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Digital Technologies, Social Media and Emerging, Alternative Documentary Production Methodologies

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Abstract

My research is a practice-based project involving documentary production and theoretical analysis of emerging forms of documentary and online co-collaboration, exploring paradigm shifts in digital technology particularly in the web-based feminist activism and feminist social praxis. The practice-led research explores new forms of production practices outside traditional methodologies and dissemination. Specifically, by utilizing cheap digital technology tools and working within online social networking platforms the research theoretically analyses what means were available towards online participatory media practices to create new documentary forms. My research aims are therefore to investigate how the new paradigm shifts in digital technology and the democratization of the filmmaking process, through online, collaborative practice, can allow women documentary filmmakers to connect to a global marketplace outside the traditional filmmaking channels. Further, looking at the history of the documentary form, as well as the feminist movement, I am interested in which of the key themes and debates that have characterized their intersection are still important at this moment of changing and emerging technologies.

Can new technologies, access to cheap digital tools and collaborative modes of practice help or hinder the creative process of making a digital documentary? In examining the history of feminist filmmaking and the emerging documentary shifts in production offered the opportunity to position my own practice within these traditions and experiment further with online forms of modality. This experiment allowed me to gather empirical data using new media practices (i.e. creation and curation of online and repurposed content, use of new production tools within online spaces) to create a first person, auto-ethnographic narrative on the subject of feminism and online activism.

Additionally, my research looks at the theoretical and historical underpinnings surrounding feminist filmmaking, new documentary practices and its implications within new technologies, and the emerging forms of collaborative online modes of practice. Each of these areas will intersect within the three key areas of debate surrounding documentary filmmaking; those of 1) narrativity, 2) witness and 3) ethics. My practice investigates these interactive, participatory modes created with emerging technologies and online audiences and

how this is shifting narratives, audience reception and producing new ethical debates around ‘truth’ and ‘authenticity’ as these lines are continually blurred.

Rethinking documentary in the virtual space brings about new challenges to the old debates around evidence, witness and ethics, as it is the product of a more democratic attitude towards practice, distribution and dissemination of its stories. New participatory audiences are now also helping to create the very product they are witnessing. Therefore, creating media within the public sphere can bring about a wealth of new tools, wider contributions to media making and a more global awareness of its dissemination. But it is not without its controversy and challenges.

Further, my research looks at how working within this co-collaborative mode, the position of filmmaker as the ‘sole’ creator or ‘auteur’ comes into question. It discusses the advantages and/or the disadvantages to this approach and in doing so looks at what contributions and challenges an online audience can provide to support the filmmaker that cannot be gained through historical and traditional production and exhibition forms.

What once was a higher barrier to entry into the film business is now a more open and online accessibility where anyone can wield a cheap camera or mobile phone device, make a movie and share it on the internet. These newfound democratic practices could potentially disrupt an already complex system of communication practices. However, it could also supply it with a much-needed collective idea bank for tackling global issues and finding sustainable solutions. Within the scope of participatory practices, a first person filmmaker can experience the greatest of democratic freedom within the confines of this process and delivery.

The research is supported and conducted through a practice-led film project, web support platform (including blog and social media sites) and published case study. The final output film project around which these questions are posed is entitled: *“Single Girl in a Virtual World: What does a 21st Century Feminist Look Like?”*¹. The film’s purpose is therefore to engage an online global audience of participants and contributors to the film’s narrative thread by asking for contributions within the production, creation and financing of the documentary film. The practice utilizes social networks, crowd funding initiatives, web

¹ *Single Girl in a Virtual World: What Does a 21st Century Feminist Look Like?* (Nelson 2013)

blogs, viral video, virtual chat interaction and traditional modes of documentary practice in its methodology in an effort to collect data surrounding activity and attempt to answer my research questions at large. The overall objective is to create an online documentary film that exemplifies feminist activism in a new frame through application of documentary modes and new emerging digital media practices.

Preface

This thesis is written in order to conclude the DPhil Programme of Critical and Creative Practice in Media/Film/Music at the University of Sussex. This thesis is written under supervision of Dr. Michael Bull and Mrs. Wilma De Jong. The thesis re-write version (submitted 19, January 2015) is written under the supervision of Professor Sue Thornham and Dr. Caroline Bassett.

I would like the opportunity to thank both Dr. Bull and Mrs. De Jong for their specific focus of time, advisement, guidance and dedication provided to me throughout the research and practice process of this thesis. Further, I would like to acknowledge my appreciation and profound gratitude for Professor Sue Thornham and Dr. Caroline Bassett's time, input and guidance in the revision of my thesis post-viva.

I would like to thank my colleagues and film subjects at East Tennessee State University in Johnson City, Tennessee (USA) for their time and input on the topic of feminism in the 21st Century. Furthermore, I would like to thank the experts for creating time in their agenda's in order to let me interview them. I also want to acknowledge the participants and contributors from the various collective online spaces who provided necessary content for the production of the documentary film project.

Finally, I would like to thank my friends, my family, and especially my sister Jennifer, who gave their unlimited support, which was appreciated and welcomed during the writing and re-writes process.

Introduction: Research Themes and Methodology

My research was conducted through a theoretical and critical exploration of documentary filmmaking, feminist film history, new modes of practice and participatory, online audiences. The practical component was the creation of a digital documentary film project, blog and multiple social media platforms as its case study. The aims were to create a digital documentary film based on feminist documentary practice, through collaboration with participatory online audiences. The subject of the film regarded current discourse surrounding feminism, its current representation and new forms of activism within the online environment. The digital film practice was the outcome of my research findings in relation to possibilities for creativity within new documentary practice methodologies and collaborative environments.

Using participatory modes of practice, online audiences were engaged through multiple social media platforms (i.e. Wordpress/Blog, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube), as these would provide a collective space in which collaboration and creativity would help develop the film's narrative thread. I thus employed both online participants [or 'fans', 'friends', 'followers', 'audiences'] and traditional documentary 'subjects' within the production. The use of new modes of practice and technical inputs/outputs to generate content for the film's narrative thread provided not only new tools and modes of working, but also the subject matter of the analysis which follows.

The research aims are to address questions of how far new technologies, access to cheap digital tools and collaborative modes of practice can help or hinder the creative process of making a digital documentary. I examine the history of feminist filmmaking and the emerging documentary shifts in production in order to position my own practice within these traditions. My modes of working allowed me to experience directly how the use of new media practices (i.e. curation of online and repurposed content, shooting original content, use of new tools, online spaces) can create a first person, auto-ethnographic narrative on the subject of feminism and online activism, thus making a contribution to research and practice within new documentary forms.

Additionally, my research looks at the theoretical and historical underpinnings surrounding feminist filmmaking, new documentary practices and its implications within new technologies, and the emerging forms of collaborative online modes of practice. Each of these areas will also engage the three key areas of debate surrounding documentary filmmaking; those of 1) narrativity, 2) witness and 3) ethics.

The film practice would allow me to create and build a community of like-minded individuals around the subject of online feminist activism, created with collaborative audiences who would perhaps assist in developing the narrative, as well as addressing critical debates around how to approach new documentary film practice. It also provides an empirical case study that explores these key debates and questions around new technologies and dissemination of women's films: through it I can explore what worked, what didn't, and what might have changed in the past fifty years. It demonstrates new technologies and how the current modes of documentary practice have evolved, split, and mixed into emerging forms. It also enables me to explore how new digital technologies have changed how women may be making, distributing and finding new audiences for films their outside mainstream economies.

The film practice makes this case by several means: 1) engaging with other like-minded feminist filmmakers and online audiences; 2) utilizing cheap (or free) technologies available; 3) accessing free curated (or recycled) media (including archival footage) content through various online channels; 4) creating and contributing original content (for the purposes of developing a narrative thread and engaging participants/calls-to-action); and, 5) disseminating content through my blog and social media platforms. These activities shared amongst the various online communities of participants would be necessary for further discourse, collaboration and collection of new data (audio, video, textual).

New paradigm shifts in media today (creative, business, economic) have shifted how filmmakers create, share and deliver content. Documentary filmmakers have an infinite reach across the internet and access to global online audiences who are willing to collaborate as well as consume. What is significant about this is that these processes cross national boundaries and open up potential communities to a worldwide marketplace of viewers and users, which is very different from traditional models.

Because of advances in technology and accessibility of new tools, to both audiences and filmmakers, films can now be shot, edited and distributed right from the filmmaker's bedroom with full creative autonomy. These films can also resonate with audiences whose interest lie outside the mainstream, as well as providing a sustainable business model for emerging filmmakers working within this new creative economy. Different approaches to production and creativity can also be advantageous to working outside of the traditional forms of production. Wintonick comments,

These days, documentary cinema has morphed into non-fiction 'faction'... New narrative devices are being devised. New forms of storytelling. Hybrids are now viral. Reality-infused computer games, many with an ethical twist, surface as docugames. Mobile docs and webdocs are everywhere, everyplace. But they also appear as cross-media, transplatform digital documentary in all its incarnations: cyberdocs, netcasting, interactive docs. Online all the time. Media have become more democratic (2013, p. 377).

These technological advances in creativity can be an advantage in creating new forms of documentary. However, feminist filmmakers, or women in general, have traditionally been slow to access new technologies, thus potentially limiting the power of feminist films and their reach. Technical resources and access to education and training have usually favoured men. Wajcman (1991, Preface) states that “over the last two decades feminists have identified men's monopoly of technology as an important source of their power; women's lack of technological skills as an important element in our dependence on men”. But open access to online training videos, and a greater transparency within the entertainment industry due to new technologies, are changing how women gain access to those technologies and use them to tell stories important to them and the audiences which they produce for and collaborate with.

Feminist Filmmaking

Feminist filmmaking evolved alongside the feminist movement of the 1960s. Its relation to mainstream cinema, its identity as counter-cinema (filmmakers and institutions which set themselves against the formalist and ideological domination of Hollywood cinema), and its exploration of alternative modes of documentary practice (including those films made outside of the six dominant modes, suggested by Bill Nichols,) are all issues much debated in the 1970s but still relevant today.

By the late 1970s a radical form of feminism emerged, particularly in the USA, which aligned with activist leanings to create specifically feminist filmmakers, and films, which could be shown to women's groups. Lesage (2013, p. 267) mentions that often-seen films included realist documentaries, such as *Growing Up Female* (1971)², *The Woman's Film* (1971)³, *Janie's Janie* (1972)⁴, *Mother of Many Children* (1977)⁵ and *I Am Somebody* (1969)⁶, which served a consciousness-raising function. While these films addressed gender differences, especially women's issues, such issues were not being addressed in the mainstream cinema, or at least from a female point of view.

To this, Warren (2008, p. 7) adds that much of women's filmmaking in the early 1970s was driven by a desire to project images and representations that spoke to "real" women's lives and experiences. These radical feminists, during this time, were engaged in activism through the premise that shared personal experiences would reveal to women the need to unite and revolt against systematic oppressions. The style of Cinéma Vérité documentary filmmaking (made popular in the 1960s) was an attractive and useful mode of artistic and political expression for women learning filmmaking (Lesage, 1978, p. 514). It was within this narrative structure that women (single or in groups) were better able to film stories that shared experiences in a politicized way.

Perhaps feminist films would not have been recognised as such without the advent of the women's moment of the 1970s, when "feminist critics like Laura Mulvey and Claire Johnson, condemned Hollywood for objectifying women and representing them as sexual spectacle" (Hollinger, 2012, p. 68). Today new modes of practice are further complicating the debate around feminist thought, film practice, its imagery and representation of women and their subjects, with the advent and access to new technologies and the exploration and expansion of new modes of practice. Hollinger adds that one of the major characteristics of feminist filmmaking includes mixing forms, such as documentary, autobiography and fiction. Mixing these forms, she argues, creates "a tension between the social formation, subjectivity, and representation" (71).

² *Growing Up Female* (1971) by Jim Klein, Julia Reichert

³ *The Woman's Film* (1971) by Louise Alaimo, Judy Smith, Ellen Sorren

⁴ *Janie's Janie* (1972) by Jane Giese

⁵ *Mother of Many Children* (1977) by Alanis Obomsawin

⁶ *I Am Somebody* (1969) by Madeline Anderson

These same tensions can be found today explored through new, non-mainstream production and distribution routes that could potentially liberate a new generation of women filmmakers to tell and share their own stories. The varied channels of online distribution have provided a growing audience for new films and content around feminist themes that can contribute to a larger economic sector for feminist filmmakers. Also important to note is the emergence of film festivals specifically catering to women's films, which became a signifier in the 1970s for growing feminist subject matter and that audiences were interested in these types of film. With digital technologies and social media platforms, these types of festivals have grown with audience demand (Lesage, 2013, p. 266). Additionally, Butler (2002, p. 3) adds that "film festivals and film journals began the work of recovering the history of women's creativity in cinema; women filmmakers began, in groups and singly, to produce avowedly feminist films". One example of a specifically feminist distribution company is *Women Make Movies*⁷. Additionally, a growing repository of feminist conferences and film festivals can be found on KT Press⁸.

In 1975, documentaries were the predominant form of feminist film and (Armatage, 1979, p. 49) these films presented images of ordinary women with whom an audience could recognise a shared experience. There would, however, still be differences within the emerging women's film movement. What would it be called? How would it be represented? What form(s) should it employ? Whatever the answers, Lesage (1978, p. 509) argues that women's personal explorations through film were made in order to combat patriarchy, therefore making the filmmaker and her subjects political. As Kellner writes,

The proliferation of documentary films of personal witnessing emerged in the 1960s and 1970s when members of the civil rights, women's, gay and lesbian and other social movements told their personal stories...and used film as a medium to probe social problems (2013, p. 62).

Women filmmakers attempted to structure their films and tell their stories through personal experiences and share them in a politicized way. These films are "woman-identified" (Lesage, 1978, pp. 507) and this principle has not changed much since the 1960s. What have changed are emerging technologies and access to digital tools. Through the use of social media platforms, which present opportunities for wider dissemination of these types of films, more women filmmakers are telling their stories. What is becoming evident is that the

⁷ *Women Make Movies* at: <http://www.wmm.com/>

⁸ *KT Press* at: <http://www.ktpress.co.uk/feminist-film-festivals.asp>

application and accessibility of the internet and social media platforms have exponentially offered up the opportunities to women filmmakers to reach larger audiences with more immediacy and lesser barriers to entry and/or economic restrictions.

During the 1970s, feminist independent film-makers' initial aim was to "produce alternative media narratives often with a specific political purpose or expressive of family or personal histories, supported by an independent exhibition circuit, including student film societies, arts laboratories and other fringe venues" (Humm, 1997, p. 180). Often these marginal films subverted narrative conventions of mainstream cinema and thus distinguished themselves from a male-dominated cinema. Hollinger (2012, p. 233-34) adds that documentary also offered women an alternative to the mainstream. As with counter-cinema, feminist filmmaking can mix forms and styles whilst at the same time claiming a privileged relationship to 'truth'.

Changing media forms and new technologies have had a profound impact upon documentary's epistemological claims, as new approaches by both theorists and practitioners continually push its boundaries, redefining what documentary is within its new present constructs. For Bill Nichols, however, there remain "three central issues in the study of moving-image documentary – evidence, narrative and ethics" (2013, p. 33). I would also add 'witness' as a key debate, especially heightened in today's complex digital landscape. "Witness, or the act of watching, is complex when the material concerned, both visual and audio, reproduces other times and places as though they were in some way present". This becomes even more complex as digital media can be reframed, reshaped, shared virally and inserted into narrative threads as new ideas. John Ellis (2012, p. 124) continues that modern media place their viewers in the position of the witness (or 'voyeur' as the term was previously coined), as the person to whom testimony is directed. Though not the same as being on the scene or being an eyewitness, "the portrayal of the activity being watched, acts as a witness whose truthfulness should be assessed from the position of the viewer of the screen on which they appear".

Finally, Nichols adds that the concept of documentary storytelling must be a story about **the** world, rather than an imaginative fiction about **a** world; otherwise documentary as a genre cannot be sustained (2013, p. 33). Therefore, my research and practice explores new ideas and methodologies for how and why these central issues can and should remain relevant to

the documentary practitioner, its audiences and the film industry even with the emergence of new technologies shaping new documentary forms.

Documentary Evolution

New interactive, participatory modes created with emerging technologies and online audiences are shifting narratives, audience reception and producing new ethical debates around 'truth' and 'authenticity' as lines are continually blurred. How can photographic evidence be authenticated? Where does the responsibility lie if not with the filmmaker? Rughani states, that "for documentary...ethics flow from principles such as accuracy or honest dealing (sic) with contributors" (2013, p. 98). He adds that defining this 'documentary value' can be found in how filmmakers choose to shoot, edit, frame, direct and embody ethical decisions in order to construct the film. It would follow then, that makers of documentaries in today's modern digital age have a responsibility to uphold the value and integrity of their documentary practice.

The question of authorship in documentary practice, and especially that of women's documentary films, has always been difficult to define" (Warren, 2008, p. 7). Cinéma Vérité⁹ and the Direct Cinema¹⁰ movement of the 60s both in their different ways posed challenges to traditional views of authorship. What then, is the meaning of authorship in today's new participatory online space? Pettice (2011, p. 26-27) states that within new media the content of the work and the interface are separated, making it possible to create very different meanings with the same material. Interaction could therefore alter and reshape an original narrative, taking 'authority' away from the filmmaker. Structure notwithstanding, utilising an interactive narrative can be understood as providing multiple trajectories, and thus striving

⁹ Cinéma Vérité (*truthful cinema*) is a style of documentary filmmaking, invented by Jean Rouch, inspired by Dziga Vertov's theory about Kino-Pravda (see Chapter 2) and influenced by Robert Flaherty's films. It combines improvisation with the use of the camera to unveil truth or highlight subjects hidden behind crude reality and encouraged a presence of the filmmaker creating a transparency between the filmmaker and its subjects as the best way to reveal its 'truth'.

¹⁰ Direct Cinema is a documentary genre that originated between 1958 and 1962 in North America, principally in the Canadian province of Quebec and the United States, and developed by Jean Rouch in France. Similar in many respects to the Cinéma Vérité genre, it was characterized initially by filmmakers' desire to directly capture reality and represent it truthfully, and to question the relationship of reality with cinema. It also was characterised by its minimalist approaches to filmmaking through its use of lightweight cameras, improved sound and lighting equipment, which was reflected in the social attitudes of filmmaking and how it represented it more truthfully in real life outside of a studio environment.

for an ‘egalitarian authenticity’ even with overlapping narratives and themes. Yet I feel that authorship *is* possible – or at least *necessary* as an assumption the filmmaker must make, and a responsibility they must take - within new online modes.

Recently, and in light of emerging technologies, theorists of film authorship have begun to see the female auteur in particular as neither an individual creative genius, nor entirely the product of the film text, as the idea of the ‘death of the author’ assumes, but rather as a figure influencing the production and consumption of the text (Hollinger, 2012, p. 231). Perhaps, then, specific production methodologies rather than aesthetics or historical assumptions can be used to frame and redefine the feminist auteur. Within the context of women’s documentaries, for example, a set of filmmaking practices called first-person films, while not easily definable in terms of aesthetic forms, would perhaps also fall under the category of female auteur because of their individualistic modes of expression (Lebow, 2013, p. 258). For the filmmaker, documentary can be a medium for autobiography.

However, new strategies, intertwined with technological advances and the integration of participatory engagement, mean renewed debate around questions of authorship in documentary filmmaking. Dovey and Rose state that as documentary filmmakers take advantage of new practices, a new “poetics of collaboration and participation” begins to emerge (2013, p. 370). This incorporates the renewed importance of autobiographical documentaries, together with amateur film cultures with easy access to photographic technology, and is reinforced and broadened by the rise of interactive digital media typically centered on user-generated content.

John Grierson defined documentary film as the ‘creative treatment of actuality’ (Chapman, 2009, p. 9). Thus, as critics (Corner, 1996, p. 17) have pointed out, a tension between these two elements (‘actuality’ and its ‘creative treatment’) has been evident since the form’s beginning. New technologies intensify and render more complex, rather than fundamentally changing these longstanding debates around documentary’s relation to both ‘truth’ (‘actuality’) and narrative (its ‘creative treatment’). As new modes of practice enter documentary making, not only can this change the way filmmakers approach telling their stories about the world, but the audience reception and experience is also shifting through the means in which they are receiving documentary films through multiple devices on-demand. ‘Evidence’ - “something two or more people agree upon, something verifiable and concrete”

(Nichols, 2013, p. 33) – becomes more difficult to establish in the face of digital technologies’ capability of reproducing and manipulating images. Plantinga argues that in the face of this change, a fundamental bond between audience and filmmaker must be established which objectively secures ‘a’ truth factually rooted that aspires to exploration rather than propaganda (Rughani, 2013, p. 107). At its very core, this is a mode of transparency between filmmaker and audience.

A large burden of responsibility therefore, must fall on the shoulders of the documentarist. Rughani additionally, suggests that documentary ethics turn on at least two axes: (1) the documentarist’s relationship to subjects in the film and (2) their relationship to the audience. The underlying key meaning in this case is ‘responsibility’ (100). When audiences view content with different devices such as computers, mobile phones or iPads – very different from a traditional viewing experience in a darkened theatre – the viewer has a varied and different mode of engagement. Because of this flexibility of devices and spatial experiences, as well as the alteration of images, Rughani further claims that questions of accountability and ‘truth’ become more urgent for the documentary as its forms become mobile, interactive and online (98). Yet such forms also potentially yield greater power for the documentary: the opportunity, as Petitto argues, to “amplify... the message towards the entire civil society, creating a deeper awareness of issues ...” (Petitto, 2011, p. 3).

New Technologies & Online Practice

Rethinking documentary in the virtual space brings about new challenges to the old debates around evidence, witness and ethics, as it is the product of a more democratic attitude towards practice, distribution and dissemination of its stories. For new participatory audiences are now also helping to create the very product they are witnessing. Therefore, creating media within the public sphere can bring about a wealth of new tools, wider contributions to media making and a more global awareness of its dissemination. But it is not without its controversies and challenges.

What once was a higher barrier to entry into the film business is now a more open and online accessibility where anyone can wield a cheap camera or mobile phone device, make a movie and share it on the internet. These newfound accessible practices could potentially disrupt an already complex system of communication practices. However, it could also supply it with a

much-needed collective idea bank for tackling global issues and finding sustainable solutions. Within the scope of participatory practices, a first person filmmaker can experience greater freedom within the confines of this process and delivery.

Social media's prevalence continues to spur the need for the necessary skill sets and professional training needed for producing content in this new participatory way. New social media sites emerge daily, claiming new audience sectors in the effort to drive traffic, creating new content and sharing it virally amongst its growing audiences. The social communities that exist in the virtual space can move beyond traditional media experiences, creating new discourse amongst communities with potentially lower barriers to entry. Pavlik states, "perhaps the most profound social consequence of the world of online communications is the development of virtual communities" (1996, p. 296).

What powers can filmmakers invoke when considering all creative and ethical choices made as storytellers within this new online medium? Nyiro (2011, p. 2) states that "participation of the audience and interactivity is a continuously evolving phenomenon", which involves gathering content and attempting to create a synergistic thread while production processes are in a constant state of flux. How has this new frame shifted or impacted the way documentaries are created, seen and interpreted? What about the value quotient within this process as it is demystified through online audiences and media discourse?

Since the launch of YouTube and better penetrations of broadband, there has been a surge of new moving-image culture through emerging technologies such as digital cameras, flip phones and web cameras, which are cheap and easy-to-use. And with free online editing tools, some built into the very social media platform which will be used to distribute content, Nyiro adds that media making becomes extremely simple to perform (367). It is the collective strength of these numbers of online participants and social media platforms that contribute to the outputs of documentary narratives, which might otherwise be limited in scope by traditional means. It is here where a new dimension of filmmaking in non-linear and technological forms can engage audiences and present new methodologies for practice. The various ways in which the audience can interpret the film and its process depend upon many different factors, such as mobility modalities, spatial relationships, and environment experience (aurally and visually). It is at the meeting of participatory culture and

documentary where new arrangements of the production process and innovations in its form are emerging (Dovey and Rose, 2013, p. 370).

Embracing new online tools and technologies can become synonymous with making the film itself. Creating a film project while utilizing these new technologies and collaborating with a diverse group of people can create a shared affection for the project, which is necessary for inclusion and creativity. Within these new participatory engagements audiences are often free to contribute to what they perceive as valued. Participation therefore becomes part of the process, editorial is developed within a community of interest, and forms of distributed authorship are created with participants in non-linear projects (370).

With these decisions come a plethora of new, complex choices being made by both filmmakers and audiences. Both must understand the nature of these new technologies within the online environment, as well as the historical fundamentals of documentary practice. With education and knowledge comes value. And while these new forms of documentary are not (yet) finding audiences and economies of scales as with traditional modes, inherent value can be perceived in creativity and sustainability. Social media can provide an environment in which audiences can search, watch and share information they find valuable, and they also can provide support and feedback, which can prove invaluable during the creative process. These meaningful relationships potentially bridge the divide between filmmakers and audiences, creating rich environments where new forms of creativity are unfolding.

Scope, Aims and Approach

My research interests therefore lie in how the new paradigm shifts in digital technology and the democratization of the filmmaking process, through online, collaborative measures, can allow women documentary filmmakers to connect to a global marketplace outside the traditional channels. Further, looking at the history of the documentary form, as well as the feminist movement, I am interested in which of the key themes and debates that have characterized their intersection are still important at this moment of changing and emerging technologies.

Some initial key questions were:

- Are there any advantages to women filmmakers (or feminist filmmakers) working in this new digital space?
- What resources are available to reach online audiences, specifically through new technologies and social media platforms?
- How can women filmmakers utilize collaboration with online audiences to create content and find new distribution channels, specifically for the creation and dissemination of new forms of documentary films?
- Working in this new space, what advantages and/or challenges exist in positioning the woman filmmaker as the 'sole' creator or 'auteur'?
- What new channels or tools for production methodologies, distribution and financing models are available outside the traditional modes?
- What are the potential advantages and/or disadvantages to working this way as it relates to the incorporation and exploration of the three key debates of documentary filmmaking (evidence, witness, ethics)?
- What contributions, sacrifices and/or challenges (creative, financial, personal) might be presented when creating a project in this way?
- What outputs are possible within new transmedia realities in the digital space, which are not accessible in the traditional distribution and exhibition models?

