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This dissertation is an exploration of identity formation when crossing national boundaries and confronting disparate cultures and histories. Working with the assumption that identifying (or not) with local discourses informs behaviors and values, this study examines what questions emerge when one is immersed in discourses that were created beyond one's locality. Through weekly interviews with two exchange students who came to the University of North Carolina at Greensboro from Mexico, this inquiry explores how they situate themselves within and against their local discourses before, during and after the transnational experience.

The author uses bricolage and brings together different ways of knowing: visual, textual, historical, personal, and analytical in order to explore this encounter with difference. Crossing national boundaries is an experience in which fixed notions are called into question through exposure to disharmonious realities. The purpose of using bricolage is to expose the readers to disharmony in hopes that their own questions emerge about the representation of culture and nature. Rather than leading the reader down a path in which an argument is built vertically, bricolage immerses the reader into a conversation and encourages the reader to make his or her own meaning in their engagement with the texts. By exploring the students' experiences through both a visual documentary and a textual discourse analysis, a comparison between the different forms of representation arises. Different questions and meanings emerge depending on which method the researcher is using. Different paradigms exist at the same time.

The pedagogical implications challenge typical definitions of education. Rather than thinking about education as coming from an authority figure that has categorized phenomena for an audience to consume, this dissertation explores the educative experience of pulling apart fixed categories and meditating on the resulting dissonance. The former isolated notion of education complements the written media and the classroom environment. The latter notion considers visual media an important place to raise questions. It deems experience, i.e., traveling, educative and difficult questions central. And it regards considerations about the opportunities and limitations of visual texts, as well as, the opportunities and limitations of written texts as a priority.

A VISUAL AND TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF TRANSNATIONAL
IDENTITY FORMATION AND REPRESENTATION

by

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To the two breaths who never quite exhaled.

APPROVAL PAGE

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PROLOGUE: PROVOCATIONS/REFLECTIONS

Unlike most dissertations this work is not built vertically. I do not begin with theoretical foundations and then construct a logical argument that concludes with practical applications. Rather, I structure my dissertation horizontally by placing visual texts, written texts, different types of research, and paradoxical ideas next to each other in order to see what foment from the reverberations. Experiential learning (i.e., traveling) is placed next to didactic learning. A visual analysis is placed next to a textual analysis. Aesthetic ways of knowing are considered with rational ways of knowing, and performative storytelling echoes against narrative storytelling. Like Sergei Eisenstein's theory of montage, these texts "collide" against one another creating new meanings and interpretations. In concert with the horizontal structure of this dissertation, this prologue also serves as the epilogue. It provokes questions about the different educational opportunities provided in written and visual representations. These questions are vital to consider in order to introduce the study and they are also important to revisit after the interactions between the reader, the writing, and the visuals have occurred.

This bricolage will examine the pedagogy of traveling as well as different representations of this pedagogy. I interview and film two students from Mexico while they are participating in an exchange program with at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNC-G). My interest is in what assumptions held by the students were challenged as a result of traversing national boundaries and how these challenges affected

their sense of self. From this exploration I create a video documentary, as well as a textual analysis of the experience.

The different educational opportunities presented by texts and visuals is a tension that plays in my thoughts. On the one hand, there are theorists, like Paulo Freire (1970) and Maxine Greene (1983), who claim that ‘naming’ the world is the necessary path toward overthrowing tyranny. “To exist humanly is to *name* the world, to change it” (Freire, 1970, pg. 89). This notion speaks to the supremacy of literacy; the act of using words, names, and categories to shape our understanding of the world. I witnessed the power of this naming as I taught ELC 381. Some students were given words for injustices they felt existed and never had the words to express. Other students were challenged to rethink their words in the face of new ones. Visuals, on the other hand, can strike people on a more emotional level. In *Remember My Lai* (1989) we see Vernardo Simpson’s miserable condition as he recounts his participation in the massacre at My Lai. This specific, visual connection is quite different from reading about soldiers experiencing PTSD. This dissertation project is an attempt to create space for visual knowledge within an institution that has been overly trusting of text. And to create space for experiential knowledge in an institution that has been overly trusting of classroom pedagogy. When creating space, I do not want to simply bully these ideas into a crowded room, but I want to consider what kinds of intellectual and pedagogical spaces might it occupy.

At times, this project decentralizes written texts and classroom learning while centralizing visual culture and experiential learning. Derrida through deconstruction

centralizes marginalized readings of texts in order to de-center dominant assumptions and practices. This is not for the purpose of creating new centers, new masters, or new hierarchies, but to show that oppositional and otherwise different readings are meaningful and educative, particularly in relation to existing readings. The authorities, patterns, and connections between authors, readers, and texts fluctuate. Rather than settling on one connecting line, thereby creating stable ideas that privilege certain readings over others, the scholar should allow the different meanings to oscillate. The scholar should embrace the multiplicity of readings. Each construction and each privileging offers its own set of opportunities and consequences.

Deconstructing master narratives began, for Derrida, as a way to open the authoritarian postures for greater justice. “Justice is what gives us the impulse, the drive, or the movement to improve the law, that is, to deconstruct the law. Without a call for justice we would not have any interest in deconstructing the law” (Caputo, 1997, p. 16). There is a critique of power that is essential to understanding and contextualizing the different meanings through the lens of justice. One must consider who benefits from particular constructions of truth. One must consider whether particular constructions maintain the status quo or whether they allow for movement and action that redistributes power. Simply destabilizing authorities and master narratives is not in itself an admirable venture; rather we have to look at the intentions of overturning institutions and belief systems. The point is not to undo the Enlightenment, but rather to explore where, why, and how the Enlightenment has not provided justice. The point is to reframe the Enlightenment to adjust to our new mediums and our new senses of the world. There is

plenty of evidence that the destabilization of authorities and truth has been used for nefarious ends. Justifying the invasion in Iraq depended on challenging the authority of the UN, while the symbolic relationship to flags and presidents provided an unquestionable sense of what is right and what is good. The United States' inaction to address concerns about global warming has been rationalized by questioning the authority of environmental scientists. The task is precarious, as the struggle for justice always is, but it corresponds with the cultural and historical times in which we live.

The centrality of text in being the basis of knowledge has come under considerable criticism, lately. As I explored in Chapter II, writing privileges linear and rational thought over intuitive and embodied ways of knowing. The criticism goes deeper, however. Writing, fundamentally, changes our relationship with ideas and knowledge. It constructs knowledge as an object with which humans can hold, manipulate, and control. Suzanne de Castell explained:

Writing, because it enabled the separation of the utterance from the speaker and from the particular circumstances of that speaking, made it possible—and for the first time, so the argument goes—to constitute knowledge as an object, and to classify, subdivide and systematize it into distinctive disciplinary domains. (de Castell, 1995, p. 249)

As opposed to speaking, written texts were able to communicate without a body. Written texts could be consumed as though they were beyond context. Knowledge became a tangible object that we could manipulate and control rather than something by which we are humbled and by which we are awed. Our classifications of materials, ideas, and words became real objects unto themselves, rather than categories that we created to

improve understanding. Robert Pirsig (1991) shows how our classifications take on materiality through the clash between the platypus and the category of mammal:

Even today you still see occasional articles in nature magazines asking, “Why does this paradox of nature exist?” The answer is: it doesn’t. The platypus isn’t doing anything paradoxical at all. It isn’t having any problems. Platypi have been laying eggs and suckling their young for millions of years before there were any zoologists to come along and declare it illegal. The real mystery, the real enigma, is how mature, objective, trained scientific observers can blame their own goof on a poor innocent platypus. (p. 102)

The definition of mammal had been created based on available observations. This category was passed down for centuries and seemed quite stable. But then, those who classified certain animals as mammal came across the duckbill platypus. And, rather than re-thinking their categories or definitions they blamed the animal. Thomas Kuhn (1962), in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, called these disturbances in seemingly stable categories scientific anomalies. Theories did not necessarily change through the gathering of more information, but they changed when there were enough anomalies to require a paradigm shift.

In the 1930’s, A. R. Luria wanted to study how literacy effects cognitive development. He did research in the Soviet Union with illiterate Muslim farmers. He suspected that there were deficiencies in the brain that had not developed literacy skills and that teaching these farmers to read would develop their brains and empower them. As a part of his research, he posed logical puzzles to the farmers and came to conclusions based on how they answered. For example, one puzzle was to determine which object does not belong between a hammer, a saw, a tree trunk, and an axe. The farmers played

with the classifications, saying that the axe and the saw could chop the log, but the hammer could not. Or, that all the tools were made out of the tree trunk, therefore all of the objects belonged in one group and what was missing was a worker.

Perhaps it seems clear that the tree trunk is the odd one out because the other three fall under the category of “tools.” Perhaps we conclude that these farmers are simple because they cannot correctly answer what we consider to be a child’s game. Luria felt these farmers clearly showed their intellectual deficiencies by not being able to answer these logical problems correctly. To him, “tool” appeared to be a real, fundamental item, rather than a classification constructed by humans. With these isolated bits of seemingly stable meaning, one can build meaning rationally, logically, and linearly. Luria (1976) explained:

Because of the hierarchical system of individual sentences, of which verbal and logical constructions are a typical example, humans have at their disposal a powerful objective tool that permits them not only to reflect individual objects or situations but also to create objective logical codes. Such codes enable a person to go beyond direct experience and to draw conclusions that have the same objectivity as the data of direct sensory experience. In other words, social history has established the system of language and logical codes that permit men to make the leap from the sensory to the rational. (p. 10)

He felt it was clear that literacy was an objective tool with which to construct universal knowledge. He believed in the stable categories writing creates. However, by reframing Luria’s work through a lens of power we can better understand how he drew his conclusions. He clearly explains how the structure of language correlates to how we see, understand, and interpret the world. He shows that the categories we create and the authority we give them are intertwined with literacy. However, rather than concluding

that these categories are contingent and temporary, he maintains the authority of the written word. The category “tool” seems as real as a physical object, rather than a man-made classification. To him, this link between the signifier and the signified is a solid, direct connection. The “right” answer was clearly a tree trunk, and the “right” way to be is literate. Their illiteracy explained and, in essence, excused their powerless positions. But if we privilege the Derridean concept that patterns emerge and dissipate, that no meaning is fixed, we may conclude that the illiterate farmers were more astute than Luria. In this case, the written words clouded the understanding of reality as fluid and flexible.

To some scholars who are skeptical of the apparently stable categories that the written word creates, movies and documentaries seem like a refreshing way to represent the world. Historian R. J. Raack (1983) asserted that film is more suitable to represent a multi-dimensional understanding of reality. Movies do not do very well when it comes to long exposition, but the visual constructions can connect emotions and intentions to words and images in ways that written texts cannot. Writing, Raack argued, is too linear and narrow to capture the complex world in which we live. Only through filmic techniques like “quick cuts to new sequences, dissolves, fades, speed-ups, [and] slow motion” can the historian represent the daily experience of “ideas, words, images, preoccupations, distractions, sensory deceptions, conscious and unconscious motives and emotions” (p. 418). When confined to the linear and rational structures that written texts privilege, the visual media’s ability to represent irrational and non-linear aspects of our lives can seem refreshing.

MacDougall (1978), exploring ethnography, talks about the simultaneity of film that makes rich, layered understandings difficult to represent in the written word. “In anthropological writing information is conveyed serially” (p. 419). In an attempt to provide some context the anthropologist may include a sentence something like, “As we talked, we walked around the city completing his errands.” However, if the same interview were filmed such a sentence would be redundant. The film would also communicate this context throughout the entire sequence, while the text would not be able to reiterate this context gracefully. “Films present images for our inspection . . . The film-maker marks out the boundaries within which the objects of analysis can be found. These objects preserve their individuality and remain embedded in a context which presents itself as a continuum to the viewer” (MacDougall, 1978, pp. 419-420). Films do not offer analysis, per se, but rather a situation and characters with which to identify. Given this binary opposite between film and text some have concluded that the facial expressions, the bodily movements, the continual presence of place convey a richness that is lacking in the written word. The image, it is said, can hold more information than a written text.

However, the claim for more information is also made in the name of written texts. “The amount of traditional data that can presented on the screen in a two-hour film (or even an eight-hour mini-series) will always be so skimpy compared to a written version covering the same ground that a professional historian may feel intellectually starved” (Rosenstone, 1988, p. 1176). The number of events from which one can draw connections, the number of characters, and the depth of each of their backgrounds are

limited in the film format. Often this is because films must conform to narrative conventions. Compromises like condensing the amount of time an event seems to occur, combining different events or personalities into one, or just ignoring particular events must be made in order to adapt to the constraints.

Because films are not particularly good at exposition, ideas can become simplified, and careful parsing of intellectual positions and debates can become smoothed over. Philosopher Ian Jarvie explains that history [and I extend it to all social sciences] has been constructed by “debates between historians about just what exactly did happen, why it happened, and what would be an adequate account of its significance” (as cited in Rosenstone, 1988, p. 1176). A filmmaker may represent a particular point of view with more emotional depth than text, but the film itself cannot provide footnotes and/or raise opposing views in order to rebut them. If we consider the documentary *Remember My Lai*, for example, it does not stop and offer a serious antithesis to the reading of the filmmaker. When the filmmakers use other viewpoints it is only to make them seem callous and/or politically motivated.

The argument between which medium, the visual or the text, holds more information is an attempt to quantify the difference, which on its face is misguided. They both hold an infinite number of opportunities to construct information. The visual offers a *qualitatively* different kind of information than text. Authenticating visual information in an institution that has privileged the textual for so long is a great challenge. Validating visual texts for their own qualities forces a rethinking of the historical relationship with written texts. While our historical relationship with the word has influenced our

relationship with the visual, i.e., expectations of “objectivity,” embracing the qualities of the visual will influence our relationship with the word. Visual culture and textual culture raise profound questions through their critique of one another and the dissonance they create. They introduce discontinuity in our understandings of the world. By embracing visual culture alongside a textual culture will also break down many long held assumptions about the world and us. When visual culture is taken seriously in academia, academics must call into question their own relationship with the word.

Not only does film have capacities of revelation that differ from those of language, but it provides an opportunity for interrogating the concept of scientific communication, which assumes that language is an instrument for transmitting messages that progressively delineate the external world. (MacDougall, 1978, pp. 421-422)

Text becomes another contingent sign that represents the world and us and not a direct link to reality. Rather than disembodied creations devoid of context, written texts become embodied and situated. Rather than being separated from historical, social, and power discourses, they become texts that speak about the author as a cultural agent. Holding up a mirror of critique to a group that thought they were invisible has always been resisted. Those who believe the word links directly to the objective knowledge will not concede quietly.

This difference between textual and visual constructions was apparent to me throughout the duration of this project. While writing the textual analysis Chapter IV, I found the written word to be an extremely flexible mode of representation. I was able to use many different kinds of information at the same time. I began with information from

the material world, i.e., statements made by Student D and Student O. These statements did not have to be made at a particular time; I could place them side-by-side whether they were made at the beginning or the end of the semester. I could use statements made on or off the camera. I also included my own reflections on these statements. The statements by the students could be contextualized and my analysis was triangulated by historical and cultural analyses from other scholars. The vast amount of information I had at my disposal to manipulate into a meaningful piece of work provided a tremendous amount of flexibility to convey my experience of reflecting on the encounter.

While I was creating the documentary *exChange*, I felt more constricted by the narrative conventions. For one, I had to adhere to the chronology of events more. It was trickier to place quotes from different interviews side-by-side. I was more limited, although not completely, to what occurred in front of the camera. And I had to use that which I could *show* changed over time. I certainly did not have to have a narrative based on chronology. However, I needed a framework. No matter what framework I chose it would significantly restrict what information could be included.

There were many issues that I wanted to raise in the documentary that I had to leave out. There were many connections I wanted to make on which I was limited in my ability to explicitly elaborate. “The documentary bows to a double tyranny—which is to say an ideology—of the necessary image and perpetual movement” (Rosenstone, 1988, p. 1180). Ideas or connections that were difficult to show visually, or could not be simply explained in a way that moves the narrative forward, were often left out. If I did not have the appropriate images or quotes certain issues were not dealt with. If I could not show

growth and change certain ideas were ignored. And because I could only pick a few concepts to explore in the narrative in a timely fashion, I had to prioritize the concepts I wanted to convey. One storyline that was left out of the film was Student O's trip to the Venice Film Festival. While there were many opportunities to create meaning about celebrity and privilege, I decided to leave it out for the sake of time. In Chapter IV I was able to make those connections without taking up too much time, but in the film, raising it would have required that I spend a considerable amount of time (important minutes in a 69 minute documentary) contextualizing the event and attending to its significance.

I also wanted to raise issues of race, but these also proved difficult mainly because of the lack of substantial reflection on the part of Student D and Student O. They certainly confronted the reality of race issues in America as compared to the Hollywood representations of America. Off camera Student D related to me his shock of seeing how African American males dress, specifically, the large, sagging 'shorts' that come half way down the shin. "I see it on videos, but they're artists . . . it's like they are trying to be a stereotype." Witnessing the voluntary segregation in the cafeteria was also a surprise to them. Student O allowed that maybe African Americans still feel oppressed, but rejected the idea that they actually are. Interestingly, most of the theater friends they made were African-American. They, however, did not experience this as marginalization from the *White* theater community (although this line is fluid). They experienced these friendships as acceptance by the *American* theater community. Attending to these careful distinctions in the film would have required much attention for which the film did not allow. In order to explore these subjects adequately, I would have had to dedicate the entire video to

them. However, I made the choice beforehand to dedicate the exploration to the changes they encountered when they returned and to use acting as the device to move the narrative forward.

While this inflexibility seemed terribly limiting, at the same time there is a tremendous power to the documentary that is not conveyed in the written work. In Chapter IV, I quoted Student D and Student O talking about how they forgot about or how they noticed the poor people in Mexico once they returned. However, the words on the page lacked the emotional power of seeing their own personal discomfort confronting these realizations in themselves. We watched them at a loss for some words and swallow others. We saw them avert their eyes and squirm in their own skin. The visual presentation of these words, with the bodily movements and pregnant pauses, creates an emotional context that is difficult to convey through words. Rather than critiquing the words from a distance on the page, the viewer is invited to lean forward and identify with the characters on the screen. Moving, speaking visuals have the ability to connect to our emotions more easily and more readily than written texts.

Films and documentaries can touch us emotionally and communicate in ways in which people can identify. However, we must ask whether these representations open up spaces to act in ways that challenge the powerful from abusing their positions. If this is the golden age of documentaries, why are we at an ebb of civic engagement, especially during a time of war? *Fahrenheit 9/11* set records for documentaries and had to even provide additional screenings in a pro-military town like Fayetteville, NC. *An Inconvenient Truth* was a huge success and screened at the Cannes Film Festival. And yet

there seems to be little sustained public momentum to shape public policy on matters of war and the environment. So while documentaries may move us deeply about a particular topic or issue, it seems that this movement does not translate into sustained action. Perhaps the act of watching a film, the experience of sitting in a theater or at home and taking in information teaches passivity. But there is an even greater problem. Films do not provide for us the language to encounter the complex reality once we leave the theaters. While one may emotionally believe that the occupation in Iraq is unjust, if one does not have the language to recognize and counter the governmental and media-driven rhetoric, one does not have the tools needed to challenge the power structures, as they exist.

The written word, on the other hand, has inspired action, namely, the American Revolution, the French Revolution, the Mexican Revolution, etc. Movements like Communism and Nazism point to books as their foundations, such as *The Communist Manifesto* and *Mein Kampf*, respectively. Theory calls upon us to consider our language and ultimately to restructure our language. Language creates our world and reading and writing have the ability to reshape and reform our most fundamental assumptions. Asking us to reflect on our language, we are asked to reflect on our worldviews. There is a reason that traditional dissertations have been constructed vertically, from the foundational assumptions to the practical applications. It is an exploration of the language one holds to be stable and how that influences behavior.

As I think about experiential learning and classroom learning, I recognize a parallel to the visual and textual binary. Experiential learning also offers an emotional

and embodied interaction with the world, and yet it, too, does not provide a linguistic framework from which to interpret the experiences. We witness Student D and Student O at a loss for words once they see poverty in Mexico after being at UNC-G for a semester. They felt something, but they did not have a language with which to explain the phenomena around them. Theory can provide a framework from which they can begin to examine their own language and assumptions and help them understand their experience through a lens of multiple perspectives. The experiential and visual both affect us on a level that has long been ignored by academia, but the language provided by reading and writing provides a tool to create a framework by which to understand the experiences.

For these reasons, films and experiential learning can never, nor should ever, replace the written word in academia. This dissertation is not about finding a new master or a new center. I do not suggest that we give up the written word and move solely to the visual texts. But it is about opening up new possibilities for scholarly explorations. If we remain dogmatic and exclusive about written texts, we will miss an opportunity to reflect on an important critique of our work as academics. We will miss an important critique to better understand why the stories we tell are increasingly more irrelevant to the public and the policy makers. It does not mean that we give up on the written text or that we ignore issues of individual rights, democracy, and other concepts that might be connected to the written word. But it is quite possible that we end up having a new relationship with these words and concepts. Perhaps by understanding the temporal and dimensional contingency of our written words we can see there is no dogma that can achieve these goals. Any systematic dogma we create is ready to be subverted. Our understandings of

individual rights, social justice, and freedom must be flexible open enough to respond to the current social and cultural contexts. By opening up more ways to explore the issues that we care about, we will also open up new possibilities for understanding the complex world with which we engage. And hopefully we will find new spaces in which we can act.

CHAPTER I

CROSSING BOUNDARIES/CREATING MEANING

On February 25, 1994, Baruch Goldstein, a Jewish settler in the West Bank who was born in Brooklyn, carried a machine gun into the Patriarch's Cave, a shared mosque/synagogue in Hebron. He opened fire killing 29 praying Palestinians and wounding over 100 others. He was beaten and killed by the survivors.

The following day, I went to work at my new job in a restaurant in Jerusalem. When I arrived two Israeli owners were talking to Salaam, one of the Palestinian kitchen workers, in the empty dining room. I figured that they were talking to him about the Hebron massacre to gauge his response; perhaps to ascertain whether he was a potential threat. I did not want to hang around and eavesdrop, so I hurried past into the kitchen. As I passed, I heard Salaam emphatically and sarcastically saying, "*Oseh Shalom! Oseh Shalom!*" (words from a Hebrew song meaning: make peace, make peace.) I assumed he was venting his frustration about what he perceived as the empty talk of peace by Israelis.

At that time it was common for Palestinians to cross the border from the West Bank into Israel for work. Sometimes this border would be shut down for perceived security threats. For those times, the restaurant had a back room for the Palestinian workers to sleep in so they could continue to work without having to cross the border. This was illegal, but not an uncommon arrangement, I was told.

I walked back into the kitchen where Moishe was standing near the large metal sink reading the newspaper. Moishe was a short, thin, elderly man with white hair and large knit kippah that looked too big for his head. The way he looked, dressed, and spoke reminded me of other older Jewish men who hung around the fruit and vegetable shop I had worked at in my Pittsburgh neighborhood. He had the same intonations and gestures and expressions, only he spoke Hebrew and Yiddish rather than English and Yiddish. He was retired, but liked to come into the restaurant to offer advice and humor. I got the sense that he would not know what to do with himself if he did not have a place to go everyday. He needed the company and the owners liked having him around.

Moishe was reading an article about Baruch Goldstein and in my limited Hebrew I pointed to the article and said, “Isn’t that a shame?” This was my soft opening line to get a sense of how he interpreted those events. I did not want to jump in with my deep outrage and embarrassment over the murders. If not outraged, I assumed he at least thought this would not be helpful. Rather, Moishe turned around and with a hushed passion said, “*Ze tov! Ze Tov! Ze Tov!*” (It’s good! It’s good! It’s good!)

I still remember his face. I will never forget the righteousness he felt in defending the acts that I would call cold-blooded murder. This man’s demeanor and excitement were familiar to me, yet his sentiments seemed out of place. The face red with passion, and the few, simple words repeated for emphasis were common to my experiences with older Jewish men. Yet, a Jew defending an act of mass murder of defenseless civilians for political purposes was something I had never experienced before. It was an idea I had never entertained before that moment.

This exchange illustrates many questions that have arisen for me about culture, identity, traveling, and representation. In what ways do contexts influence our values? What if Moishe moved to the U. S. from Europe instead of to Israel? Would he have interpreted the shooting in Hebron differently? Certainly, but in what way? There is no guarantee that he would see Baruch Goldstein's acts as atrocious. What about Baruch Goldstein? If he never came to Israel I doubt that he would have opened fire on a group of Palestinians, but there is no guarantee. Perhaps his pathology (if there was one) would have expressed itself in another tragic way. Perhaps he would have been marked as a person who needs help and would have been treated with therapy and/or drugs. Perhaps we are all close to psychotic acts of rage given the right circumstances. And more to the point of my dissertation, what did I learn from the questions that arose while traversing these borders and confronting realities I had not even imagined?

In this dissertation I explore identity formation of travelers through visual and textual analyses. Claude Levi-Strauss coined the term bricolage to mean the processes by which people acquire objects from across social divisions to create new cultural identities. It is also used as a word to describe an exploration that uses several methods of research. I find it appropriate that in my research about 'bricolage,' in the former sense, I employ 'bricolage,' in the latter sense. A bricolage is necessary for this project in order to layer the self-exploration, transnational identity formation, and issues of representation I hope to provoke. In this project I situate myself as an observer and participant in this construction. I will create a documentary film based on the experiences of two exchange students on UNC-G's campus. I also textually analyze the interviews with these students

to identify which cultural myths are being challenged and which cultural myths are being subsumed in order to reconstruct their identities based on their contact with a new culture.

In this chapter I hope to lay the foundation for the rest of the dissertation by provoking the topic of transnational identity formation and representation. In the first section of this chapter, “Imagined Identities,” I ground my own understanding of identity in postmodernist discourse. In the second section, “Situating my I/Eye,” I position myself, the researcher, and reflect on how I became interested in this topic through my experiences as a Jew, as a traveler, and as a filmmaker. The third section, “Discourses of Travel,” locates my discourse of traveling within, and hopefully beyond, common Modernist discourses of traveling. “Why Documentary Film,” the fourth section, explores why the Academy has been hesitant to adopt documentary filmmaking as a valid form of knowledge production. In the final section, “Methodologies,” I preview and situate the chapters and the corresponding methodologies of research and chapters that compose my dissertation.

Imagined Identities

Benedict Anderson (1991) argues that all communities are imagined communities by the community members and those outside the community. While these communities may appear to be solid entities, in fact, they change and shift over time. Religions come, shift, and go. Nations come, shift, and go. Racialized communities have come, are shifting, and at some point in the future will probably go. The way communities create and re-create themselves is through the stories they tell to certain bodies about

themselves and about other bodies. These stories necessarily align certain people and divide those people from others. Roland Barthes (1972) calls these stories cultural myths. Cultural myths create temporary centers and temporary bonds between particular people, therefore, they also create temporary conflict and temporary margins. Cultural myths are connotations that have become “naturalized” through repetition in different media (Barker & Galasinski, 2001). Stories that reify the myths get retold from family members, friends, and leaders in different media and contexts such as art, religion, tales, and ritual. Contingent group affiliation becomes unchallengeable commonsense. However, this stabilization of culture and identity is only a perception. New situational realities arise and the community must adapt their stories and alter their identity slightly in order to persist in the face of a new social reality. The survival of an imagined community is not through dogmatic adherence to its suppositions, but the ability to adapt their myths to new historical circumstances.

James Clifford (1988, 1997) argues against the idea of culture as pure and distinct behaviors. He argues that myths are not mirrored wholly, completely, and exactly from one generation to the next. Not only do cultural myths change over time, but also they must adapt to and account for other competing identities and competing myths. There are discourses of nations, cultures, religions, racial categories, and social classes that are not always harmonious, but sometimes in direct conflict, that every imagined community negotiates. “Natives, people confined to and by places to which they belong, groups unsullied by contact with the larger world, have probably never existed” (Appadurai, as cited in Clifford, 1997, p. 39). Rather than a place where empty vessels get filled with

knowledge, culture is a place of contestation and hybridization. Communities imagine and re-imagine themselves according to new contexts and competing discourses.

Now that we have named certain cultural and contingent influences on our identities, we cannot confuse understanding the construction of national and cultural identities with freedom from the influence of those constructions. Knowledge is not necessarily liberating at all times and in all ways. Even though we may understand that the lines on the map represent a man made, historical, and temporary model of the world, most of us still need passports in order to cross these lines. Understanding that national and cultural identities are negotiated does not necessarily translate into a celebration of global citizens in a world culture of hybridity and heterogeneity (Kaplan, 1996). Governments, corporations, and other forces of globalization foster many identities and they are not all liberating.

This analysis of cultural and communal identity can be used to analyze individual identity as well. While each group negotiates competing discourses, individuals construct their personal identities through positioning themselves within many communal discourses. Judith Butler (as cited in Bingham, 2001) describes this phenomenon when she states that there is no pre-discursive 'I.' By this she means that there is no 'I' that exists before this negotiation between Self and cultural myths.

There is no self that is prior to the convergence [of discourses] or who maintains "integrity" prior to its entrance into this conflicted social field. There is only a taking up of the tools where they lie, where the very "taking up" is enabled by the tool lying there. (Butler, as cited in Bingham, 2001, p. 94)

Butler adds personal agency to Barthes by saying that not only do these cultural myths create our sense of identity, but they give us a reference point from which we may begin to construct our own identity. Negotiating the fears, celebrations, and the influences of others all shape our sense of reality and our sense of justice. However, this is not to say that our interpretive frameworks are determined by our circumstances. Just because one grows up in Israel does not mean that one hates Palestinians or wishes violence upon them. However, the conflict with Palestinians is certainly a reference point from which every Israeli begins to construct their own identity. The way one interprets this situation, from which vantage point, evolves and shifts over time, as well. Which imagined community we identify with and to what degree develops fluidly and therefore our interpretive frameworks evolve fluidly, as well.

Given this foundation, that the 'I' comes into being when it is subjected to cultural discourses, one question to ask when considering identity formation through traveling is what happens to the 'I' when it is subjected to foreign cultural discourses. The different set of priorities and authorities may be shocking to the Self. Different imagined communities negotiate different contexts, and therefore, tell different stories about reality. If one goes away from their cultural comfort zone, beliefs that one scorned or never even encountered may be taken very seriously in the new context. These ideas have their own history and pattern of growth, providing a context from which they came into being and were given a certain privilege. Perhaps one's own cultural myths, one's own personal stories, will be treated with scorn or perceived as nonsense.

Notions of reality, authoritative truth sources, and privileged ways of knowing change over time, space, and culture; from one historical era to another; from one territory to another; and from one set of cultural myths to another. However, while one can imagine going into a different historical era, one cannot physically go there and stand in the face of different cultural myths and priorities. But one *can* physically go to another territory where the myths are different. By entering a space where different cultural myths are privileged, one can be immersed in a sea of hermeneutic difference. Certainly one does not have to travel far in order to find a community that values different cultural myths. But communities in close contact develop potent “Otherizing” myths that may present barriers to calling one’s own myths into question. This is not to say that communities far away are not “Otherized,” but the construction of such a myth does not require the same sophistication. Not only can one face new myths and learn about a new commonsense through studying history, anthropology, and traveling across cultures, but one’s own “naturalized” myths can be recognized as culturally and historically contingent; one’s own taken-for-granted knowledge has the potential to be understood as a belief structure situated in culture.

