

RECEIVED

GCA-T-1

MAY 22 2 27 PM '00

POSTAL RATE COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

**BEFORE THE
POSTAL RATE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20268-0001**

POSTAL RATE AND FEE CHANGES, 2000

Docket No. R2000-1

**DIRECT TESTIMONY OF
KEN C. ERICKSON
ON BEHALF OF
GREETING CARD ASSOCIATION**

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	iii
Statement Of Qualifications Of Ken C. Erickson.....	1
I. Purpose And Scope Of Testimony.....	2
II. How Anthropologists View Culture.....	3
III. Anthropological Perspectives On Value And Economics	4
IV. Greeting Cards And The Post.....	5
V. Anthropology And Cultural Value	8
VI. Exploring The Itinerary Of A Greeting Card To Discover Its Cultural Value	10
VII. Greeting Cards In Use: Their Social And Symbolic Roles.....	13
VIII. The Salience Of Greeting Cards For Americans.....	16
IX. The Value Of Greeting Cards To Extending Women’s Social Roles.....	19
X. Culture Change And Greeting Cards	20
XI. Conclusions	21

Appendix

Exh. GSA-1 Ken Cleland Erickson's Curriculum Vitae

Executive Summary

1
2 My testimony is an anthropological analysis of the value of greeting cards
3 that are sent through the mail in the United States. As an anthropologist, I
4 review the anthropological perspective on culture and how greeting cards are a
5 part of American culture. I summarize basic anthropological views of value and
6 economics and describe how anthropologists study exchange systems and
7 cultures that are not part of cash economies. This point of view is especially
8 relevant to the value of greeting cards to recipients who receive them in the mail
9 because these recipients do not pay for the greeting cards, so some measure
10 other than or in addition to price is necessary to assess their value. An
11 assessment of the cultural value of greeting cards to recipients is important
12 because of the statutory requirement governing the setting of postal rates, the
13 ECSI requirement, which dictates that the cultural value of the mail to recipients
14 be considered. I briefly review the history of greeting cards in relation to the Post
15 as an institution, and then review anthropological perspectives on cultural value.

16 A means of discovering cultural value of any good in a market economy is
17 described: the itinerary approach. This approach is illustrated by following the
18 itinerary of a greeting card from production through consumption. Then, original
19 research conducted two years ago about the cultural salience of greeting cards
20 is reviewed and linked to the continued American tradition of sending greeting
21 cards through the mail. That portion of the testimony reviews how decreases in
22 greeting cards sent would not effect all recipients of greeting cards equally, but
23 would affect women, minorities, and low-income persons more than other
24 Americans.

25 In my conclusions, I point out how the value of greeting cards, particularly
26 the value to recipients, may be assessed anthropologically via objective and

- 1 trustworthy means. Assessing the cultural value of greeting cards to recipients is
- 2 an important adjunct to other methods of assessing the value of elements in the
- 3 mail stream.

1 **Statement of Qualifications of Ken C. Erickson**

2 I hold a doctorate in cultural anthropology from the University of Kansas. I
3 serve as Associate Professor of Anthropology in the Department of Sociology
4 and Anthropology at the University of Missouri-Kansas City and Director of the
5 Center for Ethnographic Research in the College of Arts and Sciences at the
6 University. My anthropological research and publications have focused on
7 consumer product design in print and electronic communications, on multi-ethnic
8 meatpacking plants in the Midwest, on immigrant/established resident relations
9 in the United States, on Vietnamese immigrant household organization, on
10 multilingualism, anthropological linguistics, and bilingual education. I have
11 conducted anthropological research on AIDS/HIV prevention programs, and on
12 bilingual access to health care.

13 I have served on the executive committee of the National Association for
14 the Practice of Anthropology and presently represent the community of applied
15 anthropologists on the nominations committee of my professional organization,
16 the American Anthropological Association. I am a Fellow of the Association and
17 a member of the Society for Applied Anthropology.

18 This summer, working with my colleagues Dr. Tanya Price and Dr. Göran
19 Dahl, I am the principal investigator of an international study of personal
20 networking and communication. That study is being conducted among Latinos
21 and African-Americans in Los Angeles and Atlanta and among established-
22 resident and newcomer Swedes in Lund and Stockholm. Much of my prior
23 research has focused on communication and language, including research for the
24 preparation of testimony to the Postal Rate Commission in Docket No. R97-1. My
25 Curriculum Vitae is attached Exh. GCA-1.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21

I. Purpose and Scope of Testimony

My testimony is given on behalf of the Greeting Card Association. In my testimony, I discuss from the perspective of cultural anthropology the significance of greeting cards in American culture. This inquiry is relevant to the questions before the Commission because of the statutory requirement that postal rates reflect the educational, *cultural*, scientific, and informational value of mail to the recipient. I review anthropological views of culture and describe how anthropologists link it to studies of value and economic systems.

Greeting cards are shown to have a long history—a history that is intimately tied to the Post Office as a social institution in societies like our own. Greeting cards have always had cultural value, as does any traditional good in any market-based society. One way of documenting this cultural value is described: the itinerary method. The itinerary of a greeting card is traced from production through use, and two kinds of cultural value that surround greeting cards are discussed: social value and symbolic value. The particular cultural salience of greeting cards for Americans is next presented, drawing on original research conducted two years ago for the Greeting Card Association. The testimony concludes by describing the importance of studies of greeting cards as they are received, displayed, and used by Americans in their everyday lives. Such research is an objective and trustworthy method of assessing the cultural value of First Class matter such as greeting cards.

II. How Anthropologists View Culture

Anthropology, broadly conceived, is the study of our species in both historical and contemporary times. Within the American academic tradition, there are four sub-fields of anthropology—physical, cultural, linguistic, and archaeological—and each of these sub-fields has both academic and applied components. Cultural anthropology studies human cultures to understand the differences and similarities among and between groups. It also studies the features of particular cultures to understand how cultures change and persist. Studies of exchange systems and studies of consumers and markets in contemporary societies like our own are part of the focus of contemporary anthropology.¹

Anthropologists view culture as a key theoretical tool for understanding human differences and similarities. One of the most widely used anthropology textbooks puts it this way:

When anthropologists speak of a human culture, they usually mean the total socially acquired life-style of a group of people including patterned, repetitive ways of thinking, feeling, and acting.²

One pattern that all human cultures share is an ability to create meaning and assign value. The two are related, from an anthropological standpoint, because cultural value does not inhere in things themselves, but is derived from the interaction of things and sociocultural systems. In other words, meaning comes out of the presence of a set of symbols that are put to work in social

¹ Glassie, Henry. *Material Culture*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press (1999); Miller, Daniel *Acknowledging Consumption: A Review of New Studies*. Routledge: London (1995).

