

ABSTRACT

ETHNOGRAPHIC VIDEOCONFERENCING, AS APPLIED TO
SONGS/CHANTS/DANCES/GAMES OF SOUTH INDIAN CHILDREN,
AND LANGUAGE LEARNING

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This dissertation presents *ethnographic videoconferencing* as an evolutionary development of ethnographic photography, and ethnographic film and video making. Ethnographic videoconferencing enables the people of a culture under study to speak for themselves. Young people of such cultures (who may already be competent in the scholar's outsider spoken language) may be pivotal figures in ethnographic videoconference processes, as the scholar may especially communicate with them; they may communicate with their elders (in the local spoken language); and then they may be able to speak directly to outsiders via videoconference. In the process, these young people may increase their competence in literary and electronic media as they deepen their knowledge of their elders' oral-centric cultures; and they may also develop ongoing community multimedia cultural resource centers.

A case study is presented: The primary fieldwork subjects are members of the Kani people, an aboriginal tribe, living in a mountain forest area of southwestern

Tamil Nadu, south India. The scholar's primary research method is ethnographic fieldwork with participant observation. The type of folklore studied is children's songs/chants/dances/games. A hypothesis is that these play activities teach taken-for-granted social behavior and assist with language acquisition, especially through *repetition with variation, the simultaneous saying and enacting of words, and question-and-answer routines*. Two post-fieldwork ethnographic videoconferences occurred between a site in Chennai, the state capital (where some Kani people, and the scholar, were among the participants); and a site at the scholar's university in Philadelphia, USA (where some Tamil emigrants and their children were among the participants).

The dissertation offers a plan for reviving and developing folk cultures, and presumes that folk cultures can enrich and transform mainstreams. But finally, it points toward the application of its principles of development to cultures in general -- those having any conventions whatsoever. Conjured is the ideal of global *teletopia*, featuring fully-functioning public spheres and helping to overcome two of contemporary society's most vexing problems: loneliness and unemployment.