is being used (Wells' "literature" versus Welles' "radio"). Morson (1979) has commented upon the differences evaluations of different media can have upon the effects interpreters might accord events in these media:

The 'safe' entertainment of beliefs that are radically different from conventional beliefs is, in fact, one of the principle social functions of literatures' 'entertainment'.

Orson Welles, however, used a different medium than H. G. Wells. In all likelihood, radio provided a different frame for evaluation (and interpreting) "entertainment" events as real or fictive.

Wells played upon a confusion of frames in order to defamiliarize frame markers and the process of their correct identification. He created the possibility of errors in order to show how important is the correct identification of frames; those who made errors were themselves 'framed', and, by becoming actors as well as listeners, were 'taken' in. (1979, pp. 12, 17)

I am here arguing that because CB and perhaps many other films as well, are perceived at several laminations of frame as "realistic" (i.e. the events themselves are presented in such a manner that they are familiar and obey known laws of physical causality,

events are filmed 'on location' and perhaps events are recorded on film, that "most realistic" of media) viewers evaluate certain parts in real-world terms. Considering the frames provided in CB, this reality orientation is not surprising. As I noted in Chapter V, viewers often attempted to ground the film in reality, searching the frame for evidence that would enable them to perceive it in realistic terms.

As logical extensions to these findings, I suggest studies in the following aspects of "film behavior": The extent of deviation from perceived notions of verisimilitude to which viewers will attend before "framing" the film as realistic or not, as well as the kinds of events in a film viewers feel are appropriately assessed in real-world terms. That is is a reality orientation "medium" or "code" specific, event specific, viewer or even culture specific, or a function of experience with a variety of symbolic modes?

Since I have explained these data on viewer evaluative reality orientation in terms of 1) the historical social weight accorded film and, 2) the perception of "realistic" frames in a film that are congruent with viewers' knowledge of events, we now turn to data which specifically addressed the social weight and uses and gratifications issues.

#### VII.4 The Social Weight Accorded Film

In Chapter II, I asked the question, "On some imaginary map of the domain of communication behavior, how large a portion does film occupy?" It was expected that informants who were more interested in film would have more elaborate "maps" of the domain than those for whom film figured less significantly. This discussion describes the kinds of knowledge informants have about film as a socially situated event, and how this knowledge affected viewer interpretive engagement with Citizens Band.

First, the data indicate that different classes of viewers have different preparatory sets in regard to films. These preparatory sets are comprised of different evaluative rules for what a viewer attends to as objects of value and interpretation in a film. However, the most significant factor affecting a viewer's interpretive engagement with a film was the significance accorded films in general. The data indicated that viewers either possessed a context in which film was seen as "entertainment" or one in which it is an evaluative object as well as one of potential entertainment. The former context provided viewers with the conditions in which attributions were made rather than inferences, in which a reality rather than fictive orientation was largely used in interpreting and assessing CB, and in which talk about the film was performed in a discursive style which could have obtained to many activities other than film interpretation. Viewers who viewed film in the latter

context meaning more often than attributing it, were more inclined to treat the film as a fictive, structured event than a naturalistic one, using a discursive style oriented more towards certain aspects of film (author, audience, structure) than were entertainment oriented viewers.

The patterns in these data--in which the overall context in which film in general is placed--should not be viewed in terms of a "cause and effect" model. Rather, these data are the result of a constellation of contexts surrounding film as a socially situated event. Specific differences in interpreters and interpretations are seen as actuated through these contexts. For analytic purposes, I discussed the data as "discrete" events. It is, however, the constellation of contexts rather than a single context which is the channel through which individual differences among interpreters were manifested. Thus, a discrete analytic context i.e. "more-than-entertainment-oriented", held by viewers is also likely to include the use of critical reviews in specific media for pre-screening a film, or to include critical triangulation as an interpretive principle or, to report membership in a social network of peers organized about film-going. A kind of behavior in regard to film is also likely to include other kinds of attitudes towards the domain. Film, once accorded a certain weight as social behavior, will be "elaborated" through particular kinds of activities.

A particular kind of elaboration accorded film--interest

manifested through attendance patterns--should not be mistaken for another kind of elaboration; formal training in either filmmaking or film analysis. Despite the fact that all informants in the study had a context that could possibly provide a "critical" orientation towards film (college education), a non-critical (reality oriented) approach was often used in responding to CB. I suggest that without a special kind of training in film, differences in interpretive skills between classes of interpreters and individuals within a class will not be that marked. That is, although the social weight accorded film differs for the classes Heavy and Light, such differences do not lead to consistent patterns of different interpretive engagements with Citizens Band. As studies by Messaris (1975), Aibel (1976) Custen (1976) and Thomas (1978) have shown, experience in producing mediated events is perhaps the critical factor influencing the ways persons respond to mediated events.

Evaluative contexts and the social weight accorded film are not equivalent indices of skill compared to the skill and competence acquired by performing creative (production) activities in a given symbolic mode. Performance through creation is one of the most powerful predictors of differences in interpretive engagement with a film.

None of the informants had been trained in either filmmaking or film analysis. Based on these data, I cannot state with

certainty what specific factors might account for viewers holding one interpretive context or another in regard to a film. As Sol Worth has noted (1977), research needs to be done on how actual interpreters treat a variety of symbolic forms in their natural settings before we can safely state that the data here have any significance beyond a single mode, film, research context or group of informants. This study, has however, discovered several things about film and its participants which I think could prove valuable for future research. Of particular import is the preliminary description of public, non-academic interpretive behavior.

#### VII.5 The Nature of Viewer Interpretive Engagement with Film.

First, interpretive engagement is, for all viewers, an active process. This activity can take a variety of forms. Interpreters "rework", "frame", "question", and "infer" and "attribute" meanings in a complex process of negotiation. Viewers reach inside and outside of the film in attempts to render it meaningful. Moreover, these acts are performed within limited portions of the film (particularly openings and closings and parts that violate "reality rules"). It would be interesting to see if such specific location of responses is limited to a film or mode, or instead is a pattern that obtains to many symbolic modes and interpreters.

Second, membership in a social group or network is an important determinant of how an individual weighs film as a kind of symbolic

behavior. All viewers ordinarily prefer to attend films with a group. Those members belonging to a group organized, in certain largely around film-going had norms for interpretation and selection of films that extended beyond the duration of immediate contact with a film or group of persons with whom one saw a film. Such viewers extended their interest in film by regularly reading critical materials and talking about film at times other than those immediately after a viewing.

