

THE AUTHENTIC “I”:
AUTHENTICITY IN FIRST-PERSON NARRATIVE JOURNALISM

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Graduate School
At the University of Missouri-Columbia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

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May 2014

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THE AUTHENTIC "I":
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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the chair of my committee, Amanda Hinnant, for her guidance, patience and encouragement to turn this research into the full thesis it deserved to be. I would also like to thank Tim Vos for encouraging me to pursue this research topic when I was just a qualitative methods student of his. I would also like to extend thanks to my other committee members, Jen Rowe and Sam Cohen, for introducing me to some of the best literary journalists writing today; my thesis would not be half as strong without Jeanne Marie Laskas or David Foster Wallace. Lastly, I would like to thank all of the journalists featured in this thesis for showing me just how innovative and fun literary journalism can be; they continually inspire my own writing and editing.

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Chapter I: Introduction

This research examines how journalists demonstrate their authenticity in first-person narrative journalism. Journalism, by definition, is about truth telling (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2007). When a magazine publishes a non-fiction essay, there is an unspoken contract between the author and the reader that what the author is reporting is true. However, this expectation of truth is more complicated when an author writes in first-person. In this voice, not only must the reader trust that what is presented to him or her is fact, but also that the author writing the piece is portraying a true version of him or herself. Therefore, a central question is whether the author is authentic and in effect, his or her reportage is authentic.

Authenticity is as difficult to define as it is to demonstrate, but it is one of society's most respected and sought after values (Lindholm, 2008). In essence, authenticity is the state of being that is most real, pure and original. An authentic person is who he or she claims to be and whose origins can be verified. This person's essence and appearance are one (Lindholm, 2008). In relation to journalism, an authentic reporter is one who can vouch not just for his or her facts but also for him or herself. This personal verification is a process in which the journalist uses certain techniques to demonstrate his or her role in the reporting. In effect, authenticity in writing is a construct with a specific methodology to it.

The process of verification is meant to establish truth. Therefore, it is pertinent to study how journalists use first-person narrative to establish the truth in their reporting. However, this research will aid more than just journalists and scholars but will help substantiate journalists' credibility to their readers. Journalism written in first person has often been met with some skepticism because it is not considered directly objective and can be seen as including irrelevant personal details. Yet, ultimately, this research could help decrease skepticism over the verity of first-person reportage and illustrate its unique merits as a style of reportage.

Theoretical Framework

There is not a pre-existing theoretical model of authenticity; therefore, this theoretical framework synthesizes the three concepts of objectivity, sincerity and authenticity to create a new theory of authenticity in journalism that can be applied to this study. Objectivity, or how journalists remain as accurate and truthful as possible, is a fundamental value of journalism, and what is expected of journalists, whether they are reporting in first or third person. The concept of objectivity has always been complex and was further complicated with the advent of literary journalism, which is a tradition the journalists in this study fall under. Yet this truth telling is made problematic when journalists report in first-person and must not only vouch for their facts but themselves or in other words, their authenticity. Thus an analysis of what authenticity means and entails is necessary, but in order to explicate this concept, its history must be explored. Therefore, there is a discussion of the concept of sincerity, which is where authenticity originated. It is important to understand the evolution of authenticity because it helps elucidate the nuances and ambiguity of truth telling. Lastly, the concept of authenticity is

discussed as it relates to the authenticity of the self. This section emphasizes the fluidity of authenticity. The examination of these three truth paradigms helps demonstrate what is expected of a journalist who writes in first person, and that truth is a fluctuating concept.

Objectivity

In the journalistic discipline, objectivity is frequently discussed in relation to truth. Westerstahl (1983) has determined that there are six components to objectivity: factuality, which begets truth and relevance, and impartiality, which involves balance/non-partisanship and neutral presentation (p. 405). The former is most pertinent to this thesis. McQuail (2010) unpacks these terms further. Factuality refers to reporting in which events and facts can be verified by sources and are presented without comment. It also includes truth criteria such as accuracy, intention not to mislead and completeness of the account. Relevance relates to the process of selection of what is most important for the intended audience (p. 201). Ultimately, McQuail (2010) claims that Westerstahl's understanding of objectivity is unique because its values (such as truth) are as important as facts (p. 201).

Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007) further complicate the concept of truth by asserting that truth is ambiguous. Therefore, they suggest that truth is a "a process," (p. 43) which involves "stripping information of any attached misinformation, disinformation, or self-promoting bias and then letting the community react, with the sorting-out process to ensure" (p. 44). In effect, finding truth is a "conversation" between the journalist and audience (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007, p. 44). Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007) believe that the best way to find the truth is through treating objectivity as a method (p. 83). The five principles of their objective method are: "1. Never add anything that was not there. 2

Never deceive the audience. 3. Be as transparent as possible about your methods and motives. 4. Rely on your own original reporting. 5. Exercise humility.” (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007, p. 89) This ambiguity becomes even more prevalent in regard to journalists who write in the first person. Their specific process or effect is authenticity.

The history of literary journalism

Literary journalism further complicated the idea of objectivity. The concept is tenuous, but a coherent definition is Weber’s (1974):

The telling of the story through scenic construction, extensive use of dialogue, a third-person point of view that allows the writer to reveal what goes on inside the mind as well as the exterior detail, and the recording of the concrete particulars of manners, customs, and events. (p. 15)

The basic premise is to apply literary techniques to journalism; however, there is also an implied focus on the inherent subjectivity of interpretation. Hartsock (1999) compares literary journalism to quantum physics in the sense that both are perpetually shifting and uncertain.

Literary journalism has existed almost as long as traditional reportage and can be traced back to Hazlitt’s 1822 essay, “The Fight,” which reported a boxing match as more than a summary but an experience (Jensen, 1974). However, it came to prominence in the 1960s when it was called New Journalism, as coined by writer Tom Wolfe (1972). The particular style of literary journalism might not have been unique to the 1960s, but it was practiced widely by fiction writers, such as Wolfe and Joan Didion, trying to break into the literary scene. It was also a tool used by the counterculture that did not trust the media. Objectivity was viewed with skepticism and seen as “insidious bias” (Schudson, 1978, p. 16). As Boorstin (1973) claims, the 1960s media was more concerned with

generating a positive image than reflecting reality in order to better depict America to the world. In tandem, the public became an “adversary culture” that distrusted the government and therefore the objective journalism that promoted the government agenda. This led to the resurgence of muckraking and new journalism as an answer to the distrusted objectivity at the time. (Schudson, 1973). The resurgence of literary journalism in the 1960s demonstrates that objectivity has been questioned and subverted for decades. Today, many journalists, including those featured in this research, write literary journalism. In effect, the questioning of objectivity has now become institutionalized.

Sincerity

Ironically, there is not one true definition of authenticity. The concept has different and complex meanings depending on which theoretical tradition it is in. There are two main definitions, though. The first is in regard to authentic objects, which assumes that there is an original object as opposed to a forgery (Golomb, 1995, p. 5). The second relates to state of being as “original, real, and pure; they are what they purport to be, their roots are known and verified, their essence and appearance are one.” (Lindholm, 2008, p. 2) The latter is the definition used in this thesis.

Authenticity evolved from the more modest virtue of sincerity (Trilling, 1974). Trilling (1974) defines sincerity as “the state or quality of the self which refers primarily to the congruence between avowal and actual feeling.” (p. 2) Furthermore, the main criteria of sincerity are “the degree of correspondence between the principle avowed by a society and its actual conduct” (Trilling, 1974, p. 27); therefore, sincerity is the self as presented in the social sphere. In effect, sincerity can be tested by determining whether a

person's outward behavior is consistent with his or her public declarations. Sincerity is essentially synonymous with being true to one's public persona or honest to one's word (Golomb, 1995, p. 8).

This philosophical concept of sincerity can be traced back to the sixteenth century when the feudal system broke down and caused people to move to cities, Lindholm (2008) suggests. With urbanization came social mobility, but as a consequence, it was easier to counterfeit identity by hiding origins, falsely claiming higher status or cheating ones' acquaintances. In this new age of guile, being true to one's word, or sincerity, was highly valued (Lindholm, 2008, 3-4). Lindholm (2008) also argues that as people moved away from their families in search of careers — origins and familial intimacy began to be associated with the current conception of authenticity. He quotes Shklar (1984), who argues that the true self was associated with childhood and family. "The true inner self is identified with one's childhood and family, and regret as well as guilt for having left them behind may render new ways of artificial, false, and in some way a betrayal of that original self" (p. 75-6; Lindholm, 2008, p. 6) Essentially, one's family is the only group who truly knows a person and therefore can vouch for or conversely expose the person as insincere. Moving away from one's family can lead to more deception and insincerity.

Sincerity was soon trumped by authenticity as society began to question the accuracy of representation. It was ambiguous whether a person's interpretation of his or her work and self was sincere or just prideful and self-delusional (Lindholm, 2008). As Trilling (1974) comments on the performative nature of sincerity, people must play the role of being themselves and "sincerely act the part of the sincere person, with the result

that a judgment may be passed upon our sincerity that it is not authentic.” (p. 12) In other words, one can sincerely perform his or her sincerity, but one cannot perform his or her authenticity and still be authentic. Authenticity, by definition, is not a role one puts on. Furthermore, people began to question social order and believed that being true to oneself was more important than conforming to rules (Lindholm, 2008). In essence, authenticity was a “shift from being as one appears, to discovering what one truly is.” (Lindholm, 2008, p. 3) Most scholarship and philosophy of authenticity stems from this definition.

Conversely, postmodernists argue that reality cannot be represented because it does not exist. In *Simulacra and Simulation*, Baudrillard (1994) argues that there is no such thing as the real in contemporary society. Rather, we live in a hyperreal environment, which is “the product of an irradiating synthesis of combinatory models in a hyperspace without atmosphere.” (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 2) Everything is a representation without context; therefore, we cannot measure the world and the people in it as real or not. In the absence of a discernable reality, society compensates by emphasizing nostalgia, objectivity and authenticity in an attempt to prove that there once was a reality. “There is an escalation of the true, of the lived experience; a resurrection of the figurative where the object and substance have disappeared.” (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 7) In effect, authenticity is not something inherent, but something we create when we need to prove the veracity of the world. This questions whether authenticity is possible or merely a construction.

A poststructuralist Barthes (1986) suggests that reality is merely an effect. Specific details are given for verisimilitude even if they do not progress the understanding of the narrative. “The very absence of the signified, to the advantage of the

referent alone, becomes the very signified of real.” (Barthes, 1986, 148). Essentially, even if reality is absent, the reference to it makes it real, hence the idea of the reality effect.

