

A STUDY ON AUDIENCE PERCEPTION
OF FACT AND FICTION IN DOCUMENTARY

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis entitled

**FACT AND FICTION IN DOCUMENTARY:
AUDIENCE PERCEPTION AND THE CHANGING GENRE OF DOCUMENTARY**

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ABSTRACT

This study addresses the disconnect between how a documentary consumer goes into a film thinking they are skeptical of the information; when they tend to have a skewed understanding of filmmaking and media literacy. An explanatory, experimental qualitative design was used. This involved collecting qualitative data through the use of focus groups and then expanding upon those data with in-depth interviews. In the first qualitative phase of the study, data was collected from volunteer participants from three different cities in Missouri. Three focus groups were conducted to recognize the volunteers' understanding of the distinctions between fact and fiction in documentary and to assess whether that relates to further word-of-mouth misinformation. The second qualitative phase was conducted as follow up to the focus groups. In this study, the researcher looked at how members of the first data study consume documentaries. She did this through one-on-one in-depth semi-structured interviews with two participants from each of the focus groups. The researcher then conducted a textual analysis of the transcribed material that came from the qualitative data collected in both the focus groups and the interviews. Ultimately addressing the question: how do audience members understand the difference between fact and fiction in documentary?

Chapter 1: Introduction

When most people think of documentaries, they tend to think of a boring movie they were forced to watch in history class as a kid—a kind of factual representation of reality. The film was full of intelligent people talking about a faraway place or a distant past, making it a “traditional” expository documentary. But the documentary genera encompass much more than just expository documentaries. Over documentary history there have been plenty of documentaries that break these traditional storytelling models. Some even go far enough to transgress the most basic understanding of documentaries: that they are focused on the factual/true side of a story.

One recent documentary that relies on this blend of fact and fiction is Penny Lane’s documentary *NUTS!* Lane even said she put fictional elements into her movie in order to highlight the role of fiction in documentary film (Lane, 2016). However, this was not the start of this conversation. One of the most well-known documentaries ever, *Nanook of the North* [1922], had, by cinematic standards, fictional elements. The subject, Nanook (whose actual name was Allakariallak), acted out sections of the film which were fictional—with some parts even being scripted (Jensen, 2016). Many will remember Animal Planet’s documentary *Mermaids: The Body Found*, a documentary about how mermaids could be real, which relied on debunked science (Switek, 2012). While there is nothing wrong with creating a fictional film in a documentary style, commonly known as a mockumentary, there is harm that can be done when a fictional film is passed off as a documentary. This misinformation can have lasting effects (Loftus, 2005). Even if we categorize “Mermaids” as docu-fiction¹, some viewers may still

¹ A docu-fiction is the intersection of documentary and fiction when the premise of the story is completely fictional or the main character is completely fictional (Rhodes, Springer, 2003).

believe the contents to be true. As this research will show if people are willing to believe that something is true and come to a documentary expecting to see something true, they will ultimately believe it is true. On the other side of this subject is Jonathan Oppenheimer's *Act of Killing*. This is a documentary which takes its subjects and has them act for the camera in a way that is deliberately staged. Oppenheimer makes no apologies for this and the audience is left to figure out what is going on. The fake scenes acted out by killers and constructed by Oppenheimer involve the filmmaker in the subjects' lives. The process leads to the climax of the film, a reflection of the killers about what they have done. This hands-on approach to directing documentary subjects as actors, while rare, is just another facet of this complex genre of study. This is not just a study about documentary, however it is a study about misinformation.

As technology and the people who use it change so does our understanding of truth and trust. 2017 is a time of distrust of the news media, fake news, and echo chambers. When people can easily push falsities into the world and have them heard by thousands of people, eliminating confusion and misinformation is important. This study will approach how misinformation impacts audience members watching documentaries. This will be important in the coming years to help understand how misinformation is passed from content provider to consumer.

The literature will show this is a complex subject upon which even people within the documentary community² do not agree. The most basic ideas are debatable. The literature will show that within the documentary community, documentaries are not seen as something that must be factual, and many believe that they have no obligation to reveal to the audience that they are not.

² The documentary community being referenced is the people who create, consume, study, and work with documentaries regularly.

This study addresses how misinformation is passed between the creators of documentaries and the audience members consuming them. An explanatory, experimental qualitative design was used, and it involved collecting qualitative data through the use of focus groups and then expanding upon those with in-depth interviews. In the first qualitative phase of the study, data was collected from volunteer participants from three different cities in Missouri. Three focus groups were conducted to recognize the volunteers' understanding of the distinctions between fact and fiction in documentary and to assess whether that relates to further word-of-mouth misinformation. The group from Columbia, Missouri served as a control group and the second two as experimental groups.

The second qualitative phase was conducted as follow up to the focus groups. In this study, the researcher looked at how members of the first data study consume documentaries, through one-on-one in-depth semi-structured interviews with two participants from each of the focus groups. The researcher then conducted a textual analysis of the transcribed material which came from the qualitative data collected in both the focus groups and the interviews, ultimately addressing the question: how do audience members understand the difference between fact and fiction in documentary?

This is an important question to ask. There is little academic research about documentary studies and even less scholarship about documentary audiences. This study will contribute to this base of knowledge to help future scholars and professionals in the field better understand documentary audience members. The audiences' perspectives are important to consider when doing research because they are the ones consuming the material that is being created. This research will help move documentary studies one step closer to understanding the people who consume this medium and the dangers of misinformation.

Audience perception theory was used as a frame to this study. Basic definitions will be discussed to help give context to the literature. Then an explanation of different types of documentaries will help show the scope of this subject. The literature will then discuss existing research about how documentaries influence audience members. Next, the literature will connect documentaries' influence on audience members to current research about viewers' understandings of documentary as a genre to further understanding of the complexity of this field of study. Ultimately, the literature review will discuss the blurred lines between fact and fiction in contemporary documentary film.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Theory. Audience perception theory is all about what a viewer brings to a given piece of media content in order to give it meaning. Wayne discusses how Skeggs and Wood found that ambiguous responses from viewers are complicated and have to do with certain readings varying in popularity (Wayne, 2016 p.44). So, modern audiences' relationships with media materials is both socially produced and individually produced. This is in agreement with Ruddock (2008).

Ruddock looked at how media influence young lives in the United Kingdom. He looked at this theory from a political standpoint, examining how media portray political messages and how those are received by youths in Liverpool, England. In his conclusion, he reflects that Morley defends that the sense people make of media content comes from their encoding and decoding of that content (Ruddock, 2008, p.256). If audiences' perception helps them understand something through the use of past information, then what happens if those audiences' past information in the subject is lacking? If someone sees a documentary and only believes documentaries to be factual and reputable forms of journalism or history, then what does the

viewer think when seeing something that looks like a true depiction of reality, but in actuality is not?

Definitions. This research would like to define what the word “fact” means. Most research does not define what the researchers mean by “truth” or “fact”. Most imply that “fact” is “reality” (Godmilow; Plantinga; Feldman) but these terms are distinct from one another. McHale defines truth as something toward which fiction strives (McHale, 1987 p.455). However, this study desires a definition of truth. In order to help define what this study sees as truth, this research will look to Nichols work. This research will think of truth as how Nichols defines reality. “...a director’s attempt to translate his or her perspective on the actual historical world into audio-visual terms; it also stems from his or her direct involvement with the film’s subject” (Nichols, 2010 p.51). This approach relates the word “truth” to both documentary and a definition. The next term to look at is “false” or “fiction.”

McHale defines fiction as “non-assertion (or pseudo-statement, or ‘suspended illocutionary force,’ or whichever variant one prefers)” (McHale, 1987 p.455). Nichols defines fiction as “...a sense of how a director constructs a distinct world that we enter into without being addressed directly” (Nichols, 2010 p.51). LaMarre never defines what she and her co-author mean by fiction, but reference it as separate from reality (LaMarre, 2009 p. 539). Godmilow and her co-author do the same as LaMarre. They discuss how fiction films are perceived as the opposite of documentary; more specifically she discusses how fiction leads to stories that are wrapped up in narratives and perfect plotline which lead to an emotional response and less critical thinking (Godmilow, 2009 p. 84). This may be true, however this research would like to use the definition Plantinga discusses for fiction as it relates to documentary—a representation of a character or the truth (Plantinga, 2005 p.106). So, fiction is, in this case, not a

completely true reality, nor is it a lie. This definition shows the complexity of falsities in documentary. It says that falsities are not just an invention of a character or truth, but rather a false representation of something that exists. The next term to look at is “audience perception.”

Godmilow was the only author reviewed who mentions audience perception specifically. She discusses how audience perception is important in that the audience needs to have the ability to critique documentary work through its perceptions (Godmilow, 1997 p.99). Feldman discusses the idea of audience perception as changing because of a rise in education levels and socio-economic levels of audiences (Feldman, 1977 p.35). LaMarre describes audience members as slow to change and slow to understand the changes in documentary (LaMarre, 2009 p. 551). The most compelling approach to audience perception comes from Plantinga. He discusses less about the audience, but how the interplay between filmmaker and audience member is the most important aspect of how the audience perceives a topic (Plantinga, 2005 p. 114). So, audience perception is something that is influenced by the documentary. How the documentary is put together will influence how the audience perceives it. But what is a documentary?

Most recent definitions try to separate documentary from fiction by focusing on the “real” aspect of it, how documentary is a real representation of real people (Smith, 2014 p.58). Smith and Rock tried to grasp the changing definition of documentary through a historical analysis of the term. They discuss the original definition of documentary, which John Grierson coined in 1926. Grierson defines it as the “creative treatment of actuality” (p.58). This definition did not stand alone over the years, as “documentary” has come to mean, to many, a presentation of facts (p.59). Smith and Rock write that what truly separates documentary as a style in popular culture is an emphasis on facts. They write that this is problematic in that this connects facts to

objective truth which is problematic in its own right, let alone when discussing documentary (p.59). In their words:

It does, however, focus us critically on the act of intending to communicate fact, as we seek a better definition of a documentary. Here we argue that documentary versus fictional films are better distinguished not by the content of the film but rather by the fact that one is produced as a statement of fact while the other is focused on the art of storytelling. Consequently, it is intent behind the communication that determines its form (p. 59).

Ultimately, the duo settles on a definition that focuses on the intent of the communication instead of the objective nature in which the message is communicated (p.61). To better understand the argument that Smith and Rock provide, a background of the history of documentary is necessary.

Documentary scholars who claim that documentary has directness, immediacy and transparency are “denying the roots of the genre,” according to Joshua Malitsky in his historical analysis of documentary’s relationship to science. He claims that other scholars point to a history that celebrates the subjective aspects of documentary as a discourse. Others have insisted there are many challenges in claiming documentary to be real (Malitsky, 2012, p.238). He finds that the history of documentary is paramount to understanding current changes in the genre (p.243). To understand current changes, it is best to go back to when it all started.

This is a historical goal of documentarians: to take their audience into a deeper level of understanding of public affairs (Mascaro, 2016, p.225). The original goal of documentary was to find truth, picture it, and share it. This goal of showing truth did not necessarily mean the objective truth (Mascaro, 2016 ; Smith 2014). Truth became “objective truth” when documentary started to be used in a more journalistic capacity. This started so that journalists could expand in-

depth journalism, working on projects for longer periods of time (Mascaro, 2016, p.223). Today there are endless subgenres of documentary. Edelstein mentions 17 subgenres and how Hollywood films are now starting to mimic the looks of documentary (Edelstein, 2013). The style of documentary, just like the term, is still changing today.

There are stylistic choices being made that separate the genre from what it used to be (Mascaro, 2016, p.227). These changes are made for artistic purposes to make the film more interesting, flashier, or to implant a deeper meaning into the film. It is a subjective way to influence an audience, but some scholars argue that documentary was never created to be objective and never has been (Mascaro, 2016 ; Smith, 2014 ; Sim, 2011). Most scholars attribute this change to the shift from modern to a post-modern era. Most documentarians, however, still see documentary as a way to express some kind of “truth” today.

Alex Edney-Browne did a textual analysis of *The Act of Killing*³ (2012) by Joshua Oppenheimer. In his article he argued that this shift in style is due to a change in the 21st century. “As postmodernism erodes the traditional boundary between fiction and reality, the genre’s claims to realistic depiction are met with suspicion and mistrust. This includes the social injustices that the genre had once ‘objectively’ documented” (Browne, 2015, p.47). It is important to note that the techniques which Oppenheimer used in his film can be found in the 1960s and earlier, Browne writes about these techniques in a more contemporary sense. He discusses how *The Act of Killing* uses re-enactment and deceit of the subjects to reveal the truth just like in traditional documentaries of the early 20th century (Browne, 2015). This conflicts with what many viewers understand of a documentary.

³ The Act of Killing is about mass killings in Indonesia. The director allows the killers (who are in positions of power with in Indonesia and where never punished for their crimes) to re-enact the killings that they had done decades before in order to show the people of Indonesia what the killers had done and allow the killers to reflect on the monstrosities they committed.

As documentary changes and the many facets of documentary (journalistic, educational, political, etc.) grow, the standard definition of documentary is not comprehensive (Smith, 2014). Our definitions have gone from ‘the creative treatment of actuality’ by John Grierson to “of relating to, or employing documentation in literature or art; broadly: factual, objective” by the Merriam Webster Dictionary. To Nichols, documentaries are about real life, real people, and the real world (Nichols, 2010). Another scholar suggests we completely change the question we are asking — instead of asking for a definition of the form, we should ask what is the director’s purpose for making the film (Smith, 2014). While it is most likely the case that the audience doesn’t know who the director is or what the director is trying to do, this definition will not fit for this study. It will not fit because audience members and researcher do not know the directors intent for making this film and therefor will not be able to use this definition of documentary. This is just one definition from one scholar, there are still others who would like to take a shot at defining this illusive category of film. Nathan Smith and Jenny Rock make the claim that documenting can no longer be the primary goal of documentary films. They did a content analysis of various films classified as documentaries, giving examples of films that convey a story in a subjective way to try and get the viewer to enjoy the entertainment value of the film (Smith, 2014, p.60). These scholars have a problem with this style of film that focuses less on the accuracy within the film and more on the entertainment of it. “A documentary that mixes perceived truths with obvious fictional elements will clash with the audience’s expectations of factuality and will fail to convincingly communicate either story or statement” (p.61). So, is a documentary that communicates falsehoods but keeps a record still a documentary? Documentary studies scholars don’t agree on a definition, or even if truth and objectivity in

documentary should be paramount. For the purposes of this research, Plantinga's approach to categorize documentary and not define it will be the approach of this study.

Documentary film thus can be understood as an extended treatment of one subject or subjects in one film, mostly with a narrative, where the filmmakers signal their intentions to their audience by way of content or through images, sounds, and beliefs (Plantinga, 2005 p.114).

There are many different theories about what makes a documentary a documentary, but this is not an issue to undertake for this research. It is more concerned with the miscommunication that this plethora of definitions can cause between the viewer and the filmmakers.

The different connections documentaries have

In a discussion with the director Janus Metz, Gerald Sim asked how Metz merged fiction and reality in his documentary, *Armadillo*. Metz believes that all documentarians are subjective in their filming and their editing (Sim, 2011, p.24). Metz said that it is hard to get a viewer to fully understand the larger implications of one story without a few elements from fiction film making (p.24). However, he also said that documentary is all about truth. He sees the truth, not as what Werner Herzog referred to as the "accountant's truth," but as a larger concept to be portrayed through documentary-style accounts (p.20). "I don't believe in direct mimicry of reality through the camera to an audience. I see myself as someone who's trying to create something authentic and sincere. But I'm definitely also working in the sort of gray zone area between fiction and documentary" (p.20). Metz is not the only director to think that the standard ideal of truth in documentary should be broadened. Wesley Mathew did a case study of the film *Ghosts* to discuss how docudramas⁴ could improve communication of visual anthropology with an engaged audience. Docudramas have a reputation for being flawed or tainted because they rely on

⁴ Merriam-Webster's definition of a 'docudrama' is described as "A drama (as for television) dealing freely with historical events especially of a recent and controversial nature." (Docudrama, 2016).

dramatized re-enactments (Mathew, 2014, p.18). Ultimately, Mathew argues that any documentary is a “subjective articulation of the filmmaker” (p.19). He also states that this is a good thing for visual anthropology because it can help get across a full message rather than just a filter of events (p.19). This is similar to what Metz said in Sim’s article. Mathew also finds issue with the lack of objectivity in this method, but says that over all a docudrama can be a good alternative to ethnographic documentaries⁵ (p.23). Mathew also discusses, Jim Schneider’s work where Schneider discussed the three relationships of any documentary.

According to Schneider, those relationships are: “... first ‘a relationship with the reality it attempts to represent’; second, ‘a relationship with the forces and conditions of production which brought it into being’; and finally, ‘a relationship with the viewer who is invoked by the film’” (Mathew, 2014, p. 18). As mentioned above, the reality a documentary tries to represent has a cyclical debate surrounding it. Sim makes the point that all political documentaries must have an impact on the discourse of events they cover (Sim, 2011, p.17). However, impact is not just about what the documentarians bring to the film. It is about what the audiences’ expectations are.

When an audience member hears that a film is a documentary he has an idea of what to expect when he watches it. Each audience member brings his own experiences into what it means to watch a documentary. Nichols notes that audience members expect to get one of two things out of watching documentaries. The first is to “learn, be moved, to discover or be persuaded of possibilities that pertain to the historical world” (Nichols 2010, p.38). The second is to “encounter documentaries with an expectation that their desire to know more about the world will find gratification during the course of the film” (p38). He goes on to say that the audience

⁵ Ethnographic documentaries are documentaries based around the documentarians embedding themselves into a given culture and conducting an observation of said culture. This type of filmmaking is often associated with Anthropology. Nichols defines this observational mode, “Emphasizes a direct engagement with the everyday life of subjects as observed by an unobtrusive camera” (Nicholes, 2010).

looks at the facts presented and decides if the argument present is a logical one to fulfill its expectation of the documentary. “Documentaries stimulate epistophilia (a desire to know) in their audiences” (p.40). And documentaries propose that they will fulfill this for their audience members (p.40). If this is what a documentary proposes and what an audience member expects to get, then many documentaries may not fulfill this expectation. When fiction is at play and the person consuming that fiction is not expecting it, how does an audience member wade through the misinformation that they could be consuming? This is not just a problem for audiences, it is an issue for documentarians as well. No documentary could have an impact without audiences understanding and investing in the film. And to have an investment in the film, audiences need to care. Therefore, the next thought in this relationship with documentary and audiences is how do documentarians get audiences to care?

An Emotional Impact

Sim asked Metz how he came to make his film (p.18) and Metz said he saw the journalism being done by mass media and it was not getting the message across. “...maybe there was a need for storytellers, narrators, filmmakers to make an emotional impact [with consumers]” (p.18). Elly Konijin, Juliette Walma van der Molen, and Sander van Nes did a multivariate analysis to see how emotion affected viewers’ perceptions of realism in audiovisual media. This was based on the pretense, addressed above, of documentaries blurring lines between fact and fiction. The main note is that every day, news and information programs are using cinematic techniques to make the programing more interesting for the viewer. This is accompanied by the statement that “more fiction and fantasy programs claim to be based on facts or real-world happenings” (Konijin et al., 2009, p.310). They found that when viewers believed the film was fictional, emotional viewers attributed more realism and higher information value to TV-programing than

non-emotional viewers (p.322), meaning that viewers who are more emotionally invested in a story line or a film tended to attribute more realism to the film, even if it was fiction and they knew it was fiction. The most important thing demonstrated was that audiences “experiencing emotions while watching visual media may bias the perception of the contents” (pg.332). This led to “viewers selective information processing to frame subsequently presented information, to favor emotional material in recall, and to influence information processing errors in believing fiction to be real” (pg. 313). This exploitation of emotions can lead to misinformation and confusion among viewers.

Konijin, Walma, and Nes’s study concludes that even if viewers know one film is fake and the other is real, as long as they get emotionally involved with the story or the characters, it may be more about what is perceived than what information is presented. “Perceived realism may thus be considered a mediating variable in the prediction of the attributed information value of a media message” (P.324). Konijin references cultivation theory stating that it is not just the amount of television one consumes every day, but also that much of the media that is presented to viewers is hard to differentiate fact from fiction (p.312).

They also point out that this is not just true of documentary, but also of everyday news media. They write that it is unclear whether consumers comprehend just how much their news is edited (p.314). This is important because, while well-edited videos is what viewers expect to see, they may not know just how something is edited. Editing could be a source of the disconnect between viewer and documentarian. How the documentary is edited absolutely changes meanings and realities within the film. Adding music is just one of the ways that editing can influence viewers’ feelings about the subject. Another is by putting in footage that looks real but is created by the documentarian. This is what Sarah Polley did in her documentary *Stories We*

Tell [2012]⁶. The same year as Konijin’s study, Heather LaMarre and Kristen Landereville did a study discussing just that — an emotional connection and audience engagement as it relates to documentary and historical reenactment films.

LaMarre and Landereville also found a viewer’s emotions can bring him or her into a story and allow that viewer to be more engaged. And if viewers are not thinking critically, they can also be misled by information in a fictional situation in a historical film (LaMarre, 2009, p.541). This duo did an experiment showing two different groups films on the same topic—one was a historical reenactment and the other was a documentary. The pair’s biggest finding was that negative emotions towards the films the researchers showed led to stronger interest in learning about genocide, feelings of disgust increased learning and feelings of guilt decreased learning (p.548) — feelings of disgust and guilt were higher in the documentary group than in the group watching the historical reenactment (p.546). The researchers also said this was true because a strong narrative plays a large role in viewer engagement. Because of this, the authors concluded: “This finding suggests that documentaries have the power to evoke just as much, and sometimes more, emotion than a fictional portrayal of an event” (p.550). This emotional involvement is something that any director would want their audience to feel. Julien Mathonnière finds this to be true in his content analysis of various war stories.

“The empathy we feel for the protagonists is entirely the result of an elaborate narrative construction” (Mathonnière, 2014, p.4). He goes on to discuss how this connection is hard to make with war movies. This is also what Metz said in Sim’s article (Sim, 2011), stating it is hard to bring all of the emotions and people to life, but if a documentary can bring you into that space

⁶Sarah Polley shoots actors reenacting scenes from her childhood on an old camera to give the scenes an archival effect. It is not until the end of the film, when the audience sees actors putting on make-up and props that we know it is a reenactment.

it can really be moving (Mathonnière, 2014 ; Sim, 2011). Mathonnière states that fiction, in some cases, can bring the viewer closer to these subjects (Mathonnière, 2014, p.9). Emotions bring consumers closer to the subject of films; one thing that these articles did not discuss is the ethics of this. Editing and providing a narrative have been established as a necessity to a documentary, but is it ethical to present something as reality when it is a fictionally developed plot line? Potter and Tomasello take manipulations of emotions in documentaries one step further in that they do not only discuss how emotions are important when portraying violence, but also how it is important for the viewer's interpretations to be considered.

The Viewer

Potter and Tomasello did an experiment to see just how much audience interpretations make a difference in understanding media with low, medium, and high violence. They start by stating that people have been conditioned to understand symbols differently, and that, depending on cues and context, things can be interpreted in another way (Potter, 2003, p.316). They found that there was a significant difference among participants' opinions of how violent the same video clip was (p.322). The authors concluded that their study shows the value of expanding experimental designs to include participant interpretations of elements in the study (p.327). This is, in part, what this research can help us understand when it comes to documentary — the audience. This is something that Ralph Beliveau looked at in his rhetorical analysis of *Hell House*. He looked at audience members and what they bring to the table when they view footage (Beliveau, 2012). He agrees with Potter and Thomson that each audience member can translate a given image differently depending on his or her background (p.87). He finds that mainstream media can make it seem like a documentary is meant to be objective, when that is not really the case (p.91). He responds with: “The situations in front of the camera or coming out of the screen

are glimpses, not of reality, but of actuality” (p.91). Beliveau, like other scholars, agrees that documentary does not need to be about reality or objectivity. But he states that the danger in this is that modern audiences have not been trained in critical thinking when it comes to media literacy (p.99). This will be an important aspect to consider when looking at more than one community of people.

The largest hurdle found in doing this review is that the lack of a solid definition or agreed upon term leaves scholars arguing about what is classified as documentary. They all agree that documentary is based on truth—at least more so than fiction films. Like Browne wrote in his article “Documentary audiences are addressed not as entertainment consumers, as with fictional films, but agentive citizens who can be called upon to address social injustices” (Browne, 2015, p.46). So then how does this merger of fiction and fact play out for an audience that was traditionally prepared for either truthful, factual films or fictional ones?

A study done by Daniel Beck, Lea Hellmuller, and Nina Aeschbacher looked at everyday factual entertainment compared to reality TV. This historical analysis showed how current audiences are used to seeing reality TV, which mimics documentary, but is not classified as documentary (Beck, 2012). This study shows audience members tend to single out things that fit with the author’s idea of what a typical audience would believe. Their focus is that documentary is about truth, journalistic inquiry, and stimulating debate, whereas reality TV focuses on entertainment value (p.6). The authors writes, discussing reality TV: “While program makers promise to depict reality, the plots of reality-based formats are influenced by the participant’s awareness of being filmed and by the necessity for the producers to cut down filmed footage to the length of TV broadcast” (p.6). As pointed out above, this is also something that documentarians do. This is not to argue that documentary is the same as reality TV by any

means; it is just possible to draw parallels to Beck's study. This is a standard on which most people do not agree, so it is important to take that into account when examining how audience members view the difference between reality and fiction in documentary and how they sift through fact and fiction in these films. This is especially true when fiction is made to look like fact. Anthony Carew looks at audience members and sees what they are producing.