Third, because "film behavior" is but another slice of communications behavior in which viewers, as social beings, constantly participate, interpretations and evaluations are made in terms that are integrative with their daily lives. The data show a strong "integrative" aspect being served by a film, both in the "reality" orientations used for evaluation and the practical uses film serves for viewers in their daily lives.

It was not uncommon for a viewer to report "general" uses and gratifications film serves ("coin of exchange", leisure "aesthetic" or "entertainment" experience, "escapism"). Because film is also an "artifact", once it becomes part of the domain of "public" culture, rather than the property of a small group of specially trained persons (filmmakers, producers) it becomes open to specific uses surely unanticipated by its creators. Thus, one informant saw Heaven Can Wait (1977) because it helped him "cope" with the death of a parent. Another informant saw Superman two times. The first



viewing could be seen as serving the use, for the informant, as a coin of exchange; "Superman I saw it the first time because it was new and everybody was seeing it. I had heard good things about it, so I went to see it." The second viewing of the film, however, could be seen as serving a much more idiosyncratic use as to other uses the film might have served for audience members;

And, I went to see it the second time because I was with somebody I knew would appreciate certain parts of the movie. The girl goes to Vassar, and that's in Poughkeepsie. And there's this one little part where they're announcing the train stops, and one of the stops is Poughkeepsie. So, that was the main reason I took her. Because I knew she would get a charge out of it...She went nuts.  
(Light)

Each viewer had his or her own "use" for a film. One informant was so enamored of Watership Down that she named her car after the film. Another informant, in a group discussion, reported that Citizens Band served the use I have heard called "social learning";

#1 Remember when our discussion was through last night? About going to a commuter-type school? From this movie, I figured out why it's terrible.  
#2 Why?  
#1 'cause whenever you had things, did you, like did your parents go and see your shows and stuff?  
#2 Sometimes.  
#1 Well, I think essentially nobody does that, nobody wants to go all the way hell out there. So, if you do anything, nobody's going to see it. So what's the use?  
(Light)

The film, as a piece of social behavior, served diverse "uses" for all informants. While one of the uses might be the very act

of making meaning through interpretation, the film was also used in creating meanings other than those internal to the film's intent. Thus, one informant reported using pieces of dialogue from Casablanca in his attempts to "pick-up" women. One informant reported attending foreign films to "brush-up" on her language skills; another informant went to Italian films to see familiar locales. I can also recall from my childhood my mother informing my sister to "Stop pulling a Judy Garland and come out of your room and eat dinner with the family." While today, one might tell a sulking child to "Stop pulling a Mary Hartman" and join the family, the specific mediated event alluded to is not as significant as the fact of a film or TV program being used "to mean" in a non-inferential way.

These data suggest that film should be seen as "meaningful" not only in regard to its internal orderings, but in the use to which such internal orderings are put by viewers away from the film, after the particular duration of viewing. This is not to suggest that the term "meaning" as used by Worth and Gross (and the sense with which this study initially used the term "meaning") is too restrictive. Interpretations and evaluations are kinds of meaningful events that are part of "film behavior". However, by limiting the study of meaning in a film to specific statements made about the internal ordering of a film at the time of any one study's ethnographic present is, I think, to miss the larger frames in which interpretive acts about film might figure.

I suggest that the different kinds of interpretive acts viewers engage in with a film be studied in different communities, over time, using what Worth (1977) called "ethnographic semiotics" and what Goodlett has called "metacinematics", which would "be concerned with the investigation of the social meaning of films." (1978, p. 147) Just as sociolinguists have realized that in studying speech, speakers and not the organs of speech are the "emitters" of speech, researchers concerned with film and meaning must realize, I think, that various activities adhering to film (making film, viewing film and talking about or interpreting film) provide sources of potentials for behavior which are selectively regulated by a culture and rendered in various ways as meaningful.

Frequency of attendance at film is but one pattern which is actuated through film. By taking the Worth/Gross model and the results of this study into different communities, the kinds of meaning accorded film can be further investigated. What the data from this study show should be taken as broad hints that locate certain patterns of viewer response to a film. These findings suggest that the true investigation of meaning and film must take place in the common symbolic marketplace. There we can seek to discover contextual patterning in and different cultural groups' engagements with film.

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## APPENDIX I

### Narrative Description of Citizens Band with Sequence Timings

Sequence Number	Time	Transitions Used	Narrative Events
1	1:51	Straight Cut	Opening montage; film credits. All the characters voices are heard talking on the CB radio. Electra (Pam) says, "There are a lot of voices out there, but yours is different. I like it."
2	9:20	Dissolve	Warlock, parked in a car, talks to Electra on the CB. She tells him to "undo a few buttons" on his shirt. Chrome Angel (Harold Risley) a truck-driver is shown overhearing this on his CB. Engrossed in this conversation, he runs his truck off the road. Chrome Angel calls for help on the emergency CB channel ("Union REAC"). Spider (Blane) responds to the call. Spider calls Smilin' Jack, a gas station owner for help, but has difficulty getting through because the Hustler is "clogging up" the emergency channel with semi-obscene patter. Chrome Angel gets out of his truck to investigate the damage, and inadvertently pins his arm beneath the truck. Spider goes out to investigate the accident. With the aid of a fellow CB owner he frees Chrome Angel, reassuring him that help is on the way via the CB.
3	10:00	Dissolve	Chrome Angel's truck, filled with cattle, is being repaired at Smilin' Jack's station. Jack warns him that the cattle had better not cause trouble while the truck is at the station. The cattle defecate on the blacktop.
4	13:22	Dissolve	Spider at home with his father, Papa Thermodyne. The morose father only appears animated when a friend, Dudley Doright, calls him on the CB. Papa's conversation is interrupted

Sequence Number	Time	Transitions Used	Narrative Events
4 (cont)			by the "Priest", who proselityses over the CB. Blane tells Papa he is going to town. Papa says, "Then the dog (Ned) dies."
5	13:52	Dissolve	Blane in his car with Ned. Over the CB he hears Grandma Breaker telling a rather involved tale of her life in Idaho with ehr M.D. father. Ned hangs out the window of the car.
6	15:04	Dissolve	Chrome Angel calls his two wives, simultaneously, on two pay telephones to tell them that his truck has broken down in Union. He tells them both (Portland Angel=Connie, Dallas Angel=Joyce) not to come to Union.
7	17:15	Straight Cut	Dean (Blood), Blane's brother with his High School gym class. One of the students, Connover (Hustler) has to run "penalty laps" around the gym becuase he forgot his jock strap. Blane, arriving at the gym, tells Connover he will "handle the Coach". Dean, furious at Blane's interference starts to argue with him. Pam (Electra) also a gym teacher, enters with her class, and the argument ends.
8	18:43	Dissolve	Dean and Blane in Dean's office in the locker room. Blane tells Dean that he "can't reach Papa" anymore, asking for Dean's help. Dean at first refuses, but agrees to give Papa a birthday party in an attempt to "reach him".
9	19:28	Straight Cut	Pam meets Blane outside the gym, on the track. He asks her if he can pick up some things he left at her apartment, including an engagement ring. She agrees to let him come over.
10	20:32	Dissolve	Debby (Hot Coffee), a prostitute is shown propositioning customers over the CB. Chrome Angel arrives. He



