

A MULTIMEDIA PROJECT ON AGING IN MID MISSOURI

University of Missouri School of Journalism

Professional Project in partial completion of the
Requirements for the degree Master of Arts

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Gaining access is in many cases the most difficult part of doing a documentary. I want to express my heartfelt thanks to the Columbia Missourian. Being a Missourian reporter helped me so much in blending in with these seniors who have been loyal readers of the newspaper all their life. I was also very lucky to have met Ellen Gallo, one of the only four Lenoir residents who showed up at my project presentation at Lenoir last June. She introduced me a list of subjects and paved my way into the retirement home. I would also like to thank my other two story subjects, Mike Callen and Harold Utlaut for generously sharing their stories with me.

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Chapter One: Introduction

I remember my mother sitting in front of the television and shedding tears every time when watching some miserable real-life TV programs when I was little. “You are lucky compared to them,” Mother said, “help them when you have power.” I never forget her words.

I was born in 1988. I grew up in a time when China has opened up and switched from planned to market-oriented economy. Communism Party Leader Deng Xiaoping proposed the policy to let some people and regions get rich before others, so that they can bring along the regions that fall behind. Therefore, in the past two decades, I saw skyscrapers, mansions and shopping malls springing up all over the city as well as agriculture land being requisitioned and villages being demolished as the city expanded. I saw peasants flooding into the city with dreams to gain wealth and second rich generation indulging themselves extravagantly. The rapidly changing social context intrigued me so much that I entered a journalism school in my undergraduate education because I want to be a recorder, not just a witness, to the tremendous social reform.

During my four years in college, I was gradually drawn to the beauty and significance of documentaries. That kind of long form journalism sounds much more exciting to me than an internship at a TV station as a daily reporter. In 2010, I went on an exchange program to Nanyang Technological University and happened to attend a final-year-project

presentation of their journalism students. They presented eight team-made movies and documentaries, which deeply impressed me with their high quality and advanced techniques. That's when I felt the impulse to be a documentary filmmaker.

After coming to the Missouri Journalism School, I carefully designed my own curriculum to get the best preparation for my career. I challenged myself with intensive hands-on courses: Broadcast I and Broadcast II, from which I've learned most of video production fundamentals; Micro-documentary and videography, which advanced my visual storytelling skills by doing in-depth feature stories and practicing DSLR videography; Fundamentals of Photojournalism, perfecting my photography skills.

As I am preparing myself, the Chinese documentary industry is also embracing a new round of development. On one hand, the Chinese government has taken the initiative to put more investment into the industry and support its development. In 2010, CCTV launched a new documentary channel, and in 2012 the state-sponsored documentary *A Bite of China* has achieved huge success in both sales and reputation. On the other hand, a new genre of video called "micro film" is booming on China's Internet, and another wave of independent documentary filmmakers has appeared and put their works on different social video websites. It is the right time for me to join their movement, as the industry is getting prosperous in China.

About four years ago, I volunteered at a non-profit organization in Beijing which aims to provide care and support for disadvantaged groups including seniors, orphans and disabled people in China. As I got the chance to talk with many seniors, I became aware of their hardship and sophisticated troubles they encountered in the process of getting old. After coming to the States, I have always been interested in how Americans face the issue of aging. Therefore I took this precious opportunity of my graduate project to find the answer to my longstanding question. I believed a comparison between the situations in China and America would be a very interesting and meaningful finding to share and discuss. I did my research, gained access to the seniors' world and talked with many old folks with different backgrounds, characters and life experiences. The finding came as a complete surprise to me. I was deeply impressed by American seniors' independence, self-satisfaction, positive life attitude and free spirit that does not want to be defined by age. I chose three subjects and produced three video stories. Three definitely could not represent the overall senior living condition, but I expect to deliver an insight into this issue.

One interesting aspect about documentary is its intersection with journalism. As a documentary film lover and journalist, I always feel curious about the truth claim of documentaries. I've seen more and more creative videos that label themselves as documentaries, while I felt uncomfortable with that and felt some shots were like staged or the story seemingly not real. I began to question what makes me trust the authenticity of the filmmaking. In my analysis component, I did scholarly research on the conventional markers of authenticity in documentaries. Based on Charles Peirce's

semiotics theory, I looked into the symbols that convey the sense of authenticity in the latest three Oscar award-winning documentaries-Inside Job, the Undeclared and Searching for Sugar Man, and found that talking head interview, voice-over and narration, the use of archival material are the most frequent markers of authenticity. These findings are very beneficial to my understanding of documentary filmmaking and provide guidance toward my future professional practice.

To sum up, I believe my project will provide insights and be a great reference for anyone who is attracted to the charm of documentary filmmaking and passionate about telling visual stories.

Chapter Two: Weekly Report

Weekly Report 1: June 2 - 9 Warming Up

This week has been really tough for me. My project proposal was finally approved on Tuesday and I had my first official meeting with Brian on Thursday morning. For the rest of the week, I was researching for any potential organizations, associations, clubs or events where I could meet seniors and talk to them. I always find this stage of a project the hardest of all because everything is uncertain and obscure. I need to reach out as much as I can with perseverance and patience.

The first story idea I pitched to Brian was about an old man who had heart transplantation last June and has recovered extraordinarily well up to now. Mike Callen is an early morning show DJ at the KOPN community radio station. He has been working as a DJ since he was 18. He had had heart problems and suffered a serious heart attack last May. After his heart failed to function, it was removed from his body, and he was on machine for several days. On the sixth day of his proposed seven-day life on the machine, which was the Memorial Day, 2012, the hospital told him they had found a fresh heart for him. A girl died in a car accident several hours ago. The doctor immediately took a flight to fetch the heart and the operation went very well. After he was discharged from the hospital two weeks later, he and his wife wrote a thank-you note to the donor's family, which was the only thing they were allowed to do to the donor's family. Three months later, they received a handwritten letter from the donor's father. He told them his daughter was a mother of two children.

I decide to photograph Mike's extraordinary energy of working as a DJ after the heart transplant and the moving from Columbia to Fayette. I will interview him about what it is like to have a second chance to live and his philosophy of aging.

This week I also visited two retirement homes: the Bluffs and Lenoir Woods. I talked with Mr. Elliot Bentley, director of Activity from Lenoir Woods, and he said he could give me a chance to do a presentation and asked me to design a poster for my presentation. I set my presentation on June 20 and will put up my notice one week in advance.

In Thursday's meeting with Brian, he gave me an assignment: bring him ten names and stories next Monday. I know Brian tried to push me forward, but it was impossible to accomplish. Brian suggested me use my approach for "Breaking the Ice" assignment from Fundamentals, but this time I felt so hard to open my mouth and stop passers-by on the street or sit near seniors in a cafe waiting for some proper moments to join the conversation. I just felt this might be disturbing to others and might not be the right way to find the cool, interesting seniors I want,. I went to the Columbia farmer's market Saturday morning and collected a few business cards. I need to wait till next week to visit some more organizations and have some deeper conversations with some seniors.

Weekly Report 2: June 10-16 Start with Mike's Story

This week started with my first shooting of my first story. I went to KOPN radio station Monday night at 11 and filmed Mike Callen on his show from 2 to 5:30 am. We had a lot of time for chatting before the show. Seated in the couch in the library at KOPN, Mike went into a long monologue about his great passion for music and his lucky life of getting paid for doing what he loves. I did not realize that I should have mic'd him up until he stopped talking about music from the 1960s and started expressing his life lessons. Afraid of stopping his flow of words, I silently took out my recorder and pressed the record button. After about 15 minutes, my 2GB card was full and I lost the rest of the conversation.

This should have been an opportunity to get terrific sound bites, but I did not take full advantage of it. Many lessons learned from this experience:

1. Make enough preparation for impromptu interviews

The reason why he went into a monologue instead of we having a conversation was that I had no idea of the singers, bands and songs he was talking about. My knowledge of the music in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s was so limited that I could hardly pick up on his points. I should have done my homework and take a little bit control over our conversation.

2. It is better to stop him and set up recording than silently and "politely" record unusable audio.

The quality of the audio I recorded was so bad for multimedia. It was such a good chance to have head-on interview on the scene, but I cared too much about being polite. Another solution is that as soon as I meet my subject, I should put a wireless mic on him.

3. Format any card every time before using

I deleted the audio files on my recorder but forgot to format the card. As a result, I had much less space than I should have.

Based on the lessons learned from Monday, I went on two more shootings.

Wednesday afternoon, I drove to their house in Fayette and had a head-on interview with Mike and his wife Leslie particularly about the heart transplantation experience last year.

Friday morning, I went to the cardiac therapy center at MU hospital with them and filmed them exercising in the gym. The therapy center was a great place to meet seniors and have conversations. Because I have built a close relationship with Mike, he introduced me to all his friends at the gym and I got to know many more interesting seniors and their stories! That was a big progress. After the therapy, Mike, Leslie and two other new friends invited me to have lunch with them at the Oakland senior center. During lunch, I got to know a little bit about the other couple. The husband called Harold has been a farmer all his life in rural Missouri and he has about 450-acre land. He and his wife are both over 80s and are going to have their 60th anniversary in a few weeks. I have a feeling that they have a story worth digging into.

My shooting went on well and smoothly except that when we were about to leave, the nurse called the hospital's media person and told me I could not use what I just filmed. I thought I had asked permission from the nurses and that would be enough. Anyway, I called their **media person and scheduled another shooting time** next Monday morning with his company.



Besides shooting my first story, I prepared for my presentation at Lenoir Woods. I sent my flyer to Mr. Bentley from Lenoir Woods and he printed and distributed them for me.

Also, Brian let me check out a Beatchek and I learned how to use it with Steve Rice's demonstration. This is another achievement of the week.

Weekly Report 3: June 17-23 Expanding

My project is expanding unexpectedly fast this week.

Monday morning, I shoot at the cardiac therapy center with the company of a MU hospital's media person. That was my second time there and I was welcomed and greeted by lots of "old" friends. I felt I had built a close relationship with some of the seniors. I especially talked with Harold Utlaut and his wife Helen Utlaut, trying to leave them a good impression. I asked whether I could come and see their farm sometime and Harold accepted at once with joy.

Harold and Helen graduated from MU respectively in 1952 and 1953. Harold majored in agriculture and Helen art and science. They have two sons: the elder one works in St. Louis; the younger one lives in Glasgow, only ten minutes' drive away from their house. The younger son has taken over some of Harold's business and will inherit the land after Harold passes away. Harold is satisfied with his life:" Not a whole lot of people in the United States could have the freedom as I do as a farmer in rural Missouri."

I also shoot some footage of Mike Friday morning in his house. I wanted to get visuals showing him unpacking stuff after moving to Fayette.

This Thursday I gave my presentation at Lenoir Woods. I took this chance seriously and prepared an elaborate PPT. (which turned out useless because the room did not even have a projector) The sad thing was that only four people were present in the grand Nifong

Hall. The good thing was that I had a two-hour-long pleasant conversation with three of them and was invited to visit them next week.

Earl and Bettie, both 80, are a couple. They remarried each other after their spouses passed away some twenty years ago. EJ, 86, has lived in Lenoir for 11 years and loves reading and writing. She has been writing a novel on her mother, who she believes an extraordinary person, for years. On Friday evening, EJ called and told me that she talked with her friends about my project and five seniors were interested in talking to me! That was a great leap forward!

I started editing my first story at the weekend. The size of all the raw materials is 62 GB in total. The result was that my final cut pro was so slow when I imported them all. I think I need to do a round of rough selection outside FCP first. And then I will create several events for different scenes and do a round of quick edit of the videos from different scenes in different projects. After sorting usable shots, I will transcribe my audio and figure out the storyline.

Six Questions to remember before pitching to Brian

My supervisor Brian Kratzer shared this article with me to help me with story searching and selecting. I find it very helpful.

<http://www.poynter.org/how-tos/newsgathering-storytelling/185746/6-questions-journalists-should-be-able-to-answer-before-pitching-a-story/>

Weekly Report 4: June 24-30 Exploring Potential Stories

After first three weeks' touching base with any potential subject and carefully building up relationships, I had many stories to explore in this week. I went to the MU therapy center to meet **Harold and Helen Uthlaut** Monday morning. Harold talked to me proudly about his hay business and his 450-acre land. At the age of 82, he is living a carefully scheduled life: Monday, Wednesday and Friday morning, he gets up at 6 am, drives to Columbia and transport hay to his customers. Then he comes to the therapy center with Helen and has discounted lunch at the Oakland Senior Center afterwards. I listened attentively and told him I was interested in his life as a typical rural Missourian farmer. He laughed hard and invited me over on Thursday afternoon.

Tuesday, as planned, I went to visit **EJ Gallo, Earl and Bette Reeves** living in Lenoir Woods. EJ showed great interest in my project. She kept thinking about the questions I proposed in my presentation over the weekend and wrote something for me. "I don't feel comfortable talking on camera directly, so I just wrote it down," She read, " Don't congratulate me for being old..." While she was reading, I visualized all the scenes, details she described in her little poem. I was deeply touched. I asked her if she could read it again on my camera and she accepted. I chose to film her reading in her reading room with the window on one side of her so that I could just use natural lighting.

EJ also gave me a list of names that she recommended me to talk to. With their permission, she also gave me their contact information. She told me she took voluntary shifts at Lenoir's library, so I asked to go with her on Friday morning.

After meeting with EJ, I went to Earl and Bette Reeves' home and had a two-hour conversation with them. Earl and Bette were both 80 and windowed. They remarried each other in their 60s. Earl was a president for a college before retirement. He was once involved in a project related to the issue of aging, so he is very willing to help. When I asked whether and how they wanted to design their funeral, they both answered they wanted to be buried with their first spouse. I thought it would be a very interesting topic to pursue.



Thursday afternoon I drove to Glasgow and visited Harold's century-old house.

Friday morning, I went to the Lenoir library and met EJ.

During her three-hour shift, I met June, Priscilla and many other residents whose names were on her recommendation list. They showed me great respect when EJ told them that I was a reporter from the *Missourian*. It was such a great chance to not only promote my project, but get videos of the senior group. I used Sony wireless mic and the external mic on my Tascam recorder to get two sets of audio and recorded a improvised interview with EJ. I plugged the wireless receiver to the **Beachtek** that was connected to my camera in order to get synchronized audio. But when I got back to the lab and played back, the quality of the audio was not very good and there was kind of humming in the background, which was not removable even though I edited it in FCP. I decided to report this problem to Brian and Steve.

Weekly report 5: July 1-7 Shaping and Envisioning the Project



After the extensive exploring last week, I shared EJ, Betty and Earl, Harold and Helen's stories with my supervisor Brian in Monday's meeting. I showed him my videos of EJ's poetic monologue about aging and the scenic shots of Lenoir

Woods, which I took over the weekend. Brian liked the cinematic feeling of EJ's story and suggested me keep this style consistent after I told him I would like to do a series of stories on Lenoir residents.