Authenticity

Lindholm (2008) claims that French philosopher Rousseau was the first scholar of authenticity. In *Confessions* (1782), Rousseau states that he is one of the most unique men of his time because he is original and willing to reveal all of his vices with complete honesty. “Let each in his turn expose with equal sincerity the failings, the wanderings of his heart, and, if he dare, aver, I was better than that man,” Rousseau writes (1782). Rousseau is “the better man” because he is authentic. Lindholm (2008) argues that Rousseau created the new ideal of exploring and revealing one’s nature, even if it was socially transgressive. Society did not matter to Rousseau as long as one was experiencing life authentically, which led to what he deemed a real existence. Rousseau was the first to suggest that modern culture and society inhibits the expression of the true authentic self; a notion that existentialists bolstered in their study of authenticity (Lindholm, 2008, p. 8). The existentialists do not believe there is a positive definition of authenticity. Sartre (1957) considers human reality as “being which is what it is not and which is not what it is” (p. 58). In effect, authenticity is only discerned by its absence. Golomb (1995) asserts that authenticity is a negative term only defined when we flee it (p. 7). Existentialists also reject the concept of sincerity, believing it to be too static; whereas authenticity requires perpetual “movement of becoming, self-transcendence and self-creation” (Golomb, 1995, p. 9).

The act of writing is an attempt to express and demonstrate authenticity (Golomb, 1995, p. 26). There are specific techniques in writing that produce authenticity. Golomb (1995) argues that writers utilize irony to challenge the reader's acceptance of the literal ostensible meaning and instead look for the contradictory or covert meaning (p. 28). Effectively, irony can help challenge the reader to question dogmatic understandings of truth and objectivity and lead to the understanding that most "truths" and states of being are in flux. Irony also aids the writer in creating artistic detachment. This is pertinent for art and authenticity because it enables the writer to judge his or her work as if from another's perspective. In effect, irony allows the writer to transcend subjectivity and concentrate on the burgeoning authentic self. As, Golomb (1995) writes, "It allows us to pass from the domain of Being to the pathos of Becoming, from inauthenticity to genuinely authentic modes of life" (p. 29).

Literature Review

Authenticity might be a pervasive topic in daily life, but it has not been academically studied in great depth in communication. Therefore, this literature review examines how authenticity has been interrogated in multiple disciplines from literature to music journalism.

Authenticity in journalism

As discussed in the theoretical framework, authenticity is a fluid concept with more than one definition depending on the context. Music journalism has proved to be a rich territory for examining authenticity. In "Authenticity Revisited: The Rock Critic and the Changing Real," Weisethaunet and Lindberg examine authenticity in music journalism for *Popular Music & Society* (2010). They define authenticity in terms of a

relationship. It is “the construction of a certain relationship between work and author, as it appears in the representation itself” (Weisethaunet and Lindberg, 2010, p. 465). This definition of authenticity does not imply that it is inherent but rather something that is ascribed. This further complicates authenticity because when a group of people has to decide what is authentic, they are afforded a certain amount of power. This is a useful definition for this research because it allows that the writer needs the reader’s interaction with the text to be considered authentic; therefore, the reader has some power.

Next, Weisethaunet and Lindberg explore the various discourses of authenticity in music and music journalism, which shows the ubiquity of the concept in this field but also its many conflicting definitions. First, they discuss the debate over what makes a musical genre “real” or “true”, which is often called “folk authenticity” (Weisethaunet and Lindberg, 2010, p. 470). Folk authenticity implies that the music and the performance of it truthfully represent the community (i.e. does a band play “real R&B” authentic to where it originated?). However, another school of thought about musical authenticity focuses on whether the music is original and if the musician expresses him or herself through performance. In effect, “appreciation of individual talent is coupled with the use of artifice, which is made legitimate by allusion to a folk kind of authenticity experience” (Weisethaunet and Lindberg, 2010, p. 472). Then there is authenticity by negation, which emphasizes what the musician is not (i.e. not commercial, not pop-y, etc.) Next, there is “inauthentic authenticity,” which is treating certain commercial musical enterprises, such as pop music, with a sense of irony that focuses on the music itself instead of the band (British 1960s pop music falls under this definition.) Eventually, “authentic inauthenticity” became popular with artists such as David Bowie, who

emphasized that musical performance is a construction and this acknowledgment of the performative nature makes the musician more authentic.

All of these varying discourses of authenticity help to suggest that authenticity is not a static concept and can be defined in multiple seemingly paradoxical ways. Furthermore, their suggestion that performance and deliberate identity construction can still be considered authentic can be applied to this research.

Authenticity in literature

Although there are many critical analyses of authenticity, there has only been one previous study located in English-language databases of how an author constructs authenticity using the textual analysis method, Müller's "The Uses of Authenticity: Hemingway and the Literary Field, 1926-1936" for *The Journal of Modern Literature*. In this article, Müller (2009) examines how Ernest Hemingway's early fiction "shaped and negotiated our collective imagination of authenticity" (p. 30) through textual analysis of *The Sun Also Rises*, "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" and *Green Hills of Africa*.

Similar to this research, Müller also cites Trilling's definition of sincerity and authenticity. Furthermore, he believes that Trilling's definition "allows writers, on a metadiegetic level, to present themselves as authentic persons and to negotiate the mechanisms and limits of this self-enactment." (2009, p. 30). Enacting the authentic empowers the writer to inhabit the authentic in his or her art and the audience to be involved as well. In effect, Müller (2009) believes authenticity always has a paradoxically performative element to it, in which the writer is "creating and presenting something to his readers that can by definition never be consciously created or presented"

(p. 30). This idea of authenticity being inherently performative is a useful understanding to build off of in this research.

Müller's article shows how to use textual analysis to study authenticity in literature. By comparing and contrasting what the author considers to be ideals in the text, whether they be places or people, Müller (2009) helps to excavate what the author considers to be authentic. In *The Sun Also Rises*, for example, Hemingway contrasts the "bohemian, inauthentic Paris" setting of the expatriates with the "healthier social and natural" (authentic) Spanish setting (Müller, 2009, p. 32). This is prevalent in the aficionado lifestyle of the bullfighters, especially Romero, who protagonist Jake Barnes considers the pinnacle of authenticity. "Romero becomes the representative of several of its core values [authenticity, masculinity and autonomy], all of which he seems to embody naturally, whereas Jake has to assume them in more or less convincing posturing" (Müller, 2009, 32). Ultimately, Müller's analysis demonstrates how a writer can construct authenticity.

By showing the inauthentic, a writer can contrast him or herself as authentic. Müller (2009) also examines the double standard of how a writer can present authenticity when really the writer is the one creating that authentic being. As Müller (2009) notes, Hemingway has created this supposedly infallible authentic figure of Romero, when in reality, the bullfighter he was based off was anything but authentic and loved parties and money. "Romero's authenticity is thus a fictional device that Hemingway used to illustrate and discuss the posture as such" (Müller, 2009, p. 33).

This article is obviously limited because it is a study of fiction, which is not held to as high of standards of accuracy and truth as journalism is. Despite this, it does

demonstrate that the precarious concept of authenticity can be defined and located within a text. Furthermore, it acknowledges the writer's pertinent role in creating this definition of authenticity.

Research Questions

Telling the truth is one of journalism's main societal functions; however, a journalist writing in first-person must demonstrate that he or she is trustworthy. In effect, the first-person writer must demonstrate he or she is authentic. As the theoretical framework suggests, though, proving one's authenticity is an artistic contrivance. If authenticity is a construction, then it becomes necessary to evaluate how writers construct it. Furthermore, if proving authenticity is a self-conscious act, then there is probably a technique to it.

Thus this research addresses the following questions:

Primary research question: How do journalists who write in the first-person construct authenticity?

Research question 1a: What are the techniques or tools that journalists employ to demonstrate the authenticity of their reportage?

Research question 1b: What are the techniques or tools that journalists employ to demonstrate the authenticity of themselves, and how does it contribute to the overall authenticity of their narrative?

Chapter II: Method

This research used textual analysis of long-form narrative journalism written in the first-person to determine how writers construct authenticity. For the purpose of this research, authenticity takes the Lindholm (2008) definition as someone who is “original, real, and pure; they are what they purport to be, their roots are known and verified, their essence and appearance are one.” (p. 2) If authenticity is viewed as a technique or effect (Barthes, 1986) to get to this ultimate goal, then this research analyzed the texts in terms of this effect. From the theoretical framework, it is evident that writers construct authenticity through at least three techniques: references to a writer’s family or biography (Shklar, 1984), the use of irony (Golomb, 1995) and the ostensible absence of authenticity (Sartre, 1957), which is noted when the writer becomes self-conscious about his or her reportage. However, this study was open to other techniques based on discovery. These three techniques and potential others that arose during the study were applied to the texts to determine how the writer uses authenticity. These techniques were discovered via close reading of the selected texts and marked when they emerged in the texts. The initial stage of this textual analysis involved reading the texts and highlighting any instance when authenticity could come into play with these three techniques in mind. Once all techniques were found, they were coded by category (i.e. “self-consciousness,” “irony”, etc.) Any quotes that were initially highlighted that did not fit into the three techniques developed into further techniques such as authenticity of source, inference, etc. Negative cases, in which authenticity was not apparent, were not coded. However, it is worth noting that these negative cases are really just the general reportage in the piece

in which the writer does not reference him or herself. Therefore, the techniques that were coded help to bolster the overall authenticity of the entire article, including the sections where authenticity is not ostensible. Four writers were analyzed for the purpose of maximizing comparisons.

Textual analysis is the most effective research method because it attempts to understand the inherent meaning of a text. Larsen (1991) defines a text as “indeterminate field of meaning in which intentions and possible effects intersect” (p. 122). This definition implies that there is an authorial attempt to construct meaning. His emphasis on the manifest and latent meaning of a text is also pertinent for this study. The manifest meaning of a text is the “immediately understood” meaning and the latent is the one that is “carried by the first meaning” (Larsen, 1991, p. 125). van Dijk (1991) builds off of this idea of latent meaning with his discussion of the implication of meaning. This suggests that not all information is explicitly expressed in the text but is often left to be inferred. In effect, what is left “unsaid is sometimes more revealing than the study of what is actually expressed in the text” (van Dijk, 1991, p. 114). This adapts well to the study of authenticity because as noted in the theoretical framework, authenticity is often implicit in society; therefore, it was expected that authenticity would be covert within the text as well and in order to excavate this authenticity, one must look for tacit meaning.

Attempting to maximize comparisons among four writers helped to demonstrate the academic merit of the research. Christians and Carey (1989) write that choosing two apt comparison groups can “improve the substance and explanatory power of our interpretations” (p. 366). Authenticity is a very personal concept, but if there really is an

authenticity effect in practice then comparing four writers who use it will help justify the validity of the research.

Textual analysis is frequently used to study journalism. A prime example of this is the study “The Global Village in Atlanta: A Textual Analysis of Olympic News Coverage for Children in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution,” in which Lester-Roushanzamir and Raman (1999) did a textual analysis of how *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* presented international others in the children’s section during the 1996 Atlanta Olympics. They initially noted how these articles about international others were presented visually (length, placement, surrounding articles, etc.) and then closely read the text for rhetorical devices such as allusion, simile, omissions, metaphor, tone, theme, etc. This led to the inductive discovery of three categories of how the other was presented “(1) foreign other dichotomized as either ‘like us’ (good) or exotic (good or bad); (2) anti- communism/demonization (i.e., other as distinctly compromised); and (3) professional journalistic discourse combined with the special international news strategy of parachute/disaster reporting” (Lester-Roushanzamir and Raman, 1999, p. 704). This study is a good example of how initially broad coding can inductively lead to more specific categories on which to base analysis.

