

## Owning and sharing experiences of adventure: tourism, video and editing practices

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## Introduction - the car wreck

In Harvey Sacks's (1992) lecture 'Storyteller as "witness;" Entitlement to experience' he investigates the different ways in which knowledge and experience circulate in everyday conversation. Sacks reminds his students that we can pass a fact from one person to another (e.g. water boils at 100°C) and they can then pass that item of knowledge on to another member of society and they can then pass that on to another and so on, relatively easily.<sup>1</sup> Sacks then turns to experiences which seem to have a much more limited circulatory logic in conversation between members of society. Experiences quickly run out of persons who can tell them and persons who will listen to them. Sacks draws upon the example of conversations where one person - 'Ethel'<sup>2</sup> - has witnessed the wreck from a recent car crash. Having had this experience, Ethel can tell her friend 'Betsy' about seeing the wreck because it is recognisably a tell-able event. It is also Ethel's experience, she possesses it; 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 persuade her husband to hear about Ethel's experience that day 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 car wreck. In tracing out the short distance Ethel's experience can travel before it runs out of tellers and audiences, Sacks identifies 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' (1992: 244).

The manner in which an ordinary member of society's daily personal experiences become increasingly un-interesting and un-tellable beyond their immediate acquaintances is a feature of conversation we all become familiar with through sharing our daily experiences and the experiences of others. For Sacks, what this raises is that the communicative geography of experience is tied to each teller's *entitlement* to relate a story of such an experience and their entitlement to have certain emotions in relation to it. What we begin to realise from his work is that stories that turn on the experience of events do not circulate in quite the same way that other stories do. When Betsy receives the story from Ethel she does not thereby acquire Ethel's experiences as hers; for Betsy they are *indirect* experiences. Nor is Betsy entitled to feel the same way in relation to the original event because she did not come upon the car crash herself. Betsy ought not to faint or burst into tears on hearing about the crumpled car and police cordon that Ethel passed by on the motorway that morning.

It might then seem that experience can only have a very limited dispersal through those with direct access to the events and through being told in conversations that form part of close relationships to one another, as family or friends or colleagues. However, in his lecture, Sacks goes on to pick out cases where an indirectly experienced (or reported) event does allow for a widespread entitlement to an affectual response. Using the then current examples of the Vietnam War and the assassination of JFK, Sacks shows that these were events where unacquainted members of US society were entitled to talk about what they felt and, for some, to become motivated to further action be it political protests or mass mourning. In leaping to the national scale and to media events Sack's ideas connect to both media studies and cultural geography. The former has been concerned with the production and reception of events through the idea of experience (Scannell, 1996; 2004). Cultural geography has had a more recent shift in its focus toward the circulation of emotion (Davidson et al. 2007) and affect (Thrift, 2008). Each form of mediated experience moves through the world through different

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<sup>1</sup> Elsewhere in his lectures Sacks examines jokes which are equally to pass around and as he reveals also distribute and rely upon knowledge.

<sup>2</sup> I will call the persons here 'Ethel' and 'Betsy' so we can more easily keep track of them.

sets of rights and distributional properties than knowledge (Jay, 2005). My interest in this chapter is taking up Sacks's writings on the circulation of experience through stories told in conversation to examine how experience circulates through home movies made by adventurers. Adventurers that have much in common with tourists while also being distinct from them. To arrive at the adventurer and their video practices will require traversing, firstly, earlier studies of the circulation of experience in broadcast media and, secondly, the relationship between tourism and adventure.

## **Mediated geographies of experience**

Social scientists trying to record and understand the experiential have given photographic cameras to groups document their experiences of, for instance, being refugees in social housing, seniors visiting the countryside, children at school or residents in a particular neighbourhood of the city. Video cameras, as they have become cheaper and easier to use, have been handed out following similar principles of auto-documentation of for instance, children in the car (Noy, 2012). Video then has become a further method for bringing social scientists closer to the experience of 'being someone' or 'doing something' (Garrett 2011). This has come at a time when there has been an explosion of new communicative practices via video-sharing sites, Youtube being the most well known (Burgess & Green, 2009). To understand how experiences are shared I am suggesting we can then turn toward the production and consumption of amateur videos on Youtube and in turn this requires us to touch upon the production cultures of the home movie (Thornton Caldwell 2008).