With stories of Mike, Harold, several Lenoir residents in hand, I proposed to revise my original graduate project proposal by cutting out the part of teenager stories and only producing four episodes on senior people. Brian and my committee chair Prof. Keith Greenwood approved my revision.

There has always been a question in my head since the first day of my project---**In what format do I want to make these multimedia stories? Should I make it a sound slide with audio and still images? Should I make it a combination of still images, video and audio? Should I only use video more of a broadcast style?**

Besides the format of content, what style should my video be? More long takes with less editing to create **a documentary style?** Or more photographically beautiful shots with more editing to create **a cinematic style?** All of these questions are very important to me.

The answers will not only affect my editing in the later stage, but the ongoing shooting process. I'm totally lost in the ocean of possibilities and poured out all my questions in front of Brian.

Brian was very patient and instructive. He encouraged me to shoot video and experiment some cinematic style of storytelling. We brainstormed on the transitions between the individual stories of each Lenoir resident in one integral video of the retirement home. We proposed two ways: one is to end the first story with a shot of the first subject walking in and out of frame in front of the woods and the outside bench; the other is to end the first story with a shot of the first subject talking to the second subject in the Lenoir library, and the camera follows the second subject from the library scene and start the second story from there. Both ways sound cinematic and interesting, but are hard to implement and have the risk of staging.



But I still wanted to spice up my shots a little bit by adding some movement. With David's immediate and generous help, I checked out a **glide track** and experimented it in Tuesday's shooting of EJ Gallo typewriting her little poem.

After the shooting, I checked out this multimedia project on the New York Times and found inspiring.

<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/science/lives-restored-series.html?ref=multimedia#>

Weekly Report 6: July 8-14 Deep into Lenoir



My subject this week was June Edwards. She was top on EJ Gallo's recommendation list. What EJ told me interesting about her was that June has been searching her genealogy for years. I knew nothing more about her except that she is a little deaf.

I made a call to her on Wednesday trying to introduce myself and make an appointment with her. She did not quite get what I was saying on the phone, but she knew I would like to visit her on Friday afternoon.

July 12, Friday, I made my visit to her house in Lenoir Woods. I will not start working on a story until I find something interesting or meaningful to my topic out of my subject. I tried to ask her as many questions as I could, but her level of deafness was worse than I expected. Although we could hardly maintain a dialogue, she kept talking about her only daughter Kanberly, which aroused my curiosity about their relationship. The parent-children relationship and the generation gap is one of the issues I would like to explore about senior life.

I had a terribly hard time doing talking-head interview with June in her bedroom. I repeated my questions at most to five times until she could get it. And once she started recalling her memories, it was hard to stop her.

Her daughter Kanberly moved to Los Angeles since about 1985, comes back to visit June about twice a year. Kanberly quit high school in Missouri and went to California to learn

drawing and painting. She became an ad painter after college graduation and lived there ever since. Kanberly has been in a relationship for 12 years, but has not wanted a marriage or a baby. June's husband passed away in the mid-90s, and she moved in Lenoir in 2001.

For twelve and a half years June's been living on her own and she reached 88 years old. I asked whether she missed her daughter and whether she's concerned about her daughter's value on marriage. She seemed to answer every question with a easy laughter. "If that is the way it's supposed to be, then that's the way it's supposed to be". Honestly, these answers and opinions were not what I expected and wanted. Based on my own culture, I would at least expect some complaints about her daughter's selfishness and impiety. I tried to get her emotions and opinions by asking harsher questions like "how did you feel when she left you?" and "have you ever wanted a grandchild?" Finally she talked about her god-given pregnancy and her eyes were watery. That is only a 5-minute valuable story toward the end of the three hours' visit, but it's worth waiting for.

Before I left, I asked to go with her to the Lenoir library on Sunday and she was very happy. I need to see her in action and know what kind of visuals I could get from her story.

Sunday afternoon she took her volunteer shift in the library as usual. The job was basically putting back returned booked on the shelves. She was quick and quiet, and because she was deaf, I could hardly talk to her. I felt frustrated by the silence and lack of communication. After the tedious shooting, I decided to drop her story for the time being.

Weekly Report 7: July 15-21 Searching Angles and Topics

As I talk to more senior people, many interesting stories and issues unfolded before me. I start to think about themes of my whole project. What do I want to show about senior life? What are the important problems that senior citizen face today? With so many Lenoir residents willing to share, how should I make quick and smart selection?

I did some search online and also summarized the information I've already collected. Some common issues are deteriorating health, spouse dying, loneliness and financial incapacity. But among all these problems, **what is the order of priority?**

I remember I proposed this project based on my understanding of the severity of senior problems in China. Many old Chinese people live in poor housing conditions with no children looking after them. Although I knew senior Americans' living conditions must have been much better before I started my project, I assumed they had more loneliness issue because American culture does not value filial piety as much as Chinese and children do not have duties to look after their parents when they grow up.



However, my assumption was proved to be cultural bias after I talked to several seniors here. Most of them live alone away from their children and only have several family reunions every year, but they take it for granted and enjoy the freedom and independence. They do not necessarily need children to be around and do not feel sorry for themselves.

Rather than loneliness, financial issue turns to be a more serious concern for senior people. This week I met another warm-hearted Lenoir resident, Priscilla Farrall. She is a manager of the resident library and also a loyal Missourian reader. She is passionate about my project and eager to help me understand senior life. She told me that the money of senior people usually comes from the following sources:

1. social securities
2. private retirement fund
3. employer retirement fund
4. personal saving

She knows lots of Lenoir residents and introduced me quite a few: Ruby, who just celebrated her 100th birthday; Gwenn, who took up painting as a hobby after her retirement; Margie, a retired pastor diagnosed with Parkinson's. Margie and Robert Woods' story is most appealing to me. Robert has been taking care of Margie for ten years and watching her going downhill. I would really like to find out the hardship of taking care of the other and their special lessons and thoughts on life.

While Priscilla and I were chatting, an old man with a blue cap came up to say hi. His name is Raymond. He was once a farm boy and he went to the Korea War. I decided to do a quick interview with him right away to see whether he got interesting stories.



Raymond has a body of 85 years old, but a much younger heart. Although his memory of the old days was still fresh, the problem was that he was rambling verbosely. I could even not help falling

asleep. The only interesting thing about him was his hobby of playing the harmonica. He took it out from his vest pocket and played an old song and also the national anthem for me.

After hearing so many stories and meeting with several people, I made my standards. I need to choose the better talkers, the ones with more energy and activities, the ones with impressive stories or unique talents. I do not want to see my audience bored by these ordinary seniors rambling about their old days and banal thoughts on life.

Weekly Report 8: July 22-26 Another Story: Robert and Margie

Introduced by Priscilla, this week I got a chance to interview Robert and Margie. They have been living in an Maple Woods apartment in Lenoir Woods for six and a half years. They are both retired United Methodist pastors. Robert is 73, Margie is 71 and they have been married for 52 years. Margie was diagnosed with Parkinson's ten years ago and is losing her mobility gradually.



My interview questions focused on the couple's coping with the disease. I want to find out how Robert takes care of Margie and what Margie's illness means to them. Margie's talk was very hard to understand due to her limited speaking ability. Robert spoke slowly with frequent stops. Generally, the quality of the audio was not very satisfactory.

For Margie's story, I need more visuals about her daily life: getting up and getting dressed, reading bible and so on. Tuesday I was invited to have lunch with them at the Lenoir dining hall. It was such a great chance to meet senior residents and introduce my project. As the only young guy in the big room, I caught so many eyes and even more when I set up my camera at the dinner table. I got decent video of Margie and Robert eating lunch, but they did not generate much conversation.

As I go on more shooting, one serious limitation I realized is my camera's video recording capabilities. It was true that Canon 5D mark II can capture HD video, but it does not have auto focus in video mode, which made it very hard to track focus and zoom at the same time. 5D mark II can perform very well in staged shots and scenes because of full-frame sensor and shallow depth of field, but it is not suitable for documentary style of movies, which happens instantly and does not allow do-overs. These out of focus shots will be a big headache in my post-production.

Weekly Report 9: August 12-18 Getting back to My Project and

Subjects

After two weeks' trip to China, I got back to Columbia on August 10 and started the ninth week of my project. Due to the jet lag, I felt sleepy during the daytime and could do nothing but make phone calls and go over my raw materials.

Getting back to my subjects is very important at this stage after two weeks' lost of contact. I need to let them know that I'm still interested and working on my project. I first need to pick up Robert and Margie's story from where I stopped. I called Robert on Tuesday and asked if he would do anything special this week. He invited me to go to the worship service on Sunday evening with him and Margie.



Thursday, I drove to Fayette to have a makeup interview with Mike. While going over full take of Mike's story, I realized that my audio and visuals have a big matching problem. His audio was pretty much about the past and abstract

life reflections, but the visuals are about his present life. In this makeup interview, I want him to talk about his job at KOPN, therapy at the hospital and moving to Fayette. As Mike and I have become really close friends, after the interview I asked him to sing a little bit for me. I recorded his singing on camera. He was not as good as I expected, but the shot was natural and interesting to watch.

Sunday night I went to the Vespers with Margie and Robert. I had a hard time recording quality video while following them along the corridor. It was so easy to get out of focus and the video was so shaky. In the church, I became the focus again. Robert introduced me as their guest to all the people present. This introduction did not ease me, but somehow made me more nervous and fettered. Trying not to make any noise or disturb the sacred worship service, I just set up my camera and leave it there without getting a different angle. I was too concerned about my politeness and did not make full use of the opportunity as a photographer.

When I went over the videos after the worship, I felt so frustrated at myself. My shots are mediocre, and far from enough. I shouldn't had set myself as a participant, but an observer and a professional reporter.

Weekly Report 10: August 19-25 Wrapping Up Lenoir Stories

Previously informed by Robert, this week I went to the couple's monthly get-together with retired pastors and their families on Friday. Robert and Margie have two regular monthly meetings on their calendar, one with the retired pastors and one with the Parkinson's patients group.

The get-together was basically a lunch in a reserved room on the second floor of East Hy-Vee. Everybody ordered their own food and sat at the round table. The majority of the twenty people present were couples. After the group chair gave a short speech, everyone started to introduce himself and share his recent stories. I put my camera on the table instead of setting up a tripod because I thought using a tripod might be too formal and intrusive (which turned out to be definitely wrong!!!! An important lesson).

Robert did not have other activities to invite me, so this was very likely the last shooting for their story. With this in mind, I was thinking how to end the story and particularly what the last shot would be. When we said goodbye in front of the entrance of Lenoir residency, I took a shot of them getting off their car and entering their apartment.

Generally, I am not very satisfied with my visuals of Margie's story. I do not have enough details showing how Robert takes care of her, and I do not have shots of their interaction with friends. But it seems that I do not have more chance to make it up. Clock is ticking and I need to move on to my next one.

Wednesday I finally made up my mind to call Harold Uthaut and asked him whether he wanted to be my subject. He accepted without hesitation, but I need to call and check their availability next Wednesday.

Weekly Report 11: August 26-September 1 One Assistant with Harold's Story

This week was incredibly exciting and productive. My high school friend Bingxia Zhang, who would start her graduate program in film production at Boston University next week, came to visit me in Columbia. She especially came here to observe my work and get warm up for her new semester. I was so glad that I could have her as my assistant.

With another set of hands, I completed my shooting for Harold Uthlaut's story on only one and a half days with hundreds of satisfactory shots. As planned, we drove to Harold's house in Glasgow on Thursday morning. I brought my 5D Mark II and asked her to take my Canon 500D with a borrowed tripod. Besides, I took my GoPro with me, prepared to get some cool angles. I also took a set of wireless mic checked out from the photo locker the day before and a wire lavalier mic borrowed from Steve Rice.

After meeting up with Harold and Helen, I asked them to do the interview first.

According to my experience, there are many advantages of getting audio before shooting:

1. The interview helps to get a general knowledge of the subject and an initial idea of the storytelling.
2. You can think of the visuals that could match the audio during the interview and shoot more efficiently.

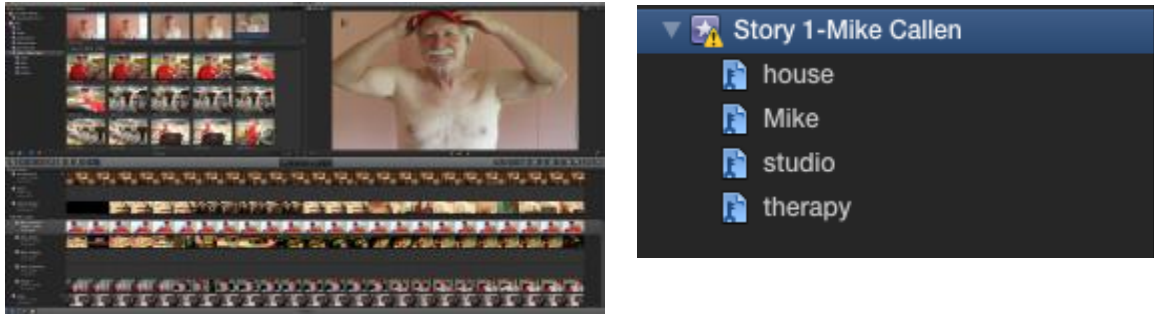
Good audio also depends on my interview questions. I divided my questions into four topics: getting old in the countryside, straw business, carpentry and antique collections.

With this clear structure in my mind, I know what to shoot.

Weekly Report 12: Sept. 2-8 Post-Production 1

My post production officially starts from this week. I have 66 GB for Mike's tory, 56 GB for Harold's, 70 GB for Robert and Margie's, 25GB for EJ's and about 40 GB for other Lenoir stories.

I started with Mike's story this week. I almost crashed down my FCP when I imported all the files, including videos, stills and audios.



I organized my files with keyword selections. "Mike" was tagged with every single file and "house" "Studio" "Therapy" was tagged to the shots from different scenes.



I also created individual projects for different scenes.

Weekly Report 13: Sept. 9-15 Post-Production 2

Problems just flooded as I went on with my post-production. I realize that I do not have enough shots for Margie and June's stories. Mike' story has serious audio editing problem, and for Harold's story, the audio is lengthy and hard to trim.