Blurred lines between fact and fiction

Carew looks at citizen journalists and the content they are producing. He discusses in what ways this is shaping how we understand documentary (Carew, 2012). He states that, "Digital video footage is now indivisible from 'reality'" (p.1). He then explains how a would-be-audience member's access to a camera allows him to create his own content and better understand that the lines between fiction and reality are blurred (p.1). This fits with the audience perception theory in that audience members can bring their own ideas into the film to help them discern what is real and what is not. Some documentaries flawlessly depict a reality that the documentarian created; because some documentarians are trying to persuade or educate a viewer on a topic. When the lines between fiction and reality are blurred and an agenda is still pushed, can it be a point of confusion or misinformation for the viewer?

Nichols discusses how the viewer perceives "voice." He writes, "The voice of a documentary can make claims, propose perspectives, and evoke feelings" (Nichols, 2010, p.50). He goes on to explain how documentaries try to persuade a viewer through voice, or narrative. This does not just mean through literal voice, but through framing, composition, chronology, and what modes⁷ the documentarian uses (p.52). The way voice is perceived is important because it

⁷ The modes of documentary described by Nichols are: expository, poetic, observational, participatory, reflective, or performative. These modes show a motive for the documentary and ground it in a reason for making the film, and the style it is created in.

is what persuades the viewer, and if that is based in fiction, it can cause misinformation to be perpetuated through the viewer. Nichols also points out that these films are grounded in subjectivity. Stating that the documentarian starts with what they know and builds off a partial perspective, which drives them, but makes it difficult to be objective (p.57). But as Edelstein stated direct cinema⁸ is the most common version of documentary (Edelstein, 2013). This direct cinema is a kind of investigative journalistic style, which common knowledge would dictate to be unbiased and fact based — which other scholars say is impossible. So, the scholarship on the topic of documentary audiences is rather mixed. Do viewers understand the difference between a mockumentary and journalistic documentary? And why does it matter?

How do viewers understand the difference between fiction (dramatization, re-enactment, etc.) and fact in documentary? Obviously, it is hard enough for scholars to understand where to draw the line between fiction films and documentary. How do viewers understand these differences? How is this understanding different when discussing various kinds of documentary watchers? Will people who believe documentaries as truth be more likely to see fiction as fact? Documentary audiences are not as well studied by scholars as other audiences in media studies. This research will add to the discourse about audiences and about documentaries. This question will help documentary scholars to better understand consumers in this era of change for the genre. It will also give documentarians a perspective into their audience members. The methods to conduct this research will be done through focuses groups, in-depth interviews.

Research Question: How do audience members understand the difference between fact and fiction in documentary?

⁸ According to Ideas Film, an online magazine about film thinking, Direct Cinema is “a term that implies the attempt to remove all barriers between subject and audience, be they of a technical, procedural and structural nature.” (Knight).

H1: If the participants have less experience with documentaries, they will be more inclined to believe fictional elements of the documentary to be true.

H2: A participant with a lower education level will be more inclined to believe fictional elements of the documentary to be true.

H3: If a participant knows about the ongoing discussion of factual and fictional elements being used in documentary, he or she would be more likely to spot fictional elements in the film.

Chapter 3: Methods

This research looks at how audience members' past experiences with documentary inform their current understanding of documentaries. To approach this topic, research was done through a qualitative experiment using focus groups and in-depth interviews. The researcher put together three different focus groups in order to better understand audiences' perceptions of fact and fiction in documentary. Focus groups give the chance for consumers to give their opinions of products, services and issues (Brennen, 2013). If audience members can be seen as consumers of a documentary, then focus groups can be used to understand consumers' opinions of documentaries as a product. By testing different variables, the research was able to record what it is that audience members bring to a screening that helps them understand the difference between fact and fiction in documentary.

Specifically, the research is going to look at how age, education level, and past experience with the genera play a role in understanding fact and fiction in documentary. One of the hypotheses of this study is that if the participant has less experience with documentaries they will be more inclined to believe fictional elements of the documentary to be true. The second hypothesis is that if the participant has a lower education level then they will be more inclined to

believe fictional elements of the documentary to be true. The third is if a participant knew about the ongoing discussion of factual and fictional elements being used in documentary then they would be more likely to spot fictional elements in the film than if they had no previous knowledge of the conversation.

To test these hypotheses, the researcher showed a documentary to the three different focus groups. One goal of doing this work was to record the way people understand fictional elements in documentary. Another goal of this research was to add to the conversation about how audience members understand factual and fictional elements in documentaries. This topic has very little literature and this study will help further the conversation about documentary audiences.

Group makeup

This study consisted of three focus groups. Prior to the group meeting, the participants filled out a pre-survey to gather background information. The information collected was: age, education level, current job, and the last time the subject watched a documentary. Focus group members did not need to have an interest in documentaries, but had to have seen a documentary in the last year to participate. This was in order to ensure everyone had a baseline of having watched at least one documentary as a reference point. The sample of people varied in their like and dislike of documentaries. This helped to gauge if their past experience with this film type would influence their understanding process. Gender, race, class and other groupings not mentioned were not taken into consideration when selecting participants for this study.

The researcher was not the moderator for this study. The moderator was trained in interviewing, with a good understanding of the study and of the subjects being discussed. Brennen said that it is best for moderators to paraphrase responses and re-state key aspects of

what participants say in order to better understand participants (Brennen, 2013). The moderator also employed the four active listening tools that Brennen brings up: Clarifying responses, paraphrasing responses, reflecting responses, and summarizing responses (Brennen). This was used to show the participants the moderator is engaged and understanding what the participant is saying. It was also used to help the researcher clearly understand what the participant meant.

Participant recruiting

The researcher invited people to participate in the first focus group. Subsequent focus group members were found through snow-ball sampling and invitations to participate from the researcher. Each focus group consisted of five to eight people. This range gave the group enough varying viewpoints to elicit conversation and kept it intimate enough the group could discuss opinions openly and without fear of judgment. Participants were incentivized to participate in the study with compensation of 10 dollars and a movie voucher for one free movie at the True/False Film Fest⁹. The cash was provided by the researcher and the movie voucher was donated by True/False.

Setting

The study took place in three different Missouri cities. One group was held on the University of Missouri campus in Columbia, Missouri. Columbia, Missouri is home to the True/False Film Fest. The participants at this location would be more likely to know about the conversation about fact and fiction in documentaries. Columbia also is a highly media-literate city, being home to the oldest journalism school in the world — the Missouri School of Journalism. The researcher

⁹ The True / False Film Fest is a documentary film festival held the first week of March every year in Columbia, Missouri. It lasts about four days in the spring and brings in documentary films which blur the lines between fact and fiction in documentary — thus the name True / False. The festival donated a ticket for each participant.

reserved a room large enough to comfortably sit the participants, the moderator and the researcher.

The second location was in Jefferson City, Missouri. This is a more rural area of Missouri and about 35 minutes from Columbia. While a few people may venture into Columbia for True/False, there are far fewer people who will know about this festival and about the conversation about fact and fiction in documentary. The researcher reserved a local community room at a Hawthorn Bank in Jefferson City.

The third location was in Kansas City, Missouri, about two hours from Columbia. Here participants were the least likely of the three cities in this study to know about True/False and the conversation about fact and fiction in documentary. The researcher reserved a room on the University of Missouri – Kansas City campus.

Collection

Collection of data was primarily done through videorecording the focus groups. The researcher also gathered field notes by acting as an observer. The researcher then took two participants from each focus group after it was completed and conducted one-on-one, in-depth, semi-structured interviews which were audio recorded and then transcribed.

As stated above, this study was done through three focus groups. One group was the control group (Columbia) and the other two variable groups (Jefferson City and Kansas City). Each participant was told prior to arrival that he or she would need to participate in group discussions and be attentive to the documentary. The moderator had a list of questions to ask each group, but it was up to the moderator's discretion if he asked more questions to better document participant answers. Each section started with a short introduction, which varied depending on location. Then the moderator showed the first 18 minutes of *Stories We Tell*, a

documentary directed by Sarah Polley. In this section of the documentary the participants were exposed to the director's style of using both high quality footage with a super-8 footage and reenactments interspersed. They saw all of the main characters in the film and got a sample of who they are. They were introduced to Michael and Diane's love affair and the struggles they faced as a couple. The section shown ends with Diane moving to Montreal to pursue her acting career. This documentary was picked because it is an expository documentary, in a slightly more artistic style than some participants may have been used to, but most might not have seen. This section introduced the film and allowed the participants to get a taste of the style and be exposed to a number of the reenactments. After showing participants this section of the film the moderator asked each group similar questions.

For Group 1 (the control group from Columbia), before the documentary started the moderator introduced the documentary with just: "Enjoy *Stories We Tell* directed by Sarah Polley." This introduction did not comment on the truth or falsities in the film. It only introduced the title and director. This created a transition into the film, leaving only the participants pre-conceived notions about the film, without input from the moderator. Once the section of the film finished, the moderator paused the movie and asked a range of questions. Once this questioning was finished, the moderator ended with an explanation of the current conversation about fact and fiction in documentary and revealed the home movies in this documentary are a mixture of reenactments shot on an old super eight camera and actual home movie footage. The researcher then picked two participants who were particularly interested in the conversation to stay for interviews. The moderator and researcher then asked for those two participants to stay and released the other participants. Then the researcher conducted a 10-minute interview with each of the two remaining participants.

The same process was completed with Group 2 (Jefferson City group) and Group 3 (Kansas City group). The only difference was in the introductions. The introduction for Jefferson City was a short blurb about the documentary and an observation made by the director about the falsities in the film. The moderator read: “Stories We Tell was directed by Sarah Polley. “[This film] explores the elusive nature of truth and memory, but at its core is a deeply personal film about how our narratives shape and define us as individuals and families, all interconnecting to paint a profound, funny and poignant picture of the larger human story.” Polley told Indiewire magazine that she never intended to fool anyone and she was genuinely surprised with how long it took people to see the falsities in the film.”

For Group 3 (Kansas City group), the process was introduced by the moderator reading: “Stories We Tell was directed by Sarah Polley. The film’s website describes the plot as the director’s story, where Polley “playfully interviews and interrogates a cast of characters of varying reliability, eliciting refreshingly candid, yet mostly contradictory, answers to the same questions.”” This was an introduction that hinted at the idea that there could be some kind of untrustworthy element in the film.

The three different introductions gave each different group a different frame with which to watch the film. This allowed the control group to be a basis for what a general group of people would expect coming from a documentary. Then the different hints given to other groups were used to see if that past information would impact how they viewed the film.

Analysis and measurements of Focus Groups and Interviews

Once the focus group recordings and interviews were transcribed, they went through an ideological textual analysis of what was said in these groups and interviews (Brennan, 2013). Doing so helped better understand the multiple ideological positions that came out of this

research (Brennan, 2013). The researcher looked at three of the five main areas of emphasis Brennan points out in her book — content, absence and mode of address (Brennan, 2013). The methods of analysis left out were structure and style. These transcripts have not been created with a traditional written format in mind, due to the fact they are conversations. This is the same for the style of the texts they are in the format of Word documents which the researcher created.

When looking at content, this study took into account “opinions, beliefs values and other judgments, the vocabulary used, the stereotypes and characterizations of people [in the film], and the conflicts, resolutions, and other actions within the text” (Brennan, 2013). This was assessed for each group. Then trends that emerged in the separate groups were compared to document an opinion of participants’ speech content. This also helped document how the prior knowledge of fiction and fact being discussed earlier during the focus group impacted the following conversations (Note: this is not an observation to show correlation or causation. Due to this being a small sample in qualitative research, this study will not show any kind of correlation or causation). The next step was to look at how the groups compared across age groups and education levels. Comparing and contrasting ages and education gave more information about the diversity of content between ages and document the differences in content between education levels. This groups were too small to identify any kind of pattern or representative data, but did provide an avenue for future research. Then this study looked at the next level of textual analysis — mode of address.

Brennan describes this as a mode of how the text talks to the reader. This research looked at how the participants addressed the moderator or the group — to whomever they were directing their comments (Brennan. 2013). The researcher did the same kind of comparisons which were mentioned for content — a comparison between control group, group two and group three, and

then a comparison between age and education groups. This documents with whom the participants are discussing their ideas about the films and documents whom the participant is thinking about when watching the films. Finally, the researcher looked at the last level of this textual analysis — absence.

Brennan describes this as elements that could have been expected to be discussed but where not brought up in the text (Brennan, 2013). The study looked at what elements were not brought up in the conversations when comparing control group and group two and group three or across age groups and education levels. This helped document possible difference between groups. This also helped check for any holes in the questions asked or check the study for missed concepts. Looking at the hypotheses for this qualitative experiment, they will be recognized through use of this textual analysis.

One hypothesis suggests that if the participants have less experience with documentaries they will be more inclined to believe fictional elements of the documentary to be true. Looking at the data gained from the textual analysis, this study recorded if more people with more experience with documentary where more shocked by the idea of fiction in documentary or vice versa. If this were to be documented, then this hypothesis would be incorrect. The second hypothesis suggests a participant with a lower education level will be more inclined to believe fictional elements of the documentary to be true. Looking at the data gained from the textual analysis this study will record that if more people with a higher education level where more shocked by the idea of fiction in documentary then this hypothesis would be incorrect.

The final hypothesis suggests that participants who know about the ongoing discussion about factual and fictional elements being used in documentary would be more likely to spot fictional elements in the film. This was also measured through the textual analysis that was done.

If more people did not know about the ongoing discussion and then could still point out the fictional elements in the documentary without a problem, this hypothesis would be incorrect.

Chapter 4: Analysis / Results

In total 21 people participated in this study. Eight from Kansas City, five from Jefferson City, and seven from Columbia. Participants varied in age, education level, and their passion for documentary. Fourteen of the participants were 18 to their mid 20s, two were in their late 20s to mid 40s, and four were in their late 40s and up. The different participants' ages allowed the research to consider life experience when understanding answers from participants. Five participants were finishing up high school, seven were in college and eight participants had bachelor's degrees. The different degrees held allow the study to consider education to understand answers from participants. None had seen Polley's film before, but all had seen a documentary within the last year. Five had watched a documentary less than a week before the study, one more than a week, seven had seen a documentary in less than a month before the study, six more than a month before, and one had seen a documentary less than a year before the study. This showed that each participant had an expectation of what a documentary was before participating in the study. When asked about their favorite or most recently watched documentaries, participants listed foodie, music and historical documentaries as their frame of reference. Only a few members in the Columbia group brought up poetic or participatory documentaries. All participants' names have been changed to give them anonymity.

Modes

Content: This is the most extensive mode of the three this study addresses, encompassing participants' opinions, beliefs, values, judgments, vocabulary, stereotypes and characterizations of people in the film. The discussion of what separates documentary film from

other genre is what started off each group. All three groups said documentaries are true and normally unscripted and educational. C1 took that a step farther saying, “I think that it has roots in reality but I don't necessarily believe that everything in there is 100 percent natural or un-staged.” She was not alone in this thought. KC7 said that documentaries are fact based, but they are facts that are filtered through the characters’ perception. This nuanced thought was not brought up as early in the conversation during the Jefferson City group. This group said documentaries are educational, fact based, and not scripted. This group of 18/19-year-old students did not think about the stories constructed in documentaries as biased. They thought more of, what Nichols describes as, an expository documentary. This is a documentary which emphasizes verbal commentary and an argumentative logic, a mode which Nichols writes, most people associate with documentary (Nichols, 2010 Pg.31). The group from Columbia and Kansas City did bring up that facts can be colored by the people talking about them. The people who brought this up were in their mid 20s and up in each group. None of the groups brought up the idea of outright fiction in documentary early in the discussions. They did, however, play with the idea of what is reality and truth in their groups.

Most notably in KC the group, there was discussion of *Stories We Tell*'s style. The moderator asked if KC3 thought the story had facts. KC3 said yes, but with the caveat that they were not scientific facts, saying instead, “that some other documentaries have but it is facts from people's viewpoints.” KC3 brought up the idea of perception and reality in documentaries and how that plays a role in the factual nature of a documentary. She said that these types of personal facts are still valid, but are not scientific. This deviates from what Smith and Rock assumed about popular culture and documentaries, that facts are equated with objective truth. This was not KC3’s point of view on facts in documentary. This was also brought up by other

group members throughout the session. It was also a nuance that was brought up in the Columbia focus group.

JC2 said that what the people in the film are remembering could be incorrect because they are just memories of memories and that can be faulty. This group also discussed how this faulty memory can color how we remember people and therefore, the level of honesty the film displayed. In Columbia, C7 brought up that documentaries tend to do more journalism, in line with what Smith and Rock wrote. But C7 said that this was not the case with *Stories We Tell*, Which C7 said had a style different from journalism. This was referenced a few time throughout the session after that. However, in her individual interview, C7 said “I think documentators (sic) have to take a long time to make sure they are getting everything right or the story line won't even come together. So in a way, they have the hardest jobs of any journalist, in my opinion.” C7 is a journalism student and discussed that she loves non-fiction because of this. When asked why she equated documentary with journalism, she said she loved that question showing this as a topic she had thought about it before. She said that documentarians need to know the basic journalistic ethics and they need to know where to draw the line between fact and fiction. This was not the case for filmmakers discussed in the literature. She also brought up films like *Kate Plays Christine* and *Stranger in Paradise* as films she had seen before, two documentaries that use fiction to help tell the story. After she talked about journalistic ethics in documentary, she said that films such as those needed to be in their own film category, that they are not documentaries because they were not “a super journalistic work.” JC4 also brought up this theory of hybrid documentaries.

In his individual interview, JC4 discussed how *Stories We Tell* is not really completely factual, because it is based on peoples’ perspectives and not scientific, objective fact. He said for

this reason it was not really a documentary. He went on, “I mean calling it a fictional documentary or semi-fictional or something like that would make more sense. But it would be hard to classify something that has fictional elements in the same grouping as something that is completely factual.” JC4 was a fan of music and National Geographic documentaries. He believed that there are documentaries that are completely factual and National Geographic was his prime example. JC4 also brought up Shark Week from the Discovery Channel. When he learned those programs bend the facts (much like *Stories We Tell* and the reenactments with Diane), he said that was not okay. He said it did not bother him with *Stories We Tell*, but in a Shark Week or National Geographic scenario, it does. He said if he was trying to learn something then he would have an issue with fictional elements in the documentary. He was not the only one. Many of the participants, after learning about fiction in documentary, said they think it is fine if it not used in educational or political documentaries.

C3 said that if she had not known about the reenactments in *Stories We Tell* it would not have bothered her to have found out later some of the home footage in the film was staged. In her individual interview she said that this would not be the case if she had been watching a National Geographic-style film. She said she understands documentarians needing more visual footage, but she would not want to be shown something that was not real portrayed as something real in a historical documentary “because those are ... facts.” JC5 and JC1 took a stance on any documentary, saying that if a storyline where changed or the situation made up, that would be wrong. But they were fine with fictional visual aids in documentaries, such as reenactments. Fiction was not the only focus people had. They also formed opinions about the characters in just the 18-minutes of the film they saw.

When the moderator asked if people believed the story being told, they said yes. In Columbia, the group unanimously said they believed it and when asked if there were parts that were not believable, they said maybe they had not gotten to the implausible part or maybe the people are only saying nice things about the Diane character. C6 said from what she had seen so far, it looked like Diane could suffer from depression and maybe the family did not want to talk about it. Members of the Columbia and Jefferson City groups thought that Michael was a trustworthy narrator. C6 said it was because his voice is wise; JC3 also commented on his having a nice voice. The Kansas City group members said they did not trust him fully, mostly because they were confused by what the narrator was reading. KC2 said that the narration was just too story like (which it is, because the narrator is reading a memoir he wrote at the request of the director). This showed that KC2 had some hesitations about the narrator because she expected documentaries to be unscripted and not have such a story book narration. Kansas City was the group with the most educated and oldest people in the study. In Jefferson City, the group took a particular liking to the Harry character. JC1 stating that he was “cool.” Two of the groups scrutinized the family for different things. In Jefferson City, members thought the family should be more emotional or that they were being fake when expressing nervousness at the beginning of the film. In Columbia, a few participants thought the family members were cherry picking or misremembering their memories of Diane because of all the positive things they had to say about her. In Jefferson City, JC4 said he really thought everyone was being genuine about Diane — that they really thought she was a great person. It seemed that it did not matter where people came from they believed that documentaries told a true story.

Each participant had different feelings about characters and where the plot was heading, but only one person picked up on the fictional elements in the film. Age, education and

experience did not seem to make a difference. Participants did bring up reasons why the film may have fictional elements, when asked if the film was believable they had less speculative reasoning than they did about the characters.

In Columbia the group thought that the fact they showed the setup of the interviews, the people being nervous and the narration being read made the story more believable because it set up the film to show these people just giving their “honest opinion.” The group then went on to agree that they could not see why the director would lie about this story. In Kansas City, the group said something similar. KC5 said the characters in the film had no reason to lie up to the point the group had seen. KC2 said that they seemed to be displaying genuine emotions. Group members also agreed that having the behind-the-scenes footage showed these people were not actors. C3 said “Well, I think that for me, watching a documentary you don't think that, ‘Oh these people aren't telling the truth.’ And so that for me is why I didn't doubt them at all.” Before C6 knew that it was reenactment footage, she brought it up as evidence that the people talking are reliable characters, saying that they would say something and then show it happening. C6 said “That gives it the legitimacy, I guess, that the things they are saying are true.” KC5 also said that the home movies gave the film some legitimacy. The Columbia group was not hesitant to believe the reenactment footage was real home movie footage. The other two groups were at first hesitant, but only one person stuck with that notion and continued to claim it might be fake.

In Jefferson City, JC2 mentioned that the film had a ton of footage of Diane and was skeptical about it. The group talked about reasons why all of the home movie would exist, citing reasons such as Michael saying he got a camera and liked using it. JC1 said he thought it might have been staged and JC3 said they could have just told someone to play Diane and they shot it with an old camera — which is exactly what the film did. But JC3 said that was equally as likely

as just having the real footage. In Kansas City, the group also discussed the home movies. KC6 said he has worked with video editing software before and that the grain on the reenactment footage was just too constantly grainy, making him think it might be fake. He was the only person this study encountered that really pushed for the idea that the footage could be fake. He also picked up on the scene from the present-day interviews that were shot on the Super 8 camera, which neither of the other groups did. The people in his group said they just thought that was a stylistic choice to bridge the current footage and the old stuff. This is where it is important to note the introductions of the film to the groups.

In Columbia they were not told anything about the fictional elements in documentary, but they did bring up the True/False Film Fest on their own. In Kansas City, they got a hint that the characters were not 100 percent reliable. In Jefferson City, they were told that there was fiction in the film. In Kansas City, only one person brought up the introduction as a frame of reference for the film. KC2 brought up the introduction in a way that was unrelated to the fictional elements in the film. In Jefferson City JC4 said in his individual interview that if the moderator had not said that there was fiction in the film, then he would have watched the movie differently. He said he was watching behind the characters on screen because he thought the filmmaker was trying to trick them, but he did not find anything. This was the case for most of the participants.

The moderator asked the Jefferson City group if they thought there was a place for fiction in documentary. JC4 thought there should not be because he normally watches documentaries to learn something. The group got into a conversation about films like *Mermaids*, *Shark Week*, shows like *Catching Bigfoot* and *Ghost Hunters*. The group agreed that it completely depends on what you are showing whether can be fiction in a documentary. JC2 said personal stories wouldn't bother him if fictional because it did not affect him. JC1 and JC5 said if the fictional

part was a major point in the story, that would be a problem. The moderator then asked if the group thought they knew what was going to happen in the rest of the movie.

The ideas ran wild with the Jefferson City group, ranging from an on-camera confession from Michael for murdering Diane, to Diane committing suicide to a divorce between Michael and Diane. Kansas City and Columbia were asked the same question and agreed that there was some kind of infidelity and a divorce. All groups assumed Diane had died. None of the participants figured out the whole story from the section of the film they saw. Then the big question came when the moderator asked if there were any fictional elements of the film they had just seen.

Besides the conversation about perspective and faulty memory on the part of the characters, KC6 was the only one who said the home movies might be fake. All other participants said they thought there were no fictional elements to the film. When the moderator told them about the reenactments, they were surprised but not upset by it, because it was not an educational documentary.

Mode of Address

Each group reacted in largely the same way when it came to how they addressed each other and the moderator. They would talk to the moderator when he asked them a question. Then participants would point to people or nod at them if they were building on what a co-participant had said. This did not change across age groups or across education levels. One thing that could be attributed to the age of the Jefferson City group is that they asked the moderator if they were correct a few times. This is not something the other, older groups did. All of the groups were collaborative and constructive with each other and the moderator.

Absence

There was only one thing that, surprisingly, did not come up during this process. Not even one of the participants looked up the film before they came. When each group was asked what they thought the plot of the film was, after only watching 18 minutes of it, none of them knew what it was — not even the general idea. The research was advertised as: “Participate in documentary research and watch *Stories We Tell* directed by Sarah Polley.” It was surprising that no one decided to see what they had signed up to watch. Paired with participants answers this can show that participants thought they knew what they were getting. Most walked into the room thinking they were going to watch a documentary, which each of them thought they knew what that was. Most were surprised by the poetic nature and cinematic qualities of *Stories We Tell* and did not think that this was a documentary style. All but one participant liked these qualities and said they would like to watch more documentaries like this.

Hypotheses Findings

H1: If the participant has less experience with documentaries they will be more inclined to believe fictional elements of the documentary to be true.

Participants had mixed ideas about the film. Those that had more experience with documentary seemed to be more weary of the reenactments but in Kansas City only KC6 said they were fake without the moderator asking. In Columbia everyone agreed that there were no fictional elements in the film and a few of them had gone to the True/ False film festival just two weeks before. In Jefferson City JC2 was weary of the footage because he said there was an awful lot of it. Once it was brought up again JC2 explained his hesitation and others in the group said that it could be fake but none of them said there were fake parts in the film outright. JC2 had seen a documentary recently but couldn't recall what the documentary was. From this data it

seems the responses to who believed the footage to be fake and the those who where not sure or thought it was real was fairly mixed. That would prove this first hypothesis false.

