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CULTURAL DIABETES

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A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of Arts and Humanities

University of Denver

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Masters of Art

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by

Keri E. Noll

June 2012

Advisor: Diane Waldman

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Title: CULTURAL DIABETES  
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### **Abstract**

Diabetes has become a cultural problem across America, but particularly in the Midwest and Southern regions. For my film, I explored these two areas and compared the food and exercise culture to one of the healthier regions, the West. Having moved from Indiana to Colorado, I used my own personal experiences to analyze why people in the Midwest struggle with diabetes and obesity at such a higher rate than those nearer to the Pacific Ocean. Through a series of interviews with close friends and observational analysis of each state, I came to learn something very important about health: our food culture is embedded and encouraged by the people that surround us, and changing the way we behave is more than just being taught healthy activities. People can change, but unfortunately I believe the problem is going to have to get worse before America takes it seriously enough to fix it.

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## **Chapter 1: Thesis Proposal**

### Introduction

Arm pain. Dizziness. Shortness of Breath. In conjunction with each other, these three fairly ordinary symptoms can mean something is seriously wrong. I never thought, at the age of twenty-two, that I would be worried about my friend having a heart attack. The weeks following his doctor's visit were some of the longest days I've ever experienced as we talked about what the doctor said, what is not wrong with him and what could be wrong with him. We prepared for the worst. Luckily, or maybe unluckily, my friend Zach was diagnosed with pre-diabetes. The doctor gave him a strict diet consisting of mostly lean meats, fruits, vegetables, and as few carbohydrates as possible. With increased exercise and the help of Metformin (a pill that controls the amount of glucose in the blood and helps treat type II diabetes), Zach had a little over three months to lose 40 pounds in order to decrease his chances of getting the disease.

It was almost surreal when I thought about my friend having diabetes; the image of diabetes, to me, was always the elderly overweight man sitting in his Lazy Boy with his aging dog sitting by his feet. But when I thought about it, Zach's diagnosis wasn't really a surprise. Ever since we had been friends, he had struggled with his weight, and his relationship to food was anything but healthy. Not only did he tend to overeat and

snack late at night, he tended to crave heavy, greasy junk food. I still remember our first conversation after he had started his new diet: He was complaining that all he could eat was chicken breast, brown rice and vegetables for dinner. Yuck. My response? Sounds delicious to me.

Zach isn't the only one struggling to keep his weight under control. According to Youfa Wang and May Beydoun (2011), the prevalence of obesity has increased at an average annual rate of 0.5% over the last thirty years, and if this continues, 75% of adults and 24% of children will be obese in 2015 (22). In 2009, ten states had populations where two-thirds of their citizens were overweight or obese. Yet shockingly, the regional trends are fairly consistent year to year as states in the West and New England areas rank lowest and states in the South and Rust Belt areas rank the highest.

While Zach's dietary change was highly advised and enforced for medicinal purposes, I had a similar change, though it was much more voluntary. Although, perhaps not entirely voluntary. Moving out West where the obesity rates are lower, it was easy to see why: most people are very conscious of the food they eat and live very active lifestyles. Living in this kind of environment inspired (or pressured me) into becoming more health conscious and to start exercising more. I was making similar lifestyle changes as Zach, not because of a doctor's order, but because of the area I lived in. How is it possible that two regions of the same country can exhibit such different lifestyles? Perhaps it's not surprising that consistent with these differences, we see levels of obesity

and disease that vary dramatically by region. My proposed documentary will explore this connection.

Several have theorized that cultural and regional differences are the biggest influences on how and what people should eat (Anderson, 2005; Counihan, 2011). The goal of this proposed documentary is to explore how people from differing regions live out their food choices in relation to taste culture (e.g. foods that are considered “good” and foods that are considered not fit for eating). To do so with accuracy, it is important to know what research has already been done on this topic. First we will look at articles that specifically talk about the disease of diabetes itself and where it is most prevalent. Then, the articles take on a more broad sense, as they discuss obesity and try to pinpoint the major causes for it. Finally, this literature review will look at what connections have been made between food and culture across different regions of the United States.

### Diabetes On The Rise

Although diabetes is not a new disease, its prevalence in the United States has increased greatly in the past few decades, which has caused concern for many scientists and civilians alike. In order to compare regional differences in food culture in America so as to consider how they play into the rates of diabetes, it is important to understand what the main causes of the disease are and what work has already been done on the topic of food and diabetes. In his book titled *Food and Western Disease*, Staffan Lindeberg (2009) includes a section on type II diabetes, implying that the main cause of this disease

is the food people eat. His solutions are to switch to what he calls a “Paleolithic” diet, consisting mostly of plants and nuts. He also recommends restricting calories and becoming physically active so as to stabilize or lose weight. Michael Pollan (2008) discusses diabetes in a similar way. In his book *In Defense of Food: An Eater’s Manifesto*, he focuses on the way Americans eat, what we eat, and how our diet is killing us faster than any other diet in the world. He believes strongly that if we just change our diet, we will become healthier. Diabetes is mentioned a few times throughout the book, but mostly as a side effect that didn’t really arise until later in the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a result of processed foods. This seems to be the contemporary way of discussing the disease since many documentaries made in the past ten years explore America’s eating habits, yet only two, *Food, Inc* (2008) and *King Corn* (2007), specifically mention diabetes.

The other food documentaries that have influenced this project are *Supersize Me* (2004), *Killer at Large* (2008), and *Food Matters* (2008). Many people are familiar with Morgan Spurlock’s 30 day experiment with fast food, but did anyone really think that eating large amounts of fast food wouldn’t have negative effects on his or her health? This film mostly reaffirmed how bad fast food is for you and gave audiences an insight into the production of this greasy, mass-produced food. *Killer at Large* makes a good epilogue to *Supersize Me* as it looks at the political and social problems associated with America’s rising obesity epidemic. The most compelling part of the film is the story of Brooke Bates, an obese 12 year old who gets liposuction at the beginning of the film. She has struggled with weight her whole life and finally decides to do something about it:



surgery. But as the movie shows us, obesity is a lifestyle and Brooke gains almost all of her weight back within the year after her procedure. This story explains a lesson that America needs to learn: there may be many quick fixes to obesity problems, but the only permanent solution is to change the way we eat and live. This particular idea is one that I hope to expand on in my project.

*Food Matters* links the food that people in America eat to the diseases they are dying of most regularly such as cancer, heart disease and obesity. The idea of this film is to suggest ways of making our food work *for* us instead of against us. I hope to get across a similar message in my film as I make connections between lower rates of diabetes in the West and their healthier food choices compared to those of the Midwest.

Going back to *Food, Inc* and *King Corn*, both of these films spend approximately five to ten minutes telling the personal story of an individual, in both cases a middle-aged Hispanic man, who comes from a lower income family and can't afford to eat healthy foods; this causes him to be overweight and diabetic. There is a particularly powerful scene in *Food, Inc* where a group of children is asked to raise their hands if they know someone who has diabetes. Then they are asked to keep their hands raised if they know two people affected by diabetes. Three people. Four people. The high rate of diabetes sinks in as most of the young people still have their hands in the air. The major source of blame is placed on the American government for subsidizing corn and making junk food cheaper than healthy food like fruits and vegetables, which forces people from lower

socioeconomic backgrounds to choose between quantity and quality. But income levels are not the only factor in predicting the probability of diabetes.

Barker et al (2011) listed four key factors that contribute to the occurrence of diabetes in the Diabetes Belt: the higher population of non-Hispanic African Americans, the prevalence of obesity, the sedentary lifestyle, and the fact that fewer residents have college degrees (437). Barker and his colleagues were the first to identify the Diabetes Belt in America, which consists of 644 counties in the southeastern region of the United States where the average percentage rate of diabetes is 11.7% compared to the rest of the nation at 8.5% (436). They state that diabetes is “strongly affected by behavioral, cultural and environmental factors...overlaid on genetic susceptibility” (434). The biggest factor in the prevalence of the disease is obesity.

### Big is Bad

Researchers have found three main links to obesity in America: local food environment, obesigenic lifestyle, and geographic location (Dunton, 2009; Joens-Matre, 2008; Morland, 2009; Pearce, 2010; Wang, 2007; Yen et al, 2009; Yin et al, 2006) It is important to notice that these factors can also be linked to the four causes of diabetes listed previously, which seems to imply that a very strong linear connection exists between obesity and diabetes. There are a range of studies that look at these three factors in combination with individual characteristics such as socioeconomic status, race, and gender.

We will first look at the connections between obesity and the local food environment. A lot of research has been done to find links between the neighborhood proximity to desirable food sources, and the weight of the population. Researchers look at people's access to food outlets, supermarkets, fast food restaurants, and advertisements in specific neighborhoods, and then they calculate the average BMI (body mass index) of the people living in that neighborhood in order to make correlations between the two factors. Most studies found that physical availability of specific types of food sources like stores and restaurants has an influence on the food choices that people make and also the health issues that follow. One particular study focused on two towns located in the southeast region of the United States, Forsyth County, North Carolina and Jackson, Mississippi. Researchers performed a random digit survey where they dialed randomly selected phone numbers and found that over a quarter of the population was obese and the average distance to a supermarket was farther than the distance to a franchised fast food restaurant; the respective distances were 1.77 miles compared to 1.39 miles (Morland, 2009 493). This study also found that obesity was higher in areas with at least one independently owned neighborhood grocery store, convenience store or franchised fast food restaurant. Conversely, obesity rates were lower in areas with at least one supermarket, limited-service restaurant or specialty food store (493). From these statistics, we can see that the differences in distance to a supermarket and to a fast food chain are almost negligible, especially if a person is driving to either of these locations. The main factor appears to be the type of store available within the neighborhood. Areas

with access to healthy foods at cheaper prices, like at a supermarket, had lower obesity rates while areas that were limited to stores that only sold snack foods or had higher prices for their products saw an increase in obesity. So it can be said that the local food environment does play a large part in the obesity epidemic, but many other factors have been observed as playing a large role in the problem as well.

Michael Graham (2010) writes that America's obesity problem is not due to the decrease in exercise, fast food, or poverty; America is obese because of the increased calorie intake and the increased number of meals per day (73). Many others blame our obesigenic society, one that limits physical activity and provides its citizens with abundant food at relatively low costs (Wang, 2007 24). But further research shows that people of different races, ages, genders, and geographical regions have differing prevalence of obesity so perhaps it is not as simple as merely the over-eating and the lack of physical activity; we need to know why certain people from specific areas are more or less prone to obesity than others. I chose to focus on the geographical factor most because of the lifestyle and food changes I saw in myself as I moved from one area of the country to the other. None of the other factors changed like gender or race, but there was a dramatic change in my perception of food and exercise. Because of this, I see geographical regions as the factor that should be researched more in depth through my film.