The practice methodology will explore how these new modes of production/distribution might change the audience's experiences and expectations. Since they are involved with the creation of a project instead of being merely a consumer, how might this approach alter the course of its production methodology and/or creative practice? Using online marketing tools such as social networking sites, online forums, video and recycled media content, blogs, crowd funding initiatives, and Apps and widgets (as integration and mediation tools), with minimal equipment (webcam, mobile camera, natural light, internal sound on my flip camera), no crew and no budget, I would seek to understand how the creative and technical processes of documentary production have changed since the emergence of documentary film and that of feminist filmmaking beginning in the 1960s. Further, I also seek to explore what has *not* changed, creatively, ethically and theoretically.

Research Methods, Themes & Questions

Methodology

My practice methodology is laid out chronologically (see Chapter 4). This chapter describes my preparation, production process, outcomes and reflection. I've summarized the steps as follows:

1. Create a theme and a narrative thread that is loosely based, open to interpretation and within online participatory influence.
2. Create a model for strategic implementation, editorial content calendar, technological learning curves and application through various social media channels.
3. Development of production methodology including equipment, crew, cost, budget, and timeline.
4. Create film's trailer and film production Press Kit.
5. Launch crowd funding campaign through Kickstarter
6. Launch social media sites i.e., Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, MySpace, Wordpress, LinkedIn, etc.
7. Coordinate and automate technical links with TubeMogul, Feedburner (RSS) to sync updates.
8. Engage with participatory audiences on multiple social media sites, generating ideas, blog posts, video content and invitation.
9. Commence film production and principal photography, production logistics, union paperwork, interviews, locations, legality/insurance.
10. Film production completion, editing and postproduction process (recycled media, music) fair use and copyright considerations.
11. Focus on the delivery of the film project to through various online channels.

Themes & Questions

The following summary of chapters and themes identify and address my practice and research and findings.

Chapter 1: Feminist Filmmaking: Then and Now

This chapter explores the history of feminist filmmaking in order to examine how far collaborative and participatory practices within the new modes of documentary filmmaking and the use of new media technologies have changed how women make and distribute films today. Feminist filmmaking evolved alongside the feminist movement of the 1960s and I shall explore this women's film or women's cinema (films made by women), (or feminist) filmmaking in relation to its historical limitations in respect of equipment, distribution, and audience reception. My research also explores its relation to mainstream cinema and the emergence of counter-cinema (filmmakers and institutions that set themselves against the

technical and ideological domination of Hollywood cinema). It also looks at alternative modes of documentary practice (including those films made outside of the six dominant modes (explored in Chapter 2). Each of these issues, much debated in the 1970s, is still relevant in today's new media environment.

Questions explored:

- What key debates surrounded feminist filmmaking in the 1960s and 1970s?
- What form should documentary film, as it relates to women's films, take?
- With the emergence of mobile equipment what means did women filmmakers have at their disposal to tell stories that were important to them?
- What types of documentary forms emerged during the feminist movement, which would emerge to express narratives of political or personal purpose?
- How has alternative cinema and the 'other' documentary or counter-cinema had its influence on women's cinema?
- What new technologies emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, which changed how women filmmakers made films?
- What current technologies are impacting how women filmmakers tell their stories today?

Chapter 2: Documentary Filmmaking: Witnessing the Evolution of the Documentary?

This chapter looks at the transformation documentary film has made from its beginnings when John Grierson coined its definition as the 'creative treatment of actuality' (Chapman, 2009, p. 9) to the opposing viewpoints and developments of Direct Cinema and Cinéma Vérité and on to how its current framework and assumptions have shifted with the ever-changing technological landscape. I shall also explore the continuing relevance of its central issues and questions.

Questions explored:

- How has documentary evolved since the 1930s?
- What impact have traditional documentary modes had on new, emerging documentary forms?
- What are the key documentary modes of practice?
- What are the key debates surrounding documentary practice in establishing 'truth' in documentary?
- How can filmmakers establish 'documentary value' in today's participatory, digital environment?
- How have the ideals of 'truth' and 'authorship' impacted the new forms of collaborative documentary practice?
- How has technology had a profound impact upon documentary practice in new forms of collaboration and online activity?
- What questions surround authorship and auteurism specifically for women documentary makers?

- What digital transformations are taking place and how are they impacting new modes of documentary practice?

Chapter 3: Online Communities and its Technologies

This chapter discusses new paradigm shifts in online media making, particularly documentary's emergence within its new forms. It concerns rethinking documentary in the virtual space and how it brings about new challenges to the key debates around documentary filmmaking.

Questions explored:

- How have social media and new technologies created the need for new skillsets to produce content in collaborative ways?
- What new collaborative forms online are emerging in documentary practice?
- How do these new forms relate to the key issues in documentary practice?
- How are new documentary modes of representation shifting the mode of engagement with online audiences?
- How are audiences' experiences shifting as new documentary forms emerge?
- What are the advantages and/or challenges between working in a traditional film practice and the new media practices emerging?
- What are the new online delivery models available for wider dissemination of documentary films?
- How does creating media in the online sphere impact the overall production methodology of the film?
- What considerations must be taken into account when collaborating with and within online communities?
- How have transmedia trends and convergence impacted current forms of documentary practice and its perceived value?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages for women filmmakers of new technologies?

Chapter 4: The Practice as a Case Study

This chapter looks at the chronological steps of the case study itself during the practice element of my research for the digital, online film project entitled: *Single Girl in a Virtual World: What Does a 21st Century Feminist Look Like?*¹¹.

Its process, output and reflection outlined each step that was documented to show the evolution of the practice as it unfolded. Its purpose was to establish a creative practice-led case study in support of my theoretical and critical research.

¹¹ *Single Girl in a Virtual World: What Does a 21st Century Feminist Look Like?* (2013) by Jodi Nelson

Finally, in the Conclusion I reflect on the results. Some questions were answered, and some not – answers were often tentative, emerging through my attempts to test often-abstract questions through a grounded empirical practice and theoretical framework.

Chapter 1: Feminist Filmmaking: Then and Now

The following chapter explores the history of feminist filmmaking, in order to examine how far collaborative and participatory practices within the new modes of documentary filmmaking, and the use of new media technologies, have changed how women filmmakers (feminist filmmakers) make and distribute films today. Feminist filmmaking (the term which I will use here to include women filmmakers both in front of and behind the camera, as well as feminist subject matter) evolved alongside the feminist movement of the 1960s. I shall explore this genre of filmmaking in relation to its historical limitations in respect of equipment, distribution, and audience reception, its relation and opposition to mainstream cinema, and the emergence of counter-cinema and alternative modes of practice. Each of these issues, much debated in the 1970s, is relevant to the on-going questions being debated in today's new media environment.

Such questions include debates around what women's films should look like; i.e. straight-forward documentary ('the real'), counter-cinema, experimental or avant-garde, issues of 'transparency' and whether small scale productions are the best means for getting exposure and distribution outside of the traditional mainstream media. In the 1960s, despite the introduction of VHS and lighter equipment and the existence of networks of women's groups, women's films still had problems with exposure and finding audiences. These problems still exist today, even with the use of new technologies, which has radically changed the environment of production and distribution of women's films.

My film practice provides an empirical case study that explores these debates and questions around new technologies and dissemination of women's films – what worked, what didn't, and what might have changed in the past fifty years. It also demonstrates new technologies and how modes of documentary practice have evolved, split, mixed and how they have changed women making, distributing and finding new audiences for films outside mainstream economies. As Julia Lesage argues,

Film culture's tripartite division of production, distribution and exhibition is taken far too much as read, with the system's distribution and exhibition largely un-interrogated. This failure significantly contributes to obfuscating its ideological underpinnings; but, for normally excluded or marginalised voices (women, for

example), consideration of the totality of the system is utterly crucial. A voice without listeners might as well be silent (2013, p. 266).

This chapter examines feminist film history, then and now, through the lens of 2nd and 3rd wave feminism and the feminist film theory in which it developed alongside the 1970s, and through today's continuing exploration of feminist filmmaking within new technological spheres. It also explores what has been called new 4th wave feminism and its approaches toward women's cinema and practice within the new technological environment.

Hollinger, in her book, *Feminist Film Studies* (2012), argues that:

The history of feminist film theory begins in the 1970s and parallels the development of film theory itself as an academic discipline. It stems from the woman's movement of the 1960s and was influenced by germinal feminist works like Simone De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, and Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (7).

To this, Warren (2008, p. 7) adds that much of women's filmmaking in the early seventies was driven by a desire to project images and representations that spoke to "real" women's lives and experiences. These radical feminists in the early seventies were engaged in activism through the premise that shared personal experiences would reveal to women the need to unite and revolt against systematic oppressions. Films, therefore, collectively participate in the radical feminist goal of linking the personal to the political. Yet, the formal and narrative techniques evident in feminist documentaries vary substantially. Lesage (1978, p. 514) mentions that the style of Cinéma Vérité¹² documentary filmmaking was an attractive and useful mode of artistic and political expression for women learning filmmaking in the late 1960s. It was within this narrative structure that women (single or in groups) were able to film stories that shared experiences in a politicized way.

Thornham (1997, p. 1) states that the emergence of feminist ideas and feminist politics depends on the premise that women can consciously and collectively change their social place. In a society where women are typically second-class citizens, feminist filmmakers took these new ideas and put them on film. Cowie (2000, p. 48) adds that before the feminist movement, women had almost completely been left out of film: "they were present but not in characterisations any self-respecting person could identify with".

Lesage (1978, p. 521) argues that the “feminist documentary films articulate a vision, in part being realized now, of what the shift in relations in the public sphere would be and how power would [have] (sic) been acted if women were to gain and use power in a Feminist way”. Perhaps feminist films would not have been recognised as such without the advent of the women’s moment of the 1970s when “feminist critics like Laura Mulvey and Claire Johnson, condemned Hollywood for objectifying women and representing them as sexual spectacle” (Hollinger, 2012, p. 68). However, today new modes of practice are further complicating the debate around feminist thought, film practice, its imagery and representation of women and their subjects even with the advent of new technologies and modes of practice.

Hollinger (71) adds that one of the major characteristics of feminist film theory includes mixing forms, such as documentary, autobiography and fiction. Mixing these forms, she argues, creates “a tension between the social formation, subjectivity, and representation”. Thornham argues that if the filmmaker herself is the subject of her narrative, then she is also the subject of its actions and events and describes Rosenberg’s (2012, p. 12) account of how the early feminist documentary films were “a direct expression of the women’s movement, with a common structure, that of conscious-raising, and common aims”. If documentary filmmaking, as defined by Nichols (Hollinger, 2012, p. 73) represents a “creative treatment of actuality, not a faithful transcription of it, oscillating between a rendering of the real world and a response to that world”, then the creative treatment of its actuality must also be defined within the scope of the kind of authorship Thornham is describing. Women who are making films about women, whether being the subject or action of the film themselves, represent an authorial viewpoint, which is critically significant.

Women are continually and severely under-represented in writing and directing roles in the film industry. For example, in the “UK independent films released between 2010 and 2012, just 11.4% of the directors and 16.1% of the writers were women” (Rosser, 2013). Additionally, Rosser calculates that 92.2% of directors of UK films in 2012 are male, which translates to 165 male directors in 2012 compared to 14 women directors. While these statistics represent a more mainstream industry overview, feminist filmmakers occupy an even more marginalised position. One has to question whether it is a matter of subject, access to distribution or funding, or a result of what Johnson (Butler, 2002, p. 8) calls the ‘counter-cinematic’ nature of feminist filmmaking (noted from her article *Women's Cinema as*

Counter-Cinema, 1973). This means that it will inevitably lie on the outskirts of mainstream media – perhaps deliberately so.

Lesage comments that, “Currently, in this age of digital film-making and distribution, most documentaries will garner a viewership of no more than a few hundred people” (2013, p. 271). While digital filmmaking and distribution on the internet is perhaps perceived as ‘amateur’ filmmaking in the eyes of a traditional mainstream economic model, the current technological age has provided new business models, which can be a sustainable and economically viable resource for women filmmakers. New digital tools, which can be accessed for free, and various online distribution models through which works can be shared, sold and accessed by large audiences, are increasingly becoming more viable for how women’s films are made and seen. Still, Lesage is less enthusiastic about the exhibition of feminist films:

It’s become inexpensive to make documentaries, somewhat more costly to ship them out to festivals - especially to get film prints made for that purpose. But at that point, if the works do get into festivals, even fewer films get a distributor, and only a minuscule number achieve theatrical release or purchase by TV (2013, p. 271).

Arguably, this line of thinking can cover every aspect of the filmmaking genre, not just women’s films. However, women’s films are still marginalized and underrepresented when competing against mainstream fare. It should be noted, however, that non-mainstream production and distribution routes could potentially liberate a new generation of women filmmakers to tell and share their own stories. The varied channels of online distribution have provided a growing audience for new films and content around feminist themes, which can contribute to a larger economic sector for feminist filmmakers. However, without the previous feminist movement and its critical feminist film theory debate, the emergence of the new feminist filmmakers today might not have been possible. Therefore, it’s important to reflect upon women filmmakers’ positioning during the feminist movement in history and look at its theoretical and critical underpinnings, which drove feminists (and women in general perhaps to that degree) to become filmmakers in the first place.

History of Feminism and Film

Warren (2008, p. 3) argues that feminist documentaries, motivated by realism (constructed within a particular genre or media, but in this case, realism in documentary to show life in a

‘natural’, ‘real’, ‘truthful’ or ‘unmediated’ state) in both theory and practice, emerged out of the political, social and cultural revolution referred to as the “Women’s Liberation Movement”. Thornham (1997, p. 13) adds that the post-war surge in the activities of the Women’s Movement produced a shift in film representations towards a more independent and female point of view. Women who had learned filmmaking in the anti-war movement now used their skills to contribute to this emerging movement. For Lesage, “The films these people made came out of the same ethos as the consciousness-raising groups and had the same goals” (1978, p. 507); what they produced was both aesthetic experiment and political commitment – to show representations of the realities of women’s lives which might then change those lives directly or indirectly.

By the late 1970s a radical form of feminism emerged, particularly in the USA, which aligned with activist leanings to create specifically feminist films and filmmakers, which could be shown to women’s groups. Lesage (2013, p. 267) mentions that often-seen films included realist documentaries, such as *Growing Up Female* (1971)¹³, *The Woman’s Film* (1971)¹⁴, *Janie’s Janie* (1972)¹⁵, *Mother of Many Children* (1977)¹⁶ and *I Am Somebody* (1969)¹⁷, which served a consciousness-raising function. While these films addressed gender differences, especially women’s issues, such issues were not being addressed in the mainstream cinema, at least from a female point of view. To these films we need to add the smaller number of feminist avant-garde films. As Humm (1997, p. 10) states, the task of feminist filmmakers “was to make visible the insignia of the women’s movement: the personal is political. This task, and the consequent uneasy tension of the personal and the political when it comes to art practice marks 1970s feminist aesthetics”.

Also important to mention is the emergence of film festivals specifically catering to women’s films, which became a signifier for growing feminist subject matter and that audiences were interested in these types of film. As Lesage (2013, p. 266) notes, “in the 1970s and 80s many more women’s works were seen at feminist conferences or women’s film festivals than were available anywhere else” (examples were mentioned previously in the Introduction). Today, because of the nature of the digital media and internet, women filmmakers have more

¹³ *Growing Up Female* (1971) by Jim Klein, Julia Reichert

¹⁴ *The Woman’s Film* (1971) by Louise Alaimo, Judy Smith, Ellen Sorren

¹⁵ *Janie’s Janie* (1972) by Jane Giese

¹⁶ *Mother of Many Children* (1977) by Alanis Obomsawin

¹⁷ *I Am Somebody* (1969) by Madeline Anderson

opportunities than ever to create, share, and explore issues which are important to them and can potentially make a political impact, which furthers the debate between feminist filmmaking practice and theory. A greater access to cheap and free digital resources and access to social media platforms for the creative production and distribution process provide feminist filmmakers tools to further the women's movement, share stories about and for women, and make films that represent female embodiment with lesser barriers to entry.

In 1975, documentaries were the predominant form of political film. Armatage writes (1979, p. 49) that they would present images of ordinary women with whom an audience could recognise a shared experience. Lesage (1978, p. 508) furthers this argument, stating,

As Feminist films explicitly demand that a new space be opened up for women in women's terms, the collective and social act of Feminist filmmaking has often led to entirely new demands in the areas of health care, welfare, poverty programs, work, and law (especially rape), and in the cultural sphere proper in the areas of art, education, and the mass media.

Further, she adds that feminist documentary filmmaking was at the heart of the 1970s women's movement, while Thornham (2012, p. 1) quotes Patricia Mellencamp, "The 1970s was a time of oppositions, of dualities...". This social unrest and feminist activism in particular, was forging new representations of how women fit into a new economic, cultural and social context. It was also a time when women documentary filmmakers used cinema as an instrument for social change. Warren adds, "Filmmakers collaborated to create new distribution networks through which non-fiction films were mobilized in tandem with women's political activism, and particularly consciousness-raising, as a way to incite reflection as a precursor to action" (2008, p. 4).

However, there were still differences within the emerging women's film movement. What would it be called? How would it be represented? What form(s) should it employ? Warren (2008, p. 3) argued that the "real" problem in the Feminist Film Movement, arose from the clashing emerging movements of the political, aesthetic and intellectual histories of both feminist film theory and feminist history at the time. For Lesage (1978, p. 509) however, women's personal explorations through film were made in order to combat patriarchy, therefore making the filmmaker and her subjects political. Yet, she argues that without analysis or a sense of the collective process, there was little change. At the same time,

without the women's movement, the feminist film evolution might not have emerged, or at the very least produced a landscape whereby women filmmakers could tell their stories.

B. Ruby Rich's 1978 article '*The Crisis of Naming in Feminist Film Criticism*' became one of the key articles within 1970s feminist film criticism. Thornham states that "its desire to name, to map, and in many cases to prescribe the contours of a new and authentically feminist form of filmmaking" (2012, p. 2) incited arguments amongst other feminist theorists (especially Claire Johnston and Laura Mulvey) about what might constitute feminist filmmaking. Johnston's article 'Women's Cinema as Counter-Cinema' (1973) and articles by Johnston, Mulvey and Pam Cook in *Screen* during the same time argued that "cinematic form as well as content must be disrupted if a feminist (counter-) cinema was to emerge" (pp. 3-4). They argued that seeking to change people's attitudes by simply showing them images and representations of women with which they could identify was a fundamental mistake.

In contrast, Warren (2008, pp. 3-4) states that it's important to note the cultural and political impact of the collusion between the activism of the Women's Liberation Movement and the practices of filmmaking during this time. Films that reflected "reality" or mirrored images of a societal truth at the very least could exert a powerful influence on the lives of real women. The question, therefore, was not only what to 'call' feminist filmmaking, but also what form it should take. The end of the 1970s served to split feminist filmmaking between two types of film work, which seemed to be at odds with one another. "One called for immediate documentation for purposes of political activism, consciousness-raising, self-expression, or the search for 'positive images' of woman" (Butler, 2002, p. 3). Mulvey, however, argued that feminist documentaries were a limited way to explore the possibilities of feminist film and identification: "The way forward demanded a commitment to creating a new language of cinema informed by a new engagement with semiotics, psychoanalysis, and Althusserian Marxism" (Warren, 2008, p. 12). An alternative to realist documentary works, Butler (3) continued, such filmmaking "insisted on rigorous, formal work on the medium - or, better, the cinematic apparatus, understood as a social technology - in order to analyse and disengage the ideological codes embedded in representation".

For Rosenberg, a key proponent of the documentary form, feminist filmmaking is a direct political outcome of the 1970s " 'women's movement, its twofold aims to 'mediate between the movement and the public and ... recruit new members', and to 'promote intra-

movement solidarity and esprit” (Thornham, 2012, p. 5). Rosenberg further breaks feminist filmmaking down into three categories: the “social issue” documentary, the “personal portrait” documentary, and the “women’s avant-garde film” (6). Realism, therefore, became a “style” of filmmaking in feminist film theory in the seventies and eighties.

Warren (2008, p. 7) states that realism made feminist documentaries relevant, accessible, and political. But Lesage also insisted, as Kuhn did too in the 1980s, “that feminist filmmakers did not simply import a conventional form of realism from Direct Cinema, but rather redefined the aesthetics of Cinéma Vérité because of their particular relationships with their subjects, their activism in the women’s movement, and the results they wished to effect with their films” (Warren, 2008, p. 11). The Women’s Liberation Movement was influential in how women’s filmmaking evolved alongside it. It’s also indicative of how we view feminism and women’s filmmaking today. Yet the argument continues about the aesthetic style or “form” in which the film should ultimately take shape.

Lesage (1978, p. 531) argues that feminist documentaries’ use of Cinéma Vérité aesthetics and their close identification with their subjects is due to their conscious-raising narrative structure. Women filmmakers attempted to structure their films and tell their stories through personal experiences and share them in a politicized way. These films are “woman-identified” (507) and thus this ideology has not changed much since the 1960s. What have changed are technology and access to digital tools. Through the use of social media platforms, which present opportunities for wider dissemination of these types of films, more women filmmakers are telling their stories. Warren notes that “before 1969 fewer than 20 ‘feminist films’ existed whereas by mid-decade, in 1976, over 250 films by women circulated, and the number of feminist filmmakers had risen from less than 40 in 1972 to more than 200 in 1976” (2008, p. 5). Lesage (2013, p. 266) adds that as these numbers continued to increase into the 1980s and 90s, especially with the accessibility of VHS cameras, more women began to make documentaries for both activism and autobiographical work.

Today, the internet and social media platforms have exponentially offered up the opportunities to women filmmakers to reach larger audiences with more immediacy, lesser barriers to entry and/or economic restrictions. However, it should be noted that even though advances in technology have leveraged a more even playing field for women filmmakers to

get their films made and seen, debates about just how feminist filmmaking should relate to the ongoing debates within feminist theory continue. Hollinger (2012, pp. 7-8) adds, "Because feminist film theory was at its inception so tied to feminist film practice, there has also always been a questioning of what the relationship between theory and practice should actually involve".

Feminist Film Theory

"Feminist film theory was founded on the proposition, also central to John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* (1972), that looking and being looked at are charged with sexual and social power relations" (Butler, 2002, p. 4). How has feminism and therefore feminist film theory evolved since the 1970s? Empowering, educational and informative, albeit controversial, feminist film theory developed alongside the feminist movement of the 70s, and has continued to develop into the present day. Humm (1997, p. 3) argues, "Films' powerful misfiring of the female is what feminism seeks to disempower. The visual is therefore a crucial visible part of any feminist theory".

Simone De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949), Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), and Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1969) inspired an emerging 1970s feminist film theory. Hollinger adds, "From these sources and others, feminist film scholars began to shape their analyses of how film texts work to instil patriarchal ideology in female viewers, an approach known in literary scholarship as feminist critique" (2012, p. 7). According to Butler, feminist film theory focused on three areas: the female gaze, female desire, and female narrative agency (2002, p. 5). Additionally, B. Ruby Rich commented that feminist film theorists' approaches, such as those of Mulvey and Johnston, would set the agenda for feminist film debate and inform feminist film counter-cinema for the next twenty years.

B. Ruby Rich's comments (Thornham, 1997, p. 30), along with Mulvey's work in her 1975 article '*Visual Pleasures and Narrative Cinema*', represent what Thornham calls a "hugely ambitious attempt to appropriate for feminism the theories and methodologies of ideological and semiotic theory and analysis". '*Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*', the single most anthologized essay in the field of feminist film theory, places the issues of sexual difference at the centre of its argument. Hollinger (2012, p. 11) adds, "Mulvey's essay has been extremely influential on feminist theory and on film theory in general because it not only

confronts head-on the crucial questions of pleasure, spectatorship, and gender identity in mainstream cinema but draws these terms together into a relational whole". However, Mulvey's article has also been highly contested and brought about notable disagreement amongst feminist film theorists. As Mayne points out, "The focal point of most analyses of the subject in film has been the ubiquitous gaze, and virtually every exploration of women's relationship to the cinema has returned to Laura Mulvey's designation of the cinematic gaze as male" (1990, p. 19). Further contemporary developments in European film, cultural theory, structuralist theory and semiotic approaches to feminist film theory gave way to a different process of viewing the relationship between the spectator-screen relationship and the process of film viewing. "What British semiotic critics brought to film analysis in the 1970s was the understanding that gender constructions are always fraught. Since ideological tensions are negotiated mainly through gender, women's representations are inevitably contradictory" (Humm, 1997, p. 13).

Feminist alternative cinema (or experimental filmmaking) didn't become well established until the advent of the women's movement of the 1960s. "Feminist critics, like Laura Mulvey and Claire Johnston, condemned Hollywood for objectifying women and representing them as sexual spectacle (Hollinger, 2012, p. 68). For them, it was feminist avant-garde cinema, with its disruption of form as well as content that could provide an alternative. Thornham states that Mulvey goes beyond the issue of Johnston's call for counter-cinema by telling stories differently and presenting them visually in new ways (1997, p. 30). However, Johnston argued against Mulvey, insisting that feminism could not just abandon mainstream filmmaking. She advocated radical counter-cinema, but felt it necessary to continue investigating and infiltrating mainstream cinema in order to combat women's objectification in Hollywood. Johnston insisted on the importance of fantasy in women's cinema: "In order to counter our objectification in the cinema...women's cinema must embody the working through of desire: such an objective demands the use of the mainstream entertainment film" (30). But she also advocated "...women filmmakers in avant-garde and documentary filmmaking, where a counter-cinema perspective has had great influence" (Hollinger, 2012, p. 13). The aims were to distinguish avant-garde films, which could challenge, subvert and separate themselves from mainstream by asking the audiences to rethink long-established ideas about the very nature of cinema itself. "To challenge and subvert this truth-effect, avant-garde films either do away with narrative entirely or displace, deform, or reformulate their storytelling aspects" (67).

Within the changing landscape of feminist film theory, Humm states that feminist film theory shared three major assumptions: “gender is a social construction that oppresses women more than men; ‘patriarchy’ (i.e., the male domination of social institutions) fashions these constructions; women’s experiential knowledge best helps us to envision a future non-sexist society” (1997, p. 5). With new languages emerging, new feminist film festivals and film journals also discussed women’s creativity in cinema and these combinations began to create a new field of feminist film studies. “For the first time, “women’s films” denoted films made by and for, not just starring or about, women and emerging out of the political fever and radical demands of the women’s movement” (Warren, 2008, p. 5).