H2: If the participant has a lower education level then they will be more inclined to believe fictional elements of the documentary to be true.

The group from Jefferson City were all in high school, the youngest of the three groups. JC2 had made a comment about the sheer volume of home video in the film, but never said it was fake. This group not only did not see the falsities in the film, members let their imaginations run wild with what might happen in the next 100 minutes of the film. They said that maybe it was a form of “gotcha journalism” where the filmmakers where trying to catch Michael in a lie about what happened to Diane and that maybe he killed her. They did agree that Diane was dead and there was some kind of infidelity in their relationship, but they did not guess the search for Polley’s paternity was part of the film. Kansas City had the most educated group of people. All the people in the room had a bachelor’s degree or were in college already. The participants who had bachelor’s degrees where skeptical of the film, but only KC6 said that the footage was fake. They picked up on the plot of the film quickly and thought there was some kind of infidelity and that Diane was gone—either dead or had disappeared in some way. In Columbia, most of the group was in college, with a few people who had earned bachelor’s degrees. That group saw no discrepancy in the video. Apart from it being a film told from people’s biased perspectives, they believed this was not a fictional film.

Each of the groups addressed this idea of why the story was being told. Each of the groups then decided the family had to be interesting, otherwise they wouldn’t make a movie out of it. They just didn’t know why Diane and her family were so interesting. All-in-all, it seemed the fictional elements of the film were not noticed by many people, while the high school

students let their imaginations take them when talking about what could happen in the story the groups were similar in this aspect — proving this hypothesis false.

H3: If the participants knew about the ongoing discussion of factual and fictional elements being used in documentary, then they would be more likely to spot fictional elements in the film than if they had no previous knowledge of the conversation.

In Columbia the film was just introduced by title and an “enjoy the film” comment, yet it is the location of the True/False Film Fest. This came up in the first question the moderator asked. C1 and C7 brought up the festival and a few of the films they had seen at it. Yet no one in the group caught the reenactments as fake home movie footage. In Jefferson City, the group was introduced to the film by the moderator saying: “Polley told Indiewire magazine that she never intended to fool anyone and she was genuinely surprised with how long it took people to see the falsities in the film.” No one brought this up during the group discussion, but JC4 did mention that having that knowledge changed how he watched the film. He was watching the backgrounds of the footage and interviews, thinking there was going to be some kind of mistake or trick happening in a spot where the viewer wouldn’t normally be looking. In Kansas City, KC2 brought up the introduction the moderator read as: “*Stories We Tell* was directed by Sarah Polley. The film’s website describes the plot as the director’s story, where Polley ‘playfully interviews and interrogates a cast of characters of varying reliability, eliciting refreshingly candid, yet mostly contradictory, answers to the same questions.’” The moderator asked what Polley meant when she told her father this was an interrogation process in the film. KC2 said that she just thought of this introduction. She said it impacted how she watched the film because she thought it was just going to be in an interrogation style documentary. Participants who had previous knowledge of the conversation of falsities in documentary and who were told that the

film they were about to watch had some element of fiction still missed the reenactments, proving this hypothesis false.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

Even when told the documentary they were about to watch had fiction, participants still did not know parts of it were fake. One of the only reasons they questioned it was because the moderator was asking the question. This came up first in the Kansas City group. The moderator asked if there were fictional elements in the film and KC7 said she didn't think so but now because he was asking, she was thinking about it. This same idea came up in the Jefferson City group. In Columbia, C3 said that normally she just watches movies to escape, so she is not normally paying attention to details like that. C7 said she considers herself someone who actively watches movies, but not to fact check them. She said she was more concerned about the plot. This was the same thought process for JC4 and KC1. KC2 and JC5 both said they try to figure out the plot, but if there is something they don't know, they will look it up. This was not the typical response. As stated, not noticing the reenacted footage was common across education levels, age groups, and focus groups. Most of the people who participated were only thinking about this topic in such detail because they were attending a session on documentary research. Not only does this change the outcome, but it changes how they thought about the film. This raises the question then why do we suspend our critical thinking when we are watching a documentary?

Is it the big screen and association with movies and escapism or is it just what each person brings into watching a documentary? The people who participated in this study bring their own biases into watching this documentary, which then shaped their opinions of the film. In each focus group they believed that a documentary is true and unscripted. Some groups said

documentaries are also educational and that was normally why people watch them. During his in-depth interview, JC4 was asked if knowing that documentaries can have elements of fiction in them would change how he looked at documentaries in the future. He said,

Well usually, I just kind of assume they [documentaries] are right because you know they pull out all these guys and they are like 'this is Dr. so and so, and he specializes in this,' but you never really think to question whether or not what they are saying is true. Then look at where they get their facts and all of that. So, it is probably something you should do.

It is not just about assuming documentarians are telling the truth in film. It is also about understanding the filmmaking process and how that can affect the visuals in the film.

In Kansas City, the moderator asked about the Super 8 footage that was shown in the modern day setting. The group went through a bunch of reasons as to why it was there: to merge the two assorted styles of video, to give the footage a retro feel, to set the mood, or to set up the idea of flashbacks early in the film. While these are all good reasons for the footage being in the film, none of them have to do with the filmmaker hinting at the falsity in her film. The participants were not thinking like the filmmaker, so they didn't see it. C7 talked about how documentary is different because the filmmakers don't have as much creative control over the footage and how it is put together. Director control varies, depending on the script and type of documentary that is being made, but documentarians have access to the same equipment as fiction filmmakers, and certainly the same editing software. She notes that fiction can create things that easily fit into the story and documentaries must work with what they have. When documentarians can go back and shoot something again or re-edit a scene to change it, there is a disconnect between what the participant thinks documentary is and what it is/can be.

In the Jefferson City group, JC3 brought up a scene where the camera gets a shot of people walking down some stairs and the actors playing Mick and Diane are at the side of the steps talking. The narration speaks of the first time they met and how they talked at a party. JC3 said he thought it was odd that someone would have filmed that exact moment. This brought up another thought about truth in documentary. It is not just about the facts being told and the things being shown, but it is also about those two things matching. It was not just a party scene—it was the exact moment when the two characters met. In that same group, JC4 said that he thought in this particular documentary the mismatch of footage and narration was not a big deal, but if it was an expository documentary he would want the footage to be the exact footage being referenced in the script. The example brought up was Shark Week on the Discovery Channel. He said that if they are talking about a particular shark, the only shark that should be shown is that specific shark. This is fairly limiting for documentarians, but this is what he has always thought documentaries were meant to do. For him, this was a hard line that should not be crossed in an expository documentary. All of the group weighed in on this — if there was a fictional element in a documentary, how far is too far?

JC2 said if there was a major lie in one of the points of a poetic documentary like *Stories We Tell*, it wouldn't matter because it is just a simple story about a random family. JC3 said he needed to see more of the film to decide if a fictional element would bother him. JC5 and JC1 said if there was a major fictional element in the plot that would ruin the documentary for them. In Kansas City, KC1 and KC2 had a few things to say about blurring fact and fiction in documentary as well.

KC1 was not a huge fan of this documentary. She said it was too “loose” of a structure to hold her attention. She said she watches documentaries all the time, but this one was not for her.

Reenactments are fine if they help move the story along, but if they create the story then that is an issue, she said. This is in both the intention the filmmaker had when creating the film and it is about the execution of what she intended. KC2 said that she does not care if there are reenactments, but she would like to know ahead of time, either through saying this is a true story with reenactments or labeling footage. C3 said she draws the line at the point where it is only the smallest detail that makes the story true and everything else is just made up. That is where she said that is too much false to be a documentary. C7 said that if all of the reenactment footage would have been fake, that would have changed the film for her. But because the film had a mix of real home movie footage and reenactments, she said it was like they were embellishments. Even though only a few of the participants picked up on the footage as being fake after being told about the reenactments, they also struggled with this question of just what a documentary is.

JC4 said that *Stories We Tell* is not a fiction film, but since it has elements of fiction with the reenactments it cannot be non-fiction; it is somewhere in the middle. This is akin to what C7 said about hybrid documentaries such as *Kate Plays Christine* and *Stranger In Paradise*. KC2 brought up mockumentaries and how they are created to look like documentaries, but use fiction to create a story that looks real. She also said that *Stories We Tell* is not a mockumentary, because the charterers were showing real emotions. The participants were at a loss for what documentary is if it is not 100 percent true. Documentaries were seen by these participants as a factual tale both visually and audibly, so much so that even when they knew there were fictional elements, most of them did not pick up on the reenactments.

Limitations

This conversation is important, but this study is not without its limitations. It is limited in the scope of people who participated. Due to locations, the groups come from a small radius, all from a Midwestern city and fell within similar class and race groups. Columbia, Missouri is also home to the True/False Film Festival (which was held a week before the focus group) and the world's first journalism school. This makes Columbia unique in that it is an especially media literate city. Using Columbia as a control group might not be representative of all cities, but even if it is not participants in this group still missed the fictional elements in the documentary shown.

It is also limited in that the researcher only showed part of one documentary, which is, of course, not representative of all documentaries in the field. The section shown of *Stories We Tell* was only 18 minutes. Although, the part shown was a good sample of the rest of the film, the participants did not get the same emotional pay off they would have if they watched the film in its entirety. Some of what was asked of the participants was to have them be speculative of the film, which was not entirely fair because they did not get the full storyline.

This was also a study completed using qualitative methods. The results do not prove any kind of causation or correlation. This is a starting point for more research to be done.

Directions for Future Research

A published study using audience perception theory and documentaries has not been done in this way before. Therefore, this material will stand alone and will need to be built upon. This is a topic which still has many lingering questions to be answered. This research will hopefully fill in some of the gaps in scholarship when it comes to the viewers' opinion of documentaries with fiction and fact. This could be done with a wider scope of people or with different documentaries shown. Other questions to look at would be what do documentarians think about

their audience members when they are constructing a film, looking further into the implications of possible misinformation from documentaries and where does this idea of truth and documentary come from.

Conclusion

This research will be able to help documentary crews and scholars start to understand the audience's point of view and expectations when watching a documentary. This is important because media are fluid. Perceptions are not something that can be dictated to viewers. The consumer must understand what is happening or the documentary can have differing implications than what was intended by the filmmaker. A documentary can have a worthy cause and still fall on deaf ears, leaving a remarkable story unheard or a dire issue misunderstood. In this research, *Stories We Tell* portrays the fallibility of memory and the participants picked up on that.

However, the audience members did not understand that is what they were supposed to get out of this documentary. After they were told what the plot of the documentary was they just thought it was a story about someone's family. Does it matter that participants got the point the filmmaker was making, but they didn't realize they did? Is this a goal accomplished for Polley? This communication may not be dire in the context of this film, but what about other documentaries? Documentaries were viewed as a kindIn this research, *Stories We Tell* portrays the fallibility of memory and the participants picked up on that. However, the audience members did not understand that this is what they were supposed to get out of this documentary. After they were told what the plot of the documentary was they just thought it was a story about someone's family. Does it matter that participants got the point the filmmaker was making but they didn't realize they did? Is this a goal accomplished for Polley? This communication may not be dire in the context of this film, but what about other documentaries? The participants of this study have

viewed documentaries as a news source. They believe they can trust documentaries to do journalistic work and get the story right. Even if the documentarians do not get it right, participants believed they could sniff out the falsities.

However, this did not happen. Only one person firmly said that the reenactments were fake. Participants who believe they are actively consuming and pick out things that are not real are skeptical, but in this aspect, they still got tricked. Is being skeptical enough? Being a part of the conversation is a good step, but who is going to clue audience members in?

Media literacy will continue to be an important topic in the coming years. Discussions like this are going to be more and more prevalent. When people are questioning the validity of news and facts, being able to recognize when things are constructed is a must. There is a call for better education about media literacy to aide in understanding. As of now, people have a very stagnant idea of documentary — a subject that seems to be changing rapidly.

If the general idea about documentaries is that they are true, then whose job is it to make sure the audience knows what is real and what is not? In a film like *Stories We Tell*, it may not matter. The larger implications in a documentary about climate change, politics, or medicine could be dangerous. Anyone with a budget and a camera could make a documentary and without ethical guidelines or common ground in the industry on even the most common topic — what is a documentary — whose job is it to stop the flow of misinformation?

Today, access to information is immediate and endless, which could make it easy to check on facts that do not seem plausible. Yet, of the six people who were interviewed individually, only two said they would look up things they did not think were true. Filmmakers each have their own agenda to push through their film, even if their motives are well intentioned how does the average person decipher what is real and what is fictional? Especially when the

average consumer does not always have the media literacy and knowledge of filmmaking to make that judgment. Whose job is it to make sure consumers understand what they are watching and that they are literate enough to approach a documentary with a healthy skepticism?

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Appendix

Pre-Survey Questions

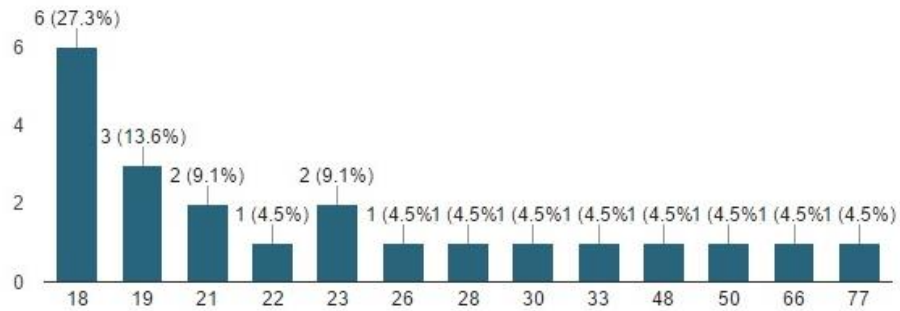
- 1) First name? (short answer)
- 2) Age? (short answer)
- 3) Current Job (short answer)
- 4) Highest level of education
 - a. Some High School
 - b. High School
 - c. Some College
 - d. Bachelors Degree
 - e. Associates Degree
 - f. Associates Degree
 - g. Other degree of higher education
 - h. Masters degree
 - i. Doctorate
- 5) When was the last time you watched a documentary?
 - a. Less than a week ago
 - b. More than a week ago
 - c. Less than a month ago
 - d. More than a month ago
 - e. Less than a year ago
 - f. More than a year ago
 - g. I have never seen a documentary
- 6) Have you ever seen “Stories We Tell” directed by Sarah Polley
 - a. Yes
 - b. no

Participants Pre-Survey Answers

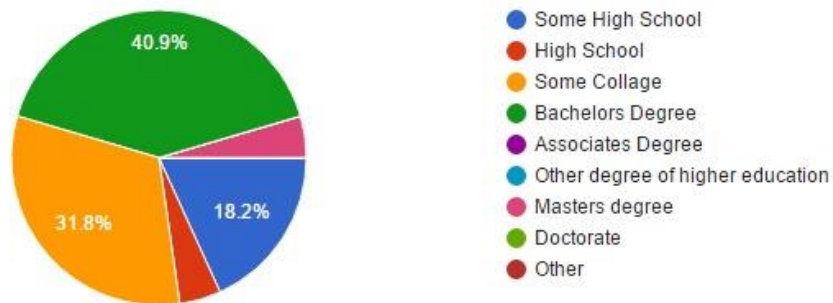
<u>First Name</u>	<u>Current Age</u>	<u>Current Job</u>	<u>Highest level of education</u>	<u>When was the last time you watched a documentary?</u>	<u>Have you seen "Stories We Tell" directed by Sarah Polley?</u>
<u>K.C. Group</u>					
KC1	77	portrait artist residency	Bachelors Degree	Less than a week ago	No
KC2	19	City Pets and Ponds	Some College	Less than a month ago	No
KC3	19	Pharmacy Technician	Some College	More than a month ago	No
KC4	19	Student	Some College	More than a month ago	No

KC5	48	IRB Manager	Some College	Less than a week ago	No
KC6	50	Systems Administrator	Bachelors Degree	More than a month ago	No
KC7	66	IRB Executive Director	Bachelors Degree	Less than a month ago	No
KC8	18	Domino's employee	Some College	More than a month ago	No
<u>Jeff City Group</u>					
JC1	18	Cashier	Some High School	Less than a year ago	No
JC2	18	Theatre employee	Some High School	Less than a week ago	No
JC3	18	Movie Theater employee	Some High School	Less than a month ago	No
JC4	18	Hy-Vee cashier	High School	More than a month ago	No
JC5	18	Hostess	Some High School	Less than a week ago	No
<u>Columbia Group</u>					
C1	23	Student	Bachelors Degree	Less than a week ago	No
C2	21	Tour guide	Some College	Less than a month ago	No
C3	21	Personal Care Aid	Bachelors Degree	More than a month ago	No
C4	23	student	Bachelors Degree	More than a week ago	No
C5	30	Graduate instructor	Bachelors Degree	Less than a month ago	No
C6	26	Nanny	Bachelors Degree	Less than a month ago	No
C7	22	Student	Some College	Less than a month ago	No

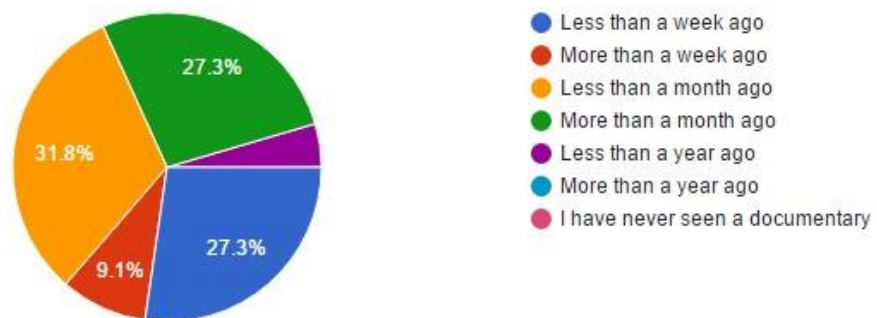
Current Age (22 responses)



Highest level of education (22 responses)



When was the last time you watched a documentary? (22 responses)



Introductions to the film

1) short blurb about the documentary and what the director has said about it. The introduction will not comment on the truth or falsities in the film it will only introduce it. This was used in Kansas City, MO.

- **“Stories We Tell was directed by Sarah Polley. The film’s website describes the plot as the director’s story, where Polley “playfully interviews and interrogates a cast of characters of varying reliability, eliciting refreshingly candid, yet mostly contradictory, answers to the same questions.”**”

2) short blurb about the documentary and what the director has said about it. The introduction will comment on the truth or falsities in the film. This was used in Jefferson City, MO.

- **Stories We Tell was directed by Sarah Polley. “[This film] explores the elusive nature of truth and memory, but at its core is a deeply personal film about how our narratives shape and define us as individuals and families, all interconnecting to paint a profound, funny and poignant picture of the larger human story.” Polley told Indiewire magazine that she never intended to fool anyone and she was genuinely surprised with how long it took people to see the falsities in the film.**

3) Before the documentary starts the moderator will only tell the title of the film and that is all. There will be no real introduction to the film. This was used in Columbia, MO.

- **Enjoy Stories We Tell directed by Sarah Polley.**

Core Questions Asked by the Moderator during focus groups

- What do you believe separates documentary from other genera?
- What did you think about the style of the documentary?
- Who is the movie about?
- Is this a true story?
- What clues tell you that?
- Was there anything about the documentary that you have seen so far that confused you?
- What made it believable and what made it not?
- Did you believe the story?
- Did you think there were any fictional elements in the film?
- Final thoughts about the film or the role of fact and fiction in this documentary?
- The moderator will also ask clarifying questions to make sure the record is clear in what the participant means.

Core Questions Asked by the Researcher in Individual Interviews

- What did you think of the film?
- What do you think of the reenactments in the film?
- Is this okay to do in documentary film?
- Would this make you more skeptical of information you receive from documentaries in the future?
- How would you describe yourself as a documentary watcher? Do you actively think about the content and weigh its truth or fiction or do you like to just enjoy the story and think about it later? Or do you not watch documentaries enough to really know? – why do you think that?

- The researcher will also expand on any questions that arise during the focus groups or that come up during the interview.

Transcriptions

Columbia Focus Group. Moderator: I want to start out by asking you a general question to begin with. The first is, what do you think makes up a documentary? What makes a documentary different from other types of films?

C3: It's true.

M: so it is about something that is true?

C6: there is not usually a script.

M: So not written, just is what happened? Okay, what else?

C1: I think that it has roots in reality but I don't necessarily believe that everything in there is 100 percent natural or un-staged

M: so, talk a little bit more about that. What does that mean? Is there an example you could give, a documentary that you have seen maybe?

C1: yeah, like at True/ False I saw the Jonbenet movie [*Casting Jonbenet*]. And so that was, there were kind of certain things that when the director asked questions, it was obviously to provoke certain types of answers. So, it wasn't just kind of a free formed like 'oh we are just naturally going to, you know, let this person talk about whatever.' it kind of had sort of a narrative in a sense. In that way it wasn't really natural but it was natural in the sense where like the people answering were answering, to the best of our knowledge, pretty authentically.

M: okay, and so is there a limit to what sort of root in reality and at what point do those roots not connect anymore?

C1: yeah, I think there would be a point, if there were, I'm trying to think of a good example. But like if you were doing a documentary on something, maybe in history and you decided that you wanted to change part of the main plot. I think that, that might make it a little bit more of a fiction. Kind of like a fan fiction type thing, but without the fan part. But you could maybe change and tweak small details or kind of show maybe a picture that is meant to be representative of the time but maybe isn't representative of the exact place. And that could be rooted in reality, in my view, but not necessarily 100 percent factual and accurate. 02:25

M: some time you see a Hollywood movie and it says at the beginning 'based on a true story.' So is that a documentary or not a documentary, really for anybody? Your shaking your head back there, what's your first name? C2?

C2: And no I don't consider that a documentary, because they'll take true parts from the story but they can twist what actually happened. So certain movies they will add more of the Hollywood effect, to get viewers to watch it. So, they will take out some parts of the story that aren't true and twist them a little bit, so they can cut costs down.

M: do documentaries ever do that?

C2: um, no not that I know of.

M: anybody else C5? 03:09

C5: I mean they possibly could, but the fact they are actors portraying other events strips it further from a documentary for me, in my opinion.

M: what if a documentary uses a reenactment? because those usually have actors in them?

C5: Yeah, I think that if it is a portion, but if it's.. yeah I mean there are blurry lines between it all. I think it could still be a documentary if there were reenactments and it was mostly based on the first hand experiences.

M: okay, C7? What do you think?

C7: I guess I feel like documentaries always have more of an intent to tell the truth than obviously, like fictionalized [films]. 04:08 This documentary is particularly interesting because it's called 'Stories We Tell' and it is more centrally about this woman, Diane. But she [the director] is piecing it together through all these different perspectives, and I feel like documentaries in general do more journalism. Just kind of investigate into what it is by asking multiple people vs, I think, when you have a Hollywood script or just a regular film, it is like scripted it is superposed to go a certain way. There is no extensive research, per say. And more importantly research depicted in the film making process. I think they are to be very transparent about who they talk to, what they said, all of that when they make documentaries, as opposed to a Hollywood film that is "based on a true story." It's like 'where did you get that?' They could have just said it was based on a true story just because.

M: okay, What is your name? C4, how about you any different take on any of that?

C4: I think for documentary I agree with a lot of conversation that is happening here and especially including interview questions also. And sometimes these kinds of questions can be repeated multiple times when they are talking to different persons. And I am pretty sure in the Hollywood movies the questions are not asked multiple times or even included in the footage or the video we see. 05:33

M: Right, right. So, let's turn to this documentary and a pretty open ended question here, but what did you think about the style and the way this documentary is put together?

C5: It was engaging to see the super eight film meshed with the interviews and then also another layer of kind of a documentary of the interviews. So, to see those different layers, like she said [C1] feel more transparent.

M: and when you say documentary of the interviews getting made, that we saw the camera and we saw the lights and we saw the microphones.

C5: Yeah, it wasn't just a documentary, or just an interview, but an outsiders perspective of the interview taking place. Which makes it appear more transparent. but then to play devils advocate is that something embraced to make it feel more transparent but then the editor is still picking and choosing exactly what we see. 06:41 So then it could be just as manipulated as a Hollywood film, they just did it in a very thoughtful way to hid that.

M: okay, anybody else on the style, on the way the story is being told?

C1: I thought there was an interesting juxtaposition between like scripted and unscripted. In the senses where we don't know who this guy is that is reading this script this transcript. We don't know if he is related, where as everyone else is, where assuming, we can tell there are a couple siblings, but we may not know a couple of the other relationships. And then there is of course the husband. So it is kind of interesting in the senses of that narrative and obviously someone wrote that but we don't know who is behind that. Juxtaposed with, you know, a daughters perspective and then the husbands perspective and then over different images and things kind of representing what they are talking about.

M: what clues have you all picked up about who that person is whose reading that kind of manuscript it looks like?

C6: I think she called him dad once didn't she?

M: mmhmm, so who called him that?

C7: Is it the filmmaker? I don't actually know, I don't want to assume anything.

M: Okay, any other thoughts on the style?

C7: I think, usual before i watch a movie I have an idea of what the synopsis is but I didn't look this up or anything before hand. So, as far as I know I don't know what the intent of this documentary is. Like I don't know what question we are trying to answer, I don't even know what happened to Diane to make her interesting enough to make a documentary about people talking about her. So, I think the mystery and the tension is still there. where as other documentary I have seen, I feel at least in the beginning, there is a narrative tension for me to ruminate over as I am watching it play out. Where as here I'm like 'well, what is going to happen next?' It feels a little more suspenseful to me.