Another relevant study of textual analysis is Kovacic and Erjavec’s (2011) research on how Slovenian reporters construct the image of investigative reporting and utilize their interpretations in the process. Kovacic and Erjavec use textual analysis to study 56 reports from Slovenian newspapers, analyzing them from three criteria: structure, sources and keywords. This textual analysis of micro textual concepts elucidated four discourse strategies employed to establish investigative reporting,

including an emphasis on factuality, reliance on secret sources, appealing to common knowledge and citation of official sources. Ultimately, Kovacic and Erjavec argue that these discourse strategies give power to authority figures instead of questioning them, which is the opposite of what good investigative reporting should do. This is a particularly relevant study to this research because it suggests that reporters are actively involved in creating an image. It is an effective use of textual analysis to demonstrate the dubious concept of truth construction, which is also the focus of this research,

Unit of Analysis

Each unit of analysis was a long-form narrative journalism article written in the first person. Authenticity is such an individual and personal concept that it is necessary to focus on specific writers. Following an author throughout several pieces helped to demonstrate whether that author consistently presents an authentic self. Therefore, this research focused on the journalism of two writers who play with the concept of authenticity, John Jeremiah Sullivan and David Foster Wallace, and two writers who represent a more traditional notion of authenticity, Susan Orlean and Jeanne Marie Laskas. These four journalists write long-form narrative articles for magazines, which makes them an apt comparison group. All four frequently write in the first-person, making them ideal for this research.

Sullivan is a writer and editor for *GQ*, *The Oxford American*, *The Paris Review* and *The New York Times Magazine*. His long-form pieces have been published in an essay collection, *Pulphead*, which came out in 2011. Essays will be selected from this book because it contains the most comprehensive sampling of his work to date. Sullivan was chosen because he is known for his unique narrative technique of presenting one

version of himself to the reader only to change this persona halfway through the essay. This is especially apparent in his *GQ* essay about a Christian rock festival, “Upon this Rock,” in which he starts off the piece as an arrogant East Coast magazine writer out to ridicule Christians but later admits to having been a born-again Christian in his high school years (Sullivan, 2011). Another way he plays with the concept of authenticity is by creating characters and later acknowledging in the essay that this person is fictitious. Sullivan does this in the *GQ* essay “Violence of Lambs,” in which he discusses the possibility of animals attacking humans. He introduces the reader to an expert who can verify this conspiracy theory, but as Sullivan later reveals, this man never existed (Sullivan, 2011). Sullivan’s perpetually changing voice makes him an intriguing writer to research.

David Foster Wallace was predominantly known as novelist but did a fair amount of reporting and non-fiction writing. He published two non-fiction essay collections, *A Supposedly Fun Thing I’ll Never Do Again* and *Consider the Lobster*. The former will be considered for the purposes of this research because it features more reporting; whereas, the latter focuses on cultural criticism. Wallace was known for his use of footnotes that added biographical details or self-deprecating humor to his pieces; this self-consciousness can be seen as a mark of authenticity construction. In a profile of tennis player Michael Joyce, “Tennis Player Michael Joyce's Professional Artistry as a Paradigm of Certain Stuff about Choice, Freedom, Discipline, Joy, Grotesquerie, and Human Completeness,” Wallace (1998) purports that Joyce does not possess any self-consciousness and uses his footnotes to admit his own self-consciousness. Like Sullivan, Wallace also fabricated characters and whole conversations to a greater extent. He does this in the titular essay of

the collection, in which he recounts taking a cruise and sometimes makes up entire dialogue sequences (Wallace, 1998).

Orlean and Laskas offered a contrast to the potentially dubious authenticity of Sullivan and Wallace. Susan Orlean is a writer for *The New Yorker* and has a reputation for highlighting the lives of ordinary people. She has published multiple essay collections and books, but for the purposes of this research her collection of profiles *The Bullfighter Checks Her Makeup: My Encounters with Extraordinary People* was the focus because it showcases her first-person reportage. In “The American Man, Age Ten,” Orlean (2001) profiles a 10-year-old boy Colin Duffy and modestly asserts herself into the article as she discusses how the interview went. She is more actively present in “Orchid Fever,” her 1995 *New Yorker* essay (which is not part of the aforementioned essay collection). In the essay, Orlean (1995) profiles the orchid collector John Laroche, but she directly engages with her subject in this piece by retracing the swamps he scavenges from and occasionally offers her opinion on the veracity of her reporting. Orlean represents a more traditional style of first-person reportage and does not actively challenge her authenticity, which makes her a fitting contrast.

Jeanne Marie Laskas also writes for *GQ*. She has written six books, including three memoirs, but she is predominantly known for her sports writing and on-the-job reports on unusual careers. In a similar fashion to Orlean, Laskas focuses on the average people who are usually neglected by the media and reports in a fresh, frank first-person voice. In “Underworld”, Laskas (2007) profiles coal miners and directly discusses her own ignorance on the topic, which is a deliberately self-conscious device that seemingly bolsters her credibility because she is equating herself with the equally ill-informed

reader. Whereas in “He Didn’t Mean to Hurt You,” Laskas profiles the notoriously violent football player Ndamukong Suh and uses her first- person perspective to comment on how difficult he is to interview. Although Laskas is still a more traditional reporter, she uses this voice to discuss the reporting process and how it both interferes with and illuminates the truth

All four journalists write fairly substantial articles (around 5,000 to 20,000 words per article); therefore, two essays were selected from each writer to analyze. These will be the aforementioned essays: Sullivan’s (2011) 11,831-word “Upon this Rock” and the 9,523-word “Violence of the Lambs,” Wallace’s (1998) 20,141-word “A Supposedly Fun Thing I’ll Never Do Again” and 9,342-word “Tennis Player Michael Joyce's Professional Artistry as a Paradigm of Certain Stuff about Choice, Freedom, Discipline, Joy, Grotesquerie, and Human Completeness,” Orlean’s 5,074-word “The American Man, Age Ten” (2001) and 6,572-word “Orchid Fever” (1995) and Laskas’ 10,390-word “Underworld” (2007) and her 5,155-word “He Didn’t Mean to Hurt You” (2012).

Authenticity might seem like a dubious concept to come to a conclusion on, but researching the writing of these journalists leads to a tangible understanding of authenticity. Using textual analysis as a method assures that texts were examined as they were without the bias of authorial intention or other critical interpretations. The four writers share similar characteristics, which allowed for maximized comparisons. They are American, English-language writers who were born within a decade of one another and all write for magazines. Even though all four have distinct writing styles, the analysis of them all helped substantiate the concept of authenticity. These writers are fairly contemporary and therefore can help reflect on the current state of first-person narrative

in long-form journalism. Furthermore, two of these writers, Sullivan and Wallace, are known for playing with authenticity; whereas, Orlean and Laskas also write in first person but do not have this reputation. Therefore, this research expected to find differences between the two groups that also maximized the possibility for comparison.

Chapter III: Findings

Introduction to Essays

The following eight texts were analyzed for the purposes of this research. A brief summary of each essay's key points is necessary before turning to the findings about authenticity techniques.

The two John Jeremiah Sullivan essays used in this research are both from *GQ* and demonstrate his contrived voice. In "Upon this Rock," Sullivan (2011) covers a Christian rock festival in Pennsylvania for the magazine. He starts the essay in a derisive tone as he anticipates the fervid evangelicals he will encounter. However, once he arrives, he befriends a group of West Virginia Christians who are generous and intelligent. As Sullivan acclimates to the festival and gets to know the men better, he finds he cannot continue the essay in the mocking tone. Sullivan eventually admits the festival is too personal for him because it recalls when he had been an evangelical Christian in high school. Although Sullivan left the Bible study group and does not consider himself a practicing Christian at the time of writing, he feels conflicted about God. Sullivan leaves the festival personally dejected but with hope from the men he has met.

"Violence of the Lambs" is initially presented as a trend piece that examines the growth in animal attacks on humans from previously passive species (Sullivan, 2011). Sullivan starts tracking all cases and eventually meets an idiosyncratic expert on animal violence, Marc Livengood. Although Livengood is a conspiracy theorist, Sullivan seems persuaded by his research and accompanies him to an African village where monkeys attacked the residents. Livengood grows even stranger during the trip, and Sullivan

begins to doubt his credibility. After the trip, he cannot reach Livengood, and the reporting process stalls. At the end of the essay, Sullivan admits that though he did not fabricate the reports of animal violence, Livengood and all interactions are imaginary. Sullivan suggests he would not have told the reader this except his editors required it of him. The essay can be seen as a hoax or metacommentary on how easy it is to speculate in trend pieces and create sensationalist news.

David Foster Wallace attempts to elevate the ordinary in his essays. “Tennis Player Michael Joyce's Professional Artistry as a Paradigm of Certain Stuff about Choice, Freedom, Discipline, Joy, Grotesquerie, and Human Completeness” (1998) is an *Esquire* profile of an unknown professional tennis player, ranked 79th best at the time of writing, that Wallace met at the qualifiers for the 1996 Canadian Open. Wallace uses the essay to explain the nuances of playing tennis professionally and how qualifiers are used to judge the player. Although it is evident that Joyce is a good but not great tennis player and not a very charismatic personality, Wallace explains the skill level needed to make it even that far in tennis. Throughout the essay, Wallace contrasts Joyce’s skill with that of his own. As a talented junior tennis player in high school, Wallace appreciates the competition even if Joyce’s success eluded him.

“A Supposedly Fun Thing I’ll Never Do Again” (1998) is a travel piece for *Harper’s* about Wallace’s experience on a weeklong Caribbean cruise. He begins the essay after he gets off the plane for the cruise and documents the entire trip — from dinners with his assigned shipmates to the poor quality of entertainment on the ship — to disembarkment. Although not much happens in the essay itself, Wallace muses on the

forced relaxation of cruises, his existential fear of the ocean and the herd mentality of his fellow guests.

Susan Orlean has made her career on profiling people, from the ordinary to the idiosyncratic, for *The New Yorker*. The essays used in this research demonstrate her range. In “The American Male, Age Ten,” (2001) Orlean profiles 10-year-old Colin Duffy. For all intents and purposes, he is presented as an average preadolescent, who reveres professional athletes, wants to move to a ranch in Wyoming and plays video games as often as he can. Despite his seemingly trivial activities, Orlean notes how Duffy is becoming aware of life’s hardships because he has known people who have died and even questions Orlean on if she would ever have an abortion. Orlean inserts herself throughout the reporting by stating what she asked Colin that elicited certain answers.