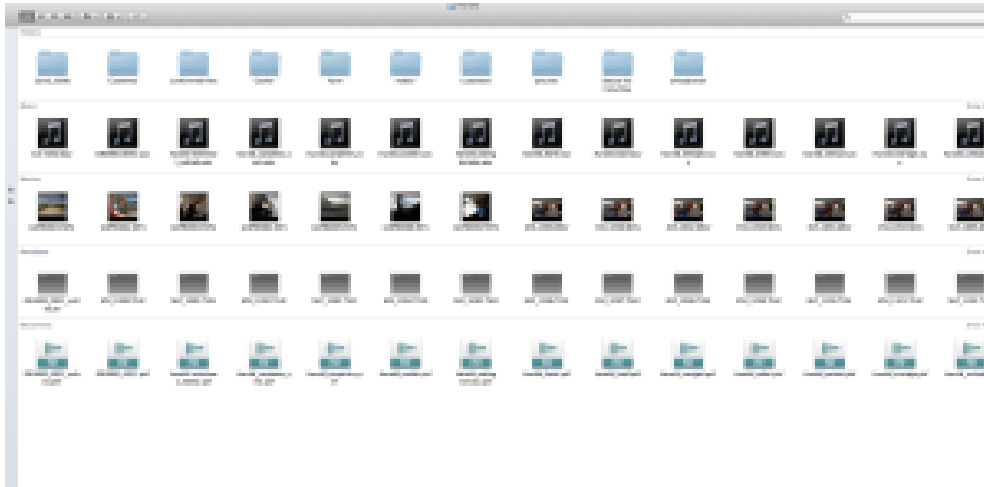
My present procedures are:

1. First listening to the camera interviews, taking notes of visuals, roughly do transcriptions and logging in
2. Edit the interview audio recorded by my Tascam recorder in Adobe Audition and cut out the soundbites I want to use
3. Import the edited audio files and video interview files in to FCP and synchronize them
4. Edit the synchronized files on the timeline and cut out the wanted soundbites with the visuals. And these files are what I want to use.
5. Play all the b-rolls in Quick Time and trim the shots without compression
6. Import all the trimmed shots into FCP and then start first round of editing on the timeline

Weekly Report 14: Sept. 16-22 Post-Production 3

The post-production is not only about techniques, but also ideas and inspirations.

Gradually I got stuck in the way to tell the story. I grouped Harold's story files into folders named by the scenes.



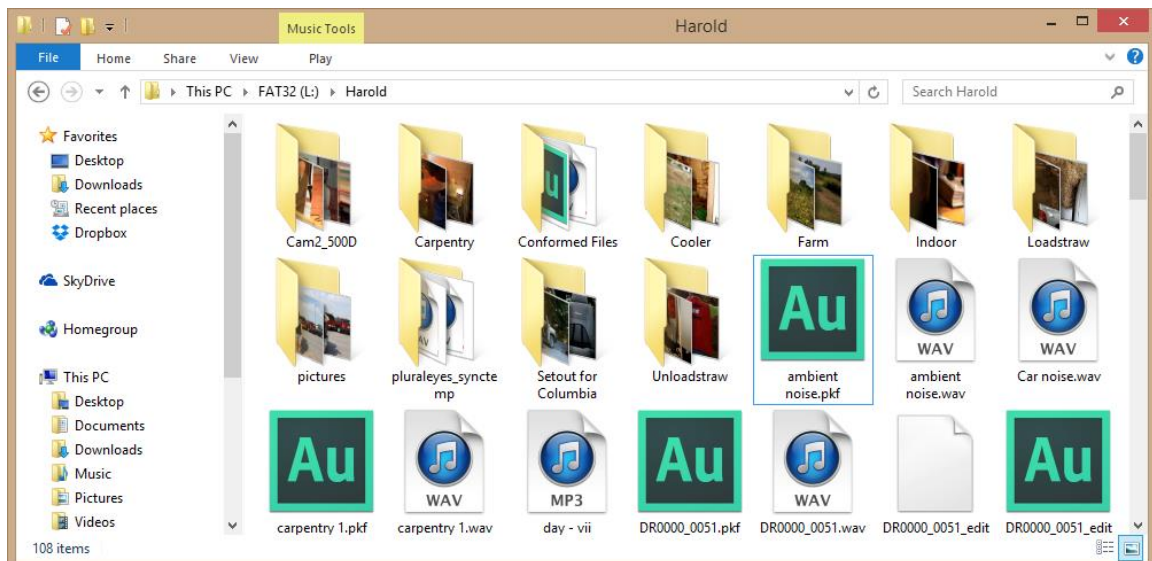
I decided to start my story with my most confident shot- a close-up of Harold's face, but what comes next? I have so many ways to arrange my shots and scenes. I went back to the handy printed version of the transcription many times during the editing, tried several edits, but still could not make up my mind. What I can do at this stage is to cut the shots and edited out the sequences in different scenes first.

Summary of Post-Production Field Notes

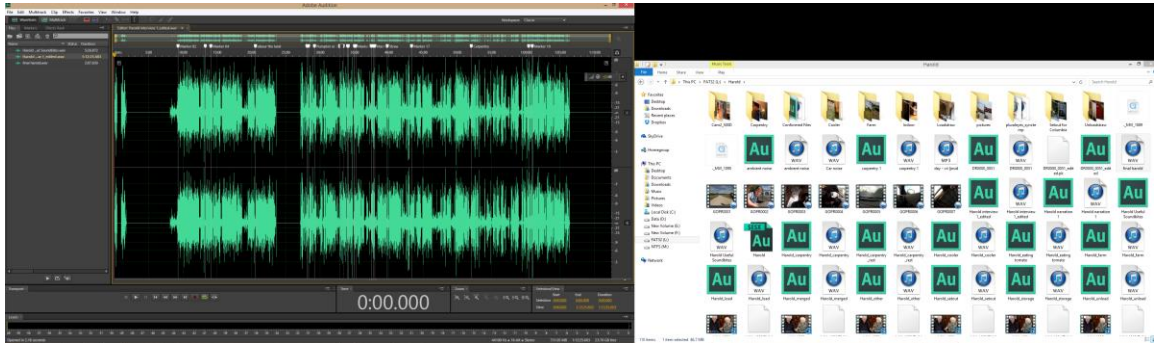
After a long struggle with Final Cut Pro X, I finally made up my mind to drop it and switch to Adobe Premiere CS6 in December. First, the journalism school's Mac desktops are very slow to load a huge project as mine. Second, FCPX does not perform well in audio-video synchronizing. I wasted so much time in synchronizing in the way I wanted. Third, the sticky storyline function works poorly and makes my timeline panel messy. I tried very hard to fight with the function.

After watching the tutorials on Lynda.com, I redesigned my post-production workflow and restarted my editing. Here are the steps:

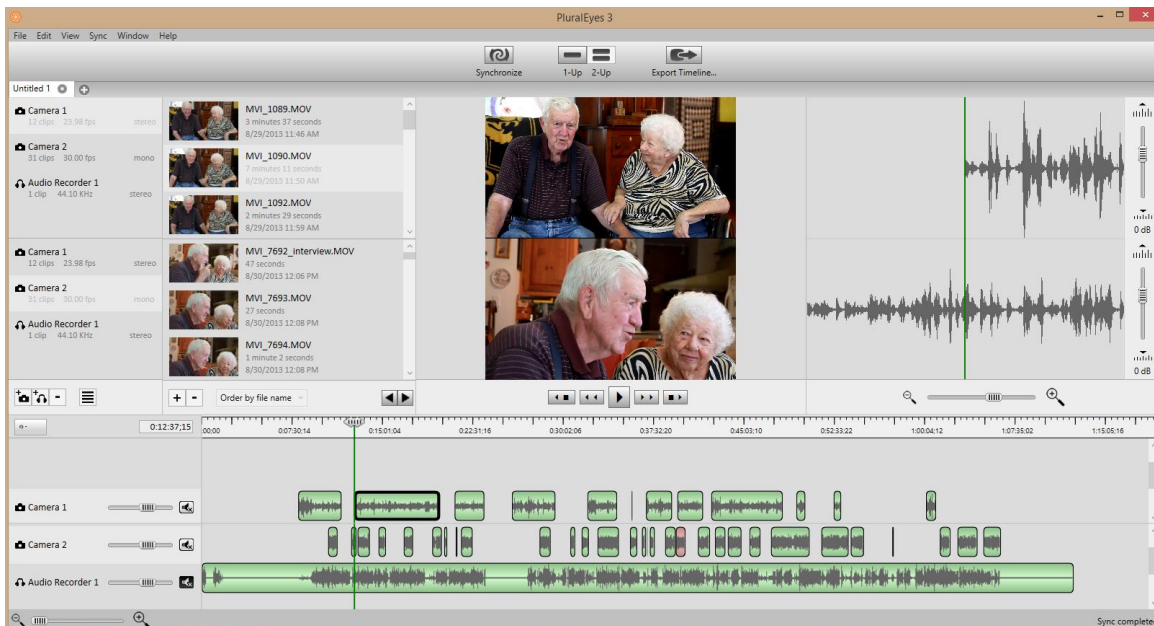
1. Make a folder for each story and make a subfolder for each scene within each story. Put all the stills of each story in a separate subfolder from the scene subfolders. Also, make a subfolder for audio files.



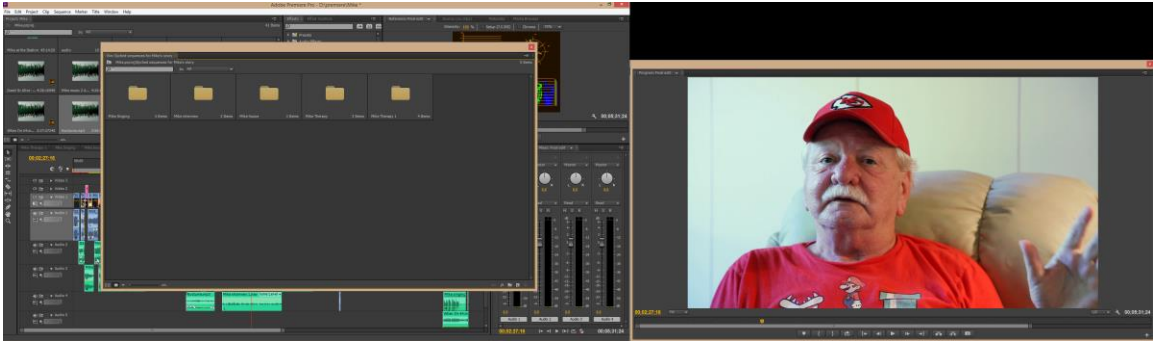
2. Listen to the interview audio in Adobe Audition. Make markers on interview questions and usable sound bites. (These markers will show up in Premiere as well.) Transcribe the necessary parts of the interview.



3. Synchronize the shots in each scene with the audio files recorded separately using wireless lavalier microphone and recorder. Using PluralEyes 3.0 to synchronize the files and exported it into a XML format file for Premiere.



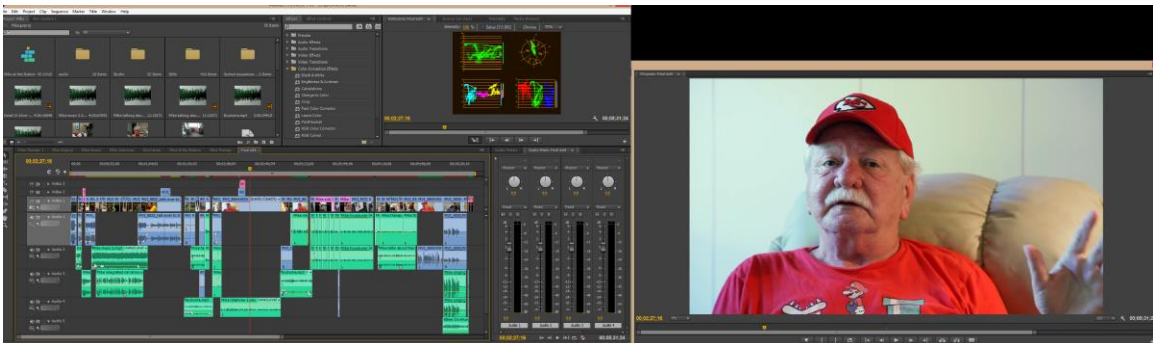
4. Import the XML file into Premiere and there is the synchronized sequence. That's where I started my editing.

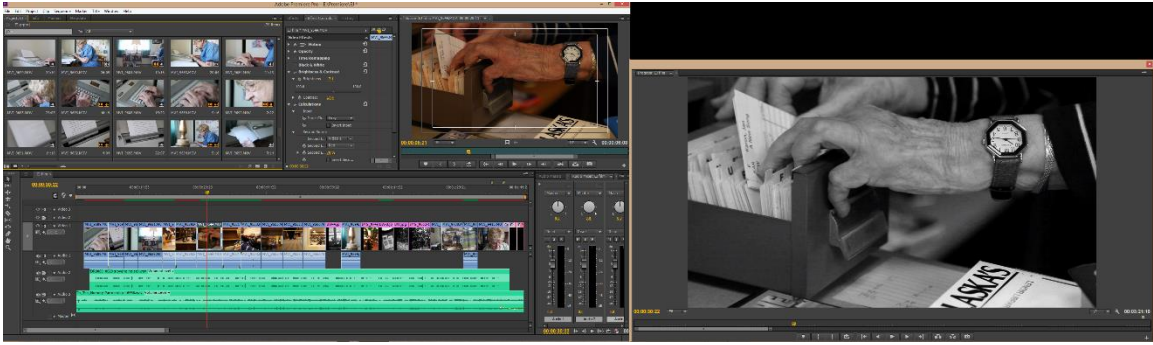


5. Think about what's the focus of my story. Use a SVO (Subject-Verb-Object) to summarize my central statement. Then edit the interview, line up the sound bites and make it into a narration.

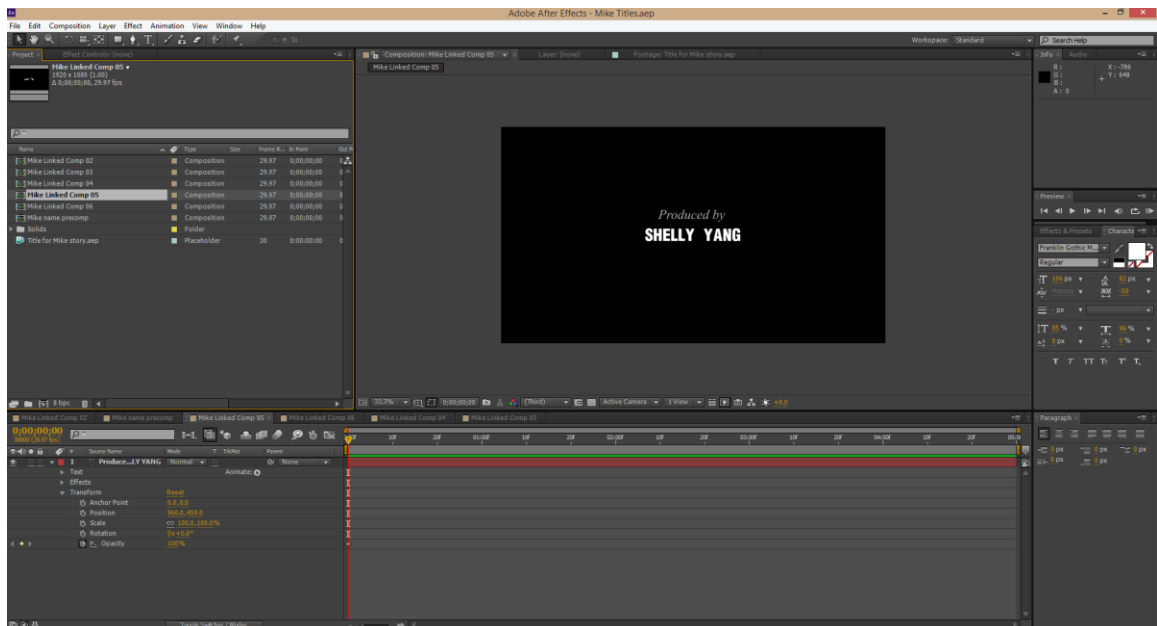
6. Sort out the best shots. Line up sequences. Use the visuals to reference the audio.