Cowie argues that Feminist film theory and criticism therefore could be defined as a system for theorizing and articulation and has been a development within the theory of cinema which argues that film is not simply a reflection of other practices (2000, p. 49). However, Alexandra Juhasz makes an important intervention into understanding the debates about what kind of relationship should exist between practice and theory and what kinds of films feminist filmmakers should be producing. She argues that feminist film theory generated a “canon of “correct” feminist films [the avant-garde ‘theory’ films], which were of course aligned with a body of “correct” feminist film theory – and even more problematically, ... publishing and citation practices in the field created an illusory consensus about the failures of realism” (Warren, 2008, p. 7).

In a 1999 article on feminist documentaries, Juhasz argues that the rejection of realist documentary films formed the foundation for the school of thinking we have come to know as feminist film theory. Although not all aesthetic strategies of realist documentaries were rejected, they were rarely included in the collections of feminist film theory. Warren adds: “for rising feminist film theorists in the academy, urgently seeking a new language of feminist cinema, the use of the “verité style” signalled a regrettable naiveté among women filmmakers” (11). Humm (1997, p. 35) makes a similar critique, pointing to how often critics idealise avant-garde or experimental films while ignoring feminist documentaries. Hollinger however, argues, “one of the major characteristics of feminist film theory in fact, includes mixing forms, such as documentary, autobiography and fiction...as it creates a tension between social formation, subjectivity and representation” (2012, p. 71). For feminist filmmaking, then, the argument that sexism was embedded in film at the level of form had

profound implications for feminist film theory debate then and now. Today, feminism continues to be both an ongoing, polarizing debate and an exploration into continuing women's rights both domestically and internationally; as film evolves with new technologies, these feminist representations are also shifting.

Alternative Cinema and the 'Other' Documentary

The proliferation of documentary films of personal witnessing emerged in the 1960s and 1970s when members of the civil rights, women's, gay and lesbian and other social movements told their personal stories...and used film as a medium to probe social problems (Kellner, 2013, p. 62).

Humm (1997, p. 180) adds that during the 1970s, feminist independent film-makers' initial aim was to "produce alternative media narratives often with a specific political purpose or expressive of family or personal histories, supported by an independent exhibition circuit, including student film societies, arts laboratories and other fringe venues". Often, as their stated purpose, these marginal films subverted narrative conventions of mainstream cinema and distinguished themselves from a male-dominated cinema. These new forms have led critics to divide avant-garde films into four distinct categories, experimental, independent, underground and art films.

Hollinger (2012, p. 28) describes independent films as similar in their narrative and formal structures to mainstream films. They are typically funded and distributed through non-mainstream channels and strive for less commercial success. Underground films however, can express views that might be shocking or radical and are aesthetically and thematically at odds with Hollywood. Avant-garde films can also be divided into those that contain political content and those that do not. Hollinger adds that to challenge the truth effect of documentary, "avant-garde films either do away with narrative entirely or displace, deform, or reformulate their storytelling aspects" (2012, p. 67).

Even though women's contributions were not always recognized, they have been involved in avant-garde cinema from its inception. However, therein lies a bias towards avant-garde and formally experimental films as the most successful of alternative, counter- or feminist films, which emerged in the seventies and still holds influence today. Warren argues that "the illusion of a consensus about what constituted "feminist films" in the seventies has developed in the academic discipline to the lamentable detriment of the rich variety of filmmaking

practices that actually made their way to diverse audiences at that time” (2008, p. 5). Investigating these different modes of practice will perhaps show how their differences are fundamentally rooted within feminist codes of representation, political and truth seeking, despite their varied forms.

Documentary

As we have seen, documentary was one of the major forms of feminist filmmaking that emerged. Hollinger argues that documentary offered women an alternative to the mainstream despite its varied forms and that “the very definition of a documentary film has been open to considerable debate” (2012, p. 73). There is an on-going debate about what comprises a ‘true’ documentary film because so many forms have been mixed, even though the very idea of counter-cinema is the mix of forms and styles. Additionally, with the advent of the internet and video sharing sites, amateur creators are contributing to this mix, which further blurs the lines of professional documentary practice.

Documentary, Bill Nichols argues, “is a proposition about how the world is – what exists within it, what our relations to these things are, what alternatives there might be – that invites consent” (Thornham, 2012, p. 4). Additionally, what the documentary includes and excludes, proposes and suppresses should also remain significant. Early feminist documentaries’ ultimate aim therefore was to bring the truth of women’s lives to the screen. According to Lesage (Hollinger, 2012, p. 75), they were to be “committed documentaries” that had clear goals. They hoped to show women as they really are, create a wider range of female images, critique and correct past film depictions of women, and allow women for once to tell their own stories”.

One particular style of documentary filmmaking is Cinéma Vérité, which came into prominence in the early sixties. “Its premise is simple: that the camera merely records what happens in front of it” (Armatage, 1979, p. 49). UK filmmaker Kim Longinotto, working primarily in Cinéma Vérité format, has documented the stories of women ordinary and extraordinary, in films including *Hidden Faces* (1990)¹⁸, *Runaway* (2001)¹⁹, and *Divorce Iranian Style* (1998)²⁰. Longinotto has successfully adapted Cinéma Vérité filmmaking and

¹⁸ *Hidden Faces* (1990) by Claire Hunt, Kim Longinotto

¹⁹ *Runaway* (2001) Kim Longinotto, Ziba Mir-Hosseini

²⁰ *Divorce Iranian Style* (1998) Kim Longinotto, Ziba Mir-Hosseini

managed to be unobtrusive because she builds trust with her subjects. Further, White adds, “this is not to say that relationships of power and authority—of who has the right to speak and the obligation to listen, of what can be said and in which terms or contexts—do not govern the film” (2006, p. 124). And even though Longinotto never appears in front of the camera, her position as cinematographer can be interpreted as authorial and observational. Hollinger argues that this is merely one example of feminist filmmaking around the issue of objectivity and accuracy of representation: “This debate has deeply impacted the work of woman filmmakers, many of whom adopted the documentary form because they saw it as a way to capture the reality of women's lives” (2012, p. 72).

Counter-cinema

Butler (2002, p. 8) states, “in the 1970s, it made sense to conceive counter-cinema solely in terms of opposition to an enfeebled mainstream industry, but by the mid-1980s, the revival of Hollywood and the rise of new forms of political and cultural conservatism had created a need for other models”. Although women have made small inroads, their achievements lie more in their re-inflections of its practices rather than their ability to change mainstream cinema. Further, she argues that economic and cultural forces took over the argument for aesthetic negation. Butler adds that although *Women's Cinema as Counter-cinema* (Johnston, 1973) became a canonical text in film studies, it was in direct conflict with the thinking that had emerged around cinema and the women's movement. In Butler, Johnston states, “it suggests a viable alternative to the rigid hierarchical structures of male-dominated cinema and offers real opportunities for a dialogue about the nature of women's cinema within it” (2000, pp. 32-33). Additionally, the development of these collective works was a major step forward in women's cinema as a means of acquiring and sharing of skills.

For too long the notion of film as a political tool and film as entertainment have been regarded as two opposing poles with little common ground. A strategy therefore was necessary in order to counter objectification in the cinema. Johnston argued that “women's cinema must embody the working through of desire: such an objective demands the use of the entertainment film. Ideas derived from the entertainment film, then, should inform the political film, and political ideas should inform the entertainment cinema: a two way process” (pp. 32-33). Writing in 1973, she argued that because of technological advances (amongst other social and cultural advances), cinema had changed formidably over the last few decades. She adds that it was no longer the monolithic system that Hollywood invented in the

1930s, 40s and 50s. And according to Annette Kuhn (Butler, 2002, pp. 57), “low investments of money and “professionalism” have meant that avant-garde cinema has historically been much more open than the film industry to women”. Additionally, it is these technological advances that have profoundly changed the economic conditions of the cinematic production, thereby making alternative (or avant-garde, experimental) cinema possible. Further, alternative cinema provides a space in which both the political and aesthetic can challenge the basic assumptions of mainstream cinema.

These new forms and assumptions of alternative cinema also reacted to the widening gaps between mass audiences and the art audience. According to Dinkla, “in Futurist performances and manifestos audience participation was an implicit or explicit means to reduce the distance between performer and audience - either by spatial integration or by provocative addresses” (1996, p. 279). Audience participation was essential to interactive art of the sixties, as would be collaboration and flexibility of roles when producing a feminist film. Armatage adds, “this would reduce the alienation of the processes for both crew and subject” (1979, p. 49). This particular approach adds up to the opposite of the perfectionist techniques of Hollywood. Armatage argues then “ ‘reality’ has been fragmented - cut - and reassembled, with the aid of all the conventional devices which render that fragmentation vitally invisible. So a new illusion is created, a new fiction” (49).

Despite the fragmented realities and women imposing narratives through the lens of their personal accounts, it was the “organisation of small-scale independent production and distribution/exhibition facilities which became the most important” (Thornham, 2012, p. 8). It can be argued then that it is because of film’s accessibility and scale, which makes it an ideal political and educational tool through various avant-garde movements, that women’s experimental cinema has developed. Butler adds, “through authorial self-inscription, women filmmakers have been able to figure the terms of their engagement with the medium and its conventions” (2002, p. 59). However, it should be noted that feminists must also be involved in mass culture because that is a way of shaping consciousness and there are no guarantees of breaking of these codes of contemporary cinema through alternative filmmaking. Additionally, Thornham adds, “such a “breaking of the codes” is itself no guarantee of radical filmmaking – it too, can become “just another style, another technique” (2012, p. 9).

Though feminism and feminist film theory has evolved today new modes [according to Bill Nichol's definition of the six modes of practice] are continuing to fragment into smaller, more niche modes. This mixing and moulding or reshaping of the original six modes into new forms provides a framework for further discussion and debate around feminist criticism and representation by the very nature of its new technological interfaces. Now that women filmmakers have more access to digital production tools, alternative funding sources and non-mainstream distribution, there is a wellspring of ideological arguments and film outputs contributing to growing feminist collection of works. While working within the confines of mainstream cinema can in fact shape consciousness it is the workings outside the confines of mainstream cinema that allow women filmmakers to stretch beyond the rigid boundaries of male-dominated cinema through experimentation, personal revelations and autobiographical contexts. Hollinger (2012, p. 68) agrees: "the avant-garde became seen as a place where women filmmakers who sought to challenge mainstream images might find many attractions...[aided by] its traditional concern with personal expression as a way to express inner experience, sensations, feelings, and thoughts". Adoption and usage of new technologies are aiding in this new expression of the personal and political. Additionally, realist documentary, avant-garde, and a more fluid conception of 'alternative' cinema have all been advocated as the ideal form for a feminist filmmaking.

New Technologies

In the sixties and seventies, the advent of the VHS and camcorder devices allowed women access to lighter and more mobile equipment, thereby opening the door of possibility for feminist filmmaking to flourish. While still outside the traditional Hollywood trajectory, this new found freedom and accessibility would lay the groundwork for future emerging digital technologies, which would eventually enable new debates around feminism, women's filmmaking and access to the production and reception of women's stories. "Documentaries were seen not only as a way to present images of women that would contradict those presented by Hollywood, but also as affording women access to filmmaking with less costly, lightweight, accessible 16mm and eventually video equipment that necessitated less expense and training" (Stabile, 1994, p. 75).

Lesage however, believes women's documentary films are still struggling even in this new digital economy. "Currently, in this age of digital film-making and distribution, most

documentaries will garner a viewership of no more than a few hundred people” (2013, p. 271). While this might perhaps be perceived as amateur filmmaking in the eyes of the traditional mainstream cinema economics, the internet has provided new business models, which can be sustainable and economically viable for women filmmakers. Dovey and Rose agree “amateur media production is likely to play an increasingly significant role in the future cultural landscape. Studying this phenomenon as it evolves will raise significant new questions about creativity, identity and culture” (2013, p. 367). And these questions are not only expressed through the use of digital tools but also through new distribution models, which allow women’s films to be shared, sold and accessed.

The DIY route has liberated a new generation of women filmmakers to collaborate, participate, produce and sell their stories. It has also provided a growing online audience with new films and content, which can contribute to a larger economic sector outside of mainstream cinema. Lesage agrees that documentaries are inexpensive to produce and get into festivals. However, she argues there are still challenges within the established distribution system. “If the works do get into festivals, even fewer films get a distributor, and only a minuscule number achieve theatrical release or purchase by TV” (2013, p. 271).

With more streaming media platforms, both free and paid and with the branching out of feminism through social media engagement it would seem perhaps easier to find feminist films and feminist media. But this over-abundance of media online falls outside the realm of the canonized works and can be difficult to track. Lesage agrees that the alternative, internet-way to building an audience and making a film can potentially reach a large viewership, but there are issues with platform and visibility. “Some forms of putting media on the Internet will be successful; some artists will build a viewership; some sites or platforms will endure. Others will not” (272). Further, she states that we mostly rely on gatekeeping practices and that in our neo-liberal culture democracy goes hand in hand with marketing. However, as cultural and social behaviours shift through online practices, so do the business models currently in place: “What is significant about internet outreach by documentary film-makers is that it crosses national boundaries and opens up exposure and sales to a worldwide marketplace and potential communities of viewers and users” (271).

With the current and past modes of documentary practice within the new digital sphere new questions arise. How might collaborative practices, new media integration, apps, non-linear

digital technologies and social media platforms have an impact on the way in which feminists approach their work? How might this impact the overall narrative of the film's approach and execution? How might these films be accepted (or rejected) amongst a growing online community with varied interests, backgrounds and points of view? How might this impact the filmmaker's creative process outside of traditional practice modes? What economic or sustainable models might be possible given this new approach?

Stabile notes that women historically are slower than men to utilize these resources and embrace new technologies. The statistics of underrepresentation in the traditional industry show women fall way behind as Directors, Writers, and Producers of films in the mainstream. Lack of access, education and training are partly to blame for the lower percentages of women filmmakers in the industry. Stabile concurs: "given the fact that technology has more often than not been utilized to oppress those who do not possess it or cannot engage with it, these feminists have tended to be more generally critical of technoscience, while at the same time aware of its liberatory potential" (1994, p. 5).

However, the internet and social media platforms offering free tutorials and educational opportunities, for example through MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses), have shifted the playing field. Women now have the same advantages as men when it comes to access to resources, education and information for the creating of films. However, recent statistics suggest that mainstream cinema still does not reflect this trend. And given the enormous amount of content that filters through the internet space, those films falling outside the feminist film canon are difficult to calculate.

What still retains a wide disparity between gender contributions is mainstream cinema, where male dominated films and filmmakers are still at the forefront of the industry. While alternative cinema has had a massive uptake via access to the internet and social media economies, the challenge continues through critical argument about the value and economic stability for women's films. Feminist filmmakers (and women in general both in front of and behind the camera) still have a more difficult time getting their films made and distributed, in film festivals, online video sharing sites and traditional modes of sales as evidenced by industry research and statistics reports (Follows, 2013). With the emergence of new documentary modes, the shifting frame and mixing of styles continue to push the boundaries of 'reality' within documentary filmmaking. Hight (2013, p. 198) agrees that aiming for a

more direct relationship between filmmaker and audiences with these new documentary movements will downplay the mediators of actuality and might perhaps get rid of the gatekeeper's altogether. This transparency of relationship between filmmaker and audience is emerging through the creative modes of online, collaborative documentary practice as a trajectory drawing from Cinéma Vérité and Direct Cinema, and is "eroding distinctions between public and private space by allowing for an expansion of the documentary gaze into increasingly intimate areas of everyday life" (200).

Conclusion

Much of women's filmmaking in the early seventies was driven by a desire to project images and representations that spoke to "real" women's lives and experiences, and the emergence of cheaper, lighter equipment allowed women more access to tell their stories.

As feminist film theory developed alongside the feminist movement, it produced debates around women both in front of and behind the camera over what denoted a feminist film. With cheap equipment, Cinéma Vérité and Direct Cinema both in Europe and the US evolved, with women producing films with new technologies to create when there was no access to training. This emergence of new technology brought about collaboration amongst women filmmakers, which challenged the mainstream. Challenges with marginalisation, distribution, and social attitudes, finding audiences and sustaining economic stability continue today.

New modes of practice are further complicating the discussion and debate around feminist thought, film practice, its imagery and representation of women and their subjects. So, where is documentary filmmaking going? Technologies have changed, but in a sense the questions surrounding feminist filmmaking have not. What kinds of films should women be making then? Films outside the mainstream? Counter-cinema, as Johnston suggests, in a radical way to shake the status quo? What do those films look like? Should they be straight documentary ('the real'), or experimental and avant-garde films? Perhaps films should link both: working outside the mainstream, utilising small-scale productions, using new available technologies and collaborating with online, participatory audiences in order to build visibility and find distribution, which can be platforms used for and by women working within the confines of these new technologies. These are techniques my film practice will demonstrate, working within this framework.

In the next chapter, I'll explore the different modes of documentary practice, as well as the new face of documentary forms that have evolved out of the adaptation, use and dissemination of new technologies, as the personal, political and cultural shifts of women making films are occurring in both the mainstream and outside.

Chapter 2: Documentary Filmmaking: Witnessing the Evolution of the Documentary

This chapter looks at the transformations documentary film has undergone from its ‘classic’ period (Pre-1960 Griersonian era) when John Grierson coined its definition as the ‘creative treatment of actuality’ (Chapman, 2009, p. 9), to the opposing viewpoints and practices of Direct Cinema and Cinéma Vérité, to how its current framework and underpinning assumptions have shifted with the ever-changing technological landscape. However, debates around documentary’s three central issues (see below) continue to circulate.

While Robert Flaherty’s film *Nanook of the North* (1922) was noted as the first original documentary, it would be some years later that John Grierson would establish the documentary genre both theoretically and as a form of practice (Aitken, 2013, p. 129). However, Grierson’s definition of documentary (as both ‘creative’ and faithful to ‘actuality’) was somewhat contradictory. Winston states, “at minimum ‘treatment’ – manipulation – was needed to create a narrative. Hence the ‘clumsiness’ of the term ‘documentary’” (2013, p. 6).

It would be years later, in the 1960s, that French filmmakers would redefine documentary and push it into new directions. Filmmaker Jean Rouch and Sociologist Edgar Morin coined the term *Cinéma Vérité* (cinema of truth). This movement would change the assumptions and modalities of documentary practice, due in part to the new availability of synchronous-sound equipment, which allowed filmmakers to capture events as they actually unfolded. Van Cauwenberge states, “some critics took Cinéma Vérité literally as claiming to reveal truth on film and were irritated by its pretentiousness, while others understood it more figuratively: Cinéma Vérité meant ‘the truth of cinema’ and not ‘the cinema of truth’” (2013, p. 189). Without a doubt the ‘truth’ of documentary would be an ongoing debate.

During the same time, American and Canadian filmmakers preferred the term *Direct Cinema* to describe the outputs from the lightweight, hand-held equipment which allowed them to capture ‘real’ moments. Fundamentally, this version sought the ‘truth’ of documentary as well. Controversy between the two schools emerged, although both were rooted in similar fundamental practices. Direct Cinema owed its evolution of documentary practices more to its hand-held application and minimal crew, thereby establishing ‘direct and authentic

contact' with 'lived' reality (189), whereas the Cinéma Vérité was about capturing the 'truth' of cinema and looking back to Vertov. David Abelvich Kaufman, or Denis Kaufman, also known as Dziga Vertov was a Soviet documentary filmmaker, newsreel director and cinema theorist best known for his documentary film *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929). Later, as six modes of documentary practice emerged (as defined by Bill Nichols), utilizing various modes of practice and outputs, each had a stake on its claim on 'the real'. This debate over the terms 'truth' and 'authenticity' would continue to unfold throughout the following decades and as technologies improved and access to resources became more readily available (Warren, 2008, p. 7). The idea of documenting the 'real' becomes a central focus of documentary practice with implications for the subject and nature of its making. Rughani agrees that, "although the documentary has long been questions (sic) on the basis of its authenticity - its claim on the real - it is only in the current century that these issues have been seriously addressed by scholars and practitioners as a - if not 'the' - central issue in documentary film" (2013, p. 98).

Media and new technologies have had a profound impact upon documentary's changing epistemology as new approaches by academic institutions and applications by documentary practitioners continually push its boundaries, redefining what documentary is within its new present constructs. "There are three central issues in the study of moving-image documentary – evidence, narrative and ethics", argues Bill Nichols (2013, p. 33). I would also add 'witness' as a key debate, especially heightened in today's digital landscape. How have these central issues impacted the documentary practitioner, its audiences and the film industry with the emergence of new technologies shaping new documentary forms? Nichols continues that the concept of documentary storytelling must be a story about **the** world, rather than an imaginative fiction about **a** world; otherwise documentary as a genre cannot be sustained (33).

New interactive, participatory modes created with new technologies and audiences are shifting narratives, audience reception and pushing new ethical debates about 'truth' and 'authenticity' as lines are continually blurred. How can photographic evidence be authenticated? Where does the responsibility lie if not with the filmmaker? Rughani states that "for documentary...ethics flow from principles such as accuracy or honest dealing (sic) with contributors" (2013, p. 98). If all creative work must find a delicate balance between artistic ambition and creative responsibility, integrity when working with real subjects and controversial subject matter must be valued and integrated into the filmmaking process if it is

to protect what Bruzzi calls ‘documentary value’ (2013, p. 48). But new forms of documentary push against established boundaries. As Dovey and Rose state, “documentary has always been prone to the seductions of technology” (2013, p. 366). As new modes of practice enter into the documentary epistemology, not only does this change the way filmmakers approach telling their stories about the world, but the audience reception and experience is also shifting by the means in which they are receiving documentary films through multiple devices on-demand.

A Brief History of Documentary

In the 1930s the Documentary Film Movement followed the Griersonian model, which was, argues Aitken, based on a classical, idealist German philosophy. It was preoccupied with the notion that “the modern world had become an increasingly inhuman place, and that society had grown too fast and too large to be any longer congruent with optimal personal or social conditions” (2013, p. 129). What the Grierson tradition attempted was to play a key role in shaping the individual and social spheres, as well as the historic-philosophical movement of society. This new class of “social-idealist intellectuals, film-makers and producers” would make up the documentary film movement (136).

However, documentary wasn’t limited to Grierson’s realist position. In the 1920s, documentary had been seen as “a species of oppositional avant-garde film-making” (Winston, 2013, p. 15). The prime example of this mode of filmmaking was *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) by Dziga Vertov. Winston adds, “...a film without a scenario...a film without sets, actors, etc. The ‘author-supervisor’ of this ‘experiment’ was Dziga Vertov” (15). Vertov saw making films as using a tool (the camera), which would allow for new visions of reality to be made manifest. He coined the term ‘Kino-Pravda’, promoted through his newsreel service, which was known as ‘film truth’. “The surface of the world presented on the screen could be penetrated by the camera’s eye to produce new film ‘truths’ – *kino pravda* ...” (15). This would evolve into a documentary ideology known as Cinéma Vérité or the ‘cinema of truth’. For Vertov, it was essential to remind the audience constantly of the processes of filming, thereby presenting a ‘truth’ on the screen. French documentary makers would expand on this ideology with their Cinéma Vérité movement in the 1960s.

Vertov and others were limited in their tools because of the cumbersome nature of 35mm cameras and sound equipment. In the 1960s, however, “[t]he (sic) development of the 16mm hand-held synch-sound camera rig in 1960” (2) meant that a greater ‘verité’ could be captured on screen. “Sound [also] permitted both film-makers and subjects to provide a more elaborate social and cultural context for what was visible on the screen” (Henley, 2013, p. 310).

This post-1960 Cinéma Vérité (known as Vertovian Practice) emerged in France as a ‘new documentary’ form, which was originated and presented by filmmaker Jean Rouch and sociologist Edgar Morin (Van Cauwenberge, 2013, p. 189). In America and Canada during the same time, Direct Cinema emerged as the competing form of documentary. This shift was a “dominant ‘fly-on-the-wall’ observational, non-interventionist aesthetic” (Winston, 2013, p. 2) and rejected the classic techniques embraced by Grierson. It had a specific aesthetic dogma which all those following Direct Cinema must adhere to: it could only be made with non-professional actors, long synchronous-sound takes and using available sound and light (5).

The two movements adopted different approaches and arguments around what the ‘truth’ of documentary would be. Direct Cinema had not adopted the older educative, journalistic Anglophone documentary tradition. The French documentary, against a background of considerable theoretical debate on the cinema in general, turned back to Vertov and Kino-Pravda (189). Winston adds that the division between the two forms became a blurring of the lines when it came to capturing the ‘truth’. However, the “difference was that Cinéma Vérité made no implicit or explicit claim to impartiality, no manipulation so that filmmakers could be seen in plain view” (17).

Faced with different principles of documentary filmmaking, the basic question then, Nichols asks, is when a documentarist tells a story, whose story is it? The filmmaker’s or the subject’s? (2010, p. 10). Hill states that documentary is an ambiguous genre “operating at ‘the margins of reality’” (2013, p. 84). But that ‘reality’ can remain elusive and new forms of documentary can further blur the lines of whose truth or story it is.

Despite the need for objectivity which seems to be demanded by documentary’s claim on the real, the world about which the documentarist tells us is being “presented through the prism of the documentarist’s own sober sensitivities” (Winston, 2013, p. 2). If documentary stands

for rational and critical engagement with truth and evidence, Hill believes it also stands for emotional engagement with the value of these ideals in society and culture (2013, p. 83). Yet documentary is also founded upon narrative, so that Nichols argues that what distinguishes documentary from other non-fictional cinema genres is that “it exists ‘in the crease between life as lived and life as narrativized’ ” (Winston, 2013, p. 4). The various ways in which this narrative can be constructed would lead to the further stratification of documentary forms and debates surrounding ‘truth’ claims of what could be evidenced and witnessed. Nichols argues that six modes of documentary film practice can now be distinguished, each with its own sets of approaches and debates to the three central issues of evidence, witness (or narrative, used interchangeably here) and ethics.

Six Modes of Documentary Practice

The most useful delineation of documentary modes has been provided as a framework by Bill Nichols who describes it as an,

...institutional framework [which] also imposes an institutional way of seeing and speaking, which functions as a set of limits, or conventions, for the filmmaker and audience alike (2010, p. 17).

Nelmes states that Nichols identifies these modes as “sub-genres of the documentary” (2012, p. 211). These sub-genres, or modes, are known as Expository, Observational, Poetic, Reflexive, Performative and Participatory. Each follows its own sets of rules, but they can co-exist beside each other, utilize similar techniques, are not mutually exclusive and can represent a combination of styles within one form.