² Harris, Marvin. *Culture, Nature: An Introduction to General Anthropology*. New York: Harper and Row (1985) p. 114.

1 interaction. This is an anthropological view of meaning that is at the core of most
2 anthropological (and many linguistic) studies of human symbolic systems. In the
3 case of greeting cards, ways in which anthropologists might approach cultural
4 value - and the way an objective assessment of statutorily recognized
5 educational, cultural, scientific, and information, or "ECSI" value to recipients of
6 mail can begin to be formed - can be understood by focusing an anthropological
7 lens on economic systems.

8 **III. Anthropological Perspectives on Value and Economics**

9 As an applied cultural anthropologist, I can offer some basic insights
10 about how anthropology views economic systems in general. The
11 anthropological perspective on economics may shed some light on the cultural
12 value of greeting cards that come in the mail.

13 Here, again, is a textbook view of the anthropological approach:

14 All cultures have an economy, a set of institutions that combine
15 technology, labor, and natural resources to produce and distribute goods
16 and services. To the extent that economizing takes place—that is,
17 minimizing costs and maximizing benefits—it always takes place in a
18 definite cultural context, and it is always embedded in institutional
19 relationships such as kinship or politics.³

20 It is an anthropological truism that for most of human history, and
21 perhaps, for most humans in recent times, arguments about price elasticity of
22 goods are meaningless. This is because the appearance of money economies is
23 a recent phenomenon. The arrival of money is tied to the development of
24 complex forms of social organization, to state societies such as those that
25 produce Postal Services and Postal Rate Commissions. For most people and
26 for most of human history, reciprocal exchange in which value cannot be

³ Harris (Ibid). p. 247.

1 measured by price has been the mainstay of human economic systems. Most
2 people for most of human history have not used price to assess value.

3 While our present-day society may lean heavily on price-based studies of
4 value to determine important questions such as those raised in these
5 proceedings, anthropologists have often been forced by their non-market subject
6 matter to develop other means of evaluating non-money based exchange.
7 These methods are useful in both complex and simple societies. These tools are
8 derived from exploratory research tools in the social sciences, particularly
9 ethnography.

10 These methods are designed to capture what people do and say in real
11 life, in a lived human context. But a part of that context exists outside the
12 present moment in the memories and retellings (or re-writings) of past human
13 events. Anthropologists have to take into account the fact that cultures do not
14 appear over night and neither do rituals, symbols, or greeting cards. So history,
15 for an anthropologist, is seen as part of the present context through which
16 people make sense out of their lives. Making sense of the cultural value of
17 greeting cards requires at least a passing understanding of their history.
18 Importantly, the history of greeting cards is closely tied to the history of national
19 postal systems.

20 **IV. Greeting Cards and the Post**

21 Greeting cards have been around for a long time. There is some
22 suggestion that they have been in use even before mass production printing.
23 Greeting cards with more precisely documented historical and cultural

1 provenience appear in Great Britain by the middle of the last century.⁴ Their
2 spread is tied to emerging technological and political changes, changes that
3 crossed national borders just as they do today and that, just as they do today,
4 link the mailed greeting card—a material embodiment of interpersonal social
5 life—to national interests and to the technical and strategic interests of the
6 marketplace.

7 The development of printing technology and marketing strategies by
8 printers came along at just about the same time as the British penny post and
9 the signing of the first international postal accords. The first global postal
10 convention, signed in Austria in 1869, approved for the first time the international
11 use of the 123mm by 83mm open-faced postal card that we know today.
12 Greeting cards had been mass-produced for domestic use in England as early
13 as 1843.⁵ But after the postal convention, greeting cards really took off. In
14 1895, Gleeson White wrote that “a complete set of all designs published in
15 England alone would include at least 200,000 examples.”⁶ Greeting cards arose
16 right along with modernity and are part of what makes a contemporary nation a
17 part of the community of nations.

⁴ The historical importance of greeting cards was discussed in my testimony before the Postal Rate Commission in Docket No. R97-1. Historians like Kombolin, Yuri *Pozdravitelnaia Otkrytka v Rossii: Konets XIX Veka-nachalo XX Veka. The Greeting Card in Russia: End of the 19th Century—Beginning of the 20th Century.* (Russian and English) Kiiesa Malen, trans. Sankt-Petersburg: Trade House Konstantin (1994) point out that greeting cards have been part of the culture of Europe since the invention of printing. Ernest Dudley Chase, in *The Romance of Greeting Cards* Dedham, MA: Rust Crraft Publishers (1956) points out that greeting cards were known in the mid-1400s. There are Chinese parallels—printed greetings that were exchanged during seasonal rituals—that pre-date these European cards by a thousand years, according to Mary Erbaugh, "Greeting Cards in China: Mixed language of Connections and Affections," In Deborah Davis, editor, *The Consumer Revolution in Urban China.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press (2000).

⁵ Buday, Gyorgy. *The History of the Christmas Card.* London: Rockliff (1954).

1 Across from Washington, D.C.'s Union Station, some words are written in
2 stone atop two Ionic pillars that frame the entrance of what was at one time the
3 principal post office in our nation's capital:

4 Messenger of Sympathy and Love
5 Servant of Parted Friends
6 Consoler of the Lonely
7 Bond of the Scattered Family
8 Enlarger of the Common Life

9 These words represent one vision of the mission and mandate of the
10 United States Postal Service. Today, this building is no longer a post office, but
11 the United States Postal Museum.