Situating My I/Eye

I do not assume that traveling in itself will necessarily break down “Otherizing” myths and engender empathy for all. There are too many variables including experiences before the move out of the familiar context, the relationship between the imagined communities that one is traversing, the intention of the move, and the influences one is exposed to while in the new situation. I do not assume that my experiences are universal,

but I also do not want to avoid how my experiences have shaped my thought. There are many reasons why I interpreted my travels in the way that I did. I created particular meanings because I could relate past experiences with Jewish men to Moishe so easily. Another strong influence that impacted how I interpreted the experience was growing up Jewish in the Diaspora. As an American Jew in Israel I was continually given signs that I was included in this national/religious/cultural community. On several occasions I was told that the only place for Jews was in Israel. Due to the Law of Return, all I had to do was announce that I wanted to be a citizen and within a few minutes I would be a citizen. I was taken on tours of the Israeli Army and was being taught Hebrew with Russian immigrants. Within the myths that made Israel a community was that I belonged and that it was only a matter of degree as to whether I claimed citizenship or not. As I was imagining myself as a part of this community, I had the opportunity to compare my different selves to one another. This specific opportunity for reflection did not exist in the same way for travelers that were not Jewish.

Being a Diasporic Jew also opened my awareness to notions of contingent identities. Jews are constantly shifting between outsider and insider in their lived experiences in America. In a racialized society like the United States, being a Jew with white skin has allowed me to be considered an insider to mainstream culture at times. However, there are times when people find out that I am Jewish, or assume from the start that I am, and consider me to be outside of mainstream culture. Likewise, other minority groups, also, waver as to whether they include Jews within their framework of minorities.

Sometimes Jews are looked upon as a branch of Whites, and are therefore left outside of the imagined community of minority groups.

This shifting perception of Jewish identity casts long shadows into different anti-Semitismisms. If one opposes Communism, one could blame the Jews and point to Marx and Trotsky as examples. Likewise, if one opposes Capitalism, one could blame the Jews and point to the long history of trade and money lending in Europe as proof of the capitalistic nature of the Jews. If one wants to stand up against Imperialism, one could blame the Jews and point to Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza as proof. If one wants to stand up against Anarchy, one could blame the Jews and talk about Noam Chomsky and Emma Goldman as their evidence. Many different subjective evils have been blamed on the Jews, even if the evils are diametrically opposed. To be sure, some of these same arguments have been made to shower Jews with diametrically opposed accolades.

There is a common phrase, usually used within a religious context, which suggests we should be "in the world, but not of the world." I understand this as a suggestion that there is a value to being skeptical of cultural myths, and yet we should not alienate ourselves from other people who are not skeptical of these myths. Judith Butler certainly would question the possibility of not being of the world. Generally speaking, this rhetorical phrase would be used to reject particular popular myths, in order to adopt other ones, perhaps more local in nature. However, for Jews this has been their lived experience for over two thousand years. They have been in communities around the world, but not of these communities. These societies did not create Judaism, nor were the societies created by or for Jews (until Israel in 1948). This gave them a unique

perspective from outside these communities, yet, having to survive within them. At the same time these inside/outside Jewish communities were connected internationally and able to compare the varying degrees of recognition, misrepresentation and assimilation. This knowledge allowed them to see many different ways of being. It allowed them to recognize that one logic is not the only logic.

They [Jews] are determinists all because having watched many societies and studied many 'ways of life' at close quarters, they grasp the basic regularities of life. Their manner of thinking is dialectical, because, they see society as in a state of flux. They conceive reality as being dynamic, not static. (Deutscher, 1982, p. 6)

Susan Handleman (1982) argues in *The Slayers of Moses: The Emergence of Rabbinic Interpretation in Modern Literary Theory* that this existential situation of being displaced influenced rabbinic interpretation of texts. And rabbinic interpretation of texts has influenced postmodern literary theory through Jewish intellectuals like Freud and Derrida. Jewish writings, learning and interpretation was a stabilizing cultural practice through the fluctuations of geography. The interpretations do not privilege stability in a text, but rather instability. Not only were the physical bodies displaced, but also displacement, or extreme misreading, became a technique for interpretation.

Displacement is a necessary re-vision and re-creation of a text which is the only anchor of a people displaced in space. Displacement, in other words, is both the condition and answer to exile. (Handleman, 1982, p. 223)

The Jewish position, certainly in the Diaspora, is not one of stable identity, but one of flux. This life experience may have contributed to my interest in travel experiences as ways to de-center senses of culture and identity. Surely, this lesson of

radical alterity is not universally assimilated to all people who travel. However, I cannot imagine a more important lesson, if we wish to begin to understand the different perceptions and the different needs that different people's positions in life produce. I cannot imagine a more important lesson if we wish to imagine this world as a world of different possibilities. And traveling did not teach this to me in an abstract way; rather, it was taught to me experientially, in an embodied way. Authorities and privileged notions *did* change around me as a matter of circumstance and my own authorities and privileges were called into question.

Discourses of Travel

Discourses around travel also have to be historically situated. Metaphors of wanderers and exiles and refugees have often been used in our culture. During the 20th Century the "expatriate" was valorized, like Joseph Conrad, Paul Gauguin and Ernest Hemingway, for their search for "authenticity" in purer and simpler lifestyles. These modern artists were a wandering and culturally inquisitive group. As if everything had been said at home, these foreign settings gave them a new point of view. Caren Kaplan (1996) deconstructs these modernist conversations around travel.

The occidental ethnographer, the modernist expatriate poet, the writer of popular travel accounts, and the tourist may all participate in the mythologized narrativizations of displacement without questioning the cultural, political, and economic grounds of their different professions, privileges, means, and limitations. (Kaplan, 1996, p. 2)

This modern notion of traveling is founded upon discourses of 'truth' that value dispassionate observation. I can hear echoes of the modernist discourses in my own

understandings, the lone traveler exploring new physical terrains and new psychological terrains. I want to remain aware of these echoes in order to remain aware of my own position, and try to situate the knowledge I produce.

Renato Rosaldo (1989) critiques this form of traveling by Westerners when he speaks of “imperialist nostalgia.” Through this formulation we can imagine the tourist examining the wreckage of Europe’s attempt to rule the world. Expatriates take a pose of interest and yearning toward the foreign culture in order to distance themselves from the brutal domination of Europe’s past imperialism. However, they do not recognize their own position within the brutal domination. Kaplan (1996) says that modern expatriates witness others’ tragedies and successes, but they do not see them as producers or actors in this world. They are on a quest for substance while ignoring or violating the object of their concern. In this stance, the local, the native, which Jamaica Kincaid (1988) tells us hates the ugly, empty tourist, is not given authority to produce the narrative of the domination, brutalization, and marginalization that they have endured. Rather, this power of storytelling and accounting for past and present tragedies still remains with the culture that prosecuted and persecuted.

Why Documentary Film?

In this project, I do not just write about reflections on travel, but I also create a documentary film about this exploration. The documentary film started as a genre in the early 20th century and provided those at home with the ultimate modern travel experience. The documentary film reified these notions of objectivity and quests for authenticity, which, presumably, can never be found in tourist resorts. These early

documentaries about the Other do not present the Other as creators of meaning, but rather beings that are. In the 2006 Full Frame Documentary Festival, the largest documentary festival in the U. S., you could have observed three Iraqi families in the war-torn land, a group of Hurricane Katrina survivors in Utah, or a Palestinian Hip-Hop artist. Going places far off the beaten track and sharing ideas and customs that are removed from our own are featured at our local theaters (although not often) and on our television screens. The search for truth and authenticity has been the promise of documentary films. The audience does not judge; they are the dispassionate observers gathering information from which to sharpen ideas about the world. The filmmakers' biases, positions, methods and negotiations during production, as well as our positions, are hidden from us. The filmmaker and the audience are positioned similarly to the modern traveler, looking over the wreckage of the world and avoiding their own relationship and responsibility to the situation.

Given this history of documentary films, why would I want to create one for an academic exploration? This weaving together of text and film is not common for doctoral dissertations. However, in our society, the moving image is where many stories are being told, many truths are being contested, and many myths are being hybridized. It is past time that scholars begin to experiment with creating knowledge with visuals. While it is true that documentaries were born in the Modernist Age, we must experiment to see if the form can be adapted to new understandings of Self and Other-ness. Just as communities must adapt to new social and historical realities, institutions must also adapt in order to remain alive and relevant.

Academics working within institutions that are built on the printed word are hesitant to dive into this contested language of the image. However, the language of the image has proven itself to be a powerful force in the contestation and hybridization of every aspect of our culture and discourse. Increasingly, scholars are marginalized from important public discussions. For many decades, social scientists have been marginalized in our cultural discourse with the claim that they are too radical and out of touch. In the past seven years we have also seen the increased marginalization of hard scientists when it comes to global warming and evolution. In either case, the marginalization occurs when the information contradicts the political and economic interests of the powerful. Universities are still important to the powerful as an institution to confer privilege. However, if we wish for the university to retain an important role in the production of culture and knowledge, we must be willing to join the conversations with images. Of course, as with any academic scholarship, we must remain skeptical and have all critical eyes open.

While academics, in many disciplines, have written about movies and television, most knowledge produced through the moving image in academia has been limited to Film, Anthropology, and Communication Departments. An increasing number of academics have appeared in documentaries for interviews to provide their insight into a particular issue, however, the production of these films are outside of the institutions of higher education. Academics, with searing insight, have been very critical of television in particular, and skeptical of the educational depth of films. Academia has been at the forefront of analyzing the language of the image with a critical lens. However, as the

society at large is creating culture through images, the Academy must enter this conversation not only through print, but through images, as well.

There are good reasons why universities are hesitant to embrace creating knowledge with film. Marshall McLuhan's famous quote, "the medium is the message," speaks to this hesitation. The messages universities privilege are embedded in the medium of print and not film. The university is an institution that really came to fruition within the Modern Era. The Enlightenment asserted that it is best to isolate phenomena in order to study them. Empiricism, rationalism, uniformity, continuity, and linearity became privileged ways to understand the world. So the question must be asked, what changed in the 17th century that these lines of thought became sanctioned over other ways of thinking? McLuhan and other theorists and historians have convincingly proposed that Gutenberg's invention of the printing press in the 16th century brought about this radical change in thought, thereby connecting the compartmentalized, rational thought privileged by universities with the medium of print itself.

Elizabeth Eisenstein (1979) argued that there were two long-term consequences of print which may be understood as vertical and lateral. The vertical consequence is that knowledge became standardized and preserved. Less effort was required to preserve and pass on what was known, and more effort could go into exploring possibilities of how to make meaning with information. This was understood as building on top of previous generations, or standing on the shoulders of previous researchers. Each generation prided themselves on knowing more than the previous generation, and speculated about what their descendants will discover. Here we see the privileging of linear ways of thinking

about knowledge coming to the fore directly from the medium of print. There was a perceived direction to information and knowledge, a *telos*.

The lateral consequence was that the critique of authority was encouraged by print. Not only was knowledge more accessible by print, but incompatible views were made available to a wide audience. Many competing versions of the truth allowed people to be more critical, or perhaps more organized in their criticism, of the official truth claimed by people in power. Some have claimed that human rights and democracy itself is an outcome of the print medium.

Academia's hesitation is rooted in the fear of this retribalization, the fear of rationality and linearity being usurped by other ways of knowing, and the fear of individual rights and democracy dissolving. However, the image *has* usurped the text as the means to inform the populace. The question is how will we respond. Historian Robert A. Rosenstone, who was involved in a couple of films, describes the scenario:

Today, the chief source of historical knowledge for the majority of the population—outside of the much despised textbook—must surely be the visual media, a set of institutions that lie almost wholly outside the control of those who devote our lives to history. Any reasonable extrapolation suggests that trend will continue. Certainly, it is not farfetched to foresee a time (are we almost there?) when written history will be a kind of esoteric pursuit and when historians will be viewed as the priests of a mysterious religion, commentators on sacred texts and performers of rituals for a populace little interested in their meaning but indulgent enough (let us hope) to pay for them to continue. (1988, p. 1174)

McLuhan asserts that changes in life that occur through changes in media do not depend on the approval or disapproval of those living in society (1964). Whether scholars approve or disapprove of the changes occurring in our culture, the changes are still

occurring. If individual rights and democracy are important concepts to impart, then we must be willing to find other means by which to make our message relevant. At this point, scholars in universities are creating meaning and telling stories in ways that do not matter to people outside of academia.

Print is not about to go away, as Rosenstone may have imagined. History shows us that new media usually does not displace other existing media. Other media perhaps shift in reaction to the new media, but they do not disappear altogether (Briggs & Burke, 2005). After the rise of print, new institutions of clubs and coffee houses in Europe maintained oral culture, perhaps in order to work in conjunction with print. Likewise, the print culture of academia will not be displaced by the production of knowledge in other media. Rather, the new media provides a tool to be taken up and re-created with the sensibilities of the author and the culture of the institution. Academic culture has a lot to say to the visual culture, about the visual culture, and with the visual media.

Visual culture also offers an important critique of print culture. Premodern knowledge production was seen as a cooperative endeavor. Printing engendered notions of the individual's ownership of knowledge evidenced by the laws of intellectual property and copyright (Briggs & Burke, 2005). Within the logic of isolation, empiricism, and linearity, Sir Isaac Newton offered a vision of the world as a clock. Each component works and interacts with others to create what we consider to be the world. Once we understand all of the individual cause and effect relationships, we will understand how the world works, just as we can account for the gears and springs that that interact together to make a clock. However, film takes the mechanical and makes it organic

(McLuhan, 1964). The 'message' is a move from linear connections to patterns and configurations. With a move to the digital, the world no longer seems like a clock, but an organic system. Not only do individual parts make up the world, but in turn, the world influences the individual parts. Knowledge returns to a contextualized phenomenon, rather than an isolated one.

Documentary provides a point of conflation between visual culture and print culture that speaks directly to the constructions of truth. Documentary situates itself and is perceived as a point of education. Even the term 'documentary' reflects an interest in a record, in what is actual, and not what the producer thinks or feels about the subject at hand. The documentary asks the audience to accept that the filmmaker is objectively describing reality and not making meaning. "Non-fiction," as Carl Plantinga (1997) says, "presents their state of affairs assertively, rather than fictively" (p. 40). A contract is formed between the audience and the filmmaker that what the filmmaker has presented is the world as it is.

The movie camera itself is a Modernist invention and has had a strong relation to positivism since its first uses (Sturken & Cartwright, 2004). There is a long discourse between the connections made between scientific discovery and technology. Galileo created the telescope that allowed us to see things far away. He saw craters in the moon and the rings around Saturn. The microscope allowed us to look at molecules and cells with greater magnification than ever before. The camera has entered this same discourse of technology, scientificity, and objectivity. But what does it present to us that we have not been able to see before? It allows us to capture visual moments and allows people

who were not there, due to either time or space, to see that moment. But, while the camera can show images of events that we have no other way of seeing, the creators' priorities and interpretations mediate these images. The camera does not comply because it enhances our senses, but rather, it complies with notions of scientific knowledge, because a machine without emotions produces the images and the observer gets to look at the image at a distance, decontextualized from the occurrence (Hansen, Needham, & Nichols, 1991).

People who are present interpret events in an infinite number of ways. Therefore, photographs and movies reflect a limited interpretation through the interest of the creator. Since the beginning of documentaries, this claim of truth has been under scrutiny. What one decides to film, how one edits the shots, and what ones leaves out have all been shown to reflect the interests of the filmmaker, rather than comply with a representation of objective truth. These same questions can then be turned onto print. How does one decide what to write about and in what style? What is being left out? How is it being put together? What symbolic systems, histories and authorities are being affirmed and supported? Documentaries provide an important, revealing, and fascinating point of departure to explore the interstices of print culture and visual culture, along with truth and representation.

Methodology

If I were born in France, would there be anything that I could recognize as me? If I had different parents, different siblings, lived in a different country, in a different age, within a different political climate, how would I be different? These questions cannot be

answered with empirical evidence. There is no reproducible lab experiment that could “prove” one answer over another. I cannot jump into another body for an hour or two state with certainty, “These are the similarities and these are the differences.” Because this question cannot be reduced to a reproducible cause and effect experiment, some may call it unimportant. However, artists have been imagining and playing with these ideas for years. Mark Twain’s “The Prince and the Pauper,” and a slew of movies like *Freaky Friday* and *Trading Spaces* explore this very topic. Enduring clichés, like “walking a mile in someone else’s shoes,” also speaks to the pedagogical importance of considering the world from the situation of another. While we have much information that speaks to why people feel separated from each other, we need more information about how people can learn to feel connected.

As this project explores representation through text and video and layers national, cultural, and personal identities, a bricolage of methodologies is necessary to create a useful piece of work. One approach of triangulation is to try to approach a discursive phenomenon by different methods and different theories (Wodak, de Cilia, Reisigl, & Liebhart, 1999). The prologue/epilogue set up tensions between the visual and the textual. I direct the reader to return to the prologue/epilogue after Chapter IV in order to revisit the questions having read the dissertation and viewed the documentary, *exChange*. In the following paragraphs, I preview the next three chapters included in my dissertation, along with their complementing methodologies.

Chapter II is entitled “Documentary Discourses in the 20th Century and Beyond.” While assertions of truth have been embedded in the technology of the camera since the

outset, documentaries have asserted that their form of visual storytelling is telling the truth. This assertion has been met with skepticism and has been challenged by theorists and filmmakers themselves. Documentaries have been a point of departure for discussions of truth and representation since the first documentary was made. If media have influenced our ways of perceiving the world, then one way to track this change is to study the evolution of the perceptions of the medium. During the 20th century and still today documentary films have been the impetus and starting point for profound dialogues of truth and representation. However, even though the dialogue has been ongoing amongst theorists and practitioners, most of those who consume documentaries do not challenge this assertion.

For this chapter, I use historical analyses combined with visual culture studies to position documentaries' role in knowledge production. I use English historians Asa Briggs and Peter Burke to explore the history of media. Jack Ellis and Betsy McLane have developed a critical history of English language documentary film and their research will be important to my historical analysis of documentary. Visual culture studies has grown out of McLuhan's reflections and theorists from this school, like Marita Sturken, Nancy Cartwright, Nicholas Mirzoeff, and Ella Shohat provide a theoretical framework in which to explore.

The latter part of this chapter examines the state of documentaries today and speculate about the future. Perhaps it is premature to talk about future directions of the documentary because while the Internet promises to be a powerful force, its presence in the media mix is still being furiously negotiated. When we look at McLuhan's principle

of “the medium is the message,” the decentralized production and distribution supported by the Internet seems to carry exciting democratic potential. However, there has been ample research by scholars like Robert McChesney documenting how corporations are trying to regulate the production and distribution of Internet content for their own economic interests. Recently there has been talk about telecommunication companies controlling bandwidth based on price. This could make broadcasting of video prohibitive to individual and independent producers like myself. More importantly, this would allow telecommunication companies control over what gets said through video. Likewise, we can be assured that documentary evidence showing particular abuses by BellSouth will be not be given priority to transfer over their lines no matter how much one is willing to pay. Assuming that the lines remain open and free regardless of content, the possibilities introduced by the Internet are exciting. Watching a movie can be more interactive with the possibility to footnote and raise rebuttals as the viewing is in progress. Interweaving text and video, by watching bits of streaming video and reading bits of text interchangeably, can generate interesting comparisons between the different ways of knowing. Rather than privileging print culture or visual culture, they can work together (or against each other) to create new forms of knowledge.

After finishing Chapter II, I would like the committee member to watch the film, *exChange*. The previous two chapters will have situated the understanding of the personal, historical, and theoretical influences. This film looks at two exchange students at UNC-G who came from Mexico. The students came with the hope of focusing their studies on theater and filmmaking. Even though they study at an engineering university,

their passions are with the arts and UNC-G has reputable Theater and Broadcast and Cinema Departments. *exChange* works in two layers. One layer is the narrative of the students and what assumptions are challenged as they traverse national and cultural boundaries. A second layer reflects back on the production of *exChange* itself. Through a dance number performed by Duane Cyrus and a voiceover that asks questions, I hope to provoke the assumptions behind stabilized identities and accurate representations created through documentaries.

After viewing the documentary, the committee member should read Chapter III, “Journeying through the Creation.” In this chapter I connect the filmmaking process to an aesthetic epistemology as articulated by Harold Rugg. During production and post-production, I kept a journal in order to track the tensions and hurdles I faced and my thoughts in resolving the situations. This chapter explores the route taken while creating *exChange* from the conception of the idea to the final edit. The creation process includes many compromises, including what should be filmed and how to prioritize and interpret the scenes while editing. James Agee (1941) questioned his own process of documenting in the famous text *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. Robert Coles (1997), as a founder at the Center for Documentary Studies, has also done important reflective explorations about soul-searching questions that arise from creating documentaries. These two authors, along with my field notes, are central to tying the theory of an aesthetic epistemology to the practice of documenting. Questions about truth, the filmmaker, and the characters in the documentary are explored.

In Chapter IV, “An Investigation of Transnational Identity formation through Discourse Analysis,” I explore the experiences of the two Mexican students through a textual analysis. I interviewed them throughout their stay and I selected seven separate interviews to investigate. By analyzing the discourse surrounding ideas of being modern and their thoughts about the indigenous population of Mexico, I explore their negotiations of cultural, national, and personal identities. The importance of the discourse surrounding the indigenous people is that it speaks to the most marginalized people in Mexican society and to an imagined Mexican past. The importance of the discourse surrounding modernity is that this discourse speaks to the logic of neoliberalism and an imagined Mexican future.

In the beginning of the chapter I contextualize the national, historical, and cultural discourses of being modern and the indigenous population. It is important to have some insight into the community they are coming from in order to situate the identities they are constructing. In Mexico, most people identify as a Mestizo, meaning that they are a mix of the Indigenous, Spanish, and African people that make up Mexican history. There is a tension in merging these (imagined) pasts that make up the people of Mexico when one, the Spanish, conquered and brutalized the others, the African and the Indigenous. This backdrop provides fertile ground from which to explore the shifting and constructed nature of identities.

Using discourse analysis, I explore possible interpretations of their experiences at UNC-G in their interviews. There are no precise guidelines for discourse analysis; it is considered an approach, rather than a method (Wodak & Meyer, 2001). For me, the

central question is: In what ways does being immersed in different signifying practices and different discourses de-center senses of culture and identity? Did the experience open up fixed identity formations or was the experience perceived as an extension of their own growth process? What discourses were challenged and in what ways did they make use of the knowledge they learned? The approach I used has to fit these interests.

When I first listened to the interviews, I followed Ruth Wodak's articulation of her discourse-historical approach (2001). In this approach, Wodak describes five strategies employed by the speakers to try to discern the power embedded in the speech: referential strategies, predication, argumentation that justifies political inclusion and exclusion, perspectivation, and intensification or mitigation. Wodak's analysis technique focuses on only the text and therefore, I rely on other methods to contextualize the text. Sam and Kate Bevan's (1999) constructivist interpretation positions interviewers and interviewees as members of social groups, speaking to imaginary audiences and positioned within a social situation. While the researcher constructs a situation to study, the participants construct themselves and the world within that context, and then the researcher constructs another world through interpretation. The social relationships and the attempt to communicate our constructions are vital to the meaning making process.

The bricolage employed in this dissertation is necessary to communicate and interpret the layered nature of this project and to reflect upon the in between spaces of the rational and the irrational. Trying to frame and capture and interpret dynamic reality and turn it into representations that never change is necessarily an interpretive act with complex reverberations. Immersing oneself in hermeneutic differences pushes the

boundaries of senses of identity and stability. How does one represent this opening up of boundaries and interpretations with a medium that tries to close them? There is no one way to look at these phenomena. It requires an approach that is open to historical, philosophical, and self analyses.

CHAPTER II

DOCUMENTARY DISCOURSES IN THE 20TH CENTURY AND BEYOND

December 28, 1895. Paris. The Lumière Brothers projected 25 film works, all less than a minute long, to a general audience. This date, place, and event are widely considered to be the moment when cinema officially began. And at this exhibition, scripted films were set alongside films that captured life events. That night, there were no distinctions made between the two. There were no claims that one type of work was more entertaining and there were no claims that one type of work captured reality better. In fact, there was no mention of different genres at all. The short films that captured life events became known as actualities. The actualities that day included one piece showing workers leaving a factory and another showed blacksmiths at work.

Beyond the one “take” that officially became *La Sortie de l’Usine Lumière à Lyon* (or its common English title, *Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory*) there were several “takes” of the workers leaving the factory. The existence of these different “takes” raises questions and blurs the distinction between recorded events and staged films. We can imagine the directions given to the workers: “Everyone back to the starting position . . . Don’t look at the camera . . . Get ready . . . Act natural . . . Start leaving now.” Clearly, the camera, the cameraman, and by extension the audience are not the unobtrusive flies-on-the-wall that may be suggested by simply watching the short film. Does this information somehow take away from the “reality” of the films; after all, do not the

workers leave that factory in much the same way every day? Does this qualitatively change the importance of the image of workers leaving the factory? Does this realization change how we view the images? Did we really believe we were so invisible and why is that our goal?

I begin with this moment in time because it represents the seminal moment when cinema began. The artists and the public were curious and unsure about the opportunities of this new medium. In less than 20 years after this evening, the word documentary was first named. Throughout the 20th century documentary films were situated as objective glances into reality. In this chapter I contextualize the history of documentary film and the discourses that surround it by critiquing the positivist assumptions about knowledge that have become intertwined with the movie camera technology and the documentary genre. Before the reader/viewer watches the documentary *exChange* I want to contextualize and historicize the discourses that have surrounded the genre in order to locate my decisions during the creative process. As we stand in the 21st century, questions about what is knowable have rendered “reality” elusive, constructed, and limited. Important questions and insights have emerged about the construction, limitations and opportunities of documentary films.

In cinematic folklore, the audience who watched *The Arrival of the Train at a Station*, a Lumière actuality that was showcased in a following tour, jumped out of their seats and ran to the back of the theater because they feared that the train would jump off the screen. People tell and retell this story because they want to believe and propagate the idea that films are difficult to distinguish from reality. However, Martin Loiperdinger

(2004) convincingly historicizes and critiques the veracity of this myth. Imagining the reality of the situation makes it easy to be skeptical of this story. The image was in flickering black and white and there was no sound of the train whatever, only the whirring of the projector. The real star that night was the camera and not the films or their content. The entertainment was the technology and only hints and promises about the possibilities and eventualities were present. There were many screenings of those films across Europe and the U. S., and this story followed these tours and was adapted to the location. The variations include this reaction to the first audience and to rural audiences, suggesting both the magic of the new technology and the gullibility of the audience. There is no public record of this happening, besides the long tradition of this story. There are no press reports, police reports, or eyewitness reports. The Lumière Brothers never mentioned it in their letters or any other writings. It is more likely that the illusion was taken for granted by the audiences, while the myth that the experience could be mistaken for “reality” had to be invented. Perhaps the story germinated from the poster designed by Abel Truchet in 1896 (see Figure 1). This poster depicts the arrival of the train, with the track coming off the screen. There are two women watching the screen, but they are not running or screaming in any way. This story sounds like the pitch of a carnival barker trying to generate interest in the new medium. And yet, this outrageous claim has been repeated consistently for the past century.

In this chapter we go back to the camera obscura in the 17th century, as well as look forward to the potential of the Internet. This chapter is separated into five sections. In the first section, “Ways of Knowing through Images and Media,” I discuss



Reproduced from Loiperdinger's (2004) "Lumière's Arrival of the Train: Cinema's Founding Myth" in *The Moving Image*, 4(1), 89 under the Fair Use laws.

Figure 1. Abel Truchet Poster (1896) Advertising Lumière Exhibition

positivist and post-positivist thought concerning knowledge and the interpretation of photographic images. The second section, "The Invention of the Movie Camera," challenges the positivist discourses that surround the history of this device. The third section, "Working against a Definition of Documentary," explores the many attempts at defining documentaries and the difficulties that arise. The fourth section, "Totality and Infinity of the 20th Century Documentary" uses Eugene Levinas' theories of Totality/the Same and Infinity/the Other to explore the evolution of documentary films in the 20th century. Through probing *Nanook of the North* (1922) and following the evolution to self-reflexive films, this section covers the critiques and responses by filmmakers and theorists. This section ends with examining Trinh T. Minh-ha's *Reassemblage* (1982), released 60 years after *Nanook*, and the possibilities for documentary that she presents in

the film. The last section, “Standing at an Impasse,” explores the state of documentaries today and glances into the future concerning the media and the documentary form.

Ways of Knowing through Images and Media

The same city and year that the Lumière Brothers had their exhibition, Paris 1895, Felix-Louis Regnault filmed a Wolof woman making pottery at the Exposition Ethnographique de l’Afrique Occidentale. “He regarded the camera as a laboratory instrument that could fix transient human events for further analysis, and he went so far as to predict that ethnography would only attain the precision of a science through the use of such instruments” (MacDougall, 1978, p. 406). This exemplifies the positivist reception of the technology at that time. While positivism privileges isolating phenomena as a method of understanding, questions about context prove to be informative and are often overlooked. One such question that arises for me is why were there no European filmmakers or scientists on display in Wolof institutions for the Wolof community to observe and study? The practice of representation and the practice of consuming representations involve relationships of power. “To willfully look or not is to exercise choice and influence. To be made to look, to try to get someone else to look at you or at something you want to be noticed, or to engage in an exchange of looks, entails a play of power” (Sturken & Cartwright, 2001, p. 10). It is important to note that the workers who were leaving the factory in the Lumière actually were leaving the Lumière family factory. To place a human being inside a museum exhibit, to frame them in a viewfinder, to record their image to film or tape, and to edit their image to create a story all involve acts of power.

The movie camera was developed during a time when positivism was privileged. Positivism includes the belief that truth can be established through observation. The influence of the observer is seen as a liability since the subjectivity of the observer may influence the objective reality. In this logic, machines become more reliable than humans, because machines, it is assumed, do not have intentions or biases. Hence, the camera, still and moving, was heralded in particular contexts as a reliable captor of reality. The camera was seen as an objective device that can capture objective reality despite the subjective user. “The photographic image has often been seen as an entity stripped of intentionality, through which the truth can be told without mediation or subjective distortion” (Sturken & Cartwright, 2001, p. 280). The camera is seen as a tool that can record “a trace of reality skimmed off of the very surface of life” (Sturken & Cartwright, 2001, p. 17). Hegel used the metaphor of a potter shaping the pot to show that through our creations we recognize ourselves and we recognize our power to shape meaning. However, Regnault’s filming of the Wolof woman suggested a different interpretation. No longer does creating the pot define the potter, but rather, an observer watching the creation of the pot from a distance can define the potter.

