

Gender Bias In Amateur Video



JOE FERGUSON, PhD

PhD Clinical Psychology, Fielding University
MBA, Wharton School of Business

One of my favorite films at Sundance 2011 was *Life In A Day*, a collaboration of YouTube and Google, in which the global community was invited to submit video of their lives and those around them on July 24th of 2010. Free cameras were distributed in parts of the world where they are still uncommon and over 80,000 amateur video clips were received from 192 countries; an impressive cross-section of life on the global street. The film itself is brilliant, but Ridley Scott and his crew have also accumulated a fascinating social research database in the process of making it. With the benefit of Google resources and technology, each of these 5000

hours of video was reviewed, rated and tagged in every conceivable way. In the Q&A after the Sundance screening, director Kevin Macdonald said that by the time they were done he could query “*adolescent romance with animals in the background at sunset*” and instantly see the best 100 clips on that theme from around the world. This provides the perfect combination of shameless voyeurism and immaculate scientific research!

In the process of wallowing for months in this metacultural media melting pot, the filmmakers made many unexpected and fascinating observations, only a few of which could be artfully reflected in their 90 minute movie. Among the most fascinating of these was the fact that men overwhelmingly video their women against beautiful landscapes, often backlit by a sunset or using some other flattering cinematic device, while women tend to video their men making asses of themselves in preposterous situations. This tendency was strong enough that the editors dubbed it *The Backlight Effect*.

At Sundance, the film crew and the guy from Google all declined to interpret the backlight effect but I have some thoughts about it and it is probably relevant to your own personal life. Trust me. Call me.

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332 Forest Avenue, Suite #17, Laguna Beach, CA 92651
(949) 235-2615 ~ DrJoe@Fergi.com ~ www.Fergi.com