M: A lot of documentaries have sort of this thesis statement at the beginning. The Greek empire lasted so many years and did this, this and this and then they do that. So, this one doesn't have that. 08:51

C7: yeah, I feel like I literally was like who are these people sitting down, and I am feeling myself like get more perked, little by little as they talked more.

M: So you liked that?

C7: yeah, I liked it, it feels more like a fictional premise than most documentaries where I am only going to watch people answering questions. or if it is a spoiler then here is the question and then you get to see how that plays out. But here I feel like this is building.

M: right, does everybody like that? or is anybody annoyed by that or indifferent.

C4: On that I just have a lot of questions marks when I am watching that. and especially like why are the main character not showing up? Like where is that, and like is she dead, or what is going on with her? And i am also curious to why the choose this particular family, they seem pretty common or like known by a lot of people it looks like just a really common family.

M: yeah, we have that one person being interviewed [that says] "why would anyone care about our family."

C4: right, right.

C5: I think that also kind of gives us kind of, maybe makes it a little more personal for us to put ourselves in that position, be more engaged in it because it seems on a level that is equal to me, I guess.

M: that thing, "why would people care about my family?"

C5: yeah, why would anybody want to watch a movie on me and then I have this personal relationship to oh they are just like me. 10:20 That made me connect to the people.

C7: I fell like my expectations are higher because I'm like well when I finally figure out what happened to her why we are even having this story be told this better be a good one, or something.

M: Yeah, well we have only shown you 18 minuets the whole thing is, i don't know, 100 minuets or something, so you have only seen about a fifth of it. So, that is a little bit cruel I know but for the sake of the study it works better to do it this way. Do you feel like, I think we have gotten to this a little bit, but do you feel like this is being told as a story or how would you define how the story is being told?

C2: I would define it as a story but you kind of have to put it together yourself, because you are just getting each bit of the puzzle. So as each person talks you are kind of figuring it out more and more. So it kind of keeps you more engaged because you are not getting the over all picture right away you are just getting little segments of it.

M: and are there other stories that are told that way?

C2: yeah, I would say some people do it that way. I think this one is a little bit more on the hidden aspect of it, but still keeping you guessing.

M: or I guess I could maybe ask that question, what other examples might you talk about where there is a story told that way? Can you think of other examples?

C: Well, I can't think of the specific name of the movie or show I am thinking of, but they will sometimes do flashbacks where you'll see a ton you don't really know where it's going with that flashback of it. That kind of thing.

M: Any body else have a take on the storytelling approach here?

C1: It kind of reminds me of an urban legend or an urban myth in a way. Where like everyone knows the general premise of the story and everyone has a similar plot line but there are small differences in how each person tells the story, so it is like 'oh well you know,' like with the car example. It was like 'oh I had this Mercedes-Benz, yeah dad had the Benz' and then like there is another friend who was like 'well, I think he lied about having the Benz, but duh duh duh.' And so it is kind of one of those things where very one knows the premises but like maybe the details got a little fudged and everyone remembers it a little bit differently.

M: mmhm. So, what are your unanswered questions at this point? You [C5] mentioned a couple already, and I'm sort of interested in ticking through those so, what questions do you want answered?

C5: I guess what is the climax? Because it is obviously building up to something. And so, something is building up and what is that?

M: what do you think it is do you have any clue yet?

C5: judging because there is this unknown character and some turmoil within the relationship a level of an affair or something along those lines. 13:22

M: okay, any other unanswered questions you have?

C1: well, I didn't pick up on the dad comment so now I am interested in that, because I didn't hear that part so.

M: so, you are interested in the relationship of everybody to everybody else?

C1: mmhm.

C4: I wanted to know what they wanted the audience to take away from this documentary. What did they want to tell?

M: what is the purpose of doing the movie, telling the story?

C4: right, right.

M: Is there any part of it that confuses you?

(silence from the group)

M: No?

C5: Yeah, thus far they seem pretty aware of what they are trying to portray.

M: I mean it is a fine line sometimes between what confuses you and what you are just waiting to find out. You know it is not that you are confused we just haven't been given the information yet.

C7: I think she is dead.

M: Okay.

C7: and I think that, well I was wondering if maybe she committed suicide. but then I was like I feel like they are all talking about it from the same level of general fond, but confused emotion. I feel like if she had committed suicide there may have be more emotional charge there. But I definitely think there is a nostalgic look at her and maybe there is some kind of mystery as to something that happened surrounding the end of her life.

M: so when you typically watch a documentaries do you have those same sorts of kind of trying to figure out what is going on or is a different experience.

C7: I think it is more intuitive. That I just don't feel surprised that much unless it is something just super out of left field. But I think that this is supposed to be a study on how people talk about people after they are gone or something.

M: Okay, anybody else? On that same question, weather, or let me ask the question a little bit differently. Do you feel like you believe the story they are telling? Most of you are nodding. any part of it that you don't believe?

C6: I think so far they are just kind of telling positive parts of her. Just from seeing the videos and stuff, I feel like there are a lot of negative parts of her life too. If feel like she probably had some depression and stuff just from what I have seen so far.

M: so we just haven't gotten there yet?

C6: yeah.

M: so you all nodded when iI said do you believe the story. So what makes it believable? Why do you believe it?

C5: One big aspect is they started out showing how nervous everyone was to be interviewed. *(group makes noises of agreement)*

C5: So to start with that you know, that it is alluding to this fact that everybody is just kind of giving their honest opinion.

C6: they are not actors.

C5: yeah.

C7: I feel like they haven't talked about the negative parts of her because they don't want to assume. because that last part where that woman said 'she was a woman of secrets.' Made me think that any negative impressions they have they can substantiate, like with any true evidence to point to. But I think that it is believable because I don't think they are staking a lot of, like I guess I feel like. I feel like they don't have anything any reason to not tell the truth. They are all just kind of describing her. Like they are all just kind of describing literally what has happened in events that they can document with footage of her. and what she was like. They don't have any reason or incentive to lie or face some hard questions or yet. so there is no emotional stakes.

C5: it is all so clear that they all kind of have an affection for her. and so they're not talking about the negative things because there is this fondness that they hold for her. they are always referring to her in past tense. So, like she said [C7] she is most likely passed on. and so initially it is difficult to bring up a negating thing about somebody who you've loved and has passed. And so maybe that is the part where it would be not believable because just that subconscious is repressing any negative emotions. you want to think of them with love.

M: C3, you have been sort of quite. I think you nodded you head about it being believable, why do you find it believable?

C3: well, I think that for me, watching a documentary you don't think that oh these people aren't telling the truth. 16:10 And so that for me is why I didn't doubt them at all. And then again, I think someone else said, watching from an outsiders perspective on the whole setting up the crew and seeing the cameras just is more realistic to it as well.

M: gotcha ya, Have any of the people in the film contradicted each other? I think that is a believable factor. Your nodding your head, where did they contradict?

C1: The car example, that I brought up earlier. The different way people remembered.

M: Okay, any other place? not really. Okay, near the beginning one of the women who is talking says ' you know I'm going to call her mum, not Diane.' What did that mean?

C4: respect.

M: Respect, okay.

C5: or it could be...

C4: Just to respect her mom.

M: mmmm.

C1: It could be like a step mom or somebody that could be a mother figure but wasn't like a truly biological mom or maybe she didn't fully subscribe to her as a mother.

M: mmmm.

C7: Or maybe she did some actress thing and was like 'call me Diane from now on.' I think that documentaries don't lie but I do think that some time they can leave out parts of the truth either intentionally or unintentionally, but virtue of not having the time to literally bullet proof every single thing that has ever been said. And I think that everything is believable right now because we haven't uncovered everything, like the whole truth. So it is not like there's the presence of lies but maybe there's the absence of the entire picture.

M: okay. Let's talk about Michael, you guys know who Michael is. So, what's his role in the film?

C7: He is the husband or we don't know...

C6: He has kind of been narrating a lot.

M: so Michael is the guy, the old guy who is reading it. did everybody pick up on that? I guess maybe some people said that before. Okay, so do you find him reliable and believable? in that role or in any of those roles? C6, go ahead you have the floor.

C6: yeah.

M: and why do you feel like that is the case? 16:09 (22:23->phone audio recording)

C6: His voice is real wise, and he was there for all of it. Like I think he knew her more than anyone else probably.

C7: he speaks with a lot of hesitancy, like he is trying to get everything right. as opposed to smoothly rattling it off. It seems like he wants to get it right.

C5: There is something about his personality when he first sits down and his confusion about what is going on. And why are we doing it this way, and why is there this camera here. he doesn't seem to be the person that would continue reading these papers if something was wrong. It seems like it is in his personality to be like, he would read something and say 'well, that's not how it happened.'

M: mhm. So as you talk about that scene. We see the filmmaker, who somebody said you believe that's his daughter, father daughter relationship, because she calls him dad. So that is the director, Sarah Polley. We mentioned her before. And he says 'what is this,' or whatever. And she says 'it's an interrogation, an interrogation process,' what did that mean? C2?

C2: I thought she was doing it jokingly. Like we are asking all of these questions about your life and everything so we are kind of interrogating you, but in like a ha-ha matter. Not like interrogating you.

M: and how did he react to it?

C6: he kind of acted like he didn't really hear, I thought.

M: He is a little hard of hearing. you can kind of get that. and so she has to speak loudly to him, right to his ear sometimes, but.

C6: it seems like he ignored it.

M: so does that change his, if you think about it that way, does that change his reliability at all? Not his hearing issues, but the interrogation and all the rest. Or his relationship to the filmmaker?

(group is silent)

M: no, not really?

C2: I mean, like he's clearly going to be a little bias because it is his side of the story and what he is telling so, he can't change that.

M: Okay, So do you think, way back at the beginning we were talking about different forms of films the difference between fiction and documentary, do you feel like there is any fiction in this film — the part you have seen so far?

(Group: silently shaking heads no)

C5: I think any fiction would be the subconscious mind of the people being interviewed. That seems to be the extent of it.

M: and by 'subconscious mind' what do you mean there?

C5: Just remembering things with a more, with a higher sense of nostalgia or fondness than reality.

C6: yeah, changing a detail here and there can make the story a little better.

C5: but it also seems like they are trying to avoid that by bringing in the entire, what I think is, family.

M: C1?

C1: yeah, people, like I know there have been physiological studies. that people sometimes change their memories for different reasons. So sometimes like if they want to forget something or you know, if they want to remember something above all else, or really because the mind isn't perfect, in terms of remembering small details. So I think in that sense there could be fictional elements. But kind of like what she [C2] said, I agree it is just, their reality as they know it.

M: there was a classic study on that, the Kennedy Nixon election in 1960 was basically tied. It went to Kennedy though, Nixon won the popular vote, so like our last election, Kennedy won the electoral vote. But after Kennedy was assassinated pollsters asked people who they voted for in 1960 and like 80 percent of people said they voted for Kennedy. And it wasn't that they, well some of them probably lied because they thought it was the right answer. But they, they did believe that a bunch of people had changed their own memories because of the assassination and everything else. It is interesting to see.

C7: so, if Trump gets assassinated?

M: no, no we won't go down that path. I still want to ask about fictional parts, anyone else? C3? or here C4.

C4: I think for the scripts, like when he is reading, that is just kind of made up by the person. And you can just kind of fix all the times.

M: do you think the things in the script actually happened or do you think those are made up events or just the telling of it in that kind of story style?

C4: It is very hard to tell, Maybe like some parts are just kind of made up and the other part is based on reality and the other part is based on experience, memories, it can be a lot of this comes up with works.

M: somebody else started to answer before. C6?

C2: I wouldn't say that it's necessarily fictional, but I think that they kind of came to the assumption that she fell in love with the character he was portraying in the play. because, I mean,

unless you really get her side we don't actually know if that is true or not. So I wouldn't say it is technically fiction, but I would say that, that's an assumption. 25:48

C6: I was going to say, a lot of the details that they are describing they have video of her doing that. Like she would do something, I can't remember exactly. so that gave it like...

M: Maybe the most obvious one is the son whose saying 'I can remember her on the phone and she was holding out her hand' and then we saw that.

(Group: ahhh, nodding in agreement)

M: So what are you saying how does that connect to what we are talking about now?

C6: That gives it the legitimacy, I guess, that the things they are saying are true.

M: so that serves as evidence to that?

C6: yes. thank you.

C7: We should differentiate between fact, fiction and assumptions. Because I think assumptions are somewhere in the middle for that, because it is not like they are entirely baseless, but they also are little stretching from what can concretely be backed up.

M: so what is fiction? 26:35

C7: Fiction, I feel like is the least rooted, it is like a progression.

M: can it be, C2 was talking about that, so is it intent? So if I intentionally know is false that that's fiction but if I unintentionally say something that I don't know is true, that's not fiction? 26:54

C7: well I guess it depends on, I guess feel like fiction and fact can run parallel to each other with maybe events or like, things like that. and I think that assumptions are the meaning you derive from maybe either to be honest. But I don't think it's quite that assumptions are just fiction.

M: Okay, In a documentary like this, and we will talk about this, we talked about this more broadly before, is there a role for fiction in here? can fiction make it easier to tell a story like this? or make it harder?

C1: I mean if you wanted like as kind of he [C5] said earlier, we don't know what the climax of the story is so like maybe the climax is really boring. And so if fiction were added in it could make it more exciting. And enticing, you know kind of give a more satisfying ending for people.

M: and would you like that or dislike that if you knew it was fiction in a documentary? 27:55

C1: I would dislike it if I came into the film thinking it was a documentary. If I didn't know I'd be open to it, or if where fiction for sure.

M: anyone else a take on whether fiction can help or hurt a movie like this? C3?

C3: I mean I agree with what she [C1] just said. I think if you don't know any better it wouldn't affect your opinion at all but I think if you watch it and then find out after that parts of it were made up or fiction, that would be misleading. I wouldn't like that.

M: C2, how about you on that same question?

C2: Yeah, I would agree with that, because, I don't know people go into a documentary thinking that it's all true, but if you watch a movie and it says based on a true story you know that they are going to add stuff.

M: C1, you talked about the *Casting Jonbenet* movie that was a True/False, did anybody else see that?

(group: everyone, but C1 shakes heads no.)

M: Did you go into it know that it was, did you think it was going to just be a kind of newsy coverage of the murder?

C1: yeah.

M: So you got something very different. The movie, just briefly, is they're casting/ interviewing/ auditioning actors to play parts in the Jonbenet story, for a movie they are never going to make. They really just want to have these actors to talk to.

C7: Is that like *Kate Plays Christine*?

M: They're cousins for sure the movies, are cousins. So did that bother you when you figured out that's not what your going to get or did you like it? or a little bit of both?

C1: I think the first ten minuets I was like, because I love murder mysteries and so I walked in thinking 'this will be really great. They are going to discuss all the conspiracy theories' and then like all these people where in there and I was like 'ehh, I don't know.' the first ten minuets where like 'oh I'm so and so and I've never acted before.' You know, just very irrelevant details, but kind of as, and I don't want to spoil too much of the movie.

M: It is hard to spoil because it is really the experience. It will be on Netflix soon. But it is really the experience of how it is put together. But yeah, go ahead.

C1: They, as you get further into it, you learn that where they are casting is near the neighborhood of where this all happened. And these people have these strange ties into the family and they have these strange ties into a lot of things that where going on. And then they start opening up about their own struggles. And so, and kind of related this all back to like these conspiracy theories. So I got what I wanted out of the movie, but I liked it by the end. It just took me a little bit. Like, the first ten minuets I was not into it. And then you could tell it was very intentional, in how it was shot and it was put together nicely to form a narrative. 30:52 . But also in a way that showcased people's reality. And the relativity of the people who where there there when it happened or you know, their lives and personal struggles they went through that helped them play their characters, or that they justified as reasons why they'd be best for the role.

M: did people get up and leave during the film? Kind of famously, people leave in the middle of it, at Sundance and other places.

C1: Really?

C7: why?

M: because they went to see a true crime story and then they end up getting something that is much more esoteric.

C1: I was kind of toward the front so I didn't really see many people go, but yeah, I don't think anyone near me left. I think people got a little bit restless, kind of maybe in the first third.

M: It is a little too long too, but yeah. So, I am going to try and keep to time here, I just want to ask one more question related to it. So that film we where talking about has actors in it. Are there any actors in what you saw now? Is anybody you saw an actor?

(Group: shaking head no)

M: no?

C5: It didn't appear to be.

M: no one?

C1: I don't think we know, I think that is unanswered. Maybe I'm just skeptical.

M: unanswerable at this point?

C1: yeah.

M: okay, the researcher is going to grab two people. If you get picked it is not like a prize, if you don't get picked it's not a penitential, she is just trying to grab a couple people to ask some additional questions to. Maybe I don't like to reveal too much before we do it. Well, I will reveal to the people who don't get picked right now. But the researcher will take them out into the hallway or something so.

Researcher: Can you stay for a little while [C7]? and can you [C3]? yeah? okay.

M: okay, so why don't you guys, you three head out into the hallway

R: are you going to tell them about the..

M: yeah

R: oh they can stay for that because, that's one of the things I'm going to ask them about.

M: oh your okay. So, there are some actors in there, and some people pick up on it and some people don't. Sarah Polley is the director, so she is the one we see at the recording studio at the beginning. And she is an actor too, and so she has been in, not in huge films and I think she is more of a director now than an actor. Have you seen her in stuff? Does she look familiar or do you know the name?

C1: um, the name kind of sound...

M: probably the biggest movie she has been in, she is Canadian obviously, In America, it is getting kind of old now but it's called GO. G-O, and it is kind of an action comedy but she does a lot more thoughtful stuff. She directs documentaries, like this, but also fiction films. *The Sweet Hereafter*? No, she was in that movie she didn't direct it. I trying to think, I didn't look it up before I came, but so one of the things that surprises her is that people, most people seeing the film don't pick this up. But a lot of the home movies where fake. they where actors playing that. specifically, the hand one, that was not real. That was they had the interview and then they filmed stuff to match that. So for the part you saw about half of the home movies are fake and about half are real. And if you watch it a bunch of times, like we have, it gets real obvious which ones are which.

C7: Is it like a stunt double or something?

M: yeah, so they have actors playing the people, and so the actor playing young Micheal looks a lot like him, Micheal. And the actor playing young Diane actually doesn't look that much like her, if you watch it a few times. It is really obvious to see who it is. So yeah, the scene, and sometimes people will say it in the focus group, where they are all talking and the thing about the car, or whatever, somebody will say ' why would they have film of that? What is the chances they would have film of them talking about that?' But it is in the movie, so sometimes people get skeptical about it that way. So she [Polley] was surprised because she just did it to help construct the story and there are some clues at the beginning that she is shooting, you mentioned [C5], shooting with the super eight shooting interview. So we saw that, she felt like that was sort of a clue to say to people we are shooting with this camera too, not just this camera but this camera. So, she was surprised later and it has turned out to be one of the things that made this. Because this played at True/False in, what year was it? 2012? 2011? And it was a huge hit. here and it made the festival rounds and it was a really popular film. But that was thing that everyone was talking about, ;'ugh I got fooled' and 'I didn't realize it was that' and that sort of thing so.

C7: wait, so the home video's where fake?

M: about half of them. some of them where real. Like the ones you see at the very beginning are almost all real and then the fake stuff comes as the just get more and more stories to tell. You know, again, sometimes skeptical people in a group will say ' they just have so much home video of themselves' but you know a lot of people did that back then too. and shot lots and lots of film and had those things. So I will give you a spoiler about Diane if you want it? The sad thing is this movie is hard to get, I mean we have a DVD of it and you can buy a DVD of it, but it's not anything streaming or Itunes or anything like that right now.

R: Amazon.

M: Oh! It's on Amazon? 36:05 Alright so if you want to watch it on Amazon and you don't want me to spoil it get up now. so there is mystery that is happening here, Diane is dead, but the mystery is not about that. It's about her, Sarah Polley's paternity. The guy she is calling dad, is ultimately not her dad. Though he raised her and all the rest. We see her dad and we've seen him already. It's Harry, the guy that looks like Einstein. That's her dad.

C7: but Diane is her mom?

M: yeah, and Diane is her mom. So, and all of the other people are her brothers and sisters and so that is kind of explored through this.

C6: half brothers and sisters.

M: well, yeah half brothers in this case.

C6: they are?

M: they're all, I think, they are all Micheal's children except for Sarah right?

R: yeah, I believe so.

C6: was it like she had an affair with Harry after she went to Montreal?

M: you know it has been long enough since I watched it all, but I don't think it was much after that. and she probably. Some of the fun of the movie is that she has to figure out that there are several men, that might be her father, and she has to narrow it down to who it is. And you saw them all, Mort and Greg. Greg was that the other guy? we only see him briefly. Mort and Greg, and Harry are the contenders.

C7: who are Mort and Greg?

M: Mort was kind of a thin, I mean they are all kind of older now. Was kind of a thin balding guy and Greg was kind of a handsome, well he is an actor he looks like an actor. but it's really shot you don't see much of him in this one. So it is a lot of fun watch.

C7: How did she die?

M: Cancer wasn't it?

R: Cancer, yeah.

C6: Do you find out in the movie that they have added fictional things?

M: No, well, sort of.

C6: Do you have to Google it afterwards?

M: Kind of, they don't come out and say look all this was fake, but it is sort of revealed.

C7: is the fiction part the home video reenactments or ?

M: yeah only that. everything else is real. All the interviews are real, those are her real siblings and all of that stuff is real. All of the older people are friends and relatives and stuff, and that is all real.

C7: did they add the reenactments to help dramatize?

M: yeah, to help flesh out, so that it wasn't just talking heads all the time. But it ended up having a slice of life of its own, because people didn't realize that. She didn't want to just say some of this is fake at the beginning because it took some of the fun out of it. but then it ended up being that people didn't notice.

C7: so she is relevant because it's her mom?

M: yeah. Okay, so other than the two that the researcher asked to stay, you guys are free to go. Thanks for coming out to do it. 38:51

C3 Individual Interview. Researcher: What was your name again?

C3: C3

R: C3, nice to meet you.

C3: nice to meet you too.

R: what did you think of the film?

C3: I liked it, I liked that you were just figuring out what was going on and how everybody fit together. I would definitely watch the rest of it. Just because if I hadn't known the ending I would have wanted to know the ending. And you could tell they are building up to something the whole time, so I thought that made it more interesting.

R: cool, do you normally watch documentaries or are you more of a fiction fan?

C3: I've been on a documentary kick. Only what I can get off of Netflix, so I've seen the Minimalist documentary. The girl that was in Italy, that got, you haven't seen it? Do you know what I'm talking about? She was studying abroad in Italy.

R: Oh! Yeah, I do.

C3: and then she was accused of murdering her roommate.

R: I'm not going to remember her name. [*Amanda Knox*]

C3: Yeah, but I haven't seen any of the True/ False ones but I've seen a few on Netflix.

R: If you got to choose between a fiction film and a documentary do you have a preference?

C3: It kind of depends on what movies they are, but I guess it kind of depends.

R: depends on what they are about?

C3: yeah.

R: so, as far as this film goes what do you think about the reenactments that are in it?

C3: the parts that were fake?

R: Yeah, the fake parts.

C3: that kind of makes sense, now that you're saying it. Because there was film of every single thing they were talking about. It doesn't bother you as much as I thought it would. Because it is not the people that are retelling the story that are not real. And I get how the girl.. what's her name, the girl that made this film?

R: Sarah Polley?

C3: Yeah, I can understand how she would want to add that in just for more visual effect, just to make it more interesting for people to listen to her family recall information, but then also have a visual for what they are saying. So, it didn't bother me as much as I thought.

R: okay, do you have a problem, because it is not really identified at all, if you were to walk away today, after just seeing that little bit and then find out later that that was fake, would that bother you?

C3: No I don't think so, probably just the same I would have been like oh, but I don't think that would have bothered me.

R: If it was in a different context, if you were watching a very factual based documentary, something you would have seen in history class or something like that. and you would have seen the same kind of reenactment would that have bothered you? Kind of like Nat Geo style stuff?

C3: Maybe a little bit more, just because those are like facts. 03:01 And I wouldn't want to be shown something that is not real, if it is in terms of history. but again I can understand how you want more visuals for stuff. Documentaries are interesting because of the different ways they portray the story, and tell the story so yeah.

R: Generally you think reenactments are okay in documentary?

C3: Yeah.

R: Do you think there is a spot where it kind of goes over a line, where you are like ' oh that's not okay'

C3: yeah, kind of like what we were talking about in there [the room where the focus group was held], like when it says in a movie 'based off of a true story' they can really just take that and use the smallest part of the story and change it however they want. So, obviously that is too far. 03:51 But I think in terms of as long as the story line stays the same and it is just actors portraying the true story, I think that's okay. But if they are portraying something else or something that would be more interesting then I think that goes more into a fictional movie. R: So, when you watch a movie do you consider your self actively watching a movie or..

C3: (laughing) No. Usually I'm a pretty lazy movie watcher. I just wait to see what happens

R: there's nothing wrong with that. More of like an escapist kind of.

C3: yeah.

R: Thinking back on other documentaries you've seen, you said you are on a doc kick, does this process make you skeptical of anything you have seen or..

C3: yeah it does kind of. not in a bad way, but it makes me think back. Like 'Oh i wonder if the other documentaries have used actors for portrayals, yeah. it just makes me think. An dI think next time I watch a documentary that is definitely going to be on my mind when I watch it, interesting.

R: is there one that comes to mind?

C3: The one that I keep thinking back on is the *Blackfish* documentary, I don't know if you've seen it? There's, obviously, a lot of footage in that one and it all looks real, and I can't imagine that they would use fake footage, but that's just what I keep thinking of. But I don't know, I don't know if it's real or not.

R: I think *Blackfish* more what get's you in that, is the music that they put into it.

C3: Yeah.

R: it makes you very..

C3: emotional, yes

R: emotionally connected to it, yeah.

C3: yeah, I think so too.