“The Orchid Thief” (1995) is one of Orlean’s more idiosyncratic profiles, in which she examines the enigmatic John Laroche, a horticulturist and orchid thief, who was accused of poaching orchids on Seminole land. Orlean details his fixation on the flower but also examines Laroche’s dubious nature that would lead to his deception. The piece is part profile and part an explanation on botany and the specific allure of orchids. To better contextualize the research, Orlean meets the Seminoles Laroche allegedly robbed and traipses through the swamps in search of orchids herself.

Similarly, Jeanne Marie Laskas writes profiles of ordinary people who do not usually receive journalistic attention or those who are misunderstood for *GQ*. In “Underworld” (2007), Laskas spends four months profiling Pennsylvania coal miners. Laskas is attempting to illuminate an under-represented and misunderstood group where she lives. Although the article is partially a profile on why certain men go to the mines,

she also discusses the challenges of reporting in such a confined environment. She interviews the men in the mines and meets their families in their homes to better understand the context of who they are.

In “He Didn’t Mean to Hurt You” (2012), Laskas meets Ndamukong Suh, the Lions notoriously violent defensive tackle. Laskas attempts to understand what makes him so reactionary and expects to find an aggressive young man but actually meets a very well mannered and family-oriented player. Throughout the article, Laskas admits how difficult it was to interview Suh because of his family’s protective nature and his natural aloofness. The profile is both an attempt to understand Suh’s character and motivations and an examination on his evasive nature.

Techniques for Authenticity

The findings are organized by techniques for authenticity. As discussed in the method section, the texts were analyzed with three initial techniques in mind (inclusion of biography, use of irony and self-consciousness). In the process of the research, however, additional tools were found. Some of these tools also include sub criteria that contribute to the overall effect of the main criteria. For example, the authenticity of reporting technique also includes four sub criteria. Therefore, the findings are organized by technique and related sub criteria. In the examination of each tool, it is explained how that particular tool helps to demonstrate the journalist’s authenticity. Additionally, each tool is analyzed in terms of how it contributes to the overall concept that authenticity is a series of techniques.

The authenticity of reporting

Although the theoretical framework of this thesis presupposed that there were only three techniques that journalists used to establish their authenticity, the research elucidated several preliminary steps that these journalists use to establish their presence and perspective. Research question 1a asks, “What are the techniques or tools that journalists employ to demonstrate the authenticity of their reportage?” In these cases, the journalist first announces his or her role in reporting and then comments on the nature of reporting before he or she discusses personal authenticity. This serves to verify the credibility of his or her reportage. The authenticity of reporting technique also includes the following four sub criteria: the conscious use of the first person, discussion of access to sources, the use of inference to make conclusions and an analysis on the reporting process itself.

Conscious use of first person

Authenticity is not inherently assumed in journalism. As these four journalists indicate, it is something the writer must demonstrate. The simplest and most direct way to do this is to acknowledge the reporter's presence in the narrative. One method for this is the conscious use of first-person. A basic establishment of "I" in the first few paragraphs of the story alerts the reader to the journalist's presence and influence in the narrative. Susan Orlean starts “The American Male at Age Ten” with, “If Colin Duffy and I were to get married” (p. 1), Orlean is clearly presenting the narrative from her perspective. Although the story mostly flows as a straightforward narrative with only the occasional quote from Colin, Orlean interjects her presence throughout. Sometimes she remarks on where she got information from, such as “Colin told me” (p. 5), other times, she remarks

on how her role as reporter affected her interactions, “On the way home that day, I was quizzing Colin about his world views.” (p. 3). By the end of the piece, Orlean diverts from “I” versus “Colin” and refers to them as “we.” “We could hear mothers up and down the block hooting for their kids.” (p. 9) The reader is not affronted by the use of “we” because he or she has grown accustomed to Orlean’s presence and influence on the story. Although Orlean is the most prominent practitioner of this self-conscious “I,” one thing that is consistent is that all four writers establish their presence and first-person narrative early on so as not to confuse the reader on who is speaking.

Writers often comment on how they are present just because they are a reporter. David Foster Wallace starts “A Supposedly Fun Thing I’ll Never Do Again” by establishing who and where he is as a reporter to verify credibility. “Right now it’s Saturday 18 March, and I’m sitting in the extremely full coffee shop of the Fort Lauderdale Airport, killing the four hours between when I had to be off the cruise ship” (p. 33). Likewise, Jean Marie Laskas likes to set the scene. The first few paragraphs of “Underworld” place Laskas in the mine along with her interviewees and demonstrate how thorough her reporting is because she was able to get this access. “He handed me a salt-and-vinegar potato chip. We were more than 500 feet underground” (p. 1). John Jeremiah Sullivan often begins his pieces by stating what his exact assignment was, so the reader is clear on his intentions. “I was assigned to cover the Cross-Over Festival in Lake of the Ozarks, Missouri,” he writes in “Upon This Rock” (p. 1). Similarly, “Violence of the Lambs” (Sullivan) starts with, “Last year I was asked to write an article for this magazine about the future of the human race.” (p. 1) These admissions not only locate the writer in

the story but identify him or her as a journalist. Just as the interviewee is cognizant that these writers are journalists, the reader is also allowed this awareness.

Access

Acknowledging the role of reporter and how sources perceive it is another way to show journalistic authenticity. This usually correlates with the reporter's amount of access to the source. Laskas discusses how she got her access and how in depth it was to demonstrate her credibility in "Underworld." "Underground, I wasn't permitted to go anywhere without Foot, even though I did. He got sick of me, and I got sick of him, and so he got even more sick of me in what became, over a four-month period, an easy friendship" (p. 3). This transparency helps explain just how much information she was able to glean from her sources and alerts the reader that this 10,000-word story took four months of reporting. It also suggests a level of intimacy that Laskas was able to achieve when she mentions their "easy friendship." However, this is not always easy access. Laskas had some difficulty getting Ndamukong Suh comfortable with her presence in "He Didn't Mean to Hurt You," which stalled her reporting process and led her to almost resent her source. "All day long I've been waiting. Ducking in and out of cars with him, shifting one hip, then the other, standing, just trying to make eye contact with him, having long given up on a smile, let alone *words*. Nothing. Shy? Rude? Mean? I have no idea" (p. 1). This helps explain why the profile often focuses more on Suh's family and their perception of him than Suh himself because Laskas had such a challenging time getting an interview. Although he eventually does speak to her, other writers admit to being foiled by lack of access.

Both Wallace and Sullivan note how they might have lost access due to their professional as journalists. In “A Supposedly Fun Thing I’ll Never Do Again,” Wallace discusses that his confusing status as a reporter denied him access to some of the ship’s facilities and the crew. “Somewhere he’d [the captain] gotten the impression I was an investigative journalist and wouldn’t let me see the galley” (p. 34). In effect, Wallace is admitting that he might not have gotten a complete story. Sullivan, however, decides not to pursue a source because it would destroy his credibility as a journalist in “Violence of the Lambs.” “I want you to know that I tried and tried, for months, to write about something other than what I’ve ended up writing on here, a tangent that came up early in the research but immediately screamed career killer and was repeatedly shunted aside by this reporter” (p. 1). This is somewhat ironic considering the entire article is incredulous, but Sullivan acknowledges that reporters do weigh their own credibility when deciding whether to pursue sources.

These writers discuss access to demonstrate their credibility because access alludes to how long, thorough and close the reporting process was. A reporter with more access is likely to have a more authentic story because he or she was privy to more intimacy with the source. However, by explaining the depth or lack thereof of this access, the reporter also illustrates how successful he or she was and invites the reader into the reporting process.

Inference

As the journalist establishes his or her role in the story, it is evident that certain information was not gleaned from pure reporting but personal understanding of the situation. The journalist might make assertions on the character of his or her subject that

are less based on direct observation but rather his or her inference. However, the journalist is protected from reader incredulity because he or she has already established that the story is coming from his or her perspective. Furthermore, this subjective perspective also contributes to his or her overall personal authority and authenticity.

Although it has been noted that Orlean uses first person early on to establish her presence in “American Male,” she will often proceed with straightforward statements, such as: “It is a town of amazing lawns” (p. 1) or “it isn’t clear if he is absolutely sure of the difference between human athletes and Marvel Comics action figures” (p. 2). These are not facts about Colin but observations from Orlean’s reporting. The quality of the town’s lawns is subjective, and Colin’s ambiguities are not something she could learn from talking to him because even he is not aware of them. However, it is these inferences that make Orlean’s reporting nuanced, so that a simple profile of an average ten-year-old becomes a portrait of American youth.

Sometimes these inferences are directly affected by the reporting process. Orlean’s interactions with John Laroche in “Orchid Fever” influence her overall portrayal of his character. “Laroche grew up in Miami. He says he was a weird kid. This is not hard to believe” (p. 1). This is a statement gathered from interviewing him, which once again illustrates the value of detailing the reporting process and the importance of the reporter’s subjective perspective. This style of inference also surfaces in Laskas’ work. Laskas’ task when interviewing Suh was to determine the background of football’s most aggressive players, yet in the process of her reporting, she discovers Suh is actually reserved. “He’s not, notably, jabbing his food like an angry person. In fact, his movements are gentle; his eyes scan the room as he thinks” (p. 6). As noted above,

Laskas' first interaction with Suh was abrasive, so her later inference that he has a gentle personality reveals more about his overall character and helps her achieve a more nuanced portrait of who Suh really is as a person than his media portrayal.

Successful inference can help vouch for the reporter's overall authenticity. Good inferences can show a reporter's ability to judge character, which therefore demonstrates his or her trustworthiness. A reader can only trust inferences if he or she can trust the reporter. This is why demonstrating personal authenticity eventually becomes so important in first-person reportage. Subjective perspective is necessary in first person reportage because the writer must be able to justify why he or she reported in first person and what his or her subjective perspective can bring. If the reporter is authentic, then a reader is able to trust the journalist's authority to make these inferences. Therefore, it is in the reporter's best interest to demonstrate that he or she is authentic to substantiate the subjective perspective and authority.

Analysis of reporting

The journalist also often uses this introduction of his or her role in the reporting to comment on the medium and nature of reporting. This self-consciousness on the medium questions the authority of journalistic inferences as if the journalist is pulling back the curtain on how the process actually works. This trusting of the reader with how contrived the reporting process and magazine industry is is an attempt to establish an intimacy.

Wallace often addresses the reader as if he is giving him or her a secret into how reporting works. In "Michael Joyce," he lets the reader know that the tennis industry often lies about player statistics. "One reason the industry sort of hates upsets is that the ATP [Association of Tennis Professionals] press liaisons have to go around teaching

journalists how to spell and pronounce new names” (p. 3). This quote not only decreases the ATP’s credibility but also derides other journalists as not thorough or savvy enough to follow the industry; yet through this admission, Wallace is separating himself from the typical journalist and vouching for his own trustworthiness. He continues this as he describes Joyce physically. “Michael Joyce, twenty-two, is listed in the ATP Tour Player Guide as five eleven and 165 pounds, but in person he’s more like five nine” (p. 5). Wallace only knows Joyce’s actual stature because of his in-person reporting. He is setting himself apart from the less credible institutions and journalists by reporting the discrepancies in their reporting versus what he actually saw.