Yin et al (2006) looked at the prevalence of obesity between rural and urban area children living in Georgia. Their findings suggested that rural area and rural decline

areas had the higher prevalence for obesity, but they said that “economics and race do not fully explain the overweight prevalence in rural areas so these areas must support the obesigenic lifestyle” (131). Roxanne Joens-Matre et al (2008) wrote an article titled “Rural-Urban Differences in Physical Activity, Physical Fitness, and Overweight Prevalence of Children” which also examined the lifestyle and physical fitness of school-age children who live in rural areas, urban areas, and small cities, but this time using subjects from Iowa. The findings showed that children from rural areas and small cities are more active than those from urban areas, although the percentage difference was only small to moderate (52). Interestingly, obesity and being overweight were more prevalent in rural areas, which was consistent with the national results. Nationally, the rate of obesity in children is 16%, but the children in this study had rates higher than 16% in all locations (51). What the authors were especially interested in was the fact that low-income families are usually associated with lower activity levels, yet here in Iowa, the rural youth were mostly from lower income families and they were the most active. This unexpected finding could be related to the land topography, as kids from lower income families in Iowa probably work out on the farm, whereas kids from lower income families in Mississippi and West Virginia do not. This study demonstrates that there is more to studying the prevalence of obesity than just stereotyping certain types of people.

Similarly, Yen et al (2009) studied the effects of physical activity on people of different weight categories. Regular exercise increases the probability of being in the normal weight range by 0.4% and decreases the chance of being overweight or obese by

0.2% and 0.3% respectively. This study also found that someone who exercises regularly increases their chance of being overweight or obese by 1% when they watch television or play video, while the chances for someone who does not exercise increase by 10% (1358). Another factor examined by Dunton et al (2009) is the local physical environment, such as road-safety, vegetation density, intersection density, locked schoolyards, access to physical activity facilities, and walking or biking path availability. As expected, more access to schoolyards, safer neighborhoods, and more walking paths lowered the percentage of obesity, while more safety hazards, less access to facilities, and no walking or biking paths led to an increase in obesity. There were no significant results, but they qualify that by explaining that most studies that do find serious results use self-reported height and weight to calculate the BMIs.

Overall, the findings from these studies seem to illustrate that predicting which race or gender or geographic location will be the most obese is not that simple; even when consistent results are found across different studies, there are always exceptions based on some variable like race, gender, or socio-economic status. In order to more accurately predict a person's chances of becoming obese or getting diabetes, his or her lifestyle should be looked at in the context of regional culture, as every state seems to have its own effect on how the prevalence of obesity is distributed. For this reason, the proposed film will look at people who have moved from a less-healthy to a more healthy region, while also considering families in which relatives are spread across differing regions but gather together for occasional family get-togethers. This will enable the film

to consider how particular lifestyles in differing regions come to take on a cultural value for those who live within them, and how those regionally specific cultural values can change over time.

### How People Relate to Their Food

While it is important to know the science behind diabetes and the statistical research that has been conducted on it, obesity seems to stem from a problem much larger than any man or woman in a white coat can identify. As stated before, obesity stems from the overabundance of calories consumed and the little amount of physical exertion that is expended each day. But if it were as simple as cutting calories, wouldn't people be ready to follow the rules laid out to help them get healthier? What causes people to eat so much when they aren't working to burn off those calories? The answer, I believe, is that food is so tightly woven into the traditions and culture of people who live in the Midwest and Southern United States that they don't know how to change their eating habits. In order to further examine these links between food and culture, one needs to take an anthropological look at the way people relate and attach themselves to food.

It is easy to see this type of connection in my family alone. Eugene Anderson, author of *Everyone Eats: Understanding Food and Culture* (2005) compares the cultures of New York and Los Angeles to that of the Midwest: whereas in New York and Los Angeles, there exists a snob value in being open to trying new foods, "in the Midwest, in contrast, cultural pressures are diverted towards everyone eating the same familiar dishes

day after day, and year after year” (104). Growing up in southwestern Indiana, I’m pretty sure five out of the seven dinners every week consisted of some sort of combination of chicken, some sort of starch like rice or potatoes, and a vegetable. Chicken pot pie. Crock pot chicken. Baked chicken. Chicken fajitas. And when we weren’t having chicken, we were eating its cousin, turkey. Familiarity was something I grew up with, so when I went off to college and needed to decide what to have for dinner by myself, no surprise, I usually gravitated towards chicken.

This inclination of children to favor the foods that they were raised on is similar to the eating habits of other mammals; children eat the food their parents preferred and learn to love the foods that were seen as treats or rewards (99). So if our parents grew up eating hearty meals because they were raised on a farm, they will cook these foods for their families because it’s what they like and it’s what they know. Anderson (2005) also writes that in the Midwest different food was feared and hated because it was foreign and seen as indulgence. These beliefs come from the Calvinist Christians who were dominant in the area and the rough frontier living of the farm towns where the excess of food was identified with the rich and the idle (106). And even though people who currently live in the Midwestern states are no longer farmers and most are no longer associated with the Calvinists, these ideals linger in our eating habits today.

In her book titled *Food and Culture: a Reader* (2011), Carole Counihan talks about how food is used for ritual occasions such as birthdays, funerals, anniversaries and family reunions as a symbol of comfort and happiness (204). I know when a family



friend has any sort of change in his or her life, such as having a baby or moving into a new home, my mother is always there with some sort of casserole to offer the family. It's a built in belief that offering food to someone else is an offering of help and compassion. And it's true, digging into a nice warm, cheesy casserole after unloading boxes all day or listening to a screaming baby is comforting. So how do these traditions compare to those of people outside of the Midwest?

Jamie Pearce and Karen Witten (2010) write that

understanding which characteristics of the 'toxic' environment are pertinent has considerable potential for developing the theoretical understanding of obesity, as well as delivering successful policy intervention (12).

In this sense, my project is about finding those toxic variables and displaying them on camera for all to see. Most food documentaries try to persuade people to eat certain foods or cook their food a certain way without taking into consideration the cultural and environmental factors that are at hand. There are a lot of factors that influence obesity and physical activity levels, which in turn influence the chances of getting diabetes, but I think in order to really understand the people in the areas most affected by these diseases, we have to go there and see the culture for ourselves.

This project will focus on two specific areas of the United States that are located in two very different regions of America with very diverse eating habits. These articles set a nice background for the personal research I will be doing in both Colorado and Indiana, and I hope to be able to add significant information to the food documentary genre and the research on diabetes relating to specific regions. As mentioned previously,

I hope to use the information already present in the food documentaries to create a more dynamic discussion about the link between regional food choices and diabetes rates. I hope to create a personal story, similar to Brooke's in *Killer at Large*, that keeps the audience emotionally involved, yet also teaches them that certain regions of our country create bad eating habits that in turn create high rates of obesity and diabetes. Finally, I hope to offer suggestions and advice similar to that in *Food Matters* on how to start having a healthy relationship with food in America, but particularly aimed at those living in the Midwest. My goal is to combine the main concepts of these food documentaries and localize the problem by focusing on two specific areas of the United States; I also want to expand the image of diabetes from the overweight and underprivileged Hispanic man by showing and talking about other people who have the disease.

The next section of this paper discusses how I will identify the locations and families that will serve as the focus of this documentary, and how I intend to utilize experts in these differing areas to deepen understandings about the cultural factors related to diabetes.

### Methodology

The overall goal for the structure of this film will be to take the audience through my own personal journey, without the piece being completely autobiographical, in order to look at the different regional cultures of the Midwest and the West that have led to widely varying rates in obesity and diabetes. I want to tell the story of how I moved from

the Midwestern United States to Colorado and how my perceptions of food culture and lifestyle changed dramatically by simply driving 17 hours west. I went from being what I considered health conscious by counting the number of calories I consumed everyday to being a vegetarian with a passion for buying organic food. Is the Mississippi River some magical line that divides the healthy part of the country with low rates of diabetes from the area less concerned with adverse health effects of food and more concerned with what tastes good? This is what I want to look at in my film.

Back home in Indiana, food is the center of every get together, and everyone seems to have their own special dish that they bring to every potluck event. For example, my mother makes her famous Jell-O salad which consists of marshmallows, cottage cheese, canned pineapple, Jell-O mix and absolutely no nutritional value whatsoever, but everyone loves it. There are no questions about where the ingredients came from or whether they are organic or how many calories are in each serving; food is tradition there and people take pleasure in eating tasty, home-style cooking that can be shared with everyone. The opposite is true here in Colorado. Many people are very conscious of food choices and stores like Whole Foods and Fresh Market are popular grocery options. In addition, meals here always seem to be lighter and less greasy than the foods from home. So maybe it was the pressure from living in this culture that changed my mind, or maybe it was being educated that opened my eyes to a new, better way to eat, but something about moving to Colorado dramatically changed the way I looked at food.

For this project, I will be filming large group get-togethers in both Colorado and Indiana. Colorado has been the leanest state in America in 2009 and 2010, with 21% of the population falling into the obese category. The diabetes percentage of the majority of the state is less than 6.5%, with only a small area in the southeastern corner having rates between 8.1% and 9.4%. Indiana, on the other hand, was the 16<sup>th</sup> fattest state in 2009 with rates of obesity over 30%; the prevalence of diabetes across the state is mostly between 8.1% and 9.4% with areas in the middle of the state reaching up to 11%. Based on these facts and other research done on the topic, it was quite clear that one of the main causes, if not the dominant cause of diabetes, is obesity. Alongside obesity, lifestyle differences in amount of activity and exercise can increase obesity and further increase the risk of diabetes. Because of these factors, I decided to take a closer look at the food culture of two areas.

The opening sequence of the film, at this point, should be something that implies that what audiences are about to see is something about food and health, with a nod at the idea of my personal story being included. I see a panning shot of a bunch of cars parked outside the Colorado event that I will be filming; the shot will be focused on the license plates of all the cars, with all of them saying Colorado except for when you get to my car, which will be an Indiana license plate. This will set up the two places I will be comparing, as well as the idea that someone here is not from Colorado and is an outsider. Over this image, you would hear the sound of a group laughing and talking, probably just using audio from the picnic. Then there would be a transition into a voiceover giving

facts about the obesity and diabetes rates of each state, explaining how they are related, and ending with the idea of “searching to find cultural differences in the different regions of America” to set up the goal of this film. It might also be interesting to have a voiceover from someone dealing with diabetes, talking about how he or she has changed his or her lifestyle in order to get better. If I use this voiceover, I would probably interview my friend Zach who is from Indiana as well and was diagnosed with pre-diabetes. He has drastically changed his eating and lifestyle in order to avoid getting full-blown diabetes, and his interview could provide a good opening into the two cultures that the film is about to portray. After this glimpse into diabetes and setting up the main ideas, there would be a scene that gives the titles of the film, which has yet to be decided.

In order to tell this story, the film will need to start by showcasing the opinion I had of health-nut people from Colorado before I moved here. I always envisioned vegetarians and people who only ate organic food as pompous individuals who wanted to have the appearance of being really healthy and more advanced than everyone else; to me, they were snobs who didn't really have a good reason for not eating meat. To portray this negative opinion, I will open with a short scene of someone, most likely the host of the party or a close friend, trying to prepare the vegetarian options for the get-together that will take place later in the day. It might be funny if they themselves were not a vegetarian so that they would offer some good commentary on the food they were preparing. I really want to reinforce the weird vegetarian food that is available and that most of it does not look very good when it's being assembled. Ideally, I would like to

find some tofu and have them make some sort of tofu dog or maybe prepare a quinoa dish. Another idea would be to have them buy some vegetarian foods and cook them in advance in order to find one they actually liked; it could be a funny sequence as they taste-test different foods, either spitting them out immediately or finding them not bad, but not good either. I would keep any footage of them enjoying the vegetarian food for later in the film. The specific food is negotiable, but the idea is to show how weird the food is here to imply my initial view on health food. During this segment, I can see my identity behind the camera coming through slightly through little interactions with the person on screen since I'm sure they will be talking to me as they try the foods. I will not appear on camera, nor will I talk much from behind it, although there may be a voiceover narration that indicates my initial reaction to vegetarian cooking. My presence will be minimal at this point to sort of parallel my distance from vegetarianism when I first came to Colorado.