12 Whatever the purpose of the building, the Postal Service remains an
13 enlarger of the common life. Despite email and the telephone, people still use
14 the U.S. mail to communicate with friends and loved ones and to celebrate and
15 re-produce American cultural traditions. How well the Postal Service promotes
16 understanding and love, abets the subjective ebb and flow of social life, provides
17 social glue for families and broadens the scope of shared experience can be
18 measured in objective and empirical ways. Since for purposes of rate setting the
19 governing statute requires attention to cultural value -- along with other non-
20 economic forms of value -- these measurements should be of use to the Postal
21 Rate Commission. This testimony will suggest one arena in which the Postal
22 Service plays that role: as the means through which greeting cards are received
23 by ordinary Americans.

24 For recipients of greeting cards, the mail has cultural value.

⁶ White, Gleeson *Christmas Cards and Their Chief Designers*. London: Offices of the Studio (1895) p.4.

1 Some measures of the value of greeting cards and other First Class mail
2 to recipients will no doubt include volume and price calculations. The inscription
3 on the old Post Office building is multidimensional in its range of meanings. So
4 are the criteria that the Postal Rate Commission uses to evaluate and
5 recommend requests for changes in postal rates. Anthropological research often
6 deals with issues that are outside the scope of everyday economic exchanges -
7 issues such as those that are put up for public display above the entrance to the
8 former Main Post Office Building in Washington, D.C.

9 Greeting cards are a valuable and venerable part of our culture and
10 everyone seems to agree that greeting cards have cultural value. But how can
11 one measure the value to recipients of greeting cards that come in the mail?

12 **V. Anthropology and Cultural Value**

13 Anthropologists are interested in all kinds of value and all kinds of
14 exchange systems - not just those very recently invented systems like market
15 economies.

16 It has been suggested that one - perhaps the only - "objective" way to
17 measure the value of greeting cards to recipients is at the point of sale of a
18 stamp. The economist witness Bernstein, in responding to GCA/USPS-T41-6,
19 writes that sending a birthday card "reflects the mailer's view of the value of the
20 birthday card to the recipient." While this may in some respects be true, the
21 mailer's and the recipient's views of the value of that birthday card to the
22 recipient are not necessarily congruent.

23 While the price paid by the sender is one way to measure the value of a
24 greeting card to the recipient - as seen by the sender - an anthropological
25 perspective suggests additional objective means of establishing the value of
26 greeting cards or any other good in the marketplace. In fact, a large body of

1 recent anthropological research and analysis deals with this very problem. I will
2 review some of this research and analysis to help understand one item of
3 American culture - the greeting card that is sent through the mail.

4 While I am not an economist, it appears that in most economic analysis of
5 the value of goods, particularly the econometric analyses used to explore
6 relationships between price and purchasing, value is measured in monetary
7 terms. Anthropologists often measure prices, too (though they turn to economists
8 to understand econometric models of the complex relationships among prices
9 and goods over time). But many goods in cultural systems are not bought or
10 sold. Some things are given as gifts. Some items are exchanged for other items.
11 And some material goods—like greeting cards and letters—arrive in the mail
12 without the recipient having to pay the sender or the letter carrier. The value of
13 such things, the value to recipients, cannot be directly established with reference
14 to the price paid for them in a market setting. Anthropologists have developed
15 methods to account for and establish the value of these kinds of goods.

16 Anthropologists often conduct their research through participation and
17 observation within a cultural setting. This means they are able to directly
18 observe exchanges as they happen. Anthropologists can observe how any item
19 of material culture is used. These observations result in empirical descriptions of
20 objects in their cultural contexts of use. It is an anthropologically accepted fact
21 that an understanding of the specific nature - or price - of any consumer good
22 does not offer a complete account of its social or cultural value.⁷ With a

⁷Writing about food consumption, anthropologist Sydney Mintz provides an example of the anthropological view of objects: "The specific nature of the consumed substances surely matters; but it cannot, by itself, explain why such substances may seem irresistible." "The Changing Role of Food in the Study of Consumption." In *Consumption and the World of Goods*, John Brewer and Roy Porter, editors. Routledge: London (1993) " p.271.

1 knowledge of local systems of meaning (languages, expectations, histories and
2 desires), anthropologists explore the value of goods from multiple perspectives.
3 And, sometimes, anthropologists are able to explore the entire life of a good.⁸

4 Anthropologist Dominique Desjeaux, a specialist in material culture, calls
5 the entire life of any good its "itinerary."⁹ The itinerary is the route or path that a
6 good takes in time and space from its conception through its production,
7 distribution, merchandising, sale or exchange, uses, and eventual disposal. By
8 understanding the itinerary of a good, anthropologists can uncover multiple
9 cultural values that people assign to it at any point in its itinerary. This approach
10 is useful to objectively trace the multiple values of any good in any cultural
11 system: greeting cards, for example.

12 **VI. Exploring the Itinerary of a Greeting Card to Discover its Cultural Value**

13 Tracing the cultural values of a greeting card along its itinerary is a way of
14 assessing the cultural value of greeting cards that are sent and received in the
15 mail. Like any consumer good, a greeting card has to be designed and
16 manufactured. And, like many consumer goods, it is modified after purchase
17 and used in ways that may or may not be congruent with the expectations of
18 managers, marketers, distributors, retailers, or letter carriers. From design to
19 disposal, a greeting card can come to have multiple kinds of cultural value
20 placed upon it by the people who interact with it and through it. By sketching the
21 itinerary of a greeting card, starting with its manufacture, I will try to show how
22 cultural meanings grow and interact up to the point at which the Commission's

⁸In anthropological terms, the word "goods" refers to those items of human material culture that are part of exchange systems. They are items that are traded or purchased, items that circulate in money economies or in other systems of exchange.

⁹ Desjeaux, Dominique. Quand Les Français Déménagent. L'Harmattan: Paris. (1999).

1 specific assignment begins -- the purchase of postage to mail the greeting card.
2 In other words, the same cultural factors govern the design, distribution, choice,
3 and recipient appreciation and use of the card.