Sequence Number	Time	Transitions Used	Narrative Events
10			is a steady customer of Hot Coffee's, and pays the rent on her home (Cozy Cove). She tells him that her business is bad since they moved the highway. Chrome Angel tells her that she must go "mobile", like the rest of the country, if her business is to survive.
11	22:48	Dissolve	Chrome Angel and Hot Coffee look at mobile homes. He agrees to make the downpayment on the home, but Hot Coffee must make the monthly payments. They agree.
12	23:14	Dissolve	Hot Coffee, on the road with her new mobile home, propositions the truck in front of her. He agrees to "taste her hot coffee", and pulls off the road. (This is shown in fast motion, or undercranked camera speed.)
13	23:52	Straight Cut	Blane visits Pam to retrieve his things but insists she keep her engagement ring. He finds out she is seeing some new person, but is unable to learn who. He asks her if she still uses the CB radio he gave her. "Sometimes", says Pam.
14	23:59	Dissolve	Blane, driving his car, sees a plane about to crash on the road. He calls on the CB emergency channel for help, but is unable to get through because the Hustler ("the biggest stud in town") is illegally using the channel. Blane rescues the pilot from the downed plane, assuring him "Help should be here soon. I've got a CB."
15	28:18	Dissolve	Blane, in a cafe with friends, vows to clean up the band of those who misuse CB radio by "kicking ass".
16	29:11	Dissolve	Blane installs a "range finder" on his car to detect the source of illegal CB broadcasts. He warns all those listening of his crusade.

Sequence Number	Time	Transitions Used	Narrative Events
17	30:30	Straight Cut	Blane, with the aid of Cochise locates the Hustler, who is a young boy. Blane enters his home and smashes his CB with a club. The Hustler's mother returns and thanks Blane for his deed; she had become exasperated with her son's CB obsession.
18	32:38	Dissolve	Chrome Angel's two wives in a bus depot. They sit next to each other on the bus. After exchanging pleasantries and swapping photographs, they discover they are both married to truckdrivers. Connie tells of the time she discovered her husband "cheating" with another woman. They then discover that they are married to the same man, Chrome Angel. (END OF REEL I) Joyce asks Connie if this means that they are related. There is then an iris in on Chrome Angel trying to call Joyce in Dallas.
	37:19		
19	:26	Straight Cut	Blane cuts Grandma Breaker's CB wires outside her home.
20	1:12	Straight Cut	Chrome Angel, in Hot Coffee's mobile home, explains his bigamous situation, noting, "Sometimes you're on the road so long you forget just how good a woman feels." The wives pass by the mobile home en route to a motel. They register in two single rooms because as Joyce notes "They're might be litigation." (DISSOLVE) Hot Coffee and Chrome Angel discussing the predicament.
21	2:19	Straight Cut	Blane finds Papa passed out next to the CB radio. Papa is drunk. Blane weeps on Papa's head.
22	3:15	Dissolve	Blane receives an award from the American Legion for his rescuse of the airplane pilot. Papa is absent.
23	3:15	Dissolve	Pam and Dean argue about whether she

Sequence Number	Time	Transitions Used	Narrative Events
23			should attend his teams basketball game. He quizzes her about her present involvement with his brother, Blane. She says she is "A woman, and not a trophy."
24	6:05	Straight Cut	Dean at Basketball Game. His team loses by one point, and his exasperation is shown in a FREEZE FRAME. Warlock is shown sitting on the bench.
25	6:45	Dissolve	After the game, Blane is waiting in the school parking lot for the team bus. He and Pam have a reconciliation and kiss. Dean witnesses the kiss, and walks away.
26	9:42	Dissolve	Blane and Cochise dismantle the aerial of Red Baron, a Neo-Nazi who wants to keep the CB airways "racially pure". They tie Red Baron's aerial to his own car; when he pursues them, he dismantles his own aerial.
27	13:26	Dissolve	A view of the "junkyard" surrounding Blane and Papa's home. Blane asks Papa to watch Ned while he runs an errand. Papa refuses, again noting that "The dog dies." Blane says "Do whatever you want" and leaves Papa with the dog.
28	13:55	Dissolve	Papa, outside his home, talks to Dudley Doright on the CB. He tells the CB friend that he wants to go to Canada. Dudley tells him Canada is only 26-27 hours away. Papa notes that there are lots of cattle in Canada, and that he would like to raise cattle.
29	14:21	Straight Cut	The wives are at a Chinese restaurant discussing a strategy for dealing with Chrome Angel. They discover that each was married under a different religion. Jiyce asks Connie if she is the other woman Connie had

Sequence Number	Time	Transitions Used	Narrative Events
29			mentioned on the bus. Connie is not sure. Joyce then notes that "We don't actually know that he's been unfaithful, technically speaking." Connie feels that she must "Sit on that one for a while."
30	16:30	Freeze Frame and Dissolve	Blane and Dean bickering in a bakery while ordering a birthday cake for Papa's upcoming birthday party. Blane then searches for the CB Priest in his car. He enters a church confessional after seeing the telltale aerial hidden in a religious statue. The Priest hears his confession ("I've had sinful thoughts against my father"), and then slams the confessional shut, saying, "Big Roger Spider, 10-4." Blane does not dismantle the Priest's aerial.
31	20:52	Straight Cut	Wives in a motel room, drinking wine. They have decided what to do with Chrome Angel; "Find him, break his balls and divorce him."
32	22:06	Dissolve	Blane takes Pam to Papa's for dinner. Blane notes to Pam that the tough meat tastes like horsemeat. Papa claims it is dogmeat. Blane frantically looks for his dog, Ned. Pam tells Papa he should have simmered the meat longer. Papa tells Pam that she should go to Canada, for "This country promises everything, sure. I should have stayed in Canada. Had a cattle ranch there. It's mighty hard for a man without a woman." Blane returns, feeling Papa has cooked Ned. Papa opens a cupboard, and the dog steps out. Blane drives Pam home, telling her that he knew all along that Papa had not cooked Ned. (FREEZE FRAME)
33	25:22	Dissolve	Spider, in his CB repair room, hears a voice on the CB (Blood) threatening