Well before cameras, debates about representation and interpretation have been ongoing. Do systems of representation reflect the world as it is, or do systems of representation reflect and construct the meanings that people attribute to the world? McLuhan (1964) argues that not only do systems of representation construct the world, but they construct the person and the society that use the representations. Changes in media, which in his definition includes everything from tools to television, change the

way we perceive the world. Not only do media reflect our cultural context and value system, but they also create our cultural context and value system. For example, when our society's greatest technological advances were mechanical, the world as a clock served as a strong metaphor. In order to understand the world, the metaphor suggests, we must take it apart, isolate the components, and understand the many cause and effect relationships that exist between these parts that construct our world. As our technological triumphs moved to digital, so did our conception of the universe. Computers and networks cannot be entirely understood as the parts that create the whole. The network as a whole also influences the individual computers. Post-positivism no longer understands the world as a series of small parts in predictable causal relations that produce one knowable whole; rather, the whole also influences the parts, which changes the whole, which influences the parts, and so on. Systems of representation are a part of this matrix that reflect and respond to other forces. "Language and systems of representation do not reflect an already existing reality so much as they organize, construct, and mediate our understanding of reality, emotion, and imagination" (Sturken & Cartwright, 2001, p. 13). Post-positivism asserts that the world is never entirely knowable or predictable.

Positivism emerged during the Enlightenment. Why did isolating phenomena and perceiving the world as knowable become privileged at that time? What cultural, temporal, contingent reality was being mediated and constructed? Elizabeth Eisenstein (1986) examines this question through the introduction of the printing press that emerged as the primary medium that represented our world. Because of this invention, she proposes two significant changes to our relationship with knowledge: less effort was

required to preserve knowledge, and critique of authority was encouraged. Because knowledge was seemingly captured and fixed by writing, the relationship with the past and future changed. Preserving knowledge was less of an issue than making new meanings with the knowledge. The idea that we are building from the past and into the future, in a linear fashion, is embedded in the relationships formed by print. The printing press also opened up means for communication across established boundaries. Competing versions of the truth became available to large numbers of people forcing them to be more critical of “official” versions of the truth.

McLuhan (1964) adds another link between the emergence of positivism and the printing press. He claims that specialist technologies detribalize while non-specialist technologies tribalize, or even retribalize. The individual skill required to read and to write, not to mention the individual time spent reading and writing, places value on the individual above the group. Isolation rather than contextualization becomes privileged. Consuming television and movies, however, does not require a skill. One does not get better at watching television the more one watches. (However, one may become better at viewing television critically.) As opposed to causation, configuration and association are privileged. Moving images have undoubtedly become our central mythmaker at the same time that retribalization in our culture seems to be on the rise. For example, the popularity of professional sports is unprecedented, partisan politics is bitterer, and dogmatic churches are more powerful.

Whether we are talking about writing, films, or clocks, we still must ask the questions, who gets to name what, and for whose benefit? Who is claiming to know the

truth, to what authority are they staking their claim, and what are the consequences of this supposed truth? Briggs and Burke (2005) claim that in every age and in every location, and with any medium, power is the central tension in the dispersion of information. “The need for information in every age has been associated with the effort to control the present and the future for personal, political, and economic reasons” (Briggs & Burke, 2005, p. 214). Briggs and Burke explore these power plays across oral, textual, and visual mediums. For oral examples they point to King Charles I and Queen Elizabeth I. The king was known to have said that the pulpit governs people more than the sword in times of peace, and the queen talked about tuning the pulpits, meaning to encourage obedience to the throne. For textual examples they point to John Fenno, the first publisher of the *Gazette of the United States* in 1789. He claimed that the purpose of this paper, paid for by the federalists, was “to hold the people’s own government in a favorable light . . . by exhibiting facts” (Briggs & Burke, 2005, p. 162). This same desire for control of communication channels for economic and political purposes is clearly stated in 1965 by Thailand’s official primary objectives of radio and television broadcasting:

- A) Promote national policy and common interests in politics, military affairs, economics, and social welfare.
- B) Promote the loyalty of citizens to the country, the religion, and the king.
- C) Promote the unity and mutual co-operation of the army and its citizens.
- D) To invite citizens to retort to and oppose the enemy, including those doctrines which are dangerous to the nation. (Briggs & Burke, 2005, pp. 196-197)

This tension between who gets to tell their stories to whom and as a consequence has a greater say in economic and political matters has always existed. General David

Sarnoff, the President and Chairman of the Board at RCA from 1930-1970, defending the broadcasting system said, “We are too prone to make technological instruments the scapegoats for the sins of those who wield them. The products of modern science are not in themselves good or bad; it is the way that they are used that determines their value” (as cited in McLuhan, 1964, p. 11). He is speaking to a truth that there are “liberating” possibilities and “oppressive” possibilities that exist with uses of all kinds of media.

While we must acknowledge that this tension between power and interests has always existed, we must also acknowledge that the elites have had varying degrees of success in inculcating the intended population with stories that serve their interests. McLuhan suggests that we look at the media used to account for this variance. McLuhan responded to Sarnoff’s statement by claiming that the statement addresses the overt messages but ignored the messages in the media themselves. To McLuhan, the messages contained in any medium are not simply the intended messages the producers hope to convey, but the messages are also how they change the patterns of human affairs. Some contexts, and therefore media, move towards a concentration of power, while other contexts move towards a dispersion of power. We must consider whether the French Revolution, the Bill of Rights, and the Emancipation Proclamation, all victories in the dispersion of power, occurred because print was the privileged medium within their contexts. In comparison, since television has become our central mythmaker in America, power has become more consolidated as evidenced by the expansion of the wealth gap.

I do not think it is a coincidence that General David Sarnoff, the leader of a media giant, wanted to focus on the overt verbal messages conveyed through the medium rather

than the message that is conveyed through the pattern of relationships. By looking at the pattern of relationships in the broadcasting system, we see that a few people have the opportunity to tell stories to many. Only a handful of multinational corporations control global media distribution. This organization is decidedly an authoritarian pattern and message.

The printing press, however, existed within and created a context in which power became decentralized. This is not to say that there was not strong debate on the matter of power. Historian G. M. Trevelyan, in the periodical *The Nineteenth Century*, wrote, “the Philistines had captured the Ark” when talking about the printing press (as cited in Briggs & Burke, 2005, p. 159). By this he was presumably condemning the low quality of writing that was being published in the dailies and weeklies that became popular due to the massive number of people publishing. However, more than simply poor grammar and crude style is suggested here. There is also a condemnation that the printing press allowed the masses, rather than the elite, more control of communicating stories. Philistines are not only poor grammarians, but they are crass, ignorant, and have little regard for humanity and beauty. The Ark is a metaphor for ultimate truth and ultimate power. More than simply offended by the overuse of clichés, Trevelyan’s statement condemns the fact that through the printing press the people gained more influence in public policy.

With the rise of corporate media conglomerates in the 20th century and the control of radio, television, and movies, messages became concentrated once again. Is it any wonder that it was illegal to teach American slaves to read and write and, yet, the

powerful elite encourage the most marginalized American people to watch TV and go to Hollywood movies? Now in the 21st century, the Internet has provided some with hope for a more democratic system of representation and consumption of text and images. Some responses to challenges of the centralized power structures have been to protect the forts and refuse to let go of certain authorities, like Trevelyan over 100 years before. Other responses have been to try to accept the uncertainty of the world and to try to learn from the multiplicity of voices.

The Invention of the Movie Camera

Before we look specifically at documentary movies, it is important to contextualize the most important machine that contributes to their creations, the movie camera. While it has been positioned as a positivist tool, I connect its history to other artistic and aesthetic devices. While the camera may have some important scientific uses, the story of the camera as a scientific tool had to be created. For instance, in John Fell's *A History of Films* (1979) and David Cook's *A History of Narrative Films* (1981), the first mention of research that led to the invention of the movie camera was of Edward Muybridge's study of horses in 1872. Muybridge was hired by Leland Stanford to determine if horses at any point in a gallop have all four hooves off the ground. After some failed attempts, Muybridge was able to devise a system where the horse would trip several still cameras to snap a picture alongside a straightaway. A surprising discovery actually occurred, but not the surprise that exists in the books. The surprise was that the experiment was able to prove conclusively that horses do have all four legs off the ground during a gallop, but not when expected. Prior to the photos some assumed that all

four hooves were off the ground when the horse was fully stretched, but, in fact, all four hooves are off the ground when the legs are fully tucked. The least surprising aspect of this experiment, however, was that when you put sequential pictures one after the other, an illusion of motion is apparent. This, in fact, had been known for centuries, yet the myth of his work discovering the illusion of motion spread throughout our culture.

Why does this story surrounding this event achieve such privilege in our books and our knowledge about the history of the movie camera? I speculate that the reason behind the motility of this story is because it arouses at least two other narratives that are deemed important. First, it locates the invention of the movie camera in America. Even though Muybridge was Scottish by birth, his work with Stanford was done in California. Much of the history behind the movie camera took place in many countries across Europe and Asia. However, by focusing on Muybridge and drawing a direct line to Thomas Edison's kinetograph, the history of the motion picture can be located within the borders of the United States. This serves nationalist interests on the part of the writer, publisher, and potential reader of histories created in the United States. The second important narrative, with which the Muybridge story resonates, is that of the camera as an objective tool that captures reality. Ever since its first use the camera has been intertwined with positivist discourses. Through these discourses, the camera is positioned as a scientific tool for registering reality and is more accurate at representing reality than hand-rendered images (Sturken & Cartwright, 2004). There is no doubt that Muybridge showed conclusively that all four hooves are off the ground while a horse is galloping. This follows the narrative of technology and machines leading to scientific, empirical

discovery: Galileo's telescope showed us the craters in the moon and the rings around Saturn; circling the globe on a ship taught us that the world was round. The Muybridge story of capturing a horse with four hooves off the ground has become so privileged because it corresponds and promotes the story of the camera as captor of reality.

Do the glimpses of human doings that movie cameras and documentaries provide for us answers to the questions we are presumably seeking? Must we assume that if a camera can provide us with the answer of whether a horse's hooves are all off the ground in a full gallop, it can also answer the question of how we are to perceive, understand, and ultimately relate to other cultures in far away lands? Historian Daniel Boorstin delineates between two 'why' questions: the 'science why' and the 'religious why.' The 'science why' asks questions about how things work, such as, "Why is the sky blue?" The answers require empirical evidence. The 'religious why' asks about questions of purpose and meaning, such as, "How should we live together socially?" and "Is there a Supreme Being and/or spiritual realm?" These are not empirical questions; they are therefore by definition not going to be answered by any accumulation of empirical data (Covaleskie, 2006). By watching a moving two-dimensional image of the potter making a pot, isolated from culture and history, can we really learn the reality about, or as perceived by, the potter?

The history of the movie camera began well before Muybridge and the galloping horses. I begin my history of the camera in the 17th century with mathematician Anthmiasius Kircher's camera obscura. He discovered that a completely black and darkened room with a slit in the back allowing in the sunlight would project the image of

what was in the sunlight. He did, in fact, use the camera obscura for primarily scientific demonstrations. However, it was itinerant entertainers who created a portable camera obscura, called the magic lantern (See Figure 2), and used the medium for entertaining spectacles (Fell, 1979).



Photograph: Andreas Praefcke, March 2006. File licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 2.5 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.5/>)

Figure 2. *A Magic Lantern with a Strip of Pictures. They Varied Greatly in Design with a Wide Range of Features to Simulate Motion.*

The magic lantern had a lens and used a candle for illumination and projection. Later technology replaced the candle with limestone that was heated until it glowed.¹ The projectionist would slide in plates with letters, forms, or hand-drawn images which were projected onto walls, screens, or even smoke. Sometimes they had strips in which they could show successive pictures. At other times two lanterns were used. Fading in and out was possible with two lanterns, or one with two lenses. And many accessories, like

¹ This is the origin of the term limelight.

pulleys and cranks were developed to make the slides move up and down or side to side. A good projectionist would be able to simulate motion with just a lantern or two and sequential slides. When we think about the progenitor of cinema, it seems that the magic lantern shows were direct ancestors.

The magic lantern was certainly the most widely celebrated optical device before cinema. However, there were many other devices that used successive static pictures to create motion. The phenakistoscope was developed by the Belgian Joseph Plateau and by the Austrian Simon von Stampfer at the same time, 1832, and completely independent of one another.² The phenakistoscope was a disc with successive pictures drawn around it and the disc was attached perpendicularly to a handle in a way that allowed it to spin. There were slots at the edges to act as a shutter. One would hold device so the disc was vertical and the pictures faced a mirror. Next, one would spin the disc and peer through the slots, so the pictures would not blur into one another. An illusion of motion would appear in the mirror (see Figure 3).

In two years, George Horner invented the Daedaleum based on the same principles. The Daedaleum was an open cylinder that spun. Toward the top of the walls were the shutter slots and on the bottom interior were the successive stills. When spun, one could look through the slits and see a moving image on the opposite wall (See Figure 4). Unlike the phenakistoscope, one didn't need a mirror and more than one person could

² I am skeptical that two people living so close to one another discovered the same thing at the same time completely independent of one another. However, I am not that interested in researching this story and pushing the questions that surround it further.

view it.³ In 1853, Franz Uchatius, an Austrian soldier, combined the disc from the phenakistoscope with the magic lantern in order to project the moving illusion. In 1870, once photos could be recorded on glass, Henry Heyl used a photo disc and patented the magic lantern projector, even though it had already been around for over 200 years. In 1888, after Muybridge's horse experiment, Etienne Jules Marey, a Parisian physiologist, created a camera that was shaped like a gun. It filmed, or "shot," 20 or 60 pictures per second depending on the setting. At first all of the images appeared on one glass plate, but he moved to paper rolls of film and eventually used celluloid to work with his device.



Disc made by Edward Muybridge. File licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 2.5 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.5/>)

Figure 3. Disc Used on a Phenakistoscope, c. 1893.

³ Many sources suggest that Ting Huan invented a similar device in China in 180 A.D. While Ting Huan's invention was too far away, in time and space, for me to consider it a direct descendent of the movie camera, I certainly want to mention and honor his invention in this history.



Photograph © Andrew Dunn, 5 November 2004. File licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 2.5 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.5/>)

Figure 4. *Reproduction of the Daedulum, Invented by George Horner in 1834.*

With this background, Edison was poised to “invent” the movie camera. Actually, William Kennedy-Laurie Dickson, also a Scottish inventor under the employ of Edison created the kinetograph. He also invented the kinoscope to view the film. The kinoscope looped 40’-50’ rolls of film on spools, making reels unnecessary. Edison lost interest in projection and thought that the kinoscope, which allowed one person to view a short film for 5¢, was the future. His belief that projection was a passing fancy suggests to me a poor historical awareness and a shortsighted entrepreneurial priority on his part. However, it caused him to not pursue a foreign patent on his invention. This allowed the Lumière brothers to create the cinématographe without being in violation of Edison’s intellectual property. This device captured, processed, and projected films portably, which brings us back to that fateful night in Paris in 1895.

This short history shows that the motion picture camera and its ancestors have been closely tied to devices used for entertainment and amusement rather than scientific

experiments, not to mention that there were many people and cultures involved in creating the camera, not just Thomas Edison and the United States. Like most stories in our world, the narrative of the camera being a device that captures reality was created and maintained by a complex conflation of discourses, intentions, and corporeal contexts. It is easy to assign blame, but difficult to find responsibility. Most of the documentarians I talk about in this chapter were aware of, or at least questioning of, the illusion/reality problematics. Oftentimes, like most performers, they wanted to create the best illusion they could; perhaps these interests hold them responsible for this myth. While many documentaries challenged commonly held societal myths (and there are many that did not, also), the larger narrative of technology capturing reality was quite in line with political and business interests. The elites during the Age of Invention promoted the idea that machines were moving us forward to a better world. The narrative that a machine can capture reality benefited their interests for society to put resources into the industrial factories and machines they controlled. So, perhaps these interests hold them to blame for this myth. The audiences were also complicit because they, too, wanted the benefits that come with being a part of a society and an age that has access to the “Truth.” Perhaps for these interests they are to blame for promulgating this myth. While trying to place blame on a particular group of people may not produce meaningful results, we still must explore the narratives and the contexts that produced particular stories about the nature and representation of truth that had meaning for particular populations.

Working against a Definition of Documentary

Today, documentary exists as a distinctly separate genre from narrative film. It has been considered the more serious counterpart. This genre in particular carries the weight of positivist ways of knowing. Through this use of the movie camera, there is a suggestion that the world is ultimately knowable. Recently, as political documentaries have become box office hits (i.e., *Fahrenheit 9/11*, *Supersize Me*, *An Inconvenient Truth*, etc.), there has been an increasing challenge as to whether particular films are documentaries or not based on their objectivity. The strategy behind the challenge is if one can prove that they are not documentaries, and therefore not reliable for objective truth, they are political propaganda with subjective agendas and should be viewed with suspicion, if at all.

So, what is a documentary? The word “documentary” suggests an interest in what is actual (Coles, 1997). John Grierson, an English critic and filmmaker, first used the term when he wrote that Robert Flaherty’s film *Moana* has “documentary value.” The film, a social and cultural creation, has value because it is based on primary sources, be they textual, visual, or aural. The root word ‘document’ in documentary refers to both the creation (the film, exhibit, or radio presentation) being a document, and the creation being based on documents, broadly defined. Grierson defined documentary as, “the creative treatment of actuality” (Ellis & McLane, 2005, p. 4). Here we see that even when this word was first being created, there was awareness of the illusion/reality problematics.

Images, to include documentaries, have always been important means through which ideologies are produced and onto which ideologies are projected (Sturken &

Cartwright, 2001). Ideologies are defined as how individuals position their values and beliefs in relation to social institutions. Oftentimes ideologies seem natural and inevitable, like individual freedom or the importance of family. Everyone lives with an ideology, but it becomes acutely visible when the individual's ideology is in direct contrast with how the social context defines normality. Documentaries are often accused of being propaganda or absolute truth depending on whether the viewer agrees with the film's ideology or not. Sturken and Cartwright (2001) warn against seeing all ideologies as propaganda. Propaganda, they claim, uses false representations to lure people into holding beliefs that compromise their own interests. While we all hold ideologies, not all ideologies are held out of ignorance. Trying to define documentary based on objective truth versus ideological propaganda is difficult at best, and a distraction from the issues at worst.

Jack Ellis and Betsy McLane (2005) begin their book *A New History of Documentary Film* with five areas (subjects, purpose, form, method, and audience response) to distinguish documentary films from fiction films. While I appreciate the attempt to define the genre, each area is riddled with exceptions and presumptions. For instance, in the area of subjects, they claim that documentaries generally deal with public matters rather than private ones. In the last 40 years there have been many documentaries dealing with personal psychologies or family dynamics, not to mention that films defined as fiction say much about the social and cultural location from which they emerged. In the method section, there is an assumption that documentarians only capture footage in the field, while fictive films create sets and follow a script. However, voiceovers are

scripted, expert interviews are more or less scripted, and highly stylized reenactments performed on studio sets are common devices in documentaries. Under audience response, they claim that what the “documentary filmmakers seek to achieve is generally twofold: an aesthetic experience of some sort, on the one hand; and an effect on attitudes, possible leading to action, on the other” (Ellis & McLane, 2005, p. 3). Given this designation, I do not see any difference between documentarians and fiction filmmakers. Other correlations with fiction are noticed when we consider the use of editing devices such as pace, plot, coherence, moral authority, and emotionality, to name but a few, that inform these constructions (Coles, 1997).

It is difficult and unclear to determine exactly what we mean when we refer to movies as documentaries. While distinctions between documentaries and narrative films are blurry and definitions are finite, most theoreticians still look at the cross section between the intent of the filmmaker, methods used to capture the visual and aural evidence, and methods used to edit the evidence together. Some theorists claim that what a documentary is rests solely on an unofficial contract between filmmaker and audience that what the film presents is reality as it is, not an interpretation by the filmmaker (Plantinga, 1997). Scholars and filmmakers (often the same) have challenged this contract on all fronts resulting in adaptations by filmmakers in how footage is captured and edited. New critiques emerged in response. Perhaps the best definition of documentary is rooted in the history, tradition, and perceived boundaries of the form. A documentary is what the audience and creator agree is a documentary, whether they believe it represents objective truth or not.

The argument and debate about what is and what is not a documentary is a healthy one when it takes place among filmmakers, audience members, and others who consider the question seriously. As long as the argument remains alive the genre is alive and strong. Since most documentarians presume themselves to be more than entertainers, they have taken the conversation seriously. Unlike Hollywood filmmakers, documentarians are often film theoreticians as well. Since they, generally speaking, embrace the social importance of their images, they have been more responsive to theoretical challenges than Hollywood filmmakers. Throughout the 20th century documentarians attempted to address critiques by changing the methods of collecting shots, by examining the relationships between filmmaker and subject, and, in some cases, by making clear through the films that the authoritative narrative has been abandoned.

When the conversation is co-opted by talking heads on cable news channels that are trying to push up ratings or promote a required political agenda, the debate becomes limited. Only particular films made by people with opposing viewpoints become questioned. This conversation selectively muddies the truth-value of particular films based on financial and/or political interest, while allowing other films' veracity to go unchecked. This conversation does not care about truth or films, but only what serves a particular political and economic agenda. When one challenges the myths that benefit those in power—those controlling the stories and the broadcast system—one can expect a barrage of interpretations that discredits the work and the person behind the work.

This debate over defining documentary calls the filmmakers' intentions into question. Do they want to entertain, do they want to deceive, or do they want to be taken

seriously as researchers? Do they want to continue to believe in their illusions or do they want to have their methods open for scrutiny? Different filmmakers have answered these questions differently. The myth of objectivity has been useful for filmmakers to validate their work by connecting it with the privileged scientific gaze. However, there exists a steady stream of documentarians who have tried to answer the harshest critics. Many have tried to maintain their objectivity by exploring different ways to collect evidence and present it. Others have renounced the idea of objectivity in documentary films, and still others have turned the questions of objectivity onto science and other forms of knowledge production.

Totality and Infinity of the 20th Century Documentary

Emmanuel Levinas' work *Totality and Infinity* (1961) illustrates the tension between positivist and post-positivist ways of knowing. While philosophy has rarely ever relied on empirical data, philosophy during 19th and early 20th centuries relied on linear, predictable, and strictly rational thought. Categorization and isolation were common thought patterns used to justify the creation of knowledge. In these ways, philosophy resonated with positivism. "Through the concept of 'totality,' [Levinas] characterizes the whole of Western philosophy, whereas 'the infinite' indicates the transcendence suppressed by that same tradition" (Peperzak, 1993, p. 120). Totality suggests that the world is knowable and controllable by human reasoning. Infinity, on the other hand, creates space for the idea that the world is not completely knowable and predictable. Levinas connects the concepts of the Same and the Other to totality and infinity, respectively. The Same is connected to totality in its desire to universalize its experience.

The Other is connected to infinity in that it is a reality that cannot be wholly integrated into any form of interiority.

Ethnographic and narrative documentaries of the 20th century dealt specifically with issues surrounding representations of the Other. Documentary is what ‘we’ do to the Other. Documentaries represented and promulgated the binary oppositions of white/other, male/female, and civilized/primitive (Sturken & Cartwright, 2001). Rarely do we use the tool to explore our cultures and ourselves, and even more rarely do we inquire about what the Other says about us. With few exceptions, documentaries tend to be about vulnerable people directed by privileged people (Coles, 1997). There are very few documentaries of the 20th century that are about privileged people directed by vulnerable people. Usually, filmmakers go across town, over the tracks, or beyond our borders to capture and say something about the Other. The more vulnerable the people, the more exotic the landscape, the more interesting is the film. Often it is under the auspices of trying to give the Other a voice or to help the Other. But this work should make us stop to reflect on how the Other is defined and what “we” are hoping to accomplish.

Zygmunt Baumann described the positivist dream as for a “unified, managed, and controlled space,” achieved through “projects of social engineering [and] the search for universal standards of truth, justice, and beauty” (Baumann, as cited in Renov, 2004, p. 130). Documentary, for the most part, has concurred with this discourse.

Documentarians of the 20th century have tried to reduce difference to sameness by encompassing and redefining the Other. Distance is seen as control, and difference as hierarchy (Hansen, Needham, & Nichols, 1991). Much of documentary filmmaking of

the 20th century assents with the agenda of exploring, documenting, explaining, understanding, and symbolically controlling the world.

“Totality is understood to be the province of systematic knowledge, that is, reason . . . Sovereign reason knows only itself” (Renov, 2004, p. 130), and it tries to neutralize and encompass others. Totality serves the ego. “Ego’s freedom expresses itself by its mastery of the world that is its own” (Peperzak, 1993, p. 143). Infinity, on the other hand, recognizes radical alteriorty. Infinity is beyond calculation and “gloriously exceeds every capacity” (Levinas, as cited in Renov, 2004, p. 150). In Levinas’ metaphysics, infinity brings into being an ethical obligation to the Other. Freedom (from the Other) is not the intention, but rather, justice (to the Other) is the intention. “I am saved by the acceptance of the critique that comes from the Other’s face” (Peperzak, 1994, p. 146). The ego’s relationship to the Other precedes any definition of ego. The quality of that relationship, whether we separate or engage in various ways with the Other, is fundamental in Levinas’ metaphysics.

Documentaries of the 20th century certainly engage with the Other. However, we must explore the qualities of this engagement. Traditionally, ethnographies about the Other do not present the Other as creators of meaning, but rather beings that are. The Other exists in a particular condition because “we” have exploited them. In the meantime, it is “we,” the filmmakers and the audience, who are putting all of this together, and it is “we,” the filmmakers and the audience, who must correct it. The hierarchy still sides with the dominant culture. “We” look upon “them,” “we” understand their exploitation and “we” must do something to change things (Hansen, Needham, & Nichols, 1991). All

control lies within the domain of the dominant culture. Renov states that the problem with the documentarians Dziga Vertov, John Grierson, Leni Riefenstahl, and I would add Robert Flaherty and Frederick Wiseman, was their aggressive self-assurance in the pursuit of “Truth” (Renov, 2004). This intent of asserting the “Truth” superceded their engagement with the Other.

In the Beginning: “Nanook of the North”

To further examine this relationship with the Other, I would like to look closer at Robert Flaherty’s 1922 film *Nanook of the North*. Interesting, but not surprising, Flaherty was an explorer before he was a filmmaker. The explorers, exiles, and expatriates were powerful tropes that captured the sensibilities of the Modern Age. Malcolm Bradbury described the modernist writer as “a member of a wandering, culturally inquisitive group . . . The place of art’s very making can become an ideal distant city, where the creator counts, or the chaos is fruitful, the Weltgeist flows” (as cited in Kaplan, 1996, p. 29). Flaherty was attempting to introduce the Western world to the Inuits he came to know. *Nanook* is a film about an Inuit hunter. Allariallak, who Flaherty renamed Nanook, “acted out” activities he does on a regular basis (more or less). The film was a big box office success across America and the Western world.

Nanook, and documentaries like it, received a lot of scrutiny for claims they made about authority and truth. Much investigation has been done about *Nanook* and many questions have been raised about whether Flaherty has presented the world as it is. For one, the final movie was made up of staged footage. At first, Flaherty shot 17 hours worth of unstaged film. But when he was in New York editing the film a cigarette ember

ignited all of the raw footage. This meant he had to return to the Arctic and re-shoot the entire movie. A fur company, Revillon Freres, funded this second venture into the arctic.⁴ Since he had ideas about what worked and what he wanted, all of the scenes were staged. Like a Hollywood film, the scenes were performed several times so that Flaherty could film from multiple angles to assist with the editing process. When Allariallak was filmed struggling to reel in a seal through a hole in the ice, there was no actual seal at the end of the line; rather he is pretending to struggle. A dead seal is used for the shot where we see him pull a seal out of the hole. On top of that, many of the scenes that were filmed were not actually representative of how Inuits lived in the early 1920's (Nichols, 2001). He discouraged Allariallak from using rifles when he hunted, although that was common for Inuits at that time.

Flaherty also distorted the relationships between the people on the screen. "The dramatis personae of the Flaherty films are the nuclear family structured around conventional lines. He did not acknowledge the polygamy practiced in traditional Inuit culture" (Ellis & McLane, 2004, p. 18). Flaherty took the liberty of creating a family for Allariallak that resembled American standards. In the movie, Nanook only had one wife when, in reality, Allariallak had more. Community life was also ignored (Ellis & McLane, 2004). The appearance of numerous Inuits, in scenes like the hunt, seemed

⁴ Here is another celebrated story that deserves more scrutiny. It seems too romantic and perfect that he accidentally burned all of the film and then received funding to return to the Arctic and create a huge success. I speculate that he did not have the shots he wanted, but he had a vision of what he wanted. He secured funding from a fur company and then he burned the film. This is total speculation on my part. But considering he returned to the Arctic with a completely different method of filming, it seems more realistic to me.

incongruous with the prior appearance of the isolation of the nuclear family. There was no explanation for their appearance.

While many stories, plays, and movies dating back to the Greeks dealt with aberrations and anomalies, Flaherty's *Nanook* dealt with consistent patterns (Ellis & McLane, 2004). There was no anger, sex, or grief represented, along with no governing models or spiritual life depicted. The emphasis was on individual survival and division of labor amongst a nuclear family. The conflict on the screen was between the Inuit family and nature. There was no conflict between each other, between their community and other communities, and there were no spiritual or moral crises shown.

Inventively, Flaherty processed the film in this remote location and watched footage with Allariallak as the production went on. After the film was released and *Nanook* became a star, agents and other interested parties went to the Arctic looking for him. It turned out that Allariallak had died of starvation, trapped on an ice floe before he knew of his fame.

From these observations, some questions about representation and responsibility arise. What exactly was represented about the Other in this movie? Were we watching what Flaherty wanted to find in the arctic? Were we watching what Flaherty believed the American public would want to find? How would one characterize these desires? What is the difference between Allariallak and an actor? What was this movie's relationship to reality? What is Flaherty's responsibility to reality? What is Flaherty's responsibility for Allariallak's representation and Allariallak's physical body after the filming was

complete? Would any movie stand up to the truth test, and can any filmmaker be completely free of, or completely fulfill, ethical obligations to the Other?

From Nanook to Self-Reflexivity

One way theorists distinguish and defend documentaries is by talking about the intention of the films and filmmakers. Documentarians have often identified themselves by emphasizing the social importance of the films. John Grierson, who defined documentary as “the creative treatment of actuality,” intended his films to make social democracy easier in this complex world. His films were publicly funded and he was located within Britain’s Empire Marketing Board. While Michael Moore considers himself a filmmaker first and foremost, he said in an interview with Matt Lauer (MSNBC, June 18, 2004) about *Fahrenheit 9/11*,

If I do nothing else but just get people out to vote, regardless who they vote for, if I can get that 50 percent, or part of that 50 percent out that has chosen not to vote, to engage and to come back in and care about what’s going on, then I will feel like I’ve done something important.

Hollywood films and corporate-owned television productions state intentions other than social importance for their creations. A common stated intention is that the production is only meant to entertain. This ignores the importance of examining the narratives that “entertain” certain audiences. Both documentary and narrative films are imbued with politics and aesthetics. To separate the two leads to gross generalizations about genres and simple explanations of intentions.

The important intention for Hollywood and corporate television is to make a profit. The justification that the productions are only meant to entertain intentionally

distracts from the profit motive and how this motive influences the content. Most creations put into the public space, from curricula, to science, to movies, actively try to obfuscate the economic, political, and ideological attitudes reflected in the creations. Documentarians, on the other hand, have historically relished in this debate and boldly claim the political importance of their work.

