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REVIEW ESSAY

Audiovisual Teaching Materials

Karen F. A. Fox

Instruction in the social sciences has four aims: to interest students in examining and understanding social phenomena, to instruct them in the key concepts of the discipline, to provide them with data as a basis for forming hypotheses and making generalizations, and to present them with research conclusions, occasionally including the antecedents and procedures of the research study. Audiovisual materials often emphasize the first and last aims, raising consciousness and presenting conclusions. Few materials effectively present key concepts. But recently produced audiovisual materials on women have provided increased opportunities to observe women's lives and to hear women speak about themselves, and these observational data can serve as a basis for inquiry into the forces that influence women's lives.

While abundant material on women has been produced, this review concentrates on materials suitable for college-level social sciences courses dealing with women, and particularly on audiovisual materials which provide observational data. Numerous excellent films that are primarily confessional in style have been excluded, because they are not as immediately relevant for social science courses and because many of them have been widely reviewed elsewhere.¹ This review also draws most

1. Over seventy films are reviewed in J. Betancourt, *Women in Focus* (Dayton, Ohio: Pflaum/Standard, 1974).

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heavily on materials produced in the past three years, for while some materials retain their freshness for many years, most do not.

An exceptional series of twenty-six films, *Faces of Change*,² made under the auspices of the American Universities Field Staff (AUFS), was released late in 1974. While single-film ethnographies must generally be limited to presenting only a few aspects of a culture or else risk over-generalizing, this series consists of five films on each of four rural cultures—the Boran of northern Kenya, a village in Afghanistan, the China Coast islands, and Taiwan—and six films on a fifth rural culture, the Aymará of Bolivia. Made by teams of filmmakers and social scientists, working without scripts or professional actors, the films provide a multidisciplinary focus on the interaction between the culture and the ecological conditions in which it exists, the social and economic systems, and the impact of modernization on aspirations and values, including education and the roles of women.

One film on each of the five cultures records the daily activities, concerns, and aspirations of women. The film *Boran Women*³ is particularly handsome visually, accentuated by the beautifully colored robes of the elegant, graceful women depicted. Of the five cultures, this film comes closest to being an ethnography, describing the culturally defined tasks performed by women rather than focusing on specific women. As the film catalogs the tasks and responsibilities of the Boran women, one wonders if there is anything of significance remaining for men to do. In addition to keeping house, the women make them—from twigs. When the group must move to find water for the herds, the women dismantle their houses and pack them on cattle. The women cook and clean; walk several miles daily for water; plant, cultivate, store, and distribute corn; and milk the cattle and provide for the storage and sharing of milk.

*Afghan Women*⁴ is a unique revelation of the life of Afghan village women who live secluded from male eyes. As a result, this film had to be made exclusively by women, who were able to enter Afghan households to record women making bread, visiting, and in the midst of the two- to three-year task of preparing a dowry consisting of dresses, pillows, mattresses, rugs, and tablecloths in return for a bride-price of about \$1,000.

The film *Andean Women*⁵ is the most poignant, despite the reliance on subtitles. (Most of the films are narrated.) The conversations are warm and personal, suggesting common ties between grindingly poor Aymará Indians and the affluent people of our highly technological society. For example, two men discussing a fiesta agree that they had a

2. Available from Fieldstaff Films, American Universities Field Staff, 3 Lebanon Street, Hanover, New Hampshire 03755.

3. Color sixteen-millimeter film, eighteen minutes, 1974, AUFS.

4. *Ibid.*, seventeen minutes.

5. *Ibid.*, nineteen minutes.

good time but admit that they were hung over the next day. A group of married women, removing dried corn from the cobs, discuss their marriages with the frankness and feeling of a consciousness-raising group.