4 In complex processes such as greeting card manufacturing, the many
5 actors involved in design and production will value greeting cards in different
6 ways. A manager, in charge of artists and writers whose collaborative labor will
7 result in a prototype greeting card, may be concerned about its eventual sales
8 success. Or, she may be concerned about the impression that the greeting card
9 may have on her supervisor. A press operator would be concerned about the
10 special characteristics of the greeting card, about the dies that must be made to
11 cut the greeting card, about the inks or foil, and so on through the process of
12 manufacturing, distributing, and merchandising the product. To be sure, one
13 could determine the economic value of each greeting card with reference to each
14 person whose salary depends upon its production. But this economic value by
15 no means represents the total value, importance, or meaning of the greeting
16 card to each person in these early stages of the card's itinerary.

17 The material features of a greeting card—the writing on it, the ink and foil
18 and paper—condition the work that must be performed to produce the greeting
19 card. The work of making greeting cards has a particular cultural value that is
20 linked to (though not determined by) its material features. This is true of any
21 workplace.¹⁰ And work at each step in the itinerary of the greeting card is linked
22 to personal and social histories, to what Bourdieu would call a habitus - a set of
23 cultural patterns that exist outside of conscious awareness that are a blend of
24 human history and contemporary materiality—a blend of social life and things—

¹⁰ Lalmphere, Louise, Alex Stepick, and Guillermo Grenier. *Newcomers in the Workplace*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press (1994).

1 that is reproduced in the making of the good.¹¹ So one kind of cultural value
2 found in greeting cards is in the cultural value of the work that must be performed
3 to make the card. This work constitutes a demonstrable, and empirically
4 verifiable, cultural link to the cultural value of greeting cards as part of an
5 American cultural tradition.

6 The social and symbolic value(s) of greeting cards at any point in their
7 itinerary are not fixed but are relative to the people who are creating, selling, or
8 using them. The cultural values that a greeting card carries are transformed into
9 new values, new meanings, as the greeting card moves through its itinerary.
10 This discussion of the production of greeting cards is offered to highlight the fact
11 that there are many kinds of value beyond the value measured by price, that
12 these values may be ascertained empirically through participation, observation
13 and/or interviews of the people engaged in making greeting cards. And, of
14 course, greeting card manufacture is a part of the cultural value of greeting cards
15 to people who send and receive them.

16 The ways in which people buy, modify, send, and receive greeting cards
17 is also dependent upon context. The meanings of greeting cards found in their
18 use—their social and symbolic value—may vary depending upon the contexts of
19 their exchange and display and may be discovered empirically.

20 Study of greeting cards as they are actually used has been conducted in
21 Europe, the United States, and in China.¹² Anthropological research has

¹¹Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (1984).

¹²Erickson, Ken C. Original ethnographic and survey research on the cultural value of greeting cards was reported in Direct Testimony of Ken C Erickson on Behalf of Greeting Card Association. Postal Rate and Fee Changes, 1997, Docket No. R97-1. Pabson, Stephen. "From Symbolic Exchange to Bureaucratic

1 highlighted the symbolic and social value that greeting cards hold to people who
2 send and receive them—these are part of the consumption stage of a greeting
3 card's itinerary.

4 **VII. Greeting Cards in Use: Their Social and Symbolic Roles**

5 For the purposes of this testimony, it is useful to distinguish two related
6 cultural dimensions of value: the social and the symbolic. These can be
7 understood as subsets of cultural value. Social value in this sense refers to the
8 ways in which the exchange and use of greeting cards acts on social
9 relationships. Symbolic value refers to the semiological or meaningful dimension
10 of greeting cards. Greeting cards contain cultural symbols that are displayed in
11 public and these symbols help to reproduce important cultural beliefs and
12 ideas—including the kind of deeply held and unconscious notions that form the
13 bases for the rules (or regularities) that are behind the things that members of a
14 culture say and do.

15 Any ethnographic research on greeting cards—that is to say, research
16 that is conducted through interviews about or observations of actual instances of
17 greeting card use—will uncover instances of at least three kinds of social
18 functions that greeting cards can have. It is likely that hand-written letters also
19 have these functions. These are

- 20 To create new relationships
- 21 To extend or expand new relationships
- 22 To limit or attenuate relationships

23 For example, a greeting card may be sent to someone to whom you have
24 no relationship: a new co-worker, for example. Teachers may send out greeting

Discourse: The Hallmark Greeting Card. *Theory Culture and Society* (1986) pp. 99-111. Greeting Cards in China: mixed language of connections and affections by Mary S. Erbaugh, p. 171-200.

1 cards to parents to welcome their children to school and in so doing convey and
2 mark the beginning of a new relationship that did not exist before. Greeting
3 cards, through their materiality, are able to be displayed. This means they are
4 able to make social relationships take on a material form. Telephone calls and
5 interpersonal speech can not do this. This material feature of greeting cards
6 make them especially effective ritual means of marking and creating new
7 relationships in our culture.

8 Greeting cards can extend and expand new relationships. The purchase
9 of a greeting card that expresses a new or deeper emotion than might have been
10 considered part of a past relationship can bind the sender and recipient in an
11 exchange of emotional attachment that might not have been present before it
12 was marked in a greeting card. We have found that many people with whom we
13 have spoken in our research rely on greeting cards to say “just the right words.”
14 Having “just the right words” to accomplish some social end is an important
15 feature of both written and formal speech in many cultures. But extending
16 relationships can be risky—the wrong words can create new social debts where
17 they may not be wanted, or deliver a message not close enough when a bit of
18 distance is called for.

19 Greeting cards cannot only create or enhance relationships, they can
20 create a kind of distance. Research has shown that many people are concerned
21 about saying too much, or about expressing some emotion that does not reflect
22 the attenuated or distanced nature of some family or friendship relationship.
23 Having the right greeting card to send can thus provide the right kind of social
24 distance that might be difficult if the sender and recipient were caught together in
25 a spontaneous (and therefor more risky) interaction. I have seen a response by
26 Postal Service witness Virginia Mayes, in which she states:

1 An argument could be made . . . that greeting cards
2 or other personal correspondence would have high
3 value for the recipient, but I can think of certain
4 circumstances - such as a greeting card from a local
5 merchant or from a despised relative - that would
6 render this argument invalid. [Response to
7 GCA/USPS-T32-2 (a).]

8 From an anthropological perspective, however, a greeting card from a business -
9 or even a "despised relative" - that expressed the proper degree of emotional
10 distance might have a very positive value to the recipient: it could show that the
11 sending party shared, or at least respected, the recipient's wish for a more
12 attenuated relationship. Obviously, there are many instances in which greeting
13 cards are welcomed - a reason they are sent.