The Expository documentary, or the ‘Voice-of-God’ (Nichols, 1991, pp. 32-33) follows the classic tradition (of Grierson and Flaherty), which arose from dissatisfaction with the distracting, entertainment qualities of fiction film. This mode often uses a narrator to address the audience directly, to present exposition or an explanation of what they (audience) are seeing on the screen. Its primary purpose is to make an argument and it is most identified with documentary in general, with a structure grounded in a series of assertions backed up by evidence. Nelmes adds that this mode explicitly uses rhetorical techniques in order to make points about aspects of actuality and has a straightforward ‘show and tell’ structure to guide the viewer through the material (2012, p. 212). Editing in the expository mode also serves to maintain the continuity of the spoken argument or perspective, which is called evidentiary.

Film examples of the Expository mode are: *Nanook of the North* (1922)²¹, *Night Mail* (1936)²², *The Spanish Earth* (1937)²³, *The River* (1938)²⁴, and the seven-part documentary series *Why We Fight* (1942-45)²⁵.

The Observational documentary, or the ‘fly-on-the-wall’ mode (filmmakers such as Leacock-Pennebaker, and Fredrick Wiseman) arose from the availability of more mobile, synchronous recording equipment used in the 1960s, which allowed the Direct Cinema filmmaker to remain hidden behind the camera, thereby not effecting changes or influencing the actions or events unfolding. Nichols states that this technique limited the filmmaker to the present moment and required a disciplined detachment from the events themselves (1991, p. 33). The mode also emerged, as there was a growing dissatisfaction with the moralizing quality of expository documentary and moved in the direction of a more detached or ‘neutral’ (‘objective’) stance towards its subject matter (Nelmes, 2012, p. 212). She adds that “overtly ‘interpretive’ techniques such as editorializing voiceover or music (which are common in other modes of documentary) are avoided in favor of an apparent capturing of reality as it unfolds” (212).

Film examples of the Observational mode are: *Primary* (1960)²⁶, *Titicut Follies* (1967)²⁷, and *Gimme Shelter* (1970)²⁸.

The Poetic documentary has a more artistic and subjective expression, which stresses the lyrical, rhythmic and emotional aspect of the historical world. This mode moves away from ‘objective’ reality and demonstrates no overt rhetorical strategies. Nelmes argues, “The poetic mode will seem more allusive and use ‘associative’ editing to capture a mood or tone rather than make an explicit argument about a subject” (pp. 211-212). In editing poetic documentaries, continuity has no consequence on the narrative but rather explores associations and patterns of chronological rhythms and spatial juxtapositions. This mode falls more in line with avant-garde and experimental films and is more abstract in its approach.

²¹ *Nanook of the North* (1922) by Robert J. Flaherty

²² *Night Mail* (1936) by Harry Watt, Basil Wright

²³ *The Spanish Earth* (1937) by Joris Ivens

²⁴ *The River* (1938) by Pare Lorentz

²⁵ *Why We Fight* (1942-45) by Frank Capra, Anatole Litvak

²⁶ *Primary* (1960) by Robert Drew

²⁷ *Titicut Follies* (1967) by Frederick Wiseman

²⁸ *Gimme Shelter* (1970) by Albert Maysles, David Maysles, Charlotte Zwerin

Film examples of the Poetic mode are: *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* (1927)²⁹, *Night and Fog* (1955)³⁰, *Araya* (1959), *Koyaanisqatsi* (1982)³¹, and *General Orders No. 9* (2009)³².

The Reflexive documentary (from filmmakers such as Dziga Vertov, Jill Godmilow, and Raul Ruiz) used an awareness of process to show ‘truth’. Nichols notes that it arose to challenge documentary’s impression of reality from the desire to make the conventions of representation themselves more apparent (1991, p. 33). It is the most self-aware mode and conveys ‘a truth’ but not necessarily ‘the truth’. Bruzzi states that such films “challenge the notion of film’s ‘transparency’ and highlight the performative quality of documentary, [and] will emphasise (sic) issues of authorship and construction” (2013, p. 49). For this purpose, it uses many of the same devices as other documentaries but the construction of the documentary process is made visible to the audiences through its editing, sound and recording.

Film examples of the Reflexive mode are: *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929)³³, *Land Without Bread* (1933)³⁴, *This is Spinal Tap* (1984)³⁵, and *The Thin Blue Line* (1988)³⁶.

The Participatory (or Interactive) mode of documentary (from filmmakers such as Rouch, de Antonio, and Connie Field) arose during the same time, again because of the availability of mobile equipment, facilitating the desire to make the filmmaker’s perspective more evident. Unlike in the Observational mode, the filmmaker is present and there is a direct engagement between filmmaker and subject. In addition, the filmmaker appears on camera and makes an impact on the events recorded, acknowledged and often celebrated. Nichols argues that this mode encouraged engagement with individuals more directly by not reverting to the classic exposition (1991, p. 33), but rather involving participation from both the filmmaker and social actors, thereby giving the audience a sense of what it’s like for the filmmaker to be in a situation and the ultimate outcomes. It usually takes the form of interviews or more direct involvement and uses archival footage to examine historical issues. Nelmes adds that “the filmmaker *does not* remain aloof from the subject matter, which results in a documentary

²⁹ *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* (1927) by Walter Ruttmann

³⁰ *Night and Fog* (1955) by Alain Resnais

³¹ *Koyaanisqatsi* (1982) by Godfrey Reggio

³² *General Orders No. 9* (2009) by Robert Persons

³³ *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) Dziga Vertov

³⁴ *Land Without Bread* (1933) by Luis Bunuel

³⁵ *This is Spinal Tap* (1984) by Rob Reiner

³⁶ *The Thin Blue Line* (1988) by Errol Morris

which is far removed from the detached or straightforward didactic” (2012, p. 212).

Film examples of the Participatory mode are: *Man on Wire* (2008)³⁷, and *The Cove* (2009)³⁸, and *Exit through the Gift Shop* (2010)³⁹.

The final mode, the Performative mode, emphasizes the filmmaker as the participant. The film itself is constructed with the filmmaker as the central figure and emphasizes the subjective nature of the maker. This mode uses performance within a non-fiction context to draw attention to the impossibilities of authentic documentary representation, perhaps because of the filmmaker’s own involvement or the emotional and social impact on the audience. Bruzzi emphasizes that performance is at the heart of this mode. When it comes to ‘truth’ seeking, it is “a negotiation between film-maker and reality” (2013, p. 48) and Nelmes adds (2012, p. 212) that it raises all sorts of questions about the filmmaker and subject’s ‘performance’ in front of the camera, which is often referred to in the negative, and argued to be detracting from the essential truth of what is going on.

Film examples of the Performative mode are: *Tongues Tied* (1989)⁴⁰, *Chile, the Obstinate Memory* (1997)⁴¹, and *Waltz with Bashir* (2008)⁴².

In conclusion, Nelmes states, “the most important thing to notice about this typology of different modes is that it is constantly evolving” (213). These modes are not mutually exclusive and often they do overlap across the history of documentary. These modes can co-exist and morph into new shapes by using various techniques borrowed from one another: “It is entirely possible for a single documentary to use expository, poetic and observational techniques as suits its purpose at any one time” (213). Despite the debates surrounding specific documentary forms, ultimately how filmmakers and audiences engage with these different modes of narrative about the world of actuality determines our sense of documentary authenticity. The question of evidence (or truth) will continue to be one of three key areas of debate (narrativity and ethics being the other two) at the forefront of documentary filmmaking as it continues to change with new technologies and social events.

³⁷ *Man on Wire* (2008) by James Marsh

³⁸ *The Cove* (2009) by Louis Psihoyos

³⁹ *Exit Through the Gift Shop* (2010) by Banksy

⁴⁰ *Tongues Tied* (1989) by Marlon Riggs

⁴¹ *Chile, The Obstinate Memory* (1997) by Patricio Guzman

⁴² *Waltz with Bashir* (2008) by Ari Folman

Truth in Documentary (Evidence, Witness/Narrative & Ethics)

For Nichols, “Grierson’s famous definition of documentary as “the *creative* treatment of actuality,” (with emphasis added) undercuts the very claim to truth and authenticity on which the documentary depends” (2010, p. 17). Yet the notion of ‘truth’ or fidelity to ‘the real’ is at the heart of the documentary form. Kellner (2013, p. 59) argues that the accompanying ideal of objectivity came from a variety of sources, including a tradition of photography where the mode of reproducing real images creates a measure of ‘truth’. However, specifically looking in the age of the digital media and its technological iterations, photographs can lie, while Plantinga argues that evidence does not necessarily rise to the level of proof (2013, p. 40). With the variety of images and modes of representation shown within the six modes of documentary continually blurring the lines of the ‘truth’, how are audiences to distinguish what is documentary and what is fiction?

Nichols states “evidence refers back to a fact, object, or situation – something two or more people agree upon, something verifiable and concrete – but facts and events only acquire the distinctive status of evidence within a discursive or interpretive frame” (2013, p. 33). Therefore, one could deduce that evidence, as ‘a’ truth is a negotiation between filmmaker and audience within an agreed framework. Documentary film depicts events unfolding in time; therefore narrative and sequencing are central to the practice. However, as Winston states, the crucial element in determining the claim on/to the real is always the witness. Direct witness by the camera observing events as they unfold is obvious, but also a third-party being filmed or recreated for the camera reconstruction can be a witness. What is clear, argues Winston, is that “Without witness there can be no claim on the real, no ‘documentary value’, no documentary (2013, p. 8).

Evidence, then, according to Nichols, “is that part of discourse, be it rational-philosophic, poetic narrative, or rhetorical, charged with a double existence” (2013, p. 33), both within and reaching beyond that discourse. It is this, which constitutes ‘documentary value’. Yet documentary also relies on persuasion, so that “style, form and voice are at the heart and soul of persuasive engagement” (38). Photographic evidence is thus never the sole means by which ‘truth’ can be asserted, but rather it is how images are reproduced and framed, and the reception of that construction, that determine their designation as within the frame of ‘documentary truth’ and as having ‘documentary value’. For these theorists, then, it is not

truth but rather the idea of truth that is central to the documentary. As Hill argues, “An idea of truth becomes significant to understanding the development of the genre and how audiences engage with documentaries in more psychological and emotional ways” (2013, p. 87).

It was during the Post-World War II era that documentary’s legitimacy increasingly came under fire. Questions of authenticity in relation to the images focused on the issues of film technology itself. As 16mm synchronous sound equipment was adopted and used, it was proposed as a potential solution (Saunders, 2013, p. 159). However, as new technologies have emerged, duplication and deception are easily replicated, in the hands of both documentary creator and audiences.

Today in the era of digital disruption and multiple modes of intervention how can audiences ascertain the ‘authenticity’ of what they are viewing on the screen? Even the film screens have shifted into smaller, mobile devices, which contribute to changing reception within new environments and experiences. Hill states that there are different strategies that audiences use to assess and reflect on truth claims: for example, how the image was captured and then subsequently organized, which includes the editing, framing, music, speech and narration (2013, p. 86). This is an important assertion because it shows that audiences use this assessment to determine documentary’s difference from other genres and judge the character of documentary through their experience of it.

How, then, should we approach issues of authenticity and truthfulness? Plantinga argues that if documentary merely imagines or fictionalizes its subjects, then images serving as evidence become a moot point (2013, p. 41). Therefore, a fundamental bond between audience and filmmaker must exist which objectively secures ‘a’ truth factually rooted that aspires to exploration rather than propaganda. At its very core, he argues, it is a transparency between filmmaker and audience, which must exist to nurture truth (41). But what does that transparency look like in context?

For Hight a more direct relationship between reality and audiences should be the aim, with filmmakers downplaying themselves as mediators of actuality. Instead documentary should be a ‘window on reality’ with the filmmaker’s role reduced to faithfully representing the reality that appeared before the camera (2013, p. 198). My question here is ‘whose reality’?

Isn't documentary form, style and structure the very epitome of subjectivity? And whilst the best intentions of a filmmaker can be to capture 'truth' or 'a' truth on camera, the reproduction of that image into a series of events can become skewed (Grierson's 'creative treatment') during the production phase. Even the audience, as witness, can mis/interpret what they experience based on their own set of understandings.

Rughani (2013, p. 107) states that audiences expect filmmakers to engage with them honestly and transparently, though such aspirations are complex and can be quite controversial. Hill adds that documentary's truth claim rests on reception and not image alone (2013, p. 83), and that reception depends on the modes of engagement with the images, "drawing on cognitive, psychological, emotional, physical and sensory modes of engagement with fact and fiction" (87). Winston also argues that documentary's claim on the truth can never be guaranteed to rest on image alone. It requires the audience to test its authenticity against their own experiences – whether in reality or on the basis of information (2013, p. 10). It also depends on the audience's prior knowledge, and for filmmakers, no matter how many ways they refine or reframe the meaning of their images, these procedures cannot ultimately determine reception. Audiences expect documentarists to tell the truth when representing reality, but audiences (should also) recognize that the translation of a story experience involves choice.

So a key question for documentary makers then becomes: what kind of reproduction, or manipulation, of that image is 'ethical'? Rughani adds that the central ethical question then becomes one of transparency and that filmmakers must show audiences their processes in order to form a bond of trust: "Trust is not now dependent on the rhetoric of neutrality (so often a mirage), but on being straightforward, or at least not misleading an audience" (2013, p. 107). For Rughani:

The last of the three central issues in documentary is the question of ethics: the ethics of filming subjects who are not professional actors - an ethic of production; and the ethics of presenting the results to an audience as something other than fiction - and ethics of reception (98).

Winston adds that documentary ethics is the "spectre haunting documentary" (2013, p. 10). And although documentary has long been questioned on the basis of its authenticity, it is in this current century that the issue of ethics has become 'the' central issue in documentary film (Rughani, 2013, p. 98). What does 'ethics' actually mean in this context? It could be defined as an accuracy or honest dealing with contributors, but this is subjective at best, and

information can be manipulated through various means, with reception further reshaping its context and meaning. Historical cultural shifts can also affect our sense of ‘authenticity’ or ‘truth’, and can be influenced by economic and political power (98). However, Winston further believes that not all documentary, from the perspective of authenticity and ethics, need be considered suspect (2013, p. 11).

In a perfect world, the ‘expectation’ is that the documentarist seeks genuine responses by an audience to the authentic story they are telling. However, the choices made in the film’s construction are made and justified by the agendas and experiences that shape the filmmaker (Rughani, 2013, p. 101). Winston adds that, in fact, almost inevitably filmmakers benefit more from a documentary than do their subjects, as they still hold the dominant voice and power over its people, its subjects and the correction of the social ills in view. However, this form of creative expression can always backfire (2013, p. 11).

A large burden of responsibility thus falls on the shoulders of the documentarist, but the room for creative expression is shaped substantially by the commissioning and economic structures in which their films are cut. Perhaps it is the ethical norms and instincts of the maker, which are contextually shaped that lead to different responses. Rughani explains that for artists’ documentary there is a tension that comes from the expectation of artistic freedom. However, documentary ethics turns on at least two axes: (1) the documentarist’s relationship to subjects in the film and (2) relationship to the audience. The underlying key meaning here is ‘responsibility’ and therein lies the tension (2013, p. 100).

Striving to meet requirements of commissioners and financial backers as well as the audience can put a tremendous amount of responsibility on the practitioner to conform. There is a tug-of-war between meeting that responsibility and being loyal to creative expression and the documentary subjects ethically. Documentary ethics, according to Rughani, include: “avoiding plagiarism; providing a non-partisan culture in the coverage of politics; privacy; harm and offense (including nudity, sex and violence); fairness and consent; protection for children and minors; conflicts of interest; accountability; commercial interests; religion and terrorism’ (99). While this list casts a wide net, individual documentarists will negotiate these elements differently, according to their differing worldviews, and all can be caught within power relations inscribed by institutions or commissioners (99).

However, in this digital age, where practitioners can create films outside the institutional framework, free from the established debates and ethical requirements, giving them complete autonomy over where their storytelling frame lies, how can the audience determine what is a 'true' documentary film? In participatory practices and fringe creativity (outside the standards of traditional industry practices), who is the true author (auteur) of that film and is/are its maker(s) upholding the three crucial areas of practice (evidence, witness, and ethics)? Rughani believes the embrace of documentary modes by key artists and the migration of documentary practice into new forms, breeds a new hybridity in the relationship of documentary to art. This brings about a new phase in the relationship between filmmakers and audiences, which ushers in an ethical evolution (104). Winston, in his call for the exploration of a post-Griersonian era, states that once filmmakers are liberated from the implications of 'actuality' and 'creativity', [and] then ethical behavior becomes even more crucial than it was previously (Hight, 2013, p. 204). For Bruzzi, this means an even greater stress on the documentary as 'authored' form: "For one of the corollaries of accepting that documentary cannot but perform the interaction between reality and its representation is the acknowledgment that documentary, like fiction, is authored' (2013, p. 50).

Authorship & Authenticity

Bruzzi states that the question of authorship has traditionally been problematic for the documentary as the very nature of the auteur disrupts the film's allegiance to transparency and truthfulness (49). The concept of auteurism developed in the 1950s with the French New Wave filmmakers, most notably Truffaut, Godard and Rohmer, who argued that although social contexts shape film processes, it was the director who authored a film (Humm, 1997, p. 96). Truffaut wrote the impassioned essay "Une certaine tendance du cinema français" ("A Certain Tendency in French Cinema") in 1954 for French New Wave theorists. Its concept of the auteur was to establish the film director as the sole creative force, offering a unique perspective and personal achievement (Hollinger, 2012, p. 230). This involved looking at a director's (typically defined as 'his') body of work to determine a narrative, thematic and stylistic pattern that might provide evidence of 'his' personal artistic touch.

However, "the question of authorship in documentary practice and especially that of women's documentary films has been more difficult to define" (Warren, 2008, p. 7). The emergence of the Direct Cinema movement of the 60s, and the subsequent emergence of

women's documentaries beginning in the 1970s, coincided with a period in which the concept of authorship lost critical leverage and reached a point of stasis due to the impact of poststructuralism's announcement of the 'death of the author' (Humm, 1997, p. 37). Humm also points out that the emphasis on the centrality of the author also ceased to be a central issue at the moment when women began to reclaim their own rights to authorship (97). For female filmmakers, writes Butler, authoring "is already complicated by social conditions and cultural conventions, authorship is not so much a question of deconstruction as one of reconstruction" (2002, p. 61). Mayne also suggested the notion of female authorship as not simply a useful political strategy, but crucial to the reinvention of cinema that has been undertaken by women filmmakers and feminist spectators (1990, p. 97). Any discussions on female authorship must take into consideration the historical nature of the 1950s cinematic definition and its limitations (94).

What then, is the meaning of authorship (or autonomy, authority) in the context of authenticity in today's new participatory online space, and what might be the benefits or deterrents of claiming authorship here? Pettice (2011, pp. 26-27) states that within new media the content of the work and the interface are separated, therefore it is possible to create two different meanings with the same material. Interaction could thus alter and reshape an original narrative, as well as the creative practice itself. Structure notwithstanding, utilising an interactive narrative can be understood as creating multiple trajectories, and thus striving for 'egalitarian authenticity' with possibly overlapping narratives and themes. In this sense a modified form of authorship is possible within the constraints of technology (27).

When considering the idea of author as origin within a mass-mediated approach, it must still be determined who in fact is responsible for the film's authorship (Gerstner and Staiger, 2003, p. 31). Participants can become actors in their own freely given content and can alter the frame established by the author, which "raises questions about the ethics of representation" (Ward, 2008, p. 191). If narrative activity provides tellers (i.e. author of origin or contributing participants) an opportunity to impose order on otherwise disconnected events, there could be potentially negative aspects of practicing in this way. (Ochs and Capps, 1996, p. 19).

It is, however, ultimately the filmmaker who is responsible for weaving a narrative thread through disconnected events and user-generated content in order to make a cohesive story.

This, in my view, is true regardless of whether the content was shot by the filmmaker, curated from online video, screen-captured, collected from archive or found (recycled) media. Indeed, Hill argues that such ambiguities of authorship are also true of earlier forms of incorporation: the interview, eyewitness testimony, caught-on-camera footage, and various reconstructions - regardless of whether content is captured live or through online means (2008, p. 217).

In this way, the ethical issues, though they have shifted their terrain, remain in many ways the same. Problems can occur between creator and community when manipulating original content (by either filmmaker or participant), or there are different agendas on the part of the filmmaker and participants. If drama is a process of construction then so is documentary and it is the responsibility of the author to maintain the 'truthfulness' of their construction. Ochs and Capps state that "narrative is broadly understood to be an unfolding reflective awareness of being-in-the-world, including a sense of one's past and future" (1996, p. 21) so it follows that narrative and the self are inseparable as narrative is simultaneously born out of experience and gives shape to experience (19). For this reason it is important for the filmmaker to be open to the unique perspectives of the participants, which can open the narrative discourse beyond a single effort.

For women filmmakers, to whom the status of author has often been denied, and who have often preferred collaborative modes of working, the tension between these two imperatives is even greater. Within the context of women's documentaries, a set of filmmaking practices called first-person films, while not easily definable in terms of aesthetic forms, would perhaps also fall under the category of female auteur because of their individualistic modes of expression (Lebow, 2013, p. 258). Other women filmmakers, however, have preferred more collaborative ways of working.

"Authorship as origin continues as an approach in mass-mediated, multiple-worker culture" (Gerstner and Staiger, 2003, p. 31). New strategies, intertwined with technological advances and the integration of participatory engagement, further escalate the debate around authorship. Dovey and Rose state that as documentary filmmakers take advantage of these new practices, the emergence of new "poetics of collaboration and participation" begin to emerge (2013, p. 370). An example of this is a film by Jonathan Caouette, *Tarnation* (2003) where as the filmmaker he is also the main character of the film, giving it a distinct first

person, autobiographical context. At the other extreme, Mandy Rose's web-based documentary, *Are you happy?*⁴³, provides an exploration of the intersection between documentary and networked culture, combining footage from filmmakers around the world with live data from social media. Here, authorship is attenuated and shared.

Filmmakers must now meet the challenge of designing interfaces and databases that offer meaningful journeys for the viewers. At the meeting of participatory culture and documentary practice, these emergences of new arrangements and production processes are informing new innovations in documentary form, thus redefining the very nature of documentary. Where participation becomes part of the process and editorial is developed with community interest, new forms of distributed authorship and innovation flourish into new forms.

Digital Transformations and New Modes of Practice

“ ‘The VERY IDEA of autobiography reinvents the VERY IDEA of documentary’ as stated by Renov” (Dovey and Rose, 2013, p. 367). Lebow agrees that for the filmmaker documentary can now be a valuable medium for autobiography and speak for a generation who might previously have adopted a more third-person approach (2013, p. 257). This emergence of autobiographical documentaries, aligned with the rise of amateur film cultures with easy access of photographic technology, is reinforced and broadened by the rise of interactive (digital media) typically centered around user-generated content. For the first-person filmmaker, a perceived individualism can appeal to a more general and sometimes universal principal of identification. “Moreover, s/he can be said to be addressing an even broader audience with the potential for identification that transcends such particularisms” (258). Although not easily definable in terms of any necessary aesthetic or generic elements, they (first person documentaries) have the potential to create new forms of practice, creativity and perception:

Documentary culture has been energized by such trends, as individual film-makers draw upon a sudden wealth of audiovisual material to construct narratives and arguments (see *Capturing the Friedmans* [Andrew Jarecki, 2003, USA] and *Grizzly Man* [Werner Herzog, 2005, USA] and talented amateurs explore their own autobiographical archives (*Tarnation*, 2003, USA [Jonathan Caouette]) (Hight, 2013, p. 200).

⁴³ *Are you happy? Project* by Mandy Rose at: <http://www.theareyouhappyproject.org/about>

It was the emergence of camcorder cultures that facilitated the rise of the first-person documentaries and in the 1990s the arrival of the web led the way for filmmakers and audiences alike to navigate these materials unconstrained by any authorial narrative devices (Henley, 2013, p. 317). Although these types of formats, which represent a new function within documentary culture, can trace their development back to the hand-held immediacy of Cinéma Vérité, and Direct Cinema, today these formats are more performative in their representations (Hight, 2013, p. 199).

Bruzzi reminds us that the idea of 'documentary value' is at stake within this new documentary format. The authenticity of documentary witnessing, whether provided by filmmakers directly or through an agency of informants, is ultimately problematic. The shift towards a more self-conscious 'arty' and expressive mode of documentary filmmaking has emerged and transparency issues will emphasize issues of authorship and construction (2013, p. 49). "'Citizen' documentary producers on YouTube...using social networks and the documentary mode of self-reflexivity...allowed audiences to 'place themselves within the frame'. They became the agents" (Pullen, 2013, p. 288). This functionality showcases documentary's complexity, to further blur the lines of authenticity within new modes of practice.

Nichols states "documentary has become the flagship for a cinema of social engagement and distinctive vision...embracing new forms and tackling fresh topics" (2010, p. 2). These new digital forms of representation typically will embody some form of cross-pollination with traditional documentary forms. Nichols calls them merely an on-going documentary tradition (xiv). However, what is significant is not necessarily the changes in technology, or the removal of the sole, controlling filmmaker, but rather that the responsibility for determining documentary value is removed from the image and its maker and passed onto the audience (Winston, 2013, p. 26).

Because of the flexibility of the new equipment and the alteration of images, Rughani claims a new accountability whose 'truth' is now a more urgent question for the documentary as its forms become mobile, interactive and online (2013, p. 98). As documentary practice can now appear in many different modes and contexts, it's not enough that audiences know that media is mediated, but more specifically 'how' content is made (108). With more amateur filmmakers making documentaries in non-traditional formats, engaging and interacting with

online participants to create films for its new audiences outside of the industrial commissioning bodies and financiers, how can audiences determine if they are beholden to the same traditional documentary ethics? Nyiro states that participation and interactivity with growing online audiences is a continuously evolving phenomenon (2011, p. 2) and that today's social networks provide distribution channels for content and influence the value chain.

When audiences view content with devices such as computers, mobile phones or iPads, very different from a traditional viewing experience in a darkened theatre, the viewer has a varied and different mode of engagement. And while documentaries are typically the discourse of the author's focused subject what is an important aspect in creating and using new media, beyond its creative value, is the opportunity to "amplify the message towards the entire civil society" (Petitto, 2011, p. 3). These modes of engagement with online audiences can be as simple as gathering media material for creative practice or distributing across viral media sites such as YouTube, which have the potential to reach millions of viewers. However, in order to gain such audience attention filmmakers must look for alternative ways to communicate their message (Henon, 2009, p. 6).