In media studies, Scannell (1996) returned to Sacks's material on ordinary members of society witnessing a car crash, to point out that 'Ethel' checks on the newsworthiness of her experience by, quite literally, turning to consider whether the local radio 'news' had reported on it. In her selection of the local news channel, she demonstrates her assessment of the event she experienced as not being of national news significance. The news, then, becomes an objective measure to which witnesses to an event can compare their subjective experience of it. Picking up Sacks's concern with the shared national experience of the death of JFK, Myers (2000) and Scannell (2004) examine how modern media events such as the death of Princess Diana and 9/11 have changed, firstly, the circulation of eyewitness testimony and, secondly, the emotional responses of members of the public. In terms of the latter, Myers underlines that entitlement to feeling upset about the death of a public figure, known only indirectly, turns upon a number of justifications: how that person featured in their lives, a sense of similarity of role (e.g. as members of a family losing one of its members) and as being spokespersons for the feelings of all other ordinary people (in relation to the loss of this particular public figure). Where Scannell and Myers explored the broadcast media and members of the public what I will turn toward in this chapter is the distinct geographies of mediation and circulation of experience of home movies and adventure tourists.

Were Sacks researching the experience of encountering a car wreck now, it is not impossible that Ethel would have pulled her smartphone out of her handbag to record what she saw. Nor is it all that unlikely that Betsy would have then learnt about Ethel's experience by seeing the videoclip through Facebook. Nor that videoclip might (or might not) lead eventually to a conversation about the car wreck on the phone after all (Miller, 2011). The circulation of experience is changing as social media alter both the geography and temporality of how we keep up with the events in our friends lives. In others words, where and when we expect our friends and their (and our) events to show up is different from previous generations. Simultaneously, the media that we expect them to share with us have multiplied. This is not to say that the social actions that we are trying to accomplish with them are unfamiliar. Friends and families are still gossiping, forgiving, updating, flirting, telling stories, remembering and, here, sharing experiences (Miller, 2011).

My concern in this chapter is not to explore the direct parallel case of bystander videos of dramatic events and how they are shared. My interest is in a form of home movie that has a longer history: the tourist's holiday movie (Nicolson 2004). Its extended lineage usefully downplays what might otherwise seem, from the account above, like an epochal transformation in the sharing of experiences. Rather than examine all forms of tourism and their video documentation, in this short chapter, it is the adventure-holiday and its video documentation. The adventure-tourist, as we will see later, is not a conventional tourist, even if they are not quite an adventurer either. As a genre, the adventure-tourist videos of snowboarding, mountain-biking and so on, are common on Youtube and, moreover have, alongside videos of children and parents at play, become part of the advertising campaigns of home movie editing apps. In part, the popularity of adventure tourist videos resides in their spectacle but it has also emerged in the desire to share extraordinary experiences.

### **Tourism, experience and media**

Tourism has always been bound up with the experience of other places and in his classic book on tourism, Urry identified the centrality of the gaze of the tourist (Urry, 1990). The geography of the mass tourist industry has grown up around supporting, servicing and presenting itself for that gaze. As Urry (1990) documented, the tourist gaze has varied by period and continues to vary across different societies. The travels of tourists parallel have been argued to emerge out of the pilgrimages to holy sanctuaries in search of religious experiences (MacCannell, 1992), thereby allowing religious experience to circulate. The tourist industries exploit this logic of experience by reminding us that the only way to have and possess that experience of other places is to travel to them and spend time there. Understanding the pursuit of those experiences has classically been understood in terms of a search for authenticity in the face of commodification (Wang, 1999) rather than how a more varied and less pilgrimatic set of experiences are distributed.

