A CRACK IN THE INVISIBLE WALL

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Barry Hampe, a documentarian and author of *Making Documentary Films and Reality Videos* (1997), suggests that when filming a “real” situation, the film crew must establish an “invisible wall” between themselves and the subjects in order to maintain the integrity of the situation. This draws from the cinema verite tradition in which the filmmakers theoretically take the position of “flies on the wall.” Frederick Wiseman is well known for his films of institutional settings such as High School, Hospital, and Public Housing which are shot in this tradition. Our findings, however, suggest these concepts to be flawed. Through our observations, working as a documentary film crew surveying a university classroom setting, we have found that while people often behave as if the invisible wall exists, there are moments when the performance breaks down and the subjects reveal that they are keenly aware of the presence of the film crew. Drawing from our own experiences, as well as other scholars discussions of verisimilitude, reality and truth in documentary film we will discuss the impact of a documentary film crew on an educational setting.