Sequence Number	Time	Transitions Used	Narrative Events
33			his life.
34	26:35	Dissolve	Wives let cattle out of Chrome Angel's truck.
35	28:05	Dissolve	Cochise and Smilin' Jack cleaning up after the cattle. Jack says, "I want him and his bullshit truck out of here."
36	28:16	Straight Cut	Wives in motel room read letter from Chrome Angel. He asks them to meet him in the yellow camper (Hot Coffee's) in the parking lot. They go to the trailer and meet Hot Coffee, who Harold assures them is "Just a friend."
37	30:43	Dissolve	Blane, preparing for Papa's party, is threatened by Blood on the CB. He goes to look for Blood. Warlock, in his car, is talking to Electra on the CB. She tells him, "I have two boyfriends, but I can't talk to them like I talk to you. You know, like sexy and dreamy and tenderly."
38	36:36	Straight Cut	Chrome Angel and wives arguing. A Pizza is delivered. The idea of the two families sharing a duplex is suggested by Hot Coffee. (End Reel II)
39	38:21	Straight Cut	Blane discovers that Electra is Pam.
40	2:07	Straight Cut	Compromise with the duplex is agreed upon.
41	4:52	Dissolve	After discovering that Blood is his brother (Dean), Blane returns home to Papa's party to find Papa passed out. He wakes him by calling him on the CB. Tells Papa that he is going away but that Papa will be well taken care of.

Sequence Number	Time	Transitions Used	Narrative Events
42	8:22	Dissolve	Papa, after giving some birthday cake to Ned, packs his suitcase and walks off into the woods. On the soundtrack we hear a CB warning that he is lost in a storm.
43	9:14	Dissolve	Pam comes to Blane's to help look for Papa. Dean answers the door and is reconciled with Pam. All of the CB characters (Hustler and his mother, Priest, Red Baron, Grandma Breaker, Smilin' Jack, Cochise, Chrome Angel and wives, Warlock and Hot Coffee) search for Papa after hearing the plea for help on the CB. Papa is discovered riding Chrome Angel's missing cattle. Pam and Blane are reconciled.
44	16:13	Dissolve	Pam and Blane are married via CB radio with the Priest officiating. A plane, presumably flown by the pilot whose life Blane had saved carries a sign, "Happy Wedding Spider and Electra". Hot Coffee is flirting with Warlock via the CB.
45	19:28	Dissolve and and Fade Out	Credits for the film superimposed over the final wedding festivities. Voice of Arthur Godfrey says, "We definitely out."

APPENDIX II

List of Films Named by Informants and Their Gross Box Office Receipts  
in the First Year of Release (Source; Variety)

@ Gross Receipts less than \$1,000,000  
\* "All-Time Rental Champ"  
# Revival  
X Foreign  
O Limited American Distribution  
N Receipts Not Available

LIGHT			HEAVY		
<u>Viewers</u>	<u>Film</u>	<u>Receipts in Millions</u>	<u>Viewers</u>	<u>Film</u>	<u>Receipts in Millions</u>
5	*Superman	81.	3	*Superman	81.
4	*Death on the Nile	8.134	2	XOAutumn Sonata	2.
3	*Star Wars	127.	2	*Death on the Nile	8.130
2	*Animal House	52.36	2	XO#Fanny	N
2	#XOBittersweet	N	2	O girlfriends	1.
2	*California Suite	29.2	2	*Going South	4.627
2	#XOCavalcade	N	2	*Hooper	31.5
2	*Heaven Can Wait	42.517	2	*Invasion of the Body- snatchers	11.056
2	*Interiors	4.	2	XO#Marius	N
2	*King of the Gypsies	4.	2	@Movie, Movie	
2	*An Unmarried Woman	11.	2	OX@No Time For Breakfast	
1	XOThe Story of Adele H	1.1	2	XOEI Topo	N
1	#*Annie Hall	12.	2	*A Wedding	3.6
1	XOAutumn Sonata	2	1	xO"Bolivian Movie"	N
1	@XOCat and Mouse		1	*California Suite	29.2
1	*Coming Home	8.2	1	#XOCasque D'Or	N
1	XODona Flor and Her Two Husbands	N	1	#XOLa Chienne	N
1	@XOThe First Time		1	XOCoup de Grace	N
1	*The Goodbye Girl	41.	1	XODona Flor	N
1	@XOThe Innocent		1	*King of the Gypsies	4.
1	*The Invasion of the Bodysnatchers	11.056	1	#XOThe Loneliness of the Long Dis- tance Runner	N

LIGHT			HEAVY		
<u>Viewers</u>	<u>Film</u>	<u>Receipts in Millions</u>	<u>Viewers</u>	<u>Film</u>	<u>Receipts in Millions</u>
1	@XOJules et Jim	N	1	*Lord of the Rings	13.457
1	@XONo Time For Break- fast		1	XOMadame Rosa	1.680
1	#XOOrpheus	N	1	@XOOne Sings, The Other Doesn't	
1	#*Pinochio	13.	1	@OPumping Iron	
1	#*Taxi Driver	11.6	1	@OQuintet	
1	XOEI Topo	N	1	*Revenge of the Pink Panther	25.
1	*The Turning Point	15.045	1	XOSlave of Love	N
1	@XOViolette		1	Watership Down	2.5
1	*The Wiz	6.681	1	OSweet California	N
			1	*The Wiz	6.681



## APPENDIX III

## Sample Interview; Light Viewer

- Q: How many movies do you see?  
A: Maybe four or five a year. Not very many.  
Q: Does that include television?  
A: If you include television, I'd say maybe...I just watch it if it's on. I don't particularly want to watch it. But it might be once a month, if you consider that.
- Q: What do you do when you want to go to the movies?  
A: Look in the papers, see what's closest. Ummm, if I've heard something is particularly good, I might go out of my way to see it. But that's very rare. Very rare.  
Q: Do you ever get suggestions by other people?  
A: I don't really talk to many people about movies. So, it's mostly... it might be that someone has mentioned that something was good, but I only take that into account for a little while, you know.  
Q: So, it's mostly newspapers or...  
A: Different advertisements. If I see film clips and something looks interesting, or if there's something I want to take my cousins to see, I'll take them to see it.  
Q: These are little cousins?  
A: Yeah. Little kids. I go to little kid films. Disney. I saw Pinochio this year.  
Q: Do you count those in the four movies you see a year?  
A: Yeah. (laughs)
- Q: When do you go to the movies, usually?  
A: When? Umm, if I', with my cousins, it's usually a Saturday afternoon, you know when they're over. Or, during the week.  
Q: During the week?  
A: I prefer to go when there isn't as much of a crowd. I don't like a cramped theatre.
- Q: Are there any social occasions, or occasions when you go to the movies? Your little cousins would be one. Are there any other kinds?  
A: Well, if I go with J\_\_\_, with a friend. But, umm, I don't have a gang of people that get together and go to a movie every so often if that's what you mean. It's no regular thing.
- Q: What movies have you seen recently? Can you think of the last few movies that you've seen?  
A: Okay. Star Wars. How recent is that? Invasion of the Body-snatchers, the Pinochio. Pinochio and umm, I saw another Disney one. Darn, I can't remember what it was. It had Winnie the Pooh, that's all I remember. And Animal House.
- Q: What kinds of movies do you like to see?  
A: Oh, I have a variety. I don't have any particular style that I

like to see. But I don't go out of my way to see foreign films at all. I don't really come into the city. And they aren't very often offered in the suburbs. I avoid the city. Unless I'm in with a friend, which isn't too often.