Unlike Ethel who, as an ordinary person with a concern with ordinariness (Sacks, 1984), happened upon a grim car crash, adventure tourists are a combination of pilgrims and Simmel's adventurer. The latter goes in search of experiences that have 'something alien, untouchable, out of the ordinary' (Simmel, 2013). There is a desire to participate in and produce the extraordinary and to escape both the job of 'doing being ordinary' and the way of reporting on experiences that accompanies it (Sacks, 1984). While the adventurer is a distinct figure from the pilgrim, the adventure-tourist finds themselves the target of businesses trying to commodify their adventures in sacred or spectacular sites and charging for the opportunity to have extraordinary experiences in these places. The locations for adventure-tourists are often beyond the beaten tracks of mass tourism (Cloke & Perkins, 2002; Kane, 2012).

Not only are places sought out that provide suitable spectacular locations for for adventure, sites are developed and adapted for adventurers. Bungee jumping, for example, has had platforms purpose-built in dramatic locations. Bungee jumping also captures the centrality of embodied experience to adventures. As Cloke and Perkins put it: 'from fear to adrenaline-filled exhilaration – from 'AARRH' to 'YEEHAA' – is the essence of commodified adventure' (2002: 538). Bungee jumping serves the commodification critique well since it does indeed appear to be a diminished adventure and one that is, in turn, a target of critique by the adventure tourists that we spoke to during the larger research project that this chapter arises out of<sup>3</sup> (capturing that spirit see also (Heywood, 1994)). However bungee jumping also helps us appreciate the distance the adventure tourist lies from the tourist who is primarily looking at the place they are visiting (Urry & Larsen, 2011). Compared to the se-

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<sup>3</sup> 'Assembling the line: amateur and professional work, skill and practice in digital video editing practices'. A three year ethnographic study of video editing practices funded by the ESRC RES 062-23-0564

date tourist photographing the Eiffel Tower there are sharply distinct sensoriums in adventure tourism, for example in pursuits of scuba diving (Merchant, 2012) or rock climbing (Lewis, 2000).

Moving on to the role of media in adventure-tourism, the sites travelled to, are places that have been anticipated through pre-visiting them. Both mass tourism and adventure tourism are mediated through magazines, TV holiday programs, brochures and, more recently, through online social media such as Youtube, Flickr, Yelp, Tripadvisor etc. Correspondingly, and in a reflexive relationship with the media that precede them, tourists' experience of places are dominated by visual practices (Crang, 1997). The role of photography in shaping the experience of place at the time but also in sharing experiences later has been written about extensively (Crang, 1997; Urry, 1995). The relationship between cinema, television and the representation and consumption of place has become a substantial domain of empirical work and theorising by human geographers and others (Clarke, 1997; Lukinbeal, 2004). In a recent collection on the relationship between the idea of the hotel and its uses in cinema, tourism, of course, figures centrally (Clarke, 2009). Finally, from studies of social media, tourist's creative consumption of multiple traditional media before and during their visits has been inquired into (e.g. on Rosslyn Chapel, Månsson (2011). Central to my examination here, amateur Youtube videos made by adventure-tourists are drawn upon by other adventure-tourists to guide their adventures.

While the production of holiday home-movies has been examined predominantly through historical studies of their representations of place (Nicholson, 2004) and their role in the preservation of alternative archives of past events (Ishizuka & Zimmermann, 2008), the spread of video cameras through mobile phones and other devices with the parallel rise of Youtube and other video sharing systems have lead to a rising interest in contemporary video cultures (Buckingham & Willett, 2010). A variety of alternative and extreme sports (e.g. snowboarding, mountain biking), alongside urban subcultures (e.g. street-dancing, parcour, urban exploration) have from their outset had video as part of their equipment (Fogarty, 2010; Garrett 2011). The history and practices of most of these new activities have grown up around their recording, viewing and, indeed, the spread of their very techniques via video (Booth, 1996; Woermann, 2012). The video produced by these groups are usually heavily edited with jump cuts, slow motion, accelerated motion, titling, cuts to musical rhythms and so on. The adventure tourist's video practice sits somewhere between the conventional tourist's steady gaze upon touristic places with a video camera and the jump-cut videos of extreme and alternative sports. Each practice, be it of the mass tourist at the Eiffel Tower, the trial biker traversing several impossible walls (Spinney 2010) or, as we will in the next section, the adventure tourist climbing cliffs in the Mediterranean, has a concern with capturing their experiences on video for sharing with others.