R: How about something like that, Make you think about documentary a little differently? The use of these editing processes that can really change how you feel about it.

C3: yeah, yeah, it dose make you. When you are making a documentary They definitely have an idea of how they want their viewers to be feeling and they kind of manipulate their footage in order to get the reaction they want. And I guess I just didn't really realize it until today. Watching this and talking about it, but you do just get caught up in the footage and the music and that kind of thing.

R: is that something that you think normally happens with a documentary? Traditionally when you think about a documentary, this one [Stories We Tell] has a little more of a cinematic style, but traditionally when you think about a documentary are those terms you would use to describe it? Like you get caught up in it and you get kind of emotionally attached.

C3: Yeah, I think documentaries that are more about stories and real life people as opposed to a history documentary I think you get more emotionally attached to the story, because you can relate to them and they use a lot of different styles to keep you interested, If you are watching a history documentary it is probably because your already interested in the history of what it is going to be talking about. so they don't use as much different styles as keeping you interested I think.

R: okay cool. Do you have any other comments about this process or the movie or..

C3: I don't think so.

R: Okay.

C3: it was interesting I liked it. 07:32

C7 Individual Interview. Researcher: So what did you think of the movie?

C7: I thought it was enthralling. I don't know how else to say it.

R: Okay, what do you mean? Was it engaging or in what way?

C7: I guess it was engaging, because I felt like I wanted to continue on watching to see what would happen. Even now I still kind of want to see it, even though I know what is going to happen. It built very well as a work. I guess the progression of the story wasn't like this is just a boring of what really happened or something. It didn't feel like an investigation, in the traditional sense of how a documentary or how non-fiction usually plays out. So that is why I really liked it.

R: would you consider your self more of a documentary person or a fiction person?

C7: Man, that's hard to say. I don't really watch a lot of T.V. Because I never have time, but I really do think non-fiction. I do prefer non-fiction even through when I was younger I really liked fiction more.

R: do you have an idea of your favorite documentaries?

C7: I really liked what was playing at true false this year. I really liked *Still Tomorrow* and *Stranger In Paradise*, and *I am Not Your Negro*. And I recently saw *All Governments lie*, which is a good documentary I saw a couple of months ago. And Yeah, I don't know also stuff on the history channel. I just think that fiction has come to make me uncomfortable. Because, I think, as a journalist I've been trying to sniff out where is the truth or whatever. And with fiction, I'm like 'oh that was totally your own creative control, why do I care?' 02:13 Unless it is a really compelling narrative, but I mean we have so many more fictional movies out there than documentaries. but I feel like at least documentaries instill trust in me more.

R: So, when you say with fiction films that the director has complete creative control, how do you feel about the reenactments then, that where in this film? Because that was something the director..

C7: I mean I guess even then I still feel, like when the moderator said 'oh there where some actors' that made me tense up. Like, oh this film duped me. but then he just pointed out that they where reenacting it. And i was like 'well but they are using was still something that really happened.' They where using the interviewer's, or interviewees' accounts to form what it was opposed to Sarah [the director] was like 'oh you should imagine this, this, this and stuff.' So that is the difference between, I guess the term creative control doesn't actually give you room to interpret that but I' thinking creativity for a fictional director would be purely from their brain. 03:25 Not, okay they said it was like this so let's try to make it look like this, I think that it was a little misleading, in the course of trying to portray it, you know, for the film. But I think the ultimate effect was on the side of reality, or what really happened. Because they also do reenactments when they have documentaries about the Ice Age or the Civil War maybe. You know?

R: Yeah.

C7: So I guess I don't think that counts as fiction. I think that counts as trying to make something fit.

R: Okay, So what about the fiction films that are based on a true story?

C7: ugh, I guess if something says that it is based on a true story. That is different than this is real. You know if it's like 'oh the basis for this was inspired by a true story' but if it is literally a fictional like there are actors playing it, then literally all my expectations of how 'real' it is just go out the door.

R: okay, So what about with this film, you didn't know they were reenactments and you wouldn't have known unless the moderator said something. So then in that case, how do you feel about that? 04:41

C7: Feel about the fact that they were reenactments?

R: Well, because based on a true story they tell you that it is 'based' on a true story, right? but then in this film they just don't tell you, right?

C7: hmm, Yeah. I guess in this case because there are so few, and I see how they are ultimate purpose is to make the overarching still true to real life story that was filtered through mostly, other people's voices. It was tangential to that, so I don't view it the same or take it as seriously as if it were entirely a fictional film composed entirely of actors. Now I think it might have been a little different if there was literally no footage of Diane ever at all and all the footage that was on the screen was fictional, I think that would have changed it a little bit for me. 05:35 because only part of it was fictional I was like well, embellishments are everywhere. Like when you read narrative journalism. So, I'm like a narrative journalist. I really want to write for long form magazine, like the New Yorker, or the Atlantic. I have taken narrative writing classes and I know that you can't literally get every single detail, every little thing that happened correct when you are writing it. you embellish a little bit, like this [Stories We Tell]. I don't think that is crossing the line between fiction and reality in that case. I think that there is literally no way and sometimes, I guess, fictional tools such as writing in details or embellishing a little bit might help you further the narrative that is mostly true, and it is a quicker fix than trying to bullet proof every single thing. but I ultimately don't think it is a bad thing, right? Or not a bad thing, I don't think it is a fictional thing. I think that Hollywood and this is based on a true story, I think, that's very different. Than embellishments for a certain purpose.

R: Yeah, So this film at the very end what they do is they show people putting on mustaches and fixing wigs and stuff that is pretty much your only cue that it is a reenactment, but you said that is okay for this kind of story, because it is just people telling their story. So, would you feel if it was a history film and they did some kind of reenactment like this or like a Nat Geo kind of style?07:19

C7: I guess I don't feel... for historical reenactments I guess I don't harbor any ill will there because I think it just helps make the experience more real. Now if they didn't interview historians or researchers for that documentary that be way more suspicious. Like way more at the bend of this is basically a fictional Hollywood movie with like Daniel Day Lewis. So, I don't know I think it just makes the experience more visceral. Because we are such a visually/ audibly guided species now. That I think I see why someone would do it that way, and I think that with Hollywood when they say 'this is based on a true story' they don't presume to show that this is literally the truth, this is literally real life. I think that a reenactment and a fictionalized account are just so different.08:17 Because the real life reenactment is always supplemented by literally historians or whatever facts and stuff.

R: Right, When you are watching a movie do you think you are an active movie watcher or are you passive?

C7: I'm pretty active. That's just because I'm an over analytical person

R: what are you normally looking for when you watch a movie?

C7: um, well you might have heard from how I answered the moderators questions, but I am always someone who is trying to figure out what is going to happen next. But it's not like I am even consciously doing it. it is like if you where to ask me, 'what do you think will happen next?' or ' do you think this is this?' I would go back into my little archive of impressions from watching movies and stuff. So I think it is like, I am always aware of what I think could happen. that mostly is to fine tune my level of surprise about what is happening next. For example, I expected that they where talking about her [Diane] because she had passed on. [I picked up on that] from the tones or choice words and stuff. But it was't like she passed on in a bad way or something. I also picked up on that she and Michael, her husband, I picked up that their relationship, because of the way it was foreshadowing that there was a conflict when we look back. I was like 'there has to be something in the present that makes you look back and it is colored differently to you and stuff.

R: Yeah, so it is more for the story line is what you look at? Like the where is it headed?

C7: yeah. definitely and I am trying to make sense of all of the details I've all ready seen.

R: Does this whole process make you think of anything you watch previously that you are kind of like ' I don't know about that?' Or is that something that you think you normally pick up on.

C7: wait, can you say that question again?

R: yeah, so this whole process talking about fact and fiction in documentary is there a documentary you watched previously that, thinking about this stuff now, that you are kind of wondering about it.

C7: not necessarily. I think I have really been training myself over consuming so much journalism over the past two years to hone in on what is fact and what is fiction. And just be very skeptical. Also, because I just do this stuff [journalism] so much I think I appreciate documentaries more because I appreciate journalism so much. I saw '*Kate Plays Christine*,' I don't know if you have seen that one, but this one [*Stories We Tell*] didn't make me think of it differently but it did make me think of it again. 11:05 because that was also a film that was really playing with my mind, like fact and fiction and the disconnect there. And I really like the questions you asked about reenactments vs Hollywood fiction. I really do think that fiction plays a role in how we live our day-to-day lives because there is always a level of delusion or fantasy or a level of like so many assumptions that create a different picture for us when we look at something. I always think that's fair. I always think that's present. and I think that failing to acknowledge that, that influence is how we see things or that that can be used to a documentary film makers advantage, would be deceptive. So, yeah, ultimately i think that this experience is just making me really want to defend the validity of fictional tools. Like kind of using fiction, AKA those reenactments of like embellishing stuff. I think that in select doses that is helpful to further reality, because it makes the experience more visceral. And I think that you don't necessarily loose more ethically, or something from that. Because sometimes you literally just have holes in your narrative. what are you going to do? just leave them or patch them over, a little bit and in a way that's ultimately not going to take away from the film.

R: yeah.

C7: We had this question posed in Page William's writing class, if your writing narrative about a town are you going to say there's 30 strip clubs when there was maybe only 25? Is that actually ethically bad? And I was like ' well, if you legitimately did't know if it was 30 or 25 and you went 30, than whatever. Like no one is going to fight you on those details.' But I mean if you get caught and like the audience changes their perception of your process, be prepared for that, but chances are it should't matter enough for them to care anyways. So they would just be fine with

it, is kind of ultimate take away with like balancing fiction and reality. Because you always have to have a mix of both. that's just life.

R: Right, so you equate journalism with documentary, or you have been?

C7: I have been yes.

R: so, why do you see documentary as journalism?

C7: Oh, I love this question. I think that documentary filmmakers have to do a lot of research and investigations and interviews just like any conventional journalist, pen and paper, magazine, newspaper, broadcast whatever. I think that they have to do their job to make sure what they are getting, they have to literally take pieces of people and put them together. Fiction, pure fiction is like a streamlined thought that you can add to. And I think that documentary is that you have to put things together to build it, but it has to be cohesive, you don't get to just say 'those two will fit together' you have to see if they do fit together. I think documentators have to take a long time to make sure they are getting everything right or the story line won't even come together. So in a way, they have the hardest jobs of any journalist, in my opinion. Because they have to make sure that A, it looks, feels, tastes good for the audience and B, they also have to decided what is a good stopping point for the tension is. I think writers they have much more flow, they can create more with their words, you can't really control how something looks as much with multi-media. But I definitely think documentary filmmakers have to know the basic journalist principals. 14:55 The ethics, of like how much is real and how much is fiction because that is how I feel when you get to advanced narratives for writing as well. And I think they also have to wrestle with what kind of questions can we ask that will actually get us a story, and how do we put everyone's perspective together so it forms one product. I think it is the pinnacle of good journalism. I think you can tell when something is mostly reality and something is like kind of fiction, or fiction.

R: so you brought up *Kate Plays Christine* then, would you consider that the same kind of journalistic documentary?

C7: I don't really think so, it felt like right in the middle, I think there where journalistic take-aways, but I didn't think it was ultimately, in my opinion, a super journalistic work. It looked more like an experiment at the end of the day, than an actual documentary.

R: okay, so how about, you said you saw *Stranger In Paradise* at True/ False? So, what about that?

C7: Did you see it?

R: I did.

C7: Oh okay cool, *Stranger in Paradise* was also one of those hard ones because I didn't think there was actually anything that they where documenting. It was also, like an experiment. yeah, funny how I brought those two up, but they're both, and probably *Casting Jonbenet* I haven't seen it personally, but I can extrapolate. From what she [C1] said. I think those are all experiments in their own regard. They are documenting the experience of this experiment but it is not the same as gathering information and researching, like you would for a documentary. 16:35 In this senses this documentary that we just saw, was a documentary of a filmmakers mom. Like it kind of tracing her emotional psyche to figure out who the hell her dad is. I think that, that is not a thought experiment that is literally an investigation of journalism. It just happens to be personal enough to where you are not going to categorize it as the same as why did the Greek and Roman empires fall, or whatever.

R: So, are things like *Stranger In Paradise* and *Kate Plays Christine*, are those documentaries then in your mind?

C7: I don't know. I don't think so. I think they deserve their own category and I think that because what we've already named three similar in that genera we should begin giving them their own type of work. Because it is not pure fiction, but it is not a documentary it's still valuable, almost more valuable in a way. because it exposes a lot of psychological, like. I feel like there is a name for this, but I don't know on a short scale like so many of the things you see in short three minute spurts on BuzzFeed or whatever like all of those are experiments, they are not pure documentaries. I think they are realistic-fiction, is how I would call them.

R: Well, that is all of the question's I have, do you have any other thoughts about this process or movie or fact and fiction in documentary?

C7: um, no but I have some good questions in my head, or like take-aways from this that I am going to think about a lot more. Fact and fiction, I didn't even realize how strongly I felt about fiction.

R: yeah, it's interesting. 18:26

Jefferson City Focus Group. Moderator: I'm just going to ask some questions. Anxious to hear what everybody thinks. I may call on you if i feel like I want to hear a little bit more from you about something, I will get everyone more or less evenly. So, let me start off with sort of a general question. what do you think separates a documentary from other types of films? not necessarily this one but any documentary. What separates it from other types of films. anybody can go that feels like it. JC2?

JC2: documentaries put education above entertainment

M: okay, JC1?

JC1: i'd say they are probably usually more fact based.

M: okay, your name is? JC4. How about you?

JC4: as opposed to other movies they are not based on a script. They are just about a certain thing, trying to find more about.

M: K, JC5?

JC5: I feel like documentaries are more just like things you are interested in rather than interested in seeing.

M: Okay, JC3?

JC3: I kind of think they are more learning stuff too that you want to know about. like watch nature documentaries to get knowledge to find out stuff.

M: Okay, is there, what's a documentary you have seen most recently? Anybody have one they have seen?

JC1: I watched one on Netflix with my sister. a couple of months ago. I don't remember the name of it but it was about health and diet and how sugar affects us and how corporations put like, bad sugars in a lot of food and stuff, we shouldn't have.

M: I'm familiar with that one, I haven't seen it. It's called sugar something, sugar, the sugar trap, something like that. how about somebody else? something you've seen.

JC5: I saw Marcé, Marcé its about the history behind the city in France.

M: okay, where did you see that?

JC5: on Netflix.

M: K, JC2? you seen anything?

JC2: *shakes head No*

M: Not that you can recall? Okay. JC4?

JC4: not too recently

M: Okay, JC3?

JC3: I watched one on netflix with my dad about the Eagles.

M: The Eagles the bird or the football team?

JC3: the band.

M: oh okay the band, I stopped too soon

Group: *laughter*

JC4: I watched one about Queen recently.

M: okay, so "Rock-umentary." Okay so, do any of you have what you would consider a favorite documentary?

JC2: yes, at least i did. but i don't remember what it was called.

M: okay, it will come back to you maybe.

JC1: I watched one about Russian prisons one time. It was really interesting.

M: JC5? how about you? you have a favorite? 02:56

JC5: I feel like Marcé right now, just because it is fresh on my mind.

M: mhhh

JC5: but..

JC2: I remember, the one about Ray Crock, the founder of McDonalds.

M: okay, and now there is a fictional version of that out with Michael Keaton.

JC2: I like michael keaton, I'm going to go see it.

M: It's pretty good. I saw it, its pretty good. JC4, do you have a favorite?

JC4: Just that Queen documentary.

M: okay, so you liked that one, good.

JC3: I watched one about the national parks and their foundling and how they are today.

M: that was a Ken Burns, I think. last year.

JC4: for the centennial.

M: ya, for the centennial. So now lets turn to the documentary we just watched, or watched 18 minuets of anyway. what did you think about this style? the way this one was put together? 03:48

JC2: they had a lot of stock footage of Diane.

M: and by stock footage you mean?

JC2: like footage of her,

JC1: it's easy to picture her when they are describing her. because there is a lot of old videos of her being lively and dancing and stuff.

JC2: there is like a weirdly, large amount.

M: k, weirdly large amount of home video.

LC4: i like how they lace the old video with the interviews as they talked [about something] they showed [it] .

M: k, JC5, how about you. anything you like or dislike about the way this is put together?

JC5: honestly, just agreeing with that (*nods at JC4*). just having the connection between her home videos and how they all feel about her.

M: okay, JC3?

JC3: um. I liked that they had the family, and made it really like personal. and the narrator had a nice voice.

M: he had a great voice, so how does this style compares to some of the ones you just mentioned? thoughts?

JC3: this one cuts between more people, back and forth.

M: who are some of the people we have seen?

JC3: couple of sons, daughters..

JC1: husband. i dont know who Harry is..

JC4: Harry and friends

JC5: they are not professionals that are giving you an exact definition and stuff. it's people who knew her personally.

JC1: ya, like that sugar one that i watched there where a lot of professionals and stuff giving a lot of information during their interviews. and this was just like, memories.

M: and you like that?

JC1: ya, i think it gives the documentary more of a personal touch. sometimes regular documentaries almost feel a little cold. 05:39 not unlike, Diane's husband.

M: *chuckles*, How about you JC5? How do you like this style compared to the Marcé documentaries?

JC5: I don't know it feels a bit different. when i watch a documentary i am typically watching for straight fact things. rather than, an emotional connection to something. so having it be more personal just feels a bit weird to me.

M: Is it good weird? or bad weird?

JC5: Its kind of a good weird, cus its good to see, you can have something that's factual and historic and not have it be cut and dry.

M: okay, but you have only... I'll ask this question it may sound a little strange only having seen part of it, but kind of do your best. Do you feel like this documentary tells or will tell a full story?

JC4: I do, because when they mentioned 'go ahead and tell the full story from the start' they all made it seem like they had a lot to tell. I feel like they will talk for quite a while. especially if we are only 18 minuets into it. I feel like it could go on for a while.

JC2: And something interesting must have happened because everyone else is still alive. and they are talking about Diane like you know, just some person they knew long time ago.

JC1: It kind of feels like it is building up to something.

JC4: ya, when they mentioned that 'every family has its story' they said they each have their one thing so I feel something big happened.

M: what do you think happened? what do you think the big thing is?

JC4: I feel like she [Diane] probably died in some freak accident.

JC5: I don't know if it was really an accident, because they'er talking about how out going and just how out there she was, so i feel like it was a completely natural thing and their kind of shocked that it was something so small.

JC2: I'm thinking either cancer or clinical depression.

M: Okay, JC1?

JC1: Um, As far as what happened to her?

M: ya, you are just guessing. There is no right or wrong answer here, just curious what you think is going to happen? Or what you think is going to happen in the movie, not necessarily what you think happened to Diane.

JC1: I think she left him.

M: do you think Diane is dead?

JC1: well, not necessarily. She could have just disappeared as far as we know. Because, as far as we know she just went up to Toronto and my guess is that she left him and doesn't come back. Disappears. JC3, what where you going to say?

JC3: that's kind of where I was going too. Like whenever she got an acting job she maybe got a bigger break or something.

JC2: because she was this...

JC5: I do think it's odd that they made sure that they won't refer to her as Diane, but every time they refer to Michel they refer to a part he played or Michel, they won't call him dad.

JC1: I hadn't noticed that.

M: He is called dad one time, did anybody notice when that was?

JC5: oh..

JC3: was it when they were talking about the oral sex?

M: Oh your right, I'm thinking of two times then. Cus, he did say dad and then right near where we stopped, when Sarah Polly, is the director, and she is the one leading us at the beginning and she says 'dad can you read that again?' So, he is called dad at that point. 09:03 . Did you have any, again we are only part way in but based on what we have seen so far do you have any questions that are unanswered. we talked about Diane a little bit but if you have more on that, that's fine. But, do you have any questions that are unanswered based on what you have seen up to this point?

JC3: I kind of would have liked to see more of the parents talking.

JC4: I don't know why but the dad's reading seems a little raw and candid, even though he has a script.

M: okay, JC1.

JC1: um..

M: you may not have any that's fine.

JC1: yeah.

M: JC2? JC5? No? they answered your questions to this point.

JC5: No, I just have the same questions. Why does he have a script? and What all went down when they were younger?

M: what do you think the paper he is reading, that script he is reading is?

JC1: It just kind of seems like a documented story that he typed up.

M: So, Michel, the narrator, you feel like it is a story he wrote? and that he is reading it in the third person.

JC4: maybe.

JC2: well, at the beginning he was like, 'ahhh i have to read all this?'

JC1: That's true.

M: so what does that mean?

JC2: so I think the director wrote it now. Because she wanted to have a clear narrative through the whole movie. that was not as necessarily biased or as disoriented as everyone else.

M: does that narration help tell the story? hurt?

JC2: yes.

M: It helps it, why?

JC2: cus it is giving us more information.

M: okay so it is just giving us information. And you guys said before you wanted documentaries to deliver information. so that's one of the ways this one's doing it. everybody is nodding. Did anybody not like the narration? Michael's narration.

JC1: hes got a nice voice.

group: ya, yes, he dose have a nice voice.

JC3: is one of the guys they interview Michael too?

JC2: ya, when he is at the table.

JC1: is he the father at the table and the person reading the story right?

M: I'm not sure I understand the question, and i'm not sure i'm going to answer it based on where we are at but go ahead and ask it again.

JC3: when they do the regular interviews the older guy sitting at the table...

M: oh, oh. ya i can answer that. that's Morts and Harry that's other people that's not Michael. so Michael the only time we see him is when he's reading, oh! well. hes at the table later, i see what you are saying. By himself? ya, that's Michael. the same guy. 11:48 Was there anything that confused you about what you have seen so far?

JC3: At the beginning when it showed Diane just kind of there on camera when she was younger and not doing anything. That kind of confused me at first.

M: that back and white footage where she is just sitting and waiting for something?

JC3: ya, that got weird after a bit.

M: and what was the confusion?

JC3: I just didn't really understand who she was.

JC4: was he saying something about how he did a bunch of work around the house?

M: Michael?

JC4: Ya, the dad. Everyone else said he didn't do anything.

M: oh i guess, ya. We where sort of led by the narration to believe that. Then the kids came in and said he didn't really do anything. Anybody else? Anything confusing or conflicting?

JC2: I was a little confused when they where setting up everything. because i didn't know how they where all related to each other.

M: So when saw all the different people getting interviewed you where waiting to see who they where and how they where connected?

JC2: ya, and then when they had all the mics in the in the frame, I was like 'okay who are these people?'

M: so every time they interview somebody we get a title that is just a one word title that 's their first name. So, its Amy it's harry it's whatever. Is that helpful or is that not helpful. Because sometimes in a documentary it will say ' Amy Smith. Ornithologist.' and so we know who she is. In this case it just says Amy.

JC4: It'd be nice to have the relationship to them

JC3: ya

JC5: especially in this case where it is supposed to be more personal.

JC4: ya I was going to say, it makes it seem less personal. Even though it is a personal situation. I just think because there are so many people it is hard to keep track. 13:38

JC1: Except for Harry, Harry was cool.

JC2: Harry was a fan favorite.

M: so, again, based on what you have seen so far do you believe the story you've seen? is it believable?

JC1: I don't have any reason not to.

JC2: I'm agnostic, so.

M: meaning, your not sure if you believe it yet or not?

JC2: I'm just taking it at a face value. watching it to watch it.
M: K, JC5, How about you?
JC5: I'm not sure what I think about it yet. Thinking back to what she [Sarah] said. while he [Michael] was asking 'do i really have to read all of this'? and she said this is't actually a documentary.
M: what does she say it was?
JC1: it's an interrogation.
JC5: ya, it's an interrogation or something.
M: so what does that mean in this context?
JC5: I feel like they are trying to get him to confess to something.
Group: they each look around at each other and laugh.
JC3: He murdered her.
JC2: That's why they have him reading from a script!
M: Did you just say ' he murdered her'?
JC3: ya, he could have.
M: Do you really think that, maybe? I don't know who said it, I just heard whispering over here.
JC3: No, I don't know, I just kind of popped into my head.
JC5: But if it was chronic depression, or something like that, maybe he knew and he didn't do anything to help her. or something, so maybe they blame him for her being gone. Weather she is dead or if she just left.
JC2: of course then why would she [Sarah] tell him [Michael] that it's an interrogation then?
JC5: I mean he is older and he is her dad.
JC1: She could be trying to get him to realize that whatever happened was his fault. By reading this script that was from their point of view.
JC2: ahhhhh.
JC3: When we started did' t we hear you read something, that said she didn't mean to trick anyone.
M: The, she said.
JC2: she had no guile.
M: That was what we heard in the film, her friend said she had no guile. [read off a script] 'Polley told Indiewire magazine that she never intended to fool anyone and she was genuinely surprised with how long it took people to see the falsities in the film.' Is that what you're talking about?
JC3: ya.
M: So, how does that connect to what we are talking about now?
JC3: I was thinking, maybe they where trying to get the dad to realize something or confess something. 16:00
M: You all more or less said, it was believable or you weren't sure yet, you weren't committing yet. JC1, I think you said it was believable, what makes it believable?
JC1: maybe just the personal aspect of it. The appeals to pathos, like the kids talking about their mother who may, or may not be dead or disappeared.
M: So it seemed genuine. what they said.
JC1: they all seemed very sure of their story. confident that they thought she was a great women.
M: okay. 16:33 JC4
JC4: the fact that so many of them are saying the same thing, and the fact that there is not so much contradictory facts.

M: no one really seems to disagree they all seem to reinforce each other?

JC4: ya.

JC5: I feel like that's kind of why I'm not sure if I quite believe it yet. because they are all saying the same thing. and that's kind of what you see at the beginning of the funeral. people being like 'oh they were so great, they were so wonderful.' kind of the guilt or sadness makes you feel like they were such a great person but they may not actually feel that way. M: do you think it will change as the film goes on?

JC5: I think it could.

M: do you think that Michael is a reliable character? we've talked a little bit about him as the interrogation subject. do you think he is reliable?