Conclusion

This new dimension of filmmaking in non-linear and technological forms which engage audiences and present new methodologies for practice, have facilitated new forms of participation and interactive communication, which are much harder to regulate in a global public sphere (Castells, 2008, p. 78). And the various ways in which the audience can interpret the film and its process depend upon many different factors, such as mobility modalities, spatial relationships, and environment (aurally and visually). It is this further blurring of the lines between media – a process called 'convergence of modes', which has emerged, eroding the one-to-one relationship that used to exist between a medium and its use (De Sola Pool, 1983, p. 23).

However, Dovey argues a case for the desire for emotional connectivity as a response to postmodern living. As we experience ourselves in a public sphere that no longer holds comfort we depend upon our communicative acts of performance to be open, individual, 'authentic versions of self' (Hight, 2013, p. 200). Such trends of this eroding public and

private space have allowed for the expansion of this documentary gaze (first-person, autobiographical, performative) into intimate areas of everyday life (200). Amateur media production will most likely play an increasingly significant role in the future cultural landscape, which will only add to on-going debates as well as raising new questions about creativity, identity and culture (Dovey and Rose, 2013, p. 367).

In the following chapter, my film's practice will serve as the case study to my research in an attempt to explore what it reveals about these emerging practices and their relationship to the themes of evidence, witness and ethics. As an autobiographical (or auto-ethnographic), first person documentary form, it explores the subject of narrativity and aims for a universal principal of identification through participation and collaboration.

Chapter 3: Online Communities, New Technologies & Economies of Scale

This chapter discusses new paradigm shifts in online media making, particularly documentary in its new forms. It also looks at both the opportunities and challenges, which exist currently for collaboration, creation and participation within the online new media space. It also explores the economies of scale, what opportunities are available to filmmakers, and new models of monetization and fundraising that now exist for exploitation of storytelling across new technological frameworks.

Rethinking documentary in the virtual space brings about new challenges to the old issues of evidence, witness and ethics as it opens up more democratic processes of practice, distribution and dissemination of its stories. New participatory audiences now also help to create the very product they are witnessing. Creating media within the public sphere brings about a wealth of new tools, wider contributions to its making and a more global awareness of its dissemination. But these changes are not without controversy and challenges for filmmakers now working outside of the traditional modes.

Documentary filmmaking can no longer claim to be produced under the conditions established by those in traditional filmmaking industries, and filmmakers can perhaps either find success or failure by the online fans in the community for which they build their film's campaign. But while this new form of creative participation has its merits, there is still a clear division between amateur makers and professionals when it comes to distribution and access. In a white paper on digital media and learning, Jenkins states there is a need for policy and pedagogical intervention (particularly in the digital divide) when it comes to the "participation gap; which is an equal access to the opportunities, experiences, skills and knowledge" (2006, p. 3).

What once was a high barrier to entry into the film business is now a more open and online accessibility where anyone can wield a cheap camera or mobile phone device, make a movie and share it on the internet, potentially becoming internet star overnight. These newfound democratic practices could potentially disrupt an already complex system of communication practices. However, they could also provide a much-needed collective idea bank for tackling global issues and finding sustainable solutions. Writing about ICTs more generally, Pavlik

(1996, p. 287) argues, “The development of these new information technologies is profoundly altering our social, political, and economic fabric”. Within the scope of participatory practices, a first-person filmmaker can experience the greatest of democratic freedom using this process and delivery, sharing stories, activism and personal insight. It seems the power of the crowd is attempting to usurp the gatekeepers of Hollywood.

Social media’s prevalence continues to spur the need for the necessary skill sets and professional training necessary for producing content in this new participatory way. New social media sites emerge daily, claiming new audience sectors in the effort to drive traffic, creating new content and sharing it virally amongst growing audiences. “When communities and institutions co-create digital artefacts to preserve cultural identity, both contribute to the sharing of cultural knowledge and distribution of this knowledge to a wider audience” (Russo and Watkins, 2008, p. 228). However, the issues raised by these practices are not only to do with technology and content, but also social issues.

Jenkins (2006, p. 3) states that there are ethics challenges and that there is a “breakdown of traditional forms of professional training and socialization that might prepare young people for their increasingly public roles as media makers and community participants.” If the medium is the message, then audiences are getting these on a number of different devices when and how they want them. Social media platforms have altered our social, political and economic fabric of filmmaking methodologies (Pavlik, 1996, p. 287) but can provide a variety of opportunities for expression (and impression) of storytelling ideas, and the creation of original and shared content. These applications can provide a faster flow of information exchange outside the traditional fold and give rise to new creative production activities.

The social communities that exist in the virtual space can cross beyond traditional media experiences, creating new discourse amongst communities with potentially lower barriers to entry. Pavlik continues, “perhaps the most profound social consequence of the world of online communications is the development of virtual communities” (296). And although this virtual expanse reaches beyond the boundaries of traditional media it comes with its own sets of challenges.

However, it should be noted that beyond any new forms of technological advance in filmmaking activities, including all creative forms and business models of production and

distribution, fundamentally something on which documentary film was founded has not changed. The old issues of evidence, witness and ethics continue to evolve as new democratic processes of creative practice, online distribution and collaborative, interactivity in storytelling emerge, shift and expand.

Collaboration: New Documentary Forms Online

New ‘distinctive’ documentary forms are emerging in the internet environment, forms which may be substantially new or may simply intensify existing cultural forms and practices (Dovey and Rose, 2013, p. 366). What new forms have documentary films taken within the virtual space today? What powers do we as filmmakers invoke in our craft when considering all creative and ethical choices made as storytellers in this new online medium? Documentarians such as Errol Morris, Kim Longinoto and Nick Broomfield make documentaries spanning many subjects and encounter a multitude of creative and ethical choices with live subjects, which can potentially determine the outcome of their film. But what about new filmmakers making documentaries in non-traditional formats using the internet and interacting with online audiences to create films in a participatory frame?

Nyiro (2011, p. 2) states “participation of the audience and interactivity is a continuously evolving phenomenon”. How then has this new frame shifted or impacted the way documentaries are created, seen and interpreted? DIY (Do-it-Yourself) filmmakers (amateurs and professionals alike) are trying to learn how to build online audiences and choosing how, when and what stories they want to tell. This can take shape in many forms, as Lesage (2013, p. 270) describes: “sometimes interactive narrative, sometimes a cumulative collection of oral history and contextual material, or sometimes audio-visual material incorporated into blogging, arguably often an incarnation of autobiographical media in a new guise”.

Documentaries are typically the discourse of the author’s focused subject(s) - who see(s) reality from their point of view and express what is seen and interpreted according to their own values and perspectives. However, this is framed through the perception of the filmmaker. Thus the documentary becomes something authored, and in many cases intimate, and personal – the version of reality that the filmmaker experiences through interactions with the material and subjects. The process of documentary production can change, however, through new forms of collaboration, through software design and interactivity. Not only do

these provide a creative environment in which to mine resources, but they can also provide the user with experience through participatory practice.

An advantage of this changed process is that documentary filmmakers are crossing national boundaries and gaining more exposure to sales in the worldwide marketplace through potential online communities of viewers and users (271). Dovey and Rose add that these developments for the filmmaker can lead to the recruitment of interactive audiences who are co-producing, leading to new modes of practice (2013, p. 366). And Petitto states that “an important aspect in using new media is not only related to a matter of increasing membership...rather it deals with the opportunity of amplifying the message towards the entire civil society, creating a deeper awareness of issues related to ecology and environment” (2011, p. 3).

However, both the key traditional debates within documentary practice (concerning evidence, witness and ethics) and the forms of its ‘creative treatment’ are changing within these new processes. Dovey and Rose call this the ‘rise of the vernacular video’, which is characterized as “demotic, promiscuous, amateur, fluid and haptically convenient, technology at hand and in the hand” (2013, p. 366). The shifting frames in virtual space, where text and video move at the speed of light, changing, transfixing, shifting, imposing, exposing, exploiting, informing, and entertaining, change the process of traditional production processes, which can alter the outcome. There are many modes of practice, given the technology platforms provided on which creator’s content is placed, shared and executed. Ultimately, what shifts is the perspective on truth, in the face of an online participatory audience. It is now thousands, perhaps millions of perceptions of the truth the filmmaker seeks to collaborate with.

“Vernacular video” as described by Dovey and Rose, has at least three tributaries: one is avant-garde, the second is of the amateur, and the final is defined as ‘camcorder cultures’, which display many of the same characteristics as those of the 1990s. This vernacular video is characterized by “affect, intimacy, desire and display” (367). The avant-garde vernacular continues earlier traditions of avant-garde (documentary) filmmaking, where perhaps the amateur depicts everyday cultural activity and is unpaid. And the camcorder culture, which paved the way for the emphasis on embodied presence and much of the first-person filmmaking we see today, has developed its own online grammar (367). What is unique in this particular movement is how these audiences are circulating information, commenting and

channeling communicative exchange (Petitto, 2011, p. 4) in an effort to create stories, be social activists for causes they are interested in, and collaborate, using new technologies to tell these stories.

Since the launch of YouTube and better penetrations of broadband, there has been a surge of new moving-image culture through emerging technologies such as digital cameras, flip phones and web cameras, which are cheap and easy-to-use. And with free online editing tools, some built into the very social media platform which will be used for distribution, media making becomes extremely simple to perform (Dovey and Rose, 2013, p. 367). Software programs such as the Korsakow (Korsakow.org) system, open-source software, allow, “the author/producer to link into video, clips which are thumbnail choices offered up by relationship between their tags and tags of a previous clip” (369).

Documentary practice in this way becomes a way of working within a space in which all forms are subjective and in a constant state of flux. This database style of filmmaking is one offering new modes and strategies of documentary filmmaking and the ‘art of montage’ and ‘database authoring’ (369). This space of textual and visual language together creates inseparability from the media content, which is not merely captured media on the screen, but rather becomes multi-layered forms of technology, archived databases, curated social media sites and deep knowledge-based blogs. And while this content happens in ‘real’ time, the context of the original content then shifts to blur the boundaries with fiction, as it is shifted, moulded, shaped and re-shaped accordingly.

To return to Grierson’s definition, the ‘creative treatment’ in documentary was there from the outset. For example, the first documentary of the Lumière Brothers ‘*Sortie des Usines Lumière à Lyon*’ (*Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory*) (1895) was in fact a (re) construction, whereby the camera was set up outside the doors of the factory and the workers were asked to go home and change into better clothes. This is not merely capturing life as it is happening. The film was also said to have been reshot three times to get the most accurate shot of the action of the scene. However, in the social media landscape, the content is in fact captured in real time, but then re-framed to ‘fit’ a narrative thread. In some cases, even the original content has been fictionalized from the outset, producing a problem in verifying original ownership online.

Bill Nichols argues that “...just as there are documentary modes of representation, there is also a ‘documentary mode of engagement’ for the viewer” (Hill, 2008, p. 217). Further, Hill adds that even though there are different outputs of documentaries and styles they are simply different modes of style and form. However, when audiences view content with different devices, such as computers, mobile phones or iPads, this may produce a very different mode of engagement. As Hight argues, “...Slippage occurs between the levels of production, transmission and reception within media practice” (Hight, 2008, p. 205).

These modes of engagement with online audiences can be as simple as gathering media material in non-traditional ways, such as through texts, online web video, blog content, tweets, and video comments, to interacting with subjects via mobile phone, Flip camera or via Skype (VoIP or Voice over Internet Protocol). Because of these new modes of practice and new forms of representation being experienced by both the creator and the viewer, what becomes the social role of documentary and how does it fit into our modern digital society? Does it ‘re-frame’ the experience toward greater ‘truthfulness’ or ‘reality’ because of its new production paradigms and how it is experienced by its user? Or is it merely a means of gathering content by new technical means, and of experiencing on multiple platforms, which contribute to its immediacy outside of traditional channels? Finally, how is it to be regulated? Castells comments that the “Emergence of the new medium, internet, and its wide-spreading usage...would facilitate new forms of participation...interactive communication [which is] much harder to regulate and is seen as a medium with potential to produce a global public sphere” (2008, p. 78).

The various ways in which the audience can interpret the film and its process depend upon many different factors, such as mobility modalities, spatial relationships, and environment (aurally and visually). It is at the meeting of participatory culture and documentary where new arrangements of the production process and innovation of its form are emerging (Dovey and Rose, 2013, p. 370). Participation then becomes part of the process, editorial is developed within a community of interest and forms of distributed authorship are created with participants in non-linear projects (370). Wintonick states:

...New silicon-based technology is transforming documentary expression and nonfiction media, allowing for a full spectrum of possibilities. Our brave, new and complicated world is filled with change and choice. What we once called 'new media', and then 'next media' has now been transformed, transplatformed and transformed into what I call 'Now Media' (2013, p. 376).

There is a paradox with interactive audiences however, as Vozab states, in that “audiences that have greater competences to use interactive media show interest mostly in entertainment content, while the audiences that seek information on public issues lack the technical competence for this new medium” (2011, p. 7). However, there is a distinct advantage to the filmmaker who creates within the interactive media sphere, in the form of “Flexibility, fast reactions and recognizing the right moment to get media coverage” (7). The online environment can also dissolve the [physical] distance between the viewer and the filmmaker, which might prove tremendously empowering to the subject.

Wintonick further describes documentary practice in these new forms as the development of a utopia of sorts: “Utopias place pictures of possible worlds in our minds. By building utopias, we define our collective and individual stories. For some of us who create for the screen, caught by the spark of the ideal, utopias are possible. They can be forged and created” (2013, p. 376). And, he adds, in terms of creating the ‘new documentary’ or ‘a documentary cinema’, a digital utopia or ‘digitopia’ needs to be built to facilitate the way in which we will face the reality of the digital age (376).

Traditional Film Practices vs. New Media Practices

Traditionally, films are made without audience input – that is, until the [Hollywood] studios put them through a focus group at the completion of the filmmaking process. Only then does the audience’s input (potentially) change the outcome of the final product. However, with new technologies, filmmakers now have many opportunities to make and share their content without going through the traditional gatekeepers. The big change for documentary filmmakers is not just the amount of access they have, and the hours that are now able to film, but perhaps how camera technology has improved and access to material has grown. This collective access to new technologies offers an ever-expanding medium in which filmmakers can not only explore their creative experiences, but also engage with audiences during any point of the production processes. Specifically, these tools have enabled filmmakers to utilize a direct to distribution model of online delivery, which can process both added creative freedom and potential revenue.

Independent filmmakers can now shoot, edit and distribute a film from their bedrooms. In addition to the film itself, these new technologies are offering viewers an opportunity to choose whether to watch something in a single sitting or in fragments, which is empowering an audience to determine how content is created and watched. Because of these technologies, new business models are emerging, thus allowing for new methodologies of practice and engagement, process and delivery.

Embracing new online tools and technologies can become synonymous with making the film itself. Creating a film project while utilizing these new technologies and collaborating with a diverse group of people can create a shared affection for the project, which is necessary for inclusion and creativity. Where traditional modes of production still constitute a privileged system run by middle-aged white males of certain socioeconomic classes, there is a tremendous opportunity for those who are willing, to break from the status quo and do things differently. Hope (2010) adds, though, that in order to build new audiences, filmmakers must build meaningful relationships that will ultimately enable these projects to succeed. The issue of transparency, which falls within the key documentary debates, still resonates even within the online sphere.

Traditional documentary filmmaking practices have erected high barriers to entry, limited access to equipment and resources that also includes distribution. In the online sphere, however, a dynamic shift has seen new user-creators who are making original content, where there is potential access to financial and creative control given the nature of the online environment. This access brings new partnerships between filmmaker and audience member that perhaps brings more immediacy, lesser barriers to entry and worldwide access to distribution and sales opportunities, previously denied through traditional formats. But what inherent value (creative, economical, political) is there in this non-traditional system?

Within these new participatory engagements audiences are often free to contribute to what they perceive as valuable. Pavlik argues: “Individuals are participants in a simulated reality that they help define through their decisions, actions, and communications” (1996, p. 309). With the plethora of new choices being made by filmmakers and audiences, they both must understand the nature of new technologies within the online environment, as well as historical fundamentals of documentary practice. With education and knowledge comes value. And while these new forms of documentary are not finding audiences and economies of scales as

with traditional modes, new value can be perceived to lie in explorations of creativity and potential sustainability. Social media provides that environment whereby audiences can search, watch and share information they find valuable. Online audiences also provide support and feedback, which can prove invaluable during the creative process.

People of different backgrounds can create and share their own histories, share their cultural traditions and perspectives with lesser barriers to entry. Pavlik continues to add that freedom of expression will have an even greater significance in the new media environment (318). Development and education initiatives geared towards marginalised groups of various of colour, ethnic and gender divides will be an on-going evolution, as they are the least likely to have access to these tools. And whilst these media technologies might pose many threats to values of privacy, intellectual property and access to information, Pavlik argues that they do hold the promise of a better future (318).

Creatively, the online public sphere can offer opportunities in idea exchange, experiential learning and creative enterprise. Pavlik states that “it is participatory, evolving, and allows connections to people all around the world. There are many benefits possible, including cultural enrichment, education and cognitive development” (360). The public frame can also encourage open communication, an expansion of freedom of speech (within limitations), and can aid the creative process for the artist. Creating and engagement can offer more opportunities to learn new ideas and develop methods from the growing community than the artist could possess geographically. By promoting more communication the participants may enjoy a more robust communication environment, thereby creating a transparent relationship and one which is more freely available for creative exchange (362).

Content creation, curation and co-collaboration from independent filmmakers and online audiences are creating new forms of DIY (do-it-yourself) documentary. From blogs and social media sites such as YouTube, Facebook, iTunes, Google+, and Twitter, these platforms are enabling filmmakers to bypass the middleman in traditional film industry economies and taking control of their creative efforts. Collaborating with online audiences, filmmakers are experimenting with new forms of storytelling and finding new financial opportunities to exhibit their projects; thus reinventing the way films can be made, seen and sold.

The Opportunities for Practice within the New Media Paradigm Shifts

YouTube, which emerged on the internet scene in 2006, quickly became the forerunner in online video platforms where both amateur and professional filmmakers could share their projects utilizing the latest digital effects and production technologies using mobile phones and inexpensive editing software. Such filmmakers are distributing their films online with the hopes of driving huge numbers of fans, which might perhaps leverage a larger visibility amongst industry employers. Ziv argues “From tags on Twitter, to locations on Foursquare, to algorithmic systems; each of these trends is helping us build meaningful relationships” (Ziv, 2010). And these meaningful relationships are perhaps also bridging filmmakers and audiences, creating rich environments in which new forms of documentary forms of creativity are unfolding.

Opportunities for Creativity and Creation

Not only has digital technology changed and opened opportunities for creativity, but also it has created possibilities for new emerging forms of documentary practice (Dovey and Rose, 2013, p. 367). As well, the frame has also changed opportunities for audiences at different levels of the creative value chain. The participatory online environment has provided lesser barriers to entry for filmmakers, allowing for more access to shared content across multiple platforms in which a multitude of personal experiences can be shared globally. Rose (2011) states, “...if stories themselves are universal, the way we tell them changes with the technology at hand. Every new medium has given rise to a new form of narrative.” One of the new tools of these new technologies is extensive sources of online footage from the various video platforms, which is replacing traditional curation of archival footage.

Sourcing Footage and Recycled Media

As a readily available resource, found footage or recycled media is becoming a resource for online filmmakers. However, a deliberate decision must be made when choosing online content that is different from utilizing ‘legitimate’ archival footage from affiliate sources (i.e. broadcasters, distributors, consumers and/or other filmmakers). Ward (2008, p. 192) states that “accusations of people ‘not being themselves’ or ‘playacting’ are rife, and are deemed to be a central problematic for a film’s documentary status or credentials.” With millions of videos being uploaded everyday on various online platforms, content makers now have a huge supply of ready-made videos to use in mash-ups, video diaries, film projects and other Transmedia works. Ward adds “Some films are taking up and using real archive footage not

so much for rhetorical purposes...but for dramatic purposes within what is recognizably a documentary orientation (192).

Archival database searches allow for video content to be searched and found easily. For example, YouTube's curation system (using key words to search for themes, topics and subject matter of relevance) can provide the filmmaker with useful clips and moving image resources. Jenkins (2003, p. 283) states that [online access and curation] represents a movement toward media convergence and the "unleashing of significant new tools that enable the grassroots archiving, annotation, appropriation, and recirculation of media content".

The benefits of utilizing found footage are that it is both accessible and free, providing an invaluable resource to a filmmaker. Another is the use of database links within clips for interactive capabilities found within internet functionalities. Dovey and Rose (2013, p. 368) states that when filmmakers utilize sourced clips, the viewer is offered a choice of what to see next based on links within databases, such as tags (or descriptive words that databases use to classify materials). These links can be created by user-generated content to source additional materials not found in traditional moving image archives.

User-generated content, however, can and must be utilized in a responsible way, which is at best, loosely subjective. "Found-footage filmmaking, otherwise known as collage, montage, or archival film practice, is an aesthetic of ruins", argues Russell (1999, p. 238). However, these 'ruins' can provide invaluable resources for developing narrative threads, reframe sequences of storylines, and/or fill in gaps not created by original footage. Birchall agrees that the ease of availability of access to this material is matched by the ease with which it can be remixed and redistributed (2008, p. 280). Although there are representational challenges implicit in found footage and certain sacrifices of aesthetics stemming from original footage, creating a film with found or recycled footage online can allow for a greater creative freedom as well as a lesser financial burden to the filmmaker. It can also offer online audiences a deeper knowledge base and access to information outside of traditional dissemination. This interactivity can also allow filmmakers to build, engage and interact with a growing online global audience for their films.

Building Participatory Audiences

Online audiences have access to many tools utilized by filmmakers in an effort to use participatory methodologies of film practice: access to making web video, creating blogs, texting, tweeting and contributing to Facebook news feeds; content created, shared and existing on multiple platforms. The technology is inexpensive, available and malleable. The social media sites collect data and information across multiple channels from online audiences, thereby engaging different audiences and communities. Thorburn states that “these and similar terms try to name the web’s participatory, activist potential, its power to create new communities and theoretically to permit isolated minorities to find one another across geographic and political boundaries” (2003, p. 20).

The opportunity for filmmakers, however, is to build and engage with these online audiences for participation and distribution opportunities differing from the traditional modes of practice and economies. Pullen adds that “Citizen documentary producers” on YouTube, for example, offer new modes and new media platforms for audiences to place themselves within the frame (2013, p. 288). New ways of seeing can be identified and the community can work towards a mutual goal of creative exchange and consumption of niche products not found in the mainstream cinema. Dovey and Rose add that new forms of documentary are changing through software design and interactivity: “the user experience of documentary can change through the new facility for participation offered by the online environment” (2013, p. 366).

However, Arata states that interactivity favours pragmatic agreements. “Pragmatic interactions should not force preconceptions on others. Agreements for action should come from reaching positions of solidarity and working toward common purposes freely chosen” (2003, p. 222). Arata adds that “An interactive view celebrates a constructive flexibility well suited for navigating in open, changing, or unknown environments.” (223). Many barriers can be broken down and access to rich stories and content can be shared across multiple online platforms.

Multiple Platforms and Marketing Reach

Wintonick states that today making documentary cinema is about the “synthesis of methods, production tools, monetising schemes, delivery systems, multi-screens and virtual marketing systems” (2013, p. 377). At the same time, Birchall (2008, p. 278) asks the question for makers, consumers and scholars of moving images: “What distinguishes documentary online from documentary made for other channels?” Traditional filmmaking methodologies are

giving way to these new mediums with access to recycled, found or what Birchall calls “open-stock clips” (278), as multiple platform sites like YouTube, Vimeo, Funny or Die and other video rich sites become accessible twenty-four/seven to filmmakers and their growing online audiences to create, collaborate and extend visibility and reach. Textual content through newsfeeds, blogs and micro blogs (Twitter) have also become a viable source of user-generated material filmmakers can utilize in their storytelling process. Lesage suggests that “internet marketing and distribution, or the use of the internet itself as an exhibition platform, depends on a whole new kind of media and business savvy” (2013, p. 270). It is perhaps the very nature of this exchange that has altered the face of traditional documentary forms, paving the way for new methodologies of practice and dissemination.

Filmmakers can be reluctant to take on the marketing and distribution activities of their work, as traditionally these functions have been managed by specific service industries. However, the digital revolution along with its attendant tools of social media and networking has made distribution and marketing much more accessible and possible. This has perhaps had a compelling influence on filmmakers to apply their artistic and creative sensibilities to the managerial and administrative apparatus of long- and short-term strategic planning. The realization that these functions can open more creative control over content and projects has empowered filmmakers to become a “total filmmaker” (De Jong, Knudsen, Rothwell, 2012, p. 3). Here Knudsen elaborates on this term,

Abundance is the ether in which we increasingly live. We are sold the idea that opportunities and career options are abundant and that there are abundant ways of expressing ourselves. Digital technology and the internet are exponentially reinforcing this message. One consequence of this is that the nature of gatekeepers and gatekeeping to the arts content is rapidly changing, as are models of income generation and consequent business models (2012, p. 308).

Reiss states that marketing and distribution are intertwined and filmmakers cannot plan to engage online audiences without both (2010b, p. 74). After filmmakers identify their audiences, the next step is to engage them across these platforms to entice them to see your film. This includes “integrating the marketing and web life of your film into the film itself” (75). Lesage agrees that what is significant about internet outreach by documentary filmmakers is that it crosses national boundaries and opens up exposure and sales to a worldwide marketplace and potential communities of viewers and users” (2013, p. 271). Additionally, online platforms can provide a digital repository for archival records for research discourse and reflection.

The use of online marketing tools such as widgets, sharing tools, plug-ins and SEO (search engine optimization) analytics will also aid the filmmaker to track the viewing habits and activities of their online growing audiences. Reiss adds that “content marketing is the key to engaging audiences and manifesting outreach through various outlets due to the construct of the web tools and integration technologies” (2010b, p. 109). YouTube in particular, can provide an unlimited supply of content that can be viewed on a variety of devices. Utilizing various platforms of new media to produce essay films, diary film, video confession, domestic ethnography and blogs are “varying the possibilities for the expression of subjectivity and the telling of life stories ... Those variances depend, in some measure, on the medium of choice as well as the discursive conditions that prevail” (Renov, 2008, p. 44).

Perhaps niche communities born out of this internet space are not replicating mass media, but rather providing an intimate space (albeit public) for creative thought and action. The new media technologies have provided the tools for both the creator and the receiver to share an intimate exchange without ever having met in person. “Stories are recognizable patterns, and in those patterns we find meaning. We use stories to make sense of our world and to share that understanding with others” (Rose, 2011). Wintonick adds that technology is transforming documentary expression and non-fiction media into a full spectrum of docmedia possibilities. “Profound changes are transforming the creation and distribution of classical theatrical, educational and broadcast documentary” (2013, pp. 376-377).