What they have tried to deny, historically speaking, is the personal bias in their work. Most documentarians want their work to appear as records and as a document of reality. Pointing out that a person with values, beliefs, and a particular worldview constructed the film frustrates this purpose (Ruby, 1988). Positivist ways of knowing requires detached distance between the observer and the observed, so claims of bias on the part of the observer, in this case the documentary filmmaker, is a threat to the authority of the film.

In response to challenges of truth and objectivity, documentary filmmakers adjusted their methods in order to maintain a stance of objectivity, thereby maintaining their authority. The “Flaherty–style”⁵ documentary techniques became unfashionable only to resurface later in various mutations. The realism of one generation is artifice to the next (Nichols, 1988). Hollywood movies have constantly updated special effects to make the effects more stimulating. As we look backwards, however, the previous generation of special effects look quaint and naïve. This same pattern emerges in documentaries, but it is the claims of authority and truth that have been updated over time

⁵ This may be described as staging footage, renaming the characters, adjusting familial relationships, using a musical score for emotional purposes, using an authoritative voiceover or authoritative textual graphics to interpret the events.

and look quaint and naïve in retrospect. As the techniques have changed, so have the criticisms. New strategies to present the truth have created new strategies to contest the truth claims.

During the 1950's when synchronous sound capture became available in a portable format, filmmakers began using cameras as a fly-on-the-wall to particular events. The filmmakers could bring image and sound recording equipment out of the studio. The cameras and microphones could capture people in the street or follow a presidential candidate on the campaign trail. Observational documentaries, as they were called, often have no voiceover or extra music. "Observational filming, using synchronous sound, emphasized the spontaneous dialogue of the film subjects rather than a commentary spoken by the filmmaker or anthropologist—or more often some anonymous reportorial voice" (MacDougall, 1978, p. 414). It was thought that this technique would finally present a true objective document to see, study, and know because the interpretive narrator is no longer necessary. This method oftentimes exposed the process of filming during the production. The audience is made aware of the camera filming the event through the poorly composed shots and overly fast pans and zooms.

Filmmakers like Frederick Wiseman, Richard Leacock, and D. A. Pennebaker were part of this movement that used no voiceovers, interviews, additional music, or direction of the film's subjects. All of the blatant signs that critics pointed out showed the filmmakers subjectivities had been taken away. The absolute repression of subjectivity was considered a cardinal virtue (Renov, 2004). They made claims of science and objectivity to establish their work as superior to earlier documentaries. However, the

filmmakers still decided what to film for reasons of their own biases. Wiseman filmed the inside of a mental hospital in *Titicut Follies* (1967) to show how poorly the patients are treated. There was a definite point of view that was never recognized. Rather, the film was presented as an objective look inside the hospital. Robert Drew directed *Primary* (1960), a cinéma vérité look at the primary campaign between Hubert Humphrey and John F. Kennedy, because he believed what was being said and people who were saying them were important, and/or would be compelling to an audience. Even when the filmmaker takes away the signs of manipulation, the filmmaker is still making choices and trying to influence audiences in particular ways for particular reasons. These intentions influence all aspects of the film from conception to distribution.

While observational films convey a sense of actual time by using longer shots and by including lulls in action and pauses in speech, these qualities are still constructed (Nichols, 2001). They feel more “real” because they are being compared and referenced to the traditional documentaries. It was not common to observe an awkward lull in a traditional documentary; therefore, to include a lull suggests that what we are looking at is “reality” without intrusion by the filmmaker. When a critique of subjectivity was made about documentary films, the next generation of documentarians de-emphasized or eliminated the aspects that were called into question and replaced them with new techniques. While it certainly may have been refreshing to see new techniques, the claim of objectivity was at best hyperbolic and at worst disingenuous.

Other questions surrounded the behavior of the people in the film. What would people be doing if the cameras were not there? “It became increasingly clear that the

illusion of authorial invisibility could lead to a false interpretation of the behavior on the screen” (MacDougall, 1978, p. 415). If we acknowledge the camera’s presence, do we interpret the films differently? This led to another major shift during the 1960’s.

Filmmakers began inserting themselves into the films. “Some filmmakers came to believe that their films should not only be revelatory, but self-revelatory, containing evidence of the encounter in which produced them” (MacDougall, 1978, p. 415). These filmmakers, like Jean Rouch, wanted to disentangle themselves from the ethical quandaries of truth and representation by recognizing and embracing the choices, biases, and intentions of the filmmakers. These movies demonstrated that people with explicit agendas constructed these films. Discussion about the making of the film, within the film, was a device used by these filmmakers to make some of their own choices explicit. Voiceover was used as a way for the filmmakers to express their questions, concerns, and contingent interpretations, rather than as an authoritative voice from nowhere.

This style was not necessarily new, but the questions it was trying to answer were new. Dziga Vertov was perhaps the first to be reflexive about the process of creating a documentary in *The Man with a Movie Camera* (1929). He showed the editing and filming process and reminded the audience that what they were watching was a construction. However, his intentions for these choices were not about truth and representation, but rather he wanted to identify the filmmaker as a worker. After the Russian Revolution, this was an important way to present oneself. Artists were sometimes seen as elitist dilettantes and Vertov wanted to separate himself and filmmaking from that label. Self-reflexive documentaries in the 1960’s arrived from

different concerns and with different intentions. If truth cannot be captured, they felt one must make the audience aware that what is asserted, questioned, or pondered emerged from a particular human experience.

Jay Ruby (1988) insists that all filmmakers must make present their own intentions in the film in order to take away the mystique. “Human beings construct and impose meaning on the world. We create order. We don’t discover it” (p. 67). He separates the film into three parts: product, process, and producer. Ruby asserts that all parts must be made knowable to the audience in order for the audience to have a complete understanding of the film. He states unequivocally, “I am convinced that filmmakers along with anthropologists have the ethical, aesthetic, and scientific obligations to be reflexive and self-critical about their work” (Ruby, 1988, p. 64). The self-reflexive movement puts the onus on the filmmakers to open up the films for interpretation.

However, self-reflexive documentaries became narrow in focus. These filmmakers did not feel comfortable with their authority to assert something about the world or the Other, and therefore, they were left making movies about themselves. They felt comfortable with their authority to talk about their own families, angst, and experiences. The films became psychological and shied away from confronting social and political situations. The self-reflexiveness led to endless regression at times and seemed more interested in “good form” than social change (Nichols, 1991, p. 60).

David MacDougall (1998), a harsh critic and producer of observational films, is frustrated with the obligatory call for self-reflexiveness. He wants to tell stories about the

Other that he encounters and he wants to tell them in the observational mode. He understands that he is telling a story about the Other from his perspective, and he expects his audience to understand this as well. He expects the audience to engage in a critical way with his films. As the contract between audience and documentarian has been questioned for the past century, certainly there is an audience for films that assume a critical viewing. On the other hand, given the history of documentaries, and the authority they have asserted, perhaps there is a responsibility for the documentarian to make obvious the choices and assumptions that have been made. Is it possible to engage the audience in a critical way in images and representation without being self-reflexive? Is it a false assumption that people can engage with the image in a critical way? Is the history, or the experience of watching a film, too powerful to expect that kind of scrutiny from the audience?

Brian Winston (2001) suggests that documentarians have many ethical obligations to the audience, but more importantly, the filmmakers have an ethical obligation to the Other who is being filmed. The ethical obligation being addressed in self-reflexive films is the ethical obligation to the audience and to the documentary form, but not necessarily to the subjects of the film. The relationship between the filmmaker and the subject trumps, in an ethical sense, the relationship between the filmmaker and the audience or the filmmaker and the tradition of documentary. Are we really helping the Other by creating a film about their story? What does informed consent mean when even the filmmaker cannot predict what might occur during the filming process? What control does the Other have in their representation?

Even with these questions, imposing strict protocols on the production of documentaries concerning consent forms, dramatizations, or voiceovers will destroy the genre in the end. As long as the questions excite and are sources of meaning we must continue to examine how documentarians present themselves, their footage, and the Other. However, free expression must be preserved as well. To formally exclude certain films from the category of documentary infringes on this freedom. After all, defining a documentary is elusive and is dependent on the agreement between the filmmaker and the audience. Through the ongoing creations and discussions there has been much change in the presentations and interpretations of documentary films. These discussions and creations must be allowed to continue to prosper. Not all films have to be put together in the same way. There are many films to make and many ways to make them.

Standing at an Impasse

Marshall McLuhan explains that movies brought us from the world of sequence, a textual way of knowing, into the world of configuration and structure. In documentaries evidence and argument are easily conflated (Hansen, Needham, & Nichols, 1991). Events are understood as evidence based on their relation to historical time and in agreement with the narrative structure. To isolate events in order to look at them closer and put them under a series of probing questions does not translate well in the visual medium. In the words of Trinh T. Minh-ha, in her documentary *Re-assemblage*, “reality is organized into an explanation of itself” (Minh-ha, 1982). It appears to me that we are standing at an intellectual impasse in the production and interpretation of documentary films. They are produced with modernist tools in a more or less systematic process, and yet suggest to the

audience a way of knowing based on association and emotions. As McLuhan says, “On film the mechanical appears organic” (McLuhan, 1964, p. 285). The criteria of scientific investigation are in tension with narrative, poetic, expressive, and subjective dimensions of documentary (Hansen, Needham, & Nichols, 1991).

I am reminded of the Audre Lorde (1984) quote, “The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house” (p. 110). Are we at a loss to represent the infinite Other with a medium that was created to transfix reality? McLuhan (1964) defines the message of any medium as the change of patterns it introduces into human affairs. The impasse comes from the different ways of knowing between consuming films and creating films. The creation of films is usually accomplished in an orderly, systematic fashion, encompassing long periods of time and great effort. During production, the sequential takes precedence over the relational. However, the consumption of films takes little effort. We sit in movie houses or at our TV sets taking in information from an authoritative, preaching, lecturing text. Interaction is not a necessity. While you may pause the film if you are at home to talk about or think about what was suggested, this is not a typical way to consume a film. The consumption of the film is done in a few hours, at most, and relational ways of knowing takes precedence over sequential. Watching a film is an experience more than a plan or a skill.

There is no need for any preparation or prerequisite training for watching television; it needs no analogue to the McGuffey Reader. Watching television requires no skills and develops no skills. That is why there is no such thing as remedial television watching. (Postman, 1992, p. 154)

Certainly one can say that one may be a better critical viewer than one was five years ago, but that is a separate skill from watching. One can watch all the television and all the movies one can and still know little about making movies (except, perhaps, if they watch programs about making movies). In contrast with text, you will often hear that to become a better writer, one must read, and to become a better reader, one must write. There seems to be an embedded link in text. While certainly filmmakers learn from watching other films, it is not uncommon to hear a screenwriter or a television writer quoted as saying, I don't watch that refuse, I just write it. The production and consumption of films seems to emphasize two different ways of knowing: the production emphasizes mechanical and sequential ways of knowing, and the consumption emphasizes relational and emotional ways of knowing.

Reaching for the Infinite: "Re-Assemblage"

We don't need cameras here; we have enough trouble controlling our eyes! I waste my time looking and not seeing. If a camera helped us to see, we would be better off—but it would not be *us*, *seeing*. A camera distracts you. It makes you less of a person. Words are even worse; they make birds fly away, and they make us dizzy with noise . . . We *stop* seeing; the noise of the words takes over. (Coles, 1997, pp. 160-161)

A Hopi youth, a 14-year-old girl, related these words to Robert Coles. What does she mean by this binary of looking and seeing? I understand her binary as similar to Levinas' Totality and Infinity. Looking can be compared to Totality and Seeing can be compared to Infinity. When you *look* at something, you view it isolated, distanced, and out of context. You try to capture it. You judge it. You box it in. When you *see* something you understand it in its contingent context. You appreciate the singularity of

the event, because you recognize that its occurrence is not necessary and the possibilities are endless. This one exists, but the possibilities were, and continue to be, infinite.

MacDougall (1975), in his essay “Beyond Observational Cinema,” disparaged ethnographic films of the 20th century. An observational filmmaker himself, he took note of the distinctively Western parochialism of the observational filmmaker, pretending invisibility, translating and reshaping cultural otherness. In doing so, the filmmaker echoes the colonialist sentiments of the omniscient one, of the conqueror and of the expert. Today, however, we believe we are in, or are emerging into, a post-colonial space. There is great hope expressed with this new condition. Yoneji Masuda said, “Information has no natural boundaries. When global information space is formed world-wide communications activities among citizens will cross all natural boundaries” (as cited in Briggs & Burke, 2005, p. 213). It is true that information has crossed many “natural” boundaries of space and geography. Such boundary crossing communication has been liberating, at times. Never before have so many people across the world demonstrated against a single war as we saw prior to and throughout the American invasion in Iraq. Perhaps we can say the world was standing against war in general, but probably they were standing against this war, in particular. Certainly the demonstrations against the WTO and their vision of globalization have brought together many people from around the world to communicate, plan, and try to create an alternate vision. However, we cannot say that the hopeful vision of the oneness of humanity all working together has come to fruition. The stronger voice so far in this post-colonial world is that of fear, nationalism, and fundamentalism.

It is within the tradition of documentaries that Trinh T. Minh-ha takes her camera as an anthropologist, a Vietnamese, and a woman (I do not know how she would order these), enters a village in Nigeria, and creates *Re-Assemblage* (1982). Throughout the film, she uses her own voice to provoke the audience. In the beginning of the film she states, "I do not intend to speak about. Just be near-by." Immediately she positions herself as distrustful of certainty and distrustful of the previous conversations about authority and culture. "Near-by" is an appealing choice of words. It does not suggest a fly-on-the-wall and it does not suggest attempts to dominate or assimilate into the group. She accepts their alteriority without the intention of knowing and understanding. A sense of discomfort of the situation and its history is sensed, an 'all-knowing' Anthropologist coming in to study a group of 'primitive' people. And yet, there exists a hope that through being 'near-by' this history, this discomfort, this *looking* at each other can be overcome. Through being 'near-by,' perhaps people can *see* each other.

There are many thought provoking quotes sprinkled throughout the movie: "Scarcely 20 years were enough to make 2 billion people define themselves as underdeveloped." In this statement she is commenting on the West's control of the global distribution of ideas and narratives, and how these ideas can construct reality for different audiences.

"For many of us, the best way to be neutral and objective is to copy reality meticulously." Here she provokes conceptions of positivism as it relates to ethnographic work. She tells a story of an ethnographer who leaves a tape recorder out to capture a conversation around the fire, while the ethnographer goes to sleep in his tent. Machines

can copy the conversation word for word better than human beings can remember, but a machine cannot develop a relationship with people as they sit around a fire. A tape recorder can capture *Totality*, but can never understand *Infinitely*.

“I am looking through a circle in a circle of looks” (Minh-ha, 1982). The gaze through the circular viewfinder of the camera with a circular lens is not the only look that matters. There are looks that occur between the people being filmed and back toward the filmmaker. The audience will look at the screen and also be a part of the circle of looks. The camera is just one of many looks that matter and is not the only one with authority. While it is the one that is recorded, and it is the one through which the audience will enter the circle, we must understand it as one within a context of others. Perhaps, by contextualizing the look of the camera, documentaries can help us *see*.

Through this film, she explores her own critique of modern assumptions about knowledge, self, and the Other. Winston (2000), in *Lies, Damn Lies, and Documentaries*, states, “The real difficulties of ethical documentary production turn on the degree and nature of intervention not on its absence or presence; and they rest far more on the relationship between documentarist and participant than between documentarist and audience” (p. 1). In this film, she is trying to position herself as a creator with a responsibility to the Other. She is accounting for the subject who is taking a subjective account of others. She’s trying to see, not look.

In *Re-Assemblage*, Minh-ha exaggerates many filmmaking taboos to break through the constructedness of the film and attempts to present the infinite humanity of the people she filmed. There are long sequences of music and sounds from that particular

geography without any visual footage. There are long sequences of visual footage, faces, activities, etc., with no sound. Sometimes the sound will cut in the middle of the shot exposing the filmmaker's decisions. She reminds us that she is choosing music, conversation, ambient sounds, and images. She is choosing whether to include sound over particular images. Minh-ha records a conversation between two women in their native language. She does not translate and she does not add subtitles. She positions the viewer as the outsider, as the one who does not know. The viewer and she must be humble in the face of the Other.

For me, it works. For me, it feels liberating. But when we try for the infinite we must fall short. Of course, this is just another form of reality as special effect. While it "works" for me, it is still only an opportunity to enter in dialogue with others about the opportunities and consequences of this construction. The question still remains as to whether we can represent the Other without creating neocolonialisms. Nevertheless, *Re-Assemblage* presents a model that points a way out of the impasse. It points to a form that uses the movie camera to present the *Infinite* Other rather than *Total* Other.

Documentaries Today

Documentaries have been marginalized for most of their history. A few have found airplay on the public airwaves and some have been used in classrooms. In the 1980's and 1990's, cable TV spread quickly across the United States and around much of the globe. With the creation of 24-hour stations that required documentary content, i.e., The History Channel, The Discovery Channel, The National Geographic Channel, etc., the demand for documentaries increased rapidly. There was an initial excitement about

the disparate voices that might have a chance to find space on our airwaves and the educational possibilities that might entail. However, rather than opening up content space for the serious documentarians who had difficulty finding distribution, a different sort of documentary was in demand. In these documentaries, personal control by the individual filmmakers lessened and the production cost per hour decreased dramatically (Ellis & McLane, 2004). The filmmakers of these documentaries are typically hired hands and had little say over the creative content of the films (except for the aesthetics of the graphics and special effects), and they hold no rights to the films. These films consistently use staged footage to include animated dramatizations, authoritative voiceovers, emotional music, and claims of “Truth” without questioning these techniques.

With the creation of retail stores like The Discovery Channel Store and ever-increasing emphasis on product tie-ins “it became abundantly clear that that executives at cable channels were far more interested in ‘branding’ themselves as saleable corporate commodities than in producing meaningful documentaries” (Ellis & McLane, 2004, p. 295). While vanilla ice cream coated with chocolate became known as Eskimo Pies, Klondike bars, and even Nanooks following the success of *Nanook of the North*, there is little evidence to suggest that Flaherty made his subsequent movies in order to cross-market other commodities (Ellis & McLane, 2004). The rise of cable television, and the choices of programming made by the executives, exemplifies the profit motive and presenting thought-provoking material are often at odds with each other.

Another motivating factor in the cable documentaries was that they were programmed to reach not only a regional or national audience, but an international

audience (Ellis & McLane, 2004). For this reason, too, non-controversial subjects get played: nature, adventure, ancient civilizations, natural wonders, and World War II. The more difficult subjects rarely get played, such as politically and personally challenging analyses of recent historical events. Cross-culturally, these topics are perceived to cause significant controversy that might be bad for business.

It is hard to avoid the evidence that those same forces of new technology and international business, far from extending our understanding and our tolerances, are shutting down our horizons. More and more, it seems, the Global Village is patrolled and ring-fenced by the Global Market . . . In a time when even the most public-spirited broadcasters are frozen in the headlights of ratings and profits, the space for documentary to explore difficult issues in faraway places shrinks every year. (Leslie Woodhead, as cited in Ellis & McLane, 2005, p. 332)

The few slots where challenging work is being shown are the occasional documentary on PBS, the BBC, and HBO/Cinemax.

There is also the phenomenon of “Reality Television” spawned from MTV’s “The Real World.” Reality Television invokes authenticity by co-opting documentary devices (Edwards, 2006). The use of interviews, cinéma vérité, black and white surveillance footage, and voiceover refers to the techniques of documentaries, which resonate with notions of realism. Much of “Reality Television” is simply competition, like *Survivor*, *Hell’s Kitchen*, or *The Apprentice*, with very high stakes designed to elicit emotional responses. Other “reality” shows, like *The Real World*, *The Osbournes*, and *The Simple Life* are more within the tradition of sit-coms and/or soap operas. They are heavily edited to provide a formal narrative arc. The “real” is a constant marketing tool and a continually shifting benchmark. Other documentaries promise behind-the-scenes look at

these “reality” shows and they are positioned as the reality of reality shows: “the really, real world,” “the real world you never saw” (VH1, as cited in Edwards, 2006). This speaks to the general distrust the audience has of anything being positioned as real, whether it is reality shows or news. However, this general distrust does not guarantee insightful critique.

Future Glance: McLuhan vs. McChesney

When talking about documentaries in the future, perhaps the medium that points the way is the Internet. It will be very important to follow how the Internet will take shape in the next few decades. Cheap video cameras and cheap editing equipment makes it more affordable to produce high quality sounds and images edited together. The Internet provides a distribution system for these films to find an audience. In 2004, Arab Muslim terrorists filmed the beheading of foreign hostages and put the images on the Internet for the world to see. Of course this would have been impossible with the expenses of film and without the Internet as a distribution network (Ellis & McLane, 2004). *Loose Change* (2005), a documentary in a positivist sense, put together information suggesting that 9/11 was perpetrated by the U. S. Government using photos, newspaper reports, and an authoritative voiceover. It has created a large stir considering it has only been released on the Internet. And, of course, there are the thousands and thousands of personal web pages and blogs that intersplice text and video and pictures into one, or many, representation of self and the world.

The Internet is . . . a media environment in which megacorporations coexist with Mom and Pop and a handful of volunteers, a domain in which some players are creating massive wealth while others are carving out small, alternative spaces . . .

It is as if the theater premiering the latest episode of the *Star Wars* saga were also to show my home movies. (Renov, 2004, p. 235)

I discussed earlier the paradox between producing and consuming television and movies. Perhaps this bridge has been crossed with the Internet; producing and consuming are once again intricately linked in a non-linear and associative pattern. As I look into the future of documentaries, I see the greatest opportunities and challenges being the integration into the Internet and intertextual presentations. I think while documentary devices will remain useful, such as interviews, observational shots, etc., I am not sure if trying to command a web user's attention for two hours will be an effective format on the Internet. Interactivity will probably be necessary, through viewers choosing what information to access and through responses generated by the viewers. The audio and video will have to be integrated with text and in conversation with audio, video, and text generated by the users. The Internet is the medium most in line with the fragmented and contested world post-positivism asserts. The Internet situates deeply personal truths lying next to provocative critical theory. There is great disparity in technical acuity, design, and politics, all contained in the same medium. Perhaps it is the technology that will sustain us as centralized authorities become increasingly questioned.

As Briggs and Burke noted earlier, information in every age has been subject to efforts to control the present and the future for personal, political, and economic reasons. Robert McChesney points out "all sectors of the federal government emphasize that the information superhighway 'will be built, owned, and operated by the private sector'" (McChesney, 2000, p. 5). This promise of control and potential profit may be the reason

the private sector continues to put resources into the Internet. A current example of this power struggle has been the challenges to “net neutrality.” Certainly, if regulations come into place that would allow large corporations to pay for faster internet connections, that would give them an advantage in reaching an audience. However, even with that advantage people will still choose information from more sources, from more disparate voices than available to them in the centralized broadcasting system. In ways that have not been seen before, meaningful and challenging knowledge will exist next to and be in competition with “entertaining” titillating constructions.

Over the next several decades, media theory will learn more about the tenets put forth by Marshall McLuhan and those proposed by Robert McChesney. While the Internet offers the personal, the political, and the flippant side-by-side for production, distribution, and consumption, we cannot forget that it is structured on a staggering system of technology and significant amounts of money (Renov, 2004). Access to the Internet is still for the privileged few. While it is clear that more diverse views from the dominant Western and Eastern voices are well represented, it is equally clear that oppressed people in these societies and societies outside of the dominant economic systems are less represented. This situation seems to be setting up new forms of colonialism, or at least new justifications for it. Robert McChesney, a searing critic of neoliberal globalization policies, particularly the convergence of broadcasting companies, has argued that because a few wealthy and powerful people control this communication infrastructure, the messages most people receive benefit the wealthy and the powerful.

As a rule of thumb, if certain forces thoroughly dominate a society's political economy, they will thoroughly dominate its communication system, and the first set of policy questions will not even be subject to debate. So it is and so it has been with the Communist Party in various "people's republics," and, for the most part, with big business interests in this country. (McChesney, 2000, p. 3)

It may be argued that McChesney, like Sarnoff, could be ignoring the messages embedded in the media itself. If McLuhan had written the passage above he might have reversed the order of causation that leads to domination. He may have written the first sentence as, "If certain forces controlled the communication system they would thoroughly dominate the political economy." Meaning can be derived from both statements. McChesney's argument perhaps ignores that the Enlightenment, the Bill of Rights, and the French Revolution were influenced by the printing press. He ignores the one instance, perhaps, when large masses of people took power from the powerful. McLuhan, however, may ignore the power of choices humans and their communities have no matter in what cultural context they exist.

Many people have commented on the recent rise in nationalism and have suggested that the Internet is polarizing people by presenting messages that are so localized that the audience only receives information that they want. I would contend that the rise in nationalism has less to do with the medium of the Internet and more to do with fear and uncertainty created around the globe by the current political situation. The wars, threats, and imperial maneuverings of the Bush administration have global reverberations and implications. Also, perhaps seeking out localized information is a holdover from broadcasting, where many people from all sides of the political spectrum felt unrepresented or misrepresented by the limited perspective available on the network and

cable news programs. In the long run, however, the Internet will expose people to more diverse information in many different forms and will encourage dialogue across ideological difference. Even language barriers are being overcome with technologies that translate web pages from one language to another.

Another consideration is governmental and national influence over the Internet. For a long time ideas about the free market place dominated the logic of the Internet. This was believed to be natural and not attributed to an American value system. The first challenge to this came from a French court that denied Yahoo the ability to auction off Nazi memorabilia. There has also been the belief that freedom of speech and freedom of the press would be the operating principles of the Internet. But we must consider what we see today in China. The government there is working with Internet giants Google and Yahoo to devise technology that censors information that the nation-state wishes to censor. I am not sure how successful this censorship campaign has been because there will always be hackers. At the same time that individuals appear to have the ability to access many sources of information, it also seems possible for authorities to monitor what information individuals are accessing.

As we look ahead, the future of media and documentary is uncertain. It is full of promise and full of nightmares. Looking over media history of the last 400 years and considering what we have learned might provide some direction for the future. Elizabeth Eisenstein talked about lateral and vertical changes due to the printing press. People had more access to conflicting information and felt less of a need to preserve information. The radio and television broadcasting era closed down the dialogue of competing voices

and allowed the corporate interests to determine the stories we tell about our own society and about others. Perhaps we see in the Internet a medium that is opening up this dialogue once again across borders and boundaries. Perhaps we will see stories and documentaries being produced and consumed from many different segments of our society and other societies. As far as preserving knowledge or building on past knowledge, I think we are seeing a different use of knowledge. In the spaces of Linux, Youtube and Wikipedia, an interactive, contested, and negotiated creation of knowledge is privileged. The questions and debates about representation and reality are the same; only the assumptions about knowledge are different. And the time it takes to respond to a critique has been sped up rapidly.

If I was to predict the future now, based on how I interpret the research, I believe McLuhan's theories about the media being the message will trump the control the powerful want to place on the Internet. I believe that the messages contained in this de-centered medium will make life more difficult for the powerful who want to maintain a centralized power system, whether net neutrality laws are passed or not. McLuhan (1964) postulated that media changes the perceptions of the user, whether the user wants to be changed or not. However, their one trump card is to dismantle the system entirely. A printing press can be owned and operated by one person; the Internet, however, needs a collection of resources in order to be maintained. It is easy to imagine calls for its dismantling under the guise of moral decay due to easily accessible gambling, adult pornography, and child pornography. This tension between the message in the medium of the Internet and the powerful trying to control the Internet will be the central struggle in

the dominant global economies during the next few decades. This struggle will impact the future of media, the future of politics, and the future of documentaries.

exChange: The Documentary

At this time please watch the documentary *exChange* before continuing on to Chapter III.

CHAPTER III

JOURNEYING THROUGH THE CREATION

In Chapter II, I mapped out the theoretical and ethical issues of truth and representation that have occurred throughout the history of documentary filmmaking. Clearly there is a gap between what we imagine documentary work to be and what it actually is. The questions are too serious and the tensions are too great. In this chapter, I explore my own decisions, judgments, and assumptions I made along the way when creating the documentary *exChange*. The purpose of this focus on the event of research is to examine it epistemologically. For this reason, I focus on places of confusion I felt and mistakes I made along the way, for these are the places of the most learning. Through “reinserting the experiencing self into the practice of ethnography, which means attending to the phenomena of the ethnographic experience as it is happening” we can explore the construction of knowledge as a creation of an experiencing human embedded in social reality (Devereaux, 1995, p. 69). To this end, I kept a notebook throughout the process, recording my thoughts, frustrations, and decisions.

I am hardly the first to take up this task of examining the Self examining the world. In one famous example, James Agee (1941), in his book *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, anguishes about his inadequacy to the task of representing the poor tenant farmers and the conditions in which they lived. Initially he and photographer Walker Evans were on an assignment for Fortune Magazine to document the daily experiences of

white sharecroppers in the South. Fortune refused to publish their work and, in turn, they published *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. In the book, he frets because he will not know all there is to know about the tenant farmers. He will not be able to convey the complete picture of suffering and pride, of victim and agent, which makes the people fully human. The audience will not be aware of how short he has come; rather, they will feel as though they have received a full understanding of the conditions and the lives of the people represented in his book. This gap between his creation and its consumption caused tremendous tension and anxiety as he proceeded with his work.

In a multitude of ways outside of the creator's control, the audience is encouraged to experience the documentary as a proxy for experience in the material world itself, rather than a reflection of the documentarian's own perspective. This is not true for novels, paintings, or fiction films. But documentaries cross multiple discourses of truth, authority, and technology to present itself as a practically unmediated look upon reality. Documentaries draw upon discourses of machines' objectivity and scientific methods of analysis to convey an appearance of impartial observation. There are also aspects in the experience of consuming documentaries that gives it the impression that the world in the film is coterminous with the world in which we live. Synchronous sound can be recorded and played back along with the images. Unlike photos and paintings, the images also exist in the dimension of time. Audiences often experience watching a film as though they are having the experience depicted in the film. Perhaps overstating it, historian and filmmaker Robert Rosenstone (1988) says, "The huge images on the screen and the wraparound sounds overwhelm us, swamp our senses, and destroy attempts to remain

aloof, distanced, critical” (p. 1177). Another aspect of documentaries that convinces audiences that they are experiencing unmediated reality is that they begin with the material world, not with representations of the world, i.e., characters, settings, and dialogue are created. As Bill Nichols (1991) says,

Whatever else we may say about the constructed, mediated, semiotic nature of the world in which we live, we must also say that it exceeds all representations. That is a brute reality; objects collide, actions occur, forces take their toll . . . Documentaries direct us toward the world of brute reality even as it also seeks to interpret it. (p. 110)

Ultimately, it is the historical discourse surrounding documentary films that encourages people to consume it as objective reality, but the features of synchronous sound, its existence in time, and its beginning with the material world make it easier to create and maintain the discourse of objective truth.

Agee tried to justify his work by considering the belief that it will help improve the conditions of the farmers’ lives. But even to this end, he knew in all likelihood there would be no long-term changes as a result of his documenting their lives. He laments the inadequacy of words and wishes that he could rather use odors, photographs, and fragments of cotton, wood, earth, and excrement. However, no matter what he used to represent the white Southern tenant farmers, it would always remain a representation. There are no methods that allow him to exactly duplicate the tenant farmers symbolically. More accurately, there are no methods that allow him to duplicate his perception of the tenant farmers. Perhaps even more accurately, he could never implant in all of his readers a passion to upset a social order that causes so many to suffer.