7. Color Correction and color grading in Premiere. Use the reference monitor to see the waveform and histogram, and use color correction effects.





8. Use After Effects to create titles for the video stories.



Use of Background Music

I continued to show my editing to Brian and discussed about storytelling. Brian and I had some disagreement on the editing of my second video piece- Harold Utlaut's story. In order to show the scenic rural Missouri morning and Harold's early set-out for Columbia, I used some instrumental music to accompany my footage. However, Brian was not very comfortable with my use of music, saying it's too subjective and sensational in a

documentary. It was a quite interesting debate. I think contemporarily audience have basically lost interest in videos that are only talking without any melody in the background. Journalistic multimedia stories still can use music without harming the objectivity of the storytelling. However the selection of the music should be careful. Too emotional or melodic music should be avoided.

Chapter Three: Self Evaluation

Although I did not produce the number of stories I initially envisioned, I learned a lot about video production and documentary storytelling by doing this project.

I have been encountering and solving problems from the first day of my project. After I gained my access to Lenoir, I met and talked with so many seniors that I had a hard time deciding whose story I should work on. I finally decided to pursue the subjects who were relatively active and good at talking. Story pitching is hard and there are no absolute criteria for a good story idea. I could not say my decision was the best, but it worked in my project.

I found it very easy to blend in and get people talk to me. One of my subjects said I was a very “delightful” friend to have. However, just because of their hospitality to me, I gradually felt confused about whether I should be an observer or a participant in making a documentary. Sometimes when they wanted me to be involved in what they were doing, it became hard for me to stand alone and capture it. I needed to politely respond to their request and keep an eye on my camera at the same time, which was the toughest part of making a documentary on my own.

I was really confident about the technical aspect of shooting after several semesters’ training, but I still came across some new problem. I tried three new and fancy pieces of equipment in my project: Beachtek audio adapter, Glidetrack and Gopro. Beachtek caused some kind of humming to my audio so that I had to drop it after using it only once.

Glidetrack turned out too heavy for me to operate independently. I was most successful in using Gopro from some creative angles. Although I enjoyed the freedom and independence of a one-man band, this project made me realize the importance and necessity to have a second pairs of hands in making a documentary. I fortunately had a friend of mine working as my assistant in shooting Harold's story. I enjoyed the cooperation very much and gained fresh new experience in leadership and teamwork.

Documentary production is hard, harder than film. Film has a history of more than 100 years while documentary as an industry is relatively new. Film has somewhat formed its narrative structure and production process and conventions, especially the commercial films, whereas documentary filmmakers are still at the stage of exploration. The freedom to experiment and create is beneficial but challenging. I had a headache deciding the format and style of my series of documentaries. Before I put my hands on the post production, I kept myself watching as many award-winning multimedia projects and documentaries as possible. I believed for beginners the best way to learn is to imitate. I tried to use different approaches to tell the three stories, and experience the advantages and disadvantages of each one. I used talking-head interviews in Mike's story, making it a broadcast documentary feel; I used lots of close-ups and voice-over narration in Harold's story and make it a more photojournalistic multimedia style; and for E.J.'s story I experimented artsy and cinematic style, exploring black and white storytelling and using metaphor shots as well as background music.

Also, the post-production process was time-consuming due to endless problems with editing. I used to use FCP on the Macs in future's lab, but later I found it very slow

working with a total raw material of more than 60GB, and the audio-visual synchronizing is clumsy. For example, if I shot 12 shots in one scene and recorded audio separately with a lavalier mic, I need to synch 12 times in FCP. In addition, the sticky storyline gives me trouble when editing two camera positions. After the struggle, I switched to Adobe Premiere and used Plural Eyes for synchronizing. I gradually figured out my own post production workflow which I believe is the main achievement of my project and will work for my future career. Here are the steps:

1. Make a folder for each story and make a subfolder for each scene within each story. Put all the stills of each story in a separate subfolder from the scene subfolders. Also, make a subfolder for audio files.
2. Listen to the interview audio in Adobe Audition. Make markers on interview questions and usable sound bites. (These markers will show up in Premiere as well.) Transcribe the necessary parts of the interview.
3. Synchronize the shots in each scene with the audio files recorded separately using wireless lavalier microphone and recorder. Using PluralEyes 3.0 to synchronize the files and exported it into a XML format file for Premiere.
4. Import the XML file into Premiere and there is the synchronized sequence. That's where I started my editing.

5. Think about what's the focus of my story. Use a SVO (Subject-Verb-Object) to summarize my central statement. Then edit the interview, line up the sound bites and make it into a narration.
6. Sort out the best shots. Line up sequences. Use the visuals to reference the audio.
7. Color correction and color grading in Premiere. Use the reference monitor to see the waveform and histogram, and use color correction effects.
8. Use After Effects to create titles for the video stories.

Besides the workflow, I have also created a collection of relevant learning materials. I made notes of Lynda tutorials, clipped webpages and articles with Evernote, marked videos that worth watching and started reading daily RSS feeds with smartphone app Feedly. As I gradually realized the importance of background music in documentaries, I started to collect and build my own library of background music from public domain or Creative Commons. I pushed myself into the world of video production and started developing these small habits that I believe will reward me in a long term.

I was glad that I easily blended in with seniors and gained their trust, and that I discovered and told interesting stories out of really ordinary people. However, there are many regrets and imperfections in my project. I had many more potentially good stories that I did not follow. I planned to produce longer pieces or merge several short stories into one, but I failed. There were many other great ideas that Brian and I came up with last summer but were not applicable due to my current execution capacity.

I wish I could have planned and researched better, not just walking in and pressing the record button. I did not pay enough attention to the value and function of writing pre-shoot scripts and transcriptions. Also, as I conducted my analysis component and learned the three markers of authenticity, I wish I could have gathered and used more archival materials in my storytelling.

This project has not only led me into the world of video production, but more importantly the world of older Americans. Before I started my project, my expectation of American senior life was something similar to Chinese: Seniors live as a disadvantaged group of the society and most are concerned with various physical, mental or financial problems, which make their life uneasy. Therefore at the very beginning I was looking for “miserable” subjects and “negative” story angles like these. I soon realized I was wrong and I need to set aside my expectation in my own culture and refresh my understanding. As the project went on, I was impressed by the distinct attitudes, values, habits and life styles of older Americans. Most of the seniors I met were self-satisfied, independent, positive and optimistic with a free spirit. This is a valuable lesson to me.

If I were to continue this project, I would like to find more seniors from different demographic backgrounds and produce more video stories that could represent more voices of seniors in Mid Missouri.

Chapter Four: Description of the Multimedia Stories

Mike Callen: When I'm 64



Mike Callen is a late-night music show DJ at KOPN radio station in Columbia, Missouri. He has been a DJ since he was 18 and is a diehard fan of rock music from the 60s, 70s and 80s. He had had heart problem for many years, but a heart attack in late February 2012 severely weakened him. As he was on the schedule to have a heart transplant in August, a sudden heart attack on his way to a medical examination on May 24 threatened his life. His doctor took out his failed heart and put a pump in his leg that could only keep his heart beating for seven days. It was until the sixth night that a compatible heart was found. Mike was discharged from the hospital one week after the surgery, and back to the studio one month later.



Mike Callen
KOPN DJ

Mike on the late night music show at KOPN station in June, 2013



Mike talks about his heart transplant experience in the interview.



Mike's wife Leslie Botkin shows a photo of Mike right after the heart transplant in the ward



Mike makes fun of the scar on his chest which he got from the transplant.

Harold: The Legacy of a Rural Missourian



Harold Utlaut, 85, has been living in Glasgow, Missouri since 1950s. He studied Agriculture in University of Missouri and then spent all his life working as a rural farmer. He owns 450 acres of land, which he cash rents to renters. At the age of 85, he is still engaged in vegetable planting and straw business. To him, the alternative of hard working is dying, which is not a pleasant alternative.



Harold and Helen Utlaut talk about how they met in college.



Harold sorts out the vegetables he just picked from the garden in the cooler accompanied by his pet Missy.



Harold unloads his straw at Westlake Ace Hardware west of Columbia, Missouri.

Poet E.J.

Ellen Jane Gallo, often called E.J., 86, is a resident at Lenoir Woods retirement home located in the southeast of Columbia. She loves reading and writing on her typewriter. She wrote a little poem about her feelings of aging. The black and white video uses her poem as the narration and depicts her version of aging.



E.J. reads her poem.



E.J. types her poem on a typewriter.



Her pills

Chapter Five: Analysis Component

Conventional Markers of Authenticity in Documentary

Introduction

Documentary is defined as a film genre that recreates an actual event or tells a nonfictional story. But every representation or storytelling needs filmmakers' creativity. That's why the Scottish film theorist John Grierson called documentary the "creative treatment of actuality" in the 1930s (Grierson, 1966). The relationship between documentary and reality has been widely discussed for decades. No matter how many scholars question how real the reality in documentary is, and no matter how creative and various the treatment of the reality is, once a film is labeled as documentary it simultaneously signifies one essential fact to viewers: this film works with the real-
"actuality."

As the documentary genre has evolved over years, there has been an increase in the creative ways that filmmakers deal with reality. These ways on one hand could make documentary more interesting to watch, on the other may spontaneously leave the audience with doubt about the authenticity of the storytelling.

In fact the relationship between documentary and reality has been widely discussed for decades. No matter how many scholars have questioned how real is the reality in documentary film, and no matter how creative and various the treatment of the reality has become in an increasing number of documentaries, once a film is labeled as documentary it simultaneously signifies one essential fact: that this film works with the real-“actuality.”

Films that are tagged as documentaries can be very different from each other. Some documentarians are not journalistically based and hold the belief that they can construct a version of truth from their framing. Jean-Luc Godard, a famous director once said: “Cinema is truth 24 times a second, and every cut is a lie.” (1960) Each documentary editor has his or her own judgment and is editing the truth instead of just showing it raw.

However, they are at the same time faced with the responsibility to legitimize the film as documentary, different from a fiction. Documentaries are supposed to deal with reality truthfully. Even though documentarians exert their creativity and embed their own interpretation, they also need to think about the techniques that can help build the credibility of themselves and their documentaries. For filmmakers, these techniques are dependent on their own idea of truth, their ethics of journalism and understanding of the cinema language. For an audience, these techniques are the signs and symbols that they can recognize and relate to authenticity.

This research explores the construction and justification of authenticity in documentary films. The three Oscar award-winning documentaries from 2010 to 2013 are selected and carefully examined to look for visual and audio symbols of authentic storytelling that help communicate between filmmakers and their audience. Previous literature has discussed about several conventional visual and audio techniques of documentary filmmaking: voice-over narration and subtitles, “talking heads” or “confessional” interview, documentarian’s on-screen presence, participants’ consent, on-location sound recording, real people as social actors, blurred focus, long takes, flat lighting, handheld camera and son on. This research focused on the most prominently used visual and audio markers as well as the manipulation of the past. It will provide a unique approach for future scholars and professionals to understand the documentary techniques by applying Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotics theory.

Theoretical framework

Semiotic theory, which studies signs, symbols and their interpretations, has been established as an insightful theoretical framework for this kind of textual and visual analysis research.

From a Greek root meaning sign, semiotics is literally defined as the study of signs. As scholar Daniel Chandler points out, this might be the “shortest definition” (2007, p.1) of semiotics. This shortest definition makes the scope of semiotics study breathtakingly both simple and comprehensive (Hodge, 1988). Chandler (2007) claims it is necessary to

clarify the meaning and scope of signs, which, possibly to some people's surprise, may actually include a considerable variety such as "drawings, paintings, photography" (p.1) as well as "words, sounds and body language" (p.2). Because of this wide range of subjects and interdisciplinary research, there has been much dispute among leading semioticians as to what should be involved (Chandler, 2007) and what should be established as the common basis for the science of semiotics (Solomonick, 2008).

The history of semiotics identifies two primary founders of the science: Swiss linguistic Ferdinand Saussure and American philosopher Charles S. Peirce (Sebeok, 2001; Chandler, 2007). For the linguist Saussure, semiology studies the role of signs as part of social life (Thibault, 1997). He defined it as a dyadic form made up of signifier and signified (Sebeok, 2001). For example, the word "rose" could be the signifier of the signified concept that rose is a flower with a sweet smell that is usually white, yellow, red, or pink and that grows on a bush which has thorns on the stems. Sebeok concluded that in Saussure's semiotics theory the signification between the signifier and the signified is an arbitrary one that has been established by the society at will. Which signifier pairs with which signified is determined by convention.

However, for the philosopher Peirce semiotics was the "formal doctrine of signs", which was closely related to logic (Chandler, 2000). For Peirce, signs function as mediators between the external world of objects and the internal world of ideas. He characterized signs as occurring in a triadic relationship of object, representamen and

interpretant. Object refers to a thing or a thought, representamen to the corresponding sign, and interpretant to a relationship between the object and the representamen (Dimitrova, 2010, p.87).

Based on these two foundations of semiotic theory, scholars have expanded the study with knowledge from other disciplines. A variety of branches have been developed under the umbrella of semiotics. For instance, social semiotics tries to combine semiotics with social theory and believes that signs and messages must always be situated in the context of social relations and processes (Hodge, 2001). Najafian (2011) concluded through analyzing two advertisements from Time magazine that image, word and color are just three of the many semiotics modes through which social meanings are coded. The social semiotics references are how ideology is implied in the advertising discourse.

This research applied Charles Peirce's semiotics theory in which he categorized the signs into three types: icons, which have relationship of similarity or close resemblance and offer the most direct communication; Indexes, which might not look similar to the object they refer to, bear a relationship or proximity to the object they represent; and symbols, which presume neither resemblance nor physical connection to the referential world, meaning that the relationships are arbitrary or conventionally established. (Peirce, 1906, p.531)

There have been quite a number of books and journal articles discussing the usefulness and problems of his theory, but little research has been done using his theory to analyze cinema language. Although this theory is more than a century old, it is still effective and remains as a very important categorization of signs. This theory guided this research to identify the markers of authentic storytelling and discuss the relationship between the marker and the represented.