Although Wallace uses this examination of the reporting process to bolster his own credibility and authenticity of reportage, Laskas is more self-deprecating. She admits when she is not sure of her own reporting. She describes the difficulties of reporting on an unknowable coalmine in “Underworld.” “I rarely knew where I was in that endless catacomb of tunnels, on and on and on, about fifteen square miles in all, where the quiet, when you found it, felt like an embrace” (p. 2). Although this statement could demonstrate that Laskas does not actually understand what she is reporting on, it has the opposite effect. A journalist who was not confident in his or her reportage would not purposely draw the reader’s attention to his or her potential faux pas. Yet Laskas has enough authority over her perspective and reportage that she is willing to admit this. In other words, she is transparent.

Another technique is for the journalist to acknowledge how contrived the reporting process is. No subject that has been reported on is ever truly pure because the

reporter's presence affects the environment. Laskas discusses how evidently staged her interviews with Suh are.

I was thinking about this stuff when Ngum called, asked me if Suh had talked to me yet, and I said no. Then Suh finished the workout and walked up to grab a towel, came so close to me I could feel the heat off him, and I smiled as anyone would smile to begin a conversation, but he took a towel and without once looking at me passed by and headed to the locker room. A few minutes later I got a call from Ngum saying he'd meet me in the cafeteria. (p. 6)

As the above quote illustrates, Laskas was having difficulty getting access to Suh, who would not grant her an interview. Yet when she does run into him, she has to pretend their interaction is normal ("I smiled as anyone would smile to begin a conversation"). Ironically, it is this false intimacy she creates with Suh that eventually gets him to talk to her. The obstinacy of her interviewee only bolsters the reporting that Laskas did effectively complete because it illustrates how challenging it was to get the interview.

Sullivan is conscious of his influence in his stories. When he befriends the West Virginians in "Upon this Rock," he acknowledges how their awareness of his career changes the relationship and causes them to say things to him outside the bounds of normal conversation. "Hey, man, if you write about us, can I just ask one thing? ... Put in there that we love God. You can say we're crazy, but say that we love God.'" (p. 14) By acknowledging that this is not an organic quote but one influenced by Sullivan's role as a reporter ("if you write about us"), he is being transparent about how the reporting process actually works.

If the reporter is willing to admit the problems with reporting, it implies he or she will also be an insider and will transcend or at least acknowledge these problems. This transparency bolsters his or her credibility as a reporter and allows the journalist to later

push the limits of personal credibility and authenticity. Effectively, transparency is part of this technique.

Wallace and Sullivan both frequently mock the credibility of magazines. Wallace states at the beginning of “Fun Thing,” “They are sort of disingenuous, I believe, these magazine people. They say all they want is a sort of really big experiential postcard” (p. 34). The contradictory pairing of the negative “disingenuous” with the positive “I believe” helps to assert Wallace’s credibility over that of the magazine’s. Similarly, in the beginning of “Upon this Rock,” Sullivan derides the easy magazine reporting he planned to do for the piece. “Fly home, stir in statistics. Paycheck ... I am a professional. And they don't give out awards for that sort of toe-tap, J-school foolishness” (p. 1). He acknowledges what could make a good, yet inaccurate, magazine story (“stir in statistics”) but also derides professionalism (“I am a professional.”) When Sullivan’s story becomes anything but the sardonic magazine piece he planned to write, he notes the contrivance of the genre. “I had no pseudo-anthropological moxie left” (p. 13). This emphasis on pseudo implies that what is featured in the magazine is not real, yet what he is presenting should be considered authentic. This belittling of the magazine’s authenticity helps to elevate the reporter’s authenticity.

Sullivan takes this to an extreme in “Violence of the Lambs,” his story satirizing the hype-focused journalism world. Throughout the story, he mocks the overall credibility of the industry. His hypothesis is that journalists create sensationalized stories by seeing multiple stories on the same theme as a trend. Sullivan mocks the lone wire editor looking for a pattern that is not there. “Well, someone there in a pulsating cubicle on the company's editorial floor, a person entrusted with sifting through all the different

wire reports from all over the planet and deciding what merited attention, started seeing something, a pattern” (p. 3). Effectively, Sullivan is critiquing the role of gatekeeper as someone who sees patterns that do not exist. However, Sullivan eventually takes on this role himself as he finds more stories about animals attacking humans. As he combs through the stories, he notes, “You see what I mean about there being something *off* in these stories” (p. 4). He even asserts that they had the “instant ring of stuff you wouldn't make up” (p. 7). Of course, knowing that this story is fake suggests that Sullivan’s over assurance that these stories must be true is actually a hint they are not. Also, Sullivan’s own ability to easily contrive a story from just reading the wire is a critique on how convenient these stories are. Commenting on the nature of reporting allows the journalist to show his or her personal authority. If the journalist is aware of the contrivances and shortfalls of reporting, then it implies he or she is able to transcend them.

Journalists must establish the credibility of their reportage before they can expect the reader to trust them. They must be transparent that the article is coming from their subjective perspective so as not to mislead the reader about their observations. Yet this also requires that they be equally transparent about the reporting process, from discussion of how much access they had to the source to how contrived the journalism industry is, so that their reporting is not subject to scrutiny. If their reporting is credible, then they are allowed more personal digressions in their attempt to demonstrate personal authenticity.

Demonstrating Personal Authenticity

Although journalists must verify that their reporting is sound, they must also convince the reader that they are authentic. Research question 1b asks, “What are the techniques or tools that journalists employ to demonstrate the authenticity of themselves,

and how does it contribute to the overall authenticity of their narrative?” The techniques include: introducing biographical details, using irony, being self-consciousness and discussing the authenticity of the source. The journalists in this research use all four techniques throughout their writing, and therefore, it cannot be concluded that they employ one technique to progress to the next. Rather, used throughout the text, these techniques interact with one another and bolster journalists’ authenticity.

Biographical details

As established in the theoretical framework, the true self was associated with one’s origins and family because those are the people who know the writer and whom he or she cannot fool (Shklar, 1984). Although this conception of family relating to authenticity originated when people started migrating from the country where their families lived to urban environments (Lindholm, 200), in journalism, this is less about spatial proximity but biographical proximity. When a writer wants to convince the reader he or she is authentic, he or she cannot necessarily rely on the present self in the article, but he or she can demonstrate authenticity by discussing who he or she was as a child.

David Foster Wallace frequently discusses childhood predilections to justify his current fixations as a reporter. Sometimes these references to childhood are either to demonstrate his expertise in the subject or insecurities about it. In “Michael Joyce,” Wallace reassures the reader that he is knowledgeable on the world of tennis because he used to be an amateur player as a teenager. “I have played probably just enough tennis to understand that it’s true. I have played against men who were on a whole different, higher plateau than I, and I have understood on the deepest and most humbling level the impossibility of beating them, of ‘solving their game’” (p. 9-10). Wallace employs this

biographical reference to explain how he can judge who qualifies as a skilled player.

Effectively, he can understand what Joyce is experiencing because he has gone through it himself. However, he willingly admits his ignorance of the exact skill level Joyce is at a few paragraphs after when he describes his tennis strategy.

If I'd been just a little bit better, an actual regional champion, I would have gotten to see that there were fourteen-year-olds in the United States playing a level of tennis unlike anything I knew about...It doesn't look like a very glorious or even interesting way to play, now that I see it here in bald retrospective print, but it was interesting to me, and you'd be surprised how effective it was (on the level at which I was competing, at least). (p. 10)

Wallace is both demonstrating his expertise and lack thereof in the above quote. He admits that though he was a successful enough regional player to really understand the world of competitive tennis, he was never successful enough to fully comprehend where Joyce is. This is inviting the reader into an intimacy and confession in which he willingly acknowledges his own shortcomings (“if I'd been a little bit better...” or “now that I see it here in bald retrospective print”). This self-deprecating style continues in his other essays.

When Wallace references his biography in “Fun Thing,” he explains where some of his reportorial biases come from. For example, he has a phobia of the ships’ darts. “I also have a morbid but wholly justified fear of darts stemming from a childhood trauma too hair-raising to discuss here” (p. 52). Although he refuses to go into further detail on this “childhood trauma,” he uses this biographical detail from his childhood to explicate his current seemingly irrational behavior. He continues this justification as he explains his existential fear of the ocean. “I predict this’ll get cut by the editor, but I need to cover some background. I, who had never before this cruise actually been on the ocean, have

always associated the ocean with dread and death” (p. 261). Wallace does this to justify why he focuses on certain parts of the reporting process than others because he has a personal problem stemming from his childhood. It helps reorient the reader that this article is coming from his perspective, which is one he readily admits contains bias. Interestingly, the personal biases he acknowledges relate to potentially embarrassing fears that could make him look vulnerable to the reader; however, by acknowledging these problems, he is trusting the reader not to take advantage of him. Thus what started as an admission that his personal problems are affecting his reporting in a potentially negative way is actually a way to gain sympathy and trust from the reader. What is especially telling is his reference to the editor, as if Wallace knows he is crossing a boundary of what he is allowed to tell the reader, yet he still does it to invite the reader into his reporting process.

John Jeremiah Sullivan uses his biography to explain the paradoxes in his writing. The crux of “Upon this Rock” essay is that he once was a Christian as a teenager. However, at the beginning of the essay, he never directly states his religious affiliation, but it is assumed he is an atheist like the readers of the magazine. “You know that’s how they refer to us, right? We’re ‘of the world’” (p. 6). This use of first-person plural not only equalizes Sullivan with the readers “we,” but it also pits him against the festival attendees. Yet throughout the essay he also hints that he used to be Christian before he fully acknowledges it. When he first arrives at the festival, he remarks, “The Evangelical strata were more or less recognizable from my high school days” (p. 3). This implies that Sullivan at least knew a group he purported to be unfamiliar with in the beginning of the essay. He has also unnerves the West Virginia Christians after he interprets a passage of

the Bible for the group. “He knew my gloss was theologically sound, and he wondered where I'd gotten it” (p. 7). These subtle biographical hints help guide the reader to the true version of Sullivan and make his eventual revelation that he was a Christian less abrupt.