Q: Are there any movies you won't go to see?

A: X's, absolutely not.

Q: Anything else?

A: A lot of violence. If I know that there's a lot of violence in a movie, I'll avoid it. If I know it's a little too explicit for me, even if it's rated a GP or an R, I won't bother to go see it. What else...that's about all I can think of.

Q: Can you tell me how you decided to go see Star Wars, or Invasion of the Bodysnatchers or Animal House?

A: Okay. Pinocchio I took my cousins to, obviously. Animal House I just happened to see, because I was in , you know, they have the twin theatres? And I took my cousins to see Pinocchio, and I saw Animal House was on the other side. So, they watched the second showing of Pinocchio and I saw Animal House. Well, that's one movie I do walk out on. Yes, I went back and saw the rest of Pinocchio. That's terrible, but...Invasion of the Bodysnatchers was with, you know, a friend. Somebody else picked out the movie, really. It sounded interesting. I had seen the original, and I thought it would be nice to see the remake. I like the horror movies, that Saturday morning, you know, the Skull, things like that. I enjoy those.

Q: Do you remember how you saw Star Wars?

A: Well, I liked Star Trek, and it was similar. And I like Science Fiction. So it was natural for me to go to Star Wars.

Q: Do you ever talk about films with anyone?

A: Not really. Because I don't really watch a lot. Now if I see one, and I want to recommend it, I will, but I don't really see all that many. If they don't come close enough, I don't get to see it.

Q: Are there any particular people you do talk to, when you do talk?

A: Hmmm. No. Just the person that I went with, usually.

Q: And what kinds of things do you talk about?

A: Hmmm. Special effects. Whether or not I really enjoyed...whether it had a visual impact, whether it was a sharp scenery. Whether it was...oh geez...if there was something, some kind of a conflict we might try to talk about the conflict in the film.

Q: In the film?

A: Yeah.

Q: When do you usually talk? Any particular time?

A: Right after the film, and then if it was that great an impression. As I said, I don't go to the movies an awful lot, so I really

don't talk about them that much.

Q: Do you ever read movie reviews, or watch and listen to critics on the TV or radio?

A: I listen to Gene Shallit and Dennis Cunningham and I read the New York Times movie reviews quite often. But they're just one thing to take into account. They're not the end. You know, if they say it's poor, if I want to go see it, I'll still go and see it. But again, if they say it's great and it doesn't sound like a subject I'd like to see, I won't bother.

Q: Is this something you do regularly?

A: Well, in the morning I usually have on, we usually put on the television in the morning. And Gene Shallit's usually on once a week. I don't know how often he's on. Whenever I see it, I'll listen to it, I guess.

Q: Do you subscribe to any periodicals about film?

A: Just the New York Times, which has the book reviews and the movie reviews in it. The New Yorker...what did I say the New York Times for, New Yorker, sorry. And I also read the New York Times, as far as their critics go.

Q: Do you ever leave before a movie's over?

A: Animal House I did. That was too much for me.

Q: What about it was too much?

A: I just didn't like the shenanigans. I thought it was overdone. Of course I never lived through something like that. So maybe someone who had lived in a fraternity, it was fine.

Q: You just didn't like it?

A: No. It offended me.

Q: So you sometimes do leave before a movie is over?

A: Yes.

Q: Is that something that's happened...

A: It's happened a couple of times, yes. If it's too dull, or boring. That was one. I can't remember what the film was. It was that I just put it out of my mind. And there was another one I left because it was just too much to take. I'm a product of a Catholic education, and I was brought up in a little glass bubble, or something.

Q: Do you ever go to the movies alone?

A: I haven't, no. I'm just really not comfortable in that.

Q: Last question. Do you know any people that go to the movies often?

A: No, except K\_\_\_\_. If you consider K\_\_\_\_ often.

Q: For you, how often is often?

A: Oh, every week to me is often. You know, the kids who, every Saturday night have to go out to a date at the movies.

Q: Other than that?

A: No.

## APPENDIX IV

### Sample Group Discussion

- #1 Oh well, that was fun (laughter).
- #2 You should arrange it so that you have to see it with an audience.
- #3 Otherwise, you've said half the things you're going to say, and by now, I've forgotten them in any case. (laughs) It's nice, these chairs you just sink into.
- #4 I thought it was a terrific movie.
- #1 It would have been perfect if you were stoned.
- #2 No, because it's so loose already that if you were stoned you would just...
- #1 It gets you up high at certain points, with, it injects a little anxiety just a little bit of anxiety and then it relieves it. It keeps on relieving it at every point.
- #3 It's like Nashville, except at the end it almost didn't relieve it.
- #1 But the difference was, it was the opposite of Nashville, because it...
- #4 It had a piece of...there were three other movies it reminded me of. One was Nashville. The other was The Last Picture Show.
- #1 The Last Picture Show?
- #4 Right.
- #1 Well, it has a lot...and American Grafitti.
- #4 And American Grafitti was the third.
- #1 Well, it was also very similar to...I don't think that, I think that I didn't see this with anybody, but there was a double feature of Hospital and a movie about a disc jockey in Los Angeles and it was very similar with the same idea that communication is, is the same metaphor that communication will solve all the problems.
- #3 Was that the message?
- #1 I think that was the message.
- #3 You always get messages. I just thought folks helping each other out.
- #4 This was an Oklahoma version of Essalen. (laughter) I don't know. I liked it a lot. I thought it was a lot of fun.
- #1 It was very funny. It was very endearing.
- #3 It certainly wasn't a movie I would have gone to see downtown.
- #1 You can see why it wasn't successful, though. I mean...
- #3 All the people who would go to see it...
- #1 It has that kind of quasi-documentary...
- #4 But you have the feeling that with just a little bit more, it could be very successful, you know.
- #2 You have to be a real snob, because it's really a two level vision of smutty people.
- #3 If it had one name. Because you look at the cast, and you don't know who they are.
- #4 If Spider had been played by Richard Dreyfuss...
- #1 No. Because it's also...there was a movie, Carwash...and this has some of that quality.