Literature Review

Defining documentary

The Scottish filmmaker and theorist John Grierson called the documentary the “creative treatment of actuality” in the 1930s (Grierson, 1966). His concise definition has drawn wide discussion and recognition ever since. This view distinguishes the documentary from the fiction film, which is not thought to be primarily a treatment of reality, and also from the non-fiction film, which is not thought to be creative or dramatic (Plantinga, 2005). However, this characterization leaves the obvious tension between “creative treatment” and “actuality” unresolved (Nichols, 2010, p.6).

This tension has been on the side of heated debate by a large number of scholars and documentary filmmakers as well. Some dispute the documentary’s ability to represent reality. Michael Renov claims:

“it is important to recall that the documentary is the cinematic idiom that most actively promotes the illusion of immediacy insofar as it forswears ‘realism’ in favor of a direct, ontological claim to the ‘real’. Every documentary issues a ‘truth claim’ of a sort, positing a relationship to history which exceeds the analogical status of its fictional counterpart.” (1986:71-72)

Even more, questions have been posed about the documentary’s claim to truth.

Documentary filmmaker Marcel Ophuls likewise mistrusts the form even though it has been his career.

“I don’t trust the motives of those who think they are superior to fiction films. I don’t trust their claim to have cornered the market on the truth.” (Closely Watched Trains, p.19)

The key problem of clarifying the tension and defining documentary is, as Dirk Eitzen noted, to determine what constitutes “actuality” (1995, p.82). This seems to lead to a philosophical question, just as indicated by Plato’s Cave¹. The shadows on the wall are essentially different from the reality even though they are as close as the prisoners get to viewing reality. “Actuality” is infinite and can never be wholly represented.

However, as Susan Sontag put it: “The picture may distort; but there is always a presumption that something exists; or did exist, which is like what’s in the picture”

¹ Plato’s Cave: An allegory used by the Greek philosopher Plato in his work *The Republic*. In the allegory Socrates describes a group of people who have lived chained to a wall of a cave and faced a blank wall. They watch shadows projected on the wall by things passing in front of a fire behind them, and begin to ascribe forms to these shadows. According to Socrates, the shadows are as close as the prisoners get to viewing reality.

(Sontag, 1977, p.5). Just as scholar Stella Bruzzi has indicated, documentaries were like “a negotiation between filmmaker and reality” (2006, p.186). A documentary will never be reality nor will it invalidate that reality by being representational (Stella, 2006). Louise Spence and Vinicius Navarro (2011) made a clear argument:

“What is at issue is not so much ‘Is it true or untrue?’ but rather ‘how is actuality treated in order to sanction the documentary’s claims to be telling the truth?’” (p.2).

Spence and Navarro asserted that all representation is transformation. And they further proposed that documentary, as a distinct genre of film, has already established its own conventional nature of representations that aims to offer a credible account and convey a sense of authenticity to the audience. These conventional procedures and techniques, which distinguish it from other types of film, make it easy for audiences to recognize a documentary. Spence and Navarro based their analysis on Charles Sanders Peirce’s semiotics theory and especially pointed out that the conventionalized visual analogies create a symbolic relation to that which they represent. One of the symbols in nonfiction films is the marker of authenticity. Through comprehensive examination of serious documentaries, Spence and Navarro discovered quite a broad range of markers of authenticity, such as muddy sound, blurred focus, long takes, flat lighting, handheld camera, etc (2011).

To this point, the relation between creative treatment and representing reality seems not irreconcilable nor intrinsically contradictory. By balancing these two elements, new ways

of defining documentary have been put forward. Carl Plantinga (2005) proposed two terms: Documentary as Indexical Record (DIR) and Documentary as Assertion (DA). DIR means “a documentary is a sustained discourse of narrative, categorical rhetorical, or other form that makes use of moving or still photographic images predominantly as traces to represent what the photographic images are of” (p.107). DA differently holds that filmmakers take an assertive stance toward the world of the work.

Famous documentary theorist Bill Nichols (2010) defined documentary with the following four components:

1. an institutional framework
2. a community of practitioners
3. a corpus of texts
4. a constituency of viewers (p. 20-41)

Generally, he concluded that documentary uses conventional means to represent or make claims about historical reality. By “conventional means,” he explains in Chapter “a Corpus of Texts” that the group of documentary works is linked by its common features or conventions. Just as a complement to Spence and Navarro’s research, he listed a few other symbols that these conventions might include:

1. Voiceover narration
2. Talking heads interview
3. Real people as social actors
4. On-location sound recording (p.18-23, p.26-32).

These conventions are significant characteristics of a documentary and also signs that audience can associate with authenticity of the representation.

Semiotics and Cinema

Semiotics is a large theoretical system that contains many branches of subgenre theories or convergence with other subjects or theories. Even in the field of cinema study, several branches have been commonly applied such as cognitive semiotics, film semiotics, social semiotics, semiology and so on.

It will be a complicated and huge project to explain and elaborate all the terms proposed by different theorists at different times. But generally, the fundamental premise of semiotics is that “the whole of human experience, without exception, is an interpretative structure mediated and sustained by signs” (Buckland,1995, p.6). All types of phenomena have a corresponding underlying system that consists of both the specificity and intelligibility of those phenomena. Studying film from a semiotics perspective means that film, as a photographic media, is basically a representation that constitutes icons, signs and symbols (Metz, 1974).

Semiotics has been a vague and broad term, leading scholars to elaborate and apply it different in their own means. Christian Metz defined film specificity in terms of a

specific combination of five overlapping traits -iconicity, mechanical duplication, multiplicity, movement, and mechanically produced multiple moving images (p.235-252).

Picchiotti (2006) summarized the signs of a Jewish experience by analyzing three films. However, he did not base his exploration and explanation of the signs on any branch of the semiotics theory. By using “semiotics” in the title, he actually only indicates that he examines signs instead of anything else.

Rick Iedema (2001) analyzed television and film content by using social semiotics. Social semiotics is concerned with the political understandings, the reading positions and the practical possibilities which analysis makes available. When analyzing, social semiotics does not focus on “signs” but on socially meaningful and entire texts. Basically social semiotics attempts to examine how audiences are positioned by the tele-film in question and how audiences perceive certain values as being promoted over others.

Therefore, it is obvious to tell that social semiotics theory aims to question the ways in which films present “social reality,” further questioning the objectivity of the representation.

Iedema provides some examples of analyzing film in his social semiotics study of a documentary on a hospital. He analyzed the action of the character, the pace of the

editing, tone of the voiceover, durations of each side's appearance and the spatial distance between the subject and the camera. Every shooting and editing technique could convey the director's intentional or subconscious representation of the reality could be impetrated in a certain direction (p.183-186).

Documentary techniques

Compared with fiction film or other nonfiction films, the documentary has some of its own featured techniques that function as the symbols or conventions that distinguish itself. Spence and Navarro (2011) provided an extensive discussion of the techniques of editing, camerawork, the profilmic² and sounds.

Besides the same techniques employed in fiction films, documentary's editing is less controlled. For instance, cutaways³ are not as necessary in documentary as in fiction films. Also, documentaries' adherence to the "unauthored" representation of the referential world makes continuity editing⁴ rare (p.168). Contrast and contradiction is also a basis for documentary editing. Documentarians provide different opinions on a subject or both sides of an argument to make the documentary appear impartial. In

² Profilmic: Profilmic refers to the selected elements of reality (the actor, the decor, etc.) that are placed in front of the camera then captured on film. The term was paired with the 'afilmic', indicating unselected reality, reality independent of any relation with film.

³ Cutways: a cutaway shot is the interruption of a continuously filmed action by inserting a view of something else.

⁴ Continuity editing: an editing style which aims to smooth over the inherent discontinuity of the editing process and to establish a logical coherence between shots.

addition, documentaries use montage sequences to give a quick history of the subject under investigation (p. 161-186).

In terms of camerawork, documentarians are careful with the scale of the subject photographed and the angle and height of the camera to avoid any misrepresentation. Second, camerawork indicates the approach of the documentarians toward the historical reality. Observational documentarians try not to interfere with what they see. These documentaries might use unusually long shots to indicate waiting for something to occur. Another sign that might add to the observational immediacy is the movement of handheld camera. Interpretive documentaries use the camera as an expressive tool. The third aspect of concern is the point of view of the shot (p.187-212).

How documentarians treat profilmic reality is another important aspect of production. Documentaries are most often shot on location when events occur. Besides, lighting can also affect audience's perception of the character, the environment and the authenticity of the film, so artificial lighting is tricky to use in documentaries. (p.213-238)

Audio is as important as visual in film study. Documentary's sound, from many aspects, has different requirements from fiction film. The types of sound could be summed up as speech, including voiceover commentary and interview, ambient sounds, effects, music and silence. The sounds that are recorded on the location with messiness and uncontrolled feeling will enhance the authenticity of the scene. Music could contribute to the aesthetic

effect of a film, yet leave audiences with a deceptive feeling of whether the character can hear what audience hear. (p.239-264)

These special techniques that balance uncontrolled cinematic approach with creativity and aesthetic pursuit lie in the center of the art of documentary and are crucial to its identity as a nonfiction film (2011).

Based on my literature review on semiotics theory and conventional documentary techniques, this research puts forward a hypothesis that viewers tend to associate the application of certain conventional documentary techniques with the authenticity of the documentary. This research further proposes three research questions:

1. What is the most prominently used visual marker communicating authenticity in a documentary?
2. How is sound used to communicate authenticity?
3. How is the past used to communicate authenticity?

Methodology

To answer the above questions, the research used textual analysis to interpret the visual and audio language of three American documentaries.

Textual analysis is a very useful qualitative research method for disciplines like communication and media studies, cultural studies and sociology. As Alan McKee (2003) defined it, textual analysis is used to specifically gather data about how other people make sense of the world. Researchers “make an educated guess at some of the most likely interpretations that might be made of that text” (McKee, 2003, p.1). “Text” of textual analysis does not only restrict to linguistic text, but generally refers to anything that we could make meaning from (p.4).

Lea Jacobs (1988) used textual analysis method to study the censorship of a 1932 movie “Blonde Venus.” Through close examination and comparison, he found that the industry self-regulation imposed clear rules of compensating moral values but also enhanced certain conventions of narrative storytelling. However, Jacobs also admitted that this mode of analysis could not avoid the problem of interpretation that the spectator in 1933 would have interpreted the same way as he did.

Jacob’s concern of the procedural difference between the analyst’s and the mass audience’s interpretations has been identified by some scholars as the prominent shortcoming of textual analysis as a valid and reliable research method (Philo, 2007).

Elfriede Fursich (2009) admitted that “a clearer understanding of the situation governing the production and reception of the text under investigation would add important context to the textual discourse” (p.249) but defended textual analysis as a very important research method for journalism and media studies by pointing out that the significance of

textual analysis is to establish the “ideological potential of the text between production and consumption” (p.249). Mixed-method approach has its strength, but is not necessarily an advantage.

Julie Karceski (2009) used textual analysis to study the stereotype of female scientists in American movies in the past 50 years. She used a flexible approach for data collection. The researcher simply took notes during observation, and later these notes were examined for emerging patterns and themes related to the research question (p.53).

My research applied Karceski’s approach of less structured observation, analyzing the documentaries’ video, audio and use of the past based on Peirce’s semiotics theory and my literature review.

During the screening, the film was marked when there was an instance of a visual marker which implied authentic storytelling and make notes about the appearing time, shot, how this technique was applied and so on. Also, the use of sound and the manipulation of the past were carefully examined. And after taking notes of the whole documentary, analysis is focused on patterns and repetitive techniques and draw conclusion on the signs of authenticity in their storytelling and how these signs are embedded.

Sampling

Based on extensive research on a large number of popular documentaries, awards and film festivals, the research chose purposive sampling method and picked the latest three documentaries that won the Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature. The Academy Awards have been the most authoritative and best known film awards in America. The winners of the best documentary feature award generally enjoys a large audience, good gross box office revenue, being screened in a number of theaters and in festivals (Dickerson, 2012). The award has a very high standard for documentaries to compete. Dickerson (2012) designed a rubric to help determine the films to analyze out of 14 candidates for his study on modern documentary. He collected data for several factors including director, release date, lifetime gross, number of theaters screened and number of accolades each film accrued from popular worldwide film festivals. Then he created a formula called “viewership quotient” and ordered the films. Four of his final selected five films were Oscar winners or nominators. Therefore, Oscar is seriously a good and convenient criterion for my sampling. Selecting the latest three award-winning documentaries will provide my study with high-quality, professional and contemporary material on which to base my analysis, raise readers’ interest in the issue and draw more up-to-date findings and value.

The three movies from 2010 to 2012 are *Inside Job*, *Undeclared*, and *Searching for Sugar Man*. Through textual analysis method, the three documentaries will be analyzed respectively on their visuals and audio with reference to the camerawork, editing and sounds.

Film Description

The three Oscar-award winning documentaries Searching for Sugar Man, Undefeated and Inside Job happen to be different from each other in aspects like subject matter, photography style, narration and storytelling approach, providing me diverse material for analysis.

*Inside Job*⁵

Charles Ferguson uses 120 minutes ambitiously attempting to explain the sophisticated causes and consequences of 2008 financial crisis in the documentary Inside Job. As the director and scriptwriter, he directly points to the systematic corruption of the financial services industry and uses extensive interviews with big shots in the related field, including politicians, financial insiders, academics and journalists, to support his argument. The film is based on intensive research finding and meticulous organizing of the information.

*Undeclared*⁶

Undeclared, the 2011 Oscar best documentary award winner, is a sports documentary about a underdog inner-city high school football team Manassas Tigers of Memphis struggling to reverse its fortune and reach its first-ever playoff game after years of losses. The film was released in March, 2011.

⁵ Inside Job: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1645089/>

⁶ Undeclared: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1860355/>

*Searching for Sugar Man*⁷

The 2012 Oscar best documentary winner *Searching for Sugar Man* tells a story about an American rock songwriter Sixto Rodriguez whose first two albums sold zero in the United States but unbeknownly to himself, have been selling millions for more than 25 years in South Africa. The documentary was released in January 2012 and accumulated around 7 million dollars in domestic box office revenue.

Research Findings

No matter whether a documentary is intended to inform, inspire, educate or entertain, or no matter how much creativity a filmmaker wants to inject in the movie, he needs to first secure a sense of authenticity in his film. There are certain things that build up the reliable relationship between filmmakers and viewers. They are the markers of authenticity that filmmakers embed and viewers comprehend, contributing to this distinctive trait of documentaries.

Through textual analysis of the three award-winning documentaries, I have found that several conventional documentary photography and editing techniques were applied to communicate the sense of authenticity. Talking head interview is the most prominently used visual marker of authenticity in the three films. Voice-over as well as narration is

⁷ *Searching for Sugar Man*: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2125608/>

how sound was incorporated to communicate the authenticity of documentary. Besides, documentarians brought up the past by using archival materials to secure the authenticity of documentary.

Talking Head Interview

A talking head is a format of interview where only the interviewee's head and shoulders are visible to the camera and he is the focus of the shot. The talking head interview is commonly used in the broadcasting industry, especially popular in documentaries and reality television programs. With a close shot on the interviewee's face, talking head leaves audience the impression of immediacy as if the subject is talking to them directly. Talking head is especially powerful when the interview subject gets emotional or the conversation gets tension.