The tension Agee felt in the field could be understood as a tension between the work he was doing and the epistemology that was (and is) privileged in our institutions. This epistemology assumed the best model of problem solving was accomplished by an impartial observer engaging in rational deliberation. When a problem arises, the ends are determined and through step-by-step reasoning we can solve simple and highly complex problems. Perhaps this epistemology was best articulated by John Dewey (1933) when describing the five sequential phases he believed constituted reflective thought:

(1) suggestions, in which the mind leaps forward to a possible solution; (2) an intellectualization of the difficulty or perplexity that has been felt (directly experienced) into a problem to be solved, a question for which the answer must be sought; (3) the use of one suggestion after another as a leading idea, or hypothesis, to initiate and guide observation and other operations in collection of factual material; (4) the mental elaboration of the idea or supposition as an idea or supposition (reasoning, in the sense in which reasoning is a part, not the whole, of inference, and (5) testing the hypothesis by overt or imaginative action. (as cited in Rosario, 1988, p. 344)

Reading Agee through this epistemology, we see that he frets over not being able to control the outcomes and all of the variables and not being able to achieve his ends. He is confronting the large gaps that exist when approaching documentary work with a rational deliberation model of problem solving. In this exploration of my immersion into the field, I utilize Harold Rugg's aesthetic epistemology because it offers an alternative epistemology to John Dewey's rational deliberation model and allows us to perceive these tensions from a new perspective.

Rugg was one of the first curriculum theorists to resist this pragmatic formulation of knowing. He did not claim rationality was unnecessary; rather he said it was

insufficient. He spent much of his career and beyond trying to describe the creative process and the imagination. Here was one formulation from 1928:

There is, first of all, that urge to create—hazy, intangible, it may manifest itself as a vague restlessness. There is, second, the illuminating flash of insight which suddenly reveals to the artist a conception, perhaps, indefinite, of the meaning toward what he is groping. There is, third, the mastery of the necessary techniques. And there is, fourth, a long grueling enterprise of the integrative process itself—the tenacious grip on application of the necessary techniques in shaping and reshaping the work as it develops; the successive stages of ruthless self-criticism; the rigorous sense of dissatisfaction with the work as it progresses; the insistence on unsparing exactitude, precision; the constant polishing and changing. (as cited in Rosario, 1988, p. 345)

This epistemology seems to better describe the process with which I created the documentary. Using this epistemological model I explore my own messy, subjective, and fragmented processes of creation. The following sections are titled based on the stages that Rugg has articulated. “The Urge to Create” looks at my initial interest in creating documentary films in general, and in creating *exChange*, specifically. “Flash of Insight” will examine my own history with traveling and where, perhaps, the seed of interest germinated. “Mastery of Techniques” looks at the production part of the process where I had to film, record sound, interview, and form relationships with Student D and Student O.⁶ “Integrative Process” examines the slow process of familiarizing myself with the

⁶ Most of the time in academic research the participants are anonymous. That is not the case here. For that reason there are significantly greater consequences for the participants. While I have not consciously eliminated, changed, or added content in my research, I have thought about this situation and I am sure it has influenced the meanings I have produced. For the rest of the dissertation, I address the two students as ‘Student D’ and ‘Student O.’ I have done this so my dissertation committee will recognize the students from the film, but if the written portion is read by others without the benefit of viewing the film, the participants identities will protected.

footage, seeing connections, constructing scenes, and putting them together to make a movie.

The Urge to Create

In general, the urge to create a documentary has been with me for some time. I remember in graduate school in 1995, I created a video montage using an analog editing system that was cumbersome and inaccurate. The point of the montage was to portray images of pop culture that presented the “American Dream,” while music from Jane’s Addiction and Fishbone decidedly critiqued this dream. To find images I wanted to use, I went to the New York City library where I could only take out 2 videotapes at a time. I made many trips, looked over many videos, and copied many bits onto another tape that I used to collect the images. While I was in the midst of this process I came across Marlon Riggs’ documentaries *Ethnic Notions* and *Color Adjustment*. These documentaries were about African American images, pre-television and on television, respectively. Riggs was able to critique society, media, and race relations in a way I was striving to do with my project, yet the evidence that he provided, through pictures and the way the voiceover and the interviews built the argument, seemed incontrovertible. From that point on I actively pursued to find documentaries to watch and dreamt up documentaries to create.

Specifically, I’d like to address the urge to create *exChange* from two different intentions, one scholarly and the other aesthetically. On a scholarly level, documentaries are one area of culture, particularly visual culture, which purports to teach, to educate, and to inform. As I discussed in Chapter 1, universities have embraced documentaries when it comes to using them as a teaching tool in a classroom, and when it comes to a

professor appearing in one as an expert, but universities have not yet embraced producing documentaries as a viable form of knowledge production. As a student of education, I find it intellectually exciting to bridge this important part of culture that purports to educate with education departments. The potential dialogue between the educative value of visual culture and print culture seems to be brimming with possibilities.

Aesthetically, I wanted to push the boundaries of documentaries by trying to weave together a documentary narrative with reflexive moments. I wanted to push reflexivity beyond psychological explorations of the self, and at the same time I wanted to call into question straight documentary narratives. Rather than being reflexive during the filming process by showing myself in the frame or through addressing the camera directly, I wanted to be reflexive in the editing stage. This is the stage that separates filmmaking from any other art form, and it is the stage where the filmmaker decides how to construct the story. Showing my body on the screen with a pair of headphones on was less interesting to me than raising the audience's awareness of the filmmaker as editor, and editor as storyteller. I wanted to show that the person who is creating the narrative is a person who is creating contingent meanings from these experienced moments.

Flash of Insight

Philip Jackson (1968) studied the school as a cultural institution whose primary function is not one of teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic, but rather one that transmits values. By exploring the culture of schools to include the relationships amongst peers and authority figures, he named the values transmitted as obedience, competition, and individualism. While these values are not overtly stated as goals of schools by

educators or lawmakers, these cultural values are reiterated daily through cultural acts. Mandatory attendance laws, constant bells, roll calls, and marching from one class to the next are examples of how these values are taught through ritual rather than through didacticism. Jackson called this cultural learning of values the “hidden curriculum.” My interest in education is in direct opposition to these values; therefore, I posed the question what cultural acts would encourage critical thinking, cooperation, and collectivism? What is the counter-environment to schools in which critical perspectives, not docility, are taught through cultural acts?

By drawing on my own experiences, I thought traveling internationally was an embodied experience of cultural critique. I have had three significant international experiences. I went to Israel as a 17-year-old for five weeks with the radical youth group Ha’shomer Ha’tzayir.⁷ When I was 20, I went on a program called Semester at Sea, where 400 students took classes on a boat that stopped in 11 ports as we circled the globe. My third international experience was a return trip to Israel when I was 23. I had just graduated college, and I went back to Israel to work on a kibbutz for six months and to work in Jerusalem for another six months. It was this last international experience where I remember deep critical reflection about the experience. This was the same trip when Moishe told me it was good that Baruch Goldman opened fire on praying Muslims in Hebron (See Chapter I).

⁷ My parents were not necessarily radical themselves, I was informed of this program through the shaliach in Pittsburgh (a rabbi who arranges trips to Israel.) It seemed that this program had the most time in Israel (five weeks), even though it also included three weeks at a camp in Liberty, NY. My favorite story about Ha’shomer Ha’tzair is that during the early years of Zionism, before the State of Israel existed, they would have a pig roast on Tel Aviv beach during Yom Kippur. (Yom Kippur being a day of fasting and pig being the icon of non-kosher food.)

Before I started this project, I assumed that this was the most powerful and critical experience because of two reasons: one, it was the longest and two, it was the least mediated. The first trip to Israel was for five weeks with a youth group, and while we certainly had a lot of interaction with Israelis, it was also broken up with trips to the Dead Sea, Tiberias, and Eilat. There was a lot of time that I spent on a bus filled with American teenagers touring around the country. Being a group of teenagers, the youth group took responsibility to make sure we were chaperoned or engaged in an organized activity as much as they could. During Semester at Sea the biggest cultural change was adjusting to life on the boat. In each port we stayed only four to six days. While it was certainly informative to view Kenya, India, and Hong Kong within the span of a few weeks, there was not enough time to build lasting relationships with the people I met in these countries. Rather it was the 500-foot long boat filled with wealthy, partying, American students that presented the most difficult adjustment for me to make. In contrast, the second trip to Israel was a full year and I was immersed in the culture of Israel and Israelis.

Of course, there are many instances where border crossing takes place internationally, not to mention intra-nationally. Not all international experiences are qualitatively the same. In order to define the experience I thought would promote a critical hidden curriculum, I created three criteria. One, the traveling had to be voluntary. The reasons for traversing the border have a significant impact on how the difference encountered is interpreted. If one is forced to adapt to a different culture through slavery, conquest, or exile, one will likely perceive this adaptation as a threat to their identity

(Ogbu, 1992). Two, the international experience had to include immersion into the different culture. Unlike being a tourist, a missionary, or a soldier, one cannot have physical barriers separating them from the routines and the relationships that create the life of that culture. Rather, one had to be immersed in that difference. And three, it had to be long enough to develop relationships with people in that culture. A few days or a week is usually not enough time to radically change an individual's perceptions.

I assumed that given these conditions, the daily environment would encourage recognizing difference, building communication across difference, and reflecting on one's own situated truths. The encouragement would not come from an authority figure, but rather from their lived experience. This certainly does not mean that all travelers under these conditions will begin to think critically about power, culture, and privilege. In schools there are many different reactions to the hidden curriculum. Some students resist the hidden curriculum and others find comfort in the routines. Likewise, many transnational travelers will react differently to being immersed in difference. There are certainly people who cannot separate their culture from "reality" and will refuse to accept the newly encountered social reality as a legitimate alternative to their own. I believe this to be more the exception than the rule. In my experiences, seeing different landscapes and being with different belief systems made me realize that other ways of being was not just a theoretical possibility, but rather an experienced reality. I believed more strongly that culture is not entrenched and transformation is possible.

These notions sparked the idea about a documentary following two exchange students. The exchange experience meets the three requirements by being voluntary, by

immersing students in difference, and through providing opportunities for new relationships to form in the new environment. Part of the exchange experience is the expectation of an adventure, the expectation of the unknown. I, too, entered the project not knowing how it would turn out. I did not know what the experiences of the exchange students would be and how the film would look at the end of the project. Certainly, I had some ideas and expectations; some ideas turned out to be fruitful and some expectations did not unfold as I envisioned. I expected that the exchange students would have a transformative experience, but I could not predict in what direction. Erroneously, I also expected them to be aware of the transformation as it was occurring at UNC-G, not only after they returned to their home. This assumption led to the greatest challenges for the video and the process. I further reflect on this assumption and explore the consequences throughout this chapter.

The idea also had to be translatable to the documentary format. I believed there was a natural narrative arc with the topic I chose: it would begin with the students leaving their home, the middle would show the challenge of being in a new society at UNC-G, and the end would be leaving UNC-G, looking upon their home after the experience, and reflecting on the experience. I believed that this would provide enough of a framework and structure in which to play with other narrative and creative elements. At the same time, it would still be open enough to allow the students' experiences to be presented and negotiated fairly. The structure provided a framework from which to tell their story with sound and images. It did not dictate what the experiences of the students would be. I

believed that a video documenting the transformation of the exchange students could serve as a powerful testament to the critical covert education through border crossing.

Mastery of Techniques

There are many skills required to make a documentary. Of course there are the technical skills to utilize the camera and microphone in order to capture picture and sound. There are also the artistic considerations of composition, lighting, and filming with editing in mind, not to mention the skill of manipulating the editing software. All of these techniques must be mastered, but these are not the techniques that I want to focus on in this section. Rather, I focus on the techniques of inserting oneself into lived experience and creating a narrative from that intervention. Prior to *exChange* I had only made (from conception to editing) one other documentary. While manipulating the technology was a constant concern and consideration, I mainly address the concerns I had about intervening into lived experience in order to construct *exChange*.

Because of the work of Agee and the subsequent scholars that he influenced, I was well aware that the field was not a laboratory and that documentary filmmaking is not a search for objective truths. I did not expect to be a detached observer logically analyzing phenomena. I did not expect to be systematically gathering a static body of evidence. I was not surprised to see a confusing pile of notes and video clips that did not seem to have a clear pattern or much order at all. Rather, I embraced the concept that I am a social being entering a social, cultural, and historical landscape. I knew I would be immersed in bits of information, experiences, theories, and methodologies that I, as a social being, will transform into a pattern by asking difficult questions and teasing out

contingent answers. For this reason, I gave a lot of thought to my immersion into the research, my relationship with the participants, and I tried to make choices that allowed the participants to have some control over how they were represented in the film. However, while certain parts of the process were not surprising, it was still an arduous task to create meaning in a flurry of uncertainty.

This section is broken up into several subsections. “Monterrey” and “Greensboro” discusses the issues that arose while filming at those respective places. “The Traveler” brings up the thoughts about filming this performative element for the documentary.

Monterrey

The director of the exchange programs at my university recommended Student D and Student O for the project. He had personally met them and knew them to be interested in acting and film. I thought that made a good match because I could give them something back as they were allowing me into their lives. I thought I could perhaps teach them a bit about cameras, microphones, and editing as the film progressed. At the very least we could be in conversation about the ambiguities and difficult decisions to make as they arise. The director of the exchange programs e-mailed them first on my behalf and said they should contact me if they are interested. That night Student O e-mailed me wanting to hear more.

One month later, after a few more e-mails and phone calls, my wife and I were in Monterrey, Mexico. It all happened very quickly, and I was quite nervous that I had misread their enthusiasm for the project. During these first communications, I invited them to be participants in the shooting, editing, and approval process. They expressed

interest in the project and participating in its creation, but it was difficult to gauge their degree of interest across e-mails, phone calls, and cultures.

Student D and Student O met me at the airport, with a little sign that read, “EXCHANGE.” That first night together we went out to eat and we talked about the films, the documentaries, and the music we liked. Purposefully, I left the video camera in its bag during these first moments together. I felt it was important to spend time together without the camera present in order to establish a relationship beyond the camera. There certainly was a part of me that kept saying, “This is a moment and I should be filming this.” But, I also knew that, in the end, the project will succeed or fail not by capturing every moment, but by building a relationship with Student D and Student O based on respect and trust. Theoretically, the respect and trust would establish a foundation that would be maintained even while the camera was between us.

After dinner all of us went to my hotel room and for the first time that night we addressed the project directly by discussing the questions that were on our minds. Their biggest concern, at this point, was whether I wanted them to be entertaining for the camera. I tried to reassure them that I was not interested in them feeling pressure to be clever for the camera. I also told them that they did not have to ignore the camera or me when we were filming. At that time, I took the camera out and they played with it a bit. I expected them to take part in the filming and I wanted them to have a sense of ownership throughout the process. But there is no doubt that there was a tension here. It was my camera, even though I wanted them to be comfortable with it. There were also

unintended, but inevitable, messages conveyed to them that it was my movie, even though I wanted them to feel comfortable pushing those boundaries.

I brought up issues of ownership over the video and financial compensation in the remote possibility that the film was financially successful. I approached the topic by talking about Georges Lopez, the teacher in the documentary *Etre et Avoir* (2002) who sued the filmmakers because it was his image on the screen around the world, and yet it was the filmmakers who received all the money for its success. Ultimately, he lost in court. However, I believed that in my situation, where the film is not tied to a particular cause or nonprofit, that it would make sense for Student D and Student O to be compensated for appearing in the video if there was any profit. They looked at each other knowingly making it seem as though they spoke of this already, but they did not share these concerns with me. I also reiterated in the hotel room that as part of the protocol they had to approve the documentary. I suggested to them that the raw footage would belong to all of us, but that any edited pieces from the footage, would belong to the editors. They agreed that this seemed fair.

One element in the film I thought would be key was a video diary that they could keep while in Greensboro. Apparently, they discussed this possibility even before I initially emailed them. It was a positive conversation with a lot of ideas and synergism. Obviously, I said, there is little chance that we will create something that has wide appeal, but if nothing else, we will create something that is meaningful to the people in this room. And, Student D added, not only that, but I can tell that we will be friends.

While I think they trusted me from the outset, I strongly felt the need to gain their trust. This made developing a personal relationship important. I did not want to promise that only their best face would be presented, but I wanted them to know that they would be presented fairly with their own input. One way this manifested itself was that I felt the need to be clear about the potential messages and uses of the film. This proved to be quite difficult. I explained that I hoped that the film would explore the assumptions that are challenged during a transnational experience. But they really had no reference point, no previous experience, for understanding what that meant. In their minds, they came to UNC-G to study acting and filmmaking. They came to gather knowledge, not to be transformed. They were quite confident in their imagined stable identity. This was a crucial difference in how we were approaching the project and the exchange experience. They were going to explore their identities in the world and I wanted to explore the world in their identities. Given this situation, what is my responsibility as a filmmaker? How can I let them know my intended uses of their images when they have no reference point to understand my intentions? Even with them not accepting the premise of the film, we continued. We had to accept that my intentions and expectations were quite different from their intentions and expectations.

Production started the next day. The first thing I did was hire a taxi to take us around the city so we could film b-roll.⁸ Moises, the cab driver, took us to interesting bridges, parks, churches, and the old city. There was a park he took us to that was the

⁸ A term used to describe alternate footage shot to intercut with the primary shots used in a program.

spot of an old steel factory and he told us of an accident there that killed 200 workers. I had to request that we see other parts of town, where people live.

In an attempt to get a feel for their lives in Monterrey in four days, I asked Student D and Student O if they could take me to some places that were meaningful to them. Student O immediately had a list. He wanted to show us the gym where he trained in gymnastics. He wanted to show us where he studied acting. He wanted to show us his grandma's house, his parents' house, and the stage at his school where he performed in many plays. Student D said he didn't have any places that were meaningful to him. This resistance from Student D was a common pattern. Any questionnaire I sent he never answered, whereas Student O would return his the next day. During the interviews or at other times of filming he never showed any resistance. When I asked about the resistance that manifested in these ways, he blamed his laziness. I had a different read, however. In several instances and in several ways he expressed concerns about "genuineness" in his life and in documentaries. He never wanted to "force" friendships; he wanted them "to just happen." The only other documentary he was in was about a theater production, and the documentary director had the actors pretend to find their names on the call board so that he could have visuals for that moment. Student D did not like that. Therefore, if I were to speculate why he resisted certain aspects of the production, perhaps he felt the kind of documenting I was looking for, like finding places that were meaningful to him, felt too contrived.

One aspect about the filming process I noticed immediately was that it was difficult to film and engage with the students at the same time. Paying attention to the

composition and the audio made it nearly impossible to be fully present with what was happening in front of the camera. I could not give complete attention to both. I could engage with Student D and Student O and allow the sound or the picture quality to suffer, or I could pay attention to the sound and picture quality without fully engaging in the social situation. After the first day, my wife and I decided that she would engage with them more while I was filming in Monterrey. That was not a good choice, but it seemed to be the best choice. I ended up filming less because it was vital for me to build a relationship with them, as well.

At Student O's Grandma's house we had a very powerful encounter. She just had surgery and it was difficult for her to sit up, but because Student O requested it she agreed to be interviewed. We brought our high tech equipment into her bedroom, where her daughter propped her up with pillows and attached a microphone to her nightgown. I truly felt like an intruder with my camera gear, my English language, entering her bedroom as she was recovering in her nightgown. Both she and I were reluctant participants in this interview for different reasons, but we went through with the act for the same reason; Student O wanted us to. I asked her a few questions like, "What do you think Student O will learn?" She did not trust me completely and was very protective of Student O. Her answers were all a variation of, "Student O is a good boy and he will represent our family well. He makes all of us proud." After a few questions she asked if she could continue the interview lying down. I thanked her and ended the interview. While the interview did not make the final edit, it is one of the most memorable moments I had in Mexico and during the entire filming process.

During the second night we went to a party that they held for a few close friends. We were able to sit down with their friends and talk about why they thought Student D and Student O were going on the exchange program and what they expected the two students to learn. The general consensus was that Student O was going for an adventure without too many expectations. He wanted to learn about acting and to have fun. Student D, on the other hand, was looking for another way to be. He loathed the artificial way of life he perceived in his upper class upbringing and community. With each situation our understanding of Student D and Student O and their reasons for the exchange were enriched. There was certainly an identity that they showed their parents and an identity that they showed their friends and an identity that they showed the camera. Seeing these different identities, even though we were in Monterrey only a short time, allowed me a layered understanding of Student D and Student O.

Our last night in Monterrey was spent eating dinner at Student D's house. Once again, I found myself in a situation where the adults really did not want me to film. It was not important to me to film this, but it was very important to Student D. The compromise, at first, was that we could film for the first half-hour and then we would leave to allow the family to spend time together alone. Right before dinner, I met Student D's father for the first time. I put the camera away and talked with him about the documentary project, traveling, and James Taylor, a folk musician from North Carolina. We sat together at the bar in his house and drank Spanish wine. When I first met his mom, I gave her a potted plate I brought from North Carolina. I brought a piece to offer each of the families as a sign of good will and gratitude. Within the next ten minutes, Student D told me that his

mother invited my wife and me to stay for dinner. Afterwards, Student D expressed that his parents inviting us to dinner meant a lot to him.

The dinner brought up many moments of reflection and tension. We were privy to some of the family dynamics that existed culturally and within Student D's family. An indigenous woman who worked for the family helped them cook and get ready for the dinner. From the little interaction I saw, this woman was only spoken to and acknowledged by Student D's mother. I did not feel like ignoring her, but I felt if I were too friendly to her it would be rude to the family. So, we exchanged smiles when our eyes met, but nothing more than that. I also felt the same pressure when filming. I wanted to film her presence to recognize her as a human being in the situation. I also thought it might show the affluence of Student D's family and the relationship between her and the family. But, again, I felt it would be considered rude by the family if I focused on her. That pressure may have only been my interpretation, and not coming from the family at all, but I did not want them to misinterpret my actions or intentions. My feelings, at that time, were that the act of filming her could have been interpreted as though I was trying to embarrass, or as though I was condemning their family. I ended up filming the woman when she was next to Student D's mother so that it was not entirely evident that I was filming her.

Greensboro

The bulk of filming occurred at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. There are two important challenges I faced that I address in this section. First, I discuss the challenge of capturing someone's story in an unbounded space as it unfolds over

time. The rest of this subsection is an exploration as to the ramifications of Student D and Student O not believing the premise, and not reflecting in a way I had assumed. I also address the roots of my erroneous assumptions and how I responded in the field.

The narrative of a story about an exchange experience happens in real time and many important moments occur within the relationships the students do or do not form: the love interests, the friends from different countries, the competitors, the annoying roommates, the conversations past midnight about lifestyles, belief systems, and cultural differences. It is quite a challenge to capture this on film. I was not trying to tell a historical narrative, where the beginning, middle and end could be constructed before the filming even begins. Rather, in my case, the story emerged over time and was quite unpredictable. Also, in my situation, I was a one-person crew, filming on average about once or twice a week. The potential relationships they could form were limitless. There was no way to predict which relationships would be lasting and which interactions would be important to their experience. And there was no way to film all of the important moments of which their experience comprised.

“Reality TV” is purposefully arranged to simplify these challenges. The producers create a controlled environment, which limits the space in which the “actors” can act and limits between whom relationships can be formed. Through competitive and/or cooperative activities, as well as provocative questions from an interviewer, the “actors” are goaded into particular relationships to evoke emotions and create a narrative. For example, *The Real World* takes place in an apartment and in certain seasons the residents had to work together in high pressure jobs. *Survivor* takes place in two isolated camps

where two teams compete against one another, and eventually each individual competes against each individual. *Big Brother* created a studio/house in which the participants would live, work, and play. Several cameramen record the events at all times in order to ensure everything is captured. The geographies are controlled, the possible relationships are limited, and stimuli are provided to induce drama. In these ways, the production team has a “set” in which to work, emotional relationships to film, and active narratives to edit.

I certainly did not desire to entrap them in a controlled environment like this, but I did need a way to keep track of their relationships, conflicts, and what questions and concerns were emerging. This is where I hoped the video diary would have provided some direction and insight. I hoped that this would fill in the gaps where meaningful relationships would be explored and experiences would be reflected upon. However, the video diary meant very different things to them and to me. I had imagined that late at night they would turn on the camera and reflect about their feelings and relationships, their anxieties and their excitements. However, to them a video diary meant something completely different. To them, a video diary meant capturing things they do. They filmed themselves going to the cafeteria and climbing on the climbing wall in the student recreation center. These particular moments presented limited opportunities for creating a narrative. I was hoping the video diary would provide a space for them to reflect and interpret without my questions. I imagined that it would be central in either using the footage directly in the documentary or at least indirectly guiding me through their important relationships. When I tried to clarify what I meant by video diary, they said

they would feel weird talking to the camera without someone asking them questions. In response, I conducted interviews once every two weeks, and sometimes more frequently.

Through the initial interviews it became apparent that my expectation that they would be self aware and able to talk about the transformation as it occurred was naïve. As Student D indicated in the documentary, they did not particularly believe that they would change significantly and therefore they were not looking at how the new environment was influencing their identity. This forced me to rethink my expectations. However, while I was in the field I became worried that the notion of identity transformation was not going to show in the documentary at all.

This worrying had a deleterious effect on my interviews. My desperation for them to articulate the cultural and personal challenges I was sure were occurring translated into asking carefully considered questions that were so far from what was of interest to Student D and Student O they were often confused by the questions or they were really searching for an answer, trying hard to appease me. Student O once said, diplomatically, that through the interviews they were able to verbalize aspects of their trip that they only thought about. That's the positive interpretation. The negative interpretation is that I was looking for something that I believed to be there, a transformation that I believed to be occurring, and through my questioning I was creating a self-fulfilling prophecy. In the field, I was convinced that it was a matter of finding the right question that would create the ah-ha moment that would connect their interests with my interests. The more resistance I felt, the more I searched for just the right question.

I started and ended each interview with an open question for them to share whatever they wanted to share. Most of the time this was too broad for them and they just preferred to answer my questions rather than speak from the top of their heads. I think it also spoke to the distance felt between what was interesting to them and what was interesting to me. I continued to provide this space because for one, I thought at one point it might click, and two, in some way it justified my asking them, perhaps, leading questions. The one time when this opportunity was taken advantage of was when Student D returned from Monterrey. At that point he had a lot he wanted to say without my questions. At that point, he understood what my project was about and my interests and his interests intersected. These extemporaneous moments were incredibly valuable to the video and were the most profound moments in all of the interviewing.

If I had the opportunity to re-shoot the film again one adjustment I would make would be to search for what was exciting to them during the interviews. Just as I am dedicated to a student-centered classroom, I should have also been dedicated to a student-centered interview. They were excited to talk about the courses they were taking in acting and filmmaking. They were excited to talk about the creative activities in which they were engaged. In this way, we could have started where they were and perhaps I could have found opportunities to connect what was interesting and fascinating to them with the narrative I was trying to tell. That is easy to say now looking back, now that I know they had an overwhelming experience upon returning to Monterrey. Needless to say, I was quite relieved when Student D, in particular, was able to confront and verbalize the profound issues that were raised by his transnational experience. Without knowing the

ending, however, I found it difficult to balance what is interesting to the subject and what is interesting to the filmmaker, and judge how much they have to overlap.

I was still confronted by my incorrect assumption that they would be reflective about being situated in a new geography with different historical and cultural discourses, particularly when both were reflective in other ways. I had to account for my assumption that they would be reflective about re-seeing how culture influences them. The reality is that while they were at UNC-G they were not particularly reflective about this aspect of their experience. I had to account for both my assumption and the reality I confronted.

While people tend to think of the norms they live by as “natural,” I was expecting them to realize that they were, in fact, situated. I presumed that because they had a point of comparison that the differences in culture would lead one to perceive the historical and geographical creation of different discourses. They could compare the environment and the people of Monterrey with the environment and the people of Greensboro. As it turned out, the contingency of their own belief patterns were only recognized by them once they returned to familiar territory. Before returning they were able to exempt themselves from being influenced by culture. They noticed differences in the cultures, but they safely assumed that it was not affecting them too much. Only when they were confronted with a landscape with which they were familiar a short time ago, and it appeared to be so unfamiliar, did they realize that they themselves had been transformed.

My assumption that they would be reflective came from my experience during my last trip to Israel, after I earned my bachelor’s degree. I cannot honestly answer whether I was aware of my own personal transformation on the two previous transnational

experiences, but I clearly remember reflecting on my transformation during this last trip. So why was I aware of the critical hidden curriculum during that trip? Perhaps, rather than the transnational experience itself making the personal transformation obvious, it was the interpretive lenses I had acquired before I entered the situation. This does not mean that the transformative experience was radically different, but the awareness of the transformative experience was different. The lenses with which I entered the situation brought awareness to the environment's influence on the self. These lenses were formed from the two international experiences prior to the second Israel experience and from the Cultural Anthropology courses I took during my last two years of undergraduate work.

On my second trip to Israel, I was able to make many comparisons to personal, historical and cultural reference points. I remember noticing the feelings of belonging I had when city bus drivers wished me a happy holiday on *my* holidays. My friends and I would laugh that even the prostitutes were Jewish. Strangers would argue and shout with me about politics, Jewish identity, and the future of Israel, and end with an acknowledgement of enjoying the conversation. America's culture of consensus does not encourage that type of interaction, but Jewish culture does encourage debate and disagreement. The culture that was performed in my home was the culture that was performed in the streets.

This new experience was invigorating in many ways and frightening in other ways. These cultural performances felt comfortable. It felt empowering to perform them in public spaces. It was frightening in that I could see how easy it might be to consider this way of interacting 'right,' rather than retaining a critical distance. It became a

standard that was edifying and comfortable, and it could be easy to forget the two important words: for me. In this way, a part of me embodied the experience of White Male Christian Americans, in that they can perform their culture comfortably in public spaces and have difficulty being critical of it.

At the beginning of this documentary project I believed that it was because I had been in both positions, minority and majority, that allowed me to watch my experience of being in the majority with some distance. But that is not the entire story. This switch in positions was important, but so were my previous international experiences and the language of Cultural Anthropology. I had a broad experience with different cultures and my interpretive framework was attuned to the sense that environment influences perceptions of self, and perceptions of the world. The experiences themselves were not enough, but the theory, the language, and the inclination to look in particular locations for particular meanings were influential in how I interpreted my experiences.

In my search to answer why Student D and Student O were not able to reflect in the way I expected, I propose that it was for the two reasons that I explored above. They were not looking for these particular meanings and they did not have the language to bring attention to any dissonance that might have been felt. In a profound way, it brings more interesting meanings to this investigation. They were not looking to explore how this experience might change their sense of self, their sense of Mexican society, and their sense of justice, yet, without really listening to an authority figure, all of these aspects were deeply called into question through this transnational experience.

The Traveler

Early on in my filming at UNC-G I saw Duane Cyrus perform his piece *The Traveler*. I talked with him about the work and I immediately felt there were many connections between what we were trying to say. *The Traveler* raises issues about the push and pull of what we think of as the “real” us and what we “dream” we are.