- #3 It's too tongue in cheek for the people who would yake it seriously to like it. And too serious for people like us who would go to see it. It's like that movie, The Madonna on the Second Floor where the people in a lot of ways, you have the feeling that the people who made it really took it seriously. And the whole reason we liked it is that we didn't take it seriously.
- #1 No. But they meant it to be. It was playful throughout. But there was a level that you could kind of relate to, too.
- #3 I could believe it, though. That if half the people in that movie were really off the street. I mean, if somebody told me that they went out and found real people to play that movie, and they told them to do that straight, that's what they would have gotten, you know. We just laughed at that 'cause we're snobs.
- #1 It probably would be more appealing in Oklahoma, or something like that. It's really not a movie that you would...
- #4 Maybe not. But on the other hand, it's the kind of movie which could I imagine be a big success at the Brattle theatre, for instance.
- #1 Well, it could come back.
- #4 Or in Central Square. I mean in one of those Art...you know, in a place like Harvard, there was always this kind of...
- #1 Double function.
- #4 This kind of kid who had gone to an eleven room school in Texas and considered something cool.
- #1 Well you know, American Grafitti has come back as a big one. It's much bigger on the second time than on the first time.
- #4 Well not only that, but it's spawned all those things, like...
- #3 But that's probably nostalgia, though. That's not really the same as not taking it seriously and laughing at it.
- #1 This has the...this is meant to be funny. It has that kind of double, double method of humor.
- #3 American Graffitti was not really.-.it was not taken that seriously at the time.
- #1 This has a lot of nostalgia for the symbols of America.
- #4 Yeah. At the end everybody's happy together. They all get together to go save the old man, the grandfather.
- #3 Much better than shooting the President.
- #1 There's nothing to bind people together except the CB.
- #4 And that good coffee.
- #1 Hot Coffee (laughter).
- #2 That brother, he was going to lose out, though. He was the only one unmatched at the end.
- #4 Blood? Well, sort of, yeah.
- #2 No he wasn't. He was left out.
- #1 He's going to take it out on the kids.
- #4 That was nice, though.
- #2 That he was coach? Did he know he was coach to Hustler?
- #1 They were going to do another twenty laps.
- #4 And at the end, there was Coffee talking to Warlock, "Well, hang that one on the donkey's tail", or whatever. That was a cute

- #4 idea about the mobile home.
- #1 It really did have a kind of Mozart opera at the end, with all the characters. They're all together.
- #4 That's like a Fellini movie where they all come together, you know. At the end, it starts.
- #3 It's also a little bit like those whores on the side of the massage parlor.
- #4 But that was a terrific idea about the trailer, you know.
- #2 It's funny because they speed up the action in that shot.
- #4 He says, "I gotta make a lot of miles", he says "Well, just take a look out your rear window", you know. (laughter)
- #3 You like that, did you? It was like a little bit like that...did you watch that thing last week, on ummm, The Duke of Duch...no, The Duchess of Duke Street?
- #2 Um hmm.
- #3 There was a nice scene there wher she's opening up a hotel, a really first class hotel. And two tarts come in off the street. And they say they heard this new hotel was opening up. And they wanted to look over the clientele. And they were quickly hustled out by this very stuffy doorman and maid. And the Duchess--well, she's not really a Duchess--but she comes in and says to the parlormaid who had just explained that she had hustled these two women out, she says, "They're just working girls, just like you and me", she said. It was very good.
- #4 That was a lot of fun.
- #3 It was a lot of fun. Is this...yeah, it was a Paramount/Gulf-Western movie. I was just wondering if it was a Hollywood movie.
- #1 It serves as a contrast to Autumn Sonata.
- #4 I thought it was a lot more fun than Autumn Sonata (laughter).
- #2 It was a hell of a lot more fun than Watership Down, I'll tell you.
- #1 You think kids would like this movie? No, they wouldn't. It's all really, you really have to enjoy the movie as a kind of play, as a humorous movie. Or otherwise if you don't understand the jokes it really could be quite painful. Because you wouldn't understand why anything was happening.
- #3 Oh yeah. So what's half and half and straight up?
- #1 Well, I think that's one of the things.
- #3 I told you.
- #1 I'll draw you some pictures.
- #3 Never mind drawing me some pictures. You've been waiting for this.
- #1 Well, there's sunnyside up and sunnyside down. Get my meaning?
- #3 Are we talking about fried eggs? (laughter) That's what reminds me about being on the receiving end of a conversation.
- #1 I loved the language. I mean I...
- #3 Who do we know who could tell us what all that means?
- #4 Good ole country boys there.
- #3 Maybe L\_\_\_\_\_.
- #1 Why L\_\_\_\_\_?
- #3 L\_\_\_\_\_? Because communication is his profession.
- #4 That was nice, that thing too when they're, you know, the dog meat.

- #4 I mean, it really had me believing that it was that...
- #1 But they even told you fairly early. Because she went on eating.  
And there was no way that she didn't know that it was a joke.
- #2 How did she know?
- #1 She just knew. She looked...
- #3 No. She was just tough, she was tough.
- #1 No, no. She looked at him, and she knew it wasn't...
- #4 But until then?
- #1 Until then, certainly.
- #3 No. I thought it was a joke all along until he opened the cupboard.
- #2 I thought she was, I thought she was kidding with him.
- #3 I did, too.
- #1 Nuh uh.
- #3 You didn't know. You didn't know. That was a real high anxiety.
- #2 G\_\_\_\_\_ believes that he had done it.
- #4 I thought that he had done it. I thought that she was eating it nevertheless. She wasn't going to get beaten by this old creep.
- #1 I don't think so, 'cause remember she did, she couldn't really take it. And then she looked at him and went on eating.
- #3 I don't think that came across clearly in the movie what that was all about. Whether she was calling his bluff, or what.
- #1 Well, my anxiety went down.
- #2 Did it show that she understood what he meant when he said, "I've heard your voice?"
- ALL: No.
- #4 But N\_\_\_\_\_ did. I was very impressed with it.
- #3 I'm big on breathing.
- #1 Why did he not react to the breathing, to her? I mean that was supposed to care about the real values, his brother. He was completely indifferent to that.
- #4 Why shouldn't Blane, Spider react to finding out that she's Electra?
- #3 Except that she had to take a chance at the end and really try. Cause she said she couldn't talk, she had two boyfriends, but she couldn't talk to them. But she really took a chance. She started talking to him the way she talked to them.
- #2 Talking sexy to them.
- #1 That's right. That was so funny with his brother, his father, when he couldn't wake his father up, and he talked--with the birthday cake...
- #4 On the CB radio and then he popped up.
- #1 It was really, the CB radio is...
- #2 It's the only hope.
- #1 That's right. Modern technology will do it.
- #3 Do you know anybody that has a CB radio?
- #1 Um hmm.
- #3 Do you?
- #1 That's why the movie's not a big thing in a place like Philadelphia.
- #2 Sure. I'll bet, I'll bet, but why doesn't that...
- #3 Out West?

