Editing Experience: sharing adventures through home movies

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“the profound affinity between the adventurer and the artist, and also, perhaps, of the artist's attraction by adventure. For the essence of a work of art is, after all, that it cuts out a piece of the endlessly continuous sequences of perceived experience, detaching it from all connections with one side or the other, giving it a self-sufficient form as though defined and held together by an inner core.” Simmel 1911, (Simmel, 1971)

“At least the initially blandest kind of formulation we might make ... is that while lots of people figure that experience is a great thing, and apparently at least some people are eager to have experiences, they are extraordinarily carefully regulated sorts of things. The occasions of entitlement to have them are carefully regulated, and then the experience you're entitled to have on an occasion you're entitled to have one is further carefully regulated.” p248 Sacks(Sacks, 1984).

1. From the ordinary member of society to the adventurer

On doing “being ordinary” is a favourite Harvey Sack's lecture for many of those influenced by his work. It was given to students as an introduction to a much more technical course on the nature of storytelling in conversation. Leaving quite what ordinariness might be in suspension, he suggested to his students that we might begin with the idea that ordinary people are persons whose daily preoccupation it is to continue to provide our collective ordinariness. The students should not assume that somebody is ordinary p414 (Sacks, 1984) they might realise instead that it is, for the majority of people in the world, their daily ‘job’ p414, in co-ordination with other ordinary people, to accomplish and care for the continuity of ordinary life. Rather than critique them, or ordinariness itself, at least initially, we might pursue ‘how do people go about “doing being an ordinary person” p414.

Once we begin to re-appraise human conduct in this way certain other ideas that we have about ordinariness are approached from a different angle. Commonly enough we take it as a defining characteristic of those who live quiet lives in the West that do so by repressing all manner of urges to have adventures or other unusual experiences. In other words that being a mildly repressed person, a Reginald Perrin of suburbia, is seemingly an over-riding drawback of membership of ‘Western Civilisation’ (Sacks 1984: 418). Those who are repressing themselves hold back their urges and avoid pursuing their desires, thus avoiding extraordinary experiences. Sacks’ response to this repressive hypothesis is different from that of Foucault’s. Where Foucault’s shows all the specificatory and productive work involved in the apparently repressive practices of the Victorian repression Sacks points out that the repression is elsewhere than in, for instance “our Puritan Background” (Sacks 1992: 417). For Sacks, our idea of repression as the time spent working and the avoidance of pleasure in the West, overlooks the fact that when ordinary members, whether they pursue them or not, do have bizarre, illegitimate or novel experiences the force of the ordinary operates. Thus, what is perhaps more surprising, or disappointing, is that the illicit, profound or extraordinary is recuperated and, then, returned to the ‘usual way for anybody doing such an illegitimate experience’ (Sacks 1992: 418). Something phenomenal happens to an ordinary person and yet they avoid expressing what that sensation was, for fear of the sensationalisation that might go with it. Rather than be disappointed by this seeming diminution of the extraordinary experience, once again
Sacks urges his students to realise that re-finding the ordinary everywhere is also part of the job of doing being ordinary and that sharing the extraordinary with others while continuing to do ‘being an ordinary person’ has its own logics.

Sacks is bringing his students around to what the consequences of ‘doing being ordinary’ are in both what ordinary members attend to in events and how they report on those events. As he goes on ‘you can begin to appreciate that there is some immensely powerful kind of mechanism operating in handling your perceptions and thoughts, other than the known and immensely powerful things like the chemistry of vision’ (Sacks 1992: 418) Before we protest that this surely misses all manner of other expressive occupations in society, Sacks briefly remarks that there are members of society who are singularly or simultaneously entitled to experience extraordinary things and tell of their experiences in poetic, epic or artistic ways. Both Simmel’s adventurer and his artist, from the quotations above, do so and tell about it so. In his lecture Sacks mentions film stars and writers as those who can side-step this basic requirement of being part of Western society.