Inside Job

Considering the complexity and abstractness of the topic, *Inside Job* heavily depends on interviews to explain the issue and make points. There are 64 people from all relevant sectors of the society interviewed for the film, the majority of whom are senior management staff or elites in their profession and industry. Table 1 is a list of names and titles of the interviewees in order of their first appearance in the movie.

It is an incredible number of interviews and significant amount of insiders' information for a two-hour documentary. The subjects provide a variety of insights and together untangle the complex causality of the global financial system.

Director Ferguson never wants Inside Job only to be an explanatory piece with scattered information here and there. Inside Job has the characteristics of an investigative journalism piece as well as an editorial. Ferguson evidently holds a stand in the movie implied by its script. Therefore he needs extensive sound bites to spice up the conflict and support his argument.

All of the interviews are professionally lit, well composed and recorded with high-quality synchronous audio. According to the screenplay of the film, the interviewer of all the interviews is Charles Ferguson himself. This well-preparedness though makes the shots seem conspicuous, does not undermine the authenticity of the movie, instead enhance it. It leaves audience with an impression that the production team is rather professional (there are also shots of the production team setting up the interviews in the beginning of the movie) and has done exhaustive research ahead. Besides, the biggest advantage of this neat talking head interview is that audience would not be distracted by other messiness from the subject and his speech. The connection between the subjects and audience is direct and strong. Audience can easily associate the interviewees on the screen with those in reality.

Undefeated

Undefeated takes an observational approach, and the camera basically follow the characters and captures what happens day by day. The flow of the shots explains the story well so that the director does not need to set up specific talking head interviews to provide audience with additional information. The leading character Coach Bill Courtney is a great speaker and talks about a lot on location to the cameraman who just leaves the tape rolling with his handheld camera. In this way the director has already got extensive audio to narrate the story and only needs to interview for further explanation or expression.

The talking head interviews used in this film are relatively short and shot plainly with no elaborative setup. This is in consistency with the photographic style of the b-roll and the overall grab-and-go style of the documentary. Also, this kind of interviews impresses viewers with a feeling that they are shot right in the middle of something going on and the interviewees are not prepared for the questions and just say to the camera what's on his mind at that moment, hence conveying a message of authentic storytelling to viewers.

Searching for Sugar Man

The 2013 documentary *Searching for Sugar Man* tells a story that happened in the late 1990s. For this kind of documentary which traces back history, talking head interview is almost an indispensable technique and component of storytelling.

In this documentary, the director uses talking head interviews with Rodriguez's album producers to uncover his short music career in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and then interviews "Sugar" Segerman and Willem Moller, two South African fans of Rodriguez to explain his popularity and influence there. Instead of using a specialist voice actor to narrate the story, the director uses interviews with these most relevant subjects to efficiently picture the story. For example, at 0:19:57 in the film, over the shot of ocean view from inside a car starts a voice saying for many South Africans Rodriguez's album is the soundtrack to their lives. And the voice continues narrating until the shot is cut to a talking head of "Sugar" Segerman. In this way viewers understand that the voice they've just heard before the talking head shot belongs to Sugar, which means it's not written or narrated by someone not from the movie. The manipulation of interview in such a fashion of truthiness helps reinforce the objectivity and authenticity of the documentary's storytelling.

Most of the subjects are interviewed in their workplaces or home. Because several subjects have music-related careers, they are interviewed in record shops, studios or with music-related objects in the backgrounds. The background and lighting of the talking

head interviews keeps a consistency, and at the same time enhances the credibility of the subjects' identity.

Interviews can be divided into two styles by whether interview questions are included. There is an increasing popularity for documentary filmmakers to exclude the audio or visual of asking questions. Filmmakers try to prompt interviewees to include questions in their answers. This technique has many advantages: First, it increases the speed of storytelling and eliminates possible repetition; second, it avoids the presence of the usually unnecessary and anonymous interviewer, who is deemed to represent the production crew; third, the edit creates a style of self-expression, deluding audience into thinking that interviewees just express what they want to instead of being asked to.

In *Searching for Sugar Man*, most of the interview questions are not included, however, in the interview with Clarence Avant (from 00:36:00-00:39:00), former owner of Sussex Records, also former boss of Rodriguez, the interviewer reveals himself by several uncut questions. First because audience need a context to understand Avant's answers; second the questions are follow-ups to Avant's answers and audience could feel the tension in the interview and the improvisation of the interviewer. Third, some audience might recognize that the interviewer speaks a South African English accent, which enhances the credibility of the production crew as well as the authenticity of the story which is based in South Africa.

Voice-Over and Narration

Voice-over and Narration are two terms that are often seen together and used interchangeably, and sometimes used together, like “voice-over narration.” While basically voice-over means the voice of an unseen narrator speaking, in documentaries, it specifically refers to an unseen subject’s voice that is cut from his narration in the interviews with him. The term “Narration” in documentary, on the other hand, more stands for the narration that is not voice-over, the narration that is scripted and narrated by someone not in the movie.

Besides talking head interview, voice-over and narration are very important components of the audio in a documentary. Although some fiction films also use narration, narration and voice-over are more commonly seen in nonfictions, especially broadcast style videos. They have become a conventional technique for documentary.

Inside Job

Charles Ferguson does not hide his dominant role in the documentary. He makes it clear in the opening credit that *Inside Job* is “produced, written and directed” by him.

In the screening of the 108 minutes' film, the researcher noticed 113 instances of narration segments, compared with 475 instances of interviewees' sound bites. The narration totally takes up around 35 minutes, one third of the film's length.

The narration plays a very important role of connecting the sound bites and laying out the structure of the whole storytelling. Charles Ferguson structures the documentary as a long-form journalism article, breaking it up into several parts using subheadings to lead audience: How we got here; the bubble; the crisis; accountability and where we are now. The complicated phenomenon is analyzed and presented in this logical order. Thanks to the abundant facts and clear logic in the narration, the story proves convincing and persuasive.

Ferguson uses an amount of narration to introduce the interviewee in the subsequent shots. These interviewees are not familiar to audience, and their viewpoints are closely relevant to their titles and personal backgrounds. Therefore the introduction of these interviewees are crucial information.

Compared with the amount of scripted narration and talking heads, *Inside Job* uses relatively few voice-overs. Ferguson is very careful with his manipulation of the talking head interviews with all these big figures from political and financial circles. For most cases, he just leaves audience with the visual of them talking. For one thing, it is important to see their faces and eyes while they make comments and clarify their stands;

for another, because voice-over easily gives viewers an impression that the voice is commenting on the visuals presented at the same time, it is dangerous for Ferguson to use their voices over other visuals. If not properly edited, it might harm the authenticity and credibility of the movie. One example of voice-over is used at 01:09:01 when two subjects were interviewed about that happened after Lehman Brothers announced bankruptcy. Visuals of anxious brokers and securities companies are laid over the interviews. Because they are basically describing what happened it is safe to lay the visuals as a reference to the audio.

Undefeated

Undefeated does not use scripted narration in its storytelling. The story just holds together by synchronized audio and voice-overs. Coach Bill Courtney is the main character and narrator in the documentary. He knows the history of Manassas football team, the schedule of the games and stories of the players. The director uses Courtney's speech recorded at the training field, the battle ground, and in interviews as voice-overs throughout the film.

For example, at 00:05:50 of the film, with the title saying "Bill Courtney began volunteering at Manassas 6 years ago", starts Courtney's voice saying "When I got here, there were 17 kids..." and right away the title is cut to a shot of Courtney with his team

practicing on the playground. The next moment viewers watch and hear Courtney shouting to his team "...Let's move", and with almost no break at all, another piece of his voice- "There are good athletes in the neighborhood, but they weren't gonna play for Manassas"- is laid over the shot of his players getting ready for practice. In the next second comes a shot of Courtney's talking head in his office: "Do you blame them?" With his voice still going on talking about how worst Manassas football team had been doing, the director immediately cut to a montage of black and white newspaper photos of Manassas and a newspaper article title "'Whipping Boy' Manassas." The cuts are quick and smooth, using Courtney's simple and short sentences as voice-overs to effectively summarize Manassas's past. If it had only been Courtney's talking head, it would have been tedious to watch. By using old newspaper pictures as visual reference to Courtney's narration, it effectively enhances the reliability of his speech.

Searching for Sugar Man

Like *Undefeated*, *Searching for Sugar Man* does not use a professional narrator, either. As a loyal and active fan of Rodriguez, Stephen Segerman "Sugar" is the initiator of the continual hunt for this mysterious poetic singer. Using his voices laid over referential visuals at the beginning, middle and the end of the documentary, the director seems to use him as the narrator of the story. This technique helps the story to be told from the

first-person perspective of a subject in the story and avoided the potentially intrusive presence of the director's version of the story.

One thing needs to be paid attention to is that in several instances, it is hard to tell whether Sugar's narration are sound bites that are cut from the interviews with him or it is recorded separately because his narration seems to be too literal and neat than average interview answers. Besides, there are several instances of his voice-overs that are placed separately far from his talking head interviews, leaving audience suspicious of where this voice originally came from.

Archival Material

Apart from talking heads, narration and voice-overs, the third most commonly embedded symbol of authenticity is the use of archival material in documentary. Archival material refers to press reports, photos, film or video footage recording information about the historical word. It is previously produced and obtained by someone else for other uses. People seldom question the truth claim of archival material and worry about its representation of the world. Documentary audiences treat archival material as proof of fact, and the use of it as directors' respect to history. The use of archival material can for most time add to audience's perceived authenticity and objectivity of the storytelling.

Inside Job

To talk about a topic as abstract and complicated as global financial crisis, there is apparently not many specific shots that could be used to visualize the story or illustrate what's discussed in the audio. Ferguson uses old pictures of the interview subjects, newspaper articles and legal documents, archival footage of Wall Street, financial corporates, TV newscast, court record and others as major b-roll in the film.

In the five parts of *Inside Job*, the first part *How we got here*, which talks about the how American economy and financial industry had been deregulated by the cooperation of the government, Wall Street and elite scholars since the 1980s, is mostly about the history, hence needing the most archival materials to illustrate interviewees' speech and work as factual evidence to Ferguson's scripted narration. At 00:14:29, after narration says "In 1981, President Ronald Regan chose as Treasury secretary the CEO of the investment bank Merrill Lynch, Donald Regan," the shot is cut to an archival footage of Donald Regan giving speech: "Wall Street and the president do see eye to eye". The footage here ~~does~~ not only works as an enhancement to the authenticity of the narration ahead, but also provides another layer of information that the relationship between Wall Street and the government is very close.

For another instance, from 00:20:18 to 00:22:18, in two minutes, the director compiles a number of materials including archival footage, newspaper headlines and articles, court records, shots of corporate buildings and titles with a rhythmic background song singing “I’ll be taking care of business...” in order to summarize and illustrate the fact that the world’s largest financial companies have been engaged in large-scale criminal activities. The montage of all kinds of archival materials appears as powerful evidence to the narrator’s statement, and the jaunty rhythm of editing makes the combination of visuals and narration appear like the director is announcing his sweeping victory of holding all the firms accountable. Audience will be easily convinced by the facts and the atmosphere created.

Undefeated

Undefeated comparatively uses very few archival footage because the directors followed the then ongoing story for two years. They recorded the team’s practice, games and individual problems of different characters, and presented what they witnessed to audience. The directors only uses some archival materials in the four-minute opening part of the film while introducing the history of Manassas football team and the role of Coach Courtney.

In this four minutes, the film has three people: journalist Jason Smith, Manassas principle Gloria Williams and teacher Ruth Burke introducing the characters of this documentary.

The directors uses group photos of previous team members, newspaper headline which says “Manassas: 0-10” and newspaper photos of Courtney joining the team to authenticate for audience the team’s disappointing history.

Searching for Sugar Man

For a 2012 documentary about an obscure singer from the 70s, honestly it is hard to shoot relevant b-rolls for the story as well as to find abundant archival materials about the hero, otherwise it would probably mean the hero was not that unknown.

The film could be divided into two parts. In the first part when Rodriguez has not been found and appeared on the screen, the director only uses a couple of his old photos and pictures of his album as archival material to accompany narrations about him or accompany his songs. When explaining Rodriguez’s influence on South Africans, from 00:21:00 to 00:24:30, the director uses archival footage showing protest again apartheid in South Africa in the 70s. These visuals are very powerful to illustrate what society it was and what was the socio historical context when Rodriguez’s songs came to the country. These archival footages take audience back to that time and help them empathize with the interviewees, whose voices are over these footages.

In the second part after Rodriguez was found in the 1997, the director starts to use more black and white photos of him. As the focus of the story shifts to Rodriguez's tour and concert in South Africa, the director has access to more video records about that trip, hence using more archival footage in the film. In spite of the low quality of these records, they still contribute a lot to the authenticity of the story.

In this film, there are many stylized shots of random things, like birds flying over the ocean, bird view of mountains and houses, night scene of a city, etc., which are used as b-rolls over the interviews. Some of them have a strong referential relationship with the audio, but some not. These shots have a very grainy look and seem like footage shot decades ago with antique video cameras. On first thought audience will not doubt that they are archival footages director pulled out from video libraries. However, as director Malik Bendjelloul himself revealed to CNN that he was "running out of money for more film to record the final few shots, he used an iPhone app called 8mm Vintage Camera to complete the film," suspicion arises whether these grainy shots were just created by the app.

Technology has developed so rapidly that the manipulation of shots can be very easy and various. Although it is hard to identify by audience which shots are archival and which are manipulated, and it's also difficult to determine whether the director's intention to use this stylized effect of the shots was to keep the consistency of the overall film look or to delude audience into believing these are archived and authentic historical materials, the

director's use of the app effects and manipulation of shots is bold, worth a second thought. Is the manipulation necessary? Isn't there better visualization of the audio than these random stylized shots?

Conclusion

Charles Peirce held that anything is a sign, and semiosis is a triadic relation between sign (also called representamen), object and interpretant. A sign is what represents a denoted object and an object is what a sign encodes. An interpretant is the meaning of the sign, how the sign is decoded. Previous research shows that over the years, the documentary film industry has already established its own code, a set of conventions, to represent the reality in a credible and authentic way. These conventions range from photographic techniques to editing and storytelling techniques.

Based on the textual analysis of the three latest Oscar Best Documentary Award winners *Inside Job*, *Undeclared* and *Searching for Sugar Man*, the research takes a close examination of how conventional techniques are employed and how the convention contributes to the storytelling's authenticity perceived by audience.

Talking head interview is an effective approach to get visual-audio information for stories and issues that are hard to visualize, such as financial crisis in *Inside Job* and unknown

singer Rodriguez's story in *Searching for Sugar Man*. Because of the custom composition, talking head gives audience an impression of immediacy, which enhances the atmosphere of the interview, either confrontational, confessional, or other. The employment of talking head, which is seldom seen in fiction films, let real subjects narrate the story, which lends a sense of authenticity to the storytelling.