#1 You couldn't really enjoy it.  
 #3 Not into it.  
 #1 You either explain it on sort of this kind of...  
 #2 I wonder if it did reach...You would think that it...  
 #4 It played in Philadelphia about three days.  
 #2 Yeah, but it had a different title too.  
 #1 It was called, "CB Something". It had CB in the title. They had big advertisements. They promoted it big.  
 #3 I can imagine...I mean, the talk shows on the radio are so popular, even in Philadelphia. And I can imagine. It's a terrific thing- It's like making obscene phone calls, because it's totally consensual. It's, uh, and everyone can listen in. The sexual aspects of it are just amazing. It never occurred to me before seeing this. But it's really...  
 #1 When's your birthday?  
 #3 (laughs) You know. I don't know.  
 #4 What do you mean, the sexual aspects?  
 #1 The vicarious kind of erotic...  
 #3 The idea of having, it's like anonymous phone calls, but consensual.  
 #2 But that's not just sex. That's aggressions.  
 #1 Yeah. It's everything.  
 #3 Where's the aggressions? You mean Blood and the...  
 #2 Yeah.  
 #4 What do you think. Or just...  
 #1 And the Nazi can communicate the idea that anybody can be heard.  
 #3 It must have cut down a lot on those obscene phone calls on the telephone.  
 #4 No.  
 #2 The funny thing about this movie is the way things pile on. The grotesque and frightening and the comical and the...  
 #1 That's why it's a good movie to be stoned at.  
 #3 No. It's better to have seen it first.  
 #1 No. I would have enjoyed being stoned at this one.  
 #2 I would have been so confused.  
 #3 The scene of the two women in the bedroom having that thing, when they were drunk. They really had a stoned conversation. It was very funny.  
 #2 That was so funny.  
 #1 That was maybe the best.  
 #3 That was nicely done.  
 #2 "Break his balls and divorce him."  
 #4 I mean, you haven't felt a woman for such a long time.  
 #3 (laughter) Especially when he just said it to the woman before that, to the woman in the...  
 #4 "And then he'd take off his shorts, and then he'd..."  
 #1 It was such an agreeable movie. That's what you had to like about it.  
 #3 Yeah. Like the two women.  
 #1 It's really...



- #4 I think it's one of the most agreeable and pleasant good feeling movies I've seen in a while.
- #1 It really goes against, it really turns all the sex and violence around, and makes them into...
- #2 You see, I really believe in all the horrors they're alluding to.
- #1 Yes. But it turns them around and makes them sort of much more benign. And makes you laugh at all the sex. And all the sex becomes kind of comradeship. It dissolves into comradeship.
- #3 Yeah. Living in a junkyard is very charming. I think it would be a good double feature with Easy Rider.
- #2 It tells you that the dream is full of shit, and...
- #1 It's a safe political statement.
- #3 Yeah. But there he is at the end, riding around with his herd of cattle. And everybody's cheering and calling him Papa Thermodyne.
- #1 It's got something for everybody. It really does.
- #3 I think it would be a good double feature with Easy Rider. A nice mix. I mean, they didn't show anybody riding around with a pickup truck with a rifle in the back, you know.
- #1 How about Coming Home? You could do it with Coming Home.
- #3 I haven't seen that one. I missed out a lot.
- #1 It was good.
- #4 It's a cheerful movie.
- #3 Was that the movie with Jon Voight and Jane Fonda?
- #1 Yeah.
- #3 I missed it. Why do I miss all those?
- #1 I just realized in talking about this.
- #3 Did you see that?
- #1 How much it's like eating. That you compare it with other meals.
- #2 With past meals.
- #1 Yeah. It really is. It's almost like you can't have a reference for any movie without having to watch...all films, I think. Well, I think we're becoming a little self-conscious.
- #3 A little scholarly. (laughs) Much more articulate than usual.
- #1 If you could hear this tape, you wouldn't believe it. I think we're rising down.
- #3 It might not seem possible.
- #1 How do you say goodbye on the...10-4?
- #2 10-4.
- #3 No. 10-4 must be, I think 10-4 means okay.
- #4 I think he said 10-7 at one time.
- #1 10-20 was, where are you, or "Give me a 20", is where are you, or something.
- #4 "I'm just going to 10-7". That's what he said when he turned off.
- #3 Oh, to have an FCC manual. We could find out all those things.
- #1 What do you say? You think we've...
- #4 People use it, I'm told...I mean one of the reasons truckers, for instance...
- #3 No. We could talk all night.
- #4 Use it is to warn if there are cops on the road.

- #1 In fact, that time we had that flat tire, and that guy came along with a CB and called the police.
- #3 Us?
- #1 Not a flat tire, our car...
- #4 Yeah. The accident we saw, where that Volkswagon got demolished.
- #2 Oh, I forgot about that.
- #4 That truck stopped, and on the CB called for help.
- #3 Well it's nice that there are people around us who have them for that kind of an emergency.
- #1 It seems like a rather mindless sort of pleasure. I mean, think of it as different from television, is such an active, engaging thing.
- #3 They really didn't talk about it so much here. But on the highway, you're riding along the highway, particularly out West, and people will communicate with one another. I mean, there's some way they can find out. If they see that somebody else has a CB thing, they can find them. And they talk as they go along the hughways.
- #4 I think if you were a trucker it would be a good thing to have.
- #3 How do they work the channels, and stuff?
- #1 Well, they have them like 70 channels, on 70 channels.
- #3 How do you find somebody?
- #1 I think you just must search it. That's what the light does. It finds them. It locates them.
- #4 Uh huh.
- #1 I liked the beginning of it, the film, very much.
- #3 With all the mechanical wizardry and stuff?
- #1 Yeah. Star Wars. Well, it sort of introduced all the themes of the film. All those characters were later, they appeared.
- #4 Yeah. You heard the lines.
- #1 You heard the lines and it was just an introduction to the film. It was really...but in a kind of documentary way. It started out much more documentary.
- #2 (laughs) All that gadgetery really didn't connect. Because most people weren't carrying those things around.
- #1 Yeah. But he had one. Remember he had one of the...
- #3 Allright. I'm ready to turn this thing off.
- #1 Yeah.
- #3 What do you think? Yes? No?
- #1 Anything else? You want to have the final word?
- #4 No. No. I'm happy.
- #2 Goodbye. 10-7.