A number of readers of Sacks (Myers, 2000, 2004; Scannell, 1996, 2004), have taken up the constraining force and fine organisation of the relationship between experience and ‘doing being ordinary’ as it appears media and communication. Scannell has examined both how we as ordinary members of society experience certain events through documentaries and news coverage (Scannell, 1996) and the importance for news coverage of collecting first-hand accounts from those who experience extraordinary events such as 9/11 (Scannell, 2004). What I would like to do here is consider those members of society that are neither the ordinary member nor the imaginative maker of media. I want to reflect on, using ethnographic material, those who travel in search of adventure and are committed to sharing their experiences of the extraordinary. As Simmel hints there is a connection between the adventurer and the artist, each is disconnected from the continuity of our mundane lives, ‘we have to do with something alien, untouchable, out of the ordinary’ (Simmel, 1972 (1911)). Where the ordinary is the ceaselessly flowing processes with their tangling and untangling, gushing and stilling, meandering and dashing which bear us ever onward, the adventure is apart from that flow. To have an adventure is to have experiences and to have stories to tell; there are adventurers who fail to tell them well and cannot share them. It is this tension between the experience that singles out and the urge to share that shapes the work of those adventurers who decide to relate their experiences through the medium of video.

2. Making home movies of adventure

Andrew has been making home movies for several years, steadily honing his editing skills, mastering each new version of Apple’s iMovie and, recently, shifting to HD (high definition) on an HDD camera (hard disc drive). Despite a busy schedule of Monday to Friday work in outdoor education and weekend escapades in forests and mountains, his videos are assembled as frequently as on a weekly basis. Whether he manages to have the material available to make a video usually depends on combining climbing, skiing or mountain-biking with filming climbing, skiing and mountain-biking. As you might imagine, bringing together the two activities of adventuring and recording adventuring requires, amongst other things, packing and carrying two sets of equipment. Once away from home, there are the difficulties inherent in scaling a cliff-face, finding a way between rocks while extreme skiing or zipping down a single track while cross-country biking. And in amongst
all this, locating the five minutes or more required to start-up the camera and compose shots on the ledge of a cliff, off-piste or the seat of a bicycle. And in fact, the challenge of filming extreme sports while in the midst of those sports is both Andrew’s motivation and his cinematographic style.

In the evenings, after a weekend away on mountain faces, alpine slopes or forest tracks, Andrew assembles the footage into short films, almost always set to music and usually burnt onto DVDs for sharing amongst his climbing, cycling and sailing companions. A handful of these videos are posted on Youtube, which is where I first saw them. Although they are on Youtube Andrew deliberately tags them incorrectly to keep them from for his friends and the odd person like myself that might stumble across them while looking for something else (in my case of fly-fishing on the River Tweed).

The movie-making that I sat in on was of a recently completed sailing holiday with five friends. Over Easter they had hired a yacht, navigated along the south coast of France and dropped anchor in a scattering of isolated bays in order to climb the varied limestone cliffs, just inland, usually inaccessible by road. As so often happens in a proper adventure, the unpredictable had intervened, the yacht was almost destroyed in a storm and, later in the holiday, one of the companions had fallen while climbing and been fortunate to escape major injury. Neither of the latter was filmed, Andrew’s other role as sailor or climber taking priority over documenting these events. In one sense editing begins in such absences in the documenting of certain events. Yet while we might imagine that for Andrew he thus chooses only the happy moments, that these fairly awful events did happen, informs the later assembly of the record of the holiday.

Pre-editing continues in Andrew’s new in situ routines with his HDD camera. Because he can easily select which shots to delete and which to keep, Andrew will now dispose of clips on camera, something that was too laborious and time-consuming with a tape-base camera. Editing in situ, as he tells me, helps him stay close to what the experience of the event was like at the time. As we talked beside the library of clips for his project, many showing images of blue sea Andrew explained his technique for editing as soon as possible after the event:

When you’ve just been somewhere and you’re surrounded by the mountains, or, the diver’s just come out of the water, you have this sort of vivid recollection of the moment which really captured that last ten minutes of your life. And so, you go to the camera looking for that moment. Whereas, back here in a cold city, or tired at the end of a day, or whatever, if I look at a diver in turquoise waters, it could be the most inanimate moment of that minute and forty seconds, but here it’s like ‘Oh great! Get that in there’.