14 Besides these three social values, greeting cards carry symbolic value.
15 Greeting cards, by blending images and text, reproduce in narrative and artistic
16 forms ideas about relationships—about how they should be, about how they can
17 be represented, and about the culture in general—and they do so in public.
18 Greeting cards can be seen as a kind of performance that acts out meanings for
19 others to see, assess, and re-interpret on their own as they put the card to work
20 in social relationships. The symbolic value of a greeting card lies in its ability to
21 reproduce and reflect existing assumptions about what is appropriate, right,
22 good, bad, or funny about human relationships. Greeting cards offer a kind of
23 market-based consensus of what we think about ourselves, our associates and
24 our families. Greeting cards that accurately reflect what we want to say to and
25 about one another sell better than cards that do not. Consumers, for example,
26 often talk about how a greeting card “fits” a particular social relationship. The
27 symbolic value of a greeting card is always available to be put to work in social
28 relationships. In conjunction with particular social needs, the symbolic value of
29 greeting cards is brought to life through greeting card exchange and display.

VIII. The Salience of Greeting Cards for Americans

By sending and displaying greeting cards, senders and recipients of greeting cards participate in the enactment of particularly American cultural traditions. Anthropological research on greeting cards in the United States was reported in my testimony to the Postal Rate Commission in 1997. That research was based on observations and interviews in U.S. greeting card shops. The research showed that greeting cards have a cultural life of their own, that they play roles in the celebration of American family rituals, and that greeting cards facilitate much more than me-to-you communication.¹³

The anthropological, participant-observation research was supplemented by a telephone survey. That survey resulted in an analysis of data from a statistically robust sample of Americans about the cultural salience of greeting cards. The survey research supported the conclusion that greeting cards are highly salient elements in the celebration of family rituals and that they are used to maintain and enhance social ties. In addition, the survey demonstrated that, for Americans, greeting cards are especially salient at moments of family transition or difficulty. And, importantly, we found significant variation in the salience of greeting cards according to ethnicity and income. Lower income people and people who identified as African-American or Latino felt that greeting cards were more important than did high-income people or Euro-American people.

For example, seventy-seven percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that greeting cards that come in the mail "help me know that others are thinking of me in a time of mourning," and the same

¹³ Erickson (1997) p. 15.

1 numbers were obtained when respondents were asked about illness. The next
2 most salient feature of greeting cards concerned "sharing a good laugh with
3 others." This shows how greeting cards are part of sociability and, because
4 humor can only make sense in a cultural context, how greeting cards support
5 culturally-mediated notions of what is funny and what is not—key features in the
6 cultural make-up of any language or culture. The next most salient feature of
7 greeting cards from the survey concerned the celebration of holidays and special
8 occasions. Seventy-two percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that
9 greeting cards they received "helped them celebrate."

10 The data showed that decreases in the receipt of greeting cards would
11 have a differential effect according to ethnicity and income. For example,
12 African-Americans "attach more importance to most greeting cards at all levels
13 than do other groups. Greeting cards sent through the mail are especially
14 important to the low- and middle-income groups in the sample."¹⁴ It was clear
15 that decreases in greeting card receipt would have a differential impact on these
16 groups.

17 I have continued to conduct research on the consumption of greeting
18 cards in American Culture. That research has demonstrated two critical features
19 about greeting cards: their importance in display, and their importance in the
20 social lives of women.

21 In a non-card related study in a Midwestern grade school, our research
22 team was struck by the importance of the display of greeting cards and letters
23 that came in the mail. We found that greeting cards and letters are not simply
24 consumed when they are read. They are displayed, passed around, and

¹⁴ Erickson (1997) p. 42.

1 presented as material evidence of family social connections. This will come as
2 no surprise to any American with a refrigerator capable of holding a magnet.
3 One household we visited was actually embarrassed to point out, while we were
4 touring their kitchen, that there was nothing to be seen posted on the
5 refrigerator. It was a new one, they said, and they had not been able to re-post
6 the "kid art" and usual notes that they had on display before the new refrigerator
7 arrived.

8 The point is that the cultural value of greeting cards includes their display.
9 This fact was mentioned in my earlier testimony in Docket No. R97-1 because
10 we learned that greeting cards were often passed around for other family and
11 friends to read. And the survey demonstrated that it is the expectation of
12 senders that recipients of greeting cards will put them on display for a time.

13 In her recent article on greeting cards in the People's Republic of China,
14 Mary Erbaugh echoes this point. "Offices from factories to universities now
15 display elaborate arrangements of Christmas and New Year's greeting cards for
16 months at a time."¹⁵ Her work, and my own recent research, provide additional
17 empirical, observational support for the notion that greeting cards in the United
18 States and elsewhere are not simply read and tossed away. They may be
19 displayed and in some cases even collected and saved. This suggests an
20 important social value - social because the greeting cards are displayed for
21 others to see, read, and comment upon. They have more than the one-to-one
22 exchange value measured by price paid by an individual for a greeting card.

¹⁵ Erbaugh (2000) p.192.

1 Thus, the consumption stage in the itinerary of a greeting card is a time
2 during which the non-economic value of a greeting card becomes especially
3 evident. But these data do not exhaust the social value of greeting cards.

4 **IX. The Value of Greeting Cards to Extending Women's Social Roles**

5 The cultural value of a greeting card extends beyond the moment of its
6 exchange in person or its delivery to the home or post office box with the mail
7 packet. This is clear. But setting that exchange in context reveals that by far
8 the majority of greeting card senders and recipients are women. This has
9 implications for the importance of greeting cards that come in the mail in
10 contemporary American culture.

11 What special roles might greeting cards play in women's lives that makes
12 them especially important? Recent research away from the United States can
13 provide a clue. In China, as in the United States, women are the primary
14 senders and recipients of greeting cards. There, women's public and private
15 roles and economic and social power had been more constrained than they are
16 now. Chinese women's roles are expanding. "Changing roles for women make
17 greeting cards especially attractive, even as they trace a reworking of gender
18 boundaries and increasing participation in previously male-dominated written
19 discourse. Cards offer commercialized validation of women's broader and more
20 complex relationships outside the home."¹⁶

21 Anthropologists recognize that some social systems are more male-
22 dominated in public economic and political spheres than are other cultures. And
23 women's roles in the United States, of course, are often the subject of public

¹⁶ Ibid p. 194.