Then, to further the negative image of healthy eating in Colorado, I would like to film a cooking demonstration that Whole Foods sponsors during certain weekends in the summer. I would like to film the demonstration pretty close to the person and the food if possible, to really get a sense of what ingredients they are using. To supplement this footage, I would like to walk through the aisles of Whole Foods and get images of the wide range of vegetarian and healthy food, with emphasis on the prices. It would also be interesting to show the types of people who shop at Whole Foods, which may or may not

reinforce the stereotype I had of Colorado people; if not, then that footage would probably not be used.

Jumping from this demonstration to the Indiana footage would be a nice juxtaposition between the two cultures, since the ingredients being used in meals being prepared here will be quite different from the fresh, colorful food of Colorado. It might be necessary to include text to show the audience that now they are watching people in Indiana, and include the text whenever the location does change, which would just be small lettering in the bottom of the screen that reads “Indiana.” I will set up a picnic-type gathering similar to the one in Colorado where I bring the main dishes and everyone else will bring the side dishes. Since this event will take place in my hometown, I think that during these scenes I will have someone else behind the camera while I interact with the people on screen. I will ask them about the foods they brought and where they got the recipe from; I’m hoping to gather some food traditions from these stories to help show that food in the Midwest and southern parts of the United States is based on family and tradition, not so much health. I’m hoping to invite my friends to this get-together so that they will be comfortable talking to me on camera, or at least I know what kind of food I can expect them to bring. I hope to get lots of footage of people eating and talking outside, but also get lots of close-ups of the food; it will also be nice to have people talk to me about what they are putting on their plate. There will be a tension between myself and the other people in Indiana since I am a vegetarian and most people in the Midwest love their meat. Without even prompting, I’m sure people will ask why I decided to

become one and express their own opinions on the topic. Near the end of this sequence, the footage will start to de-glamorize the heavy food of the Midwest by showing everyone sort of sitting around, looking entirely too full and lazy. Depending on when I film, it will probably be very hot and humid, so people will start to get uncomfortable as they sweat under the sun. We will see them gradually start to go inside, putting things away, without really enjoying the afternoon outside. Maybe a few clips of them trying to kick around a soccer ball before they are called inside would highlight the less active lifestyle and the way the food influences low activity after eating.

Another stark juxtaposition between Indiana and Colorado is revealed as we go back to the West just as the party is getting started. Similar to how the Indiana picnic was shot, there will be scenes from a Colorado get-together in the summer, showcasing the different types of foods that people have brought. I want to place a camera right in the middle of the food table to get a low-angle shot of people and their faces as they search for the food to put on their plate. I envision the food at this event will be very green and colorful, lots of salads and veggies, mixed with burgers, veggie burgers, and maybe even tofu dogs. I also want to include the drinks that are offered since I know soft drinks are very popular at Indiana picnics, and I'm wondering what sort of drinks people will choose here in Colorado. Water? Refreshers? Beer? Hopefully there will be lots of footage taken of people just sitting around and talking while they eat; I'll assume that perhaps a game of Frisbee or soccer will break out once everyone is done eating (or before the food is ready) which I would want to capture as well. I will be sure to find the



previous vegetarian food that was being prepared and mocked at the beginning to show how good it looks when it's available, and I aim to get footage of someone really enjoying it. Again, I would like interviews with people at the gathering to talk about the foods they brought, where they got it from and why they brought it. Since the weather will be nicer, I'm hoping people will stay and hang around for longer than the Indiana party, showing perhaps the time lapse by the sun setting or the general change in the sun. People here will be happy and not weighed down by what they just ate. Perhaps the last scene could be me, who is still behind the camera in Colorado, setting the camera down or on a tripod, as I step on screen and join the happy, healthy folk. This ending will suggest that I finally realized why people here eat and act the way they do and have chosen this lifestyle over my previous one in Indiana.

Planning a one-time event and filming it for a project is a big risk since there are many "what-ifs" that can come into play. For example, since both events will take place outside, what if it rains? That would throw off my whole idea of contrasting the Colorado activity with the Indiana sluggishness after eating. I would try my best to plan this event around a day that is supposed to be clear; in Indiana, it's pretty easy to tell if the day is going to be sunny and hot or humid and storming. But if the worst happens, and it starts to rain in the middle of my events, I would move everything indoors and continue filming the picnic segment. Then I would need to find a local park to contrast the physical appearance of the parents at the playground with their children, and the level of activity that they are exuding. Maybe I could even find other friends who are willing

to have a small picnic lunch at a park and let me film them after they finish eating. I think there are many ways to reschedule and reshoot if something goes wrong during these shoots since I will be in two places where I have a home and know people who should be willing to help me if things don't turn out as planned. The only struggle that I currently foresee is finding enough people to be comfortable on camera while they are eating and willing to talk to me about the food they cook. I think back in Indiana, people will know me well enough to do me a favor by letting me film them, but it could be a bit more challenging here in Colorado.

Through this short ten to fifteen minute glimpse into the cultures of Indiana and Colorado, I hope to show people that it's not just statistical prevalence of certain genders, races, socioeconomic classes, or even neighborhood location that determines the rate of obesity and diabetes. The Midwest and the South have strong family traditions built around hearty food and relaxed lifestyles; it's not as simple as realizing that your habits may lead to you get diabetes. When your grandmother spends all day cooking a calorie-loaded Shepherd's Pie, how do you refuse to eat it because it has meat or too many calories or it's too heavy? You don't, and that's why these regions are suffering from high rates of obesity: it's in their tradition. Conversely, Colorado's tradition is staying active and eating healthy, organic foods that make you feel good. I want my audience to understand that people's attitude towards food is very complicated and deeply-ingrained in their lives. It is not so easy for them to give up on foods that they are used to or that

make them feel good. Changes should be made, but it will never be as simple as just telling a Hoosier that they need to quit eating casseroles.

Projected Budget

PRODUCTION	Est. In Kind Contributions (DU & Other)	Actual In Kind	Est. Out of Pocket Costs	Actual Out of Pocket
Director/Producer @ \$500/day	14 days @ \$500 = \$7000		\$0	
Production Assistant @ \$150/day	14 days @ \$150 = \$2100		\$0	
Scripting @ \$150/day	14 days @ \$150 = \$2100		\$0	
AF100 camera @ \$400/wk	2 wks @ \$400 = \$800		\$0	
Tripod @ \$25/day	14 days @ \$25 = \$350		\$0	
Shotgun Mic Kit @ \$150/day	14 days @ \$150 = \$2100		\$0	
Wireless Lav Kit (2) @ \$25/day	14 days @ \$50 = \$700		\$0	
<b>Production Totals</b>	<b>\$13,260</b>		<b>\$0</b>	
<b>POST-PRODUCTION</b>				
Final Cut Pro Editing Suite @ \$75/hr	50 hrs @ \$75 = \$3750		\$0	
<b>Post. Prod Totals</b>	<b>\$3750</b>		<b>\$0</b>	
<b>OTHER EXPENSES</b>				
Gas	\$0		\$100	
Airfare	\$0		\$450	
Lodging (7 nights)	7 nights @ \$80 = \$560		\$0	
Food	\$100		\$100	
<b>Other Totals</b>	<b>\$660</b>		<b>\$650</b>	
<b>Subtotals (Prod., Post- Prod, Other)</b>	<b>\$17, 670</b>		<b>\$650</b>	
Contingency (15%)	\$2650.50		\$97.50	
<b>TOTAL COSTS (PROD, POST-PROD, OTHER)</b>	<b>\$20,320.50</b>		<b>\$747.50</b>	

The previous table contains a rough estimate of what it will cost to produce and edit my documentary thesis project. Currently, the allotted shooting schedule is two weeks or 14 days based on preparation, set-up, and the actual filming. Because I will be using the university's equipment and facilities to shoot and edit my film, there will be no personal cost in the production of the project, which means most of my budget is used towards traveling and preparing the food that will be served at the get-togethers.

Since I have family in Indiana, there will be no cost for lodging or meals while I am over there. Another expense that is diverted is one used to pay interviewees since they will be friends and family of mine; in addition, they will already be getting a free meal out of the whole thing so I don't have to worry about compensating them for their time.

The biggest portion of my budget will be the plane ticket to Indiana, and based on previous tickets purchased, it will be around \$450. The expenses allotted for crew, food and gas are all very tentative since I do not know how much food I will actually have to buy for the events or how much driving I will be doing; the cost of gas also depends on where I am driving, since gas prices are much cheaper here in Colorado than in Indiana. As for the crew expense, I will need someone to help me film in Indiana since I will be on camera at some points. Since it will be a friend, I do not foresee them wanting or accepting any monetary payment from me.

## Audience

It's been said time and time again: My generation could be the first where our parents outlive us. And our horrible eating habits are to blame. Because of this, the primary audience for my documentary film is people living in the Midwestern and Southern United States where obesity and diabetes rates are the highest. It's meant for people living in the Corn Belt, the Bible Belt, the Cotton Belt, the Lead Belt, the Pine Belt, the Rice Belt, the Stroke Belt, the Sun Belt, and most importantly, the Diabetes Belt. It's for people whose lives are centered on eating due to their cultural backgrounds or their regional influences. It's for the people who sit around all day and don't experience the endorphin high of a good exercise because it's too hot outside or because they don't have time with the demands of work and family. And more specifically, it's for the young people who are living in these areas because they are the ones who can make a difference in the generations to come.

In areas like Colorado, partaking in a healthy lifestyle is almost expected of the people who live here. Instead of just a small section of organic, natural food at the Safeway, there are Whole Foods, Fresh Markets, Vitamin Cottages, and several other local markets that sell fresh produce and organic crops. In addition to the food supply, there are numerous parks and bike trails throughout the cities to encourage outdoor activity; plus the weather is generally nice and sunny, without the humidity of the South. Moving to a healthy state makes a person want to be healthy and fit.

In contrast, living in areas where 60% of the population is overweight and the most popular meal is fried chicken gizzards in gravy, there really isn't a push for people to perpetuate healthy lifestyles. Or perhaps there is a push on the part of some health professionals and nutritionists, but it's hard to break out of the cycle of chicken and corn pudding when such foods have become an important part of the cultural landscape and have a specific emotional meaning for people. Still, I hope that after people see this documentary, they will be inspired to make healthy changes in their eating habits. I believe the age group that will be most inspired and have the most chance of changing includes young adults in their late teens and early twenties, as they head off to college to become adults. Going away to college forces young people to make their own choices about what to eat, how often to eat, whether to go to the gym and work out, whether to walk or drive to class, and whether to stay inside and play video games all afternoon or go outside and start a game of football. All of these choices can affect their healthy habits further in their life so they need inspiration to stay fit. That is where my film comes in.