### **Making home movies of adventure**

The home movie emerges from a longer history than the digital video cultures and social media described above. Home movies have been used by friends and family to share their experiences in ways that resemble Sacks's description of storytelling in conversation. The maker of the home movie was present at the events, be it a wedding or a holiday, and they subsequently share their experience with others in the form of a video. They witnessed those original events but, more than witnessing them, they also documented them with their video camera. When compared to the speed of story-assembly in conversation, what is distinct to home movie making is the time, effort and resources required to construct the medium that will tell the story (Moran, 2002; Zimmermann, 1995). While many of the studies of the home movie have been interested in what it can tell us about home and family (Chalfen, 1987; Moran, 2002) what I am treating it as here, is a site of production. In doing so w

I want us to shift into considering media production in an amateur mode and this widens us out toward a wider array of media production practices:

there is an increasingly wide range of amateur practices that go well beyond the focus on domestic life. Indeed, the home mode may itself be evolving, as both technology and the forms of family life have changed. These different practices have their own rules and traditions, and their own modes of social organisation, and they cannot be simply collapsed together (Buckingham, 2010: 46)

Home-mode movie makers are producing the extreme sports videos from above but also video blogs (Harley & Fitzpatrick, 2009; Laurier, 2014), 'how to' videos for Youtube, amateur natural history video, dance videos, monitoring of police practices (Jones & Raymond, 2012) and many other new video practices (see also Broth et al. 2014). There is, in other words, an ever-increasing proliferation of forms emerging from the home-mode, many of which are borrowed and adapted from broadcast genres (and then borrowed back again). The growth of the amateur mode of production is moreover a dispersal of video as a medium akin to the spread of the writing technologies of pens, paper and the mail service. Amateurs put video to work for different purposes than the professional broadcast media as we will see in more detail below.

An important part of the amateur mode is the relationship between the form of the video and its maker's experience, which more firmly reconnects my discussion of amateur video with Sacks's original consideration of the telling of experiences in conversation. What I will now do is shift briefly from this literature-based account to the practices of one of the home-movie editors from our project. In the project I spent a number of evenings with each home-movie maker in an 'edit-along' (borrowing from the now common 'go-along' method of Kusenbach, 2003). This involved joining editors, usually during an evening when they would have been editing anyway and then sitting alongside the home-movie makers while they edited together their videos. Like the 'go-along' it is then a way of finding out about editing practices that sits somewhere between hanging-out and interviewing.

### **Editor of his experiences**

In the evenings, after a weekend away climbing, kayaking or mountain-biking, Andrew assembled the footage recorded by himself and his friends into videos that are in an experiential mode. They were almost always set to music and usually shared afterward among his climbing, cycling and sailing companions. A handful of these videos are posted on Youtube, which is where I first saw them. The movie-making that I edited-along 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 limestone cliffs.

With a hard-drive based camcorder, the editing of Andrew's videos actually began during the events themselves. Because he could easily select which shots to delete and which to keep, Andrew disposed of clips on camera, something that had been too laborious and time-consuming with the tape-based cameras he had owned in the past. Editing *in situ*, as he told me, helped 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'. Andrew*

In trying to capture the experience of being there, he is looking for what clips to keep, then and there. By editing at that moment and in that place he can compare the record of the event with the event just after he experienced it. The closeness in time between the event and the editing of the video produces an experiential connection by their very proximity. The preservation of the experience of the event is accomplished by editing it at that moment, rather than editing it as part of a later recollection from a distance. While leaving the camera running should be closer to what the experience was like, the amateur editor works in the aftermath of the history of the unedited amateur holiday movie, which was more often a test of friendship through suffering than a gripping two to three minute video of climbing or cycling.