1 discussion and are viewed as having changed and continuing to change. Our
2 own research shows how women in the United States use greeting cards to
3 extend and manage social relationships—to thank relatives for taking time to
4 baby-sit, to engage neighbors in patterns of exchange and helping, and to
5 enculturate children, particularly daughters, in the annual round of rituals that
6 mark and celebrate what family means to Americans.¹⁷

7 **X. Culture Change and Greeting Cards**

8 If the price of sending a greeting card through the mail were to increase,
9 what would that mean to people for whom greeting cards are especially salient?
10 When greeting cards are not received in the mail, what are the results?

11 The survey conducted two years ago demonstrated that all Americans
12 would not be equally affected by a reduction in the number of greeting cards
13 received because greeting cards are more salient for women, lower-income
14 people, Latino-Americans and African-Americans than they are for other
15 Americans. So the lack of a greeting card received is the lack of an opportunity
16 to reciprocate with another greeting card. Every greeting card not received is a
17 lost opportunity for the maintenance of informal exchange systems, an exchange
18 system that trades information about family and friendship relationships and all
19 that these entail.

¹⁷ While there is no doubt a strong connection between commercial interests and family celebration of rituals like Mother's and Father's day, our knowledge of these ritual occasions shows that family participation often extends beyond the range of products (cards, gifts, party goods and decorations) offered for sale and use. Americans participate in these rituals not because they are slaves to the companies that manufacture the goods that are implicated in the celebration of these rituals. Americans participate in them because they have social and symbolic value.

1 The social and symbolic value of greeting cards to recipient's points to
2 some possible results of fewer greeting cards received in the mail. Fewer
3 greeting cards received would signal an attenuation in ritually marked social
4 relationships. And it would limit the kinds of public artistic and textual forms to
5 other media.

6 **XI. Conclusions**

7 The Postal Service is a creation of the state, just as Inca roads and quipu-
8 carrying runners were creations of earlier American states. And it is a creation
9 with a codified role that cannot be measured with recourse to the tools of
10 classical economics alone. The Service has a cultural and social role, one that
11 ties it to the emotional needs of the people it serves.

12 The Post institutionalizes the low-cost linking of individuals and
13 communities that helps make the very idea—that imagined idea—of a nation
14 coherent and tangible.¹⁸ This aspect of the post—its ability to bring people close
15 together who are otherwise separated—appears to be inscribed in the history of
16 the institution from its very beginnings. This is a social and symbolic value,
17 perhaps not one that is easily entered into a traditional economic calculus. At
18 the same time, economic rationality, profit making, and the marketplace were,
19 from the earliest American historical accounts, also part of the early discussions
20 about how a national postal service cannot be constituted. Benjamin Franklin's
21 public interest in a low-cost postal service can not be separated from his own
22 publishing interests, for example. Early day politics of the United States Post
23 Office brings two discourses into sharp relief: one is about rational economic

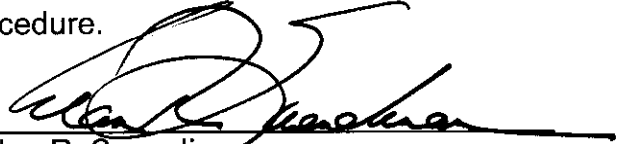
¹⁸ Anderson, Benedict R. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origina and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso (1983).

1 interests; the other is about social and cultural value. This testimony and the
2 Commission's own ECSI mandate continue that discussion.

3 Culture encompasses and transcends economics. In addition to the use
4 of existing information, further study of the cultural contribution of greeting cards
5 and other First Class matter could and should be a cornerstone in the process of
6 developing a set of objective and trustworthy measures of the value of First
7 Class letters and greeting cards. Of course, further studies could be made by
8 following actual Americans as they conduct their daily lives, interviewing them,
9 and documenting the importance of greeting cards and other First Class matter
10 to them. Such research would be a powerful adjunct to other research
11 approaches and might well enhance the Postal Service's and the Postal Rate
12 Commission's national goals.

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that I have this day served the foregoing document upon all participants of record in this proceeding on this date in accordance with section 12 of the rules of Practice and Procedure.



Alan R. Swendiman

Jackson & Campbell, P.C.
1120 20th Street, N.W.
Suite 300 South
Washington, DC 20036-3437
(202) 457-1646 (Tel.)
(202) 457-1617 (FAX)

Dated: May 22, 2000

Attorney for
Greeting Card Association

Exh. GCA-1

Curriculum Vitae

Ken C. Erickson, Ph.D.

Center for Ethnographic Research
University of Missouri, Kansas City
5100 Rockhill Road, Kansas City, MO 64110
<http://umkc.edu/cer>
erickson@cctr.umkc.edu
816/2135-1597 [voice]

Education and Training

Ph.D. Cultural Anthropology, University of Kansas, 1995.

M.A. Cultural Anthropology, University of Wyoming, 1985.

Certificate, Public Broadcasting Management. The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania. 1984.

B.A. Anthropology, cum laude , Washington State University, 1976.

Professional and Academic Experience

Director, Center for Ethnographic Research, College of Arts and Sciences, UMKC, 1998-present.

Research Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Administration of Justice, UMKC. 1996 - Present.

Senior Research Associate, Chapter I/Title I and Bilingual Education, Research and Training Associates, Overland Park, KS. 1995.

Program Coordinator (Federal Equity Programs for Race, Gender, and National Origin Programs), Kansas Department of Education. 1994 - 1995.

Education Program Consultant (Kansas and Federal Bilingual Education and English as a Second Language Programs), Kansas Department of Education. 1990 to 1994.

Senior Research Associate, LTG Associates, Turlock, CA and Tacoma Park, MD. 1992 - present.

Social Services Administrator (Refugee Programs Administration), Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services. 1983 - 1990.

Station Manager, KANZ-FM Public Radio. Garden City, Kansas. 1982-1983.