As the essay continues, Sullivan still uses the first-person plural but not to relate himself to the atheistic readers but to the festival-goers. “We operated with more or less perfect impunity from then on,” he writes about socializing with the West Virginia group (p. 8). Sullivan finally fully admits his background when he hears a band, Petra, he remembers from high school at the festival. “Something started to happen to me ...What was...this feeling? ... Oh, shit. It's Petra” (p. 9). He then discusses his teenage evangelical Christian years, when he actively participated in a Bible study group and saved others. He even employs evangelical vernacular to demonstrate his involvement. “I waxed strong in spirit” (p. 10). Although he notes that he left the faith for cliché reasons — further education, not fully believing — he cannot speak of the experience without some regret. “If this seems to imply that no apostate was ever a true Christian and that therefore, I was never one, I think I'd stand by both of those statements. Doesn't the fact that I can't write about my old friends without an apologetic tone just show that I never deserved to be one of them?” (p. 10) Sullivan's admission of his past lends an authenticity to his understanding of Christians at the festival. His simultaneous outsider yet former insider status means that though he cannot be objective, he has access to the significance of the event. Sullivan might have initially mislead the reader by adopting the sardonic magazine writer voice, but his guilt and complicated relation as a Christian

creates an intimacy with the reader. He could have kept the persona he initially contrived, but admitting it requires vulnerability and a trust of the reader.

Alternatively, writers will often draw on familial references to vouch for their authenticity. This relates to the idea that the family is the only one who truly knows the writer and can confirm or deny who the writer purports to be. Susan Orlean and Jean Marie Laskas often reference their family to give their persona more context and reflect on the values of their interviewee. Orlean discusses her family when Colin asked if she wanted to have children in “American Male.” “I had just spent an evening with him and his friend Japeth, during which they put every small, movable object in the house into Japeth's slingshot and fired it at me, so I told him I wanted children but that I hoped they would all be girls, and he said, ‘Will you have an abortion if you find out you have a boy?’ (p. 3) However, this quote is not just to demonstrate Orlean’s family situation but also how forward Colin is. Similarly, he asks an invasive question about her husband’s career that suggests his fixation with money. “He asked me what my husband did; when I answered that he was a lawyer, he snapped, ‘You must be a rich family. Lawyers make \$400,000 a year’” (p. 8). Laskas also uses family details in order to demonstrate the beliefs of her interviewees. When one of the miners mentions Laskas’ husband in conversation in “Underworld” (2007), she responds, “I never once mentioned that I *had* a husband, but everyone kept sending home presents for him. Family was the assumption. Family-to-family interaction was the natural order of communication” (p. 3).

Including biographical details is one of the techniques for authenticity because it can help establish who the reporter is and where he or she comes from. In effect, reporters are not just vouching for their reporting but also themselves individually,

whether this is personal biases (as Sullivan and Wallace note) or their family and life outside of reporting (as Orlean and Laskas). It gives the reporter a context.

Irony

Irony is another way to demonstrate authenticity by paradoxically drawing attention to what is inauthentic. An ironic statement provokes the reader into questioning what has been presented as fact instead of assuming that everything in the reportage is accurate. In effect, writers use irony to problematize the notion of reality, so that the reader is forced to question the truth (Golomb, 1995).

Sullivan frequently employs irony for this purpose as a signal to the reader to read carefully. When he writes for *GQ*, he often adopts the voice of the stereotypically arrogant, sardonic and short-sighted magazine writer. The opening line of “Upon this Rock” ironically draws attention to the contrivance of this voice. “It is wrong to boast, but in the beginning, my plan was perfect” (p. 1). No legitimate reporter would admit to having a full plan on how to write an article because it would negate the purpose of the reporting. Yet Sullivan is ironically noting how misguided he was when he initially started the assignment. This makes his later acknowledgment of his Christianity all the more effective because he has purposely demonstrated his inauthentic magazine persona. Similarly, Sullivan only bolsters this usage of irony in “Violence of the Lambs.”

Throughout “Violence of the Lambs,” Sullivan makes ironic comments to hint to the reader that his reporting is dubious if not false. Within the first paragraph of the story, Sullivan is arrogant to the point of incredulity as he discusses why he received this story assignment. “My sporadic descents to the crushing mental depths of pop-rock culture crit had predictably made me the go-to guy. Nonetheless I undertook in all good faith” (p. 1).

In this statement Sullivan mocks his own credentials to report on a science story and thus forces the reader to consider them. However, he also blatantly states that he did the story in good faith, which suggests anything but. Even after he has questioned his own credentials, he also derides the purpose of a magazine article. “I tried every way I knew to find some *legitimate* half-truths about the future for you to read about on your flight to Dallas” (p. 1). He is reporting on an already problematic, sensationalist topic and belittles it further with the oxymoron “legitimate half-truths.” The ironic remark about “your flight to Dallas” implies that Sullivan knows the reader is probably only skimming *GQ* for entertainment. A few pages later, he acknowledges the nature of sensationalist reporting being a vicious cycle when he notes that he only followed this animal-human attacks because of “an increase in media attention” (p. 3), which is exactly what he is doing in the piece.

Although readers could be successfully duped by this story, Sullivan uses irony in the opening paragraphs to warn the reader to not believe what will follow. Sullivan approaches the rest of the story as if it were a straightforward narrative with little irony, but this opening section is telling. This attempt to warn the reader is the story’s most authentic element, which only exacerbates the later lies throughout the essay.

Irony can also be used for artistic detachment, which allows the writer to view his or her story from an outside perspective. This enables the writer to explore the nuances and challenges of reporting and be more self-aware of his or her own story. Laskas, Orlean and Wallace practice this form of irony the most.

In “Hurt You,” Laskas frequently comments on how difficult and abrasive Suh is as an interview subject; therefore, she details her interactions with his family almost as

often as her direct interactions with Suh because they are more available and help to show the real Suh based on the biographical technique of authenticity. Suh is also abnormally close to his family despite his age and success, which Laskas ironically discusses. When she learns he still lives at home, she responds, “I mumble something polite about how a lot of people move home after college, so this is nothing ... odd?” (p. 3) Laskas noting how she mumbled a “polite” response implies that she was lying to the Suh family and does find it odd that he still lives with them. Yet her admission that it is “odd” is her authentic acknowledgment to the reader of how she really sees the situation and suggests the reader interpret it. The polite lie and truth that is compounded by a skeptical question mark in one sentence is a convincing irony that enables the reader to understand the situation for what it really is. She continues using this incredulous irony to emphasize Suh’s conflicting persona. “Do I need to point out that her brother will earn \$68 million—and that’s before his endorsements with Nike, Chrysler, and all the rest? Do I need to point out that her brother is fourteenth on the *Forbes* list of the world’s hundred highest-paid athletes?” (p. 3) This use of irony helps demarcate the discrepancy between Suh’s public profile and personal life, and the contrast reveals his actual character even more. Furthermore, Laskas’ own incredulity at who Suh really is helps guide the reader into learning who the authentic Suh is. Without her drawing attention to his inconsistencies, the reader might see the piece as a straightforward profile but is forced to reexamine his or her biases in favor of who Suh really is.

Orlean also uses irony to make exaggerated statements that comment on the true nature of her source’s character as she does in “American Male.” She notes Colin’s fixation on money. “I do not think this presages a future for Colin as a high-stakes

gambler; I think it says more about the powerful grasp that money has on imagination and what a large percentage of a ten-year-old's mind is made up of imaginings" (p. 8) This ironic comment that Colin will not be a "high-stakes gambler" draws attention to who he really is and how that reflects the mindset of ten year olds. Although, irony can be used to highlight nuances in reporting, it can also be used to highlight issues with it.

In "Underworld," Laskas uses irony to note the potential problems with her reportage. She finds herself continually disoriented by the harsh mining atmosphere where she must interview her sources. She comments on the white paint in the mines entrance to one of her sources. "They just paint this opening part white to cheer everyone up?" I said to Foot the first time I saw it. He didn't even dignify that guess with a response. 'It's, like, a joke?' I said. Irony?" (p. 5) Laskas makes the observation because she cannot comprehend how human beings spend their livelihoods underground like this because she can barely cope with it for the interviews. Yet her attempt to lighten the situation with a joke and colloquial language ("like") and assuage her fears is met with annoyance from the miners. Foot responds: "You just keep turning into more of an idiot. I think you'll find there are no aesthetic choices, nor is there irony, in a coal mine." It is important that Laskas notes Foot's serious response because it not only points out the foolishness of her question but also her own missteps as a reporter. Although readers tend to trust that reporters are stating facts, Laskas is drawing attention to her potential misinterpretation. Essentially, she is admitting that she comes from the same point of ignorance as her reader, and acknowledging this vulnerability endears her to the reader. Contradictorily, she can garner the reader's trust by identifying with him or her and

showing she still found an accurate story despite her lack of knowledge on the topic initially.

Similarly, Wallace uses irony to detach himself from his reporting and admit the flaws in it. In “Michael Joyce,” Wallace prefaces the Canadian Open’s qualifying rounds by saying, “You are invited to try to imagine what it would be like to be among the hundred best in the world at something. At anything. I have tried to imagine; it’s hard” (p. 1). In effect, Wallace is commenting on Joyce’s prestige, which Wallace knows he can never measure up to as a tennis player. However, there is also an irony to this self-consciousness because even though Wallace might not have been more than amateur tennis player, he is considered one of the best fiction writers of his generation. Therefore, the idea that Wallace cannot imagine being among the top hundred of anything is either deliberately humble or an ironic remark. Wallace can imagine what it would be like, and he has had to for the article.

Irony is often used to acknowledge when reporters or their reportage might be at fault or inauthentic. It allows journalists to signal to the reader that what follows might be inauthentic. Although they rarely directly state that their reportage is problematic, irony can also be a subtle attempt at admitting the truth and being more authentic.

Self-consciousness

Most paradoxically writers demonstrate their authenticity by pointing out the specific lack of it. As Golomb (2007) notes, authenticity is only ostensible in its absence. The way that writers demonstrate this lack of authenticity is through self-consciousness. The writer will purposely draw attention to the veracity of his or her

reportage or his or her interactions with the source. Consequently, the reader is also reoriented toward examining the writer's authenticity.

David Foster Wallace practices this self-consciousness most out of the four writers studied here. It is important to note that Wallace never considered himself a reporter and openly denied it. He does this throughout "Fun Thing" by self-consciously commenting on his lack of credentials as a journalist and downplaying his reportage. Wallace remarks on his relationship with his waiter on the cruise. "He doesn't know I'm on the *Nadir* as a pseudojournalist. I'm not sure why I haven't told him — somehow I think it might make things hard for him." (p. 49) It is telling that Wallace refers to himself as a "pseudojournalist," which implies a self-consciousness on one of two things: either Wallace does not believe he has the credibility to be considered a real journalist, or he does not believe that the type of reporting he is doing in the essay is considered real journalism. Whatever his intention might be, Wallace forces the reader to question what journalism is and whom we can call a journalist. If writing a long-form essay for a respected magazine such as *Harper's* is not considered journalism, then what is? Yet his willingness to expose his lack of journalistic credibility endears him to the reader because a writer trying to ensure his or her reputation would not admit to these flaws. Thus, paradoxically, the reader trusts Wallace more because of his candor. Yet conversely, Wallace also does not identify as part of the cruise either. "All week I've found myself doing everything I can to distance myself in the crew's eyes from the bovine herd I'm part of," he writes (p. 50). Wallace has purposely placed himself out of either group he could respectively belong to: the journalists or the vacationers. This self-consciousness of where he belongs allows him to be a detached observer more acutely aware of both

journalism and cruise nuances. Furthermore, it allows him to criticize journalistic conventions and be more real or authentic than them in contrast.