My initial plan, of course, is to finish this film in order to complete my Master's Degree, which will then become part of a reel that I hope will get me a job in the future. But I think this film can do more than just serve its initial purpose. In order to reach young college students in the Midwest and South, I would need to put it on DVDs that can be sent to schools. It definitely is a piece that can be shown in order to spark a discussion about nutrition, obesity, and diabetes. It would be great to have it shown as

part of a diabetes education series or even a nutritional series that is publicized in schools. This documentary takes a new focus on the disease, showing that different cultures perpetuate different eating habits and changing them is not as easy as prescribing less fast food. It shows the personal side to the disease instead of just the scientific facts we usually read about. It could even spark a whole series of films that look at diabetes, or similar diseases, in the same way.

Personally, I don't have plans to expand this short documentary into anything longer, but I would be happy if someone was interested in taking this topic farther. Because this short film is my story of how I dealt with regional difference in food culture and diabetes, I think a longer film would need more stories from different areas. Like I said before, if this film sparked a whole series, I would love to work with others to complete their sections; then maybe the series as a whole can become one solid film. In America today, almost everyone knows someone who is struggling with diabetes or obesity, so by portraying the size of the problem, we will reach audiences and inspire them to reflect on their own eating habits. I would be happy to work on a longer piece, but at this time, I think a short film is the best way to get it seen.

There is a secondary audience for this film that is quite different from the first and that is people who already live a healthy lifestyle such as those shown in Colorado. The goal for this audience is to create a sense of empathy for those struggling with obesity and diabetes. After I moved to Colorado, I had this notion that if everyone just ate better foods and exercised more, they wouldn't be sick and overweight; I did it, so why can't

they? And now I'm learning that the solution is not always that simple. Had I so easily forgotten the look on Grandma's face when turning down a piece of her homemade cherry pie? Or the look on my mother's face when I told her I was a vegetarian only a few weeks before Thanksgiving. Her incredulous eyes said "well then what will you eat?"

The cultures of the South and Midwest are centered on food that is made to be hearty and filling; people really enjoy cooking and eating together. This film should enlighten those people who live in the Western part of the country about the traditions and lifestyles of the people who are living in states where obesity is high: it's not always as simple as changing the foods you eat. If everyone around you is eating delicious smelling chili and cornbread, how do you continue to eat your celery and hummus? It's definitely harder to keep my lifestyle outside of Colorado, and people here need to realize that every city does not have the same mentality as Denver. My film is not offering a solution to the problem, but more so opening up the lines of discussion for individuals and their families to figure out how they can decrease their chances for obesity.

Overall, I think anyone who lives in America can relate to the story that I am telling in my documentary film because our food culture as a whole is something we all struggle against. Some of us have found ways to beat it, and others have found ways to embrace it. Even if someone is not directly affected by diabetes, they might know someone who is and can share this story with them. We are all living in one country, and it is important to understand the different cultures that are influencing the eating habits of



its people. And if we can inspire each other to take better care of ourselves, then future generations can turn the stereotyped “western diet” into something worth eating.

## **Chapter 2: Production Analysis—Obstacles, Adaptations and Reflections**

If there was one thing I learned from making a documentary last year, it was that no matter how much I planned for my thesis film, things were going to change in the production process. Another thing I learned was to film early and film everything so that there was a plethora of shots to choose from and always more time to reshoot if needed. Based on these tidbits of knowledge, I decided to start filming my thesis film during the summer before I had even gotten my proposal approved. It was a risky decision at the time, but I believe it definitely paid off in getting ahead of the game once I was back at school in the Fall.

Because I knew I wanted to host two potluck picnics, one in Colorado and one in Indiana, the first thing I did was talk to my friends about when they were available during the summer months to attend my event. I knew the Colorado one would be in June so based on my schedule and those of my friends, I choose the weekend of June 9<sup>th</sup> to start my filming.

### Colorado

The first obstacle hit before I could even start filming. I was going to be shooting my thesis on the Panasonic AF100 camera, but because of the tsunami in Japan and other

students using the cameras already, I had to change to filming with the Panasonic HPX. Not only did this change the camera I would be using, but it also changed the way I would be storing the footage. With the AF100, I would be using a P2 card, but now I had to revert back to recording onto the FS100. I was not too happy with this last minute change, but I knew the equipment from teaching it in the Intro class so it was not a huge hassle.

Since originally I thought my friend Kirsten, who lives in Denver, was going to be a large part of my film, I filmed her a lot the day before the picnic. I had planned to film her running at Washington Park, but had struggled with the Denver film office for several weeks trying to get a permit to film there. I sent in all the material for the permit, but never heard back about picking one up. Instead of risking it and filming at the park anyways, we decided to film her at an open space where I did not need a permit to film. I filmed her cooking at her apartment while we talked about her transition from Georgia to Colorado; I also filmed her trail running at Lair O' the Bear, climbing at Clear Creek Canyon and preparing salsa for the picnic. Her interviews were more spontaneous than planned because often our conversations revolved around food and body image so I thought I could get good, natural sound bites from this. I did also sit her down on her outside patio for a more formal interview to ask the questions that I asked everyone at the picnic in Colorado. The questions were as follows:

Q1: What do you think of the Colorado lifestyle?

Q2: Describe a typical get-together in Colorado.

Q3: Did you grow up here? Where are you originally from? What brought you to Colorado?

Q4: What are some differences you see between your home state and here? Why do you think those differences exist?

Q5: Ideas of typical Midwestern/Southern person?

Q6: What can people do to change their bad eating habits and help lower rates of obesity and diabetes?

Not everyone was asked every question because I wanted to force variety in the final project. Surprisingly, out of the five people I interviewed at the Colorado picnic, only one person was a Colorado native. At the time, I was concerned this would provide a skewed perspective of the state, but actually, I think it provided a much more diverse opinion on the lifestyle of Colorado. Plus, it provided biased descriptions of the Midwestern food culture and prospective opinions on it because some people grew up in that area while others only experienced it through family members or traveling. (Releases for the people interviewed can be found in Appendix A.)

As far as preparing for the picnic itself, I provided the main dishes of burgers and vegetarian burgers while I asked everyone else to bring drinks, side dishes or desserts. I predicted that people in Colorado would bring healthier options, and much to my pleasure, they did. There were several fruit and vegetable platters with one dessert that consisted of bananas and chocolate. People at this picnic also were much more active because they were playing bocci ball after they finished eating. Despite the rain that

lasted all day, the sun made its appearance ten minutes before the picnic was to start. That is one major risk I took in planning two outdoor events in places where the weather is so unpredictable. Fortunately, I avoided the stress of having to either move the picnic inside, which would have made it hard to compare outdoor activities at each picnic, or reschedule. Basically, I lucked out and everything worked as I planned, which really helped me get the footage I needed.

Another thing that helped me get a lot of footage was the help of another DU student, Jesus Sierra, who became my second cameraman throughout this project. He stayed at the Colorado picnic for about an hour, which helped capture b-roll while I was interviewing individuals, as well as getting footage of myself interacting with people and eating food. It was also relieving to know that since this was a one-time event, there were two people with cameras there to capture the moments; it took the pressure off of me a little bit to make sure that I was running between groups of people, gathering enough footage of everything.

Initially, I was going to have some adults attend the picnics to have them give their opinions on food culture and tradition, but decided against since Emily hosted the picnic at her house and no parents would be there. Even though this decision was forced upon me, I think it was a good choice for the film because now it only has young adults and their opinions on America's food culture and obesity epidemic, and this film is trying to encourage young people to change their eating habits; there is a better basis for connection if the audience is hearing the information from people their same age.

Otherwise, there were not big changes to the filming plan for this picnic, and I felt very confident after the event that I had gotten what I needed.

To wrap up filming in Colorado, I walked around downtown Denver for a few hours gathering footage of the buildings and specific Denver landmarks like the big blue bear outside the convention center. I also captured lots of people walking around downtown, as well as out in City Park. I wanted to get a shot of a “Denver” sign, but it turns out that this city doesn’t have a welcome sign when you enter city limits. I was not too upset by this realization; I simply resigned to get the “Colorful Colorado” sign on the way to Indiana. Overall, it was so easy to get images of healthy people utilizing the nice weather that I only had the camera out for five days. On the day I returned the equipment to the university, I bought a 2TB external hard drive exclusively for my thesis footage and transferred everything that day. Then, I had a month before I made my journey towards Indiana to film my home state.

### Indiana

The process was similar in planning the Indiana picnic, but the dates were more my choice than a collaboration of my group of friends. I was going home for a concert on July 23<sup>rd</sup>, so I asked my friends to keep the following week open for my potluck event. Zach’s family graciously offered to host the event since they have a large backyard and a pool. When budgeting for my project, I had put that I would be flying home during the summer, but after realizing how much film equipment I needed to bring with me, I decided to drive. Actually, this was better because then I could film driving footage, as

well as state signs and the Mississippi River, which I had been using as the “national divider” between the two food cultures. Unfortunately, I did not realize how hard it would be to film while I was driving or find a good place to pull off and set up the camera. These issues lead to minimal filming between the states, especially after I realized that I would not even be passing over a large section of the Mississippi River. I was almost too exhausted to even worry about having footage of myself driving and the journey between states. This taught me an important lesson for future filmmaking: I thought hauling film equipment from campus to downtown was hard, but traveling 1500 miles with it is even harder. It was difficult carrying my suitcase, the camera case, the tripod and the sound equipment into the hotel every night and back out to the car every morning, but eventually I made it home to Evansville.

While it did not rain, the hot and humid weather made it less than pleasurable to be outside filming. I spent several days walking around parks and playgrounds trying to film people. While the emptiness proved my point that people do not really spend a lot of time outside exercising, I really wanted to at least have some people in my shots or else my audience might think I simply found an empty park and filmed it. After searching three parks, I found enough people to film that I was satisfied and decided to go downtown and film Evansville landmarks to contrast with Denver. I also had my mother drive me around the city so that I could get some substitute driving footage in case I needed it for my travel sequence; we even drove into Kentucky and back so that I could get the “Welcome to Indiana” sign. I knew what footage I had of Denver so I used that to

compile the footage from Indiana in hopes of juxtaposing them together. Again, I was pretty satisfied with the amount of b-roll footage I had gotten of the city itself.

It was a little harder to get footage of Zach because he was working a lot and had already taken days off for the picnic itself. I basically had to interview him on the day of the picnic before everyone else got there. I also interviewed his dad just in case I wanted some family perspective on his diabetes issue, but I realized even as I was interviewing him that I probably would not use his footage since there were no other adults in the film. But I had it just in case I changed the direction of the project.

The picnic went wonderfully, again thanks to the help of Jesus who was travelling through Kentucky at the time of my shoot. He stopped by for an hour, which was just enough to help me out while I interviewed and mingled with people. It was good that we had two cameras because halfway through the filming, his camera overheated and shut off. Plus, the humidity caused some of his footage to be hazy looking. The weather was a major obstacle while filming in Indiana, but luckily I had backup. I was very impressed with the interviews I got from my friends; so many times I found myself nodding in agreement because what they were saying directly related to something I had put in my proposal. I asked them similar questions to those from the Colorado picnic:

Q1: Do you know anyone with diabetes?