Voice-over and narration are ways filmmakers add audio of factual information to accompany visuals. Voice-over technique is used in order to make full use of the interview audio material and avoid boring audience with a barely moving talking head for minutes. Narration is used to provide background as well as in-depth messages to connect or balance information from real subjects. Voice-over is used in all the three films analyzed while narration is only used in *Inside Job*. Voice-over is gaining more popularity than narration in documentary storytelling as narration more or less still involves the voice of the production crew, which is potentially subjective.

The use of archival materials is another conventional technique conveying documentary's authenticity. Archival materials are seen as records of the socio historical world. The use of them enriches documentaries with materials from various sources, convincing audience of the objectivity and truthfulness of the story.

Admittedly, there are scenarios where these techniques are manipulated by filmmaker and causes suspicion. Images and footage can be manipulated to look ~~like~~ decades old.

Script written by the director can be narrated by a real subject in the story and use the voice over referential visuals. These traps sometimes get the audience, while sometimes draw question to its own authenticity.

My research provides a new examination at the changing conventions of documentary filmmaking, and proposes to bring semiotics theory into the understanding of documentary language. However, there are several limitations of this study that needs to be acknowledged. First, the sample size is only three, which means that my research finding may not be an accurate generalization of the characteristics of Oscar award-winning documentaries. Second, although Oscar is one of the prestigious documentary awards, it mainly recognizes a certain style of documentary that is popular in the Hollywood whereas there are many other national as well as international awards and film festivals that award documentaries of other style, including indie docs. The conventional techniques that these documentaries apply may be very differently from my research findings. Future research is needed to examine how visual markers, audio as well as the past are incorporated to communicate authenticity in indie documentaries. Quantitative research methods such as content analysis and surveys are also recommended to be imported into this area of study

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Table 1:

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Samuel Hayes	Columbia Business School
Paul Vocker	Former federal reserve chairman
Charles Morris	Author of Two Trillion Dollar Meltdown
Robert Gnaizda	Former Director of Greenlining Institute
Willem Buiters	Chief Economist of Citigroup
George Soros	Chairman of Soros Fund Management
Eliot Spitzer	Former governor of New York
Scott Talbott	Lobbyist of Financial Services Roundtable
Andrew Sheng	Chief Advisor of China Banking Regulatory Commission
Andrew Lo	Professor and director of MIT Laboratory for Financial Engineering
Michael Greenberger	Former Deputy Director of Commodity Futures Trading Commission
Satyajit Das	Derivatives Consultant
Author of Traders	Guns and Money
Frank Partnoy	Professor of Law and Finance
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Rep. Barney Frank (D-MA)	Chairman of House Financial Services Committee
Gillian Tett	U.S. Managing Editor The Financial Times
Martin Wolf	Chief Economics Commentator of the Financial Times
Kenneth Rogoff	Professor of Economics, Harvard
Daniel Alpert	Managing Director of Westwood Capital
Raghuram Rajan	Chief Economist of International Monetary Fund
Lawrence McDonald	Former Vice President of Lehman Brothers
Harvey Miller	Lehman's Bankruptcy lawyer
Jeffrey Lane	Vice Chairman of Lehman Brothers
Kristi Davis	runner of an elite prostitution ring
Allan Sloan	Senior Editor of Fortune Magazine
Bill Ackman	Hedge Fund Manager
Jerome Fons	Former Managing Director of Moody's Rating Agency
Narration	voiceover
Soundbites	voiceover commentary
Dominique Strauss-Kahn	Managing Director of International Monetary Fund
Christine Lagarde	France Finance Minister
Simon Johnson	Professor of MIT and Former Chief Economist of International Monetary Fund

David McCormick	Under Secretary of the Treasury of Bush Administration
Joanna Xu	Former Worker of China Grand Lighting Factory
Patrick Daniel	Editor-in-Chief of Singapore Press Holdings
Lee Hsien Loong	Prime Minister of Republic of Singapore
Eric Halperin	Director of Center for Responsible Lending
Columba Ramos	resident from San Jose, CA
Steven A. Stephen	Former Construction Worker
Martin Feldstein	Professor of Economics of Harvard
Glenn Hubbard	Dean of Columbia business school

Appendix: Original Project Proposal and Revisions

The Authenticity of Documentary

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Fall 2013

Committee members:

Keith Greenwood, Chair

David Rees

Brian Kratzer

Introduction

I could still remember my mother sitting in front of the television and shedding tears every time while watching some miserable real life stories in TV programs when I was a little child. “You are lucky compared with them,” Mother said, “help them when you have power.” Those moments and words were very impressive on my young heart.

I was born in the 1980s. I grew up in the times when China has opened up and switched from planned to market-oriented economy. Chairman Deng proposed the policy to let some people and regions get rich before others so that they can bring along the backward regions. Therefore, in the past two decades, I saw skyscrapers, mansions and shopping malls springing up all over the city as well as agriculture land being requisitioned and villages being demolished as the city expanded. I saw peasants flooding into the city with dreams of wealth as well as rich second generation indulging themselves extravagantly. The rapidly changing social context intrigued me so much that I entered a journalism school in my undergraduate education because I want to be a recorder more than just a witness to the tremendous social reform.

During my four years in college, I was gradually drawn to the beauty and significance of documentaries. That kind of long form journalism sounds much more exciting to me than an internship at a TV station as a daily reporter. In 2010, I went on an exchange program

to Nanyang Technological University, and there I happened to attend a final-year-project presentation of their journalism students. They presented eight team-made movies and documentaries, which deeply impressed me with their high quality and advanced techniques. It was at that time I felt the impulse to no longer be an audience, but a documentary filmmaker.

After coming to the Missouri Journalism School, I carefully designed my own curriculum to get the best preparation for my career. I challenged myself with intensive hands-on courses: Broadcast I and Broadcast II, from which I've learned most of video production fundamentals; Micro-documentary and videography, advancing my visual storytelling skills by doing in-depth feature stories and practicing DSLR videography; Fundamentals of Photojournalism, perfecting my photography skills. I've been very focused and passionate about the profession.

As I am preparing myself, the Chinese documentary industry is also embracing a new round of development. On one hand the Chinese government has taken the initiative to put more investment into the industry and support its development. In 2010, CCTV launched a new documentary channel and in 2012 the state-sponsored documentary *A Bite of China* has achieved huge success in both sales and reputation. On the other hand, a new genre of video called "micro film"* is booming on China's Internet, and another wave of independent documentary filmmakers has appeared and put their works on

different social video websites. It is the right time for me to join their movement, as the industry is getting prosperous in China.

*Micro film is a new buzzword from China's Internet. This type of film is called "micro" because it is generally between half a minute to 5 minutes, shorter than short film and feature film. Also, micro film is produced over a relatively short filmmaking process with less investment, and is targeted for various new media and mobile platforms, where audience's attention span is short.

The Professional Skill Component

I will be working at the Columbia Missourian creating multimedia projects over the summer, under the supervision of Brian Kratzer, the director of photography and Professor Keith Greenwood, my committee chair. During my internship, I will mainly focus on two topics: senior people living in Columbia and aging issues, and rural Missouri teenagers, which builds into the Missourian's existing *My Life My Town* project. Apart from these, I will also be open to other topics or assignments assigned during the internship. All my multimedia work will be three to ten minute short pieces. I'm expected to complete at least six pieces in 14 weeks, three projects for each topic.

My first topic on the senior people derives from my personal experience. Three years ago when I volunteered for a non-governmental organization in Beijing, China, my job was to visit and look after the old people living in a retirement home. This experience gave me great access to understanding the hardship and pains of the elderly and has inspired me to document their life and reflect the issues some day. I want to explore how old people philosophize about life and death and how they cope with the fact of aging. I have been greatly influenced by Mediastorm founder Brian Storm's idea of finding and telling universal and imperishable stories. Aging and facing death is an issue that everyone has to think about at some time in his life, no matter whether he's American, Chinese, or from other countries. I would expect my work could enjoy a wide audience and be useful in a portfolio for job-hunting in both the States and China.

Columbia, Missouri has several organizations serving groups of senior people, such as Volunteer Action Center, Kiwanis Club, Missouri Hospice & Palliative Care Association and retirement houses. I will contact them and ask if they could direct me to some interesting old people. If possible and convenient, I will also participate in these organizations' activities and meet as many people as I can. Besides, church congregation is also a good event to find old people. I will chat with all these people from different resources and make notes about their age, economic status, marriage and spouse, children, health and other interesting aspects and select five most compelling characters and pitch my story ideas to Brian. The selection criteria are the uniqueness or typicality, availability and significance. Every other week before I finish the previous story, I need to pitch the next story idea to Brian and get his approval and suggestion to proceed.

For my second topic, I will mainly reply on the sources from Missouri 4H. It is a publicly supported organization for young people to make new friends, learn and develop to become leaders in the future. Bradd Anderson, their youth development specialist, is a very good source. I will consult him about interesting teenagers and programs to work on.

I plan to start working on June 3 and end on September 6. Because Prof. Kratzer will only be in Columbia until July 3 Keith Greenwood will be the supervisor of the second half of the summer. I will spend most time of the internship with my subjects; stay with them and follow them as much and in-depth as I can. I will meet with Brian twice a week, Monday and Thursday, and later with Keith once a week. Each multimedia documentary piece needs to be done within 18 days, accompanied by a 300-500-word text piece to introduce and provide context for each story. The detailed calendar is included in Appendix I.

I'll file weekly field reports to my committee by blog posts. I will conclude my interview, photos and videos in the report. I will have substantial still photos, videos, interview audio and transcriptions and even computer screenshots of my editing process as physical evidence of my work.

In general, this summer is all about multimedia storytelling and production. I believe three months immersed solely in DSLR photography and videography will be the best and probably only opportunity for me practicing before starting off my career. The experience may enhance my capacity of quick responding, problem solving, communication as well as in-depth interviewing.

The Analysis Component

The relationship between documentary and reality has been widely discussed for decades. No matter how many scholars have questioned how real is the reality in documentary film, and no matter how creative and various the treatment of the reality has become in an increasing number of documentaries, once a film is labeled as documentary it simultaneously signifies one essential fact: that this film works with the real-“actuality.”

Films that are considered to be documentaries come in many varieties. Some documentarians are not journalistically based and hold the belief that they can construct a version of truth from their framing. Jean-Luc Godard, a famous director once said: “Cinema is truth 24 times a second, and every cut is a lie.” Each documentary editor has his or her own judgment and is editing the truth instead of just showing it raw.

However, they are at the same time faced with the responsibility to legitimize the film as documentary, different from a fiction. They are silently burdened with an audience's expectation that everything they see in the film is authentic. Even though documentarians exert their creativity and embed their own interpretation, they also need to think about the techniques that can help build the credibility of themselves and their documentaries. For filmmakers, these techniques are dependent on their own idea of truth, their ethics of journalism and understanding of the cinema language. For an audience, these techniques are the signs and symbols that they can cognize and relate to authenticity.

During this year's True/False Documentary Film Fest, I watched a few documentaries out of the 38 shown. For *Winter, Go Away* and *the Institute*, I felt quite comfortable that they fall into the genre of documentary. However, for films such as *The Machine Which Makes Everything Disappear*, I was reluctant to categorize it as a documentary because some scenes, rhetoric scripts or sound conveyed a feeling of fiction or staged truth. Some of its techniques might deviate from documentary principles.

Therefore I proposed my research question:

RQ1: How do documentary filmmakers construct and justify authenticity in their storytelling?

In my research I want to examine the documentary film language and find out the symbols of authentic storytelling that help communicate between filmmakers and their audience. My research will provide a unique approach for future scholars and professionals to understand the documentary techniques by applying Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotics theory.

The results will be complementary to the present documentary techniques study and useful for future documentary filmmakers to apply in their production.

Theoretical framework

This qualitative research will be based on the textual analysis of three Oscar award-winning documentaries. Semiotic theory, which studies signs, symbols and their interpretations, has been proven as an insightful theoretical framework for this kind of textual and visual analysis research.

From a Greek root meaning sign, semiotics is literally defined as the study of signs. As scholar Daniel Chandler points out, this might be the “shortest definition” (2007, p.1) of semiotics. This shortest definition makes the scope of semiotics study breathtakingly both simple and comprehensive (Hodge, 1988). Chandler (2007) claims it is necessary to clarify the meaning and scope of signs, which, possibly to some people’s surprise, may

actually include a considerable variety such as “drawings, paintings, photography” (p.1) as well as “words, sounds and body language” (p.2). Because of this wide range of subjects and interdisciplinary research, there has been much dispute among leading semioticians as to what should be involved (Chandler, 2007) and what should be established as the common basis for the science of semiotics (Solomonick, 2008).

The history of semiotics identifies two primary founders of the science: Swiss linguistic Ferdinand Saussure and American philosopher Charles S. Peirce (Sebeok, 2001; Chandler, 2007). For the linguist Saussure, semiology studies the role of signs as part of social life (Thibault, 1997). He defined it as a dyadic form made up of signifier and signified (Sebeok, 2001). Sebeok concluded that in Saussure’s semiotics theory the signification between the signifier and the signified is an arbitrary one that has been established by the society at will. Which signifier pairs with which signified is determined by convention.

However, for the philosopher Peirce semiotics was the “formal doctrine of signs”, which was closely related to logic (Chandler, 2000). For Peirce, signs function as mediators between the external world of objects and the internal world of ideas. He characterized signs as occurring in a triadic relationship of object, representamen and interpretant. Object refers to a thing or a thought, representamen to the corresponding sign, and interpretant to a relationship between the object and the representamen (Dimitrova, 2010, p.87).

Based on these two foundations of semiotic theory, scholars have expanded the study with knowledge from other disciplines. A variety of branches have been developed under the umbrella of semiotics. For instance, social semiotics tries to combine semiotics with social theory and believes that signs and messages must always be situated in the context of social relations and processes (Hodge, 2001). Najafian (2011) concluded through analyzing two advertisements from Time magazine that image, word and color are just three of the many semiotics modes through which social meanings are coded. The social semiotics references are how ideology is implied in the advertising discourse.

This research will apply Charles Peirce's semiotics theory in which he categorized the signs into three types: icons, which have relationship of similarity or close resemblance and offer the most direct communication; Indexes, which might not look similar to the object they refer to, bear a relationship or proximity to the object they represent; and symbols, which presume neither resemblance nor physical connection to the referential world, meaning that the relationships are arbitrary or conventionally established. (Peirce, 1906, p.531)

There have been quite a number of books and journal articles discussing the usefulness and problems of his theory, but little research has been done using his theory to analyze cinema language. Although this theory has been more than a century old, it is still effective and remains as a very important categorization of signs. This theory will help

this research identify the markers of authentic storytelling and discuss the relationship between the marker and the represented.