Wallace continues this theme of detachment in “Michael Joyce,” in which he discusses Joyce’s abilities in relation to his own. He qualifies his opinions on tennis with reminders that they are coming from his perspective. “I submit that tennis is the most beautiful sport there is and also the most demanding” (p. 7). The introduction of “I submit” clearly denotes this statement as Wallace’s opinion that way if it were to seem too grandiose, it can easily be discredited as his bias. He uses this “I submit” phrase several more times in the article. The point of this piece is to show how even the less well-known professional tennis players are still much more talented than the average player.

I submit to you that you really have no idea at all. I know I didn’t. And television doesn’t really allow you to appreciate what real top-level players can do — how hard they’re actually hitting the ball, and with what control and tactical imagination and artistry. I got to watch Michael Joyce practice several times right up close, like six feet and a chain-link fence away. (p. 8)

In the above paragraph, Wallace is discussing how difficult playing tennis really well actually is. He not only draws attention to the reader’s probable ignorance but his own. This is because even though Wallace has played tennis competitively and has watched professional tennis, there is an inauthenticity to what is depicted on television. It is only because Wallace has seen it in-person (“like six feet and a chain-link fence away”) that he can verify this. He is authentic enough to admit that he is not certain of the distance with the use of the colloquialism “like.” Wallace is also relating himself to the reader by claiming that he was as unaware as they were but only through his reporting has he

garnered a new understanding. In effect, Wallace's initial self-consciousness that he did not really comprehend the difficulty of tennis helps to bolster his own reporting.

However, Wallace also uses the discrepancy in his tennis playing compared to Joyce's to acknowledge his own failed tennis aspirations. The essay slowly starts to evolve from a profile of Joyce to an examination of Wallace's own self-consciousness over his success. "The idea of me playing Joyce ... is now revealed to me to be in a certain way obscene, and I resolve not even to let Joyce know that I used to play competitive tennis, and (I'd presumed) rather well. This makes me sad" (p. 10). It is evident from this admission that Wallace did not necessarily view this assignment as a straightforward profile but a chance to reignite his own passion for tennis; when it is evident he can only admire and not play Joyce, he descends into more self-critique. Although Wallace acknowledges, "this article is about Michael Joyce and the realities of the tour, not me," by the end of the essay, he admits his full biography. Wallace played competitive junior tennis in high school, and even though he could never pursue it professionally, he still believed himself to be almost as good. Wallace has been slowly hinting at this throughout the essay, but his longer confession (in which he uses the phrase, "I confess") several times is the ultimate admission that he viewed this assignment as a personal endeavor and not a professional one. As he concludes, "I arrived at my first professional tournament with the pathetic deluded pride that attends ignorance." Wallace is not just admitting his personal history, but also his own delusions and how they might have had an impact on his reporting process. In effect, Wallace knows that he probably did not portray Joyce in a wholly authentic way because of his

own bias; however, admitting this bias in Wallace's trademark self-conscious fashion is a way to at least vouch for his personal authenticity.

Orlean and Laskas also employ a similar technique of admitting their own ignorance in a self-conscious manner. In "Orchid Fever," Orlean notes how she did some basic reporting on orchids after Laroche stole them. When she traipses through the swamp herself and does not observe the flowers in bloom, she alerts Laroche, who informs her of her own ignorance. "That's not true. They're out there. I know it. I know where they are ... You should have gone with me" (p. 9). Although this does not reflect well on the authenticity of Orlean's reportage, it does demonstrate the authenticity of Laroche as an orchid expert. Laskas explores a similar dichotomy in "Underworld." She notes how her motivation for reporting on the mines was to learn about something she was completely ignorant about. "The question I had going in was almost ridiculous in nature: If coal is really this big, and all these people really exist, how is it that I know nothing about them?" (p. 3) However, the learning curve is still steep throughout reporting, and she frequently gets chastised by the miners for her ignorance when she accidentally shines her headlamp in their eyes. She also admits that she approached the piece in a similar pseudo-anthropological fashion like Sullivan. "I wanted to discover that the guys who make their living underground do it because of some attachment to the earth, or to history, or to their own ancestry, or to further some fundamental masculine need for brotherhood, or—yes!—on behalf of the nation's consciousness and soul." The use of grandiose language and exclamation point with em dashes here, "fundamental masculine need for brotherhood" and "nation's consciousness and soul," demonstrates Laskas mocking her own ignorance of the subject. Even as she grows close to the miners

and visits the mine several times, Laskas is still conscious of her outsider status. “No matter how many times I went under, I would always be a tourist. I could ooh and I could ahh and I could leave” (p. 6). Like Wallace, she admits the report will be incomplete because she can never fully put herself in the appropriate mindset.

Sullivan takes this self-consciousness to the extreme in “Violence of the Lambs.” In the same fashion that he used irony to signal to the reader that the piece was fabricated, Sullivan’s self-consciousness all but says that his reportage is inauthentic. Sullivan takes pains in the beginning of the piece to discuss how he is wary of reporting on animal attacks because of their inherent ludicrousness. He admits he avoided the topic because “so sharply does it smack of quackery and gullibility” (p. 2). He also acknowledges the dearth of credibility in reporting on the topic. “I fear I’ll be trading away some much, much needed credibility by confessing this up front, but it began for me on the Internet. Not on kook sites, mind you.” Sullivan is not just purposely drawing the reader’s attention to reporting, but he is also admitting his method for contriving such a piece in the first place — the Internet. In effect, anyone with Internet access to create such an over-the-top report. Throughout the essay, he continues to hint at just how he is fooling the reader. He discusses his research process on animal attacks by directly asking the reader to verify his facts and sources and concludes, “I assure you I don’t know enough about even the normal goings-on in the animal kingdom to fabricate this many anomalies.” (p. 4) This blunt attempt to get the reader to trust him is meant to distract the reader from interrogating his reporting completely. Yet his assurance of truth actually makes it more suspicious. Therefore, it should not be a surprise when Sullivan concedes that he made up Livengood and their trip to Kenya. “Big parts of this piece I made up. I

didn't want to say that, but the editors are making me, because of certain scandals in the past with made-up stories, and because they want to distance themselves from me." (p. 11) This is the ultimate act of self-consciousness, but even then it is still a contrivance. Sullivan never intended to publish this as a real journalistic article, and it is not his editors who force him to confess it is fabricated. Rather, Sullivan is once again hinting at the true purpose of this article — to show how easy it is to make up stories as he notes with "certain scandals." Essentially, this is the only authentic part of this article; it is meant to act as a warning to readers on what a hoax piece consists of and how to be aware of one. Ironically, Sullivan has to write a completely incredulous report to discuss the difference between authentic and inauthentic journalism.

Journalists use self-consciousness to acknowledge the flaws in their reporting. However, journalists who were really worried about losing all credibility would not be willing to admit the problems in their writing. Therefore, paradoxically, self-consciousness endears the reader to journalists and vouches for journalists' authenticity because they are aware of their own shortcomings. Furthermore, it is a way to mock the conventions that came before the writer by suggesting that what the writer is doing is more real.

Authenticity of sources

Although the proposal for this research initially supposed there were only three techniques writers used to demonstrate authenticity, another was revealed inductively — the authenticity of the source. Throughout this research it has been evident that writers frequently question the authenticity of the reporting process or themselves yet they also contrast their own authenticity to the source in the story. This is sometimes to

demonstrate the source's authenticity, but other times it is used to examine just how inauthentic the source is.

Throughout Orlean and Laskas' pieces, the writers attempt to illustrate that the way their sources have been portrayed in the media has been inaccurate thus far and that their reportage will get at the truth. In "Orchid Fever," Orlean is evidently aware of Laroche's dubious reputation given his deception to steal the orchids. Nevertheless, when she meets Laroche, she finds a man of integrity. "Just when you think you've figured out that he's a crook, he reveals an ulterior and principled but lucrative reason for his crookedness ... He is the most moral amoral person I've ever known" (p. 2). In this quote, Orlean wrestles with how difficult it is to categorize Laroche's nature. He is not simply "a crook" because he has principles behind his moral ambiguities. Paradoxically, Laroche is authentic even in his amoralities.

Similarly, when Laskas meets the notoriously violent Suh, she is surprised to learn how benevolent he is in person. "Whatever role American celebrity has assigned him, and no matter how complicit he is in that transaction, he remains a 25-year-old young man who grew up painfully shy and obedient, and he isn't all that different today, except now we've turned him into a pepperoni head" (p. 7). Effectively, Laskas is drawing attention to the difference between Suh's fake media personality as the belligerent football player and his actual "shy and obedient" self. Laskas attributes this authentic self to Suh's family, which relates back to the idea the family and origin help reveal the authentic self. Laskas knows that the Suh she sees with his family is the authentic Suh. What is telling in both Orlean and Laskas' analysis of their sources' character is that they account for the ambiguity and discrepancies of these people;

therefore, when a writer does not explore the source with such nuance, it questions the authenticity of the source.

Alternatively, in “Violence of the Lambs,” Livengood is so easy for Sullivan to characterize that he seems unreal. In order to establish the credibility and authenticity of Livengood, Sullivan gives clear descriptions of Livengood and his university. “I’ve never seen a person easier to describe physically,” Sullivan remarks on Livengood’s appearance (p. 2). This eventual description is too simple to be taken seriously. Similarly, Sullivan directly states that Livengood’s campus is authentic by noting its seriousness. “Seemed sharp and ambitious. Many of them were a good decade past 1822. And although the campus isn’t pretty—it’s all naked brick and parking lots—there was an atmosphere of seriousness about what they were up to there.” There is no ambiguity to these descriptions, which makes them suspect. Both Laskas and Orlean have remarked on how the ambiguity and inconsistencies of their sources reveal their complex nature and in effect authenticity. Sullivan’s basic dismissal of any complexity makes his reportage dubious.

Wallace allows himself to examine just how inauthentic his source is when he takes the cruise. Ironically, Wallace discusses the inauthenticity of the cruises by examining the writing of an author who wrote the promotional brochure for the vacation. Wallace is most disturbed by the fact that the promotion is described as an essay when its purpose is clearly commercial. He directly tells the reader that this is an attempt to manipulate customers and should not be tolerated or considered good writing. “Whether it honors them well or not, an essay’s fundamental obligations are supposed to be to the reader. The reader, on however unconscious a level, understands his, and thus tends to

approach an essay with a relatively high level of openness and credulity” (p. 288).

However, this quote does not just talk about the brochure but also what Wallace believes to be journalism’s obligation to the reader. In effect, he is also telling the reader what to expect from him. By showing what inauthenticity looks like, Wallace is demonstrating his own authenticity because, unlike the brochure, he is transparent.