APPENDIX V

Sample Coding Sheet; Single Interview

1. "How many movies do you see?"
  - A. Distinction Yes/No Theatre\_\_ On TV\_\_ Made for TV\_\_ Other\_\_
  - B. Unit of Seeing \_\_\_\_ Movies per Week\_\_ Month\_\_ Year\_\_ Other\_\_
  - C. Attendance Pattern Mentioned Yes/No  
Regularly\_\_\_\_ Irregularly\_\_\_\_ Cyclically\_\_\_\_
  - D. Reasons Offered for Attendance Pattern Yes/No  
Schedule\_\_\_\_ Interest\_\_\_\_ Convenience\_\_\_\_ Other\_\_
  
2. "How do you decide to go to the movies?" (See also question 6)
  - A. Other people Yes/No  
Initiator\_\_\_\_ Recipient\_\_\_\_ Both\_\_\_\_ Neither\_\_\_\_ Avoider\_\_
  - B. Advertisements Yes/No  
TV\_\_ Radio\_\_ Newspapers\_\_ Magazines\_\_ Other\_\_
  - C. Use of Critical Reviews Yes/No  
TV\_\_ Radio\_\_ Newspapers\_\_ Magazines\_\_ Other\_\_  
Particular critic or medium preferred? Yes/No \_\_\_\_
  - D. Previews Yes/No
  - E. Schedules from Theatares Yes/No
  - F. As Part of Some Other Activity Yes/No  
School\_\_\_\_ Work\_\_ Leisure\_\_ Social Event\_\_ Other\_\_
  
3. "When do you usually go to the movies?"  
"Are there any social occasions that you might go to the movies?"
  - A. Weekdays Night/Day
  - B. Weekend Night/Day
  - C. Scheduled Show (i.e. Mati-ee)

Reasons for when one goes

Schedule\_\_\_\_  
Cost\_\_\_\_  
Leisure Time\_\_\_\_  
Other\_\_\_\_

Social Occasions      Yes/No

A. Family      Regularly\_\_\_\_\_ Irregularly\_\_\_\_\_ Never\_\_\_\_\_

B. Business      Regularly\_\_\_\_\_ Irregularly\_\_\_\_\_ Never\_\_\_\_\_

C. Friends      Regular Group\_\_\_\_\_ Yes/No

D. Date

E. Special Occasions

F. Other

4. "What movies have you seen recently?"

A. Number seen\_\_\_\_\_

B. Names

C. Time Period Mentioned

D. Recall Difficulty

6. "How did you decide to see 'X' film?" (From question 4)

A. Other people    Yes/No  
Initiator\_\_\_\_\_ Recipient\_\_\_\_\_ Neither\_\_\_\_\_ Both\_\_\_\_\_ Avider\_\_\_\_\_

B. Advertisements    Yes/No  
TV\_\_\_\_\_ Radio\_\_\_\_\_ Newspapers\_\_\_\_\_ Magazines\_\_\_\_\_ Other\_\_\_\_\_

C. Critical Reviews    Yes/No  
TV\_\_\_\_\_ Radio\_\_\_\_\_ Newspapers\_\_\_\_\_ Magazines\_\_\_\_\_ Other\_\_\_\_\_

D. Previews    Yes/No

E. Schedules or Literature    Yes/No

F. Part of Some Other Activity  
School\_\_\_\_\_ Work\_\_\_\_\_ Leisure\_\_\_\_\_ Social Event\_\_\_\_\_ Other\_\_\_\_\_

G. Spur of the Moment    Yes/No

H. Particular Film    Yes/No

I. Pre-Screening    Yes/No

J. General Movie    Yes/No

K. General Leisure Yes/No

L. Other

8. "Do you ever read reviews in newspapers or magazines, or attend to critics on the TV or radio?"

	Regularly	Irregularly	Trust	Mistrust
TV				
Radio				
Newspaper				
Magazine				

B. Is this rule governed? Yes/No  
 Before film  
 After film  
 Certain aspects of review

C. Specific periodical or critic mentioned by name?

9. "Have you ever left before the movie is over?" Why or why not?

Yes/No

Yes Reasons: Evaluation\_\_\_\_ Technical (i.e. sound, projection)  
 Audience\_\_\_\_ Other\_\_\_\_

No Reasons: Evaluation\_\_\_\_ Others Present\_\_\_\_  
 Cost\_\_\_\_ Other\_\_\_\_

10. "Do you, or have you ever gone to the movies alone?" Why or why not?

Yes Reasons: No Partner\_\_\_\_ Evaluative\_\_\_\_ Film specific\_\_\_\_  
 Other\_\_\_\_

No Reasons: Not enough interest\_\_\_\_ Stigmatized\_\_\_\_

11. "Do you know any people who go to the movies often?"

Yes/No

\_\_\_\_ Movies per \_\_\_\_ Month \_\_\_\_ Week \_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_ Other

Is this behavior labeled?

\_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX VI

Sample Coding Sheet; Group Discussion

I. Unit of Discussion

1. Shot
2. Sequence
3. Narrative Slice
4. Character
5. Whole Film
6. Combinations
7. Other (specify)

II. Kind of Response

1. Descriptive
2. Non-Literal
3. Attributional
4. Evaluation/Assessment
5. Guesses

Expectations

Reworkings                      Narrative\_\_\_\_\_ Structural\_\_\_\_\_

6. Framings/Questions

- a. Semantic
- b. Logistic
- c. Reality/Fiction

7. Audience

- a. Self
- b. Others

8. Reality/Fiction

9. Other (i.e. Social Learning)

## III. Reasons for Responses

1. None
2. Generic; other films or media
  - a. content
  - b. conventions
3. Structure
4. Technical/Formal
5. Thematic
6. Agency or Authorship
  - a. Director
  - b. Actor
  - c. Writer
  - d. Editor
  - e. Producer
  - f. Cinematographer
  - g. Combinations
  - h. "Communal" ("they")
  - l. None
7. Conditions of Production
  - a. Budget
  - b. Political
  - c. Other

## V. Talk about Film; In/Out of Frame

Total Time \_\_\_\_\_

Time In \_\_\_\_\_

Time Out \_\_\_\_\_

Reality/Fiction; Examples