Although it seems that editing is after the event, the larger project of the adventure-holiday within which those experiences are found remains ongoing. The editing is being carried out before he goes home, before Andrew is back in his everyday routines and places. Echoing Simmel (1911), when the adventure is over it becomes disconnected from the existence that Andrew had within it, taking on a dreamlike quality. Like a dream that we wake from, it fades on our return from it and, more troublingly, the adventure is left outside of our usual experience. What it was to be in the adventure becomes increasingly distant to us and removed from the mundane existence we return to afterwards. For professional media production, live-editing is the solution to how we can be part of an event and, even though we are seemingly distant spectators of TV coverage (Auslander, 2012; Scannell, 2009) liveness is destroyed once the event is edited into highlights. What Andrew does while in the midst of his adventure is an amateur variation of live-editing practices, a rolling edit that will help him recapture his own experience of his adventure.

There is also a significant departure here from the relationship between the professional documentary-maker and their object: it is the person editing the footage that also experienced the events that are recorded, they are not the editor of the experiences of others (Scannell, 1996). Consequently securing the video as the experience that belongs to him requires Andrew to maintain proximity and directness between his experience of the event and his editing of the event. By contrast, the renowned feature film editor Walter Murch tries to keep himself at a distance 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, distracts the professional editor from establishing 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.

Up until this point it appears as if the home-movie maker, until they share their edited video, is editing their experiences not only by themselves but, for themselves. And yet that is not the case, their video mediated experiences are not in an individualized register, the experiences are collective in three senses:

- a. for each climb, they undertake it, to adapt a phrase from Goffman, as a climbing-together (see this adapted to cycling in McIlvenny, 2013);
- b. they edit drawing upon the collective knowledge of climbers of the looks of climbing
- c. the videos are built to be shared in the future with other

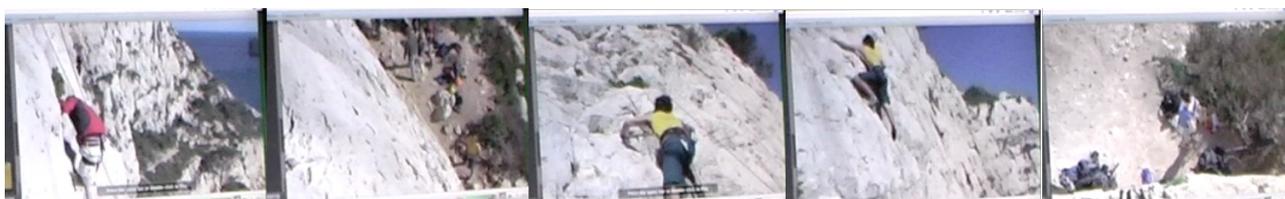
Concentrating on the third elements of its collective nature, even though the video is not being produced for broadcast, Andrew's editing is directed toward sharing it with others and it is akin to a public remembering (Middleton & Brown, 2005) of each climb he and his friends have undertaken. At a simple level his editing attends to the inclusion of shots of each person from the adventure holiday but as Andrew noted he tries to capture what happens during climbs as their collective experiences. In his editing's orientation to his friends, the work of assembling and sharing his videos also bears similarities with the family photograph album (Rose, 2010). While there is memory work going on during the editing, as there is when the family photographs are edited, there is a future orientation in this work toward future occasions when these will be collective personal, familial and friendly histories climbing.

*I'm not making money out of this, I'm not entertaining people on this, it is, it is because an experience for me is partly in the moment. But it's probably about just as much in the moment as it is in the anticipation and in the years and years afterwards that, you know, you're telling family and you're reminiscing and you're getting together with friends. Andrew*

Because these are Andrew's experiences he will be entitled to be 'telling family' in this future and, again, there is a marked similarity with parents assembling family photo albums for later tellings of the histories and geographies of the family. Or, as in his alternative anticipation of the future, he will be together with his friends again and the videos will be resources for reminiscing together. In this future orientation we can discern something of the distinctiveness of the amateur where the production orients toward these future viewings. These are viewings enmeshed in the relationships of family and friends rather than broadcasts, publics and viewers.