JC3: I think he has to be since he is reading off the script. He doesn't have a choice to go off of script.

JC5: It's like he is as reliable as his daughter who gave him the script.

JC4: ya, but I don't know if you can call him reliable just because he is reading off a script though because a script can be wrong.

JC2: ya.

JC4: so I don't know. I forgot...

M: you can't decide if he is reliable or not? is there any thing that makes him seem unreliable?

JC3: he seemed kind of like a cold person to his wife. The part where he said he did all the work and then they were all..

JC1: contradictory

JC2: he didn't say he did all the work. He just said...

JC5: he worked around the house.

JC2: ya he worked to do work around the house.

JC1: he said that he went off of a father's check list. Generally that would include taking care of the children and bonding with them, and not just shoving that off on the mother.

JC3: but if you think about the time period though. If this is like 50s/ 60s the dad would prepare stuff, lawn care,

JC5: he would be getting the most income, well he said he changed jobs and quit being an actor once they had kids.

JC3: at that time it was the mom's duty to take care of the kids

M: It would probably, just a minor adjustment it would mostly be the 70s what you're seeing here. maybe the very late 60s but mostly the 70s, if that makes any difference for you. 19:04 Do you think there were any fictional elements in what you saw?

JC2: Yes, but I don't remember. There was something that stuck out to me that I was like that seems really biased. Actually, it was when one of the daughters was talking about the dad and she was like, she just flat out said 'ya, he didn't do anything around the house, he didn't help the kids and he stuck Diane with everything.' or 'stuck mom with everything.' I was like.. everyone else is pretty much here are the facts here is how these people were, but she was like this is how I feel about this person, and that felt that that was very biased.

M: I asked about fictional, but would you define bias as inserting fiction into something? is that why are you saying biased?

JC2: Um, more just like, I'm not sure how to explain it.

JC1: I think everyone is a little fictional when they are biased. Because you are trying to steer people to your side, and you are probably going to say whatever helps you.

M: do you think that it is then intentionally false, or is it the way they remember it?

JC2: it's probably just the way she remembers it.

JC1: it may just be out of passion.

JC2: because memories are just memories of memories, so she might be remembering bad and she remembers remembering bad and then she associates Michael with bad. and then she says Michael is bad.

M: JC5 did you start to say something?

JC5: no.

JC3: one thing I think is fictional is that i'm guessing his son talking about the oral sex thing, it was kind of weird. I don't think a kid would hear that from his dad. it seems like something they wouldn't even talk about.

JC4: Also, It's the 70s. they probably weren't that prude, as he would say.

M: so if that part is fictional, how would it have gotten into the film? Would it have been scripted that way or would it have been miss-remembering

JC3: it could have been with [the statement that you said about] her trying not to trick any one. I guess I'm not sure, it just seemed odd to me that like a kid would take that course.

JC1: the husband also said that Diane only wanted to have, maybe not only but wanted to have sex all the time. all that kid mentioned was oral sex. So maybe that's another differentiation between child vs father.

M: we talked right at the beginning about sort of characteristics of documentary, so what are the characteristics of a fiction film? what are the elements of that?

JC5: there is a story line. You've got your beginning, then you are getting up to the major point, then after you get to your major point you have a conclusion. but i feel like when you are doing a documentary you could always just keep going, you don't always know the focal point until it is completely over. But in a fiction movie you can tell when the focal point is.

M: and you haven't seen enough of this one but do you feel like this one has more of a fictional structure, with a beginning and then getting that focal point and then ending or do you think it has more of the documentary structure you described?

JC5: the way it is laid out I am kind of leaning more towards fictional just because the whole introduction was seeing the build up to this documentary. So theirs, your beginning stage, and then the rising action is everyone's describing how great she was and then 22:45 how she was an amazing person. then the climax and the focal point would be the shocking reveal. and then its going to say what happened after the shocking reveal.

M: so that might happen here you think.

JC5: I think it could, yeah.

JC2: I think there's a story about the documentary going on..

M: go ahead what does that mean?

JC2: like why they started filming the introduction of the documentary, like making a documentary. and like why they left, and the dad asked the question, like 'ah i have to read all of this?' and stuff.

M: so we are seeing the making of the documentary inside the of the documentary they are making?

JC2: which is why the documentary itself is going to be apart of the story. like when the dad reads a thing, like: 'and then Michael killed her' or something and then he goes 'ohhhh okay I did it!' And then there is the story.

M: easiest case ever for Canadian officials, he just admitted it on film. Um, any other parts you think are fictional? Visually anything?

JC5: I kind of thought it was odd that whenever one of them was setting it up and one of the women sat down at her table and she asked whose tea was sitting there. like, most likely, you would think, if this is a documentary like oh either shes on a set or shes in her own home. but normally if you have props its going to have water or something but they had tea.

M: and so you are seeing that as fictional in that what she said was made up?

JC5: Nah, i feel like they are trying to stage it to look like their making it more personal, like they are in her own home so they kind of slipped that in. Like maybe this is more of a home environment then a set.

M: what does staging mean?

JC5: staging, like setting it up to look like one way but its not actually that way.

M: okay does everybody define it that way? Any different definitions of staging? Your good with that. So you mention the cup does anything else feel staged in here?

Group: totally silent, looking around blankly

JC5: I would say, maybe the way they are all adjusting how they look, but that's just how people are.

M: ya, people are nervous about being on camera. JC2, you mentioned way back at the beginning, and I cant remember what question generated it, it was something about the style maybe, but you said that they have an awful lot of home movies.

JC2: yeah.

M: lets come back to that, why dose it feel that way.

JC2: Because they just have random, they have footage of stuff that most people wouldn't have footage of.

M: such as?

JC2: like um, there's a lot of shots of her reacting to things around her. or like videos of them at the party. where he was smoking a cigarette and she was drinking something. Like why would they be filming that? If someone was at a party with a camera, they are not going to follow someone down the stairs, 'whoo we're having a great time, whats going on over here' (he is motioning his hands to follow people down the stairs and then into a hall by the stairs, a shot from the film). then it just stays on them for like 5 minuets.

M: JC4?

JC4: I just think they have a lot of that footage you know? every time they talk about something they put a piece of the footage in there. and I don't know, that time where the kid was saying 'oh ya I remember times where she would be on the phone and she would put up her hand' And then they had a video of that. like, i don't know, Its not too often you are running around your house recording your mom on the phone.

M: would it be possible that you have seen those movies over and over and because that's what you've seen in the movies so that's what you remember? So could he have seen the movies of the hand being up and that's why he talked about it in the interview? [26:24](#)

JC4: its possible.

JC1: i think one possibility is, you remember when they went on that vacation honeymoon thing in Europe? And it said that 'it often was said that he held the camera more than he held her.' that could be why they have so much footage. I mean if they did that at home.

M: that he just shot alot?

JC1: Yeah.

JC5: ya but he also said that he didn't shoot people a lot.

JC2: that he didn't like shooting people. he didn't like getting close to people.

M: anything else staged or fictional in the way it looked?

JC1: the footage could be staged.

M: and what would that be?

JC1: I mean her reacting with things, just like how we would set up a vine to shoot or record to post on social media. If he or she was like 'hey watch me do this' then..

JC3: I mean I feel like they could have just takin' an actress and said 'hey your going to be Diane, no one else knows what she looks like' and then they shoot it with an old camera, and call you Diane.

M: and why would they do that do you think?

JC3: To have all this footage that looks old.

M: so you said you think they could do that, do you think they did do that or are you just saying that they could, that it's equally as likely as having the real thing?

JC3: yeah, It's probably equally as likely. I don't really know.

M: okay anybody else?

JC5: I think some of it could have been staged, because some of it just seemed a little too specific to what they where saying.

JC2: But, like he [moderator] said, because they have seen the footage a lot that will change how they remember.

M: I'm just throwing that out there though, is there a particular scene that you remember for that though?

JC5: No, not a particular one. It's just...

JC3: At the start when they are talking about when they met after the play and they went to the party and he was like 'oh i have a sports car out there' I don't know if that scene that they showed if that was supposed to be at the party like right after they met but it would be kind of weird, just recording them.

M: that's the same scene I think you mentioned (directed towards JC2). When they come down the stairs. It could have been another party though right? It just matches up, when they where already together?

JC3: Yeah. [28:54](#)

M: So for this documentary or any documentary do you think there is a place for fiction to be inserted in there?

JC2: I think you can take some liberties. Like you said, like the footage for the one scene may have been a different party, but it just may have been used to give us a visual image to put the words to make us retain the information better. weather it is necessarily the party that, that happened at you know that would be the fiction part.

M: anybody else? JC4, is there a place for fiction in documentaries at all?

JC4: I feel like probably shouldn't be.

M: Why?

JC4: because like you said, a lot of people watch documentaries to get facts about things. Like you wouldn't want to watch a National Geographic documentary about some animal and they just throw in some facts that would seem right with it, but you don't know for sure. It seems like they should stay in non-fiction.

M: so you wouldn't want to have something about a cheetah and have them say, 'cheetahs live in trees' and your like 'no they don't' Right?

JC4: Right, and I don't know if they count as documentaries, but they are things they call 'documentaries' you know about like 'oh we saw an alien spaceship'

M: yeah, they had that one about the mermaid being found. remember that? and then an alien.
JC4: I remember that
JC5: I remember that.
M: they had an autopsy and stuff.
JC4: yeah stuff like that.
M: I guess those are technically documentaries. Its...
JC4: okay, like shark week. Basically a bunch of documentaries thrown together in a week right?
M: right?
JC4: And then they always have the search for Megalodon or something. And you don't quite know if that's real or not but they say it is.
M: That finding big foot show, you guys watch that? I guess when they find it the show is over, but is that a documentary show? Are you guys familiar with that? Has every body seen that? I have to figure out what the title is, but is that a documentary?
JC5: I think it's just "Finding Big Foot." Is't it? Or was it? I think it's done now.
M: is it, I don't know if its done or not.
JC2: did they find him?
JC5: no, because now he has a different show. He's traveling around the world trying to find there are big foots in other countries. Like I know he went to Asia to find yeti.
M: so are those documentaries?
JC5: In a sense they are a documentary from that perspective.
JC1: maybe for a certain crowd.
JC2: I think they are TV shows labeled as documentaries. Because its like the ghost chaser stuff, or whatever the ghost..
M: ya the ghost hunters, or whatever.
JC2: sure, they always have the 'oh my gosh did you see that?' and the voices and stuff and apparently all of that is fake.
M: mhhm
JC2: so, I don't know it may just be like wanting to take fiction to that next level. ah it could happen to you.
M: mhhm, are the real housewives of wherever is that documentary?
JC3: I feel like for something to be called a documentary it has to be like start with something and end with something. Giving a full you get it, you can sit down in a normal sitting and watch it all and then be done with it knowing that's the end. Like the TV shows they keep going on and on.
M: they make more money if they have more seasons so it's to their benefit for it to not end. Is this your, it is a very simple definition of a documentary is this [Stories We Tell] going to fit the bill for that?
JC3: I don't know how far it goes but, if it is just a normal like two hour movie.
M: Ya, I think it's like 90, or 88 minuets.
JC3: ya.
M: you think it's heading that way?
JC3; Yeah.
M: would you be happy/ unhappy if you learned that part of this was fiction? Part of what you saw was fiction?
JC3: I think I would have to get farther into it to get a stronger connection to it. Get a feeling for this.

M: okay, JC5?

JC5: I think it completely depends on what aspect of it is fictional.

M: Mhmm. 33:29

JC5: If its like what you said earlier, just the visual aide, then that's not really a huge deal. But if like they lie about why she is gone, that's something that is a focal point. So, If you would like about something that is crucial for you [an audience member] to know then that's where you should draw the line.

M: okay, JC2, how about you?

JC2: I mean it doesn't really have an impact on me it is more just a personal story about someone that I will never meet ever. So, for me it is just kind of entertaining. So if they had a disclaimer that said yeah, all of this was fake, none of it was real. I wouldn't care. because it was still as entertaining as it was.

M: okay, JC1? 34:15

JC1: Um, I kind of agree with JC5. If it is a major point of the story, that they lied about or that I find out on my own or they tell me that it was false, that is going to kind of just ruin the whole thing for me. Make me question why i watched it.

M: okay, JC4?

JC4: I mean i feel like I would be a little indifferent if it was fictional or not. Just because I am not using it to learn anything. I am just watching it to watch it.

M: JC3, did you answer this already, I'm losing track of who

JC3: yeah.

M: ya, you did. Okay, So Sarah Polly is the director she is the one we saw with Michael in the recording studio and doing the interviews and other things. So, she is an actor, have you seen her in anything? You guys recognize her name or her face?

JC2: I recognize the name.

M: Yeah, I don't know if she is acting as much as directing now, but Canadian, obviously this is a Canadian actor probably the best known film she was in was a movie from about 12 years ago called 'Go,' which is a fun movie, its a good movie. its kind of an action movie set in Los Angeles. It's an action comedy in Los Angeles and Las Vegas. So, I would recommend that you see it. She is in a lot of art films and stuff like that. Does that make any difference to how you see the film if you know that she's an actor?

JC5: no, even Michael was an actor, so was their mom. So, this is a film about a family that started from actors.

M: would actors approach a documentary any differently you think?

JC5: I mean I would hope not.

JC2: I don't know if they would do it on purpose but I think that they might.

M: In what way? what might they do differently?

JC2: they have so much training to fit into a character they might take any vices that they have, like Michael was a bad person, and they might amplify that through their actions. Or how they answer questions in character or something.

M: K, Any last thoughts? how do you want this movie to come out? JC5, How do you want it to, you described a classic three act structure of a film what do you want the focal point of this movie to be?

JC5: I want the focal point to be either explaining why there is a script for one person or whats happened to Diane that, why is this something they made about Diane?

M: okay, JC2, anything different?

JC2: I want it to turn out that all of the people being interviewed are ghosts and Diane killed them all.

M: wow, that be good.

JC2: that's just how I want it to turn out.

M: k, JC1?

JC1: I would probably go with my original idea of her disappearing. Kind of adds an air of mystery that she could still be out there somewhere. Diane if your watching this...

M: she's right behind you! JC4?

JC4: I would just like to figure out why they made this documentary. What happened that was important enough to make this?

M: we get that put into our heads right at the beginning. when the one sister says ' why should any body care about our family.' right?

JC4: right.

M: we don't have the answer to that yet.

JC4: exactly.

M: JC3?

JC3: I would like it to end with like a directors cut explaining, everything like 'haha we got you all.' or 'this was all real our family grew up like this, this all happened.' The mom ran away, a closer.

M: okay, that's about all I have for the group. did you pick a few people for individual interviews?

researcher: mmhh. JC5 and JC4 can you stay?

JC5 and JC4: yup.

M: other than that we will let you go. I recommend you see the rest of it, do we deiced if it was available anywhere?

R: it was on Amazon Prime a couple of weeks ago.

M: Amazon Prime. Is it still up there you think?

R: I'm not sure.

M: You might see it there. I don't want to reveal too much more about it. Will it hurt if I say?

R: No, tell them.

M: Okay, a lot of the home movies are fake, it was one of the very first things we said. there where an awful lot of them so, first time through you don't notice it. most people don't. Once you watch it multiple times, we've seen it multiple times, it's really obvious which are and which ones aren't. and they use a 8MM super eight movie camera, so they are shooting it on the same tool they would have used in the 70s to shoot it. but the actors playing Diane and Michael, and the kids are just kids its hard to tell the difference, but there pretty obvious that they are different people once you watch a little bit, and some of you might have even seen that but it didn't even register because your brain is telling you it's home movies and the same people. so if I read what I read before, when she said " she never intended to fool anyone and she was genuinely surprised how long it took people to see the falsities in the film." That really did come later, because she thought everybody would notice right away that that those where different people.she was just trying to fill in, exactly what a couple of you mentioned, it seems offaly convenient that she would say ' i remember her on the phone and she'd have her hand up' well she wanted a shot of that and so it wasn't what i suggested that maybe they had seen the movie and they remembered that, it was actually the other way around. He mentioned it in the interview and then they went and shot it. So that they had it to cover that up as they went on. there is a structure to it, and this

is an example of what is being called cinematic non-fiction now. that the way you guys describe documentary is the way a lot of documentaries are done which is experts talk about the subject and by watching it you learn more about that subject. but it doesn't really have that arch that JC5 described. And so some, documentary film makers, and i think it does make a difference that Sarah Polly's an actor because she has been working in fiction films that have that arch. there trying to build arch into it so that you can find, we did this in Kansas City last week, and somebody mentioned the difference between the documentary just telling you stuff VS a movie that lets you find it out as it happens. so this is a documentary that lets you find it out as it happens. So we do find a lot out, I hate to spoil it because I want you to see it, but I'll give you this one tid-bit. turns out Michael is not Sarah's father. that is one of the things we are headed for. And we find out who the father is. it is somebody that we already mentioned, it is Harry the guy that looks like Einstein.

Group: gasps, exchanges looks.

JC5: I mean he was the favorite.

JC4: scandal

M: So, that's one of the things you find out as you go through there. Okay so everybody besides JC5 and JC4 that the research asked you to stay, you guys can take off. [41:35](#)

JC5 Individual Interview. Researcher: What did you think of the film?

JC5: I actually thought it was really cool, I liked the theory that is behind it. You know, there is not just straight facts, I mean, that's what school is for. so if we have something outside of school that you can still learn something from it could be good.

R: Have you seen a documentary like this before? That has that cinematic non-fiction.

JC5: I haven't. and it is actually really cool, and I didn't know of anything like that.

R: yeah, cool. Do you have a background in film or documentary?

JC5: not really, but my dad does. and I was brought up in it.

R: what does your dad do?

JC5: well now he works in I.T. for Century Link. But before he shot his own home videos and then had a few published works, nothing super major, nothing that got out anywhere but, so I kind of grew up in the writing aspect of it I never really got into the video.

R: Okay, cool. so script writing and that kind of stuff?

JC5: yeah.

R: Fun. you where saying something to the effect of you wouldn't mind if there where fictional elements to the film, as long as it was't anything critical? what do you mean by that?

JC5: like having the video to visual go with that. I'm not upset with that simple because people learn with visual aides and that can help someone learn. I think the point of a documentary is so that you learn something, that you can use later in life or as kind of a fun fact. so if they lie about a fact, I mean I think that kind of defeats the purpose. and I feel like that is when you start to cross over into fiction when you start lying about facts.

R: do you see any kind of issue with that in documentary? If something is portrayed that way? [02:05](#)

JC5: I think if you are labeled as a documentary but you don't have 100 percent honest facts then yeah there's an issue. Now, if it is something where we thought this at one point, this was a fact

at one point but then we found out that it wasn't true. I think it could still be labeled as a documentary just a out of date.

R: Okay.

JC5: Because at one point it was a fact that the Earth was flat, we are on a flat planet. And then as time went on we relaxed, no it's not it's round.

R: do you think that's the viewers job to recognize that it is an out of date kind of thing, or do you think the documentarian should..

JC5: I think it's kind of both. Because I feel like you need to know. kind of what you are getting yourself into but at the same time if you publish something saying it is 100 percent true or its like 95 percent true and then you learn later that something about it isn't I feel like something needs to be released saying 'hey. this has been disproven.'

R: and do you think this should be on the DVD or on the end of ...

JC5: yeah, I feel like once they start making covers for the DVD cases or whatever, it should say this part has been disproven or this part has changed.

R: okay, you guys where saying in a documentary like this it is not super high stakes if there is that fictional element. is there a type of documentary or a type of information that you would get that you would think ' no this can not have any fiction.'

JC5: anything health related, you definitely need to have as close to 100 percent as possible. as say that because you can still have the visual differences in things. anything related to laws or politics or government. It's okay to have a biased stand point but you do need to put in your opposing perspective. and that is kind of something else that documentaries can be iffy about. You can have a bias but you have to acknowledge that there is a another perspective. because you can't just have 'blue is the best color because of these reasons. but for some people red is the best color.' there are other sides to every coin.

R: Do they need equal weight?

JC5: I don't know if they need equal weight, but it would need to mentioned somewhere weather it is a disclaimer on the disc or a disclaimer at the beginning or even if they go off for 10/ 15 minuets about the opposing side. And I mean that is even taught in school now, whenever you have to have a persuasive argument, you have to have an entire paragraph and entire fourth to fifth of your paper has to be the counter argument. So I feel we are taught that you can have your opinion but you have to acknowledge that there is something else.

R:so you expect professionals to have that same kind of.. [05:19](#)

JC5: I do. especially if you are labeled as a professional. I feel like you definitely need to know its not all going to agree with you.

R: when we where talking you said you where looking for things when you watch films, are you an active viewer or..

JC5: I'm a very active viewer. I'm that person who will sit in the suspense film and constantly say who I think is doing it. I was the person where in "Scooby Doo" I was like 'oh no it's this person. i know it, but now it's this one.'

R: So when you are watching a documentary, you guys said you expect it to be factual, you expect there to be information you get out of it, kind of educational. Is there anything else that you expect?

JC5: Just from the past documentaries I have seen I don't expect video as much as I expect images to correspond with people talking. but at the same time, i think that is just an expectation because that's what we've done for so long. So, I kind of liked the little breaks of video, but at the same time seeing the people talk about it. remembering this is a factual thing. this is

something you are learning from. so seeing those people talk and knowing who they are and what they are.

R: so what did you think of the reenactments?

JC5: Like did I have an issue with it or just what did I think?

R: yeah.

JC5: I definitely did not have an issue with reenactments just because its not the exact footage but you are not going to have exact footage all the time. Like if they made a documentary about a penguin that they found and the penguin's name is Bill, and Bill died because of an oil spill. There not going to have all of this footage of this one little penguin. So, I mean they are going to have footage of other penguins that are going around. And I mean there is not really a harm in it, I mean, sure that penguin might not be Bill, but it could have been. You don't know and I think that's okay.

R: do you mind that it wasn't labeled as a reenactment? you're okay that it's a penguin, it's not Bill but I don't need to know that it's not Bill.

JC5: yeah, I mean the same point come across, I don't think you have to know that it's a reenactment.

R: after this process would this make you more skeptical going forward watching documentaries? Kind of being like ' I don't know if that's really true.'

JC5: No, because I kind of already knew there where reenactments in documentaries. i do feel like for some people it would make them a little more skeptical, but at the same time I think once the realize it I don't think it's a hard thing to get over.

R: Okay, when your friends are like 'do you want to watch a fiction film or do you want to watch a documentary?' which would you choose normally?

JC5: I wish my friends would ask me if I wanted to watch a documentaries. i watch them at least four times a week. I would honestly say a documentary. And I can't tell you why. I think it is just because I read so much fiction when I was younger that then once I saw non-fiction I was like ' I can take this and say it to someone and it is true.' I don't know but I think that made me feel a bit better.

R: Cool, When you are watching a movie do you actively weigh is this true, is this false or are you kind of trying to figure out the plot.

JC5: Most of the time I am trying to figure out the plot, but afterwards I will typically try to sit and think well is this really a thing? and then I will normally go and look it up. So when I am watching it is more of a plot things, than a is this true.

R: Do you have any other thoughts about the documentary or this process? Or anything we talked about?

JC5: Nope, I thought it was cool. I really did. That's a cool way of telling a non-fiction story.

R: yeah, maybe you will have to get a couple of your friends to watch it.

JC5: right? because i feel like that's an issue with non-fiction in general is people don't want to read it, they don't want to get into it. because it's bland. And so having it set up in a way that it has an arc I mean that's something that someone can follow, I mean someone can get interested in it. And so I feel like that's a good method to go, to get people more interested in documentaries.

R: for sure, well thank you so much, I won't take up any more of your time. [10:33](#)

JC5 Individual Interview. Researcher: So, what did you think of the movie?

JC4: I liked it.

R: compared to other documentaries you've seen did you like the style or?

JC4: Yeah, I thought it was nice how they intertwined all of the little clips of it with the interviews, even though they told us some of them are fictional or whatever.

R: does that bother you at all?

JC4: uhhh, I don't know I don't think I saw enough of it to really make it bother me. Because I didn't get too invested into it you know?

R: so would it bother you if you were watching a different documentary and they were like this is a reenactment or if they didn't say anything and you found out later.

JC4: If it was a documentary where I was trying to learn about a topic then it would bother me. but if it was a documentary I was just kind of watching to see the documentary then it wouldn't effect me all too much.

R: do you have an example of a documentary that it would bug you in?

JC4: yeah, well you know Discovery Channel in the summer they have shark week. where they have a bunch of different things about sharks, like if I found out that a big portion of a show I liked was fake then that would probably bother me a little just because. I like watching those for all the facts and things they put on there.

R: okay, so even if what they were saying was true, like 'this shark weighs this much and it does this or that' that was true, but the shark they were talking about wasn't on the screen, is that something that would bug you?

JC4: You mean if it was misleading?

R: yeah, so kind of like this is [stories we tell]. They talk about it but it's not Diane, the actual Diane, is not the one on the screen, but that's the one that's the person they are talking about.

JC4: yeah, I would like them to have the correct visuals with what they are talking about.

R: but in this aspect that doesn't bother you?

JC4: this one didn't bother me too much, no.

R: so more if it is an educational kind of thing?

JC4: Right, exactly.

R: Okay, would you describe yourself as an active movie watcher or do you just watch it for entertainment.

JC4: what do you mean by active?

R: so when you are watching a movie are you the kind of person who is like 'I don't know if that was real' or 'I need to figure out how this is going to end' or do you just kind watch it and enjoy all of the stuff that is happening?

JC4: well, it kind of depends. I do like, in movies, you know trying to see when they mess up. Especially in the older ones. You know, your watching a superman movie and he fly's down on this guy and you can see the rope or something holding him up in the back. That stuff is fun to watch. but I would say I more watch it for the entertainment than anything else. Unless it was a movie based on a book I've read. then I try to find all of the flaws in it.