From what I learnt from Andrew, if you are trying to capture the experience of being there you should look for what clips to keep, then and there. What you need to be able to do is compare the record of the event with the event just after you witnessed it, closeness in time between the two preserves the connection (Laurier & Philo, 2006; Stan Raffel, 1979). More than this, while some short episode is complete, you are still in that special manner of responding to the world, you are in the midst of the adventure. There is an important difference here from the idea of much documentary (though not all) that the person with the camera is a witness to the events (Scannell, 1996). Moreover, by contrast with Andrew’s immersion and desire for proximity and directness (almost direct contact) between his experience of the event and his editing of the event, the renowned feature film
editor Walter Murch tries to keep himself isolated from the shooting of the films that he edits (Koppelman, 2005). For Murch, what was appreciated *in situ* as a great performance by one or more of the cast on set can distract the professional editor from what is later seen to be the best shot in the editing suite. Murch thus identifies the opposite problem, that the editor would find themselves searching for the footage of that remembered brilliant performance and setting aside the superior takes as they are viewed in the editing suite.

While being able to recall the event is important, just as it might be for a humdrum occasion that we hoped to be able capture, there is a further reason for editing the adventure while still in the midst of it. Echoing Simmel (1911), when the adventure is over it becomes disconnected from daily existence, taking on a dreamlike quality. As with the dream it can fade on our return from it and, more troublingly, it is outside of our usual experience and what it was to be in that moment becomes increasingly distant to us and removed from where we are afterwards. Live editing is the solution to how we can indeed be part of an event and, part of liveness, as spectators of TV coverage. What Andrew does at this stage is, then, a variant of live editing.

Up until this point I realise it appears as if Andrew, until he hands the DVD over, is editing his experiences not only by himself but solely for himself. An account of his experience and video editing which not only sounds narcissistic, it risks perpetuating the idea of the video camera and what it records as isomorphic with an individual's memories and private remembering. Or rather, the idea of individual's inner memories which are hidden within them and replayed by an inner viewer as if on a screen within their brain. From the outset Andrew's editing is directed toward sharing it with others, a public remembering, or, better, a generous assembling. As we will see later, in the final short film that will be handed around to the friends from the holiday the editing ongoingly attends to their inclusion and in some ways to their experiences. Similarly, while the adventurer might appear to be a loner, here Andrew’s adventure was a collective endeavour and encounter with fortune and misfortune.

3. The circulation of experience

Drawing on Sack’s ‘doing being ordinary’ have already begun to delineate the relationship between the ordinary person and the adventurer, between the experiences that each can have and that each can tell. In his subsequent lecture ‘Storyteller as witness; entitlement to experience’ Sacks quietly introduces knowledge and experience through how they circulate in conversation. Quietly, because rather than drawing together the massive literature on either, he simply reminds the students that we can pass a fact from one person to another (water boils at 100°C) and they can then pass that item of knowledge on again, relatively easily.1 Experience seems to have a much more limited and difficult circulatory logic in conversation between ordinary persons sharing their daily experiences. Where this distributional divide becomes all the more apparent is when, in Sacks’ example, the experience of a witness to a car crash runs out of persons who can both tell it and listen to it. To paraphrase Sacks, if Ethel sees a car crash, it is certainly not a day when she has nothing to report on, she can tell her friend Betsy about it because it is

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1 A certain note of caution here. Scientific knowledge turns out to require a great deal more equipment and organisation to move it around.
recognisably a tell-able event (unlike witness two cars passing by in the routine ways that two cars pass by one another), it happened to her and she felt certain things in response to it. Having been told of what Ethel witnessed, Betsy might just about be able to tell her husband what it had felt like for you to come across this car crash but Betsy’s husband would hardly be able to tell his colleagues at work about how his wife’s colleague had felt on witnessing a crash and it’s pretty much impossible that the colleague’s children, over dinner that night, would hear about what kind of experience Ethel had suffered that day. The problem Sacks identifies is that there are constraints on how a second party can feel in response to the first party’s experiences and there ‘are even sharper limits on the good feeling that they can give to a third’ p244 1992, Sacks doesn’t bother going as far as a fourth party. It is important here to remember we are examining the relating of an ordinary person’s experiences of an ordinary event and not a journalist’s packaging of their experience of an event for circulation through the national press.