The two films on the Far East are not up to the standard of the other three but have their place as part of their culture sequences. Mrs. Li, featured in *A Chinese Farm Wife*,⁶ manages a three-acre rice and tobacco farm on Taiwan. Her life is interdependent with the urban culture of the nearby town: her husband and daughter work there, as do many others, making farm labor scarce. She wears slacks and discusses with her husband how to improve the next year's tobacco crop with various combinations of chemical fertilizers. Her daughter, when she marries, receives a refrigerator. *Three Island Women*⁷ touches rather superficially on the lives of a young woman who mends nets on her father's fishing boat; of a thirty-four-year-old mother of four who assumes virtually complete responsibility for family decisions while her husband is off fishing for weeks or months at a time; and of an elderly woman who is tough and idiosyncratic.

Individually these films have the same pedagogical limitations as films that present only men's activities: the viewer does not get a sense of the way women and men perform interrelated and complementary tasks. However, each film was made to be used along with the others on the same culture. To accompany each film in the series, a packet of printed materials has been prepared, including extensive documentation on the culture, interviews, biographies of key persons in the films, maps, tables, and charts. These printed materials reflect first-rate scholarship, and have nothing in common with the skimpy "discussion guides" accompanying many instructional films.

Probably the most useful film for courses that focus on women in cross-cultural perspective is an additional film in this series, *Women in a Changing World*,⁸ edited from footage from four of the five cultures (excluding Taiwan) but rarely duplicating scenes from the separate films. A coproduction with the International Planned Parenthood Foundation, this film describes women's daily lives with particular emphasis on their attitudes toward childbearing, birth control, and abortion, as well as on men's views of women's roles. Listening to women describe their lives and beliefs, their resistance to family planning becomes understandable. An Aymará woman says: "I had only one son so my husband wants to kill me." An English-speaking Afghan professional man says he wants to have only two children. When asked if his cigarette-smoking wife concurs, he replies: "I don't know. I never asked her." A Boran grandmother, speaking of her grandson, says: "If he lives

6. Ibid., seventeen minutes.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid., forty-eight minutes.

two more years, he will go to school." In this film, as in the others in the series, the visual beauty of the surroundings and of the people often belie the relative material poverty and the oppression of a marginal existence controlled by climate, tradition, and the political, economic, and social structure of the larger society. These women only challenge the expectations of their cultures by speculating about schooling for themselves and their daughters.

Six half-hour color films have been made by the Japanese TV network in association with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) specifically for distribution during International Women's Year.⁹ While the focus of each film is ostensibly on women who are active in development efforts in their own countries, UNICEF emphasizes the welfare of children, and these films feature women to the extent that they work for UNICEF-funded projects for children. They show women in active but traditional roles: nurses (not doctors), teachers, librarians, and social workers. The films give glimpses of life in societies disrupted by disease, poverty, and overcrowding, and of efforts to assist in development.

The development of sex-role stereotypes and the ways girls have been socialized to conform to them are receiving wide attention from social scientists. Several researchers, concerned with the way in which the process of education creates and reinforces restricted opportunities for girls, have documented the bias of children's readers. *Sex Stereotyping in Children's Readers*,¹⁰ based on a study entitled *Dick and Jane as Victims*, is a slide-cassette presentation of numerous examples of bias in pictures and text extracted from 150 children's readers, together with an examination of sex stereotyping as it exists in most instructional materials and in society. A similar study of Canadian readers is reported in a film *Learning to Read between the Stereotypes*.¹¹ The results of a broader examination of American textbooks by Lenore Weitzman are presented in *The Girls' Corner: Textbooks and Options*,¹² six slide-cassette presentations covering an introduction to sex roles in textbooks and sex roles as presented in mathematics, reading, science, social studies, and spelling textbooks. While textbooks are but one component of education, their content and style often reveal the values of the society that creates them, as McClelland discovered in his cross-cultural study of textbooks and achievement

9. Further information on these color sixteen-millimeter films is available from UNICEF-TV, Room A-6106, United Nations, New York, New York 10017.

10. The presentation consists of 140 slides and a twenty-five-minute cassette tape, available for rental or purchase from Women on Words and Images, P.O. Box 2163, Princeton, New Jersey 08540.

11. Color sixteen-millimeter film, twenty minutes, 1975, Distribution Section, Teaching Aids Department, Toronto Board of Education, 155 College Street, Toronto, Ontario, M5T 1P6, Canada.