Program Director, Account Executive, News Director, Broadcaster. WDLW Boston/Waltham MA; KBUF, Garden City, KS. 1980 - 1983.

Graduate Research Fellow (Study of Puerto Rican neighborhoods and family stress and support). Department of Anthropology. Brandeis University. 1980-1981.

Recent Publications and Reports

(Publications indicated by p; contract and grant reports by r.)

r2000 Tools and Style. Presentation to Consumer Design Group, Motorola Corporation, March.

1999 Postal Modernism and Anthropological Relevance at Hallmark Cards, Inc. Anthropology Newsletter.

1999 (with Eduardo Davel, HEC Montréal and Alain Robichaud, U. Montréal) 'Sons' of the Fathers: Liberty from the Primal Scene in Two Fathered Corporations. Standing Conference on Organizational Symbolism's Annual Program, Edinburgh, Scotland. July.

1998 (with Jane Gibson, KU, and Lori Givan, Hallmark Cards, Inc.) Creative Family Satisfaction Panel. Hallmark Cards, Incorporated.

1998 It's all in the Cards: Knowledge Management at Cinderella Greetings, Incorporated. Invited paper for the session: Reframing Knowledge Management: Anthropological Perspectives on Knowing and Acting, organized by Jeanette Bloomberg & Julian Orr for the Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Philadelphia, PA.

p1998 (with Patti Sunderland) Where Our Weird Halloween Traditions Come From Washington Post. Horizon's Section. October 11.

r1998 Collaborative Evaluation Training Curriculum and Power Point (tm) Deck. Public Housing Resident's Council of Kansas City. Kansas City, MO.

r1998 (with Stan Moore) Exploratory Ethnographic Assessment of HIV Risk Among Immigrant Men in Southwest Kansas. Kansas Department of Health and Environment, Division of Infectious Diseases. Topeka, Kansas. (<http://umkc.edu/cer/projects>).

1998. Talking About Meat: How Immigrant Meatpackers and their Supervisors Communicate. Invited presentation in the panel discussion on Changing Ecologies of Technical Work Practice and the Ethnographic Stance, organized by Phil Henning, International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA.

1998. The Global in the Local: Doing Team Ethnography in the Meatpacking Industry on the U.S. High Plains. Invited paper presented in the session on interdisciplinarity sponsored by the University of Missouri-Kansas City Social Science Consortium of the Interdisciplinary PhD Program, Society for Socioeconomics, Vienna, Austria.

r1998 (with Elizabeth Berkshire) Uinta County Communities Ethnographic Assessment. Uinta County Affiliate of the Wyoming Foundation, Evanston, Wyoming.

1998. I Just Put My Boyfriend in the Trunk: Doing Gender in the Packinghouse Town. Presented at the session entitled Garden City, Kansas: A Decade of Research on Changing Ethnic Relations during the Annual Meeting of the Central States Anthropological Society, Kansas City, MO.

r1997. Card Stories: Mother's Day In-Store Ethnography Report. Prepared for Seasons Cards Division and Hallmark Cards, Incorporated Business Research Division, Kansas City, Missouri.

p1997 (with Don Stull) Doing Team Ethnography: Warnings and Advice. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

r1997 In-Store Innovation and Las Vegas Site Visit Report. Prepared for Hallmark Cards, Incorporated Business Research Division.

r1997 (With D. Perez and M. Skidmore) Anti-Gang Evaluation Report. Prepared for the Kansas City, Missouri Police Department.

p1996 Muscle and Meat: Rewriting a Story of Progress. In The Story of Progress. G. Arvastson, Ed. Studia Upsalensis No. 17. Uppsala, Sweden: Acta Universitatis Upsalensis

p1996 (with Don. Stull) Management and Multiculturalism. Meat&Poultry 42(4):44-50.

1995 Skillful Butchers in a Deskkilled Packinghouse: An Ethnographic Study of a Boxed-Beef Factory. PhD Dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Kansas, Lawrence.

r1995 Literature Review: Bi/multilingual Service Delivery in Community and Migrant Health Clinics. Paper prepared for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and LTG Associates. 1995.

1995. Culture Against Knowledge: Power at the Center Applied at the Margins. Paper presented at the annual meetings of the Society for Applied Anthropology, Baltimore, MD.

p1994 Guys in White Hats: Short-Term Participant Observation Among Workers and Managers. In Newcomers in the Workplace: Immigration and the Restructuring of the U.S. Economy. L. Lamphere, Ed., Pp. 78-98. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

p1994 The Anthropologist as Radio Producer. In Media Anthropology. S. Allen, Ed., Pp. 145-160. New York: Avondale.

r1994. (with Don Stull) Walking the Talk: Language and Cultural Issues at Branding Iron Beef [pseud.], Incorporated. Manuscript.

1994. How Tobacco Won the West (and Why Tobacco Control Isn't Winning it Back): Anthropological Encounters with the Marlborough Man. Prepared for LTG Associates, Inc. funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's SmokeLess Evaluation. LTG Associates, Turlock, California.

p1993 (with D. Stull and M. Broadway) The Price of a Good Steak. In Structuring Diversity: Ethnographic Perspectives on the New Immigration. Louise Lamphere, Ed., Pp. 35-64. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

p1993 Assessing Mental Health Needs in a Packinghouse Town. Journal of the High Plains Society for Applied Anthropology. April.

r1990 (with Stull, Donald D., J. Benson, M. Broadway, M. Grey and A. Campa) Changing Relations: Newcomers and Established Residents in Garden City, KS. Final report to the Ford Foundation. Lawrence, KS: Institute for Public Policy and Business Research. Report No. 172.

p1990 New Immigrants and the Social Service Agency: Changing Relations at SRS. Urban Anthropology 19(4):387-407.

p1988 Vietnamese Household Organization in Garden City, Kansas: Southeast Asians in a Packing House Town. Plains Anthropologist 33(119):27-36.

Recent Presentations

1998 (forthcoming: January) Ethnographic Perspectives on Organizations and their Trading Partners. Invited presentation for Solectron Corporation, Milpitas, California.

1998 (forthcoming: December) Ethnography and Market Research. Invited ,ÁúForum,Áú Presentation: Hallmark Cards, Incorporated, Kansas City, Missouri.