The Challenges of Creating Media within the Online Public Sphere

Although meaningful relationships are linking filmmakers and audiences, one of the many challenges lie in finding new economic models to sustain them. Though they may value democracy and freedom of creation, filmmakers are finding that they are beholden to the same fundamental marketing strategies used by traditional businesses. There are also many challenges that lie in ownership within the collaborative online space. Issues of sustainability and economic factors in the life of a filmmaker, not only in the traditional sense, but also in respect of new economies of scale, can present many challenges to the sole proprietor.

It’s not enough to be learning production techniques and be creative; the filmmaker must also learn the language of marketing and business. In a new online marketplace, advertising and social media content produced by large, established companies is competing for the very

same audiences that individual filmmakers are trying to attract. While there is greater freedom of creativity and access to online communities, distributing a film with limited reach and limited marketing experience can challenge even the most talented of filmmakers. As Kosek states, “Putting on screenings, doing a small theatrical, placing ads, and all of the time you spend promoting takes money. All that time promoting is money and time eating up valuable opportunities to earn funds elsewhere” (2010). She adds that it might cost less to make and distribute, but the cost of ‘time’ is a definite cost that must be calculated. Technological knowledge and new creative approaches to building online communities with better business models are also necessary to push new modes of creativity.

Additionally, within this new media space intellectual property theft is rampant, as well as other personal exposures, while a filmmaker must ‘market’ themselves in an effort to raise the visibility of their project within a public environment. Erlich (2010) states that living in the public eye is nothing new, and privacy, ultimately, for some will be sacrificed by working in this way. Ultimately, filmmakers must weigh the pros and cons. By utilizing social media to reach out to new fans, filmmakers are asking for a broader range of support, not just financially, but creatively and in terms of resources. It can ultimately be a question of how much exposure (both personal and professional) filmmakers want to permit.

Challenges with Authorship

First-person narratives can find a home within the online sphere, in part due to the ease of access to inexpensive recording tools and a growing online fan base of people willing to watch, comment and share. McElwee states that Michael Moore (*Roger and Me*⁴⁴, *Bowling for Columbine*⁴⁵, *Fahrenheit 911*⁴⁶) “kicked the door down...for a whole flood of documentary filmmakers to come in and try their own styles (Poppy, 2005). A lot of filmmakers now employ first-person narrations with the filmmaker as the main character in the film.

This new practice offers filmmakers, particularly women filmmakers a chance to be seen and heard; however it can be a skewed practice given the nature of the relationship between filmmaker and audience. Authorship for women filmmakers, as argued earlier, is both problematic and a crucial claim, and it has been an even more complex issue in relation to

⁴⁴ *Roger and Me* (1989) by Michael Moore

⁴⁵ *Bowling for Columbine* (2002) by Michael Moore

⁴⁶ *Fahrenheit 911* (2004) by Michael Moore

documentary. Gerstner and Staiger (2003, p. 49) state however, “a consequence of feminism, identity politics and queer theory has been the demand for a retheorization of agency within the advances of poststructuralist philosophy...problems and contradiction for women, and for feminist film-makers.” Further Butler adds, that authorship is problematic for women (2002, p. 23). “Yet for female filmmakers, for whom the act of authoring is already complicated by social conditions and cultural conventions, authorship is not so much a question of deconstruction as one of reconstruction” (61).

The question of authorship has always been difficult for documentary as it disrupts non-fiction film’s ‘supposed’ allegiance to transparency and truthfulness (Bruzzi, 2012:49). Further Mayne adds that the challenge of female authorship (particularly) is how the divisions, overlaps and distances connect with the contradictory embodiment of control over fantasy of woman as image, women and the woman (1990, p. 98). This complexity is further increased within the collaborative participation of online creativity, where authorship and ownership of a participatory film are even more difficult to define.

Challenges with Competition

One problem for online documentary filmmakers is the issue of platform. Another is the issue of visibility. Lesage states that some forms of putting media on the internet will be successful, allowing artists to build a viewership, and that those sites or platforms will endure. However, others will not (2013, p. 272). Thus, the precarious nature of online repositories in securing a foothold for filmmakers to distribute their films and collect fees is one that remains out of their hands.

Using social media sites to crowd fund, produce content and distribute films allows filmmakers to have this direct connection with audiences (Shlain, 2011). However, it also opens up a tremendous amount of competition and access for both free and paid content. With the multiple platforms of online distribution models available to filmmakers to share their films on-demand, bypassing the traditional sales and distribution process, audiences too have many choices of where they spend their time and money. Filmmakers must possess deep knowledge and skills in online marketing and promotion in order to compete in the online space. This requires an investment in new technical applications and business languages.

Challenges with Piracy and Ethics

Filmmakers figure in a large part of this conversation, because they are generating content that exists to be seen, but also monetized. With the various viral video sites such as Google, Facebook, YouTube looking to cash in on ‘free-labour’ – that is user-generated content - how can filmmakers protect their intellectual property rights within this viral sphere? And further, how can filmmakers help consumers determine what is authentic material and what is reframed?

“Not only is piracy unethical, it's also illegal” (Pruden, 2009a). This frame contextualizes a controversial and heated debate amongst intellectual property holders and conglomerates who are trying to cash in on user-generated content through advertising and IPO schemes. The fact that participatory engagement in creation of content is now possible within the internet framework only serves to complicate the issues surrounding privacy, piracy and intellectual property rights. As Juhasz comments, “Communal production and engaged reception have been two strategies modelled by this tradition to counter the power imbalance inherent in the cinematic act” (Juhasz, 2008, p. 306), but such strategies make claims to intellectual copyright extremely difficult.

Distribution consultant Peter Broderick said, “I’d be offended if my film wasn’t pirated” (Scarl, 2012), which perhaps implies that a film has to be pretty far off the radar for pirates to ignore. But, “This virtual identity, and all of the bits of data that comprise it, has become an incredibly valuable form of currency – it’s the way the web exchanges value” (DeMartino, 2011). And that value is at the very crux of current debates, financially, emotionally and ethically. YouTube, as Andrejevik suggests, “represents a hybrid, or perhaps a convergent medium, one in which familiar music videos and copyrighted movie clips rub shoulders with original user-generated content and with content that combines original material with copyrighted material” (Andrejevik, 2009, p. 407).

Jenkins states that from one position, digital cinema opens opportunities for avant-garde practices to offer a broader public access than found in traditional exhibition spaces (2003, p. 308). However, creating in the digital sphere produces more problems with piracy than previously. Such piracy, however, is not confined to new media forms: traditional forms, too, face rampant issues of piracy due to the nature of marketing practices and social media vibrancy amongst consumers. Blagrove Jr. argues that “A serious challenge to the

mainstream media is currently underway, because the access to digital technology and the internet, the lines between alternative and mainstream are becoming blurred” (2008, p. 176). If a filmmaker chooses to create in this democratic, participatory way, then protecting rights, intellectual property and copyright might be more difficult than within the traditional route. Thus, though the perception of ‘free’ and democratic practices appears to be liberating, as suggested above, in reality the new filmmaker faces familiar financial problems.

Challenges with Economic Factors

Raising money or selling a film online is possible in a multitude of new ways, but the realization that it takes longer, perhaps, than traditional finance and distribution deals might frustrate even the savviest filmmaker. This is why the plethora of online video sites which host content can be so appealing. Here filmmakers can upload their content for free - but in that convenience also lies a heated argument over authorship of the film and who is actually getting paid.

This new reality has forced online companies (specifically YouTube) to change monetization tactics and split revenues with filmmakers via advertising revenue shares. There can be value in this reciprocal relationship, as creators need a virtual retail shelf for their content, users need content to watch, advertisers need those users to sell products, and the online platform needs content and users in order to survive. “YouTube isn’t the only online video sharing site...[it’s] promising content creators “\$10 per 1,000 views, with some shows making as much as \$15 per thousand [sic] views” (Cohen, 2010). YouTube, Vimeo, Babblegum, and Snagfilm.com, for example, are online distributors that operate on a revenue-sharing model, where the filmmaker can make money from advertising revenue. However, this is a complex business model that very rarely offers economic sustainability for the filmmaker even through YouTube’s Partner program (Marshall, 2013).

Straight sales models “feed into the long tail business model of Amazon.com” (Knudsen, 2012, p. 311). Chris Anderson, (2006) coined the term “Long Tail” to describe the retailing strategy of selling a large number of unique items with relatively small quantities sold of each – usually in addition to selling fewer popular items in large quantities. IndieFlix is another straight sales distributor, which uses the on-demand model, but primarily through streaming and downloads, which also factors into this Long Tail business model.

Crowd funding in recent years has become another valid source of much needed funding capital for creative filmmakers and other artists for creative projects. The attraction of crowd funding sites such as Kickstarter, the Biracy Project, IndieGogo and new upstarts FilmFunds and Sponsume, is that financial resources are now available for filmmakers outside the traditional financing avenues. Hope argues that “Expectations have changed considerably, probably completely. Buyers and audiences behaviours are different. Our strategies must change with it” (2010).

Market demand for online content is changing the traditional market structure of distribution and delivery for Independent filmmakers outside of the Hollywood system. It is also providing a platform for creators in countries without the support of film communities, government subsidies or fundraising activities. This enables audiences to have global access to films and stories that might otherwise might never be told or seen. “On the face of it, Kickstarter is pretty harmless...it’s hard to raise money, especially for the arts, and there have always been a lot of gatekeepers in the way.” (Newman, 2011). However, there are stipulations and rules within the confines of these platforms, which are out of the control of the filmmaker.

The notable issues with Kickstarter, for example are; 1) it doesn’t allow for repeat or phased-fundraising (such as, in pre-, post- and/or distribution phases); 2) it doesn’t allow the filmmaker receive any monies made within the allotted time and use that as ‘seed capital’ to leverage in further funding elsewhere; and 3) (in 2009) there was no support or advice to understand how best to approach the market. Such sites are using the notion of the ‘wisdom and popularity of crowd sourcing’ to initiate funding support. This means that the filmmaker must have a built-in audience to drive traffic to this platform to gain financial support.

Another issue for the filmmaker is the ‘free debate’, which is a charged discourse around the value of offering something for nothing. The debate centres on the question of whether, by choice, or through a lack of technical and marketing know-how, filmmakers are lured with the promise of large followers on sites such as YouTube, which is in fact concerned simply to proliferate ad revenue. As Cuban argues, “With the publication of Chris Anderson’s book [Free: The Future of a Radical Price], the discussion about the role of free, today and in the future has expanded...” (Cuban, 2009b).

While cheap technologies have enabled filmmakers to embrace a new form of practice, free delivery of their creation to their growing fan bases appears to have become an acceptable norm. Pruden is cynical about the process: “If [filmmakers] think they're in the business of producing and selling movies, they are dead wrong—filmmakers are actually in the business of entertainment. Consumers don't buy movies to support a filmmaker... they buy movies to be entertained” (2009c). It is a choice that filmmakers must make when choosing to create in this form. Given the loose structure of its creative process and delivery modes, which fall outside the traditional distribution windows, certain elements of the overall practice will be sacrificed. That could be a determining factor and an overall choice for the filmmaker to make.

This could be true for new artists who have not established a following of paying fans. “If the twentieth century saw people starting to embrace Free again as a concept, it also witnessed a crucial phenomenon that helped to make Free a reality - the arrival of abundance” (Anderson, 2009a, p. 45). However, the bartering systems that existed in history are not a replacement for monetary value placed on today's digital consumer goods. How then can filmmakers afford to make a living this way when consumers are expecting free content?

That's one of the inherent problems I see with the FREE strategy. The film business is already risky, and this adds on a whole other layer of RISK. What if you give the film away and nobody cares? No sales of anything? Then you've shot yourself in the foot – you can't go back and start charging for the film and expect people to attach any sort of value to it (Parks, 2010).

Traditional sales and distribution parameters are still operating within the confines of a traditional sales strategy. Online distribution opens up the possibilities for non-exclusive rights, meaning the filmmaker can spread their film across many channels, thereby raising its visibility and revenue stream potential. The traditional route can impact the filmmaker's creative and aesthetic choices by making them have to conform to the financier's rules and is a model still out of reach for most Independent filmmakers. But online distribution has its own set of constraints imposed by the marketplace that consumes products online. “Free is not a pricing strategy, a marketing strategy, or the inevitable consequence of a market with low variable costs. It's a symptom of a much more fundamental economic shift” (Burnham, 2009).

“Anyone and everyone can make a movie inexpensively now...as filmmakers are slowly making the transition from traditional deals to the brave new worlds of DIY and digital distribution” (Swart, 2010). In consequence, filmmakers are now being faced with the challenges of learning new skill sets in marketing, finance and sales, which may impact on the creative quality of their films: “Measuring impact has become increasingly important, as funders of documentary and issue-based films want to understand the “return on investment” of films in terms of social impact” (Karlin and Johnson, 2011).

For Parks, “The other question that is circling the industry is about the VALUE of these films within the context of their delivery. If everyone starts giving away their films on the internet for free, consumers will become accustomed to getting indie films for free and won’t ever want to pay for them” (2010). However, Pruden has a different take on the free debate, as he positions it more as a promotional tool, rather than the end point for the filmmaker. “I also see piracy as the way of the future, a genie out of the bottle which has the potential to foster a more vibrant entertainment industry if we can all simply accept digital file sharing as the *key* innovative tool of the Digital Age” (2009b).

Thus, whilst independent filmmakers using these new methods gain a large amount of creative freedom and access to tools outside the traditional model, they must also look at the ‘price paid’, both short-term and in respect of long-term value and sustainable artistic models. This is why perhaps filmmakers working in the participatory environment lay emphasis on its *creative* possibilities: “Seeing art as being produced within the context of social relations...the practical activities and processes that the author embodies as she or he addresses relations of production” (Gerstner and Staiger, 2003, p. 124). The reward can be more about the process of creating with the community at large, which serves in several capacities to create product and – perhaps - sustain a long-term brand. However, “building an audience using these free and inexpensive strategies takes time” (Kirsner, 2009, p. 34). Some of the biggest challenges faced by a creator working in this online space are around spending time online attracting audiences and marketing their work. This takes time away from creative aspects, resulting in frustration and lack of sufficient financial returns. As one filmmaker commented: “Income versus audiences and art. It’s easier than ever to find your audience. But it also means more work, more expense, and it’s not clear to me that any of these new methods allow producers to make a living as an independent. I believe we’ll all still need day jobs” (*TVS Digital Survey, 2009, p.6*).

Filmmakers are at a stage where new learning paradigms must enhance their traditional film school education. Or perhaps they must unlearn everything they learned in film school. By manipulating new technologies and embracing the internet, Transmedia storytelling and social media enterprises that are available, perhaps they can cultivate value over the long course of their careers. As Nielsen wire comments, “The social landscape has changed and ... the relationship between brands and consumer has been flipped on its head because of the way consumers connect. So much influence (and insight) is now in the hands (and tweets, posts, votes and updates) of the consumer” (Nielsenwire, 2010). Perhaps this relationship will need to be embraced if filmmakers are to understand truly the business they are in when creating films within this third (online) space.

Conclusion

“The notion of ‘documentary ethics’ is a negotiated, discursive category, rather than a set of inviolable rules: what is considered ‘right and proper’ may change or develop, legal restrictions on filmmakers may loosen (or tighten), a filmmaker may challenge what is acceptable” (Ward, 2008, p. 193). Creative participation can open up a wider democratic process that allows for more access and collaborative opportunities that didn’t exist before. However, it can also allow for the proliferation of piracy and illegal downloads. This can be both a blessing and a death sentence to filmmakers, as exposure to large-scale audiences is needed for value and sustainability, but the piracy and torrent sites of illegally shared content can also hinder the filmmaker’s quest for successful monetization.

A partial answer may lie in online communities themselves. Internal ‘policing’ by online communities, widely connected, overlapping and constantly forming and breaking up, may help to protect transparency, trust, authenticity and protection against spam and piracy. Birchall (2008, p. 282) returns us once more to the question of trust and ‘authenticity’, arguing that the internet can produce creations with more immediacy, and can be as “deliberately constructed as any existing documentary forms; this authenticity is highly prized by audiences.” As earlier, transparency is still the product of the relationship between the filmmaker and their audiences, and remains key to building value for best practices and outcomes. Renov adds that the “key to the success of that relationship is that it demands a responsibility for the consequences of the filmmaking that go beyond the film itself” (Rothwell, 2008, p. 155).

As online practice methodologies evolve alongside emerging technologies, new questions surrounding the evolution of ‘documentary value’, sustainable production and efforts of collaborative meaning will push beyond the boundaries of current practice. The social communities growing within this virtual sphere can cross beyond traditional media experiences and create new discourse with filmmakers. However, access to these technologies will need to be readily available for participation and exchange to occur.

With technological advances and access, the historical models of the film industry are changing, as new business models emerge for process and delivery. Creating a project with online audiences presents a complex combination of collaboration, timing, resources, planning, individual crafting and reciprocal exchange that must come together to make a ‘successful’ film campaign. Filmmakers, as well as audiences are faced with many challenges, with an overwhelming onslaught of new technological language and procedure, as well as new cultural and political economies of scale, which they must adapt into practice. If they are to be successful, filmmakers must embrace the “total filmmaker” (De Jong, Knudsen, Rothwell, 2012, p. 3) identity in order to create projects in this new media space. Participation between audience and filmmaker through shared, curated and recycled content *can* enable relationships to develop that produce a stronger, shared value for the project being created.

Some things, however, do not change. The relationship between participant and filmmaker connected by shared passions must also be transparent and ethical. Filmmakers creating in online public spaces allow participants exposure to new ideas and creative opportunities, but they themselves must still integrate into new practices established principles of documentary practice.

Chapter 4: The Practice as a Case Study

This chapter is a reflective analysis of my practice as a case study. I will analyse my production methodology, its processes and stages. Each stage is chronologically ordered according to the ‘traditional’ film production categories: pre-production or preparation, production and post-production. However, the participatory methodology I employed makes these categories far more permeable than is the case in more traditional filmmaking. For example, certain aspects of the preparation of the project were necessary before actual ‘production’ could begin. Looked at differently, however, this preparation could itself be seen as a form of ‘production activity’ by nature of its process and activity. Thus creating a Facebook page to invite participants to create, comment on, and share media materials which could be used in the final film project, a preparation activity, could also be seen as a part of the production process whereby I gathered material for the film itself.

The final digital, online film entitled: *‘Single Girl in a Virtual World: What Does a 21st Century Feminist Look Like’* was the final output of the practice, but was not the only output created. Other pathways for media dissemination are possible by the very nature of the film’s mode of construction and generation of content. For example, a Facebook Group was created as a means of collecting data, which would be utilized as part of the film’s narrative thread. However, the materials, which exist on online platforms, could be used to generate other cross media outputs, such as a book (or an e-book), a podcast, or pedagogical materials from its many themes and topics of discussion.

For the purposes of this chapter, however, I have limited the analysis to the actual documentary film practice. The sections are divided according to the specific process or activity, its outcomes and my reflections on it.

Pre-Production Activities

Development

Before any production activity could take place, I needed to identify a theme, topic or narrative thread that was both important to me and open to discussion and interpretation both for live subjects and online participatory audiences and users.

The process took some time, as it was into my second year before I finally was able to choose a topic that interested and engaged me both creatively and intellectually. As stated in Chapter 1, the DIY (do-it-yourself) route of filmmaking (outside traditional filmmaking models) has liberated a new generation of women filmmakers to collaborate, participate, produce and sell their stories. It has also provided a growing online audience with new films and content, which can contribute to a larger economic sector outside of mainstream cinema. It was for this reason I wanted to explore not only the topic of feminism, but create a film in this way.

To test its theories, as well as stretch the boundaries of new practice utilizing social media networks and cheap authoring tools. I also wanted to create a project that had reach toward a potential target audience and online platform in which I could explore my themes. I also chose the theme (of feminism and online activism), because I could produce the project economically and without a crew – two things that were inherent to the practice component of the methodology itself. As Stabile mentioned (Chapter 1, p. 14) she notes that women historically are the last group to utilize these [digital and online] resources and embrace new technologies. The statistics of underrepresentation in the traditional industry show women fall way behind as Directors, Writers, and Producers of films in the mainstream. I was keenly aware of the imbalance of female to male ratios in film production, but it seemed it was also evident in the online technological space. I wanted to explore opportunities to embrace new technologies and new ways of telling stories outside of the traditional documentary film production methodologies.

The outcome of creating content and navigating through the online spaces, both technologically and with the developing audience engagements, however, proved challenging. Purposefully choosing a feminist debate as subject matter, I didn't expect a large following. However, I was surprised by the level of participation, engagement, sharing and comment from amongst the various online communities (YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, etc.) that provided at least seventy-per cent (70%) of the film's overall material.

Finally, I found the topic of feminism and online activism enabled my personal experience on the subject to be expanded through participatory learning and immersion. I had studied academic texts, but more importantly I learned through exchange with my subjects and learning of their experiences through the digital platforms, as well as through watching online content, using recycled media content and on-going media debates. The topic itself, while

having a broad base, was confined within a small-scale online community, and therefore created a sort of intimacy (as far as this is possible online) amongst the community outside a politically charged public form of debate.

As feminist film theory developed alongside the feminist movement, it produced debates around women both in front of and behind the camera over what denoted a feminist film. With cheap equipment, Cinema Verité and Direct Cinema both in Europe and the US evolved with women's producing films with new technologies to create when there was no access to training. This emergence of new technology brought about collaboration amongst women filmmakers, which challenged the mainstream. Challenges with marginalisation, distribution, and social attitudes, finding audiences and sustaining economic stability continue today.

New modes of practice are further complicating the discussion and debate around feminist thought, film practice, its imagery and representation of women and their subjects. By utilising small-scale productions, using new available technologies and collaborating with online, participatory audiences in order to build visibility and find distribution, which can be platforms used for and by women working within the confines of these new technologies.

Preparation

In the next step, I had to create a production model through which I could contextualize a content editorial calendar and visualize a technological map for what would be an enormous learning curve. Finally, I needed to put my model into practice through various social media channels.

This would prove to be a very pragmatic, methodical process, which required me to master a large volume of technological information and implementation. There was a great learning curve during this process that took over two weeks to complete. Of course this was just for the set up of social media platforms and the automation process, but it removed me from the actual creative process of making the film. It also had the additional information and knowledge of learning a new technology.

It was a process that involved the numerous technological challenges of automation, fixing where [link] breakdowns occurred and understanding the mechanics of how it fits into the

larger picture. These were constant challenges throughout the entire process. Integration of social media buttons, links, setting up RSS feeds, understanding codices for video uploads and finally, simultaneously broadcasting across multiple channels took a lot of time, patience and fortitude. In actuality, it took up to 50% of my overall filmmaking preparation during the pre-production period. During production, it took up approximately thirty-percent (30%). The practice itself was driven by these new technologies, but whilst they were often creatively frustrating, they provided an online platform for collecting data and workflow that enhanced the creative process overall.

In conclusion, although the process was frustratingly painful, because I had to learn the language of technology, its processes and functionality, then how to apply that new language into my filmmaking environment, it was also necessary. Learning the process myself, rather than hiring other experts in their respective fields to handle the technology flow and implementation, allowed me to stretch beyond the traditional practice of filmmaking literacy and create storytelling and its pathways in new directions that I hadn't previously.

To the degree of which this was perhaps the most liberatory piece of the process, I found the making to be a mix of both frustration and encouragement. As I learned new skills, I became more empowered but also impatient with the learning curve. As I became more empowered, I became more creative and courageous to expand beyond my previous limitations as a filmmaker, but also became more keenly aware of risks and assumptions being made as I ventured into new territories. New research inquiry that I'd not previously encountered or aware of. Perhaps it was because of the lack of hierarchy found in traditional filmmaking modes was the reason for my liberation, or perhaps it was because the making took place within a new social context within online environments where each participant was essentially 'equal' or equally qualified to participate and contribute. It was also perhaps as a female filmmaker, telling a story about a primarily feminist topic within this 'democratic' online environment, social by its very nature, which gave precedence over the actual production methodology being explored.

Pre-Production

The next stage was to develop a workable production methodology, choose equipment, decide if I wanted or even needed crew, and determine what production elements would determine the project's budget and what timeline I would be working with.

I found this process initially less challenging than the preparation process outlined above, having worked on film projects before – the production elements of film creation are similar across the board. However, in this project I would commence production without any crew or financial support. My equipment was my own, using a Flip camera (with an Omni-directional internal mic), tripod, and my mobile phone's video camera phone. I used available light and integrated sound from the camera to capture all of my original footage. I engaged in traditional documentary practice for live interviews, but also utilized online media resources for screen capture and recordings through *Skype* and a program called Camtasia for Mac to capture video. I also curated recycled media (stills photos and video) and text (Twitter, Facebook) for additional content.

The challenge of making a film without a crew or large amounts of resources was also an advantage. With minimal additional moving parts, I was able to focus all of my creative process and efforts towards autonomy of the film's direction. While the infusion of online subjects and content varied the narrative topics, I was at liberty to select appropriate ideas, content and input for insertion into the film's narrative without having to check with legal, financial or studio overseers. This liberation, I believe, is a large reason why so many filmmakers are turning to the Internet to create and share their projects.

However, through this practice, as further research question and inquiry became apparent, ethical issues had to be investigated. The greater the freedom perhaps also places greater ethical responsibility on the filmmaker because within this space, there are no external checks by funding bodies, or studio heads or distributors. The filmmaker is judged only the participants with whom they collaborate. The communities regulate and police their social spaces accordingly and I found it to be in the best interest to remain transparent and open during the entire process. If any ethical issues arose, or questions regarding my film or its practice were presented, it would have potentially altered the practice and the final outcome of the film.

At first look, the planning process filled me with trepidation, because I had only worked with a crew, as this was to be my first foray as a single filmmaker. I was the decision-maker and initiator in relation to all aesthetic decisions, equipment and technical execution, post-production supervision and creative flow. However, while this process limited some

potentially creative shot selections or creative opportunities, the limitations caused by lack of crew also meant that I had to think creatively and make the most of all available resources.

Once all the decisions had been made around the production detail, I then created a film trailer and film production press kit for the purposes of inciting interest and inspiring activity and participation in the project. Using recycled media, I formed a narrative around the making of the proposed film and its use of subject matter as the theme of the trailer.