Traveling can make us feel free to present ourselves as we want without any history. Yet, at the same time, we carry with us our history no matter where we are. The masks we wear to present ourselves change from one context to the next. In turn, who we “feel” we are inside gets called into question and becomes fluid as well.

I was not exactly sure how I would use the piece or whether I would use it at all, but I believed having it as an option during the editing stage would provide many opportunities. One, it triangulated the perception that traveling was transformative. I was concerned about the framework and I thought it could help structure the narrative and bring attention to the ideas of transformation. It also presented a space where questions about representations and reflections about truth are embodied on the stage and could be woven into the documentary.

“The performative [documentary] does not . . . counter error with fact, misinformation with information, but adopts a distinct mode of representation that knowledge and understanding require an entirely different form of engagement” (Nichols, 2001, p. 135). Bringing in the dance element makes more explicit the questions of truth in representation. As meanings between text and documentary reverberate throughout this dissertation, within the documentary, meanings reverberate between

traditional forms of documenting and the dance. It raises questions about the creative aspect of documentary and the scholarly aspect of creativity, not to discredit the validity of visuals, but to affirm that creative representations are useful ways to make meaning. I filmed Student D and Student O in the performative space at the end to raise issues of performance, acting, and character in documentary, a form of representation that has been positioned as empirical reality. By filming *The Traveler* I was giving myself options in how to edit the piece together and a space that provided opportunities to be reflexive and to push documentary traditions.

Through this process, I certainly never mastered the techniques of fieldwork or creating a documentary. But not all questions can be answered theoretically beforehand. One must immerse oneself and be open to the spaces and gaps where questions arise. There is learning in the theory and there is also learning in the experiencing. In order to allow scholarship and new ways of regenerating thought to emerge, we must continue the praxis of fieldwork, ethnography, and creating texts to share.

The Integrative Process

After I completed the filming, I had over 50 hours worth of footage. Integrating all of this data into a coherent story that not only reflected the experience of Student D and Student O, but also suggested something about their transformation seemed to be a formidable task. The footage I had captured over the previous five months resided in small tapes that sat in small boxes on my shelf. I knew what situations existed; there were a few moments that stood out, but for the most part what precisely occurred and precisely

what was said was not clear in my mind. The first step of the integrative process was familiarizing myself with the footage.

I logged the tapes in order to create a useable database of all the video and audio on each tape. This means writing down descriptions of video and audio along with their timecode numbers.⁹ Oftentimes, filmmakers log footage on 8"x11" paper, recording many shots in a long list. Instead of this method, I logged the footage on many index cards because it provided a tremendous amount of flexibility in the integrative process. I could pull out an index card from tape 3 and place it next to an index card from tape 26 to better visualize how that might go together. I could rearrange them time and time again and manipulate the information nonlinearly before I even touched the digital editing system.

Through this first step, which meant watching all 50 plus hours of footage, I could already begin to see some relationships between the shots and the scenes. Mentally, I made broad cuts and much of the footage I still considered a possibility. In order to record these thoughts, I went through the index cards and placed a red sticker next to possible moments with Student D, blue stickers next to possible moments with Student O, green stickers next to moments that included both of them, and yellow stickers next to moments that did not include either of them.

Logging the footage and culling out the promising bits had sent me through the footage twice. The third time through the footage was capturing the promising parts onto

⁹ Timecode numbers are recorded onto the tape as you film. They track hours, minutes, seconds, and frames (30 frames per second). Therefore they refer to precise locations on precise tapes, unlike a counter on a VCR which is not linked to the physical frame of the videotape.

my computer's hard drive. At this point, I was much more familiar with the footage and I made a list of the possible scenes I could use to edit. Before I began trying to make a beginning or an opening, I just began to edit particular scenes that showed promise.

The beginning of the editing process is comparable to the writer who is staring at a blank page. The research has occurred and now it is time to "say something." The possible story lines and the possible directions seemed limitless. With each quote, each scene, each shot I decided to use, a potential direction and form was suggested. At the same time, a different branch or possibility disappeared. While much has been said about the documentary filmmakers' construction of reality, there are also limitations to this construction. "Whatever its claims or disclaimers about its relation to the real, the ethnographic film cannot escape its ties to the specific" (Devereaux, 1995, p. 71). The footage captured and the medium itself allow only particular stories to be told. Often we talk about the artist and scholar constructing reality out of nothing. However, more accurately, we are constructing reality out of something, and that something will influence how reality is constructed. Michelangelo is attributed the following insight: "Every block of stone has a statue inside it and it is the task of the sculptor to discover it." While I think this is a great overstatement, part of my task was to uncover the story that existed in the footage. Of course, there is more than one story in a collection of footage; there are many stories in a collection of footage, depending on what the filmmaker wants to find, but the footage itself will influence the scope of what can be found and the style of the telling.

The first scenes that I edited was Student O's and Student D's first scenes in Monterrey, where Student O was on the stage in the small theater and Student D was setting up the lights for the photography shoot with his girlfriend. I think of these scenes as the real introduction of the characters of Student D and Student O, even though before these moments we see them talking about their return to Monterrey. I liked them as introductions because it had visual context; they were in particular spaces, rather than just interviews. Student O's scene on the stage presented him as a "romantic" as he spoke about dreams, wanting to touch one person, and getting in touch with deep emotions inside the self. Student D's opening scene was able to establish his thoughtfulness, his affluence, and his relationship with his girlfriend.

I continued to put scenes together until the momentum stopped, and at that point I began to link the scenes into a narrative. Throughout the editing I went back and forth between editing independent scenes and trying to string together a fluid narrative. When I considered the beginning of the documentary I immediately went to the final interviews. I grabbed the sound bites that were the most powerful, of which there were many. I knew it would be important to come back to this moment at the end, so I decided to use sound bites where they grappled with their new perspectives in the beginning and saved those parts where they talked about causes for the transformation for the end.

When I first laid down these clips, it occurred to me that they were different from typical interviews I see in documentaries. Rather than simply giving information and context to the visuals, the students were creating themselves in front of the camera. While it is usual to take out stutters and pauses in an interview in order to keep up the rhythm of

the video, it was obvious to me that the students grappling with language was just as informative as the words they chose. These were not experts like Carl Sagan or Shelby Foote giving their point of view on a topic they have thought carefully about. These were not talking heads, the common parlance for a videotaped interview; rather, these were embodied interviews. The audience could witness the physical discomfort of recognizing poverty, the nervous tics, the swallowing of certain words, and the difficulty of finding a language to explain a world where their cultural myths could not fully explain what they had witnessed.

It seemed that if I was going to use “The Traveler,” I had to introduce that segment up front. This was a good opportunity to experiment with some of my initial aesthetic desires for the project: one, to address directly the construction of the content and the images, and two, to be reflexive in the editing process rather than during the production process. The quick 90-frame (3 seconds) shots I inserted into the performance were images that related to longer shots we had already seen, and a couple of shots that we will see in the future. However, they were images of these scenes before the composition was set. For instance, there was the shot of the policeman giving a ticket (or taking a bribe) to the cab driver I had hired. Earlier we had seen this same event, only I filmed it with a set composition from the backseat of the cab. In the short 90-frame image inserted into “The Traveler” we see the scene from the point of view of a moving camera, a camera that is getting into position to capture the footage we saw previously. The idea is to make the audience aware of not only the presence of the camera and the cameraman in the image we are viewing, but to bring awareness to the camera and the cameraman in

the more traditionally composed images we have already seen. By extension, the intent is to bring awareness to the construction of the entire video.

At this point, the reflexive voiceover is able to push the understanding of creation and the understanding of traveling. This segment created a space to offer questions, reflect on the task of “saying something,” and question the argument and images being presented to the audience. Immediately I saw tremendous potential in these segments. I believed that they interrupted the narrative, without destroying the narrative. This performative space in the documentary triangulated and troubled the argument at the same time. Interrupting the narrative with a dance was meant to reflect back on the narrative as well. It was meant to highlight out the creative aspect of documentary. It was meant to dilute the idea of documentary as scientific investigation, but that does not mean to dilute its significance.

To me the most significant single outcome from the study of the concepts of the creative artist [has] been the cumulative confirmation of one hypothesis: there are other modes of human response than that of the experimental method of knowing. (Rugg, as cited in Rosario, 1988, p. 344)

The one issue I had with using “The Traveler” was the last segment when Student D and Student O crossed into the performative space, further blurring the distinctions between actors and people in a documentary. When I looked at the images while I was editing, I thought it could be interpreted as Student D and Student O surrounded by the Other. I worried that the African-inspired music and dance, along with Cyrus’s skin color, was coming across as the Other existing for the edification and enrichment of Student D and Student O. I did not want to position Cyrus and his work in that way. My

intention was to show Student D and Student O struggling with the fluidity of identity as it was exposed to them through traveling and as embodied by the character Cyrus created. I talked with Cyrus about this concern and shared with him an edited version. I figured if he and I agreed on how he and his work were represented, then I could continue using that section. From the beginning, Cyrus was not worried about the concerns I was raising. His response was, and I paraphrase, as a black male on the dance stage, the audience will ascribe many meanings onto the performance and he cannot let that stop him from performing.

For the first draft, I believed I had good footage for the opening and the closing. I thought that the introduction of the characters while they were in Mexico was quite nice. I was mostly concerned with how to show the theme of transformation during the section at UNC-G, mostly because they did not discuss it much during their interviews. I had a lot of footage and many scenes to work with; there were scenes in their classes, in their dorm rooms, auditions, rehearsals, performances, at bars and parties, and there were many interviews. I looked for scenes that I thought were rich in content and multi-layered. It seemed natural to bookend the UNC-G section with the auditions, and that especially became clear when I put together Student D's speech about what they learned during the semester. The other scenes that went into the first draft were a scene of them doing laundry,¹⁰ the cast party scene, and the international exchange program.

The laundry scene seemed valuable because it showed them figuring out how to do laundry for the first time; it showed them bantering with each other, and while they

¹⁰ This scene did not make the final cut.

were waiting for the wash Student O had a timely and impromptu conversation about feminism with a German student. This latter part was important to me because one of the great opportunities afforded people at universities are the unplanned intellectual conversations that occur between peers. These can be profoundly transformative moments because peers are presenting the ideas. The party scene presented some other opportunities at meaning making from the hanging out with Americans on the porch, to the argument, and Student O picking up the camera himself and interviewing his American peers. The argument in particular was important because it revealed the different experiences and personalities between Student D and Student O. The international exchange conference was important to me because it widened the conversation from Student D and Student O and brought the issue of facing difference onto a global scale. It also presented opportunities to bring in some of Student D and Student O's cultural observations over the semester that did not seem to fit in other contexts.

The issue with this first draft is that during the UNC-G section the different scenes did not particularly reverberate with each other. There was not a thematic or narrative transition from one scene to the next, so during this section the documentary felt disconnected and rudderless. I received feedback from different sources and it was clear that people seemed to be pulled into the section in Mexico the most and the UNC-G section, in particular, needed more massaging. Rather than looking for scenes that were richly layered with meaning, I changed my logic of thought. I pulled out my database of index cards and focused on two elements. One, I looked for themes and plots that evolved

throughout the footage and two, I decided to continue thinking about developing the characters of Student D and Student O. That was my focus during the scenes in Mexico, and I decided to continue that logic of thought as I chose moments for the UNC-G section.

The plots that stood out were: the expectations of learning compared to the actual learning experience; the attitude toward the poor people in Mexico; the passion for creativity and acting; the relationship between Student D and his girlfriend; and Student O and his reflections upon religion. With these plots and subplots identified, I pulled out all the potential scenes and interview quotes that spoke to these elements. The argument needed more of a setup in order to provide context and the laundry scene didn't seem to speak to other themes that were evolving throughout the documentary. Interestingly, by focusing on the narrative, I was better able to evoke my theme than by focusing on the theme at the exclusion of the narrative.

In the rational deliberation model of problem solving, there exists complete conscious control over the manipulation of the many variables (Rosario, 1988). While there were certainly times I exhibited conscious control over the many variables, there were many meaningful moments where I did not feel as though I had complete control. Rosario speaks about a “prolonged concentration of observing, scrutinizing, weighing—waiting until surface characteristics give way to their inner relationships” being present in Rugg’s aesthetic epistemology (as cited in Rosario, 1988, p. 346). This aspect of problem solving and regenerating thought is absent in Dewey’s overly calculative epistemology. Rugg suggests that there is a letting be, a meditative quality, “a

quiet waiting . . . for significant meaning to emerge” (as cited in Rosario, 1988, p. 346). This was an important part of the process I experienced in the creation of *exChange*. Throughout the research, ends were not always known and unexpected variables were asserted as significant. Rather than these being points that make us feel inadequate as researchers, we must embrace them. We must remain open to the questions and the opportunities that invite themselves. These are exciting aspects of research that should be discussed openly, rather than ignored in the literature. Only through paying attention to the gaps, as well as the formulaic methodologies, can we be assured that we will continually evolve our problem solving techniques and regenerate thought that incites action.

CHAPTER IV
AN INVESTIGATION OF TRANSNATIONAL IDENTITY FORMATION
THROUGH DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

I didn't expect to change and learn so much and see so many new things and by not doing anything, just change where you are living and having all these new things come up and learn from them. — Student D

Student D related these words to me in our last interview after he came back from Monterrey, Mexico between semesters. As someone researching identity formation and learning while traveling, these words were exciting for me to hear. It showed me that something profound did happen. It showed me that change occurred even though the recipient was not looking for change and, perhaps, was even resistant to the idea that self-learning would occur. Just like the video, I begin with the end. Rather than revealing at the end that something profound happened, I want to approach the data with the idea that something profound happened. This way we can move from questions of did something profound happen, to in what ways does being immersed in different signifying practices and different discourses de-center senses of culture and identity.

In this chapter I analyze interviews with the two students featured in the film *exChange*. As I researched Mexican culture and poured through the words of the two students, two discourses emerged that spoke to the particulars of their experience and to the historical and cultural situation from which they come. One discourse was about being contemporary, or modern. In every imagined community, there is an idea about

what it means to be contemporary and what actions are best for the future health of the community. This speaks directly to which values are privileged by the community and by the community members espousing the values. That is, one may say, “Can you believe that in 2006, we still cannot cure the common cold?” This connects and defines our contemporary era with medical advances. It is a surprise to the speaker that the best medical minds in the West have not been able to cure a common ailment. The speaker most probably believes that spending our time, effort, and money in medical research has been and will continue to be fruitful. For my research, I explore how and with what metaphors Student D and Student O describe contemporary Mexico. What aspects of Mexico are important to their sense of being contemporary, and what does this say about the lenses with which they look upon the world? Situated in a global context, this idea of being contemporary takes on more significance because of the comparison with, historically, Spain, and more recently, the United States. The second discourse I investigate is their perception of the indigenous population of Mexico. The indigenous question has been the Mexican question since 1810 when Mexico gained its independence from Spain (Coffey, 2005). Like race in America, it cuts across all political and social issues in Mexico. However, unlike race in the United States, the Mexican population identifies strongly with the indigenous population. This discourse speaks to how history is perceived and appreciated and what it means to identify as a Mexican.

Presenting this discourse analysis as a side-by-side analysis to the video affords us the opportunity to investigate the similarities and differences of the knowledge one can make between documentary and discourse analysis. I reflect more on these comparisons

in Chapter V; however, I fully expect that I will not cover this comparison in its entirety. One point of offering these two constructions together is for the viewers and readers to engage with, reflect on, and consider their own questions and conjectures concerning the knowledge produced by the different media.

In this chapter, I position my research within the history of discourse and discourse analysis. I further explicate my methodologies and the traditions that support my methodologies. Before I go into my discourse analysis of Student D and Student O, I talk about my relationships with the students and contextualize their personal histories and identifying categories.

In the first section, I position my analysis techniques within the tradition of discourse analysis. The history and issues of discourse analysis are discussed, as well as the researchers who have influenced me. Following that section, I situate Mexican identity issues to contextualize and historicize the situation from which Student D and Student O have emerged. The works of scholars such as Rosa Nidia Buenfil, Mary Coffey, Marianne Marchand, Isidro Morales Moreno, and Bart van der Aa help me to contextualize Mexican history and culture. The focus is on the places where their research converges, and less emphasis is placed on the particular interests of the researchers. In the section that follows, I discuss my own relationship with Student D and Student O as a researcher, as a friend, and as a stable presence in an unfamiliar situation. Lastly, my analysis of the interviews through the discourses that define contemporary expectations and the indigenous populations are presented.

In the tradition of discourse analysis, I do not assume that the knowledge I create is final. Rather, I strive to understand a complex situation using my experiences, the theory I have read, and constant questioning of cultural myths and my personal biases. I open up questions and struggle to find temporary closures. Certainly other people with different backgrounds would have made different closures.

Discourse and Discourse Analysis

In order to begin talking about discourse analysis it is important to discuss the term discourse. The term discourse refers to all symbolic systems, social practices, institutions, and perhaps most importantly, to that of language itself. Ian Parker (1999) talks about discourse as referring to “patterns of meaning which organize the various symbolic systems human beings inhabit, and which are necessary for us to make sense to each other” (p. 3). Discourses are expressions of values in the myriad of ways these expressions can occur, from popular culture to traditional institutions. Discourses are symbolic practices that categorize and prioritize, but it does not and cannot encapsulate reality entirely. This understanding depends on “loosening the embrace, apparently so tight, of words and things” (Foucault, 1972, pp. 48-49). The word does not refer directly to the world, but rather it refers back to its own resources and logic. The signifier is not the signified.

According to Barker and Galasinski (2001), discursive acts “play a decisive role in the genesis and construction of social conditions. They can restore, justify, and perpetuate status quo. They may also be instrumental in the transformation of the status quo” (p. 65). They constitute and reconstitute the world we believe we inhabit.

In different ways, language has been central to cultural anthropology for a long time. Cultural anthropology, whose methods have been traditionally influenced by the work of Malinowski, required researchers to learn the language of the people under study. I certainly do not want to say that this is not an important strategy for interpretation, but there seemed to be an assumption that the signifier equaled the signified; that the language equaled the culture. There is an assumption that their language points directly to an essential world and points directly to an essential self. If you do not speak their language, you may be misled, you may misunderstand, and you may not get to the “core.”

James Clifford (1997) credits Mikhail Bakhtin for critiquing the notion of a singular language: “language is a diverging, contesting, dialoguing set of discourses that no “native”—let alone visitor—can ever control” (p. 22). Language is fluid, symbolic territory which we use to communicate to each other about the world. “Since all languages are culture-bound and knowledge is positional, then languages, along with cultural and political discourses, can be incommensurable for there is no meta-language of translation” (Barker & Galasinski, 2001, p. 19). We can, however, recognize others as language users (Barker & Galasinski, 2001). We can recognize others as creators of their worlds through symbolic systems. We can recognize that their discourses do not exist in a vacuum, but rather there is a history to these signifying practices and a context in which they take place.

Given this understanding of discourse we can begin to look at discourse analysis. Our culture does not teach us to pay much attention to where things come from and

where they are going, so it takes reframing our perceptions of reality to pay attention to the history of our discourses. We are encouraged to perceive the world as it is, like it or not, as the way the world has to be. It is the research method of discourse analysis that attempts to explore and unravel the history and context of our symbolic practices. “All discourses are historical and can only be understood within reference to their context” (Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p. 15). To understand the uses of symbols in a particular context, one must explore the history of symbolic meanings in that context.

The analysis of statement, then, is a historical analysis but one that avoids all interpretation; it does not question things said as to what they are hiding, what they were ‘really’ saying, in spite of themselves, the unspoken element that they contain . . . ; but on the contrary, it questions them as to their mode of existence . . . what it means for them to have appeared when and where they did—they and no others. (Foucault, 1972, p. 109)

Discourse analysis asks the questions why these words? Why now? It allows us to observe/discuss/speculate about intersections of power articulated and embodied by individuals in particular spatial and temporal locations. It affords us the opportunity to reflect about how the push and pull of different logics, different belief systems, and different interests play themselves out in local people in local circumstances.

Discourse analysis avoids easy, dichotomous explanations (Barker & Galasinski, 2001). It begins with an empirical observation in the world (a text, an utterance, a signifying practice), and then explores what is being served or challenged—what history, what people, and what traditions. Rather than trying to be a distanced, objective analysis, discourse analysis recognizes itself as engaging within the hermeneutic circle. It neither describes, nor does it only search for causes and effects, but rather it attempts to grasp

and produce meaning. Discourse analysis begets more interpretation (Wodak & Meyer, 2001). However, if it hopes to contribute to our understanding of our social world, the interpretation can not go on forever. At some point, the researcher has to close the hermeneutic circle (Barker & Galasinski, 2001) and recognize that the closure is temporary, if not arbitrary.

One must abandon the idea of the researcher as objective if one wants to engage in discourse analysis (Humphreys, 1999). This awareness of subjectivity calls upon us to be accountable for our subjectivities. It requires the researchers to be self-reflective in where and why and for whose benefit the researcher stopped the interpretation. Traditionally, discourse analysis scholars have played an advocacy role for those who lack power (Wodak & Meyer, 2001). They have stopped the interpretation at a point where the powerless and voiceless benefit. This traditional practice of discourse analysis tries to make visible the constructions of symbolic systems and the power relationships that exist, which are frequently ignored.

There are many critics of discourse analysis. The main critique of discourse analysis is the subjectivity used in the exploration. This is a common critique of all social sciences and it speaks to a belief in a clear separation between fiction and fact. There is a popular sentiment that if we do not have observable, measurable, and repeatable “facts” then we do not have anything. As Clifford Geertz says so beautifully, this notion conflates “making things out with making things up” (as cited in Visweswaran, 1994, p. 140). Henry Widdowson goes a step further and criticizes discourse analysis for being an ideological interpretation of a text, and therefore not analysis at all (as cited in Wodak &

Meyer, 2001). Norman Fairclough responded to this charge, defending discourse analysis by pointing out that the researchers were explicit about their commitments, unlike practitioners of other research methods. They recognize other possible interpretations, rather than hide their commitments by claiming objectivity. The idea that researchers can create knowledge outside of history, outside of their bodies, and outside of culture is its own ideology. In fact, this claim of objectivity reinforces and maintains the status quo (Wodak & Meyer, 2001).

Another critique has to do with discourse analysis's narrow ecological validity (Bevan & Bevan, 1999). The complaint is that the study can be deemed as valid only within its specific context. Postmodern paradigms have challenged our notions of universal rules. This has brought researchers to focus on local levels to see how dominant ideologies are reified and contested in specific contexts. The one universal rule may be that humans engage in signifying practices; we all use (or are used by) symbols. Unraveling how one uses (or is used by) symbols in specific contexts is the purpose of discourse analysis. I think these critics are primarily concerned about the challenge to authority that this methodology presents to the entire proposition of research. If one cannot say something universal, then what is the purpose of one's work? Should not the researcher know more than others, shouldn't they be experts? In my opinion it is a good thing to have researchers' authority challenged, but that does not mean the work is invalid. Clearly, the authority bestowed on social scientists has been abused by speaking for and about "Others." However, it is vital and necessary to have the time and the space to ask and ponder the most difficult questions one can ask. It is a, if not *the*, meaning-

making venture in a secular and free society. Hopefully, “experts” in the name of “Others” will not abuse this pondering and naming. Rather, the researchers’ role should be the ability to provide spaces and opportunities to collaborate with many people to create many possible meanings.

There are no hard and fast rules for discourse analysis. Each utterance and the context in which it occurs is unique; therefore, the methods for interpreting the situation have to be unique as well. Some researchers have created and shared guidelines for discourse analysis that they use. Choosing one over the other or combining several strategies depends on the project at hand. I present three guidelines for interviews as explicated by other researchers. In the end, I combined these techniques for my purposes. In all cases, the goal of the technique is to make explicit power relationships that are frequently hidden. For this reason, there are redundancies within and similarities between the guidelines.

Barker and Galasinski (2001) analyze discourse using three broad categories: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. The ideational category deals with internal/external experiences that have informed the use of language that the interviewee is employing. In this category, the researcher would explore what the interviewee is bringing with them already. This can mean past experiences or interpretive techniques the interviewee has been exposed to in the past. The ideational can explore what purposes and intentions the different parties have in the interview itself. The interpersonal tries to understand the power relationship between the people speaking. Whether it is a group interview or just between one interviewee and one interviewer, there are power dynamics and other

aspects of unspoken communication underlying the interaction. Are people referring to one another with first names or formal titles? Who feels they have the power to start and end the conversation? Who frames the interpretation? Considering the interpersonal dynamics of conversation may speak to possible intentions and purposes of the speakers and provide opportunities for enriching our reading. The textual category attempts to make connections to other texts, and to its own logic. All discourses are intertextual, and it is important to consider how it refers back on its historical location. All meanings depend on other meanings, and this step tries to ascertain from what historical discourse and to what possible vision the speaker is speaking. In other words, what assumptions about the world are brought to the interview?

Ruth Wodak (2001) calls her technique the discourse-historical approach (Wodak & Meyer, 2001). In this approach, Wodak describes five strategies employed by the speakers to try to discern the power embedded in the speech: referential strategies, predication, argumentation that justifies political inclusion and exclusion, perspectivation, and intensification or mitigation. The referential strategies include metaphors and membership categories. In this strategy, the researcher pays attention to what larger frames and what assumptions are embedded in the speaker's references to and about the world. For instance, the references may speak to a religious orthodoxy in which the interviewee believes. The next strategy, predication, includes descriptions of positive and negative traits of others. By focusing on these descriptions, the researcher explores what the interviewee privileges in people. These descriptions may speak to assumptions of admirable behavior or speech, or even double standards that the

interviewee embraces. For example, the same action may be described as “looting” or “foraging,” depending on the person/group performing the action and the person/group describing the action. By paying attention to the third strategy, investigating verbal forms of inclusion and exclusion, one can discern where the line is drawn between companions and “Others,” and how that line is drawn. This speaks to identity issues and which communities they feel they belong to and which communities they feel threatened by. For exploring perspectivation, the researcher may ask, “Who benefits from the assertions that the interviewee expresses?” If one can ascertain who the assumptions, frames, and assertions serve, one can begin to reveal from what perspective the speaker is speaking. Finally, Wodak (Wodak & Meyer, 2001) looks at strategies of intensification or mitigation to explore what is privileged by the speaker. What does it mean that certain observations and experiences are highlighted and/or backgrounded? Exploring all of these strategies points to larger assumptions and frames that the speaker holds dear. All five strategies should be considered together to support one another in revealing the hidden power relationships embedded in the texts.

Sam and Kate Bevan (1999) explore a constructivist interpretation. Interviewers and interviewees are seen as members of social groups and of imaginary audiences positioned within a social situation. There are influences enacting on what they deem important, what they say, and how they say it. Some of these influences come from their background and their social lives and some of these influences come from their relationship with the interviewing context. The way they interact in a formal interview setting will be different, depending on whether or not they are familiar with research.

Interviewees and interviewers are understood to be performing to real and imagined audiences. The audiences for the interviewee can be the interviewer or it can be the social group of which they imagine themselves to be a part. Meanwhile, the interviewer is performing for the interviewee and perhaps the larger institution that is funding/supporting/identified with the research. While the researcher constructs a situation to study, the participants construct themselves and the world within that context; then the researcher constructs another world through interpretation.

For me, the central question is how does being immersed in different signifying practices and different discourses affect the discourses of modernity and indigenous people for two Mexican students? My approach has to fit this interest. Wodak's analysis technique proved to be a powerful and insightful tool to consider power assumptions in the text. However, Wodak's approach does not consider power dynamics of the actors in the study, which is vital to my work. In her technique, there is little consideration of the context in which the words were formed. There is an assumption that there is a direct relationship between the uttered words and the internal/external proclivities of the speaker (Wodak & Meyer, 2001).

To provide a context for the words, I employ Barker and Galasinski's (2001) intertextual analysis and Sam and Kate Bevan's (1999) constructivist approach. This combination provides the necessary tools to consider not only the text and the history of the discourses embedded in the text, but also the history of the speaker in relation to these discourses and the social situation in which the utterances occurred. All of these factors

must be considered in order to arrive at a rich understanding of the spoken words and the personal and cultural identifying characteristics that are being addressed.

Mexican Identity Formation

At the Plaza de la Tres Culturas in Mexico City, a plaque reads: “On August 13, 1521, heroically defended by Cuauhtemoc Tlatelolco fell under the power of Hernán Cortés. It was neither a triumph nor a defeat; it was the painful birth of the Mestizo people that is the Mexico of today.” The word Mestizo refers to the people who are a mix of Indian, African, and Spanish heritage. I begin my exploration into Mexican identity formation with this plaque in Mexico City, because it represents what Mexicans are telling Mexicans about being Mexican. “By themselves, monuments are of little value, mere stones in the landscape. But as part of a nation’s rites or the objects of a people’s national pilgrimage, they are invested with national soul and memory” (Young, 1993, p. 2). Just as the Plaza de la Tres Culturas was constructed by people, so is the history and identity that it wishes to portray. It is attempting to create and/or proliferate a particular way the public should remember these events. Through a brief exploration of this plaza and the public memory it conveys, we can explore the histories and the narratives that were constructed to meet the political needs and interests of the community.

Today, the Mestizos are considered to be *the* Mexican people. Even though the Mestizo population constitutes 75% of the Mexican population, this position of the Mestizo as the representative people of Mexico was not always the case. In fact, it is a relatively recent invention. It was a project born out of the Mexican Revolution that ended in 1917 (van der Aa, 2005). The difficulty was, and is, in merging these pasts when

one, the Spanish, conquered and brutalized the other, the Indigenous, and enslaved yet another, the African.

The three cultures represented by the Plaza de la Tres Culturas are not the Indian, Spanish, and African cultures. Rather it is the Indian, Spanish, and Mestizo cultures. These are meant to represent different eras: the indigenous past, the colonial past, and the modern project of hybridization. In the plaza there are pre-Hispanic Aztec ruins, a Catholic temple built by the Spanish during colonial rule, and modern apartment buildings. These modern buildings represent the Mestizo culture, the new culture birthed by the mixing of the Spanish, Indigenous, and African cultures.

In this particular construction of three races in the plaza, Africans are not represented at all. They are completely ignored. “African-Mexicans have endured a general neglect—once as slaves and again as historical subjects” (Richmond, 1996, p. 1). The Africans came to Mexico primarily as slaves for the Spanish. Not only did the African slaves not come freely, but the Indians did not want them to come. So, the Africans did not want to come, the Indians did not invite them, and the Spanish brought them there in chains. Toward the end of Spanish rule there were few pure Africans, as most had mixed with Indians and whites that form the Mestizo population of Mexico today (Beltrán, 1969). The marginalization of the African Mexican history, as (not) displayed in the Plaza de la Tres Culturas, has been assisted by the fact that they were uninvited guests, with little power, and their history has been folded into the Mestizo identity.