R: do you have an example?

JC4: "Percy Jackson." did you ever read those?

R: I didn't but my little brother got into them.

JC4: Yeah, so if you read those then you watch the movie then you realize oh it doesn't follow the plot line at all. Or like the Harry Potter movies. So, if I see things that weren't in the book that always bothers me.

R: my friend refused to watch the first Harry Potter movie after she saw it the first time because there was a whole section of the book missing. She was angry for years. So, if your

friends where to ask you if you wanted to watch a fiction film or a documentary which would you chose?

JC4: probably fiction.

R: Why do you have a preference for fiction films?

JC4: I like watching comedies, I think part of it might be they improve your mood and so not too many documentaries you watch you are thinking right after 'oh wow I'm super happy.' you know? but if you watch a comedy with an actor or somebody that you really like then it kind of cheers you up. I feel like that's part of why I like to watch movies. [04:13](#)

R: so it is more of the mood you get off watching it?

JC4: yeah

R: okay that makes sense. You talked about how critical facts, if something in a film had critical facts that where made up, that would bother you. But you where saying that this kind of visual didn't bother you as much. Can you talk more about that.

JC4: yeah, I think a lot of it comes down to its not something I was watching for an education stand point, it didn't bother me too much. But if it where something i was watching to gain more knowledge about a subject then it would bother me if the visuals and the audio didn't all connect or if they where misleading about pieces of it and if some facts where not right and all that, that would bother me. But because this was more of a partly fiction, it didn't bother me.

R: what do you mean by partly fiction?

JC4: well part of it was't real. And I guess I didn't know that when it started out but I feel like because I was't trying to learn something by watching this video, that's probably why it didn't bother me too much. [05:32](#)

R: Would you say this is still a documentary even though it has those fictional elements to it?

JC4: I don't know if I would classify it exactly as a documentary. I mean calling it a fictional documentary or semi-fictional or something like that would make more sense. but it would be hard to classify something that has fictional elements in the same grouping as something that is completely factual.

R; do you have an example of something that is completely factual in your mind?

JC4: um, I would just think, from what I know, a lot of those National Geographic and those things about the different animals and the wildlife and all that. I feel like those are completely factual.

Moderator: I'm just going to jump in here, they are really fake.

JC4: that's what I'm saying. like as far as I know.

M: I always say on those, not to stop your answer, but I know people always think that. But If you see a lion attacking an antelope they have almost always brought the antelope to the lion or vice versa because they don't just want to sit around for days waiting for antelope to show up, so they fake a ton of stuff.

R: I read a really interesting article about how they get some of those cheetah shots. Because the cameras are really invasive in their environment, so they spend weeks getting the animals used to the equipment before the even get the shot.

M: they are getting better about it and trying to get more things where, because technology now you can leave a camera going for weeks so people can leave. But back when I was a kid Disney had a lot of films, and I can look at them now and it was clearly not even in the wild. this was a box they built on a set somewhere and they stuck these animals in them. you can see the lights and everything. But when your a kid it looks real. [07:19](#)

R: but something like that?

JC4: but yeah, something like that.

R: So something like that you think is more full fact where as this is kind of fact and fiction but it's not a fiction film.

JC4: exactly like parts of this where real, obviously, but that's why I wouldn't classify it just as a fiction movie. but it is also not completely true. So I don't know if you could call it a non-fiction it's just somewhere in the middle there.

R: do you think this whole process is going to make you look at documentaries a little differently?

JC4: probably.

R: how so?

JC4: Well usually, I just kind of assume they are right because you know they pull out all these guys and they are like this is Dr. so and so, and he specializes in this, but you never really think to question whether or not what they are saying is true. 08:12 Then look at where they get their facts and all of that. So it is probably something you should do.

R: do you have any other thoughts about the film or this process or anything we've talked about?

JC4: Um I don't know. from the start when he [Moderator] read the part from the paper and it said 'that she, the film director, was not trying to mess with people, and they weren't trying to fool anybody.' while we were watching I was honestly trying hard to look like not at the people, but kind of behind them. Because sometimes they would have little things going on in the background. 08:52 like not this one but i was thinking maybe they would have stuff going on in the background that would actually fool people. And I was trying to catch it, but I didn't. And that might be in part why I didn't notice there where different people, was because I wasn't looking at the, like a shot would focus on the mom and I would try to look at things around the mom to try and see if there was something there that was out of place. But I thought it was interesting that they fooled all of us like that.

M: Nobody said it here, but in Kansas city somebody picked up on the fact that, they were like 'why did they shoot the modern day interviews with the home movie camera, which again I think is something that the director did. To kind of wink at what she was doing, but nobody picked up on it. it's the only time somebody picked up on it.

R: So the intro at the beginning kind of colored how you watched the film a bit?

JC4: yeah it did. If he wouldn't have said that, then I would have watched it like a regular one probably.

R: okay, cool, well thank you so much for coming out. 10:03

Kansas City Focus Group. Moderator: we are going to start with a question that is not exactly about the film we just watched but, What is the difference between a documentary and a fiction film? Yes, KC1 Right?

KC1: a documentary is an actual story about someone or something.

M: it tells a story about a real someone or something? does anybody have a different definition, an additional definition?

KC2: A fiction film has a narrative quality to it, where as a documentary is more about the information you get out of it.

M: okay, so what would you consider a narrative, how would you define that?

KC2: like this happened and then this happened and then this happened, like they are moving through different people and talking about different things.

M: okay, anybody else? Any additional points of view with that?

KC5: I think that sometimes documentaries don't have the same quality that you get from big screen production.

M: so, you consider it lower quality?

KC5: Yeah, or its more of a utilitarian. It's for that purpose for telling the story, with out all the extra expense of making it attractive.

M: and KC6, you are nodding your head at that, do you agree?

KC6: yeah.

M: can you give me an example?

KC6: There is a lot of off takes, like they are talking behind the camera and they don't realize the camera is on so they talk through it, and that gives you little tid-bits of information that, that's what it is. it's just that information flood.

M: Can anybody, in quick recall or mention a favorite documentary one you have seen recently? 01:38

KC5: We've been watching the food ones.

KC6: yeah the sugar one.

M: "Searching for Sugar Man?"

KC6: no, what was it about sugar?

KC5: I don't know, we watched "Food Inc." and I don't think it's "Food Inc." though, I think there is another one that came out after it that's more specific to sugar.

M: I can almost picture the poster of the one you are talking about but I can't remember the title. It's something sugar habit. KC7, anything come to mind?

KC7: I'm trying to think. I'm kind of trying to define in my head what documentary means to me. and I think initially its like something that's fact based, but yeah, that isn't necessarily so because I guess, I think the last one I watched was about the life of a football player and I'm trying to think who it was.

M: was it Gleeson? Football player who died.

KC7: I don't remember, I'll have to think about that, but then again it's fact based but it is still facts that are filtered through their own perception. 02:52

M: So, it's because people are telling the story, a true story, but they are retelling it? For the sake of the documentary, the people in the documentary?

KC7: right they are talking about this person, and some of the decisions they made and whatever. so they are obviously going to have to make that biased on their own perception of that.

M: Okay, KC1, any documentary that comes to mind that you have seen recently, or liked?

KC1: I'm trying to think because I watch a lot of documentaries sometimes one a day. but I guess what comes to mind is one I watched last week, which I don't remember the title it was death something, death, near death, or death something.

M: okay, and what was it about, what where the characters?

KC1: it was about an Australian quest for health. he lived in the United states and he also mentored a man. both of those people had an auto-immune disease. and by the care they where introducing they became the epitome of health.

KC5: we've seen that one, "The Juice," that guy on the juice quest.

KC1: yeah, yeah.

M: so a number of health or food related docs here, it sounds like.

KC1: It was pretty impactful. Then i've been watching a series called "Modernism." and I don't know where it was produced, but it is about different kinds of designers and artists and they seem to be college produced over a week or a section.

M: okay, KC4: how about you?

KC4: I watch murder documentaries.

M: okay, murder documentaries, any one in particular that's a favorite or comes to mind?

KC4: "Bobo the Clown"

M: okay, and KC8? How about you?

KC8: I don't actually know, but I do remember this one about a guy who ate McDonald everyday for a year.

KC4: "Super Size Me."

KC8: yeah.

M: that one was very popular. that did very well, it got a theatrical release and did well. KC3, how about you?

KC3: I also watched "Super Size Me" and "Raising Extinction." that one.

M: okay, KC2?

KC2: I saw, i think it was a part of a BBC series documentary, it was on Tibet and the natural environment and the culture there.

M: okay, that's a pretty wide variety we have here. I wan't to make sure my camera is recording, it is. Okay, so let me ask taking specifically about the documentary we just saw, what did you think about the style? How would you describe the style of what we just saw?

KC1: My reaction to it was that it was loose. I had a hard time staying awake.

M: so, loose? is that the word you used? And what does loose mean in your..

KC1: well, I mean I don't know. It didn't really have an impact or tie itself down to what it was about. So I kept dozing off.

M: Good thing we only watched 18 minuets, what if we had watched the whole thing? KC5, what where you saying?

KC5: Just that it is loose, they bounce around. It took a minuet to catch on that they where all related and talking about the same person. And I do think once I realized that it tied it in a little easier but it's an interesting approach, they way they bounce.

M: k, KC6, what did you think about it?

KC6: Ehhh, lots of different perspectives of the same story, it would be interesting to see how it progresses.

M: I know it is not an entirely fair question, but what do you think the story is 18 minuets in. What is the story?

KC6: hmm, there complete break up or maybe, I don't know something specific about her that happened that they haven't disclosed yet.

M: and whose break up?

KC6: the husband and wife.

M: k, Michael and Diane? what else what do you think of the style?

KC2: I thought maybe the objective was to kind of create like an empathy between the narrators and Michael and Diane and the rest of the family, to kind of make you feel like you are there being part of this event.

M: and where they successful?

KC2: Yeah. i think there was this self referential quality, it was very effective in creating that.

M: okay, KC3, how about you? Style-wise how do you feel about it?

KC3: I also agree, it felt loose, it was a really laid back way of telling it. but I think it kind of fits, because it is about a family and so it is telling it from the personal story and the homey kind of feel they where trying to go for. its not like "Raising Extinction." That was a bunch of scientific

facts and a whole bunch of consequences that are coming up in the future. That was a kind of ridged structure in a way. This was much more loose.

M: do you feel like this story has facts?

KC3: I mean, yes. Like not the type of scientific facts that some other documentaries have. but it is facts from people's view points, which change. so it's like a loose definition of facts. Because perception is reality so it's like their own reality, because it is what they perceive it to be. So it is going to vary per person. but it is what they think it is as their own facts 08:54 .

M: and how do you rate that approach to facts VS "Raising Extinction" which is a very scientific documentary?

KC3: I mean they are conveying two different things. So, I mean it is still interesting because these are all personal stories. So they are valid to themselves so they are still valid for this but if you were doing something for "Raising Extinction" you would need more than just personal feelings and stuff.

M: so the subject matter makes a difference 09:28 KC7, how about you in terms of how this is put together?

KC7: I don't know, I caught myself wandering, thinking from a perspective of a child myself or how I perceive my parents, you know. As the trail of the story. Because it kind of weaved all around. And I was curious on who wrote the script?

M: I might answer some questions later but we are just going to leave those out there for now. It had a meandering quality to you as opposed to some of the other documentaries we talked about, which are much more straight line. Everybody kind of feel the same way on that? KC2, way back at the beginning you talked about a narrative being sort of a straight line, I don't think that's the exact term that you used, but being a path through it, does this have a narrative do you think? 10:35

KC2: yeah, but it is less of a traditional sort of narrative.

M: and how would you describe it?

KC2: well, I think of it having a creative and sort of groupings of similar ideas. But with out using times as the mode of ordering it.

M: okay, what does that mean? not using time to order it?

KC2: I mean they are still using time, but they are not saying this happened after this happened after this happened.

M: so it is not just a strict chronological order. Okay, KC1, How about you. Do you like that approach/ dislike that approach? weather you agree or not, do you like that approach?

KC1: I did not find it engaging, in theory I think I do like that kind of approach.

M: but maybe not the execution we have here?

KC1: yes.

KC7: Can I speculate? you asked what we think its about?

M: that was the next think I was going to open up to all of you, so you can jump right in there and say what is it about? What's the story?

KC7: I suspect, because he is reading that he finally wrote, after she's gone. And that's just a speculation. because he is following a script he is reading his own writing, at least that is the impression I got. While they are speaking about the relationship he is reading what he has documented about the relationship.

M: We hear as we are talking about, I want to ask everybody about the story and where they differ on that, but we hear near the beginning when she is prepping for the interviews, she is saying can you tell the whole story, I think she says from beginning to end. Or start form the

beginning and go all the way through something like that. But we have sort of said that is not how they are telling the story so, is that a good thing or a bad thing? That we hear one thing and see something else? 12:33

KC2: I don't think it matters especially because there showing the production of the film so you are aware things are happening post production.

M: okay, so you feel that is why we saw behind the scenes?

KC2: I Don't think that's the reason why but I think that's why it doesn't matter, they are not trying to fool us into believing that this is something happening real time or anything.

M: well you have the floor what do you think the story is?

KC2: I guess probably just about the life of Diane.

M: okay, KC3, how about you?

KC3: I think it is about the life of Diane, because that's what they started with was talking about her. they did talk about father for a little bit and they did talk about their relationship, but I would assume that as the documentary goes on it will be more focused on her and their break up as well, but it will be more about their life story.

M: okay, lets talk about assumptions, because again you watched a portion of it but i'll ask you about what do you think will happen? what do you think the whole story is?

KC3: I don't entirely know. since she is so fun loving and out there, I feel like she is going to go out chasing her dream, not settling down, and I don't know if that will start cutting ties with family. I wouldn't know how that will work out for them. But I just assume that she is going to keep on living life to the fullest and that is probably going to end up taking her places.

M: KC8, do you have another take on where you think the story is headed?

KC8: At the begging one of the people said something about how its weird that they are talking about their family and why do people care about their family, so I got the impression we are just going to talk about their family in general. then they started focusing in on the mom, Diane. and So, I thought it was going to be more about the family in general, but now I'm thinking maybe, I assume she died and so they are going to talk about their impression of her.

M: how many people, with a show of hands think that Diane is dead?

Group: all except for KC1, raise their hands. KC6 and KC5 made noncommittal gestures.

M: How many aren't sure.

Group: KC1, KC6, and KC5 raise their hands.

KC2: They talked about her in the past tense.

M: So you think she's dead?

KC2: nods.

M: okay

KC5: or she has gone on to be something else.

M: So that's a possibility.

KC5: so Diane as Diane the character is dead. She has gone on to be, you know, we find out she is Marilyn Monroe or something.

M: At one point one of the people we interview says, 'I'm going to call her mom, not Diane.' So why did she say that? why did she say it that way? Does that mean anything, this is for anybody?

KC5: If she left to chase her dreams and become something else then there could be a lot of rejection there, as far as not seeing her in that role anymore.

M: so we see a number of people there, a number of people about the same age, who do you think those people are, the younger people?

KC6: kids

M: Diane's kids?

KC6: yeah.

M: so, siblings.

KC6: yeah, with each other.

M: and then we see three older men two kind of much older and than another guy who is not that old. who do you think they are?

KC6: maybe her siblings, but younger siblings.

KC5: or eventual life partners from different eras.

M: and then there are a couple of older women as well, so who do you think they are?

KC3: Friends of hers.

M: okay, so do you have any unanswered questions? based on what we have seen so far are there any questions that stick with you, that you'd like to know the answer to? I'm not going to answer them but I want to know what your questions are.

KC7: Probably about what did she do? You know she was leaving, so how did that work out.

M: okay, KC1?

KC1: Just what is this about?

M: okay, just a big question, what is this about? K, KC8?

KC8: Now i'm curious on if she is dead or not.

M: because I asked the question weather she was or not?

KC8: *nods.*

M: k, KC3?

KC3: I also was wondering if she's alive or not and just her story in general, I'm just curious about what happened to her.

M: KC4, is it? everybody's got hair over their name tags. Where did you come in? Well, you don't know how long we've been going but what was happening when you came in?

KC4: they where talking about the family life. And what the husband was like and what Diane was like.

M: you missed a little bit of set up, literal set up, of the film at the beginning and then a little bit of how they met, but what unanswered questions do you have watching the part you saw?

KC4: why are they telling this story?

M: why do you think they are?

KC4: maybe to heal from the death of a family member.

M: okay, I'm curious, KC2, why do you think they are telling this story?

KC2: because it's important to her.

M: what do you think the relationship is between the director, I mentioned her name at the beginning, Sarah Polly. Does anybody know who Sarah Polly is?

Group: blankly stares as moderator.

M: what is her relationship?

KC4: She is Diane's daughter.

M: okay, KC6, how about you? why do you think they are telling this story?

KC6: I just have to think something bad happened, either she went to jail or she was killed or something bad.

M: KC5?

KC5: I say either they are commemorating her as a family or she has gone on to do something that will make of particular interest, that's worth telling her story. Which of them it is I don't know, it could go either way. 19:42

M: From what you have seen so far, either what was presented or how it was presented is there anything in the film that confuses you. So, it is one step beyond unanswered questions you have because those might be revealed as you watch more. But based on what you have seen is there anything that you think the way it is presented or what was presented was confusing? KC1, you where sort of nodding.

KC1: well, I guess something I didn't see at the beginning the change in emotional level. I found that confusing.

M: Whose emotional level?

KC1: all of the people you see It's just more commentary than really emotionally engaging.

M: okay, so it was all kind of a step back they weren't too emotionally attached talking about their mother or their friend or sister or whatever it might be. KC2, what where you going to say?

KC2: I think they could be more transparent about who the people are.

M: so, we are guessing right now about what their relationships are, you would rather have that spelled out earlier in the film?

KC2: yeah.

M: KC3, your nodding.

KC3: yeah, I agree with that. Trying to decipher who everyone is and how close they where to her and how well they did know her so you know more about their perspective, and you ask who they are so you know how close they where.

M: anything else you found confusing about the content or the presentation?

KC3: um, not really. Kind of like what you [KC2] where saying earlier, they weren't really going in, they where kind of going in chronological order when they where talking about their relationship, but before that they where kind of bouncing around. One person would talk about a specific aspect and then they could connect that to somebodies take on that aspect, and it did jump around, but it did kind of flow. I don't know, I liked that, that it was kind of jumpy. It had a flow to it in a way. Other than that, I didn't think it was particularly confusing.

M: KC8, how about you anything confusing?

KC8: Not necessarily no. I just feel like there's unanswered questions with like what happened.

M: KC4, how about you?

KC4: I guess i'm not sure about how relevant everything is to their main goal. I don't know how relevant the oral sex part is supposed to be. It was very specific.

M: okay, KC7, did I ask you about confusing parts yet?

KC7: well, just the different characters your not sure who they are, some of them you identify, okay this is an older version, but who is the younger man? There is that element of who are they? [You could] identified them as being an older versions of the films they where showing of the younger family.

M: did you find that you where trying to figure out who was in the home movies and who was that we see now, 40 years older.

KC7: yeah, and some of them it was easy to tell and others I'm not sure.

M: did everybody else try to do the same thing? Try to put the old face and the younger face together? Older, I guess I should say.

Group: nodding.

M: Here is a question and you can interpret the way you will, do you believe this story? So, KC1, do you believe this story that your seeing?

KC1: I guess I believe it, because I don't know what the story is. I think what was missing, most often in documentaries, is some kind of structure for the information. So you have an expectation

with what is communicated to you. This didn't have it. I guess as a documentary it was documenting conversations.

M: so, if we were writing something there is typically sort of a thesis statement and then we support the thesis statement with what we write. And there are documentaries like that. How many people have seen "An Inconvenient Truth," the old Al Gore global warming thing, which now has a sequel. That has a very clear thesis that global warming is real and then he spends the rest of the movie, have you guys not seen it? The younger people here have not seen it (KC2, KC3, KC4). It is an important documentary you should watch it, but it is a documentary made up of a guy with kind of a boring former vice president and power points. I describe it like that, but it was quite an impactful film that came out 15 years ago or whatever. So, how about you KC7, believable or do you believe the story?

KC7: I mean yeah. He is telling the story of his family and this particular person from their perspective. Your not hearing her perspective, your only hearing their perspective so I think it is their truth. 25:06

M: I think you said, or at least agreed that documentaries are about factual things?

KC7: Well, i'm questioning that now.

M: Oh your questioning that, well, I was going to say what have you seen that supports that this is factual? Anyone else want to jump on that one? Is there evidence here that this is something that actually happened?

KC7: No.

KC3: No.

KC5: I think the home videos to some degree at least lend it some truth. That doesn't mean that they couldn't be created or put together to look like, they seem to add some evidence.

KC7: I don't know did you ever see that mermaids documentary?

Group: laughs

KC7: It was pretty convincing you know? And that was totally false, but yeah. 25:53

KC5: I think they are creating a build up that's the sense. The way they are putting together pieces and they've cut them to align so they are telling the same, you know, she was this type of person and they all across the line see that. Or she was this way or as they tell the story it keeps them on the same track.

M: Do you feel like the film is meant to be discovered a piece at a time and do you like that or dislike that?

KC5: I think that it makes it more interesting, because otherwise you are just listening to people talk about their mother or their sister or their brother and although that's interesting it really isn't relevant to not knowing that person. It's their story that means a lot to them.

M: then we go back to what the one person said, which is why would anybody care about our family.

KC5: so the sense that something is going to be disclosed. That build up gives you a reason to keep watching.

M: KC6, how about you do you believe what you are seeing?

KC6: At one point I thought I saw, in some of the old videos that they were fake, so I thought maybe what he is reading is a work of fiction and that the characters are actually characters in a screenplay. And so maybe the whole thing is not true, and the only thing that is real is the story.

M: what made you think that in the home videos that it didn't look real?

KC6: something about the graininess and the fuzziness to them is too consistent for old films. I've worked with some that software before so I've see how they make a video look old. And it's too consistent, it needs to be more sloppy.

M: KC8, how about you do you feel that the home video is authentic or not authentic?

KC8: I thought it was.

M: KC3?

KC3: I thought it was believable, but now that you are asking us I'm very suspicious about it.

M: My question was pretty general about it believably, it was KC6 who suggested that it could be fake. KC4 how about you did you see enough of the home video to get a sense of if it was real or fake?

KC4: I thought it was actors portraying the real family members because why would anybody video tape a family like that?

KC5: there was a lot of video. when they would talk about a certain thing and then there was a video, like when they met and then you see them in the hallway talking, what are the odds of that? That someone caught you on film and you have it.

KC6: My uncle Pete used to do that. he video taped everything.

KC7: I think super eight was pretty popular thing when it came out. so I imagine a lot of people video taping.

M: With those very bright lights if you are old enough to remember, it was not very light sensitive, sorry for the younger people but, they had these flood lights you had to plug in and I can remember videos of me, films of me really as small child, just squinting because the lights where so bright at Christmas. So kids squinting in front of the Christmas tree. KC2, do you feel like the home video is real or fake?

KC2: The home video I have no idea, I did notice at the beginning, because they started showing videos, they where talking about when he bought the camera and there where showing videos of them together before he bought the camera. So, I don't know about that, It makes me question if the words of the people are not genuine?

M: Okay, Michael, who we hear and see reading from the script, who ever mentioned the script, do you think he is a reliable narrator? He is the closest thing we have to a narrator in the movie he is reading from that script, that we are not quite sure what that is, is he reliable? Your shaking your head no?

KC1: I don't think he is.

M: Why not? 30:02

KC1: I guess mostly because he is just a person sitting there reading something. I have confusion about who he is and why he is reading it. I don't think he is completely believable.

M: okay, KC2, you are nodding your head there how do you feel about the reliability of Micheal?

KC2: I don't necessarily believe that it is entirely fictional. I think there is something fictions about the way he is saying, like it is very story like.

M: okay, anybody else? Who feels like, just get a show of hands, that Michel is reading a true story?

KC1: he's what?

M: He is reading a true story, you feel like what he is reading is more or less true?

KC1: from his perspective?

M: from his perspective, his memory.

Group: everyone raised their hand except KC6.

M: and KC6 you didn't raise your hand, you think...

KC6: he seemed a little disoriented.

M: you said before maybe the story was fiction and they were pulling that together.

KC6: he seems to know the words real well. he is reading it clearly like he actually, probably, wrote it.

KC5: yeah.

M: How many of you feel like he [Michel] wrote what he is reading?

Group: everyone raises hands expect for KC1.

M: KC1 your not sure?

KC1: I have no opinion on that.

M: no opinion.

KC7: I didn't realize that was Michael reading it, somehow I didn't make that for sure connection.

M: So the young Michael that we've seen in the film and that's present day Michael. The movie is about 3 or 4 years old I think.

KC5: I think the girl that is filming it, or directing it, referred to him as dad at the very beginning. 'Dad you can start' or she made some reference and referred to him as dad. Which lends it some believability that there is a connection there, unless it is planted but.

M: Okay. Let's talk about the director for a minute, so her name is Sarah Polly. Everybody feels like Michael is her dad? Everybody agrees with that based on what she [KC5] said there?

Group nodding.

M: Why do you think she's telling the story or why do you think she decided to make a movie of the story?

KC5: So if the story turns out to be that he has written the story about Diane or his life, and my guess would be that she wants to give that its due. Again, I don't know what makes Diane's life so interesting to any one outside their family, but I don't know if she is a filmmaker by trade or if she works in that area but it seems that they want to give him credit for what he's written.

M: KC7, How do you feel?

KC7: yeah, I would agree with that, I think that, whether it is for their own family or legacy or however it ends up with how her life ends up. and as far as whether I think it is true or not I guess I tend to accept things as true until something says this isn't true.

M: and what would say it isn't true? how would you determine that.