Q2: Why do you think there is such a difference between Colorado and Indiana obesity and diabetes rates?

Q3: What do you think is Indiana's food culture?



Q4: How can we try to fix the obesity problem?

All of the people interviewed were from Evansville or surrounding Indiana area, and whereas most people from Colorado did not know anyone with diabetes, almost everyone here knew at least one person with the disease. (Releases for the people interviewed can also be found in Appendix A.)

But it wasn't just the interviews that were going well, the food that people brought was exactly what I expected: heavy, greasy and not healthy. We had a vegetable platter and a bowl of watermelon, but there were also pigs in a blanket, cheesecake bites, cream cheese pinwheels, and cobbler. Plus, it was so miserable outside that everyone was either hiding in the air conditioning or lounging in the pool. The activity level was definitely minimal, and I will be the first to admit that as soon as I turned the camera off, I joined them. I felt confident in the amount of footage I gathered at the Indiana picnic as well, but unfortunately, I did not get a lot of b-roll of Zach outside the picnic. The day before I left to drive home, I filmed him playing tennis at night, but there was no opportunity to film him anywhere else. I was concerned I would not have enough b-roll of him, but I figured I could always film him more over Winter break if needed.

It was nice to have a majority of the filming out of the way. I packed everything up and started the two day journey back to Colorado. Because I was traveling this time, I had the equipment for a total of 18 days. Again, before I returned the equipment, I transferred all the footage to my external and began the long process of logging the footage.

### Proposal Defense

Because I filmed a lot over the summer, I wanted to set up my thesis proposal defense as soon as possible once school started. I compiled a few clips to show to my committee during the defense and hoped that I hadn't wasted a whole summer filming for nothing. Luckily, they liked my idea and passed the idea, making it clear that I might need to go back and shoot more once I started editing. I was elated.

There were a few changes that happened to my initial plan during this proposal defense, though. My plan was to use Kirsten as a counterpart to Zach, comparing a healthy lifestyle to one who was trying to change his unhealthy habits. My own story was present a lot in the proposal because it was what really inspired me to make this film, along with Zach's diagnosis. My committee suggested that I include my personal journey from Indiana to Colorado that changed my lifestyle, but I was uncomfortable putting myself too much in the film. While it was not anything that was going to alter the main part of my film, it meant that I probably was not going to use Kirsten's footage and that I needed to find ways to put myself in the film. They gave me a couple of student films to watch to help inspire me, but once my proposal was approved, I really did not *plan* to work on my project until Winter break.

### Skype Interview

Unfortunately, my plan to delay work on the film until Winter Break was thwarted when I got a text message from Zach in mid-October telling me that he had another fainting spell. We messaged back and forth about his health, but I realized that

this could play a major role in my film. I asked him if we could Skype the next day and record our conversation about his latest episode. I also wanted to get an update on his progress since the summer, and this was a great way to include myself in the film. Because this was going to be over the computer, I did not check out any film equipment; I merely downloaded a screen recording program and used that to record our Skype session.

I did not come up with any questions beforehand because I wanted this to be as natural and casual as possible. I told him what I was going to bring up in conversation just so that he was more comfortable being recorded, but I tried to let the conversation flow naturally. We talked about his latest event, how he had fallen back into bad habits when he was home but was trying to get healthy since he was back at school, and then we talked about how serious diabetes could be. This was probably my favorite thing to film because it was so real and honest, and I thought the audience would really appreciate seeing the human aspect of trying and failing. I felt bad that he had to experience a second attack, but not only was it an interesting turn in my film, I think it really opened his eyes to how he needed to change.

At the time, I was not sure how I was going to work this conversation into the final film, but once again, I thought it would be good to have just in case. I was slightly concerned about the quality of the image and audio, but I put those worries to the side until January.

## Diabetes Walk

Sometime in early October, I learned about a 5K to raise money for Diabetes. I decided I was going to participate because it only seemed too wrong to not support an event that was aimed at reducing diabetes rates. I found a friend to walk it with me, and we started raising money. I had not planned to film this event, it was more for good intentions, but after talking with some professors, I decided it might be a good way to end my film. I asked another student to film me participating in the walk.

It was a beautiful day for a 5K, and with the mountains in the background, this footage could really help me portray my message at the end of the film. I started piecing together the end sequence in my mind; I could use this footage and have a voiceover explaining how diabetes rates were changing and give advice to the audience on how to avoid getting the disease. This film was starting to turn into a PSA for diabetes prevention, and I wasn't sure if that was the direction I wanted to head in.

## Travel Footage and the Paper Edit

Over Winter break, I traveled back home for the holidays. I checked out the Canon Vixia to record some footage of the airport and my flight; again, this was more journey footage just in case. I also brought it along in case something happened with Zach that I wanted to film—always be prepared!

I also created a schedule for myself during this time and aimed to complete a paper edit by the time I returned to Denver in January. I had started the process, but unforeseen medical problems in my family caused me to take a break from the paper edit

until I was back at school. I still had one completed by the first week of classes, so I was not too far behind on my schedule. I showed my paper edit to my adviser, who thought the structure was good, but I still had one more section to film: the statistics section. I had no idea what I was going to show for that part, so I began editing in hopes that something would come to me during the weeks that I would spend putting together the rest of the film.

### Diabetes Statistics

Almost a month later, I had all the other sections from my paper edit put together, and I still did not have an idea for the statistics section. I sat in the lounge and talked about it with anyone who would listen. I knew I wanted to use a map to show the United States and the two states that I was discussing in my film. My nephew had gotten a large puzzle map for Christmas, and my first thought was how great it would work in my film. I spent too much time searching the internet for a cheap, large map puzzle, but eventually found one that met my requirements.

I tossed around ideas of using cars or ice cream trucks to travel between the two states. I could put the diabetes statistics on little road signs that the car would pass as it traveled. I thought about just putting the stats in text. I thought about incorporating my personal weight loss into the travel by showing different stages of my progress with each fact. Then, it came to me that I should use sugar to represent the different rates in each state; perhaps a sugar path from Indiana to Colorado? I bought the map and set up a date to film this section. I used the studio at school and asked another student to film me. I

was going to put myself in this section a lot, in hopes of incorporating my own story into the film in place of Kirsten.

I created two cut-outs of myself, one heavier from Indiana and another after my 50 pound weight loss in Colorado. I wrote down the information I wanted to say in this section, and attempted to film myself saying the information as I put together the map. It did not work out, so instead, we just filmed me putting together the map and used narration for the facts. It was simple, but effective images. I loved the colors of the map and the way the camera captured the sugar falling onto my printed pictures. I was pleased with the way it turned out, and finally I was done filming.

### **Chapter 3: Post-Production Discussion and Actual Production Costs**

#### Rough Cut

The post-production process is probably my least favorite part of the filmmaking procedure. When I was making short music videos in college, I loved editing because I only shot the footage I needed, so there was very little decision-making when it came to piecing together the story. It became clear very quickly that making videos in the professional world was not that simple. During the editing process of my documentary film last year, I discovered that sitting down at an edit bay and searching through hours of footage was not something I enjoyed. I was easily overwhelmed and frustrated, so I wanted to be as prepared as possible before sitting down to edit my thesis film.

I transferred the footage from each shoot separately, but the total amount of time spent transferring was about ten hours. Then, I spent close to five hours going through all of the footage and logging it, including transcribing all of the interviews. While this process was tedious, it really helped me get to know my footage and organize it for the edit. Using my footage log and the comments from my thesis proposal defense, I worked on a paper edit over Winter break that broke down the specific shots and sound bites that I wanted to include in my film. There were many things that changed even just from my

proposal to the paper edit. Originally, I had talked about opening the film with a shot of a bunch of Colorado license plates outside of the picnic juxtaposed with my one Indiana license plate to set up the idea that I was an outsider in this state. I did get a shot similar to this one, but ended up not using it at all. Instead, I decided to open up with Zach to introduce him early in the film, as well as the topic of diabetes. I think this change was vital because it really reflects the overall change of theme that my film underwent throughout the pre-planning process. Instead of opening with the state license plates, which would make the different regions the stars of the film, I opened with Zach, which placed him at the center of the film. The proposal ideas were more revolved around the comparison, which I now know was an empty, impersonal story, and I changed the film to center on people instead of food.

Another change that resulted from this switch of themes was the concept of introducing vegetarianism into the film. Originally, the idea was to tell my story through the picnics, showing how I came to Colorado thinking healthy food was weird and disgusting by having a friend cook strange vegetarian dishes for the Colorado picnic. Then, I would show my transformation by having people try the weird food and enjoy it. The final piece in my story would be showing the tension between me and my friends at the Indiana picnic as I tried to maintain my vegetarian lifestyle in a place where it is not so common. This storyline was cut before I even started filming for several reasons. First of all, I felt that introducing vegetarianism specifically created another storyline in the film that did not need to be there; it crowded the original message of the film, which



is diabetes and obesity. Yes, it conveyed the differences in eating habits between the regions, but the food brought to the picnics showed that message just as effectively. Second, I took this idea out because I was trying to make the film about Zach, not me. Even though I was trying to put myself more in the film, I did not want my story to compete with Zach's so much as to complement it. I felt like I could have made one movie about just my own personal transformation, but that was not this movie.

I feel like even though the film in my proposal and the film created in the paper edit were inspired by the same ideas and personal stories, they ended up being two very different films because of the switch in focus from straight forward food comparisons to Zach's and my own personal struggle with diabetes. And I was definitely happier with the second option so when I returned to school in January, I met with my adviser, Diane Waldman, to discuss my tentative structure for the film. After getting her nod of approval on my paper edit, I created an editing schedule for the following month, hoping to get a rough cut to my committee members by February 7<sup>th</sup>.

My film was basically broken down into five sections, so I decided to tackle one every day. My editing days were Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday. I did not give myself a time limit; I just edited until I finished a section. I started with the simpler sections and worked my way towards the more complicated ones. The first section I edited was the Skype interview with Zach. There were only three clips to work with, so it was really a matter of editing the conversation down to a three minutes clip. The original clip was over twenty minutes long, so I had to decide what parts were important

to the film and how to piece things together. I decided since the audience would be aware that this was recorded on a computer, jump cuts would not be too unexpected. Luckily, neither Zach nor I moved too much within the screen to cause any seriously jarring transitions, so I just placed the clips together based on our conversation.

Originally, I was going to put his text messages across the screen while I was introducing the conversation between Zach and me. I tried typing the messages across the screen. I tried fading the messages up on a black screen. I even thought about getting screen images from my phone and putting those in the film, but there was just too much text, and I did not want people reading too much. Instead, I just used the audio of me reading the messages off my phone. My goal for the length of this section was two and a half to three minutes in length, but it ended up being closer to four minutes. I figured for the rough cut, it was okay to be long since I'm sure things would get cut down as I fine-tuned the project.

The hardest part about editing this section was the beginning part where I move from my talking image into the dual image of me and Zach talking. I had some help in figuring out the best way to transition between the two. I overlaid the image of me talking on the screen shot of my computer desktop as I opened Skype and answered Zach's call. Then I used the motion tool to move my image from full screen to the small square space where my image is during the conversation. I then used motion and a black slug to cover up any discrepancies in the background of the screen. It was slow, tedious

work, but I think the end product looks much more sophisticated than if I just cut between my full screen image and the Skype screen.