The project of the Mestizo identity's goal is of creating a Mexican identity with which the majority of Mexico can identify. In order to do this, the brutality of colonialism perpetrated against the Indigenous by the Spanish is recognized and is part of the narrative of Mexico. In this way, the population is supposed to feel sympathetic toward and connected to the Indian population. Another important aspect of the Mestizo narrative is that of progress and modernity. "Modernity in Mexico is a mestizo project, the origin of which is not the European Enlightenment, but the social and political dissatisfaction of colored social castes under the Spanish ruling" (Moreno, 1997, p. 881). The Mestizo is a modern image of Mexico as opposed to the Indigenous population. The binary to this message is that the Indigenous culture is backward. On one hand there is an embracing of the Indian population, identification with the Indian heritage of Mexico. On the other hand, there is a condemnation of the present day Indian population as backward. This is why I find importance in tracing the narratives about the Indigenous people and the idea of what it means to be modern within a changing global context. The way Student D and Student O position themselves in terms of the Indian population and progress points to ways they interpret the history of Mexico, their identity as a Mexican, and the future of Mexico. This cultural context provides fertile ground from which to explore the shifting and constructed nature of transnational identities.

National Discourses

At this point, I want to theoretically broaden the scope to discuss how the narrative of the nation is constructed before I go specifically into Mexico. As I discussed in Chapter I, Anderson (1991) perceives all communities as imagined communities that

are created by telling stories about that community. Communities can be families, neighborhoods, religions, heritages, or nations. National communities construct identities by producing meaningful stories about “The Nation.” These stories provide the same purpose as monuments in that they construct public identity and public memory. There are worldly consequences based on the kinds of historical and communal understandings that are produced (Young, 1993).

Wodak claims that discursive constructs emphasize national uniqueness and intra-national uniformity and ignore or de-emphasize intra-national difference (Wodak et al., 1999). However, inter-group differences are an important and necessary point of emphasis in the construction of any identity (Wodak et al., 1999). A strong story in many communities asserts that identity can only be maintained by eliminating difference and creating one people that fall under a particular constructed identity. Sometimes this is in the form of members conforming to the norm and at other times this means physically murdering internal and external people who are deemed as “Other.” Seyla Benhabib explains this phenomenon:

Identity politics is always and necessarily a politics of the creation of difference. One is a Bosnian Serb to the degree to which one is not a Bosnian Moslem or a Croat. . . . What is shocking about these developments, is not the inevitable dialectic of identity/difference that they display but rather the atavistic belief that identities can be maintained and secured only by eliminating difference and otherness. The negotiation of identity/difference . . . is the political problem facing democracies on a global scale (as cited in Wodak et al., 1999, pp. 2-3)

This problem of negotiating identity/difference does not seem to me to be only the problem of democracies. Rather, this problem is one that faces all religions, races,

nations, and every other kind of community. Stuart Hall articulated a model of discourse in which “The Nation” is constructed. He points out five aspects that are important to stories of a nation:

1. Narrative of the Nation. These stories include histories, geographies, rituals, symbols, victories and defeats.
2. Timelessness of the Nation. In these articulations the national character is presented as unchanging, unbroken, and uniform throughout the past and into the future.
3. Invention of Tradition. These stories talk about a prehistory of disorder and how the Nation turned it into a community. Rather than timeless, the Nation is seen as a savior from chaos.
4. Myth of Origin. This aspect of the national discourse tells about the beginning of the Nation.
5. Folk, pure, original people. In this story we are told about a time pre-nation, where we can see a pure people, which can be used to represent the essence, or core, of the people in that make up the nation. (as cited in Wodak et al., 1999, p. 24)

Hall saw these elements as ways to cover up, avoid, and disregard the “real” differences between gender, class, and race. Rather than celebrating the stories as ways to create unity and stability among a group of people, he saw these stories as ways to avoid the real problems and perpetuate the cycles of poverty and ethnic violence. These stories were created by elites in order to maintain control and power within the world of nation-states. They distracted from the more fundamental issues of feeding, clothing, and providing healthcare for people.

Wodak’s own exploration of national identity is to understand the impact of this elite discourse throughout all levels of society. There is no clear national identity because the idea conforms to audience, setting, and topic at hand. Each individual belongs to other regional, religious, linguistic, or sexual communities. To better understand the

impact of the national constructions, it is necessary to investigate the reception and uses of these discourses throughout all strata and amongst many individuals of society. The receptions and uses both constitute, and are constituted by, the national discourse.

There are potential opportunities and consequences with any identity, including national identity. Judith Butler's term subjection encompasses both the consequences and the opportunities: the individual becomes a subject, but is also subjected to. Between agreement and disagreement with the national and other discourses, the individual is given a reference point from which to construct the narrative of the self. At best, these multiple discourses provide the individual with "a wide spectrum of sources of identification, from which he or she selects more or less voluntarily, depending on the context and situation" (Wodak, 1999, p. 16). This ability to define oneself within a wide range of contexts represents one of the best opportunities afforded individuals from their communal discourses. One becomes a subject.

On the other end of the spectrum, perhaps the worst consequence of communal identification and discourse is "cultural overidentification," according to Hans Saner. By this he means that one cannot perceive a separation between themselves and their community. To Saner, this is the source of the worst crimes against humanity. "It manifests itself at its crassest level in the undistanced oversocialisation of entire peoples under charismatic leaders in ideological systems" (as cited in Wodak, 1999, p. 17). From this he concludes that it is necessary to gain distance from one's own identity in order not to make it a "ridiculous and damaging phantom and to remain a *real person*" (my

emphasis, as cited in Wodak, 1999, p. 17). One has been subjected to the communal discourse and has been completely overwhelmed.

By *real person*, Saner means someone capable of extending humanity and compassion to others outside the identifying community. However, I can also understand *real person* as one who perceives they have the ability to shape reality. Half of Judith Butler's notion of subjection is that of being a subject. A *real person*, or subject, can influence the symbolic systems that shape one's identity; a *real person*, or subject, feels they have agency and control in the construction of oneself and one's community. A *real person* remains a *subject* and is not entirely dominated by the narratives to which they are *subjected*.

Maintaining your ability to be a *real person* requires gaining distance from the narratives that make up your world. Historicizing the narratives and interpreting the narratives critically is one way to gain this distance, using written texts and/or oral discourse within the context of a classroom. However, an embodied, experiential way to gain distance from narratives to which one has been subjected, and in turn gain compassion, humanity, and agency, is through physically separating yourself from the geography in which these narratives and one's subjecthood were formed; in other words, through traveling. Of course, not all kinds of travel will promote and encourage this distance. Cruises, tour buses, and resorts are intentionally created to place particular people of privilege into new geographies without challenging their narratives. Army bases and military force also protect foreigners from hearing narratives they do not want to hear. Even without the walls of a tour bus, resort, or fort, there is no guarantee how

confronting new narratives will be interpreted. However, immersion into foreign discourses encourages one to gain distance from one's communal identification with the potentiality of liberating consequences.

Mexican National Discourse

When I began this project it was not important to me from where the students came. I was interested in the transnational experience, and how being immersed in different signifying practices and being distanced from particular narratives affected personal identity. I became connected to Student D and Student O through the director of the University of North Carolina Exchange Program. He knew they were coming and knew they were interested in film and theater. For these reasons he recommended them to me. It pleased me that not only could we talk about their exchange experience, but that I could teach them about filmmaking, as well.

It is because of this set of circumstances that I have familiarized myself with Mexican history, politics, and identity. While it is important for me to be familiar with the histories and the identity formations in the country and the context from which the students began their journey, it is also important to point out that I am not a scholar of Mexican history or culture. I appreciate the infinitely complicated work of trying to understand Mexican history and identity, and while I lay out a skeletal framework from which to begin understanding Mexican history and identity, I do not want to pretend to be an expert.

I begin this framework of Mexican history from that fateful meeting between Hernán Cortés and Cuauhtémoc Tlatoac. Cortés came from Spain in 1492 and conquered

the Aztec Empire that was really just peaking as the dominant force in the region. This brought on the Colonial Era that lasted until the War of Independence (1810-1821). At first, European diseases decimated the Indians, but the Indian population grew back rapidly in the 16th century. During the Colonial Era, the Spanish controlled the ports and capitals directly, but in between these “hubs,” elected Spanish and Indian town councils, *cabildos*, governed much of this region. This hub system also gave space outside the effective jurisdiction of the Spanish Crown for African slaves to escape and form communities. The Colonial system recognized Indian and Spanish cultures, communities, and families. Africans and Mestizos were considered outside the social order and were marginalized from the dominant systems of production and distribution.

As European fighting grew intense in the early 19th century, Spain’s control over their territories became more oppressive. The American Revolution had recently taken place and the French Revolution followed, but the reaction in New Spain was more oppressive laws known as the Bourbon Reforms. Spain increased taxes dramatically and decreed that only those born in Spain could hold top government positions in New Spain. While the former upset everyone, the latter upset the *criollos*, those of Spanish descent born in New Spain who had their share of top positions in the government. As in America and in France prior to their revolutions, there were many pamphlets and small newspapers being published and distributed that promoted various radical political stances. This multiplicity of voices coming from all classes of society made it complicated to arrive at an agreement. The Plan de Iguala, designed by Agustín de

Iturbide, emerged as the plan to follow. It was a constitutional monarchy with a special place for the Roman Catholic Church. Colonialism ended, but a monarchy remained.

By 1848, Texas declared independence from Mexico and the U. S. conquered what we now call the southwest, nearly 2 million square kilometers. In 1910-1917 there was another attitude shift as the Mexican Revolution showed a rejection of the Porfirio Díaz's dictatorship, which was technologically advanced, but decidedly undemocratic. Mexican identity was redefined as the Mestizo population and striving for universal, social values marked this and the period following. To this day the Mexican Revolution is the central myth around the identity of Mexico, even though it is interpreted differently by different segments of the population (Moreno, 1997). This includes some that are cynical about the Revolution being abused to pass any legislation. "From the 1980s up to the present, Mexicans have realized that what was behind the factual and symbolic representation of the Revolution has been a complex relationship between politics and discursive practices" (Moreno, 1997, p. 880). The Revolution has been constantly invoked in order to justify any and all legislation, whether it is perceived as liberating or oppressive.

The election of the Partido Acción Nacional (PAN) and Vicente Fox in the year 2000 marked a pro-business shift in the priorities of the government that had been gaining steam for the previous half century. Prior to Fox, the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) had maintained complete control of the Mexican government since the time of the Revolution, even though their elections and ruling were decidedly corrupt. There had been a change in the rhetoric, even in the PRI, that extended the Revolution's

message to business interests and long term sustained economic growth. This led to Salinas Gotari, president during the 1980's, to make significant economic and political changes during an economic downturn. These changes pointed to a neoliberal ideology, but he tried to distance himself from that label by calling his reforms "social liberalist." Fox's election in 2000 solidified this direction.

In 2006, there was a very close election between right-of-center Felipe Calderón (PAN) and leftist Andrés Manuel López Obrador of the Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD) that has led to calls of election fixing and the setting up of an alternative government. Clearly this pro-business, neo-global direction is not universally agreed upon. Perhaps the most visible opposition, besides the recent elections, was the neozapatista revolts of the 1990's. This group was led by urban leftists and made up of Indigenous farmers working on the grassroots level. They invoked the Revolution by claiming that the goals of the Revolution have *not* evolved (rhetoric favored by the neo-global proponents), but that the goals were never fulfilled. They claimed to be the real descendants of the Revolution and that the country must review the original goals and assess what promises had not yet been fulfilled, such as Indigenous land rights.

This framework of Mexican history helps establish a foundation from which to understand the discourses that are being constructed in my study. I explore the idea of Mexican identity formation through the changing natures of two discourses: modernity and perceptions of the indigenous people. As political, global, and economic forces changed throughout the centuries, these discourses were re-imagined within the confines of the Mexican nation. By exploring these concepts, first as they are perceived over time

in the dominant paradigm, and then within the local contexts of the two exchange students, I make meaning about the identities and learning experiences of Student D and Student O as they positioned themselves along the continuum of these discourses.

Indigenous Discourses

Van der Aa (2005) differentiates three groups in Mexican society, the Mestizos, the Indigenous, and the Spaniards. He claims that there are three criteria used to determine which group can mark Mexican identity. First, there is the size of the group. Second, there is the importance of past activities. Third, there is the alleged brutality of past activities. Not one segment of society can claim the high ground on all three. In order to open this up, van der Aa uses two essential discourses of Mexican national identity to illustrate the tensions. One discourse is the origin of the state. In Mexico, that story's central event is the Virgin of Guadalupe appearing before the baptized Indian Juan Diego in 1531. This event can be interpreted as G-d's confirmation that a unique people, racially and spiritually, have been born, and are worth his G-d's attention. No matter how it is read, it seems essential that it is an Indigenous man that accepts the new identity and confirms the new direction of the people. A second discourse is that of the "Golden Age" of the people. In Mexico, this story also involves the Indigenous people. The Mayan and the Aztec civilizations are viewed as the pinnacle of Mexican power in the world. Both of these discourses show the prominence and centrality of the Indigenous population in the identity of Mexico.

These stories illustrate the tensions that exist among the three major identities that populate Mexico. In constructing a Mexican identity there is little opportunity to use the

Spanish side. The time of Cortés and colonialism cannot be used as stories of origination or power because that power is seen as brutal and ignoble. The Mestizos major story of heritage surrounds the Mexican revolution and the artists Diego Rivera, José Orozco, and Frida Kahlo. For the Mestizos, this is both a time of origination and heyday, but it does not have the power to usurp the other stories of the Virgin of Guadalupe and the ancient civilizations as the primary stories on which to base a Mexican identity. I presume that these events are too specific and too recent. The imagination of the Mexican community stretches well before the 20th century; therefore, the revolution cannot serve as the origination of the Mexican people. Everyone except the Spaniards can relate to and feel a part of the ancient civilizations. While it is okay to exclude the Spaniards from the idea of what it is to be Mexican, I believe it is inconceivable to eliminate the Indigenous from this identity. According to Mary Coffey, Mexico has been obsessed with the “Indian question” since 1810. From my reading of this information it seems that if the Indigenous people were excluded from the project of Mexican identity formation, then the project of Mexico’s nationhood might have to be rejected. By this I do not mean that the Indigenous people are often consulted for their input on Mexican identity formation, but they are not forgotten about, for better or worse, in the imaginations of those in power to actuate such constructions.

There is another folktale that caught my interest that I was introduced to by Student D and Student O. That is the story of La Malinche. La Malinche was an Indian woman who served as translator, guide, mistress, and advisor to Hernán Cortés. She learned Spanish and helped translate for him. Today, La Malinche is invoked to represent

many conflicting aspects: victim, traitor, or sometimes mother of the Mestizos. Student D and Student O referred to her on separate occasions to represent two different notions. One is that of being a traitor and the other is someone who likes anything foreign over anything Mexican. When compared to the story in the United States about Pocahontas and Sacagawea and their relationships with Europeans, some interesting meanings can be made. First, Pocahontas and Sacagawea are rarely called upon as metaphors with everyday idioms. When they are remembered it is as heroes that acted as bridge builders and rescuers to the strangers in a foreign land. The important questions here when making a comparison is to whom was La Malinche a traitor and to whom was Pocahontas seen as a helper? From whose perspective are we placing judgment upon their actions? It is from the point of view of the native Indians that La Malinche can be seen as a traitor. To Cortés and the Spaniards she would be seen as a bridge builder. In the United States the complete opposite perspective is taken. Pocahontas and Sacagawea were helpers to John Smith and Lewis and Clark and perhaps traitors to the American Indians. As we see by this comparison, stories with similar circumstances, told in two separate communities, take opposite perspectives. This seems to say much about who is included in the community of the people who tell these stories. In the story La Malinche, the part that is Mexican is Indian. We may also presume that in certain contexts this may also be a part that is shameful to Mexicans.

During the 1970's a main Aztec Temple was rediscovered in Tenochtitlán, present day Mexico City, underneath some colonial era buildings. The colonial buildings were destroyed and the temple was unearthed. Van der Aa uses this situation to illustrate that

the ancient civilization is more valued in the history and culture of today's Mexico than of the colonial era. Part of this fascination and privilege of the ancient civilizations has to do with the national discursive construction that claims an enduring character. As Mexican identity, since 1519, has shifted from Indigenous tribes to colonial rule to Mestizo, it is clear that discontinuity is more the theme than continuity. Yet to construct a timeless essence of Mexican-ness is necessary for the community to remain a relevant identification. The Indian is an important component of this timeless essence.

The crafting of the Mexican soul was the post-revolutionary project (Coffey, 2005). The celebration of the Indigenous population, it must be remembered, is the celebration of the past, not the present day Indians. Throughout the years, whether it was Catholic missionaries, anthropologists, or secular socialist politics, the Indian was approached as though they lived in a degraded state. They were believed to be and treated as though they were culturally deprived. The struggle for Mexican national unity has always been the struggle over how and on what terms to include the Indian population (Coffey, 2005). The answer has consistently been that the Indian must conform to the mainstream community. This is how the inherent contradiction between celebrating the past and disparaging the present Indians has been justified. The promise of a united community in the future has allowed people to construct a communal way of life from that past, and at the same time blame today's powerless community for the current discord.

Powerful people and powerful institutions are not only about repressing other people's truths; they also play a large role in the production of truth (Coffey, 2005). The

term culture does not just refer to the ways of life of different groups, but it also refers to sets of institutions that target a population and tries to transform them. Museums, symphonies, and ballets are directed to the upper class segment of the population to serve as a tool for enlightenment. One institution that was directed to Mexico's Indigenous population is the Instituto Nacional Indigenista (INI). According to van der Aa, the justification of this organization is to modernize and empower the Indians (2005). However, this institution does not help the Indigenous to build their identity on the pre-colonial past, but rather to conform their identity to the Mexico of today, meaning Mestizo culture. The purpose of the INI is to change the Indigenous culturally. Its purpose is to empower them, yes, but to ask that they give up their identities as they are now.

Coffey points to the National Anthropology Museum in Mexico City as an institution that serves to represent and transform Mexico today. It is the most visited museum in the country. Its presentation of Mexican history suggests Social Darwinist attitudes. It also historicizes the indigenous past and points to a glorified, united, Mestizo future. Interestingly, Coffey interprets its presentation as highly aware of the different messages that the different populations of Mexico receive from the museum. For the Indigenous Mexicans, the museum encourages Mexicanization. For the non-indigenous Mexican it encourages indigenization (2005).

The discourse of Mexican society about Indigenous Indians has been shown to have a consistent message. The past civilizations of pre-colonial Mexico are revered and used as a vital source of identification and communal strength. However, the Indigenous

Indians of today are culturally backward and must give up their cultural heritage in order to create a unified Mexico.

Discourses of Modernity

Being modern meant different things at different times in Mexico. It has legitimated social and economic policies, on one hand, and it has legitimated diverse counter reactions to these policies on the other. It remains a powerful label that actuates comparison with others and influences social and economic change. “Against the background of global transformations the label of ‘modern,’ and at times cosmopolitan, is important for individuals and groups alike: if one is not perceived as ‘modern,’ it can lead to social, political, and economic exclusion” (Marchand, 2004, p. 222). The way the discourse of modernity is presented by the elites, and how that discourse is reinterpreted through other strata of society, is an important discourse to determine how individuals and groups imagine their future. Marchand briefly describes the history of modern discourses in Mexico:

It was dictator Porfirio Díaz (1876-1880; 1884-1911) who at the end of the nineteenth century introduced an economic policy of modernization by opening up the Mexican economy to foreign investors and constructing an extensive infrastructural network of railroads. In reaction to his economic policies, as well as the lack of Democracy, the Mexican revolution erupted in 1910. The Mexican revolution, having gone through various stages of reformism and radicalism, was finally consolidated under president Lazaro Cárdenas in a statist-modernist development project tied to the creation of a mestizo national identity. (Marchand, 2004, p. 224)

The statist-modernist project converted racial impurity from a source of shame into a source of pride (Coffey, 2005). Diego Rivera, José Orozco, and Frida Kahlo

created art that called upon a folkloric depiction of the indigenous past. As discussed in the previous section and in Hall's discourses of national identity formation, this story reverberated with the idea of a pure, original people. This creates a sense of a unique essence to the people of Mexico. It called upon the social, communitarian values of the perceived past and demanded the present to eliminate racial and social distinctions.

Coffey contends that the statist-modernist project did not ask everyone to accept others as they are, but rather for everyone to embrace Mexico as theirs. In other words, it suggested assimilation as the way toward development. In this articulation of modernity, progress is seen as a construction of universal values, one way of life that suits everyone.

I cannot help but see parallels between these discourses of modernity and progress in Mexican history and The United States' definitions of modernity and progress.

Certainly the transnational railroad was a symbol used by the elites to point to U. S. progress and ingenuity. The economic policies during this time allowed the elite to exploit the poor. Rather than a revolution, the United States had the Depression. This led to labor struggles and systematic change by the policies of Franklin Delano Roosevelt during the 1930's and 1940's. As evidenced by his proposed second bill of rights and the championing of the creation of the UN, a search for universal values existed. In bringing up these parallels, it is not my intent to argue where the origination of these ideas came from, or who lead or who followed, but rather to show that even though Mexico has been presented as a dangerous and different world, they exist firmly in our context. These ideas may have transferred through simple proximity or through official and/or grassroots communications. Whatever the case, our histories and our fates are interwoven.

The next definition of modernity, according to Marchand, occurred during the Presidency of Miguel Alemán (1946-1952). In this articulation, national industry was favored over agriculture. This discourse did not challenge the Mestizo identity as constructed from the Mexican revolution, but it shifted from the search for common values to a pro-business definition of modernity. This discourse held until severe economic crises of the 1980s legitimated a further shift in the social and economic policies during the presidency of Salinas Gortari. These more contemporary visions of progress focus on “individualism, mobility, networking, and being a player” (Marchand, 2004, p. 227).

Gotari’s policies embraced neo-liberal economic globalization. These changes included ending agrarian distribution (which was promised to the Indigenous populations in 1917), privatization of the countryside, opening Mexican oil to foreign capital, and shedding the isolationist complex (Marchand, 2004). These priorities are very similar to the dictator Porfirio Díaz’s exactly 100 years before. These new (old) priorities made the North American Free Trade Agreement seem acceptable to Mexico. M. Delal Baer, the current director of the Mexico Project at the Washington D. C.-based Center for Strategic Planning and International studies, wrote in support of NAFTA in 1991 (before the agreement took place):

Ultimately the three economies [Canada, Mexico and the US] may blend into an integrated production network and share a universal, science-based culture that traces its roots to Francis Bacon. The modern denizens of urban Mexico will have more in common with their counterparts in Toronto and Chicago than with the campesinos in rural Oaxaca. (as cited in Marchand, 2004, p. 229)

Clearly, this articulation of modernity only includes a few elite members of society. We are meant to celebrate the modern denizens of urban Mexico, while what happens to the campesinos in rural Oaxaca is not worth considering. Not surprisingly, Baer places the European past as the superior heritage that all must conform to by making reference to Francis Bacon. While Gortari was a member of the PRI, his party lost to Vicente Fox in the 2000 election. His policies, however, won. Fox promoted himself as a self-made man. He worked his way from a delivery truck driver to be in charge of all operations in Latin America for the Coca-Cola Company. He was the perfect president to promote a neo-global agenda.

As the election of 2006 attests, Mexico is not united on this trajectory. Marchand articulates two opposing projects that are occurring simultaneously in Mexico today. One is to embrace neo-global policies and reshape the ideals from the Mexican revolution to fit a neo-global agenda, and the other project is to be critical of this reformulation and attune the ideals of the revolution to a globalizing context. In other words, the former favors changing the social ideals of the Mexican Revolution in order to go forward with the globalization agenda set by the World Trade Organization, and the latter favors using the social ideals of the Mexican Revolution in order to navigate a new social context.

The Red Mexican de Acción Frente al Libre Comercio (RMALC) is a group that articulates this latter vision of being modern and progressing in the new global context.

Marchand (2004) states:

According to the RMALC, free trade is not so much an objective but a means to further modernization. As such it should take into account so-called popular interests (*intereses populares*), such as employment, salaries, education, health,

social security, democracy, human rights, and the preservation of the environment. (p. 232)

El Fisgón (The Peeper), a Mexican political cartoonist, explores these two projects and their tensions in a publication aptly titled, *How to Survive Neoliberalism without Losing One's Mexican Identity*. In one particular cartoon he drew a picture of two males standing side-by-side. One figure represents the Mexico of stockbrokers (*corredores*) and is dressed in an expensive suit while the other represents the Mexico of demonstrators (*marchistas*) and is clearly poor. Underneath the representative figures is a list of comparisons. The last comparison and the most apt is, *This one loses millions playing the stock exchange*, and, *This one is one of the millions who lose when the stock exchange is playing* (trans. Marchand).

These discourses in Mexican society are complicated and multi-layered. They do not point to clear identities and clear goals, but by tracing the discourses of modernity and perceptions of the indigenous population we can unpack notions of the past and notions of the future through several transitions in Mexican society. We can tease out meanings of multiple Mexican identities. As we look at the experiences and the interviews with Student D and Student O, we can imagine how they are positioning themselves at this point in time within these traditional discourses. We can see how Student D and Student O are attempting to carve out new space between, or beyond, the *corredores* and the *marchistas*.

Interviewing and the Analyses

Student D and Student O's exchange experience took them to school at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNC-G) for two semesters, and they returned to Monterrey between semesters. I interviewed Student D and Student O in Monterrey, Mexico before they left on their exchange, throughout the fall semester of 2005, and one final interview at the beginning of the spring semester. This last interview was performed after they returned from Monterrey, which was the conclusion of the collection period. The interviews were videotaped and I kept a journal throughout the project. I drew on both of these sources. I also sent them two questionnaires: one before they came to UNC-G, and the second while they were in Monterrey between semesters. On both occasions, Student O returned his and Student D did not.

Four days before they arrived in Greensboro, I went to Monterrey, Mexico to try to understand the context from which they are coming. While this was only a taste, to be sure, it was an informative taste, as I got to see their homes, their school, their families, and their friends. The larger Mexican culture was on the periphery of my activities in Mexico, but I still got to see the sights and the landscapes of their daily lives. The most important consequence of this trip was to gain the trust of Student D, Student O, and their families.

It is important to contextualize my relationship with the students. There were times when Student D, Student O, and I spent time casually, and there were times that we sat down for formal interviews. Knowing that objectivity is not an achievable goal, I made the conscience decision to build a relationship with Student D and Student O. I ate

with their families and brought gifts for their parents when I was in Monterrey. As I ate dinner with Student D's family, his parents requested that I be there for him if he requested help, to which I agreed. I watched old home movies of Student D and his three brothers with his family. Together, we watched recorded performances of Student D's work in several plays. Naturally I also felt his parents' deep concerns for his safety and well-being. When they were in the United States, they stayed at my home a few times throughout the semester. They joined my wife and me at a music festival and we watched the Super Bowl together.

Nonetheless, the tension between subjectivity and objectivity was not always easy. To jump from friend, confidant, and at times, mentor to interviewer brought to head the various and complex intentions we all had in our relationship. There were times when they were tired of the camera, yet they continued to be available because of the relationship we had. There were times when I perceived that they were hiding and/or obscuring their thoughts and feelings when the camera was on.

By eating dinner with his family, I was privy to information about the context that informed Student D's worldview that I would not have access to if I decided to present an objective stance. However, by developing an emotional relationship with Student D and his family, I am sure this influenced my editing both consciously and subconsciously. However, I intentionally tried not to ease up on harsh criticisms; I certainly contextualized the criticisms. I care about both of them and I do not want to hurt them in any way. These are the ramifications and opportunities when one changes the objects of study into subjects.

While my intention when I began this project was to say I studied *with* these two students, I cannot say that is how it worked out. While I was certainly *with* them during more casual times, when it came to the interviews different roles emerged. I began each interview and ended each interview with an invitation for the students to share anything that they wanted. However, only once did Student D and Student O say anything during these times. Student O, as he was saying good-bye to the camera and the documentary project, and Student D when he returned after a profound experience looking at Mexico with a fresh perspective. His new appreciation for the profound experience he was having made him reflect on his experience without my questions. These were some of the most important observations he shared pertaining to my project.

Because of my need for footage for the documentary I could not get away from the documentarian position and all the authority and intrusiveness that go along with that. They also came with their own expectations entering the project. For instance, during interviews they expected me to lead the conversations, and while they answered all of my questions, they did not offer any information beyond my questions. This occurred for, at least, three reasons: (a) historical expectations of research; (b) on a gut level, they did not believe that traveling would transform how they saw the world significantly; and (c) because they did not believe it would be significant to them, they did not understand why I thought the project was important.

While there are many moments to draw from and many interviews to analyze, I decided that it was necessary to narrow down the selections. I selected seven interviews from which to analyze closely. This includes: one for each student in Monterrey, one for

each student after they returned from between semesters, one interview I conducted when they were both together talking about Mexican culture and history, one interview with Student D as he was experiencing what we might call “culture shock,” and one where Student O picked up the camera and conducted his own interview of some UNC-G students at a party. In this last interview I focused on his questions and concerns rather than the answers of the students. There were certainly important moments outside of these interviews that informed me, as well. Sometimes these seven interviews connected with moments during our casual conversations and quotes from other interviews. When that is the case, I chose to use those moments and quotes in my analysis rather than exclude these important opportunities.

As I decided to build relationships with Student D and Student O, there can be no way to avoid personality clashes and preferences. Specifically, my personal relationship with Student D seemed stronger. We seemed to communicate well about movies we liked and we shared similar intentions with our art. This may have had to do with a closer language and cultural connection. Student D seemed to be the prototype of what Baer was talking about in the earlier quote. Student D felt more connected to urbanites from other cities in North American than he did to the rural Mexicans. Culturally, he did not feel particularly Mexican. Student O, on the other hand, had a strong association with Mexico’s past and present. One way that this expressed itself directly between us is through the approach to the documentary project. While there are many complex, sometimes contradictory, intentions in our interactions, I think that Student D and I approached the project with some of the same biases. He said toward the end of the

project, he was more honest with the camera than he would have ever been with just a friend. This importance on “honesty” and “genuineness” came up often, in different ways, through my conversations with Student D. The idea that his “true” experiences, thoughts, and feelings were what he had to offer the project was a strong influence in how he presented himself. Student O, on the other hand, noted several times that he was particularly interested in the exposure for potential acting work that may come from his appearance in the documentary. There were times that I felt this was a strong influence in how he presented himself in the interviews. These are two blanket statements that need much qualification, however, I feel comfortable giving them importance due to my observations triangulated by their words. Certainly, both of these influences, along with many others, played a role in both of their presentations. I only mean to say that I observed each factor playing a larger role more often, for each of the particular students.

I interpreted the intentions I observed in Student D’s approach to be a serious struggle, one of grappling with truth and honesty. But also embedded in his presentation is a belief that there is a core to uncover. There is a sense that there is one true answer and one true identity to be uncovered with the right combination of question and answer. While I am skeptical of this proposition, I am also sympathetic to it. It certainly is an understanding that is a strong part of my schooling, upbringing, and culture, even if my current intellectual community rejects it. The intentions I have observed in Student O, however, shows an embodied understanding of Judith Butler’s theories of subjection. Student O wrote in the first questionnaire, “Leave no single impression on anyone.” Student O’s understanding of the non-essential identity allowed him to see the

documentary project as an opportunity to present himself in any way he chooses. I believe this understanding exposed a cultural difference between he and I which, at times, frustrated both of us. There were times when questions I asked assumed a single self-identification, which did not make sense to him. And there were times that I felt Student O was using my research and being evasive in order to come across a particular way. As a theoretician and as a researcher these interactions provided many opportunities to make meaning, but I believe that it was also a source of frustration in our relationship. There is also evidence that this is a personal trait in Student O. He himself talked about how it is difficult for him to show his feelings to others. This was corroborated by a good friend of his in Monterrey who said that he “is a very social person . . . but he does not open up to everyone. He’s not false, but there are some barriers.” Let me say that even though there were some frustrations, I grew to care about both of them very much.