This process was an integral part of generating interest and participation around the making of a film before the film is made. Assembling marketing materials prior to production enabled me to build an audience at the start of production. Gaining traction through the social networking sites and introducing my film project through an online trailer and Blog would be instrumental in building an online fan base. Essentially, I needed online content to produce more content. The film's trailer was built with recycled media content to incite curiosity about my film project and start a debate surrounding the narrative theme of online feminism. The online press kit and blog was utilized for my crowd funding campaign through Kickstarter and consisted of a budget outline, synopsis of the film, participation rules and time frame for production.

Overall, these (trailer, electronic press kit) digital materials provided the needed exposure to kick off the project online. This was the first creative piece of content after learning and implementing all the technical applications. Crafting a trailer took very little time, where, if I were to shoot original footage, it would need to be captured first, and then cut down into a trailer. It was satisfying to discover that recycling media to reframe an idea could attract a targeted audience and create debate and participation.

To my surprise, the trailer received a lot of traction, as evidenced by YouTube's view count (579 views as of 5.12.14). With the use of a popular song and energized, almost music-video-like imagery, my hope was to use it to engage a younger demographic. I didn't have original material at this point to showcase the film project, but rather projected the 'idea' of what the film would be about. It did come with its drawbacks, particularly with aesthetic challenges, as well as potential Intellectual Property and Copyright issues with the use of imagery and music which, were not my own.

The next stage was to launch crowd-funding campaign through the online funding model Kickstarter, which launched in 2009.

Crowd funding was a new concept when I started my creative practice in 2009/2010. There were no case studies to review or any rules or regulations with regards to the elements of how to raise funds from online platforms. I didn't like Kickstarter's platform from the beginning, because of its rigid format, limitations on time frames (i.e. reaching funding requested within 30, 60, or 90 days) and implementation of varied content to support a campaign. The account was relatively simple to set up, but the challenging part was attracting people to come to my specific page on the site. Three years later, many other platforms have been launched, along with online articles, case studies and various industry white papers for instructional use and engagement across these types of platforms (for example Kickstarter now has its own 'how to' guide). It has proved a valuable resource for filmmakers to raise needed funds. However, filmmakers still need to be technically savvy and utilize marketing and promotion *before* proceeding with a project. A large following also will help.

I had a few donations to my project, but because of the limitations on Kickstarter, I didn't raise my targeted amount by the timeframe imposed and therefore didn't receive any of the donations pledged. This was one of the key elements of frustration and a barrier to filmmakers being able to raise funds through this platform. I felt that the site wasn't working within the constraints of the filmmaker's available resources. However, the platform has changed the entire idea of how creation and funding can go hand in hand.

In hindsight, I would have preferred other platforms (such as, IndieGoGo), which have since emerged or staged my funding process a bit differently. Perhaps I would have looked for marketing/distribution funds instead of production funds, as it seems the 'distribution in reverse' method (or releasing materials, marketing and promotion before the film is made) was perhaps key to engaging potential audiences. The crowd-funding platform has exploded and does in fact offer many opportunities for filmmakers to raise necessary funds. But there is another learning curve in understanding how to bring fans to a site to build large numbers of followers. If I choose to do crowd funding again, I know it will take a lot more upfront promotion and marketing to build a large-scale audience first before attempting to raise funds.

In the next stages, I launched the various social media pages around the film's production; i.e. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, MySpace, Wordpress, LinkedIn, which I chose specifically for certain aspects of the practice activity, its interface, user-demographics and/or the ease of its technological use.

This process took a relatively short time for me to set up each account specific to the project, because I was familiar with online platforms from my own personal usage experience. The most important thing was to make sure I developed a technological-chart, which logged the website address, my password and email in order to keep everything in one place. Today, most sites allow you to log in with your Facebook account, which makes it convenient – until it [Facebook] goes away. Signing up on various social media sites would expand my reach virally and establish a digital footprint through search engine optimization (SEO) on Google, thus allowing me to target different online communities for the purposes of participation and visibility.

The outcomes from the creation of the Wordpress blog, for example, which was the central foundation of all my social media environment activity, was one of the platforms I used to create original content (the other was traditional capture). I then 'pushed' the created media content through my other social networks by linking a posting on the various channels. Youtube housed my video podcasts, Facebook participants commented through the news feed and provided additional content and Twitter served as more of an informational micro-blog of sorts to 'point' to other social media platforms to gain visitors and ultimately participants for the project.

Choosing which social media sites to use and those I felt would gain the most traction from user participation and activity was the focus of this next stage of practice activity. I threw a wide net to capture as large a number of participants as possible within these various communities. Maintaining and administering multiple social media sites meant a large amount of time was spent away from the actual creative production, though both became necessary functions of the practice itself. Creating content on these platforms, rather than in a traditional sense, served both method and outcomes.

Further, the next stages of technological activity involved the coordinating and automation of all technical links through the aggregator Tube Mogul and Feedburner (a RSS, or Really

Simple Syndication, reader; now Feedly) to sync all social media updates on the various platforms. This would ideally allow me to streamline my productivity and workflow methods without having to replicate them through each individual channel.

This process was more a necessity than a form of creativity. These functions would link individual social media networks that could advance the probability of exposure with one click. For example, by loading an original video clip (such as a video podcast) on TubeMogul, that site would in turn distribute my content to other chosen social media sites, thus expanding its reach to up to fifteen or more sites that I would otherwise have had to upload individually. The impact on my time proved invaluable.

While [Tube Mogul] was a great service, before I could use it I had to create individual social media accounts *before* Tube Mogul could do its job. So while it did take a while to create individual profiles on each site, once that was done, Tube Mogul could automate that process. The RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feeds functioned the same as Tube Mogul, but reached beyond viral video sites for viewing and sharing content such as, news blogs Digg, Delicious, Technorati, etc.

Once the technological aspects of the production methodology were in place, it was time to engage with participatory audiences on multiple social media sites set up for them in order to generate ideas, post comments, blog, post video content and engage with content, which both they and I provided.

This process served to gather content, which could then be utilised to serve the evolving narrative thread. I communicated with my growing online audiences through multiple social media channels daily and weekly, then repurposed that content amongst other viral sites via sharing tools and social buttons. I feel this gave the indication that I was online in more places than I actually was. Between my day job, dedicated research time and actual film practice, I was not able to spend more than 20+ hours a week online. To engage and build a large-scale audience (a threshold of 1,000+) more time spent online is needed. However, it could also depend on the type of media or content being pushed, and how it is engaged with will determine the popularity of its viral nature.

Through my efforts, and the nature of the viral platforms, the sites did propagate engaging discourse, content and feedback. It also created an environment devoted to my film's narrative themes, and participants had a place to contribute content to my practice that I would not have been able to achieve otherwise.

In hindsight, I might have cut down on the number of social media sites and concentrated on only two or three main platforms. I would also have created a social media editorial calendar to create more content and dedicated releases, as well as measuring its impact. I do however, know more about metrics and social media marketing now as evidenced through my research and would apply it all aspects of future creative practice.

As stated in Chapter 3, rethinking documentary in the virtual space brings about new challenges to the old issues of evidence, witness and ethics as opens up more democratic processes of practice, distribution and dissemination of its stories. New participatory audiences now also help to create the very product they are witnessing. Creating media within the public sphere brings about a wealth of new tools, wider contributions to its making and a more global awareness of its dissemination. But these changes are not without controversy and challenges for filmmakers now working outside of the traditional modes.

However, it should be noted that beyond any new forms of technological advances in filmmaking activities; including all creative forms and business models of production through distribution, fundamentally something things for which documentary film was founded on has not changed. The old issues of evidence, witness and ethics continue to evolve as new democratic processes of creative practice, online distribution and collaborative, interactivity of storytelling emerge, shift and expand.

And I believe that because traditional modes of filmmaking, both through practice and reception are ingrained in the public's eye that these 'rules' perhaps determined how the participants both interacted and perceived their role within the practice.

I learned a great deal from the participants, as well as my interaction with them. This particular case study showed evidence of their participation through sharing of video, text and audio files on the subjects of feminism in order to collaborate as well as to be a part of the social fabric of its making.

Because the film was being made with the participants, their content very much determined the film's production, its methodology and its outcome. Without their materials, the film would cease to have been made. I would not have been able to gather enough material to piece together a cohesive story. And through this process of their sharing, I too learned a lot about the subject of feminism, their reception and perspective of it, which was also reflected in the outcome of my film.

Production

In the production phase I would commence traditional modes of film production through principal photography, execution of on-set (or on location) production logistics, exercising legal (union) paperwork and clearance/permission/release forms, setting up interviews with live subjects, and securing shooting locations.

It was during this part of my practice that I would set up my production exactly as I had done through my traditional production experiences. The production process is the same; however within this project my traditional practice has served me most clearly in the form of organization and forethought, which allowed for more creative freedom within the new methodology. An organized plan allowed for more flexibility, which allowed for more opportunities in post-production to create multiple themes surrounding feminist issues. That I had over ten hours of content to choose from is due to the organization and forethought of the overall process. If I had more time I would have liked to explore different types of online filmmaking, such as narrative database films, using the Korsakow platform or Story Planet (open source software) or perhaps different collaborative/community modes of filmmaking as the research as expanded my knowledge of documentary filmmaking and what technological interfaces can now make possible in yielding new forms of practice.

Creating a project in this way did, however, present many challenges, both technically and creatively. Working within the confines of a participatory environment also exposed me to different perspectives, cultures, values and ideas. The very nature of the practice itself was an important step in understanding what drives the new media culture. The intimacy of engagement, the collective or cooperative mind (i.e. or perhaps crowd sourced, particular

groups of people), sharing and repurposing material – all in an effort to tell stories – can be provocative when engaging in creative practice without boundaries of place and time.

Documentaries are typically the discourse of the author's focused subject(s) - who see(s) reality from their point of view and expresses what is seen and interpreted according to their own values and perspectives. However, this is framed through the perception of the filmmaker. Thus the documentary becomes something authored, and in many cases intimate, and personal – the version of reality that the filmmaker experiences through interactions with the material and subjects. The process of documentary production can change, however, through new forms of collaboration, through software design and interactivity. Not only do these provide a creative environment in which to mine resources, but it can also provide the user with experience through participation practice.

Through this new media sphere, its investigation and practice yielded a finished film production as material evidence of its making with online social networks. Environments, which are made up of individuals who collectively contributed to the making of the film through their interests in the topic of feminism. Or perhaps they participated to be a part of a creative process, or both. Either way, making a film in this way, tantamount changed the way in which film's can be made and perceived using new media technologies and alternative modes of dissemination. Like authoring and productivity tools, these new 'resources' and crowd sourcing capabilities can leverage filmmaker's, particularly female filmmakers, abilities to tell stories and perhaps level the evidenced imbalance of its traditional film industry. What I learned from this experience was that my practice opened an entire arsenal of possibilities through technology and innovation, in which new creativity is possible.

Post-Production

In the final stages of the practice, I would design the film's completion process, which included editing and post-production processes, using original footage and found or recycled media and the music usage and placement.

The editing process for me was the most enjoyable process; because once all the material was assembled the decision-making was mine. This, I feel is where the 'true' authorship of the

filmmaking took hold. Ideally, my practice performed in a participatory environment with public engagement, but in the editing room it was my decision and my decision alone. But perhaps this would further raise new questions of ethics and questions surrounding the theory of just what ‘participatory filmmaking’ actually is.

As stated in Chapter 2, photographic evidence is thus never the sole means by which ‘truth’ can be asserted, but rather it is how images are reproduced and framed, and the reception of that construction, that determine their designation as within the frame of ‘documentary truth’ and as having ‘documentary value’. Today in the era of digital disruption and multiple modes of intervention how can audiences ascertain the ‘authenticity’ of what they are viewing on the screen? Even the film screens have shifted into smaller, mobile devices, which contribute to changing reception within new environments and experiences. Hill states that there are different strategies that audiences use to assess and reflect on truth claims: for example, how the image was captured and then subsequently organized, which includes the editing, framing, music, speech and narration (2013, p. 86). This is an important assertion because it shows that audiences use this assessment to determine documentary’s difference from other genres and judge the character of documentary through their experience of it.

So a key question for documentary makers then becomes: what kind of reproduction, or manipulation of that image, is ‘ethical’? In a perfect world, the ‘expectation’ is that the documentarist seeks genuine responses by an audience to the authentic story they are telling and it is the choices the filmmaker makes which is justified by the agenda set out forthwith.

Assembling sections of narrative, expanding on topics and cutting out original footage altogether though exciting, frustrating and time consuming, also had to adhere to this ethical principal of ‘truth’ and ‘evidence’ as described by Nichols as it constitutes to ‘documentary value’. But I also gained a greater understanding through this process of my abilities technologically and creatively. I understood the implications of taking recycled media and curated content and reframing it to my needs to serve the film’s intended narrative theme. Having a multitude of recycled footage, it was tempting to expand the film beyond my original intentions, but the transparency created at the beginning and throughout the filmmaking with the subjects ultimately must serve the end result. The practice of integrating recycled media to create a new frame expanded the film’s reach beyond the traditional process and opened new possibilities for me.

As stated earlier how, then, should we approach issues of authenticity and truthfulness? If a fundamental bond between audience and filmmaker must exist which objectively secures 'a' truth factually rooted that aspires to exploration rather than propaganda, then at its core must be transparency. What that transparency looks like can be open to determination. However, in this case, every effort was made to ensure the practice balanced ethical issues of transparency and accountability with the filmmaker-as-author's desire to tell a particular story/make a particular argument. Which of course, is what documentary filmmaker's have always had to do. So perhaps, this line of thinking leads me to believe that despite new technological uses, the issues of truth in documentary are accountable across any medium used to devise of its storytelling modality.

I ended up cutting about thirty minutes out of the film, which I felt made the final piece more relevant, thematically anchored and creatively focused according to how the participation process through its production phase was envisioned. Though the recycled media was not aesthetically superior to the original content, it did serve the story's narrative and wouldn't be distributed on an HD or 35mm format. Therefore, no aesthetic or conversion difficulties occurred within the online platforms.

I learned to edit on Final Cut, which was a new technical platform for me. The learning curve enabled me to become a better editor because of its user-friendly tools and interactive learning modules. It also enabled me to become a better creative thinker through analysing how best to structure the narrative from its many moving parts because of its digital, non-linear interface. I was able to utilize material that I was both intimately familiar with and that which was gathered from other sources to infuse into a finely tuned narrative.

The next phase of the post-production process would be to focus on the delivery of the final film project to through the various online channels that I had previously used to gather its media content. The technical challenges of encoding the film from the editing software onto the online platforms was yet another set of learning curves. It took two days to render and finalize the project for output on YouTube and Vimeo only for me then to realize the file size was too large. This would impair the viewing of the film due to long download times and browsing capabilities. After discovering an instructional video on YouTube, I did learn how to change the codices specifically and was able to upload the film accordingly. However, given bandwidth availability and upload times, I decided to break my full-length film into five short

parts, or chapters, as well as offering it in its full-length format. Both were good for the delivery of bite-size chunks of content and for full-length versions to give the audience a choice of when, where and for how long they wished to view the content.

Once the film was released publicly (for free), beyond the academic feedback so far I have received minimal comments on the film. This was surprising to me, especially from the online communities who actually participated in the film itself. Perhaps I anticipated a large-scale praise of its completion. This was another invaluable insight into the minds of the online community, which is difficult to measure. Because of the immediate nature of the viral space, taking three years to do a project online seemed to dissipate momentum for further engagement.

The creative process seemed to be the most liberating piece of the practice. The interaction with the online participants through daily and weekly engagement, sharing of digital materials and gathering suitable content to create a cohesive story in the end. The limitations of working in this way are perhaps that filmmakers have very limited control over what content will be produced or shared by its participants. This in fact will force the filmmaker to constantly re-evaluate their story and timeline of its edited outcome. The advantages however, are far reaching as the scope of possibilities for filmmakers to create and develop their skills alongside audiences and participants who are experiencing perhaps that creative engagement, as well as enabling sustainable practice to expand through sharing activities.

In conclusion, now that I have a clearer (or perhaps better) understanding than I did before I engaged in this practice and research activity and all of the technical implications of distribution and post-production functionalities, I believe a need for expanded bandwidth and faster upload capabilities is warranted for the process to be user-friendly.

Conclusion

Throughout the practice, my initial expectations did not match the final outcome. Having not created a film in this manner before, I remained open to the process. Through rigorous research and investigation of documentary and feminist film history, I was able to frame my practice within the context of traditional models and film movements over time as they

changed with the technological applications and accessibility. I strived to maintain a balance of equanimity, give the online participants an opportunity to explore the topic of feminism and share content and digital materials they felt would contribute to its making.

However, I also wanted to utilize an element of traditional documentary practice through the process of live interviews with subjects whom I felt would ‘anchor’ the film’s subtext. I also felt the live interviews would perhaps be able to give levity to the film’s non-traditional context. The live interviews or original footage, would perhaps give validity to the film’s overall production. Perhaps it also served to validate [my] filmmaking capabilities by straddling across both traditional modes and new alternative means of making film’s within the social network spaces. When choosing my interview subjects, I did not set out to have a ratio of ‘expert’ views to those, which were produced through online modes. Merely, I sought out to find a balance of equal views, regardless of the medium, in order to tell a compelling story. This was achieved through careful balancing claims of authorship, yet maintaining transparency and accountability with the participants from the film project’s inception.

Inherently, I found that the same ethical considerations and issues found in traditional documentary filmmaking must also adhere to the online practice. They are fundamentally one and the same, yet the modes how best to achieve transparency and truth might be found through alternative pathways. For example, release forms or notices posted within the digital community can give evidence of the practice and its framework. However, I chose not to do this, but rather communicate my intentions freely and continually throughout the process of the film’s production process so that a digital notice didn’t get buried at the bottom of a thread (or textual feed). Nor did I want a visual representation (such as an image on the header page) to be representative of the social group in which interaction was taking place. I wanted the participants to feel they could share and collaborate freely within the context of the space in which the creative process was unfolding.

Weighing that creative process and its liberatory effect of using shared and found footage against perhaps any risks or assumptions found in ethical issues which might have arisen or against the lack of impact around the audience’s reception of the final film would be a challenge that I could not measure during its making. The question of having a voice to be able to tell a story would perhaps be no different than in the traditional feminist filmmaking sense where dissemination of the [film] still would not be heard. Even though the internet and

the web is perceived as a brass ring for filmmakers to finally have a voice and a space without a [traditional] hierarchy determining the outcome of the film; it was determined that audiences still have the power of whether a film and its impact is successful. What that success looks like is still subject to the filmmaker and their intentions.

My intentions with this film and what I wanted it to say were simply this; to create/make an original film utilising new technological interventions by means of collaboration and community participation. To empower creativity through various participants to share, create, collaborate, discuss and give content, which supported the on-going discussion of feminism in the twenty-first century. And through my own personal experience of interacting with those participant's materials, how that process would affect me as a woman, a person and a filmmaker. And how that effect would determine my creative practice and the ultimate outcome of a final film being made in this way. The actual participation seemed to be a more focused relationship than the finished product itself.

Conclusion: What Worked/What Didn't in My Practice

For my original contribution to research and knowledge, I created a digital, documentary film project entitled, '*Single Girl in a Virtual World: What Does a 21st Century Feminist Look Like?*', a blog, and multiple social media platforms as a case study to support and test my theoretical and critical research findings. The aims were to make a digital documentary film based on the foundations of feminist filmmaking theories and the emerging forms of documentary practice through collaboration with participatory online audiences. The subject of the film's narrative concerned current discourse surrounding feminism, its current representation and new forms of activism within the online environment.

The practice provides an empirical case study exploring these debates and challenges around new technologies and the dissemination of women's films in documentary practice – what worked, what didn't, and what might have changed in the past fifty years. It also engages with the six current modes of documentary, how they have evolved, split, mixed and changed how women are making, distributing and finding new audiences for films outside of mainstream cinema economies.

Using participatory practices by engaging online audiences, an online digital documentary film was created with the aid of contributing audiences, using established methods in sound/reliable documentary practices. It would also serve as a creative foundation on which might be built a community of like-minded individuals who could collaborate on a developing narrative. In this respect, it was initiated in an attempt to turn the traditional filmmaking process upside down by collaborating with audiences who were also to be its consumers. The final film output would serve to address feminist filmmaking in its new documentary form, with the use of emerging technologies and new channels of distribution.

Feminist Filmmaking in its new frame

Much of women's filmmaking in the early seventies was driven by a desire to project images and representations that spoke to "real" women's lives and experiences. The emergence of cheaper, lighter equipment allowed women more access to tell their stories. With cheap equipment, Cinéma Vérité and Direct Cinema both in Europe and the US led to women producing films with new technologies to create when there was no access to training. This

emergence of new technology brought about collaboration amongst women filmmakers, which challenged the mainstream. It is those same challenges of marginalisation, distribution, and social attitudes, finding audiences and sustaining economic stability, that continues today.

New modes of practice are further complicating the discussion and debate around feminist thought, practice, its imagery and representation of women and their concerns. Technologies have changed, but in a sense the questions surrounding feminist filmmaking have not. Films working outside the mainstream, utilising small-scale productions, using new available technologies and collaborating with online, participatory audiences are necessary in order to build visibility and find distribution for women's films. In this case, my practice followed this framework and was approached in a first-person (or auto-ethnographic) style.

Using social media sites to fund, (Kickstarter), produce (Wordpress, Twitter, Facebook) and distribute (YouTube, Vimeo) the final film output, the practice used the variety of online resources to collectively build a digital footprint. I utilized cheap equipment, such as: a Flip camera, a mobile phone camera and Skype (with the screen capture software, Camtasia) to gather and shoot original footage. Recycled or curated media was also used to collect new moving frames from online sources such as YouTube. Ultimately, some aesthetics suffered due to the limited nature of the equipment and captured footage.

I also learned to become a "total filmmaker" (De Jong, Knudsen, Rothwell, 2013, p. 3). This involved learning how to manipulate new technologies toward alleviating the production's limited resources available as well as creating the practice through online collaborative modes. It was imperative to engage with and utilize new technological tools and integrate them into my production flow. Large learning curves would dictate certain methods of my practice, as well as take time away from the creative focus on its narrative development. Though this took more focus away from the actual filmmaking, and required more hours devoted to building and administrating online media platforms and technologies, it was necessary to the functionality of the new practice. The processes I used needed to be ordered, functional and automated in order for the various technologies to provide context, capture metadata (visual, textual, aural) and retain a repository for the project's outputs.

In this digital age so many new technologies are blurring the lines between amateur and

professional filmmaker, as just about anyone can wield a cheap camera, mobile phone device or webcam to record and distribute content (Dovey and Rose, 2013, p. 367). While digital filmmaking and distribution on the internet is perhaps perceived as ‘amateur’ filmmaking in the eyes of a traditional mainstream economic model, the current technological age of the internet has provided new business models, which can be potentially sustainable and economically viable for women filmmakers. Auto-ethnographic or first person narrative documentary forms can in fact flourish within collaborative models of practice, because for feminist films, a key proponent is its realism and access to telling stories about women, by women.

By placing the film’s practice within the online platform, a form of ‘realism’ can be encouraged, or at the very least a documented account and established transparency between filmmaker and audience. Women filmmakers attempted to structure their films and tell their stories through personal experiences and share it in a politicized way. These films are labeled as “woman-identified” and thus this ideology has not changed much since the 1960s.

Empowering, educational and informative, albeit controversial, feminist film theory developed alongside the feminist movement of the 70s, and has continued to develop into the present day debate. By the 1970s a radical form of feminism emerged, particularly in the USA, which aligned with activist leanings to create specifically feminist films and filmmakers, which could be shown to women’s groups. Women’s issues however, were not being addressed in the mainstream cinema, at least from a female point of view.

The emergence of film festivals specifically catering to women’s films became a signifier for growing feminist subject matter and audiences’ interest in these types of film. Today, because of the nature of the digital media and internet, women filmmakers have more opportunities to create and share films on issues, which are important to them. A greater access to cheap and free digital resources and the use of various social media platforms provide women filmmakers tools to further feminist filmmaking by making and sharing stories about and for women that represent female embodiment. The internet can also close gaps of opportunity for women filmmakers and provide a collaborative exchange which opens creative engagement.

New modes of representation will perhaps further be altered by new documentary practices. Amateur media production will also most likely play an increasingly significant role in the

future cultural landscape, which will only add to the on-going debate as well as raising new questions about creativity, identity and culture (Dovey and Rose, 2013, p. 367).

Documentary Practice and its Evolution

Documentary has always existed in the tension between what Grierson termed ‘actuality’ and its ‘creative treatment’ (based on a classical, idealist German philosophy). From the 1930s the Documentary Film Movement he established, with its ensemble of “social-idealist intellectuals, film-makers and producers” (Aitken, 2013, p. 136), developed frameworks and principles for this new and radical form of filmmaking. However, in 1960 a new movement emerged, *Cinéma Vérité* (known as Vertovian Practice) in France as a ‘new documentary’ form, which sought – like Grierson, but with different methods - a ‘cinema of truth’. In America and Canada during the same time, Direct Cinema emerged as the competing form of documentary, which shifted to a “dominant ‘fly-on-the-wall’ observational, non-interventionist aesthetic” (Winston, 2013, p. 2) and rejected the classic techniques established by Grierson.

The two ‘schools’ (Griersonian and Vertovian) adopted different approaches and debates around what the ‘truth’ of documentary would be, and once more raised questions about the nature and extent of documentary’s ‘truth’ and ‘value’. . Defining ‘documentary value’, then, can be found in how filmmakers choose to shoot, edit, frame, direct and embody ethical decisions in order to construct the film (Rughani, 2013, p. 98). These questions are always complex, yet makers of documentaries in today’s modern digital age continue to have a responsibility to uphold the value and integrity of their documentary practice, no matter what form or shape its output. Those responsibilities of the filmmaker impact the question of authorship and its relation to ‘transparency’ and ‘truth’. Sometimes the very intervention of the filmmaker can disrupt the intention of transparency and truthfulness.

Nichols describes documentary as an ‘institutional framework’ which imposes ways of seeing and speaking (2010, p. 17), and argues that these can be seen within six different modes of representation. These sub-genres are known as Expository, Observational, Poetic, Reflexive, Performative and Participatory and each follows its own sets of rules. They can co-exist beside each other, utilize similar techniques, are not mutually exclusive and can represent a combination of styles within one form. But the documentary form is constantly evolving, and

with its key debates about its relation to and use of evidence, witness and ethics continue to be raised. Authorship of these emerging forms can also be potentially problematic.

However, the question of authorship has traditionally been problematic for the documentary as the very nature of the auteur disrupts the film's allegiance to transparency and truthfulness (49). It is especially difficult to define within a collaborative production. However, within new media the content of the work and interface are separated, therefore it is possible to create different meanings with the same material (Pettice, 2011, p. 26-27). Interaction could alter and reshape an original narrative, in addition to the creative practice itself. Structure notwithstanding, utilising an interactive narrative can be understood as providing multiple trajectories, and thus striving for 'egalitarian authenticity' even with overlapping narratives and themes.