The way an ordinary member’s daily personal experiences become increasingly uninteresting and un-tellable beyond their immediate acquaintances is something we are all familiar with. For Sacks this raises a more general problem as to how each person is entitled to tell such a story and to feel in relation to it. When Betsy receives the story from Ethel she does not thereby acquire Ethel’s experiences as hers; for her they are indirect experiences. Nor is she entitled to feel the same way in relation to it because she did not come upon the car crash herself. She ought not to faint or burst into tears on hearing about the crumpled car and police cordon you passed by on the motorway that morning. Sacks picks out cases where an indirectly experienced (or reported) event does allow for a widespread entitlement to an affectual response, to tell of what one felt and, for some, to become motivated to further action the Vietnam War and at another part of his course, the assassination of JFK. Two more recent examples that bring home the centrality of news coverage, viewers’ analysis of their own entitlements to feel shocked or grieved and eye witness accounts to these events, are 9/11 (Scannell, 2004) and the death of Diana (Myers, 2000).

Outside of these media events which re-distribute experience to large numbers recipients, a number of other writers have noted the tourist industries are in the business of trying to commodify adventure through bringing large numbers of tourists to particular places (Cloke & Perkins, 2002; Lash, 2006). The tourist industries are in the business of, what Sacks in his lecture attributed to religions, the preservation and reproduction of a particular set of experiences. Given the parallels between certain aspects of travel to iconic sites and the pilgrimage to holy sanctuaries this is perhaps not so surprising (Dean, 1992). The problem is that the tourist is not Simmel’s adventurer, the things they do are predictably exciting and predictably free of the unexpected. As Cloke and Perkins note, for the bungee jumper in New Zealand, the embodied experience ‘from fear to adrenaline-filled exhilaration – from ‘AARRH’ to ‘YEEHAA’ – is the essence of commodified adventure’ (Cloke & Perkins, 2002) p538.

In both the case of the media event and tourist’s unadventurous adventure holiday we have the communication of certain experiences and their entitlements to tell of them, between the mass and the individual (Crang, 1997; Urry, 1995). What Andrew’s adventures on video raise for us, are some further refinements and extensions of how experience circulates outside of that form of transmission. In a simple sense Andrew goes to particular places with fellow experienced climbers and, much of the time, it is fellow experienced climbers that he sends the DVD of their climb to or that watch it on Youtube.
There are a number of important consequences that follow from this different form of circulation.

A departure from the tourist experience is that, as an adventurer, he is keen to avoid being a tourist, even an adventure tourist, not only in what he does while away from home but in how he records where he is:

A: It’s like why would we go to someplace to have a photograph of us with
E: ((chuckles)) Hm [hm hm
A: [the Eiffel Tower behind us eh and as we’re smiling we send it to people. It’s like, the, the essence of an experience is not necessarily that it was fun, that it was easy, it was beautiful, it’s like there’s something more to it than that.

Should Andrew adopt the tourist's perspective on what is involved in climbing then it would begin to destroy the very experience that he was hoping to share with others. It is his years of accumulated climbs that informs and shapes his experience in, and of, any particular climb. A background of hard-won techniques, many of which are techniques of seeing slope, fragility of outcrops and cracks for feet to fit into that shapes what he makes of not only doing the climb but in attempting record that on video. Bungee jumping is emblematic of an extreme experience easily acquired. Any person can turn up on the day, a trained staff is there to sort out the details for them in advance and the tourist’s only requirement is to have the courage to jump. Moreover the company may well have already organised photographing or filming the jump for the. It may be that more serious climbers, surfers and the like, do go bungee jumping for fun or become involved in planning and engineering it. Equally bungee jumping can be a first step toward a life of adventure and so one would not want to dismiss it entirely. Nevertheless the tourists that bungee-jump remain only weakly entitled to begin to describe what exceptional demands twanging themselves off a bridge put upon them, what unimaginable sufferings or joys they endured. And the video that could be made of the bungee jump could never become ‘Touching the void’.

In the ways hinted above Andrew and his fellow climbers gain the rights to speak of their experiences and also, of relevance for us, to film them. It is not only thus that their experiences have to be located in being experiences of the ease or difficulty of a climb (Bennett & Hacker, 2003) p276) it is that such an assessment is based in their expertise in climbing. This is revealed in one of the problems routinely faced by climbers who make video of their climbs:
A: (( begins selecting footage of Yellow T-shirt climbing rock face))
Now climbers always say that when you look back at climbing footage and climbing photography ((lifting sub-clip out of clip)) it doesn’t look as hard and so: the skill ((drops on to timeline)) e: therefore is: to capture ((looks across to E)) the difficulty of it ((leaves cursor on next clip of Red Jumper climbing)) The gymnastic and the, the, the vertigo of it ((looks back to iMac))