12. Each slide show runs approximately thirty minutes. Further information available from Dr. Lenore Weitzman, Sociology Department, University of California, Davis, California 95616.

motivation.¹³ These audiovisual materials on textbooks have been widely shown to educators and parents but could also be appropriately used in anthropology courses as cultural artifacts or in sociology courses as reflections of social values being transmitted to the young.

A new film, *Girls at Twelve*,¹⁴ highlights ways in which girls' aspirations are shaped. Produced and directed by Joyce Chopra, best known for her autobiographical film *Joyce at Thirty-four*, *Girls at Twelve* is the pilot of ten half-hour films being made by the Educational Development Center for their one-semester high school course, "The Role of Women in American Society." The course will provide students with materials to engage them in thinking through the consequences of their present and future life decisions, and particularly the effect that sex-role stereotyping and socialization can have on their careers and families. When the project is completed, each film will form the core of a curriculum unit with an accompanying teacher's guide and student resource book.

While the course is designed for high school students, the films are being prepared for a much broader audience, including college students and faculty, women's groups, PTAs, and other adult professional and community groups. *Girls at Twelve* strongly suggests that the series will live up to these expectations of wide interest. A half-hour unstaged color documentary of three friends growing up in Waltham, Massachusetts, the film has little narration and no interpretation: the viewer watches, listens, and interprets the data independently. Mary Ann's father left college to paint lines on New England highways and feels that his wife shouldn't work because "she doesn't have to." His daughter is a school cheerleader and a mediocre student who says: "I just like to fool around most of the time." Diane is academically gifted and independent. Her father conveys the dual message that he has no objections to her having a career when she grows up but wants her to get married and have children. This film can be a useful stimulus for women to reflect on the influences that shaped their own self-images and critical decisions about education and careers.

*Sylvia, Fran, and Joy*¹⁵ illuminates the influence of early sex-role stereotypes on women in their twenties and thirties. Sylvia is a willing wife but unwilling mother, who gave birth to satisfy her husband's desire for a child. While the father takes most of the responsibility for child care, Sylvia pursues a career. Fran, having recently left her husband, is supposedly striving to find a new identity. In the film she is shown practicing yoga and reading stories to children. Nowhere is it made clear what goals she has or how her activities are related to achieving them.

13. D. C. McClelland, *The Achieving Society* (Princeton, N.J.: D. Van Nostrand Co., 1961).

14. Color sixteen-millimeter film, thirty minutes, 1974, Educational Development Center, 55 Chapel Street, Newton, Massachusetts 02160.

15. Black-and-white sixteen-millimeter film, twenty-five minutes, 1973. Churchill Films, 662 North Robertson Boulevard, Los Angeles, California 90069.

Though the film seems ideologically more sympathetic to Sylvia and Fran, the most personally engaging of the three is Joy. She is an unquestioningly traditional housewife and mother who spends all day surrounded by little children and greets her husband with a hug and a hot dinner when he returns from work. Joy's socialization seems to have prepared her precisely for the roles she fills. This film could be interestingly juxtaposed with *Girls at Twelve* to examine the socialization which young girls receive and the decisions, conscious or unconscious, which they must make as adults.

The rapid increase in the number of women in the labor force and the emphasis on equal opportunity in employment has led to the development of several media products on working women. *Images*,¹⁶ one of four filmstrip-cassettes in a series entitled *A Woman's Place*, shows over fifty images of women, without narration. While a few women are shown in unusual occupations—driving a tractor, working in a lumber mill—most are in traditional female work roles such as bank teller, librarian, teacher, secretary, and stewardess. *Images* was designed to raise students' consciousness of expectations of women, society's and their own, and would probably be useful as a discussion starter for students with traditional perspectives. Otherwise the images appear too conventional to arouse much interest.