The next section I edited together was the introduction of the film. I knew I wanted to use Zach's interview to introduce both him and the subject to the audience. During the interview, I asked him to recount the first time he felt something was wrong and talk about being diagnosed with pre-diabetes. Unfortunately, it was slightly long and one continuous shot, but I hope that the details and honesty of his story really pulls the audience in. This part wasn't too much work, just cutting the clip and recording my voiceover at the end. I wanted to introduce myself a little before the title screen so that people would connect my voice to my image in the next section.

The third section I worked on was the closing segment using the Diabetes Walk footage. I had a lot of shots from this event, but I wanted to use my image again to connect me with the story. I figured this section would be about two minutes long, so I edited the shots together for length. Then I decided what I wanted to say in the voiceover. I decided the audience would want an update on Zach himself, which I also tied into the national statistics change from 2010 to 2011. Both were moves in the right direction, but nothing truly awe-inspiring. I decided to end on a positive note, telling the audience that they need to educate themselves and start the change. I did not want to give some fairytale ending to my film; I wanted there to be a slight push for action as well as positive inspiration through Zach. Because of the shortness of the voiceover, I cut the scene down to a minute taking out mostly clips where I was not present.

The fourth section I worked on is the largest segment of the final film: the cross-cutting scenes between Colorado and Indiana. I broke this section into four separate scenes to be worked on separately. I divided the interviews by location, and then decided what topics would be discussed in each section. I choose to start with Colorado so that I would end with Zach in Indiana. Based on the questions I asked and the answers I received, I broke the audio bits into categories. I would start by having people in Colorado talk about their lifestyle and then have them compare it to the Midwestern lifestyle. This would transition to the Indiana picnic, where people would talk about their lifestyles in Indiana and why they think there is such a difference between the two regions. This would take us back to Colorado, where people would talk about the differences they made when they moved to Colorado, why they think there is such a difference, and what they think people can do to improve the obesity and diabetes rates. Finally, back in Indiana, they would talk about the people they know with diabetes, and how they think we can improve the high rates in Indiana. Since the structures of the picnics were similar, I thought it would be visually interesting to move from picnic to picnic using parallel scenes from each. For example, the first transition from Colorado to Indiana is the opening and closing of a grill, since both picnics included grilling the burgers. The second transition includes the food selections at each picnic and people filling up their plates. The third transition was the different groups of people sitting around tables eating their food. I think these transitions helped show that while both events were based around the same idea, the food selections and activities were quite

different, which is the main emphasis of this segment. In combination with the audio from the people attending the picnics, the images of the picnic and the respective cities reinforce the differing opinions being given about the lifestyles of Colorado and Indiana.

I had the same plan for editing each of these sections of the picnic sequence. I laid out the important audio clips from each person, organized by topic, and then found appropriate b-roll to place over the interview clips. I wanted to show enough of each person talking so that the audience could recognize them in the picnic images, but I also wanted to use a lot of b-roll so that it wasn't all talking heads. Plus, the b-roll images were just as important as the words being said because they visually displayed the differences in food culture, physical activity, and obesity levels between the states.

I tried to make each section around two minutes or less in hopes of keeping this entire sequence under five minutes, but some ended up being closer to three minutes. Again, I figured things would be cut out as I trimmed the fat on the project so I left them longer for now. There were things I struggled with during this edit, mostly pertaining to text. I was not sure whether I should identify each person talking by name or leave them as just faces. I also debated on putting text on the lower third of the screen when the location changed. I decided against both. As far as the names go, there are ten people total being flashed across the screen, so I do not think the audience will remember which names belong to which face anyways. The importance doesn't lie in the person's name, but more where they are from. With the location names, I thought it was clear with the transitions and differing backyards that the location had changed, but this was something

that I was going to need outside advice on. For the rough cut, I left them off but if people were confused, then I would probably add location names in; I just did not want to label the locations if it was obvious they were different.

I also had a difficult time deciding where to put Zach's interview within this section. Obviously, people knew who he was in the picnic footage, but I wanted a good segue between this section and the following conversation between Zach and I. Since he had smaller sound bites, and I did not ask him the same questions that I did everyone else, I decided to lump his interview at the very end of the second Indiana section. This way, he was separated from everyone and his words were the focus of the audience. He tells his family history with diabetes, how he is trying to change and how he is failing to make better decisions. This leads us right into the Skype conversation where he tells us about his second fainting episode.

The last section I edited was the diabetes one. While it was the most problematic to conceptualize, it was fairly easy to put together. I had many ideas on images and text to include in this section, but unfortunately I did not use any of them. I had several newspaper headlines that mentioned Evansville being the most obese metropolitan area, a tweet from Stephen Colbert about the subject, and an opening monologue from *Conan* that talked about America's obesity problem. I had also wanted an opening monologue from *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* that specifically mentioned Evansville, but I could not find it online; I tried emailing the company to get the clip but never heard a response. I gave up on that clip, as well as one from *Everybody Loves Raymond* that talked about

food being the best medicine for any sickness. I was really disappointed about the Jay Leno clip, but I did not end up having use or space for it anyways, so it ended up working out okay.

I had a few issues with continuity while I was putting the puzzle map together since I put the states down in different orders every time, but since I used less than a minute to show the puzzle assembly, it was easy to work around. Similar to the Diabetes Walk section, I edited together the images to the desired length and then wrote a voiceover afterwards. This time the voiceover matched the clips pretty well, so there was not a lot of trimming to do. I spent some time fading the image of “Indiana Keri” next to “Colorado Keri” so that the audience could make a side by side comparison. I think the difference is fairly visible, but I wanted them to be able to really analyze the difference between the two pictures as I say in the voiceover “lost over 50 pounds.” It is an essential part of my story, as well as an important aspect of understanding my criticism of Zach later in the film.

The transition at the end of this section was a last minute decision. Originally, I was just going to fade from the state of Colorado into the start of the picnic clip. I’m not usually a fan of irises or fancy transitions, but I wanted the audience to get the sense that they were moving into the state. The camera zoom was a little shaky, so I thought I could disguise that and enhance the sense of entering the state by adding a custom, oval iris fade. It took some playing around with in motion, but I definitely like the final result. A bad zoom ended in an even more creative way to transition between scenes!

I spent one last day working on this rough cut, mostly adding in the title text box and the scrolling credits at the end. I planned on doing some color correcting and some serious audio work before I even considered calling this a final cut, but my adviser and I decided it was good enough to share with the other committee members. I distributed this rough cut to both Lynn Schofield-Clark and Sheila Schroeder and waited to hear their comments.

### Final Cut

As a person who has taken multiple art classes in my life, I know all too well that, in any creative medium, you can find someone who loves your project and someone who hates it. It is hard to learn when to take someone's advice and when to leave it. It becomes a puzzle, trying to decipher which comments to take and which ones to leave unchanged. And this project was no different.

All of my committee members were amazingly fast at watching my film and getting back to me with comments. I met with some of the members in person to discuss their comments, and then I set out to decide what I was going to change. First, I compiled lists of all the comments each person has suggested and printed them out on paper. I highlighted the comments that were repeated because I figured that those comments probably needed to be changed the most. Then I went through each list and either put a check mark by a comment that I thought would be a positive change or an "x" to symbolize those that I did not think would enhance the film. I also wrote out a reason



why I did not believe that change would be helpful. Then I compiled one master list of all the changes that I was going to make, or at least try out, and set out to edit.

The biggest suggestion I got was to clarify the transitions between the Indiana and Colorado picnics; several people were confused about which location we were in, which was a concern of mine when I first handed out the rough cuts. I'm glad they mentioned this because I did not want to include text if it was already clear, but I also did not want my audience to be confused. To fix this problem, I simply added the name of the location over the first clip of each section.

Another concern of mine was whether or not the Skype conversation between Zach and I was too long and boring. Personally, I thought it was a little long so when I heard back that people agreed, I went back to that section and tried to shorten it a bit. There are a lot of good talking points between Zach and I that I did not want to lose, so it was hard to decide what to cut out. There was a suggestion to space the interview out over the entire film, but I decided that I did not agree with that idea. I wanted to keep the timeline pretty straight forward in this film so the audience knows when this conversation happened in comparison to everything else. In the end, I removed some of the talk about his attack and about his habits in Chicago. The part about his attack was pretty repetitive of his first attack so I cut it shorter, and I took out his talking about his Chicago habits because it was more important to hear him say that he went back to his bad habits at home than to specifically hear what his good habits were in Chicago. Thankfully just

changing these two things cut almost thirty seconds off of that section, and I was happy with the length.

A problem that was brought up by several members was the positioning of some of my b-roll during the picnic sections. I was asked to move some around so that it better corresponded with what was being said, as well as to completely remove some and create b-roll sequences. I am not sure if it is my background in news editing that taught me how to use b-roll, but I had never really used sequences before. I liked the look of most of my b-roll, but I did decide to add three or four b-roll sequences into that section, which added some consistency to my b-roll and allowed me to take out some of the confusing images. Plus, I was told to add breathing room to my interview sound bites and changing around the b-roll allowed me to cover up these spaces pretty easily.

The biggest dilemma I had over comments was deciding whether or not to add more of Zach or myself into the story. It was brought up that there needed to be more personal touches in the film. This meant either shooting more of Zach, which was not really possible, or shooting more of myself and adding in more of my story in narration form. This was one of those suggestions that I had to think about for a bit: was it enhancing my film? Was it creating the story that I wanted to tell? Did I want to do it? There was one sentence that came from the conversation about this comment that led me to consider it. The person said that, as an audience member, she did not really have a reason to care about Zach. While I had not gotten this comment from anyone else, I really wanted to see that my audience cared enough about Zach to listen to his story. I

did not want more of me in there because I felt like I was in there enough. I use my personal story to link the two locations and show a transformation that is possible through fitness and healthy eating. I am there to help Zach talk through his diabetes and help him realize that it is not something to take lightly. I did not want my story to overshadow his. But I did want to show people why they should like Zach. There had been a comment that the introduction section was too long of just Zach talking and to break it up with pictures. I am not a big fan of pictures in a film unless it is for history reference, but luckily for me, my friends and I love to take random videos of ourselves. I changed the introduction section to shorten it up, make it more interesting and give the audience a reason to want Zach to succeed. I found a video from several years ago where Zach is dancing to Britney Spears and falls over laughing at the end and placed it in the middle of his interview. I let him start telling the story of his first incident in the elevator, and then interrupt him with my own voice. I tell the audience how he is the one friend who always makes me laugh and can always be counted on for a good time while they see the video of him dancing. Everybody has that friend who they can act like an idiot with and Zach is mine. Then, as he falls over in the dancing video, it fades back to his interview where he finished his elevator story and tells us he has pre-diabetes. I'm hoping this has the effect I want on audiences because if they do not care about Zach, they will not see his transformation from joking about diabetes to realizing that he has to change or things could get a lot worse.