At this point I would like to talk about some personal impressions the students left on me beyond our relationship. When I arrived in Mexico, I was surprised to see how driven, competent, and talented the students were. I am not sure what I had expected. The first place Student O showed me was a gym where he learned gymnastics. It turns out that he was the number one Mexican male gymnast for two years, representing Mexico in the World Youth Games in Russia in 1998. In the week prior to me coming, Student O found out that a film he was in was accepted at the Venice Film Festival. This was a shock to him because he did not expect much to come from this production. Although it was late notice and the ticket was exorbitant, he managed to go.

Student D had written, directed, and edited a film and the first screening was on the second night we were there. It was a short he had shot two years prior, but only got around to editing right before he left. At the age of 20 he had read, on his own, many filmmaking books and wanted to put his knowledge into practice. With the help of his friends, he rented equipment and finished production in two days time. It sat on his shelf for two years, but then he promised himself and others that he would finish it before he left. The night I ate with his family, we watched a DVD of the play “Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde” where Student D played the lead. It took me a few moments to connect the strong singing voice and confident stage presence with the mild mannered student I just met.

Both of their immediate families appeared to be extremely wealthy. Not only are Student D and Student O attending university, but also they attend the Tecnológico de Monterrey, or, “The Tec,” which is an elite, private university. In 2006, The Wall Street Journal ranked its business school #7 in the international business school category. As I was driving around Monterrey, I always knew when I was near the university because of the black iron fence that surrounded the campus, separating itself from the rest of the community. As its name suggests, “The Tec” is focused on jobs in technology, and the arts there are marginalized. “The Tec” also has high schools and elementary schools that feed into the university. Student D has always been in this system and Student O joined this system in high school. Monterrey is the wealthiest city in Mexico and Student D lives in San Pedro, the wealthiest section of Monterrey. Student D’s father is an electrical engineer for a large gas company in Mexico. Student O’s father owns a jewelry store and while not in San Pedro, lives in a large home. While I was there, I also went to Student

O's and Student D's grandmothers' houses. While not as large as his Student O's house, I did not get the sense it was an impoverished home. However, I did get the sense that Student O's immediate family stepped up a class from where they came. From my observations of Student D's grandmother's house I got the feeling that Student D's family maintained their high class status.

While there can be no doubt that their social status afforded them opportunities that few people in the world, let alone few Mexicans, of their age had, I was still impressed by the earnestness, competence, and creativeness with which they approached the opportunities. There was a spark in them to learn, there was an openness in them to listen, and there was a drive in them to do. Certainly this may come from their privileged situation of being able to name and impact the world. Subconsciously knowing this will certainly reflect your relationship with the world. Still, it was impressive.

School was a huge part of their lives. It was the center of their social, creative, and intellectual lives. They both claimed to not enjoy the education they were receiving, but realized the privilege of having a degree from there. Student D described the difference in schooling:

I have more time here in Greensboro. At the Tec they load you up with work. In the Tec system they give you homework everyday . . . busy work. 'Write a one page summary on the paper we just read, and make sure you write it in your own words.' They don't even read it. Here, the things they ask for have a purpose and a reason. Not simple, but reasonable.

Student O said, "Here I am studying what I love, acting, directing, film. There . . . it's okay." They both studied Communication Science, which is the closest thing that the

Tec has to an arts program. It combines communication theory with some production courses.

By their descriptions of the school I am reminded of Jean Anyon's (1979) work about the hidden curriculum of work. In her research she looked at what the definition of work was in schools that served different social classes. Her research showed that schools that serve working class families define work as following instructions. Middle class schools define work as getting the right answer. Affluent Professional schools define work as a creative activity where independent, personal constructions are important. Along this continuum, control shifts from teacher to students. However, what she calls the Executive Elite schools turn back, once again, to teacher-centered instruction.

Work is developing one's analytical intellectual powers. Children are continually asked to reason through a problem, to produce intellectual products that are both logically sound and of top academic quality. Schoolwork helps one to achieve, to excel, to prepare one for life. (Anyon, 2003, p. 136)

Creativity is not as valued as logic and reason. "The Tec" seems to fall into this last category, preparing elite students to hold onto their privilege.

Using El Fisgon's caricature of the two Mexican projects as a model, both Student D and Student O reject the stockbroker and the demonstrator. However, if we imagine these two extremes as lying on a continuum (with the stockbroker on the right and the demonstrator on the left, of course), I would say both are closer to the stockbroker, with Student D being further to the right.

Student D and Student O are clearly excited by their opportunities to travel the world. Student O was enthralled with his trip to Venice, but he understood it not as a

once in a lifetime opportunity, but as a learning experience because he fully expects to be running in those circles again. Student D talked flippantly about his trips to California and Boston. His brother now works for a famous computer company in California. Student D knows that the border between Mexico and the United States will not limit him, even if the United States builds a fence. These are opportunities that they expect and look forward to, and they have no desire to do away with it.

However, what Student D does not like about the stockbroker is perhaps best illustrated when he tried to describe to me the reason he was attracted to theater and film:

Before getting into acting I was going to be an electrical engineer like my dad . . . When I played [American] football, I sat on the bench; when I played basketball, I sat on the bench, When I played baseball . . . I struck out every time. I played left field and looked at the birds. But when I auditioned for a play, I got the lead. I found something I was good at. Maybe I'm good at math, but I'm better at this. I found something that not everyone was good at . . . I found something that I was better at than most people. By the time I finished high school, I knew I didn't want to be an electrical engineer.

He had a difficult time articulating the difference between math and theater. He was talented at both to the point that he stood out from the crowd. By his comparison to theater and athletics, I sense that he differentiated theater from math in terms of respect he gained from his peers, the recognition he got from others, and the social confidence it provided him. Let me call it the "cool factor." Athletics has a "cool factor" and serves that purpose for the few who are talented, but in Student D's case it was theater that provided this social respect. His comparison to theater and electrical engineering made it clear that electrical engineering did not offer him the same rewards that his theater work provided. The knowing tone he used when he said, "I knew I didn't want to be an

engineer” let it be known that electrical engineering does not score highly on the “cool factor.”

Student O, as I mentioned earlier, was closer to the marchistas than Student D, but still on the right side of the continuum. In Monterrey, he mentioned on several occasions that he respected his mom for treating everyone equally and that he was proud that she instilled him with this belief. It can certainly be argued that his view of the poor is from a paternal perspective, but I just want to mention here that he considered the poor and he thought about their situation. This concern did not trump his drive from achieving financially.

Student O had a strong Mexican identity, while Student D did not. Student O always included himself in descriptions of Mexican people and history, while Student D sometimes included and sometimes excluded himself. I asked Student O how his and Student D’s backgrounds were different. He claimed that Student D’s family was more conservative and that extended family was not an important part of Student D’s life. While to Student O, aunts, uncles, cousins, etc. were very important to him, student D said directly that he does not have a strong Mexican identity.

I asked both of them whether they consider themselves to be Mestizos. Because of Student D’s fair features and social status, I thought there was a possibility he was one of the small contingent of people who claims pure Spanish descent. This was clearly not a strong identifying category for either of them. They seemed confused by the question and conferred with each other. They asked me, “Isn’t everybody?” They both ended up answering with a nod of the head and a simultaneous shrug of the shoulder. Student D

then shared with me a family story that they might have Jewish or Arabic descent. According to him, there were Jews and Arabs that assimilated generations ago by taking on last names of animals. Garza in Spanish is a heron. This, too, was not a strong identifying category for him, but it did serve to distance himself from a Mexican identity.

It is important to keep in mind on what terms Student D and Student O are entering the United States. This has a profound impact on how they are interpreting the new discourses they face. John Ogbu's research on how different minorities perform in schools illustrates how the relationship between the majority culture and the minority culture impacts how different discourses are interpreted. A person entering a new discourse out of choice because they expect financial, political, or personal benefits is likely to relate to the foreign discourses differently from someone who is forced to enter a new discourse due to slavery, colonialism, or exile. The former is more likely to desire to understand and perform the new discourse, while the latter is likely to reject and be threatened by the new discourse. Student D and Student O are clearly making a different choice upon entering the United States than Mexican migrant workers who feel forced to find a way to feed themselves and their families. Their expectations of the experience and their relationship with the majority group are vastly different.

Students' Indigenous Discourses in Monterrey and Fall Semester

Some of my interview questions had to do with their own personal experiences during their time at UNC-G. Other questions I asked had to do with cultural and social issues. While most interviews touched on both aspects, some interviews emphasized one over the other. Both Student D and Student O seemed cautious and uncomfortable while

talking about social and cultural issues. They were certainly cautious about making large sweeping generalizations about Americans or Mexicans as they recognized that not all people fit into fixed categories. However, they were also uncomfortable with the topics of poverty and inequality. It seemed like these were not topics they discussed frequently in their education or in their social lives (at least not in a way with which they would want to represent themselves). Perhaps it is deemed impolite in their social circles to discuss these issues publicly. After one such interview, I said to Student D that he seemed really uncomfortable with these questions, to which he responded, “No, it’s not that. I just forget sometimes that this project is about culture and not about me.”

In a telling instance, I asked Student O and Student D what effect growing up upper-class had on them. After disputing and then conceding to the category, Student O claimed that this did not have any effect on him:

I don’t think that has affected me in anyway . . . as I told you in Monterrey my mom has always taught me that all people are the same. My parents work all day, I know what it takes to have money.

Student D interjected, “So, it has affected you. Yes it has. You think everyone is the same.” Student O responded, “Oh yeah, in a positive way.”

Initially, Student O took the question as an accusation. He spoke to the discourse that if you are high class then you are greedy, cruel, and insensitive to the plight of the poor. Student D reframed the influence of his class to a tolerant and enlightened influence. He explained that he was not saying the poor were the ones who discriminated, but that the people who move out of poverty are the first ones to discriminate against the

community they left. What they did not talk about were the privileges and opportunities afforded to them that were not afforded to others. They did not talk about the resources they had available to them and how that influenced who they became. To look at and talk about those opportunities and resources would challenge the discourse that their families earned and worked hard for everything they have. It would challenge the discourse that they were deserving of the opportunities and resources.

There was one time while discussing the social situation in Mexico that Student D showed an understanding of the situation of poor people in Mexico. He said, “The index of poor people in Mexico is really high. They do not have time. The kids have to work.” However, with his use of the word ‘index’ he is showing a clinical, scholarly, distanced reading of the situation. This is not a voice of outrage.

Perhaps the most telling difference between Student D and Student O on the “Indian question,” was how they included or excluded themselves from this population. When I asked the two of them what Mexican society inherited from the indigenous population, Student O quickly talked about the strength of faith in Mexican society. He did not differentiate between the domination of the Catholic Church and pre-colonial religions; he simply talked about the strength of faith that permeates Mexican society. Student D, on the other hand, shrugged his shoulders and said, “I don’t know.” This reaction could mean many things. It could mean that he either never thought about the contributions the indigenous made to society, or that he felt this was not an appropriate place to discuss the negative contributions he believed they made. Perhaps he was ashamed at the influences he saw. Perhaps he did not want to admit that they influenced

him. Either way, it was a strong rejection of their importance and agency in current Mexican political and social life.

These differing recognitions of Indian contributions to Mexican society influenced the way they constructed Mexican history. Student D began to talk about the history of Mexico as a history of “slavery and colonialism.” Student O quickly added, although softly, “Faith and religion.” He said this less confidently, but as though he wanted to be heard. He did not want to contradict the history of slavery and colonialism, but he made sure that more was included in the history of the Indian population. To only talk about colonialism and slavery is to only present a picture of European domination over Indian peoples. To only talk about slavery and colonialism is to only present the Indians as victims. However, by including religion and faith, Student O tried to bring in the agency of the Indian people into the conversation. Student O interpreted the faith of the Indigenous people as their important contribution to the Mexico of today.

This construction of the past becomes more apparent in how they interpret the current economic and political situation. “Because of our colonial past we expect others to solve all of our problems.” In this statement Student D included himself in the colonial past, yet rejected the logic that he asserted had been the legacy of their history. In this instance, Student O quickly and passionately disagreed. “I want to disagree that we wait for others to solve our problems. The Aztecs and Mayans were fighters. They had great organizations: the calendar, the government, and the religion. All was organized.” They both explicitly go to the past to describe the stance of the Mexican people, and particularly the Indigenous population. Student O called upon the ancient civilizations to

assert that the Indigenous people are competent agents and not just helpless victims. The logical extension of Student D's construction is that due to the history, the indigenous people still need a paternal European-based guide to lead them into the future. The solutions are external to the Indian people. The logical extension of Student O's construction is that the solutions are internal to the Indian people.

I do not want to overstate the connection Student O felt with the Indigenous population. There were many times that he separated himself and distinguished himself from this group. While religion was a strong source for him, he hated the religion as it was commonly practiced in Mexico. He felt that the God of fear, wrath, and punishment ruled the land. In his mind, "God equaled love," not anger and revenge. In this way he distinguished his spirituality from other forms of religion practiced in Mexico.

During his time at UNC-G, Student O went to mass on several occasions. Once he went to mass for the English service and the next time he went to mass for the Spanish service. He recognized a difference between the two services. For the Spanish mass, which takes place in the afternoon, the air conditioner was turned off and it was miserably hot. While he allowed that the air conditioner might have been broken, he felt as though that was not the case. "How could they do this to them? I did not feel that this was done to me and maybe that was wrong. I felt apart." Student O had options. He had the ability to go to the English service. Through his own statement of feeling excluded from this slight, he knew that this was not intended for him, but rather for people without options.

Student D and Student O agreed on the corruption and incompetence of the government and population to run an effective Democracy. Student O attributed the lack of literacy to this problem. “We do not have a culture of reading. We have people in power who are not prepared to be in those offices. The lack of reading makes people (the voters) gullible.” (Considering the connections between Democracy and literacy that I explored in Chapter II, there may be some truth in this reading of the situation, but exploring its accuracy is beyond the scope of this dissertation.) It is important to note that in his construction, Democracy is not called into question, but it is the non-literate culture that is being challenged as not good enough to properly organize healthy institutions. It is the Indian part of the culture that must adapt to the European part of the culture.

Student D said, “Those people don’t have a lot of education, so they are more gullible when a politician comes in and says he’ll give them money or he’ll give them land. These are the votes . . . the majority of the votes. So that doesn’t work and that doesn’t help.” Here we see him speaking to the discourse that schooling is the best way to discern what appropriate political action is and who trustworthy candidates are. We also see him justify the fact that the Indigenous population has not received ownership of the land on which they work. In 1917, written into the constitution after the Mexican Revolution, the Indian population was promised to regain ownership of the land that they had been farming for centuries. This promise was never fulfilled. It was commonly used as campaign promises and in a few isolated regions the Indigenous population was able to own their land. As part of his reforms, Gotari put an end to the land distribution. Student D’s articulation above did not allude to the broken promises and the importance of the

Indigenous people to own their own land, either symbolically, politically, or economically. Only slightly did he acknowledge that politicians have used this promise to exploit this population. Rather, the majority of his frustration is directed at the powerless Indian population for being gullible and for essentially controlling the Mexican Democracy. When he claims that this population represents the majority of the votes, he is either speaking in extreme hyperbole (the Indian population is only 15% of the Mexican population), or he does not distinguish between poor Mestizos and the Indians. To some degree, he is questioning whether certain segments of the population should be extended the right to vote.

They both talked about physical discrimination that exists in Mexico. There is a common discourse in Mexican society that the diversity of color and heritages makes it strong. I heard this several times from Student O, Student D, and their friends in Monterrey. However, Student O, who is darker than Student D, pointed out that even in Mexico, they prefer blonde hair to dark hair. This made Student D smile, as though he felt put on the spot for having fair features. Blonde hair and fair features were qualities they associated with the U. S. At another time, Student D said that while skin color does not matter in Mexico, facial features do. Indians tend to have “round heads” and “round noses” and these are not as valued as other features. However, since the Mexican Revolution was a rejection of the color system placed by Spanish colonialism, racism in Mexico is difficult to talk about (Bonilla-Silva, 2000). Bringing up racism in Mexico is taboo because it contradicts the myth that racism in Mexico is over.

In a separate discourse about the Indians is their spiritual and moral power. Student D and Student O both talked about a friend who went to school with them that ended up living in the Yucatán region with the Indian population. In the southern part of the country the Indians are more prevalent and there are no big, industrial cities. This friend did not go there to be an advocate or a scholar, but rather she went there to live with the Indians and assimilate to their culture. They talked about this as one may talk about going to a monastery. She had a calling to a more spiritual and simple life, but she gave up materials and advantages well beyond what your average person might be willing to give up. There was an awe and reverence about her journey, but at the same time recognition that it was a personal quest and not a model for society.

I believe we can see in their own discourses the historical Mexican discourses about the Indian population. Student O seems to really connect on a profound level with the spiritual construction of the Indian population and views this discourse as a source of wisdom and strength. However, he sees the European-based elements of culture as the sources of political and economic foundations for Mexican society. Student D, on the other hand, does not have a strong Mexican identity and he rarely considers the Indian population as effective political or social agents.

Students' Discourses of Modernity in Monterrey Fall Semester

During the fall of 2005, I asked Student D and Student O about the possibilities for the upcoming presidential elections in Mexico. Student D said, to which Student O concurred, "Either it will be someone from the old party, which will be a step backwards, someone like Vicente Fox that will keep moving us forward or some Leftist candidate

and I have no idea where that will lead to.” It is clear from this response that they both support the neo-global direction of Vicente Fox. This probably speaks to the discourses they are surrounded by in their communities, schools, and families, rather than a personal consideration and understanding of the consequences of the different policies.

One change under Vicente Fox was freedom of the press. Mexico never had a free press before Vicente Fox, and Student D and Student O welcomed the change, but not without criticism. They felt that the new freedom was being abused. While before the Mexican journalists could never criticize the president, Student D and Student O felt like the journalists took this new opportunity too far and did not show respect for the president. However, Student D and Student O were hopeful about the present and the future. Student D: “We are in our . . . en l’adolescencias de le democracia . . . we are in our teens. Our democracy is just beginning to grow.” Student O: “Most people feel that democracy has climaxed, there is a new party, but our democracy is only just growing up.” With the election of Vicente Fox, defeating the PRI Party for the first time since the Revolution, and the opening up of the press, they interpreted these recent changes as more democratic and going in a positive direction. The metaphor of growing up is revealing, because it reaffirms a positive direction for the country, while at the same time it talks about the Indian population, specifically, as not mature enough. It resonates with a discourse of Social Darwinism where there is a necessary direction that represents forward progress, and an absolute hierarchy of races, forms of government, and modes of production and distribution.

When I asked what they thought was the biggest current problem in Mexican society, Student D offered that people think only about themselves and not about society. At the time he offered the example of bribing traffic cops, to which he included himself. For the low paid cop, it is a nice bonus to his salary. To the person who was receiving the ticket, it was easier than going to downtown and paying the ticket. However, the government loses necessary funds. In this case, the solution he offered was higher salaries for the cops so they feel more responsible to their duty and less eager to take a bribe. He has direct experience with this logic because in his community, San Pedro, the officers are paid more and they had a reputation of being harder to bribe.

This idea of thinking selfishly rather than communally took an interesting turn in a different interview with Student D. “Everyone blames the government complaining all the time, but we don’t want to do anything for ourselves.” This conversation began with Student D saying that Mexicans earned their reputation for being lazy. While the recent discourse in the U. S. is that Mexicans are hard working and industrious, the historical discourse is that their country is poor because they are lazy. He claimed that they are the hardest workers in the U. S. because they do not want to waste the opportunity. He used the government office employee as his examples for laziness. “They come in late, they leave early, and take any responsibility, no way. Do anything extra, no way.” The example of the government employee being lazy is a common example in the U. S. as well. I think in this case, the government employee is an apt icon for the change in priorities. Government institutions are perceived as slow, impersonal, and not able to

adapt to the current reality. Corporations, on the other hand, are viewed as flexible and ready to deliver services more efficiently and more personally.

“There are some people that work extra hard, that carry all the workload because we know what will happen to our country if we do not.” In this group he referred to students and businessmen. If we follow this logic, working for your own profit and betterment, like going to school or starting a business, is what is good for the country. Collective petitioning of the government becomes an obstacle to this improvement. In this articulation of the modern condition the elites are credited with keeping the society afloat and even moving forward, while it is the poor classes that are the obstacles to this forward motion.

When I inquired about the direction the forward motion was going he did not have a specific answer, but assumed I understood what he meant. Later in the conversation he began expressing frustration at Americans who take things for granted and it exposed where he thought this forward motion was going. “They’re here. They’re Americans. Their country is a first world country; the biggest economy in the world. So, why should they work hard? Why should they make a big effort?” Of course he was being sarcastic in these last questions, but I think it speaks to his belief of the purpose of hard work. “What’s at stake is our development.” Mexico’s economy is small and the drive to work hard is to grow the economy. The direction is to duplicate the consumer society in the U. S. Another conclusion he could have reached is that this capitalistic trajectory does not provide meaningful inspiration for human action, and therefore Mexico should take a different direction.

Student O was also in agreement with the neo-liberal agenda, but he was also more inclined to articulate the vacuous nature of Americans. “Sure they’re independent, but they rely on technology a lot. They rely on material things over real things, like family.” Student D and Student O lived in a suite with two Americans and one German. These suites were set up where they each had their own room, but there was a common living area. Student O talked about how the American roommates always had a TV, computer, or radio on in their separate rooms. Both Americans were from New York and during the baseball playoffs they would watch the same game, root for the same team, in their own separate rooms. When there was a good play they would yell across the hall to each other. Both Student D and Student O related this story to me several times. Obviously it left a strong impression on them.

Student O had a particularly interesting way to bridge the spiritual connection he felt to the Mexican people and the neo-global vision of Modernity. I call it “The Theology of Dreams.” He spoke about his dreams a lot: his dreams when he was little of becoming a gymnast and an actor, fighting for his dreams, sharing his dreams with me and living out his dreams. On several occasions I heard him relate to me and others an idea he heard once. “If you don’t achieve your dreams in this lifetime, G-d grants you another chance and another chance but each time with a different family in a different context.” His dreams as he relates them are gymnastics and acting. Therefore, his interpretation of dreams is personal fame, glory, and financial success. “I would always tell my friends, ‘Fight for your dreams, fight for your dreams!’” It is certainly easier to think about poverty when you believe they will come back again and again until they are

financially successful. This idea of constant reincarnation until perfect also exists in Hinduism. However, in the Hindu example the idea is to become one with G-d, not to achieve personal success. In the end, Student O's Theology of Dreams makes the "Just Do It" culture sacred.

When the Theology of Dreams runs into an uninspired American, it is beyond its ability to conceptualize and comprehend how this could be. He met a woman working towards her BFA in acting who was going to take some time off after school because she did not feel she knew what she wanted to do. "It's strange. You are one of twelve out of hundreds of auditions and you don't know if you want to act. You are a *chosen one* and you can't tell if you want to act." This lack of spark is beyond the ability of the Theology of Dreams to comprehend.

I do not think Student O or Student D had an alternative vision of Modernity to articulate fully. The only language they had was moving forward meant becoming individualistic, opening up the economy to foreign investors, investing in technology, and becoming more mobile throughout the world. Certainly they would benefit from these economic and social policies, and that makes it harder for them to see other logics. As Student D said, we either move backward, forward, or who knows what.

Indigenous and Modern Discourses after Returning to Monterrey

At this time I would like to explore the last interview I conducted with Student D and Student O. This took place after they took a trip home for three weeks between semesters. Because Student D and Student O have different frames and different histories, they also had different experiences looking at the city of Monterrey after being

at UNC-G for one semester. Student D was shocked by what he saw when he returned.

Student O was moved, but I can't say he was shocked.

The one thing that both noticed immediately and which affected them profoundly was the extreme poverty in Mexico. Student D commented, "There is poverty here [in the U. S.], but not so raw and in-your-face. But there it is evident and seems so harsh." When they began talking about this perspective on poverty, both of them showed signs of physical discomfort. Student D twitched and swallowed the word "poverty" when he first said it. Student O paused before he could utter the phrase "poor people." They both had clearly seen the condition of the Indian population in a new way. And it affected them more profoundly than anything else they noticed. It was the first thing they mentioned during the interview.

But, as I said, there were differences. For Student D, I got the sense that this was the first time that he saw the poor people of Mexico in this light. "We're so accustomed to saying we're doing okay, everything's fine. It's good and pretty. It felt weird noticing that it isn't so good and pretty . . . the poverty . . . the low quality of life. We make ourselves think that everything's okay." Previously, the poor people in Mexico were in a safe conceptual box for Student D. He could intellectually discuss the conditions of the poor. But this time he talked about seeing it with "different eyes." Through his exchange experience, he gained distance from his everyday situation by leaving and when he came back he was able to see the harsh life of the Indians and other poor people in Mexico. For Student D, this one realization brought his entire worldview into question. "That makes me feel strange that just a point of view thing can make me look at something completely

differently. So how much of our points of view and our mindset, and our way of looking at life depends on a perspective?” He physically experienced a deep de-centeredness that called his worldview into question.

For Student O, he did not see the poor people in Mexico for the first time, but he had forgotten about them while he was at UNC-G. He forgot about the social distinctions that exist in Mexico, and upon return they were extremely apparent. In Greensboro they were living on a campus and were surrounded by people in the same financial and social situation. Returning to Mexico, he could clearly see the differences. He did not have the same kind of awakening experience about the world that Student D had, nonetheless, he did feel a certain amount of shame in forgetting about the poor people in Mexico. He realized how easy it was for him to adapt and forget.

The discourse of Modernity did not go through significant alterations, although there were important moments when the importance of economic growth was put on hold. Student D recognized the infrastructure of Monterrey and noticed how “3rd World-ish” it looked. The buildings and pavement were not kept up as well as what he saw in the U. S. Student O focused on the disorganization that exists in Mexico, as evidenced by how people stand in line. In the U. S. people quietly wait their turn, while in Mexico there is a lot of yelling and “craziness.”

However, in their language once they returned a different idea of progress was present. “We like to tell ourselves we’re getting better, but in reality we are not.” In this statement it is clear that the idea of progress was very different than what the neo-global agenda asserts. A social agenda rather than an economic or technological agenda defined

progress. "Getting better," in this sense, was being measured by the administration of social justice. However, he did not have a larger framework in which to understand and name this libidinal change in perspective. He had no vision of history or vision of the future which would allow him to understand this feeling in a larger context.

Also when they returned, they were excited to talk about the independence and confidence they gained at being individualistic. It seemed that they had a vision of the past and a vision of the future to understand this. "The family thing disappears," Student D said. By this he meant he had to take care of his own laundry, meals, and bills. "This also gives you freedom to do stuff, to not limit yourself. With a new perspective, something you thought was impossible may seem possible." With the contemporary economic and political situation in the world, Student D does not foresee himself staying in Mexico. He believes he will pursue a graduate degree and probably a career in the United States. Thereby, these points of individual growth seem to fit into the expected growth pattern. He must unlearn certain cultural ways, like living with your parents until you are married, if he expects to compete in the global market.

Student O also talked about how this new confidence about being an individual can help him pursue his dreams in the arts. "I'm not scared to be alone in my room, reading, without sound, without noises. I'm prepared." To Student O this was a barrier to being worldly and international. This was the abyss that had to be crossed in order to go isolationist to jetsetter. "Before I came here, I depended a lot on people. Before I could do anything, like study abroad, or go on an audition to LA or New York, I would need someone to support me. Right now I'm like if I want that I have to do that with or without

someone . . . I have to become more cold.” Becoming “more cold” is perceived as necessary in order to compete in the modern world.

Conclusions

Student D and Student O wanted to come as a way to study what they loved: acting, filmmaking, directing, etc. Even though they were not particularly impressed with Hollywood films, the U. S. is still the apex of filmmaking. Their vision for themselves is one of leaving Mexico and joining the globalized world, wherever that may lead. In a way, this dip into the U. S. and away from Mexico was a test to see how ready they were to join this world. They wanted to like the U. S., and they wanted the U. S. to like them. In this way, it was of great personal importance for them to adapt to the culture of the U. S.

We may say that the signifying practices were the same for Student D and Student O across the national border. The neoliberal justifications speak to the elite across the world. However, we can see how tightly interwoven the context and the signifying practices are. While you can point to a text and/or a discourse and realize that there is the same practice in another part of the world, this does not mean they are the same. There are many histories and positions that give that practice meaning and life in that context. While it is useful to point to a signifying practice and unpack it, it is impossible to qualify a particular signifying practice universally. To assume they work internationally and intra-nationally in the same ways is a false assumption. The same signifying practice in two different contexts is really two different signifying practices.

Given these assumptions, they were struck by the poverty that greeted them in Monterrey. For those moments, their priorities shifted in how they saw the world. As they stepped away from the signifying practices that formed Mexico, they looked upon their city as outsiders, and sided with the poor. Even without looking for a change in perspective and with no one authority trying to change their perspective, they still changed. “I didn’t expect to learn or change so much . . . by not doing anything. Just by changing where you live.” I would argue, by gaining distance from particular identity discourses. From immersing yourself in difference and then returning to what was once familiar is an embodied learning process of criticality.

This experience, however, did not overtake their visions of the future. I believe that they had moments when there was a different priority, but they lacked language or an interpretive frame, which may allow them to foresee a different future. This larger frame is necessary for these moments to incite action. These experiences made them question their assumptions. They had real moments of pause that did not come from a shocking text, but from their own lived experiences. There was an opening where the impossible seemed possible. There was an opening where different perspectives were understood to be valid. There was recognition of the relationship between geographical and cultural context and perspective. But it was not enough to overtake the Theology of Dreams or the theology of neoliberalism. They could safely fall back on these older frames because they were widely accepted with familiar histories and visions. Nonetheless, it seems there is an important moment, an important opportunity where this openness to alternative perspectives should be taken further. As they are searching for words to explain the new

reality that they encountered, theory and written texts can help examine their language and provide new possibilities. It would be an important step to develop a class that brings together students who are returning from abroad to look at issues facing marginalized populations in their own areas. At this time when they may be open to recognize that multiple perspectives are valid, they should hear the perspectives of those who are not heard. There are certainly no guarantees of the results, but it may provide an interpretive frame that situates and validates different experiences from different historical circumstances, cultural circumstances and/or power differentials. At a time when theory is relevant because the old stories cannot explain their experience, it is important to engage with social theory to help restructure their language and their sense of the world to include the voices of the marginalized.

At this point, the texts have “collided” against each other and the reader, the writing, and the documentary have interacted. These experiences have created a new context for the reader. Just like for Student D and Student O, it was profoundly educational to face familiar ground with a different context, so it is for the reader. With new reference points, it is important for the reader to revisit the conversation of the tensions and issues between written texts and visual texts found in the Prologue at the beginning of this dissertation.

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