It is pertinent that it is *climbers* that say this and not any of the other categories of person that Andrew could select. As Scannell (1999) notes, we accept that certain kinds of members of society are the ones who can set their experience of how difficult or easy any project, such as a climb, actually was against the appearances of doing that project in photographs or on video. Indeed it is only those sorts of persons that *can* see the difficulty of the climb on the video since they see the climb in terms of doing it themselves. Non-climbers cannot tell one way or another whether it was hard or not and in making the video Andrew anticipates their reception of it. If it 'looks' easy then for the non-climber they are likely to miss the difficulty.
If we think about this in terms of the circulation of experience then we can see that relating the experience of climbing through a video that makes it look easy will likely lead to a cul-de-sac. Whereas if Andrew both shoots and then selects clips that document, on the one hand, the remarkable agility and strength required to scale limestone cliffs of this formation and, on the other, the feeling of vertigo that the climber can suffer in amongst this, then his expectation is that a non-climber will share something of the climbing’s difficulties through the video. Indeed, this is one of the essential qualities of cinema at its best, that it borders on immersion in the experiences of others. For Andrew, if his viewers admire the climber’s gymnastic moves or feel vertigo on viewing then he has passed along something of the experience of climbing in these mountains.
4. Finding and offering points of view

Theme music playing to shot of red with shadows, shadows move slowly sideways

Theme music lowers

A: The voice you hear is not my speaking voice but

A: my mind’s voice (1.0) I have not spoken

A: since I was six years old (2.0) ((audible noise of voices in distance))

Vivian Sobchack (Sobchack, 2004) reflecting on her bodily immersion in the first two shots The Piano, the camera looking through the semi-transparent skin of someone’s fingers and then a cut to shot the child, Ada, looking through her fingers using bright sunlight. ‘My fingers knew what I was looking at - and this before the objective reverse shot that followed to put those fingers in their proper place’ (Sobchack, 2004) p63.

Sobchack’s remarks on the switch between points of view that took her from looking through a child’s hands to ‘where they could be seen objectively’ (Sobchack, 2004)p63, bring us on, from the circulation of experience, to the engagement of the viewer in the home-made climbing movie. It takes us also from Andrew’s accounts of his climbing movies and the climbing footage to his reflections on both the value of editing and how he goes about using points of view in his footage. In the opening of The Piano we are provided with a perspective, then by cutting to a face looking, who it belongs to, this cut between view and viewer, is one of the conventional grammars of film editing. The filmic inventiveness of the film-makers is in, firstly, giving us a point-of-view shot that is not initially looking at a perspective, it is only retrospectively that we see the blurry red shadows as what a character is seeing. This is perhaps why, in the editing, we are run
through the cuts between the shots a second time, before the hands are removed and we see a much more conventional perspective of a garden with horse, girl and old man. At the same time we are cut to a mid-shot of our viewer, a Victorian woman sitting beneath a tree. A second element to the filmic poesis of this editing is the voice-over, ‘the voice you are hearing’ that is hearably a child’s voice in its timbre, yet belongs to what we discover to be an adult (Livingston, 1995). These poetics of perspective and narration take the audience a while to disentangle. They draw us in by bending the convention, then as assemble the sense of the scene we become intrigued by whose perspective, whose voice these will belong to (Gallacher, 2009). As viewers we have very quickly come upon a film that is recognisably filmic and poetic, pushing us to attend our own viewing work.

Sobchack is interested in what she feels with her fingers when she briefly occupies the experience being passed on by Campion (and her editor Veronika Jenet\(^2\)). Sobchack’s lesson, in its briefest terms, is that cinema engages so much more of our bodies than the eyes alone. What she is excited by is the shifting red shadows of flesh and bone fingers over our eyes, how a film can touch its viewer and elicit its viewers’ experiences of touch. Sobchack is less interested in examining the cut which produced the point of view as belonging to someone, indeed she is critical of another reviewer for ‘rushing to reduce vision to point of view’ p64 though that is for the emphasis on ‘view’ over ‘touch’. In making sense of the cut between red shadows and fingers over eyes we are in a less phenomenological register and a more imaginative one in the analysis we do in connecting one to the other, this striking and sensual perspective and that person (Stanley Raffel, 2008). For one thing, it is is not a child looking at the world, even though we might expect hiding one’s face with one’s hand while peering out to be that person’s perspective. Jenet and Campion’s artful-ness is to have us already begin to project a character from hearing a child’s voice and then considering what sort of adult would peek from behind their fingers. During the shooting of a film a number of point of view and actor shots are often taken so that any particular point of view shot can be edited to fit to a particular character in the film (Laurier, Strebel, & Brown, 2008).