One change that I thought about making was adding more information about diabetes into the facts section. It was suggested that the disease was not being taken seriously enough in the film and that there was not enough information about symptoms and living with the disease. I originally had compiled a huge list of facts about diabetes, but only chose a few to put in the film because I did not want to bore my audience with too much information. Since most people have a general idea of what the disease is, I wanted them to hear Zach's story and then research it if they had questions or concerns. I was not sure if the film could handle more information without being too wordy or if people had the need to hear more facts. Because I was on the fence, I showed the film to a few other graduate students who had never seen it before. None of them said they really wanted more information on it because it would be too much at once. They said they liked what was there already. This persuaded me to keep the information as it was and hope that people would do the research if they wanted to know more. (I offer the CDC's diabetes website at the end of the film for easy access.)

Finally, the last few changes were to color correct Zach's interview to help reduce the overexposed sky behind him, re-record all of my narration in a sound proof room to help it sound clearer, create the title page and finish up the credits, and finalize the sound mix.

The hardest part about the editing process was not the actual edit itself but figuring out how to take comments. While all of the suggestions I received were good, it was difficult for me to not use someone's suggestion. I felt like if I did not take their

suggestion, I was saying that I did not like it, which is not true. Like I said, they would have enhanced the film, but some were not in line with the story I was trying to tell. I felt like the changes I made helped me tell Zach's story and show the comparison between Indiana and Colorado. The comments I did not use seemed to take the story in a different direction that I did not want. They were turning it into an entirely personal journey documentary, which is never what I wanted. It took enough convincing to get me into the film at all. I appreciate all the help my committee members offered me, and I think that the film turned out great.

### Production Costs

When I wrote the proposal for this project, I created an estimated budget for what I thought the production costs would be. The final projected out-of-pocket budget was \$747.50. That budget included buying food for the picnics, plane tickets to and from Indiana, and gas for driving around Colorado gathering footage. Since the production process changed, the budgeted expenses changed as well. My actual out-of-pocket budget was \$663.43, which was nearly \$100 cheaper than anticipated. The actual budget was as follows:

PRODUCTION	Actual In Kind Contributions (DU & Other)	Actual Out of Pocket Costs
Production Assistant	3 days @ \$150 = \$450	\$0
HPX/FS100	4 weeks @ \$650 = \$2600	\$0
Canon Vixia HFS100	1 week @ \$225 = \$225	\$0
Tripod	4 weeks @ \$120 = \$480	\$0
Shotgun Mic Kit	4 weeks @ \$105 = \$420	\$0
Wireless Lav Kit	4 weeks @ \$30 = \$120	\$0
Wired Lav Kit	4 weeks @ \$45 = \$180	\$0
Mic Cables (2)	4 weeks @ \$50 = \$200	\$0
Light Box	1 day @ \$100 = \$100	\$0
MFJS Studio	1 day @ \$300 = \$300	\$0
<b>Production Totals</b>	<b>\$5075</b>	<b>\$0</b>
POST-PRODUCTION		
Final Cut Pro Editing Suite	58 hrs @ \$75 = \$4350	\$0
<b>Post. Prod Totals</b>	<b>\$4350</b>	<b>\$0</b>
OTHER EXPENSES		
Gas	\$0	\$331.71
Toll	\$0	\$2.50
Hotel (2 nights)	\$186.78	\$0
Food	\$0	\$137.63
Thank You Gift	\$0	\$24.59
New Hard Drive	\$0	\$110
DVDs & sleeves	\$0	\$19.35
Map Puzzle	\$0	\$29.65
Sugar, Toothpicks, Pictures	\$0	\$8
<b>Other Totals</b>	<b>\$186.78</b>	<b>\$663.43</b>
<b>TOTAL COSTS (PROD, POST- PROD, OTHER)</b>	<b>\$9611.78</b>	<b>\$663.43</b>

The biggest change from my projected budget to the actual budget was the fact that I decided to drive back home to Indiana over the summer instead of fly. While that added to the gas budget, it took away the cost of a plane ticket, which helped reduce the budget significantly. It is a little over a thousand miles each way, plus all the driving around I did to gather footage, so I am lucky I have a car that gets good mileage or else my gas budget could have been much higher. In addition, gas prices were fairly low across the country during summer. Another budget helper was that my parents offered to pay for the hotel rooms that I stayed in while driving.

The actual cost of food was close to the projected budget, but the rest went to unexpected items. Since I was filming at other people's houses, I bought "Thank You" gifts for them, which were Edible Arrangement bouquets and flowers. I also had to buy a larger hard drive for this project, so I invested in a Seagate 2 TB so that I would not run out of room while I was filming or editing. I also spent around \$40 on props for the diabetes map section, which was sort of a last minute idea and \$20 on a pack of DVDs and sleeves so that I could share my rough cuts with the committee members.

Overall, I did not realize how much money I had spent until I sat down to calculate my budget. I saved all the receipts from my travels, which made it easy to compile at the end. Seeing the final costs really caught me off guard. Even though I had calculated a budget in the proposal, I never really thought about it as real money coming from my pocket. Realizing that I had spent almost \$1000 of my own money on this film really put everything into perspective. But while I am astonished at the amount I spent

personally, I am even more shocked at the amount that I did not have to spend. My actual in-kind budget was nearly \$10,000. I am amazed at how expensive the camera equipment and editing software are to use and very grateful that the University allows me to use them for free as a student.

While I managed to fall under my projected out-of-pocket budget for this project, it was still a lot of money that, as a student, could have gone to other things like food or housing costs. It was a great learning experience to realize just how much it costs to make a film, even a short documentary like my own. It is not just time and effort a filmmaker puts into his or her film; it's money as well. It is encouraging though because now I can be prepared for all the extra items that may drain the budget as I continue my career in production.



## **Chapter 4: Summary of the Process and Future Projections**

The process of producing and creating *Cultural Diabetes* was a very fun yet frustrating learning experience. When I look back to the proposal for this project, I am amazed at how different the final product turned out, yet I believe the changes created a more personal and entertaining film for audiences. I have never spent this much time working on a project, especially one that I created mostly by myself, so I have a new sense of pride in this project that I've never had before. It taught me that I am capable of making a film in every step of the process and allowed me to really enhance my Final Cut Pro editing skills. It also showed me that I have the ability to troubleshoot problems on shoots and in editing, which is a major skill that will come in handy as I pursue my future in television production.

The original concept for this idea came from the timely diagnosis of Zach with pre-diabetes and the naming of the Diabetes belt, as well as my changing lifestyle and recent interest in food documentaries. These four factors inspired me to create a film that filled the gap created by other food documentaries: diabetes. To fill this hole, I wanted to show how food, and inherently culture, plays a huge part in the onset of type 2 diabetes. Then, I wanted to make the film more about the differences in food culture between

Indiana and Colorado since I had noticed such a change in the type of people I was surrounded by as well as the type of food I was eating. I was going to use Zach and Kirsten as my personal examples from each area, but then I realized that I was trying to tell my story through Kirsten. This realization caused me to insert myself into the film even though I was very against making this an auto-biographical piece. I've never been very comfortable in front of the camera, and most of the documentaries I had watched where the filmmaker put himself or herself on screen just seemed *too* casual or experimental. I guess I was so used to seeing more expository style documentaries that I was trying to stay closer to that way of filming than the others. I thought that when I put myself into the film, it became just another silly homemade movie that no one really saw as film quality. But after much convincing from my committee and even just seeing the reactions from *Right Click*, my film from the documentary series, I began to understand that there are many ways to tell a quality story and people like being able to connect to the person behind the camera. Ultimately, I am happy with my decision to put myself on screen instead of just telling my story through others. I think it helps the audience relate to Zach because they can see us interact with each other as friends, but my presence is not so overpowering as to distract from Zach's story.

This project kept growing and changing each time I narrowed down what I really wanted to say through the film: preventing diabetes can be as easy as changing your eating and exercise habits, but changing those habits can be as difficult as uprooting a one thousand year old tree. It became a story that intertwined my own story with Zach's,

showing how a small change can make all the difference. Even if it inspires no one else, I hope that it gives Zach the extra push to keep working on his lifestyle change and undo the pre-diabetes diagnosis.

That being said, it was hard to make a film about a friend without being too sensitive towards the subject. I informed Zach what this film was about so he knew that he was an example of someone who had bad eating habits and was trying to change, but I still felt very conscious of the images and audio clips I used because I did not want to hurt his feelings. It brought back snippets from the documentary series I took last year about getting to know the subject, but drawing the line between being respectful of their image and being honest to one's own ideas for the film. It was hard for me to make the line because I already had a long history with Zach, but ultimately, I think I created an honest film without overstepping any boundaries that he would feel uncomfortable with.

I think this kind of relationship with the majority of people I was filming also heavily influenced my shooting style. During my proposal defense, all of my committee members expressed disapproval of the hand held camera shots and the exposed microphone cords. I have always been a fan of hand held camera shooting, particularly when the film has a more casual, relaxed feel to it. Because I was filming my friends, I think I subconsciously had that aesthetic in my mind during the shoots because it felt so natural for me to hold the camera myself and talk to my friends. I had the tripod with me every time I went out for a shoot, but I never wanted to use it. Looking back at my footage now, I still stand by my choice. This film does not have a serious, formal feel to

it, and I think the use of hand held is appropriate here to convey the message of two friends trying to fight back against their cultural bad eating habits. I do agree that when shooting interviews, I probably should have put the camera on a tripod because now when I watch documentaries or television shows that employ the hand held aesthetic, I do notice that most interviews are steady. This was something I had never really noticed before, but again, I do not think it is something that detracts from the film. The same thing goes for the exposed microphone cords; it was a very casual setting, and I did not see them as a big distraction. If I were to reshoot, I would probably hide them better, but only because everyone seemed to have a problem with them being visible. I think if I was shooting with a different aesthetic in mind, I might have minded things a little more, but I think for this project, it worked out okay.

Aside from the shooting problems, the biggest technical issue I had while putting the story together was my background in television news production. During my undergraduate career, the majority of production experience came from producing and editing together news packages for our television station. This meant two to three minute packages that were mostly reporter narration and supporting b-roll. It was quick and succinct editing that I had become accustomed to, which made it hard for me to sit down and edit a 15 minute long documentary. I had watched plenty of them before, but sitting down to create one on my own was a whole different story. I kept being told to let the story breathe, and after several times back in the edit bay, I finally came to realize how to achieve a story without constant action or talking. It was a difficult thing to change about

my editing style, but definitely something that I will be better able to do in future endeavors.

Looking back at my proposal for this film, one of the goals was to create a sense of empathy for those struggling with obesity or diabetes. My final film seems to reflect my emerging opinion on people with these diseases: it is not easy, but they can fix the problem. While I do want this film to be more encouraging and motivational than empathetic, I do believe it creates a sense of empathy for people suffering from these problems through Zach's story. My favorite part of the film is when Zach and I are talking through Skype about diabetes. Throughout most of the film, we see Zach smiling and having fun, but this moment is truly one of self-reflection and sadness. When I ask him if he realizes how serious his disease can be, his tone changes to one of someone who has been defeated. He is finally admitting that he needs to make big changes and that he is the only person who can make those changes for himself. He stares off screen with a forlorn expression as I talk about taking diabetes seriously, and in this moment, I hope people see the struggle. While diabetes and weight problems can be fixed, it takes the initiative and confidence to do it, which can be the hardest part. Zach gathers the audience's empathy in this moment because they see that he wants to change, he just doesn't know how at this moment. So while I believe empathy is no longer a main goal for this film, it definitely creates compassion for people suffering from these afflictions. And this is important because I do not want the audience to see Zach, and others with diabetes and obesity problems, as lazy and to blame for their problems. There are so

many factors at work in getting these diseases that people need to understand how difficult it can be to overcome them.