Literature Review

Defining documentary

The Scottish filmmaker and theorist John Grierson called the documentary the “creative treatment of actuality” in the 1930s (Grierson, 1966). His concise definition has drawn wide discussion and recognition ever since. This view distinguishes the documentary from the fiction film, which is not thought to be primarily a treatment of reality, and also from the non-fiction film, which is not thought to be creative or dramatic (Plantinga, 2005). However, this characterization leaves the obvious tension between “creative treatment” and “actuality” unresolved (Nichols, 2010, p.6).

This tension has been on the side of heated debate by a large number of scholars and documentary filmmakers as well. Some dispute the documentary’s ability of representing reality. Michael Renov claims:

“it is important to recall that the documentary is the cinematic idiom that most actively promotes the illusion of immediacy insofar as it forswears ‘realism’ in favor of a direct, ontological claim to the ‘real’. Every documentary issues a ‘truth claim’ of a sort,

positing a relationship to history which exceeds the analogical status of its fictional counterpart.” (1986:71-72)

Even more, questions have been posed about the documentary’s claim to truth.

Documentary filmmaker Marcel Ophuls likewise mistrusts the form even though it has been his career.

“I don’t trust the motives of those who think they are superior to fiction films. I don’t trust their claim to have cornered the market on the truth.”(Closely Watched Trains, p.19)

The key problem of clarifying the tension and defining documentary is, as Dirk Eitzen noted, to determine what constitutes “actuality” (1995, p.82). This seems to lead to a philosophical question, just as indicated by Plato’s Cave. The shadows on the wall are essentially different from the reality even though they are as close as the prisoners get to viewing reality. “Actuality” is infinite and can never be wholly represented.

However, as Susan Sontag put it: “The picture may distort; but there is always a presumption that something exists; or did exist, which is like what’s in the picture” (Sontag, 1977, p.5). Just as scholar Stella Bruzzi has indicated, documentaries were like “a negotiation between filmmaker and reality”(2006, p.186). A documentary will never be reality nor will it invalidate that reality by being representational (Stella, 2006). Louise Spence and Vinicius Navarro (2011) made a clear argument:

“What is at issue is not so much ‘Is it true or untrue?’ but rather ‘how is actuality treated in order to sanction the documentary’s claims to be telling the truth?’” (p.2).

Spence and Navarro asserted that all representation is transformation. And they further proposed that documentary, as a distinct genre of film, has already established its own conventional nature of representations that aims to offer a credible account and convey a sense of authenticity to the audience. These conventional procedures and techniques, which distinguish it from other types of film, make it easy for audiences to recognize a documentary. Spence and Navarro based their analysis on Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotics theory and especially pointed out that the conventionalized visual analogies create a symbolic relation to that which they represent. One of the symbols in nonfiction films is the marker of authenticity. Through comprehensive examination of serious documentaries, Spence and Navarro discovered quite a broad range of markers of authenticity, such as muddy sound, blurred focus, long takes, flat lighting, handheld camera, etc (2011).

To this point, the relation between creative treatment and representing reality seems not irreconcilable nor intrinsically contradictory. By balancing these two elements, new ways of defining documentary have been put forward. Carl Plantinga (2005) proposed two terms: Documentary as Indexical Record (DIR) and Documentary as Assertion (DA). DIR means "a documentary is a sustained discourse of narrative, categorical rhetorical, or other form that makes use of moving or still photographic images predominantly as traces to represent what the photographic images are of" (p.107). DA differently holds that filmmakers take an assertive stance toward the world of the work.

Famous documentary theorist Bill Nichols (2010) defined documentary with the following four components:

5. an institutional framework
6. a community of practitioners
7. a corpus of texts
8. a constituency of viewers (p. 20-41)

Generally, he concluded that documentary uses conventional means to represent or make claims about historical reality. By “conventional means”, he explains in Chapter “a Corpus of Texts” that the group of documentary works is linked by its common features or conventions. Just as a complement to Spence and Navarro’s research, he listed a few other symbols that these conventions might include:

5. Voiceover narration
6. Talking heads interview
7. Real people as social actors
8. On-location sound recording (p.18-23, p.26-32).

These conventions are significant characteristics of a documentary and also signs that audience can associate with authenticity of the representation.

Semiotics and Cinema

Semiotics is a large theoretical system that contains many branches of subgenre theories or convergence with other subjects or theories. Even in the field of cinema study, several

branches have been commonly applied such as cognitive semiotics, film semiotics, social semiotics, semiology and so on.

It will be a complicated and huge project to explain and elaborate all the terms, which were proposed by different theorists at different times. But generally, the fundamental premise of semiotics is that “the whole of human experience, without exception, is an interpretative structure mediated and sustained by signs” (Buckland,1995, p.6). All types of phenomena have a corresponding underlying system that consists of both the specificity and intelligibility of those phenomena. Studying film from a semiotics perspective means that film, as a photographic media, is basically a representation that constitutes icons, signs and symbols (Metz, 1974).

How to use semiotics to study cinema has been so much diversified by different scholars’ development of the general semiotic theory. Christian Metz defined film specificity in terms of a specific combination of five overlapping traits -iconicity, mechanical duplication, multiplicity, movement, and mechanically produced multiple moving images (p.235-252).

Picchietti (2006) summarized the signs of a Jewish experience by analyzing three films. However, he did not base his exploration and explanation of the signs on any branch of the semiotics theory. By using “semiotics” in the title, he actually only indicates that he examines signs instead of anything else.

Rick Iedema (2001) analyzed television and film content by using social semiotics.

Social semiotics is concerned with the political understandings, the reading positions and the practical possibilities which analysis makes available. When analyzing, social semiotics does not focus on “signs” but on socially meaningful and entire texts. Basically social semiotics attempts to examine how audiences are positioned by the tele-film in question and how audiences perceive certain values as being promoted over others.

Therefore, it is obvious to tell that social semiotics theory aims to question the ways in which films present “social reality,” further questioning the objectivity of the representation.

Iedema provides some examples of analyzing film in his social semiotics study of a documentary on a hospital. He analyzed the action of the character, the pace of the editing, tone of the voiceover, durations of each side’s appearance and the spatial distance between the subject and the camera. Every shooting and editing technique could convey the director’s intentional or subconscious representation of the reality could be impetrated in a certain direction (p.183-186).

Documentary techniques

Compared with fiction film or other nonfiction films, the documentary has some of its own featured techniques that function as the symbols or conventions that distinguish itself. Spence and Navarro (2011) provided an extensive discussion of the techniques of editing, camerawork, the profilmic and sounds.

Besides the same techniques employed in fiction films, documentary's editing is less controlled. For instance, cutaways are not as necessary in documentary as in fiction films. Also, documentaries' adherence to the "unauthored" representation of the referential world makes synthetic continuity rare (p.168). Contrast and contradiction is also a basis for documentary editing. Documentarians provide different opinions on a subject or both sides of an argument to make the documentary appear impartial. In addition, documentaries use montage sequences to give a quick history of the subject under investigation (p. 161-186).

In terms of camerawork, documentarians are careful with the scale of the subject photographed and the angle and height of the camera. Second, camerawork indicates the approach of the documentarians toward the historical reality. Observational documentarians try not to interfere with what they see. These documentaries might use unusually long shots to indicate waiting for something to occur. Another sign that might add to the observational immediacy is the movement of handheld camera. Interpretive documentaries use the camera as an expressive tool. The third aspect of concern is the point of view of the shot (p.187-212).

How documentarians treat profilmic reality is another important aspect of production.

Documentaries are most often shot on location when events occur. Besides, lighting can also affect audience's perception of the character, the environment and the authenticity of the film, so artificial lighting is tricky to use in documentaries. (p.213-238)

Audio is as important as visual in film study. Documentary's sound, from many aspects, has different requirement from fiction film. The types of sound could be summed up as speech, including voiceover commentary and interview, ambient sounds, effects, music and silence. The sounds that are recorded on the location with messiness and uncontrolled feeling will enhance the authenticity of the scene. Music could contribute to the aesthetic effect of a film, yet leave audience an deceptive feeling that whether the character can hear what audience hear. (p.239-264)

These special techniques that balance uncontrolled cinematic approach with creativity and aesthetic pursuit lie in the center of the art of documentary and are crucial to its identity as a nonfiction film (2011).

Methodology

To answer the question of how documentary filmmakers construct and justify authenticity in their filmmaking, the research will use textual analysis method to interpret the visual and audio language of three American documentaries.

Textual analysis is a very useful qualitative research method for disciplines like communication and media studies, cultural studies and sociology. As Alan McKee (2003) defined it, textual analysis is used to specifically gather data about how other people make sense of the world. Researchers “make an educated guess at some of the most likely interpretations that might be made of that text” (McKee, 2003, p.1). “Text” of textual analysis does not only restrict to linguistic text, but generally refers to anything that we could make meaning from (p.4).

Lea Jacobs (1988) used textual analysis method to study the censorship of a 1932 movie “Blonde Venus.” He retrieved case files of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association and analyzed the successive drafts of the script and the completed film as well as the correspondence between the director, the studio and the censors. Rather than discussing the film in sequence, he focused his analysis on the primary points of censorship, particularly the ending. Through close examination and comparison, he found that the industry self-regulation imposed clear rules of compensating moral values but also enhanced certain conventions of narrative storytelling. However, Jacobs also admitted that this mode of analysis could not avoid the problem of interpretation that the spectator in 1933 would have interpreted the same way as he did.

Jacob's concern of the procedural difference between the analyst's and the mass audience's interpretations has been identified by some scholars as the prominent shortcoming of textual analysis as a valid and reliable research method (Philo, 2007). Elfriede Fursich (2009), however, admitted that "a clearer understanding of the situation governing the production and reception of the text under investigation would add important context to the textual discourse" (p.249) but defended textual analysis as a very important research method for journalism and media studies by pointing out that the significant of textual analysis is to establish the "ideological potential of the text between production and consumption" (p.249). Mixed-method approach has its strength, but is not necessarily an advantage.

Julie Karceski (2009) used textual analysis to study the stereotype of female scientists in American movies in the past 50 years. Originally she considered two approaches for data collection. The first approach was to find answers for highly specific and structured questions, but this method was eliminated after two analyzing two films because it was too restrictive and could not reach saturation. The second approach was more flexible. The researcher simply took note during observation and later these notes were examined for emerging patterns and themes related to the research question (p.53).

My research will apply this approach of less structured observation and analyze the documentaries' camerawork, visual and audio editing based on Peirce's semiotics theory and my literature review.

I will pause every time when I identify a conventional documentary technique which implies authentic storytelling and make notes about the appearing time, shot, how this technique is applied and so on. And after taking notes of the whole documentary, I will look for patterns and repetitive techniques and draw conclusion on the signs of authenticity in their storytelling and how these signs were embedded.

Based on my literature review, a few markers of authenticity have already been identified by other research. These existing markers include voice-over narration and subtitles, "talking heads" or "confessional" interview, documentarian's on-screen presence, participants' consent, on-location sound recording, real people as social actors, blurred focus, long takes, flat lighting and handheld camera. I will be looking for these existing markers and at the same time keep open to any new markers that I can identify.

Sampling

After researching extensively on a large number of popular documentaries, awards and film festivals, I decide to use purposive sampling method and pick the latest three documentaries that won the Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature. The

Academy Awards have been the most authoritative and best known film awards in America. The winners of the best documentary feature award generally enjoys a large audience, good gross box office revenue, being screened in a number of theaters and on festivals (Dickerson, 2012). The award has a very high standard for documentaries to compete. Dickerson (2012) designed a rubric to help determine the films to analyze out of 14 candidates for his study on modern documentary. He collected data for several factors including director, release date, lifetime gross, number of theaters screened and number of accolades each film accrued from popular worldwide film festivals. Then he created a formula called “viewership quotient” and ordered the films. Four of his final selected five films were Oscar winners or nominators. Therefore, Oscar is seriously a good and convenient criterion for my sampling. Selecting the latest three award-winning documentaries will provide my study with high-quality, professional and contemporary material on which to base my analysis, raise readers’ interest in the issue and draw more up-to-date findings and value.

The three movies from 2010 to 2012 are *Inside Job*, *Undefeated*, and *Searching for Sugar Man*. Through textual analysis method, the three documentaries will be analyzed respectively on their visuals and audio with reference to the camerawork, editing and sounds.

Proposed Outlet for Publication

The paper will be submitted for *Film Quarterly* and *Studies in Documentary Film*. *Film Quarterly* has a reputation as the most authoritative academic film journal in the United States. Established in 1958, it has been publishing scholarly analyses of international cinemas, classic films, blockbusters, documentaries, animation and etc.

Studies in Documentary Film is a scholarly journal devoted to the history, theory, criticism and practice of documentary film. It was established in 2007 by Intellect.

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Appendix I Calendar

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Week 1	June 3, 4, 5 1. Sign off 2. Contact: Volunteer Action Center(ask for any special voluntary programs for low-income senior people); Kiwanis Club; Missouri Hospice & Palliative Association; retirement houses; Missouri 4H 3. Go to church congregations to meet old people			6 Meet with Brian and discuss about new story ideas and decide the first one to work on	7	8	9 Weekly Report
Week 2	10 Meeting	11	12	13 Meeting Decide the second story to work on	14	15	16
Week 3	17 Meeting	18	19	20 Meeting	21	22	23

Week 4	24	Meeting 1 st story deadline	25	26	27	Meeting Decide the third story idea	28	29	30
	29	1 st Documentary Textual Analysis							
	Week 5	July 1	Meeting 2 nd story deadline	2	3	4	5	6	7
				Meeting with Brian and Keith before Brian leaves and discuss about the rest four stories			Brian leaves school		
	Week 6	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	
					Meeting Decide the 4 th story idea				
Week 7	15	16	17	18	19	20	21		
	Meeting 3 rd story deadline					2 nd Documentary Textual Analysis			

Week 8	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
				Meeting Decide the 5 th story idea			
Week 9	29	30	31	August 1	2	3	4
	Meeting 4 th story deadline						
Week 10	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
				Meeting Decide the 6 th story idea			
Week 11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
	Meeting 5 th story deadline		Brian is back to school	Meeting with Brian Show finished work Discuss how to bind them together for publishing		3 rd Documentary Textual Analysis	

Week 12	19	20	21	22 Meeting	23	24	25
Week 13	26 6 th story deadline	27	28	29	30	31	1
Week 14	2 Preparing for publishing	3	4	5	6 Finish my analysis component	7	8

Revision to my Original Project Proposal

After I started my internship at the Missouriian on June 3, I began to look for subjects for my first topic-aging in mid Missouri. As the project went I discovered many interesting stories and found overwhelmed with the complexity of the topic and the large number of potential stories that I could chase after. Therefore after a discussion with Brian Kratzer, I dropped the other topic on Missouriian teenagers. As I started to put my hands on the editing process in late July, I soon realized how much time and effort were needed for the post-production. I reported to all my committee members and they approved of my revised plan of producing four instead of six video stories.