*Other Women, Other Work*¹⁷ goes beyond *Images* by presenting seven women who are working in traditionally male fields: truck driver, veterinarian, roof shingler, pilot, marine biologist, carpenter, and TV newswoman. The women are shown at work, and in the voice-over they describe their experiences on the job, including the satisfactions and problems of their chosen fields. While some of the women describe problems in initially entering these fields, the emphasis of the film is on the work itself, rather than on being an oddity.

Several of the women in this film have overcome job discrimination, but what of the women who continue to be held back because of the limited vision of their superiors? *Fifty-one Percent*,¹⁸ made for showing to business executives, presents three women, white, young, attractive, with first-rate qualifications, acknowledged as excellent workers. It describes the barriers to promotion they face because of societal myths about working women. These myths are convincingly expressed by male executives (played by professional actors), and, in the first two instances, the myths are cogently countered by male colleagues who urge that the women be given an opportunity to advance. In the third vignette a woman executive has been promoted and must deal with a male col-

16. Color filmstrip and cassette, six minutes, 1974; part of *A Woman's Place*, from Schloat Productions, 150 White Plains Road, Tarrytown, New York 10591.

17. Black-and-white sixteen-millimeter film, twenty minutes, 1973, Churchill Films.

18. Videotape-cassette, twenty minutes, Time-Life Films, Time-Life Building, New York, New York 10020.

league who is now her disgruntled subordinate. The implication that only superwomen should be singled out for equal treatment in promotion is troublesome, but from this videotape both male and female students might learn a great deal about the subtlety often involved in passing over women for promotion.

One frequently overlooked media resource is audiotapes, an inexpensive means of bringing top-flight guest speakers into the classroom. The Pacifica Foundation makes available dozens of audiotapes (either cassette or reel-to-reel) of programs originally aired on its educational FM radio stations, at a purchase price of about twelve dollars per tape. Two tapes on working women were recorded in 1974. *Women in the Economy*¹⁹ is a presentation by Lauri Helmbold on women working in the home and as members of the labor force, including statistics on unequal pay for women and interspersed with verses of "The Housewife's Lament." She underscores the importance of examining and eliminating such inequities with the statement that 90 percent of all women alive today will work for wages sometime in their lives. The second tape, *What Have Women Done*,²⁰ is a narrative history of working women in America that begins with the statement of prevalent myths about working women and a brief presentation of the facts which counter these myths. Cuts from scratchy records of decades-old union organizing songs provide transitions in the excellent narrative. Also available from the Pacifica Tape Library are tapes on women in law, the media, and the arts, as well as a series on *Forgotten Women in American History*.²¹

The Women's Kit,²² developed by students and staff at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, is a unique twenty-five-pound collection of resources on women. It includes records, filmstrips, slides, articles, newspapers, booklets, and posters. While most of the materials reflect Canadian conditions and concerns, the *Kit* is an outstanding example of unstructured multimedia instructional materials that raise consciousness, provide data of many kinds, and present information on research studies on women. The materials were pilot tested in over 100 Ontario high schools and colleges before being mass-produced for distribution in 1974. *The Women's Kit* deserves imitation in the United States.

One type of audiovisual product that has still to be widely produced is that which reports significant research studies on women. Most social science research on women, as on other topics, remains in journals and

19. Cassette or reel-to-reel audiotape, thirty minutes, 1974, Pacifica Tape Library, Department W741, 5316 Venice Boulevard, Los Angeles, California 90019.

20. Cassette of reel-to-reel audiotape, forty-two minutes, 1974, Pacifica Tape Library.

21. A folder describing all of Pacifica's audiotapes on women was prepared in fall 1974.

22. Available from Publications Sales, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 252 Bloor Street West, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5S 1V6.

does not achieve wide dissemination. The modest expense of producing a filmstrip-cassette or a slide-cassette presentation and the pedagogical value of such products should encourage researchers to consider including production costs as a budget item in research grant proposals, using the resulting materials for presentations at professional meetings as well as for classroom instruction. Perhaps the academic reward system might eventually give points for audiovisual, as well as printed, research reports, thus further enriching the supply and improving the quality of audiovisual instructional materials in the social sciences.

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