1998 It's All In the Cards: Knowledge Management among Suits and Creatives at Cinderella Greetings, Incorporated. Invited paper presented in the session on Knowledge Management, Julian Orr, Organizer, Annual Meeting of the American Anthropology Association, Philadelphia (December).

1998 (With Joe Stornello, PhD.) Ethnography and New Product Development. Invited Presentation for Con Agra Frozen Foods, Inc. Omaha, Nebraska, October.

1998 (with Lori Givan et al.) Five Family Satisfaction Panel Study Results and Video. Prepared for Creative Advisory Board and Hallmark Cards, Incorporated Business Research Division.

1997 Making Meat Among Mexicans, Southeast Asians, and Anglos: Industrial Slaughter On the High Plains. Invited paper presented to the 1997 Fellows of the Shelby Cullom Davis Center for Historical Studies, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ.

1997 Feeling Family: Mother's Day Cards and Their Stories. Presentation for Hallmark Business Research, Hallmark, Incorporated, Kansas City, MO.

1997 Mother's Day Messaging. With Lori Givan and Kemp Strickler, Hallmark Business Research. Presentation to Hallmark creative executives.

1997 Crossing Ritual Borders: Cultural Change in Celebrations and Gift Giving. Presentation for Hallmark continuing education program.

1997 That Mom/Mother Thing: Invited presentation; Hallmark Creative Advisory Group.

1996 (with Don. Stull) Management and Multiculturalism. Invited presentation at the Annual Meeting of the Western States Meat Association, San Francisco, California.

1995. Southeast Asians in Southwest Kansas: Ethnic Identity Formation. Invited lecture, American Studies graduate course, University of Kansas.

1995. SmokeLess States Ethnographic Evaluation: Illinois and Kansas. Report prepared for the LTG Associates and George Washington University for submission to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

1994 Lao Classroom Discourse: Audio from Kansas, Video from Thailand. Paper presented at the Illinois Statewide Conference for Teachers of Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Students, Chicago, IL.

1994 Language, Culture, and Disability. Keynote address. Midwest Association for Behavior Disorders. Kansas City, MO.

1993 What Social Workers Don't Know can be Fatal: Appropriate Cross-Cultural Human Services Delivery to New Immigrants in Kansas. Invited Workshop. Governor's Conference on Human Services, Topeka, KS.

1992 Jobs for Anthropologists. Invited lecture for undergraduate students. Department of Anthropology, Duke University, Durham, NC.

1992 Language and Cultural Diversity. Invited presentation for managers and principals at Topeka USD 500. Topeka, KS.

1992 Native Language and Literacy: What is Reading? Southwest Regional Adult Educator's Conference, Dodge City, KS.

Recent Grants and Consulting

Sprint PCS Ethnographic Capacity Building.

Crawford County Pritchett Trust Needs Assessment.

Hallmark Business Research Technical Assistance.

HIV/AIDS Demonstration Project Evaluation. Centers for Disease Control, Kansas Department of Health and Environment, United Methodist Mexican American Ministries. 1998-1999. .

HIV/AIDS Ethnographic Assessment among Latino Men in SW Kansas. Kansas Department of Health and Environment.

Kansas City, Missouri Career Ladder Program. Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs. (Not funded).

Kansas City, KS COPS Grant Evaluation. (With Prof. Alarid).

Uinta County Futures Assessment. Uinta County, Uinta County Affiliate of the Wyoming Foundation. 1997.

Greeting Card Association, Research on Cultural Salience of Greeting Cards, 1997.

Hallmark Business Research. Mass Channel Research. 1997. .

Hallmark Business Research. Store Redesign Research. 1997. .

Enhancing the Capacity of SAVE, Inc. [AIDS/HIV housing]. Spring and Summer, 1997.

Public Housing Resident's Council and HUD. 1996-1998.

1996 Single Women's Strengths: Life Histories of Lincoln Garden's Residents. UMKC Faculty Research Grant. (With Professor Kristin Esterberg; Fall, 1996.

Anti-Gang Project Evaluation. (With Professors Max Skidmore and Doug Perez). Fall 1996 and Winter, 1996.

University Courses Taught

Urban Anthropology, Applied Anthropology, UMKC.

Graduate Readings and Research in Sociology and Anthropology, UMKC.

Sociological and Anthropological Research Methods, UMKC.

Sociological Research Methods: graduate course, UMKC.

Qualitative Research Methods: graduate course, UMKC.

Talk Like an American: Sociolinguistics and American Speech: UMKC continuing education course.

Cultural Issues in the (In)Equality of Schooling: UMKC continuing education.

Introduction to Linguistics: Fort Hays State University continuing education .

Language and Related Proficiencies

Spanish; fluent speaking, reading, and writing.

Vietnamese; good speaking, some reading and writing.

Swedish; fair speaking, reading, and writing.

French; some speaking; fluent reading, some writing.

Portuguese: fair reading.

Lao and Thai; some speaking.

Wind River Shoshone, Tetela (Bantuan): some linguistic ethnography.

SPSS, spreadsheets, NUD*IST, ANTHROPAC, ETHNOGRAPH, DBASE, etc.

Service

Nominations Committee, American Anthropological Association, 2000

University of Pennsylvania, College of Education. Edmund T. Hamman, PhD (committee)

UMKC. 7 PhD committees, 3 MA committess (to 12/99)

Member, Social Sciences Institutional Review Board, UMKC.

Treasurer, National Association for the Practice of Anthropology. 1996-1998.

National Association for the Practice of Anthropology. Video Production Committee. Governing Council Member at Large, National Association for the Practice of Anthropology, 1991-1994.

National Association for the Practice of Anthropology. Annual Meeting Workshop Chairperson. 1993, 1994.

National Association for the Practice of Anthropology. Student Award Committee Chairperson. 1991, 1992.

Professional Memberships

Fellow, American Anthropological Association; Treasurer, National Association for the Practice of Anthropology, unit of the American Anthropological Association; Member, International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences; Member, Society for Linguistic Anthropology; Member, Council on Anthropology and Education; Member, Society for Applied Anthropology; Member, Society for Socioeconomics.