More recently, and in light of emerging technologies, theorists of film authorship have begun to see the female auteur as neither an individual creative genius nor entirely the product of the entire film text, but rather as a figure influencing the production and consumption of the text (Hollinger, 2012, p. 231). Within the context of women's documentaries, a set of filmmaking practices called first-person films, while not easily definable in terms of aesthetic forms, would perhaps also fall under the category of female auteur because of their individualistic modes of expression (Lebow, 2013, p. 258).

With new strategies, intertwined with technological advances and the integration of participatory engagement, further escalation of the debates around authorship, evidence, witness and ethics continues. Therefore, when new technologies enter the field, the filmmaker's focus should always be on capturing and displaying accuracy and truthfulness to audiences, because the truth claims will always rest with them. 'Truth', then, is not a fixed thing, but rather an idea that materializes through events, people and places. The audience's engagement with documentary as a 'truth' must begin with the filmmaker's intention and final output but will be determined by the relationship between filmmaker, text, and audience/participants. .

As I discovered, it is how the filmmaker reframes the content and then further disseminates their film online, which can impose ethical challenges. It also raises legal questions. In a vast sea of content, it is difficult for government bodies to monitor copyright infringements of

digital material. Online media content is a complex issue when it comes to privacy, piracy and intellectual property rights, where the laws are suited and written for a pre-internet digital era. For example, I created a branded YouTube channel specifically to distribute original and shared content with my audiences, which might prove useful to the production. Recycled media clips would indeed serve as valuable resources for the project, though not my original footage, and every best effort to clear all video content with the original owners was intended. However, some video clips were impossible to trace back to the original creator because of vast online re-sharing.

If filmmakers are keen on delivering media across online social media networks, they will however, need to arm themselves with the latest technologies and legal knowledge to ensure ownership and a profitability of their intellectual property. Emerging practices are dictating rapid changes in the copyright laws, as the technology and new platforms for dissemination are forcing filmmakers to adapt to alternative means of practice, distribution and economic models. While filmmakers should be diligent about protecting their intellectual property, there should also be a cultural movement alongside to change attitudes about current copyright policy and how to best engage those practices in an environment that is diversified by its creators and users.

New Tools and Devices for Practice

New technological flexibility allows for a wide range of creation and dissemination possibilities, which can reach audiences before, during and after production. Filmmakers embracing these technologies and understanding the complexities within their applications can lead to new forms of creativity and further debates about their place within documentary practice. New media have opened up new communication channels for filmmakers and audiences to engage, which have also created opportunities for data collection. As Knusden argues:

With an increasingly flexible range of devices such as the iPod, iPad, laptop computers, desktop computers and TV sets...where once the viewer could only see documentaries in a cinema, they can now carry a device in their pocket that will give them instant access to thousands of movies and other moving image content that they can view on demand (2012, pp. 309-10).

My practice utilized these (and many more) technologies, typically suited for business, science and engineering industries, yet now being incorporated by the arts and humanities as socially acceptable tools for creative practice. With a wide variety of uses, they can facilitate new methods of accessibility, delivery and knowledge reserves – what the film industry gatekeepers give limited access for only the privileged few.

For example, some of the online tools applied to my film practice were the use of SEO (Search Engine Optimisation) practices, application and usage of social media platforms (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube), establishing a Wordpress blog (including additional widgets, plugins and metadata usage). These online tools allowed for the functionality of curating, sharing and recording engagement within virtual communities, which were necessary to the development of my film's narrative. These new tools and their applications allowed for my practice to exist outside of the traditional documentary methodologies (while still incorporating various applications of current forms of practice) and aid in its new technological form, scope and reach. Keegan (2008) states that movies can influence audiences and change their behaviours, and this access to those influential audiences can have a direct impact on how filmmakers make and share their films.

The rising prominence of web-based media is allowing filmmakers to better make a social impact – whether on a small or large scale. Films can now bypass traditional distribution channels altogether and be released on websites, such as, YouTube and Facebook. This shift allows audiences to consume content when, where and how they want and this flexibility can allow filmmakers a greater creative freedom to explore and share stories without the limitations of the traditional industry practices. The combination of technology and access to online audiences has given rise to a current landscape in which documentary films are made and shared with the very audiences the filmmaker serves. Some of the technologies in the case of my film worked within its anticipated production methodology, some did not. The use of new tools opened new creative channels of activity and tested its 'documentary value' within a collaborative engagement with online communities. However, participation and sharing tasks geared towards the collective approach of making a digital documentary was not without its own sets of challenges.

The list of available technologies is immense, but can also be offer opportunity. Allowing the filmmaker to pick and choose resources which best fit their production; can be utilized to

reach a core audience unique to their story. Most of these technologies are offered for free in the online environment and can require minimal, if any, programming knowledge. Essentially, they are plug-and-play formats, which allow the filmmaker to focus on creating content instead. However, as stated earlier, there is still yet a long learning curve for filmmakers working in this new technological environment (even so perhaps for a seasoned professional filmmaker). The language of business and technology has merged into the creative fold and filmmakers must learn it in order to expand their reach and expertise beyond the traditional production processes.

Thus, filmmakers can be liberated from the traditional institutions, which perhaps might be unnecessarily heavy-handed on creative input and/or limit the access to resources invaluable to a filmmaker's success. In this collaborative environment with accessible mobile equipment and technological applications, gone are the traditional gatekeepers necessary to find a market, distribute and find an audience. Filmmakers can distribute films through a multitude of online channels and in some cases, even turn a profit (i.e. through YouTube's Partnership Program) with non-exclusive partnership agreements (on more than one platform), with shared advertising revenue and audience-supported crowd funding and donations.

Crowd funding in recent years has become a valid source of much needed funding capital for filmmakers. However, my particular film project was not successful (in raising any funds) with this emerging platform, as the platform was new when the campaign was launched. Kickstarter, launched in 2009, had no proof of concept, case studies or 'how-to' manuals in which filmmakers could apply best practices to their projects. However, the marketplace quickly emerged, with new crowd funding sites such as the Biracy Project, IndieGogo, FilmFunds and Sponsume, providing more avenues to gain valuable financial resources from audiences (fans, friends, followers) outside traditional financing models. Hope (2010) states that expectations have changed and that buyers and audience behaviours have shifted with the values placed on products at various levels. Therefore filmmakers' strategies must also change.

Market demand for online content is also changing the traditional market structure of distribution and delivery for filmmakers outside of the traditional system. And it is the use of these new technologies that can meet the demand due to the limited barriers to entry, varied distribution channels and accessibility to potential audiences (Shlain, 2011). Bypassing the

traditional sales and distribution process, online distributors like YouTube, Vimeo, Babblegum, and Snagfilm.com are operating on a revenue-sharing model where filmmakers can make money from shared advertising revenue. Straight sales models through Amazon.com and Createspace.com (a subsidiary of Amazon) also serve as publishing on-demand sites where filmmakers can upload and distribute their films without the need for manufacturing or fulfilment structures. IMDB.com and Withoutabox.com (also subsidiaries of Amazon) can enable filmmakers to submit projects for film festivals and have its film information “feed into the long tail business model of Amazon.com” (Knudsen, 2012, p. 311).

The Long Tail is a term that describes the retailing strategy of selling a large number of unique items with relatively small quantities sold of each – usually in addition to selling fewer popular items in large quantities. These digital platforms allow filmmakers to create artwork formatted for DVD and CD jackets, display the product with relevant information (supplied by the filmmaker), which then allows customers to purchase the product. Filmmakers have neither the packaging nor shipping responsibilities when distributing on these sites. It’s worth noting that less than a decade ago self-publication and distribution was seen as amateurish and unprofessional. These online technologies exist to streamline the backend of a business. What once was a costly output only accessible by big studios with large marketing budgets, on-demand publishing allows filmmakers to have an cheaper and faster way in which to showcase, sell and collect revenues for their films, thereby allowing them to focus more on the creation of new products.

As business models adapt to the digital culture and effective ways of doing business in an economical, expedient and sustainable way, these technologies, their applications, collaborative engagement and dissemination are now a valued supply chain for filmmakers to work outside mainstream cinema. However, it is not without its limitations and challenges, the burden of quickly changing technologies, continuing debates within the evolution of documentary practice and the cultural and social implications of making women’s cinema in online spaces impact new media practices.

Reflecting on the overall process, though value was achieved through learning new skills, adapting new technologies and expanding my knowledge and expertise of documentary filmmaking, the challenges faced could be perceived as unbalanced. In light of the

tremendous amount of ‘offline’ creativity engaged in – that is administration of social media channels, technical challenges for automation synergies for seamless workflow – there were advantages to working in this way.

For one, the creative autonomy left me free to create within a space of my own making and within the constraints of my own timeframe. By not securing outside funding, I was left to my own devices when it came to creative decision-making and production choices. Secondly, working within a participatory space, allowed for a creative synergy and collaboration amongst a global collective mind that I would not have had access to otherwise in a more traditional production space. Working within social media spheres, also opened up possibilities to expand upon available resources through technological additions that can only be found on the internet.

While there were opportunities for creative exploration and collaborative exchange, there were also challenges in getting a sufficient number of participants. Not that there was a set amount I was seeking to bring on-board, but rather the experience of working in this new way was tantamount to discovering what was possible. It is still unclear whether participatory audiences are more interested in merely being a part of a creation, during the many stages of production, rather than just consumers or viewers of the final product.

There are continued challenges in the participatory space when looking at documentary forms, particularly new forms and key debates. Authorship, while another complex subject, specifically for women, is further complicated when working within participant environments. However, I think there is definitely a space in which creative authorship can be claimed when working in this way and I think my case study showed an authority of voice and narrative. Even though content was derived from multiple spaces and authors, shared and re-shared by anonymous providers, it was my creative choice in the post-production phase that would shape the final narrative of the film, thus giving an authorial position.

There is no definitive answer in this regard, but each new opportunity to create, raises new questions within the confines of the three key debates in documentary. However, by adhering to the documentary ‘rules’ and providing a space for transparency and trust to be evident, there is less likelihood of misrepresentation and ethical misuse.

Sustainability and film revenues obtained through these new online models are still evolving. And while crowdfunding sites can offer respite from traditional methods of film financing, they bring their own sets of challenges; not the least in that there are no guaranteed methods in an online collaborative space. There are many new skills and learning curves, just as with film production, that must be undertaken if filmmakers are to become total filmmakers, which seems now is a necessity for survival in the emerging online space of documentary filmmaking.

Final thoughts

My research expands on the growing debate around new documentary practices utilizing collaboration and online participatory forms for creativity and distribution. The changes in copyright policy and business models against the traditional output of media establishments signifies a new era of practice methodologies, which push the boundaries within established documentary disciplines as well as emerging creative economies amongst feminist filmmakers.

By taking advantage of new technologies, filmmakers are changing policy and dictating new standards of practices and dissemination outside the traditional industry establishments. Audiences are forcing filmmakers to shift their strategies in all areas of film production, as they replace the gatekeepers of old. As technology advances, new business models emerge as the audiences' dictate how media products are bought and consumed, when, when and how they want; to compete with the giant media conglomerates of the past and its newer versions of the present. But with this newfound creative freedom come larger responsibilities. These include responsibilities to the key debates surrounding documentary practice and to the audiences who entrust that what they are seeing and buying is produced with authenticity and transparency.

A large burden of responsibility falls on the shoulders of the documentarist. If all creative work must find a delicate balance between artistic ambition and creative responsibility, integrity when working with real subjects and controversial subject matter must be valued and integrated into the filmmaking process if it is to protect its documentary credentials. This can present many challenges, as filmmakers are faced with an overwhelming onslaught of new technology languages, applications and procedure, which they must adapt into their

creative filmmaking process. Despite reluctance, filmmakers may need to embrace the “total filmmaker” (De Jong, Knudsen, Rothwell, 2013, p. 3) identity in order to create projects in this new media space.

It is this greater embrace of innovation and experimentation in leveraging new projects with the ability to fail (and the ability to show value), which is needed. Technological knowledge and new creative approaches to build communities with better business models are also needed. I believe my practice methodology can be used to make quality films with inherent value, or at the very least to satisfy creative inspiration and continued discourse. Inherently, an online repository of data and knowledge will emerge despite the practice’s financial successes or failures.

Filmmaking is no longer so dominated by the old rules established by those in Hollywood and traditional film and television industries. Documentary filmmakers may also now make bypass those hierarchical rules via social networks and virtual audiences in the online communities in which they can build and nurture into a sustainable and economical following. Through further research and continued practice, more case studies will emerge to determine whether they make a significant impact through new creative practices and delivery methods. Established debates of key themes will continue to evolve as the practice itself morphs into new forms. There are many technological considerations, but at the same time, there are also social consequences that the filmmaker and his/her online participants must adhere to for best practices and establishing new foundations of digital documentary practice within collaborative environments.

Ideally, this experience has changed my frame of reference and how I look at filmmaking, documentary experience and collaboration. The skills and experiences I gained through my research have led me to new areas of interactive digital documentary filmmaking, expanding into areas of UX (user experience), new models of construction and a continued curiosity for creative productivity within participatory communities, both online and offline, particularly, focusing on interactive documentaries for social change.

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Bowling for Columbine (2002) by Michael Moore
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Divorce Iranian Style (1998) Kim Longinotto, Ziba Mir-Hosseini
Exit Through the Gift Shop (2010) by Banksy
Fahrenheit 911 (2004) by Michael Moore
Gimme Shelter (1970) by Albert Maysles, David Maysles, Charlotte Zwerin
General Orders No. 9 (2009) by Robert Persons
Growing Up Female (1971) by Jim Klein, Julia Reichert
Hidden Faces (1990) by Claire Hunt, Kim Longinotto
I Am Somebody (1969) by Madeline Anderson
Janie's Janie (1972) by Jane Giese
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Land Without Bread (1933) by Luis Bunuel
Man on Wire (2008) by James Marsh
Man with a Movie Camera (1929) Dziga Vertov
Mother of Many Children (1977) by Alanis Obomsawin
Nanook of the North (1922) by Robert J. Flaherty
Night and Fog (1955) by Alain Resnais
Night Mail (1936) by Harry Watt, Basil Wright
Primary (1960) by Robert Drew
Roger and Me (1989) by Michael Moore
Runaway (2001) Kim Longinotto, Ziba Mir-Hosseini
Single Girl in a Virtual World: What Does a 21st Century Feminist Look Like? (2013) by Jodi Nelson
The Cove (2009) by Louis Psihoyos
The River (1938) by Pare Lorentz
The Spanish Earth (1937) by Joris Ivens
The Thin Blue Line (1988) by Errol Morris
The Woman's Film (1971) by Louise Alaimo, Judy Smith, Ellen Sorren
This is Spinal Tap (1984) by Rob Reiner
Titicut Follies (1967) by Frederick Wiseman
Tongues Tied (1989) by Marlon Riggs
Waltz with Bashir (2008) by Ari Folman
Why We Fight (1942-45) by Frank Capra, Anatole Litvak

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Figure 3 – Technical Flowchart of Online Production Practice (3 of 4) (Nelson, 2009).

Figure 4 – Technical Flowchart of Online Production Practice (4 of 4) (Nelson, 2009).

Practice Elements and Links

Nelson, J. (2010) *Single Girl in a Virtual World: Trailer* [Online]. Available at:
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Appendix

Workflow Models & Visual Representations of Online Media Content

I built these visual workflow models (Nelson 2009) around the technical aspects and workflow for the purposes of designing the production process (See Figures 1-4), which allowed the emerging practice and me a more organised approach, further efficacy and streamlined process. This process I found ultimately led the practice to be more personal, creatively accessible and transparent amongst the relationships developed in the online communities. This made the experience much more tangible and brought with it a sense of ease and a newfound sense of creative freedom.

WORKFLOW MODEL

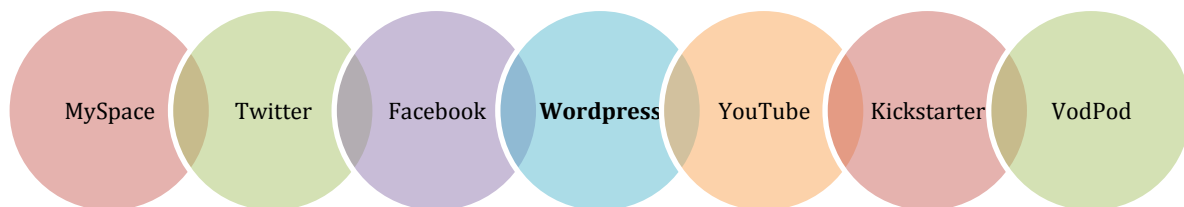


Figure 1 –Technical Flowchart of Online Production Practice (1 of 4) (Nelson 2009)



Figure 2 - Technical Flowchart of Online Production Practice (2 of 4) (Nelson 2009)

Social Media Editorial Calendar (30) Minutes a Day:

- Wordpress
 - Update site with Journal Entry/Blog
 - Update site with weekly Podcast
 - Call to Action (Every two weeks)
 - Share Journal entry with widgets available
 - Reply to comments
 - Link/comment on other related blogs
- iTunes
 - Publish/update weekly Podcast
- Facebook
 - Update all pages and groups with WP post
 - Announcement weekly for:
 - Kickstarter timeframe/countdown
 - Podcasts
 - New Journal Entry/Blog
 - Call to Action Announcements
 - Join/Like new groups
 - Reply to members' feeds
- Twitter
 - Update with all activity from WP
 - Invite followers/reply to new followers
 - Invite friends/reply to comments/follow
- MySpace
 - Update with all activity from WP
- YouTube
 - Upload all new videos
 - Post Bulletin to community
 - Invite subscriber/reply/comments
- Kickstarter (& BuyACredit)
 - Update community with all WP updates.
 - Share via widgets available
- VodPod
 - Upload new videos/podcast
 - Share via widgets available
 - Invite new followers/reply to followers
- TubeMogul
 - Upload new videos/distribute viral sites
- Feeds
 - Update all feeds with links to WP updates
- Orkut
 - Update all WP items on network
 - Invite new fans/reply to community
- Crowdrise
 - Update community with fundraising video
 - Invite/reply to community

Figure 3 - Technical Flowchart of Online Production Practice (3 of 4) (Nelson 2009)

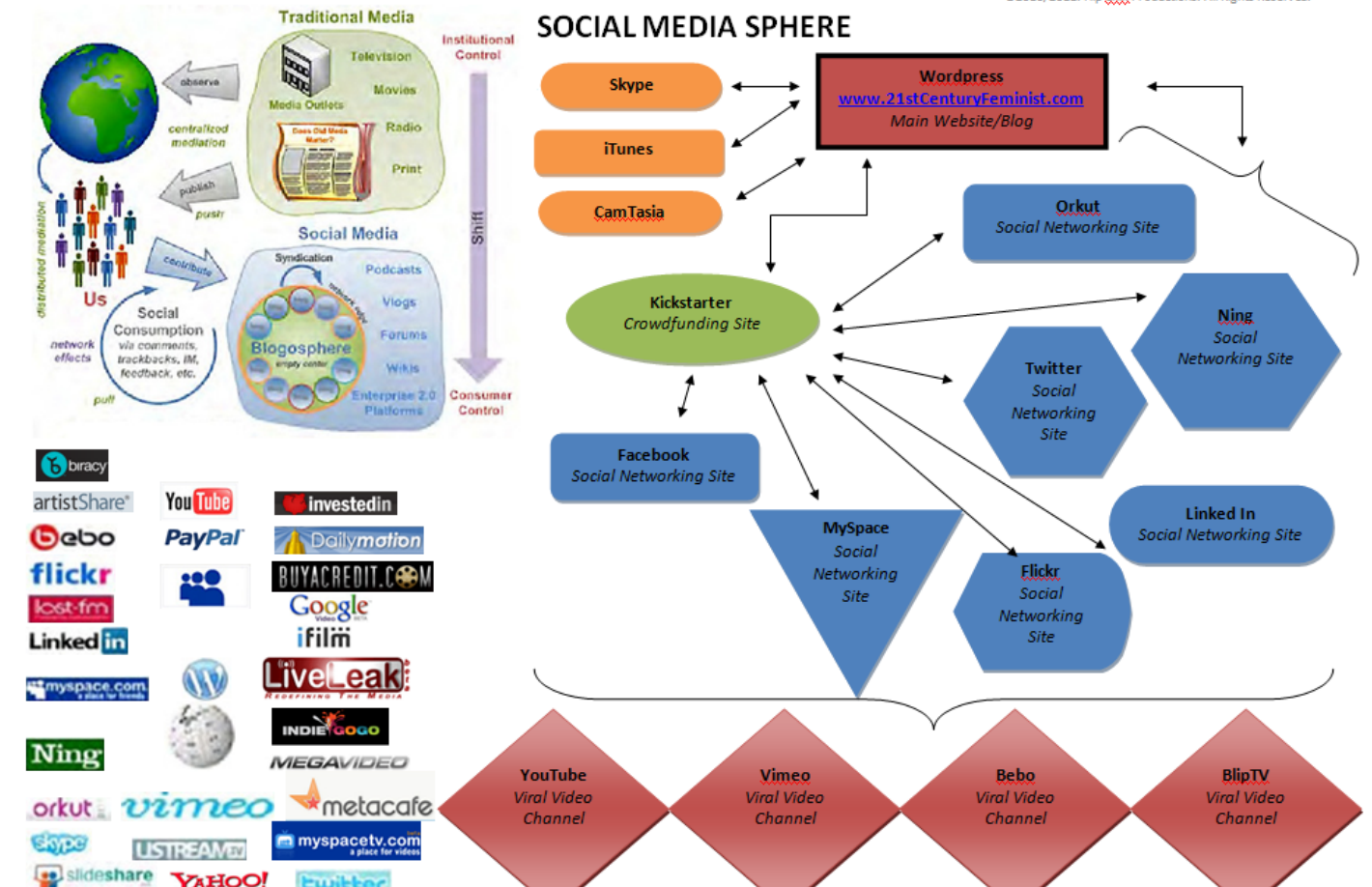


Figure 4 - Technical Flowchart of Online Production Practice (4 of 4) (Nelson 2009)

Practice Elements and Links

Film Trailer: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U6-HtdssvT4> (Nelson 2010)



Documentary Film: *'Single Girl in a Virtual World: What Does a 21st Century Feminist Look Like?'* http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=YhK0TTF8_NY (Nelson 2013)



Film Blog: <http://21stCenturyFeminist.com> (Nelson 2010)

Single Girl in a Virtual World: What Does a 21st Century Feminist Look Like?


A documentary film that exemplifies feminism in its profoundly new image



Twitter Feed: <https://twitter.com/feministproject> (Nelson 2010)



YouTube Channel: <http://www.youtube.com/21stcenturyfeminist> (Nelson 2010)




21st Century Feminist


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
21stCenturyFeminist uploaded a video 2 months ago




Part 5 - Single Girl in a Virtual World: What Does a 21st Century Feminist Look Like?

20 views

An online documentary, which utilizes found, recycled and original media to create a new canvas of debate in the realm of documentary creation and 21st Century Feminism. Filmmaker Jodi Nelson takes




21stCenturyFeminist uploaded a video 2 months ago




Part 4 - Single Girl in a Virtual World: What Does a 21st Century Feminist Look Like?

19 views

An online documentary, which utilizes found, recycled and original media to create a new canvas of debate in the realm of documentary creation and 21st Century Feminism. Filmmaker Jodi Nelson takes




21stCenturyFeminist uploaded a video 2 months ago




Part 3 - Single Girl in a Virtual World: What Does a 21st Century Feminist Look Like?

31 views

An online documentary, which utilizes found, recycled and original media to create a new canvas of debate in the realm of documentary creation and 21st Century Feminism. Filmmaker Jodi Nelson takes




21stCenturyFeminist uploaded a video 2 months ago




Part 2 - Single Girl in a Virtual World: What Does a 21st Century Feminist Look Like?

31 views

An online documentary, which utilizes found, recycled and original media to create a new canvas of debate in the realm of documentary creation and 21st Century Feminism. Filmmaker Jodi Nelson takes



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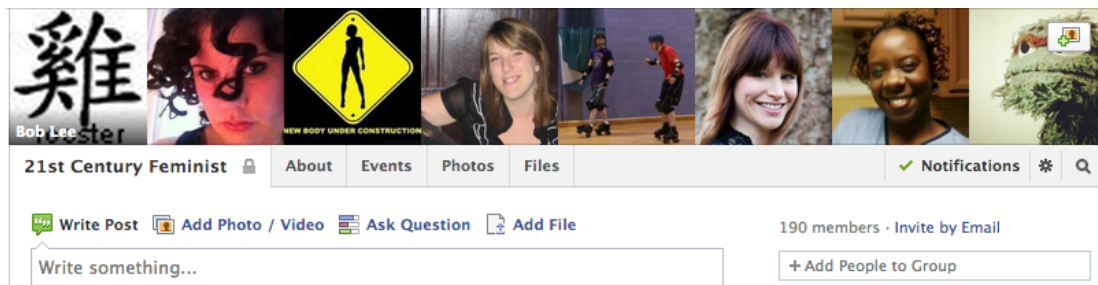


Part 1 - Single Girl in a Virtual World: What Does a 21st Century Feminist Look Like?

38 views

An online documentary, which utilizes found, recycled and original media to create a new canvas of debate in the realm of documentary creation and 21st Century Feminism. Filmmaker Jodi Nelson takes

Facebook Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/singlegirlvirtualworld/> (Nelson 2010)



Kickstarter Campaign: <http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/21stcenturyfeminist/single-girl-in-a-virtual-world?ref=search> (Nelson 2010)

Single Girl in a Virtual World

by Jodi Nelson

Home Updates **7** Backers **7** Comments **0**

Brighton, United Kingdom Documentary

7 backers

\$440 pledged of \$20,000 goal

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Funding Unsuccessful

This project reached the deadline without achieving its funding goal on February 20, 2011.

Project by
Jodi Nelson
Johnson City, TN
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Single Girl in a Virtual World: What Does a 21st Century Feminist Look Like?

Launched: Dec 22, 2010
Funding ended: Feb 20, 2011

Cheap Digital Technology

Measuring social media, digital technology, alternative production methodologies and various new delivery strategies, how does this impact the film's message and creative process?

- Open source stock clips
- YouTube
- Facebook
- Wordpress
- Twitter
- Video Phones
- Flip Cameras