The writer might also comment on the source’s authenticity to demonstrate his or her own lack of it. Wallace discusses the surprising sincerity of Michael Joyce. When Joyce makes what could be seen as an insult to Wallace, he quickly surmises that Joyce is incapable of irony. “What Michael Joyce says rarely has any kind of spin or slant on it; he mostly just reports what he sees, rather like a camera. You couldn’t even call him sincere, because it’s not like it seems ever to occur to him to try to be sincere or nonsincere” (p. 5). Essentially, Joyce is so authentic that he does even need to be aware of it. This is in stark contrast to Wallace, whose writing usually does have a “spin or slant on it.” He even admits this in a few more sentences when he acknowledges that he believed Joyce’s lack of irony was because Wallace had assumed he was unintelligent. “What I discovered as the tournament wore on was that I can be kind of a snob and an asshole and that Michael Joyce’s affectless openness is not a sign of stupidity but of something else” (p. 6). Wallace is not only pointing the error of his assumption, but he is also noting his lack of his own authenticity as the “snob and asshole.”

Sullivan goes through a similar self-conscious transformation in “Upon this Rock.” Although he started the essay to mock Christians and write a fluff piece, he realizes by the end of the essay just how misguided he had been in his detachment. “What a dickhead I’d been, thinking the trip would be a lark. There were too many ghosts here”

(p. 13). Sullivan cannot relax and report in the way he wished because his authentic past as a Christian will not let him be inauthentic now. Sullivan might not be capable of fully authentic reporting, but he can recognize authenticity as he discusses the West Virginia men he stays with. “It may be the truest thing I will have written here: They were crazy, and they loved God—and I thought about the unimpeachable dignity of that love, which I never was capable of” (p. 14). It is important that Sullivan notes it is “the truest thing,” which implies that his prior reportage might have been false. However, this assertion of his source’s authenticity also bolsters his own because he is willing to finally admit when he has been false and can recognize authenticity for what is truly is.

The source is an avenue for journalists to discuss authenticity outside of themselves. This emphasis on the source’s authenticity enables journalists to contrast it with their own authenticity, whether for positive or negative affiliation. Even if the journalist concludes that he or she is not personally authentic in contrast, he or she is able to discern what truly is authentic.

Chapter IV: Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to understand if journalists writing in first-person used techniques or tools to demonstrate their authenticity. The research attempted to answer the following questions by analyzing eight long-form narrative journalism articles: How do journalists who write in the first-person construct authenticity? What are the techniques or tools that journalists employ to demonstrate the authenticity of their reportage? What are the techniques or tools that journalists employ to demonstrate the authenticity of themselves, and how does it contribute to the overall authenticity of their narrative? Throughout this research, it is evident that journalists employ techniques to construct and demonstrate their authenticity to the reader.

The techniques include: authenticity of reporting, biographical details, irony, self-consciousness and authenticity of the source. Furthermore, within the tools to demonstrate the authenticity of the reportage, there are four subcriteria: a conscious use of first-person, access, inference about the source and an analysis of reporting as an effective truth-telling device. All of these factors, when combined, help to contribute to the overall authenticity of the writer. Furthermore, all journalists studied used these techniques.

One tool is establishing that the reporting is authentic. The conscious use of first-person is to ensure the reader is aware it is coming from the writer's perspective, which all writers studied established in the first paragraph. The writer also often discusses how much access he or she had to the source or situation to determine how thorough the

reporting was. This can be negative access as David Foster Wallace admits in “Fun Thing” that the cruise captain avoided him or positive as Jeanne Marie Laskas notes the four months she spent following the miners for “Underworld.” Additionally, the journalist frequently uses inference because successful inference can show the writer is a good judge of character and is trustworthy. Furthermore, it substantiates that the journalist’s personal subjectivity is valid because it was able to elucidate such details as Susan Orlean showcases in “American Male.” The writer comments on reporting as an effective truth-telling device or not by being transparent on the reporting process as well. This acknowledgement of the contrivances and shortcomings of reporting suggests the reporter can transcend or subvert them as John Jeremiah Sullivan often does.

Although the writer must vouch for the authenticity of his or her reporting, he or she also must demonstrate personal authenticity. The reporter can illustrate personal authenticity through the following techniques: the use of biographical details, irony, self-consciousness and commenting on the authenticity of the source. If the reporter might not be authentic at the time of reportage, he or she can use biographical details to show a time when he or she was once authentic as Sullivan does in “Upon this Rock” when he describes his teenage Christian years in contrast to his current atheism. Biography can also explain his or her biases in the article, such as how Wallace discusses his own amateur tennis career and how it influences his view on tennis players now in “Michael Joyce.” Journalists use biography to demonstrate how their source might have reacted as well, such as how Orlean notes Colin Duffy’s views on adult topics when she discusses her family with him in “American Male.”

Writers use irony to draw attention to inconsistencies in their reporting or their sources and effectively demonstrate what is inauthentic as Sullivan shows in “Violence of the Lambs” when he ironically mocks his credentials in this hoax piece. Alternatively, it can be used to distance the writer from the source so as to note nuances and complexities of the source, which Laskas uses in “Hurt You” as she delves into the dichotomy between Suh’s violent media persona and his calm, obedient family persona. Self-consciousness is also used to deliberately alert the reader to inauthenticity of the writer or his or her reporting. This is especially prevalent in “Violence of the Lambs” when Sullivan acknowledges he completely fabricated his scientific expert and their trip together. Paradoxically, by pointing out the inauthenticity inherent in the reporting, the writer persuades the reader of his or her own authenticity because a writer trying to mislead the reader would not admit this as Laskas does in “Underworld” when she acknowledges her ill-conceived understanding of mines.

Journalists acknowledge the authenticity of the source to contrast it with that of their own authenticity as well. This can be to show that the reporter is more authentic than his or her source as Wallace does in “Fun Thing” when he discusses the inherent inauthenticity of cruises or that the source has authenticity as Orlean acknowledges of Laroche in “Orchid Fever.” It is worth noting that a source is considered authentic because of his or her complexities and nuances. The fact that a source has ambiguities and inconsistencies only reveals his or her authenticity.

The journalists studied do not use singular elements from it but employ all elements. It is important to note that these elements work in tandem and do not necessarily follow a linear structure. For example, self-consciousness is often related to

irony as in “Violence of the Lambs” (2011) when Sullivan self-consciously hints that his reporting is false through use of irony. Similarly, self-consciousness can be related to biography as when Laskas admits her own ignorance on mining in “Underworld.” (2007) One of these elements alone would not demonstrate authenticity but together they can challenge one another’s relationship and give more context.

All writers studied in this research used every technique. Although this research initially assumed that only journalists who were deliberately trying to contrive their authenticity, such as Wallace and Sullivan, used these techniques, it is evident that any journalist writing in first-person is engaging with the authenticity techniques. This is apparent because of the extensive findings that Orlean and Laskas also use authenticity tools. Furthermore, they are deliberate tools that the writer uses with awareness. The writer had to consciously decide to write the story in first-person and did not have to self-consciously critique his or her own reporting as Orlean (1995) does when she explores the swamps or Wallace (1998) does as he examines his bias toward professional tennis. These are all deliberate inclusions. The reason why these inclusions are so much more apparent in Sullivan and Wallace is because they are purposely trying to mislead the reader. They are aware enough of these techniques and how it impacts authenticity that they can exploit it.

Ultimately, this research suggests that just as objectivity is a process reporters use to justify credibility, authenticity involves techniques journalists who write in first-person use to justify their credibility. This also suggests that authenticity is a truth-telling technique specifically tailored to and necessary for journalists who write in first-person. First-person writers’ credibility is more at stake than the typical third-person omniscient

often found in news writing because they must justify both their reportage and their personal trustworthiness. In effect, journalists who do not write in first person do not need to vouch for their personal authenticity because objectivity requires that they disappear into the story. Furthermore, the fact that all writers studied used these techniques suggests this could be a common practice for journalists reporting in first person. This could be useful information for journalists in the future because they could use these techniques to ensure their credibility in first-person reporting.

As established in the literature review, authenticity in journalism had not been extensively studied using textual analysis prior to this research. However, these findings do bolster prior research on authenticity. As Weisethaunet and Lindberg (2010) suggested in their study of rock journalism, authenticity is a fluid concept that is often demonstrated in paradoxical ways. As seen in this research, journalists' authenticity can fluctuate throughout articles, as the initial self they presented might be different from a later self. Müller (2009) also argued that a writer could claim authenticity by showing what is inauthentic in contrast. As noted in this research, journalists use irony and self-consciousness to draw attention to what might be inauthentic. They also discuss the authenticity of their sources to contrast their own inauthenticity. Therefore this research did corroborate previous studies on authenticity and how a writer can construct it in a text. However, this research also expanded the techniques of authenticity by discovering that the authenticity of reporting and the use of biographical details are also part of the technique. It is worth noting, though, that the previous studies did not focus on first-person journalism but fiction and rock criticism; therefore, these additional tools might

not have been elucidated in prior literature because this is one of the few times authenticity in journalism has been studied.

An obvious limitation of this research is that only four journalists were studied. Although this was a necessary limitation to ensure the research was manageable, it would be beneficial to study more journalists to further demonstrate that authenticity is a series of techniques. Also, these four journalists frequently write for similar publications and are all Americans who are similar in age and were raised after the heyday of New Journalism, so this could be an anomaly for their generation or suggestion that they have influenced one another. Therefore, it would be interesting to expand this study to include more journalists from different publications and generations.

Furthermore, this research generated potential future avenues for research. The first avenue could be how authenticity techniques came to be. As remarked on earlier, Wallace apparently had an impact on Sullivan's style, so it raises the question if Sullivan learned these tools from Wallace or created it on his own. It would also be interesting to note if later journalist generations who read these writers are influenced by their style. In effect, the question becomes, do journalists writing in first person come to it on their own or is it acquired through studying other journalists? Alternatively, it could be an instruction by the editor. The journalists in this research often wrote for the same publications if not similar ones; therefore, these techniques could be the mark of a stringent editor or the publication itself.

Also, throughout this research, it is evident that part of the way these authenticity tools work is that the writer attempts to appeal to the reader. This can be admitting ignorance as Wallace does in "Michael Joyce" about his failure to understand the skill

level of professional tennis or generating sympathy about personal confusion as Sullivan portrays his Christian identity crisis in “Upon this Rock.” The writer is trying to relate to the reader and address him or her. Therefore, further research could involve a focus group of readers to see if they interpret authenticity in the same way the writer does.

Lastly, Wallace started as and identified as a fiction writer, not a journalist, which affected how he viewed journalism and his personal credibility as a journalist. Yet this also meant that he was able to get at overall truths that a standard reporter might not have seen. This begs the question if there is a difference between truth and accuracy? Therefore, Wallace and likely other fiction writers probably have a different view of what truth actually means. Thus, it would be interesting to bring this study to other disciplines and interrogate what truth means outside of the journalism world.

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