For home movie making, in general, the point-of-view shot is a much rarer feature because, of course, the point-of-view is ongoingly that of the home movie-maker themselves. The same curious absence of the family photographer, be it mum or dad, son or daughter, that shapes family photo albums, shapes the home movie. There will usually only be one camera (though that is changing for family photos of course as digital cameras proliferate) and there is seldom the time to do lengthy set-ups that ensure both perspectives and viewers that go with those perspective. Classically, as Andrew pointed earlier, the two are folded into one as the family stands with their back to the Eiffel tower smiling at the photographer. For Andrew, as we have noted already, it’s common enough for the camcorder not to be recording what happens because it has to be fitted in and around the rest of the demands of whatever adventure the adventurer is involved in. It is testament not only to Andrew’s skill with camera but also what he has learnt about video editing’s requirements that he sets the camera up to try and catch both perspectives and viewers of those perspectives as separate shots. We begin to get a sense of the relationship between registering a scene and the editing of experiences that one is entitled to and that one will then go on to show as one’s experiences later, one which is attuned to the requirements of storytelling with video rather than with, and in, conversation. In the

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\(^2\) As is all too common with film criticism the editor goes unmentioned (Vaughan, 1983).
case of professional documentary editors they may well be a first audience to footage rather than the person whose experiences these videos were recorded in and amongst.

As we return to Andrew in the midst of editing, he is now talking about selecting from the footage rather than shooting the footage. He is being the editor, not the videographer. When he accounts for the footage is it not in terms of what his intentions (or not) were when wielding the camcorder, it is in terms of what he the editor values in the footage as he sees it in iMovie:

1 A: [°Anyway I’ve got this here (4.0)
+  
2 A: which is really cool ((scrolling back through clip))
3 A: it’s just it’s such a long scene that I’ve got to figure out°
   ((8.0 - edges through clip, until midway))
4 A: See there’s different things I like
5 A: ((turns to E, raises mouse hand))

6 A: I like [] camera moving as people are moving, so it’s the, I’ve told you this before, it’s the, it’s the subject’s experience
7 E: Yah
8 A: And then (0.5) And then I also quite like thee (. ) footage of (. ) thee (1.0) e viewing the subject having his experience
9 E: Hm[m.m
10 A: [Okay. So here I’m trying, I was actually trying to achieve ((hand on to mouse)) both and it’s (0.5) m’ maybe becomes a bit complicated
11 .hh I want to watch ((scrolls back briefly and then forward))
12 A: s:ee Ian coming into the scene ((shifts playhead backwards)) like this
13 ((backwards with Ian now offscreen)). But then before that it’s actually the camera

To run through what’s happening in the transcript. Andrew is in the process of selecting subclips to add to his timeline (the top right window with an arrow on top of it in the above diagram). We are watching the footage in the clip viewer (the window the arrow points to), below it is the effects box (which we can ignore). From time to time Andrew glances at the
position of the playhead and the in-points and out-points in the clip library (bottom right window full of clip thumbnails). To provide us with a visual sense of what the ‘this’, of ‘I’ve got this here’, is I’ve grabbed frames from Andrew skimming through the footage to make a strip at the beginning of the transcript. In presenting it in such a way Andrew brings me in to participate in the watching of the footage. At other times during the evening I was positioned much more clearly as the un-involved observer of his editing practice.

1  A: [°Anyway I’ve got this here (4.0) +
2  A: which is really cool ((scrolling back through clip))

At the outset my attention is brought to bear on the clip above of a climber reaching a ridge and then walking along it until he joins his friends sitting at the end of the ridge. My viewing what is about to be shown as a clip is instructed (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1997) through Andrew using ‘this’ as against ‘these’ or a vague ‘something’ and, moreover, that as ‘this’ can be ‘got’ suggests it is now in his workspace for being further edited into the movie. There follows what sounds like an absence of talk though is a stretch of time filled with skimming through the footage. That Andrew drags the playhead rather than letting it play itself further configures my viewing of the clip as an entity. To configure my viewing otherwise Andrew could have, for instance, let the clip play back for a while encouraging me to attend to a number of events that occur within it. His assessment of the clip - ‘which is really cool’ - arrives in synch with the red climber coming the end of the ridge and greeting his friends. What is accomplished here is establishing for both of us that there is a good clip here, the looks of it and thus roughly what that good clip consists of. Such an establishment clearly requires manipulations that are specific to video rather than say selecting a photo from a digital collection of thumbnails.