KC7: Well, I guess if they revealed that they were all stage actors...

M: okay, same question for anyone else, what would have to happen for you to decide that this was not true? 33:38 Anything different?

KC1: It could be something in the credits.

M: even all the way at the end?

KC1: mhhm.

M: can you think of other documentaries where there were parts that were not true, and you can define true however you would like, but is there another documentary you have seen where something in it wasn't actual.

KC2: The first thing I think of is a mockumentary like "Blair Witch Project" Kind of something like that where its kind of done by mistake.

M: So, I don't know how many of you are familiar with that, It was a horror movie from, a long time ago for you to know that. Maybe 15 years ago, but it was shot in the style of a documentary but it was fiction, it was 100 percent fiction. But that was never revealed in it. you could watch it

there where people who watched it and believed it was real, because they didn't reveal it. Has anybody else seen that movie?

KC7: I didn't hear what she said.

M: "Blair Witch Project"

KC7: oh yeah. I've heard of that.

KC1: I've heard of it, never watched it.

M: so a mockumentary, does anyone feel like this is a mockumentary? You say no, why not?

KC2: I think there is something genuine about the emotions they are showing.

M: do the people in the documentary strike you as actors? I mean we know Michael is an actor because we heard his biography, so if we believe that we know he's an actor. But the younger people, I believe we identified as siblings, do they strike you as being actors?

KC7: they start out by talking about how nervous they are to make their film. So I don't think so.

M: okay, anybody else? Do you feel like they are who say they are? 35:20

KC5: it is believable to this point, there is no reason not to believe it at this point.

M: same with the older people we see in the interviews? yeah. Okay, so we kind of danced around this, but I'm interested to kind of hear what you have to say, do you think there are any specifically any fictional elements in the film? KC6, you probably have been the leader of the 'there is fake in here' so if you had to put your finger on some parts of it that you think are fiction or maybe it's all of it what would that be?

KC6: I don't know maybe there is a story element to it, and it is not really as exciting as they say it is going to be.

M: so the story has been embellished maybe?

KC6: yeah, embellished a lot, but then why would all the siblings, or actors be nervous, I don't know.

M: KC5, is there any part of it you think might be fiction or fake or whatever?

KC5: Nah, it's just the reason behind the build up, I just think there is a sense that they are building up to something. and that controlled element could go either way, but no.

M: okay, KC7?

KC7: I can't think of anything that says this is false.

M: KC1, how about you?

KC1: no not really.

M: we just can't get you very interested.

KC1: maybe I had too big a dinner before I came.

M: maybe that's it. I'll tell you before we finish I can tell you some about the movie but I'll say 'you know if you don't want to hear I'll let you leave or whatever.' but you will not be that person who wants to know more about this, I can tell.

KC1: oh no, I'm curious.

M: you're hoping you'll get more interested. KC4, how about you? Any part that you are questioning on whether you think it is real or fake? is there any part that screams fiction at you?

KC4: Just your question.

M: Just my question, I tried not to be leading but I can't help it, if I'm going to put it on the table, and see what people say. KC8, you?

KC8: I believe the whole thing.

M: you believe the whole thing?

KC8: I thought they were believable

M: KC3, you?

KC3: I thought I believed it, it seemed genuine.

M: KC2?

KC2: ya, I found it believable. I think any story we tell is going to have some element of fiction

M: Okay, and the title of the film is "Stories We Tell" so that leads right into that. Let me ask about a few of the techniques we saw here. we know that there is this home movie footage. but we also see that grainy home movie footage behind the scenes. She is setting up and we see the camera, that home movie camera shooting what is clearly a modern set up. Why did she do that? KC2?

KC2: I think just to introduce that.

M: Just to introduce that look?

KC2: yeah.

M: KC6, what do you think? I think we see it one more time in the audio recording area too.

KC6: I don't know it is unnerving to me because I noticed that stuff and it seems like they shot pieces of it and forced it to be grainy on purpose.

M: we see in one, again I've watched it a lot of times so I probably noticed more than you did, but we see in the recording studio somebody with the home movie camera, an old-time super eight camera. and he is moving in the background in one shot. So it is a real camera, does that make any difference to you?

KC6: Yeah, that changes everything. Why would they do that though? I need an explanation.

M: maybe we will get there. KC5, how about you on the modern day old movies?

KC5: now you have me doubting everything. I don't know, unless it is just to make it feel retro and put you in the era of when they are talking about. [39:55](#)

M: so it could be an aesthetic choice? Just ' I want to mix up this look here.' So, you could argue from a directors point of view, if all of the old stuff looks grainy home movie and all the new stuff looks modern in HD that's kind of boring so why not mix it up, we can't make the old stuff HD but we can make the new stuff.

KC5: yeah, making it work, Just setting the mood.

M: KC7, why do you think it's in there?

KC7: I honestly didn't notice that so much. It's kind of like why do some movie start off in black and white moving into the story, I don't know. Perhaps just to set, there are flashbacks in this so.

M: KC1?

KC1: I didn't notice it. But what is occurring to me that actually what we bring to the viewing has as much to do with it as anything.

M: and explain that more, what do you mean by that? [40:56](#)

KC1: well I think I just came without any agenda, so i was just seeing something that either engaged me or it didn't engage me. some people came thinking this is really an object of study and analysis and different degrees. So if I would have come to it with that I probably would have been more engaged, just because that is a specific goal, I would have had that goal.

M: so if we would have said ' you are going to come watch an interesting family story and then answer some questions about it, you would have had a different reception of it?

KC1: yeah, or what the intent was even in asking questions.

M: I am going to continue just because I want to hear from everybody about the home movie stuff. So, KC4 why do you think the modern day home movie is inserted in there?

KC4: what do you mean by modern day?

M: so we see that kind of grainy home movie look in the modern day set up, where it is a behind the scenes shot of the thing, you might have missed it, actually i'm going to skip you because I think that happened before you came in. So it doesn't make much sense to you.

KC8: I also didn't notice it too much. At the beginning I was still confused as to what was happening. And I didn't even realize.

M: k, KC3?

KC3: I agree I think they were just trying to blur the lines between watching the past stuff and then watching the new stuff. to mix it up a little bit.

M: KC2, I don't remember if I started with you or if I am ending with you, what did you think of the modern day home movie?

KC2: I think it just kind of shows them producing the film and the cameras that we look at, just for a kind of style.

M: okay, one last question, Sarah, the director, asks Michael, her father, or says to him at one point when they are getting set up, and he is basically saying what is all this and she says 'it's an interrogation.' Why did she say that? What did that mean? KC5, you are nodding what did that mean?

KC5: Well, yeah he is quizzing her, 'I hope one day you are going to tell us what this is all about.'

M: yeah, because he is like why the two cameras and I'm just recording audio, why have all this? and she says 'it's an interrogation.'

KC5: Honestly, at the time, my interpolation was she has probably told him and he still doesn't understand, or he doesn't remember.

M: he is a little hard of hearing. it looks like so you sometimes wonder if he can hear her.

KC5: so she is just humoring him at this point, and is saying we are just torching you. For the fun of it.

M: So, as a joke?

KC5: yeah.

KC1: that's what I thought of it.

M: you thought it was a joke? did anyone think it was more than a joke?

KC2: you described it as an interrogation so i just thought it was that.

M: yeah, so the description this was from the film's website where I said in quotes "Playfully interviews and interrogates casts of characters of varying reliability. Eliciting refreshingly candid yet, mostly contradictory answers to the same questions." You were right I read interrogation, because that was in the film's description. Any final thoughts on it, if you were going to tell somebody else about this film what would you say about what you have seen? KC2?

KC2: I guess, that it is a film about how the personal becomes universal, maybe?

M: okay, KC3?

KC3: it seems like a family story that's how i view it. It's just has multiple view points. and like you said there is contradictory and watching it there was some like positive reviews about how they feel about Diane. and that it is just a movie about a family but being able to see people's view points from the same person. Like just trying to describe someone and how someone can make an impact on a lot of different people and how that can vary.

M: right, we talked about that back at the beginning, how people's memories vary. particularity someone who is absent. KC8, how would you describe this movie to somebody else?

KC8: I think the same view point thing, where it is different people giving their different view points on the same thing, and how different people can interpret different situations differently

M: okay, KC4?

KC4: it was just a story about a family and I would ask them if they wanted a spoiler because I would probably just skip to the end.

M: KC1?

KC1: I guess I would describe it as the impressions of individuals of a family of someone.

M: KC7?

KC7: I think it is more of a story about Diane, from different perspectives.

M: KC5, anything different?

KC5: I would use the words thought provoking. Because I think you put yourself in that position. How would my family describe me, would it be so consistent and kind or would it be...

M: KC6?

KC6: I would say watch at least 25 minutes of it.

M: I'd better watch a bit more before I tell people about it.

KC1: yeah, I think I would want to watch the whole thing and then decide on it. Whether I wanted to watch it again and be aware.

M: right.

KC1: and it's funny because I'm probably the one person that this really has a vital part in my life right now. I'm really wondering what my, because I'm almost 80 years old, so now I'm wondering well what would my children say about me? I've done some autobiographical kind of stuff and that and I am thought of as a person who has lead an interesting life, and I don't think of my life, well how interesting is it really? Except to maybe my family? Well, I know it is to my friends, I feel so bad, I don't know that it is. but even then there is something about this film that did not engage me, though it is a life interest of mine right now. So, I don't know.

M: maybe if you saw more of it.

KC1: yeah. [47:59](#)

M: that's all the questions I'm going to go through now, the researcher is going to grab a few people just to ask a few more additional questions and other than that we will let you go. I can tell you about it, does anybody not want it to get spoiled? If you want to watch the rest of it? I can tell you a couple of things, that will probably drive you crazy if I don't at least tell you some things. Is it okay and spoil it for people.

Group: yes

M: okay I'm going to spoil it. So, the director is Sarah Polly. She is an actor and a director, she has made a couple of movies before this one fiction film and one documentary if I remember right. She is Canadian obviously, we see here. She is not a super well known actor here though her movies have been good. I think the biggest movie she had was one from about 15 years ago called "Go." G-O it was kind of an action comedy movie she was in, it is probably her best known film. So, that might tell you a little bit, she is an actor. The biggest thing, and I think KC6 picked up on this, and maybe the rest of you did too, about half of the home movies are fake.

Half of them are real, and if you watch it more than once you can pick up on it. I mean I've seen it enough now it is really obvious which ones are which. So, they did shoot additional, they got actors to kind of match the look. For the small children it didn't matter but some of the other, for Diane and Michael particular, they do have actors that are playing them in some of the home movies. I think the young Micheal is a pretty good match. the Young Diane if you watch it a little more it gets really easy to tell the difference, that she doesn't look quite as much as I think they could have. If I nit-pick they could have shot her from farther away or from behind more often to fill those scenes in. But somewhere obvious. Somebody said that it just seemed too

convenient, I think KC5, you said its too convenient they had a video of them talking when they first met, what is the chance of that? That is a fake part. They are all Diane's children, or they are all siblings the one son says 'oh I can always remember her on the phone and waving her hand' and we see that, that's a fake one. And so some of those to match what they wanted to have there. Some of it does match though, the part where he says 'I got the movie camera and I would shoot people and I would drift off to the roof' or something, that is real footage there. So some of that they matched to that, and the other way around. So the story is, Diane is dead. I put the doubt in your mind when I asked, but I think just about everybody thought that she was. So there is a big question and it builds to a big, and the interrogation is real too, because it builds to the point, Michael is not Sarah's father. and she goes to figure that out who is. We saw him, he's in there, I'll leave that one for you to watch and see latter to see who it is. I'll leave something that is not spoiled. So, that is kind of the interrogation, Micheal didn't realize that at the time, because they where getting into it. So, it becomes much more of a mystery as it goes forward. And I will leave it at that. It is very enjoyable, it really does test the boundaries of one of the things we are looking at is.. well I don't want to say too much because she still has to ask you some questions. I won't get too much into the research or what is going on, but I will say, and I don't think it spoils anything to say this. There is certainly a trend in documentaries to move away from, or for some people not everybody, to move away from we are just going to present the fact in a row here and let you digest those. But to build more of a story that reveals it's self over time. If you go to Sundance you will see that we have seen a number of documentaries there we have the documentary festival coming up in a couple of weeks in Columbia, True / False, that runs a lot of documentaries like that where they are almost told in a fiction-like style. Even though they may not be fictionalized as much as this, and most of the stories, or all of the story is true. Or as true as people's memories can be here. It's just the footage that is faked.

KC5: I think they are turning them more into entertainment. Instead of just informative.

M: yeah, it's called cinematic non- fiction, I don't think that will spoil anything if I say that. which is just a notion to give people that more exciting movie going experience for documentaries that some people can consider to be dull. To move away from that a little bit. I will turn it over to you to who you need to keep and what you need to hand out.

R: KC2 and KC1 can you stay for a little bit or do you need to get going? Is that okay, good?

Cool. [52:29](#)

KC1 Individual Interview. Researcher: So you where saying before that you do watch quite a bit of documentaries?

KC1: Yeah I watch a lot of documentaries, I actually try to watch one every day, but I don't always get that done. some times I watch more than one a day, to get caught up on it.

R: so what Kind of documentary do you normally watch?

KC1: I watch all kinds, political issues, arts, heath. those are probably the three major categories and then I probably throw in some other stuff in there.

R: Yeah, Yeah, Yeah.

KC1: just whatever I happen to see on Netflix.

R: and as far as a style goes, is it pretty straight forward because you where saying you didn't really like the jumping around, with this one.

KC1: I didn't mind the jumping around as much as, there didn't seem to be a format for it. I don't know there was just something about it that I just really did not get into it at all. [01:04](#) So it was very hard for me to concentrate on it. and obviously the other people found it interesting. and

maybe it was my expectation of a documentary. It seemed like more to me, like a movie that was done in a very casual way.

R: so when you say what you expect from a documentary, what do you expect?

KC1: probably some ways to put it in context right away to see what it's about. Is my usual expectation. I've watched some that aren't that at all, but that's my usual expectation. and with that a lot can vary in there. there can be parts of it that are a lot like this, parts that are conversations between people, especially if it is, oh im thinking of Ray Ames, have you seen that?

R: I haven't seen it but I know what your talking about.

KC1: But it's pretty long and it's about their lives and its approached in a lot of different ways, documenting the projects and talking with them and then he goes into the home a builds anew work place. It is all over the place you know?

R: yeah

KC1: So its not like i expect just one thing, but this open process, this question thing that seemed to be very popular right now in the production of a lot of things. and sometimes I really like that and sometimes I don't. I know it is a trend right now in all kinds of filming and art.

R: what is the question? that you said you picked up on?

KC1: well that things are not resolved real readily. its not real obvious on what is really going on. or having the resolution in something can still be pretty conceptual right? Its just going on in all of the arts and sometimes I really get a kick out of it and I like it and also sometimes it makes me feel really angry.

R: okay.

KC1: like these people are not really trying at this. They are just kind of playing, BSing. In that kind of way it really engages me. when you are eventuating what they are doing and why they are doing it and maybe because the end result is not the goal. The goal is the process.

R: yeah, okay.

KC1: I've thought lots of times about making a documentary.

R: If you where to make a documentary how would you make it?

KC1: I don't know, as time goes by I know less and less, at one time I did. A friend and I where going to do a documentary about, just a day in the life together. Just like a Saturday out just doing whatever. so that would have been somewhat unstructured, but I think I would have set it up so that you realize quickly that it is just two older women that are just having fun. And you find out certain things about them as they go through their day. so it wouldn't be heavy at all. it might have some little tiny conversations, poring in something that could add. And I had put together a proposal years ago for a documentary on three Iowa poets. So, that would have been quite different. It would have been structured, so people knew right away so people knew they where going to hear from these poets. and their lives would be contrasted with each other but there would have been the mutuality about what they are saying about Iowa.

R: I see what you are saying. As far as this film goes, with the reenactments, which we found out that's what those where half reenactments half home footage. is that kind of change your perspective on how you fell about the story at all? [05:47](#)

KC1: well, I guess kind of. I guess that is kind of how I felt that this was kind of all not really all real anyway. So, I guess it doesn't change my perspective. My perspective was not as technically based as the gentlemen's [KC6] was, it was just a feeling. maybe it was because it was so jumpy to begin with. but its obvious that it didn't have to be, it was something that was being done right

now. A lot of people that would confuse in a way that was tantalizing, to me it just came off as kind of inauthentic and mushy. I don't know, I'm really critical of this,

R: no, that's okay. Go for it.

KC1: and I really did keep, once we got into it, I would start to fall asleep. then I would hear one line that really interested me and I'd listen for a bit and then fall back asleep. It just couldn't keep my interest.

R: Okay, well how about reenactments in general in documentary. Is that something you are okay with? Is that something you ...

KC1: Yeah, Yeah, I am. I guess it depends on how well it's done. and maybe even a certain kind of level of honesty about this is what's being done. when it is being done. It doesn't have to say 'this is a reenactment' like it does on TV for crime shows and that, but I think it helps to tell the story some times.

R: but you just prefer that the audience is aware?

KC1: yea, I just for a documentary, it just starts blurring so much of what a documentary is. and what a film for entertainment is. and documentaries can and are very entertaining lots of times. But I'm not real comfortable with the blurring. 07:51 I can't say why that is really.

R: Do you have a spot where that blurring is too far? where a reenactment is too far across that line?

KC1: probably depends on what I'm watching, a documentary about. If I know that's what it is I'm okay with that If i'm watching it for pure entertainment. But if I really want information out of it and a reenactment will help clarify fine, but if it just creates more story that I don't know is true or not then that's a problem for me.

R: okay, if you have something that is set up like that where it kind of does blur a little bit is there a spot where you start questioning the parts that you thought were true in the film?

KC1: Its a good question but I'd have to think about that... I know there is, I know I've experienced that. I'm trying to remember in what documentary it was. where just all of a sudden i was like I'm really not sure what I'm watching here. How true this really is. And I think that is really a very individual thing. You know, I'm a person that is very creative and imaginative. but truth is a major thing in my life. i was raised by my Quaker grandmother, and so. But I realize that truth is relative also. But I guess the intention in how you are presenting something are you being misleading or being authentic about what you are doing? that would make a lot of difference to me.

R: so is that intention or execution?

KC1: It could be both. There was just something about the way this was executed that i just didn't like.

R: you didn't trust it or you didn't engage with it?

KC1: I didn't engage with it. It just felt too messy.

R: yeah.

KC1: which is actually the way life is if you where to really you know. The creative situation that really is artificial. I mean people are just going to sit down in this great big group with out somebody pulling it together with out a clear intention. But you can try. As the matriarch of my family i used to insist on it on Sunday dinners. some people really liked it you know. but others hated it, the wouldn't have even participated if this had been the situation.

R: So, when you watch movies would you say you are more of a passive movie watcher, you just kind of watch it to have fun or entertain yourself or are you more of a ' I watch movies and I'm analyzing what they are doing?

KC1: I do both. But I don't analyze to the extreme. And I don't really have an academic movie background. I've family members who are very analytical, in fact they make fun of me because, when friends and family all get together for a movie, they'll say 'oh I bet mom will say she just loved it.' They are very analytical and they will talk about a particular director and what scenes some did such and such. you know?

R: yeah.

KC1: And I don;t really even have that kind of memory. I really expect it both ways. I expect the movie to entertain me. Or I guess a documentary I expect it to inform me, and then hopefully entertain me also. But I have high expectations for informing.

R: okay, in a documentary rather than a fiction film?

KC1: yeah. and I like the production values to be high, but not distracting. I mean either way, some can be so smooth that it's distracting. But So i'm kind of an in between person. And I just graduated from the art institute a few years ago, so. And I had some movie exposure there and that analytical kind of context but it was not where I primarily come from.

R: so just one more question. you brought up that people really kind of bring their own kind of ideas to stuff like this, how did that impact how you looked at this film? or documentaries in general? can you speak more to that?

KC1: Well, in this case I just came out to just watch it. I was really kind of a blank slate. I didn't really have the idea of analyzing or evaluation, i just figured whatever questions they are I'll answer them however they affected me. 13:17 It seemed to me to be quite clear that some people where thinking about the movie and maybe even in a research or a study mode, or information gathering. they where way more involved in the process you [the researcher] where setting up. Of seeing something then interacting with it, than I was. And I don't know why. That's where I came from which is another point of view too.

R: do you have any other thoughts about the film or the process?

KC1: I guess just for you, so how will you use this information?

R: yeah, so I am working on my masters thesis, so I am doing three of these. I did one in Columbia last week, I'm here this week, and then I'm in Jeff City next week. and then I'm going to analyze what other people have said. And my research question is how do audience members understand the difference between fact and fiction in documentary.... 14:21

KC2 Individual Interview. Researcher: So, you sound like you have a little bit of background in film, Do you you?

KC2: No, I don't.

R: Movies or documentaries?

KC2: I watch documentaries.

R: okay, what is your major?

KC2: I am getting a BFA with an emphasis in painting.

R: Cool, do they have a good art program here?

KC2: I actually go to the art institute right down the street.

R: okay, so if your friends where like ' We are going to go see a movie' or another group was like ' we are going to go watch a documentary' which would you lean towards?

KC2: I guess it would depend on the environment, Like if its free or not.

R: So, you have a choice between a free fiction film or a free documentary.

KC2: I'd probably... hmmm, maybe a documentary.

R: What do think of the film we just saw?

KC2: I definitely was interested in seeing more of it.

R: As far as the reenactments go, how did you feel about that when we found out they were that?

KC2: You know, I didn't think it was necessarily dishonest. Because most, I'd say most, documentaries of a personal nature do have recreations like that.

R: so if you were to watch a documentary, or you said you have watched a few documentaries, what kind of documentary do you watch? What's the style of it normally?

KC2: I don't know, I guess I watch a lot of natural history documentaries. Sometimes, I watch political events. or like conspiracy, like JFK shooting, maybe one.

R: So, more fact base, rather than having more cinematic qualities?

KC2: yeah.

R: as far as reenactments or cinematic things that documentaries are doing now, does that bother you at all?

KC2: no I don't find it to be dishonest. I think that as long as there is transparency in like saying 'this is a recreation' I mean there is a reasonable degree of critical thinking that goes into deciding if something is important to like deciding if you agree with that or doing more research into the source. There is no reason to distrust something like this for me.

R: Okay, 03:09 So, you said as long as it is said that it is a recreation or a reenactment, do you want that labeled on that, like 'this is a reenactment' or..

KC2: it doesn't need to say like 'this is a reenactment' But maybe in the credits or in the introduction, maybe if they should say they are describing a true story, which includes reenactments.

R: So, in this film what they do towards the end of the film, I think it's one of the last scenes of the film, they actually show the super eight footage of the actors putting on their mustache and make up and stuff so that's when you get that 'oh all these people are actors and this is all kind of fake' would that kind of hint be enough for you? Because it is never actually said.

KC2: ya I mean I would say so. I mean, it sounds like it is pretty transparent.

R: okay. so when you are looking at something like this, or reenactments in a documentary, if you feel tricked or you see something, have you ever watched something and been like 'whoa that wasn't real?'

KC2: oh sure,

R: so does that make you question other things in that documentary?

KC2: Yes, but I think that if it is something factual, or something that claims to be factual. Like, I would want more than one source of information before deciding that, that it is true.

R: So you wouldn't just take the documentary at its face value?

KC2: Yeah, I mean I guess it would depend on the topic. like if it is something about outer space then I'm like 'yeah that's fine, I'll accept that.' But if it is something political for example, where the things that I think about it has real life consequences, then I would want to double check that.

R: okay. So when you are watching a documentary or a movie [fiction film] would you consider yourself more of an analytical film viewer, where you're like 'oh that doesn't make sense, in the plot line' or are you the kind of person who is like 'cool explosion' you know? Like you are just kind of watching it and enjoying the 05:40

KC2: I definitely feel like I am actively considering what happens.

R: So do you think that with stuff like this and other things that, aren't trying to trick you but aren't labeled and are meant to just go under your radar, do you think you pick up on a lot of that stuff? 06:06

KC2: It depends on what it is, unlike KC6, I don't have a background to detect [if the technology used is filtered or old], but if its like contradicts something that I already know then maybe I'll pick up on that. It just depends

R: Yeah, so it is kind of what you are bringing into it, if you know a bit about the subject matter.

KC2: Yeah, and I mean if there is something I am not sure about I will look it up, it's pretty easy.

R: So, you said something about the narrative is what makes a documentary different, Can you talk a little bit more about that?

KC2: yeah, so in cinema there is definitely a lot of precedence that sort of inform the way you are intend to view a film. So, if something is dramatized, there is a certain level of that in this film, I guess traditional narrative, sort of chronological like he said [moderator]. And in a documentary that is not necessarily required. Like she said [another participant] cinematic documentary, that's a thing, I don't distrust it. its like, something like this you get a sort of intimacy with the details, where as like if something is cinematic in a way, like the Blind Side for example, like you watch that and you know that all of the details are going to be correct. So, you lose some of the intimacy that you have of the experiences of the people. You know what I mean?

R: So, your saying what sets the documentary apart is that you get that intimacy between characters and between...

KC2: and an intimacy with the fact of the event.

R: Cool, the last thing, you had brought up that the moderator had said he had read that chuck from the website saying that this is an interrogation, you brought that up, saying ' you said that.' did that play a role in how you looked at this film?

KC2: Well, with that particular question. He wanted to know what we thought of that particular statement, so I mean because that had been used to describe the film I had expected that the film would be in kind of an interrogation style.

R: so that impacted how you viewed the film a little bit?

KC2: yeah.

R: do you have any other thoughts about this film, or this process?

KC2: I was just wondering where I could watch the rest of it.

R: I know it's on Amazon Prime right now, you can buy it on Amazon but you can watch it on Amazon prime for free, or at least you could last week.

KC2: great.

R: yeah. Well, thank you so.. 09:56