By contrast to the long project of learning to climb and climbing as an ongoing endeavor, 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 bungee jumping company usually have already organised photographing or filming the jump for the adventure tourists involved. 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.

Because they are climbers, Andrew and his fellow climbers gain the rights to pursue what shots best depict the climbs that they do. They do this both through 'subject-side' entitlements and 'object-side' entitlements to describe and assess the experience and the video of the experience of each climb (Edwards, 2005; Stokoe & Edwards, 2007). It is not only thus that their experiences have to be located in being experiences of the ease or difficulty of a climb (the object-side of the experience) it is that such an assessment is based in their expertise in climbing (the subject side of the experience). When both shooting with the camera and editing the footage these entitlements then generate criteria for assessing the video:



*Now climbers always say that when you look back at climbing footage and climbing photography it doesn't look as hard and so: the skill therefore is to capture the difficulty of it. The gymnastic and the, the, the vertigo of it. (Andrew, while editing the series of clips shown in the panels)*

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. Indeed it is only those categories of persons that *can* see the difficulty of the climb on the video since they see the climb in terms of doing it themselves. On Youtube, there is a wider community of climbers beyond those who were on the same climbing holiday that are drawn to and can appreciate Andrew's videos. Andrew's desire though remain to show 'the gymnastic' and 'the vertigo of it'. Consequently he selects, firstly, clips of climbers contemplating the climb above and, then, of muscle-straining shifts upwards that document the remarkable agility and strength required to scale limestone cliffs of this formation. Secondly, he selects and intercut clips of the downward view of the climber (see the second and fifth panels of the sequence of panels) that document the feeling of vertigo that the climber might suffer on looking down. By cutting in this way his expectation is that a non-climber will then also be drawn into the experience of climbing through the video, even if their rights to claim it as their experience remain limited. It is, however, one of the qualities of cinema that it can allow us to escape spectating and help us enter into the embodied experiences of others (Sobchack, 2004). For Andrew, if his viewers are able to enter into the climber's gymnastic moves or feel vertigo on viewing then he has passed along something of the experience of climbing in these mountains.

## **Concluding remarks**

In this chapter I have begun to outline the entitlement to experience that the home movie maker orients toward during the editing process. Film production, be it professional or amateur, is a practice where the story-yet-to-come is assembled in an ongoing editing of camera shots (rather than in forms of talk). Departing from Sacks's description of ordinary members missing or finding what anyone could see in the extraordinary (see also Antaki, 2004) in order to continue 'doing being ordinary', I have begun to describe the logics of circulation of extraordinary experiences by extraordinary members of society. They are, in short, doing being extraordinary where telling of the extraordinary is part of that same accomplishment and cannot be reduced to the ordinary. Exploring extraordinary life required distinguishing the adventurer from the tourist. The ongoing differentiation between adventure and tourism, between the extraordinary and the ordinary, inhabits the video-making practices of the adventure-tourist. Should the adventurer's 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. Adventure is a form of life that should, according to Simmel (1913), tear ordinary life completely out of itself. In common with other social figures from Simmel, such as the soldier, one of their problems is then how to return to ordinary life having been outside of it.

The circulation of extraordinary experiences is through the changing and volatile networks of social media and mediated social relationships. The adventurer's videos of their experiences are sometimes only shared amongst their fellow adventurers, sometimes shared amongst wider friends and family, sometimes amongst other enthusiasts, sometimes they are picked up by the national or international media. Quite how these experiences are received by their varied audiences (to use a more media studies term) has been beyond the scope of this brief chapter. However for the makers themselves, part of the circulation of experience is toward a projected future occasions within a life course ahead. Home videos of extraordinary experiences are to be sent onward to a later occasion of re-viewing by their maker and their future friends and family, there to be re-assessed as a shared, mediated and familial history of experience.

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