However, despite the aesthetic appeal of the overall clip there is editing work to be done: it is too long and requires cutting and trimming. Rather than announce what will need to be done, or can be done, Andrew’s speech fades out. He has not yet worked out himself what can be done with the clip. Scrubbing through the clip step-by-step this time, rather than the rush-through of the last viewing, he inspects the shot closely.

4  A:  See there’s different things I like
5  A: ((turns to E, raises mouse hand))
6 A: I like [ ] camera moving as people are moving, so it’s the, I’ve told you this before, it’s the, it’s the subject’s experience

With his inspection completed he turns away from the screen. What he has found is an opportunity to both help the ethnographer learn about his movie-making aesthetic and to provide an account of what is ‘cool’ about this clip, which is its movement through a scene. As Andrew put it on another occasion, he likes the sense that the viewer moves into a scene that is already happening and leaves before it is finished; they join the events briefly and then leave them to continue without them. A second feature of the clip that Andrew has realised he can put to use is ‘the subject’s experience’ and ‘viewing the subject having his experience’. What provides him with one of his routine tasks is that the two shots he wants to use are found in the same piece of footage. Routine because, of course, filming in the midst events it easier to let the camera run on and make the cuts at home.

12 A: see Ian coming into the scene (shifts playhead backwards)) like this

13 (backwards with Ian now offscreen)). But then before that it’s actually the camera
This time Andrew edges, rather than plays or skims through the footage, looking for where a cut can be made that divides a point of view from a person having that view. As he creeps the playhead forward he instructs the ethnographer: 'see Ian coming into the scene'. With my attention secured Andrew then lets the clip play through. After which using 'but then' provides a contrast for a second upcoming clip. ‘Actually’ notes and secures the the alternate perspective which is the camera moving into the scene this time rather than Ian the climber. The movement of the point of view and the movement of Ian will serve to tie these shots together. From his continuous takes at the time, Andrew as editor begins to construct an experience that does not only belong to the person holding the home movie camera. He leaves behind the practices of recording and collection to create a filmic object. His experience becomes something sharable in that two ways: we have a point of view that belongs to Ian as much to Andrew and we we have an object that encourages us to watch it.

Scannell (Scannell, 1996) notes that one use of experience is that we ‘see and understand what happens through [another’s] eyes’ p99. Some adaptations need to be taken into account to bring Scannell’s description from that of accounts delivered during media interviews into the arena of the editing of home-made videos. That we are looking through the eyes of the experienced climber is something we come to understand because it is being hand-made by this climber. As we noted earlier, years of experience inform Andrew's editing in his concern for delivering the climbing video as the experiences of those others present, sharing the experience with them through the video and yet in the dilemmas of showing the in-experienced difficulties which they cannot fully appreciate. This concern with other viewers (family, friends and more) from outside the climbing community is an ongoing editing orientation of the climbing video maker. Another audience that Andrew mentioned should not be forgotten. Himself, in his old age, having adventures to look back on and look back on in the form of videos. Simmel ends his essay on the adventurer by examining why adventure is the preserve of youth and inappropriate to old age:

the fascination of the adventure is again and again not the substance which it offers us and which, if it were offered in another form of experiencing it, the intensity and excitement with which it lets us feel life in just this instance. This is what connects youth and adventure. What is called the subjectivity of youth is just this: The material of life in its substantive significance is not as important to youth as is the process which carries it, life itself. Old age is "objective"; it shapes a new structure out of the substance left behind in a peculiar sort of timelessness by the life which has slipped
by. The new structure is that of contemplativeness, impartial judgement, freedom from that unrest which marks life as being present. p197

Video, like a number of other visual media in the social sciences has been a fruitful method for bringing social scientists inside the experience of ‘being someone’ or ‘doing something’. The connection with the experience of others is not exclusive to video, it is common enough that a social group will be given cameras to document their experience of, for instance, refugees in social housing, seniors visiting the countryside or children in the playground. Perhaps, though, more than photographs, video raises the experiential and our entitlement to have come close to a place or an event as those experience by other people (and not ourselves). The relationship here is similar to that of the media’s desire to have first-hand accounts of disasters. As Scannell (Scannell, 2004) puts it ‘It is precisely because mediated narratives, told in the third person by a news presenter, lack the force of first person narratives by those who are there’ p582. For the social sciences, indirect reports or statistical summaries on housing conditions lack the force of being witness to photographs, videos or even interview quotes.

Here I have began to outline a further form of circulation for home-made videos than between social scientists and their subjects. A circulation that the maker both orients to and creates during the editing process, it is there where the story is told in video media (rather than in Sack’s conversational forms). Departing from Sacks description of ordinariness as a form of circulation that results in members missing the extraordinary (see also (Antaki, 2004)), I have begun to describe the logics of circulation for extraordinary experiences. One thing this required was distinguishing the adventurer from the tourist because the adventurer’s video maintained continuities with the adventure itself. Should their hard won experience in dangerous and difficult climbing conditions become a quite ordinary holiday video then it would begin to undermine the very form of life that produced it. A form of life that should, according to Simmel, tears ordinary life completely out of itself. Part of this circulation is in relation to a circulation from youth to old age, since the video is made to be sent onward for a later re-viewing by Andrew and his future friends and family. There to be re-connected as history, what seemed to be its substance in its immediacy and presence as experience, transformed into the memory of life live that way, open now for contemplation and reflection.

Concluding remarks

Sacks raises a striking insight into the nature of human experience, that a fundamental limit on it is what we are entitled to experience and what we are not. The ways in which whether the experience is ours, and if not then quite whose it is, provide further limits and resources for how that experience passes through or disappears into the world. Scannell notes that the TV, radio and news media, provide means by which members of society can authenticate their experiences as news worthy (Scannell, 1996). In this paper it has been the experience of our own adventures rather than being witnesses to an event that we have been examining. Nevertheless for both being a witness and being an adventurer, are oriented and open to the reception of our experiences by others, careful not make too much of them or to ‘not to have the seen the thing you should have seen’ p248, 1992, what we might call the ‘missable’ (Cavell, 2004). Even though editing the video help us retain and also find other elements that we might have missed during an adventure, making too much out of it is something Andrew is almost over-sensitive toward. Home movie makers
have a poor record in terms of length of their video, subject matter, titling, music and so on. This is already changing as individuals have a number of new tools (e.g. iMovie & Moviemaker) and media circuits (e.g. Youtube & BlipTV) through which to share their experiences with others.

As we have noted throughout, for Andrew and his fellow adventurers, to have climbed that climb, or skied that slope, is about their entitlement to have certain feelings in relation to the event. Regardless of whether they video their adventure or not they are entitled to feel elated, excited or disappointed. In editing the video Andrew is aware that he has both those feelings and those entitlements and the video is not the presentation of a collection of mere facts about the climb (Raffel 1979). What this ongoingly raises for Andrew is the question of sharing that experience and owning it. The latter is not quite the given that we imagine since it is an accomplishment to own one’s experiences. The making of the video makes visible something of what that accomplishment is, in ways similar to being able to tell the story of adventure during a dinner party would be. The art of the adventure story being also to take the listener’s along, the poor re-counter of their experiences will leave their audience sitting around the dinner table still or, equally, sitting on the sofa rather than entering into the climbing adventure. They will neither accomplish the sharing of their experience nor owning their experience and so, we might also begin to see that owning and sharing of our experience are deeply bound up with one another.

To return to Simmel, the adventure itself seems obvious in what it is when we are in the midst of it. We are in that other world of burning bridges, lucky escapes, daring ourselves and discovering strengths, all disconnected from the ordinary world. On returning to our routine existence, as the experience begins to recede into a more distant memory, the threat of both forgetting and missing what the adventure consisted of, grows. In his shooting and editing Andrew is concerned thus with what we might otherwise forget or miss - the flowers on the limestone ledge, looking suddenly downward into a fatal drop below, the finger that finds a purchase on an unlikely crevice. These are part of the experience of climbing that all too easily disappear on our return to work on the Monday. In making the video Andrew maintains the adventure as a halo around the other days of the week.