Though I have completed the final cut of my film, I know that this project has not ended for me, Zach or anyone else struggling to beat diabetes. As I mentioned at the end of the film, obesity rates have slightly improved in the last year, but diabetes rates continue to rise. On the positive side, Zach is still continuing to lose weight and trying to eat healthier. There have been more and more news stories about people getting active to try and reverse their weight and health problems. And the recent diagnosis of famous chef Paula Dean with diabetes has led to an abundance of new cooking shows about making lighter meals and healthier options for your family. It's only a few small things, but those can lead to bigger changes in the way America sees and consumes food. I know I will never lose my passion when it comes to eating healthy and staying active, and I plan to keep Zach motivated as much as possible throughout the rest of his journey.

As I stated before, this is not the end of my personal involvement. Even though I do not plan on working on this project after graduation, I do hope to spread its message further than just the end of the year screening at DU. I hope this film inspires people to learn, whether it is about diabetes or their food choices or America's obesity problem. I hope this film connects with people on a personal level and makes them want to get healthy. I do not plan on entering it into any film festivals at this time, but I want to get it up on YouTube for larger exposure. I know that my friends will show their friends and family, which will start a web of audiences that will see my film.

Despite the hardships and frustrations that came along with editing this film, I do plan on continuing work in this field. I came into this program having no idea which part of filmmaking I wanted to have a career in, and now I have narrowed that down to either holding a producer position or working on set as a camera person. I love the process of making films, and if I could work for a company that creates health awareness films or something similar, I would be happy. This project taught me a lot about myself as a person and as a filmmaker that I would never have learned otherwise, and I am thankful for a chance to showcase my strong beliefs about food and health.

We talked a lot about personal journeys throughout the process of my filmmaking. While my documentary certainly contains a little of my personal journey and some of Zach's, I think the biggest journey was the process itself. I learned how to communicate through film my personal ideals in a way that people will want to listen. To me, that is a great accomplishment because I never plan to stop teaching people about their food choices and the effects they can have on their body. I will leave you with a quote from Michael Pollan, the author of *The Omnivore's Dilemma*,

To eat with a fuller consciousness of all that is at stake might sound like a burden, but in practice few things in life can afford quite as much satisfaction. By comparison, the pleasures of eating industrially, which is to say eating in ignorance, are fleeting (11).

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**Appendix A:  
Subject Release Forms**

**The University of Denver  
The Department of Mass Communication and Journalism  
Release Agreement**

For consideration, mutually agreed upon, the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, I \_\_\_\_\_ hereby give the University of Denver and its agents, representatives, successors assigns, all persons acting with its permission or upon its authority, and all persons for whom it is acting (hereinafter referred to as "PHOTOGRAPHER"), the absolute right and unrestricted permission to copyright and/or use, and/or publish photographic portraits or pictures of me (still, single, multiple or moving) or in which I may be included in whole or in part, or composite, or distorted in character or form, in conjunction with my own or another fictitious name, or reproductions thereof, made through any media at its studios or elsewhere for purposes of art, broadcast, advertising, trade or any other lawful purpose whatsoever.

I also relinquish, give and assign to photographer all right, title, and interest I may have in the finished pictures (still, single, multiple or moving), negatives, reproduction and copies of original master tape/prints and footage/negatives and hereby waive any rights which I have now or may have in the future in this regard; and, further, grant him/her the right to give, transfer and exhibit the master tape/original prints, footage/negatives or copies and facsimiles thereof, to any responsible individual, broadcast firm, or publication, or to any of their assignees.

I hereby waive any and all rights that I may have to inspect and approve the finished product or the advertising copy that may be used in connection therewith, or the use to which it may be applied.

I hereby release, discharge, and agree to indemnify and hold harmless photographer, its nominees or others for whom photographer is acting from any liability by virtue of any use whatsoever, whether intentional or otherwise, that may occur or be produced in the taking of said picture/footage, or in any processing tending towards the completion of the finished product, unless it can be shown that said reproduction was maliciously cause, produced and published for the sole purchase of subjecting me to conspicuous ridicule, scandal, reproach, scorn and/or indignity.

**I HAVE READ THE FORGOING RELEASE AND FULLY UNDERSTAND IT.**

Agreed to this 7/9/2011 day of July,

(Signature) X \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

**The University of Denver**  
**The Department of Mass Communication and Journalism**  
**Release Agreement**

For consideration, mutually agreed upon, the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, I \_\_\_\_\_ hereby give the University of Denver and its agents, representatives, successors assigns, all persons acting with its permission or upon its authority, and all persons for whom it is acting (hereinafter referred to as "PHOTOGRAPHER"), the absolute right and unrestricted permission to copyright and/or use, and/or publish photographic portraits or pictures of me (still, single, multiple or moving) or in which I may be included in whole or in part, or composite, or distorted in character or form, in conjunction with my own or another fictitious name, or reproductions thereof, made through any media at its studios or elsewhere for purposes of art, broadcast, advertising, trade or any other lawful purpose whatsoever.

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**I HAVE READ THE FORGOING RELEASE AND FULLY UNDERSTAND IT.**

Agreed to this 9<sup>th</sup> day of 2011,

(Signature) X [Signature]

Address 8066 E. Colfax Ave

Denver CO 80231

Telephone 605-263-0605

**The University of Denver  
The Department of Mass Communication and Journalism  
Release Agreement**

For consideration, mutually agreed upon, the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, I Laurel Stacy hereby give the University of Denver and its agents, representatives, successors assigns, all persons acting with its permission or upon its authority, and all persons for whom it is acting (hereinafter referred to as "PHOTOGRAPHER"), the absolute right and unrestricted permission to copyright and/or use, and/or publish photographic portraits or pictures of me (still, single, multiple or moving) or in which I may be included in whole or in part, or composite, or distorted in character or form, in conjunction with my own or another fictitious name, or reproductions thereof, made through any media at its studios or elsewhere for purposes of art, broadcast, advertising, trade or any other lawful purpose whatsoever.

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**I HAVE READ THE FORGOING RELEASE AND FULLY UNDERSTAND IT.**

Agreed to this 9 day of 2011,

(Signature) X Laurel Stacy

Address 4217 S Pennsylvania St

Englewood, CO 80113

Telephone 303 547-0276

**The University of Denver  
The Department of Mass Communication and Journalism  
Release Agreement**

For consideration, mutually agreed upon, the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, Emily William hereby give the University of Denver and its agents, representatives, successors assigns, all persons acting with its permission or upon its authority, and all persons for whom it is acting (hereinafter referred to as "PHOTOGRAPHER"), the absolute right and unrestricted permission to copyright and/or use, and/or publish photographic portraits or pictures of me (still, single, multiple or moving) or in which I may be included in whole or in part, or composite, or distorted in character or form, in conjunction with my own or another fictitious name, or reproductions thereof, made through any media at its studios or elsewhere for purposes of art, broadcast, advertising, trade or any other lawful purpose whatsoever.

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**I HAVE READ THE FORGOING RELEASE AND FULLY UNDERSTAND IT.**

Agreed to this 9 day of July 2011

(Signature) X Emily William

Address 4217 S. Pennsylvania St

Englewood CO 80113

Telephone 720-987-6599



**The University of Denver  
The Department of Mass Communication and Journalism  
Release Agreement**

For consideration, mutually agreed upon, the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, I \_\_\_\_\_ hereby give the University of Denver and its agents, representatives, successors assigns, all persons acting with its permission or upon its authority, and all persons for whom it is acting (hereinafter referred to as "PHOTOGRAPHER"), the absolute right and unrestricted permission to copyright and/or use, and/or publish photographic portraits or pictures of me (still, single, multiple or moving) or in which I may be included in whole or in part, or composite, or distorted in character or form, in conjunction with my own or another fictitious name, or reproductions thereof, made through any media at its studios or elsewhere for purposes of art, broadcast, advertising, trade or any other lawful purpose whatsoever.


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**I HAVE READ THE FORGOING RELEASE AND FULLY UNDERSTAND IT.**

Agreed to this 30 day of July.

(Signature) X 

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_



**The University of Denver  
The Department of Mass Communication and Journalism  
Release Agreement**

For consideration, mutually agreed upon, the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, I Maria Key hereby give the University of Denver and its agents, representatives, successors assigns, all persons acting with its permission or upon its authority, and all persons for whom it is acting (hereinafter referred to as "PHOTOGRAPHER"), the absolute right and unrestricted permission to copyright and/or use, and/or publish photographic portraits or pictures of me (still, single, multiple or moving) or in which I may be included in whole or in part, or composite, or distorted in character or form, in conjunction with my own or another fictitious name, or reproductions thereof, made through any media at its studios or elsewhere for purposes of art, broadcast, advertising, trade or any other lawful purpose whatsoever.

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**I HAVE READ THE FORGOING RELEASE AND FULLY UNDERSTAND IT.**

Agreed to this 30<sup>th</sup> day of July,

(Signature) X Maria Key

Address 701 N. Keith Ave  
Evansville, IN 47711

Telephone 812-483-1444

**The University of Denver**  
**The Department of Mass Communication and Journalism**  
**Release Agreement**

For consideration, mutually agreed upon, the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, I Stephane Michel hereby give the University of Denver and its agents, representatives, successors assigns, all persons acting with its permission or upon its authority, and all persons for whom it is acting (hereinafter referred to as "PHOTOGRAPHER"), the absolute right and unrestricted permission to copyright and/or use, and/or publish photographic portraits or pictures of me (still, single, multiple or moving) or in which I may be included in whole or in part, or composite, or distorted in character or form, in conjunction with my own or another fictitious name, or reproductions thereof, made through any media at its studios or elsewhere for purposes of art, broadcast, advertising, trade or any other lawful purpose whatsoever.

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**I HAVE READ THE FORGOING RELEASE AND FULLY UNDERSTAND IT.**

Agreed to this 7/30/2011 day of \_\_\_\_\_,

(Signature) X

Stephane Michel

Address

4100 Cowland Dr

Newburgh, IN 47030

Telephone

(317) 598-8257

**The University of Denver  
The Department of Mass Communication and Journalism  
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**I HAVE READ THE FORGOING RELEASE AND FULLY UNDERSTAND IT.**

Agreed to this 30<sup>th</sup> day of July,

(Signature) X \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

**The University of Denver  
The Department of Mass Communication and Journalism  
Release Agreement**

For consideration, mutually agreed upon, the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, I Zachary Bame hereby give the University of Denver and its agents, representatives, successors assigns, all persons acting with its permission or upon its authority, and all persons for whom it is acting (hereinafter referred to as "PHOTOGRAPHER"), the absolute right and unrestricted permission to copyright and/or use, and/or publish photographic portraits or pictures of me (still, single, multiple or moving) or in which I may be included in whole or in part, or composite, or distorted in character or form, in conjunction with my own or another fictitious name, or reproductions thereof, made through any media at its studios or elsewhere for purposes of art, broadcast, advertising, trade or any other lawful purpose whatsoever.

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**I HAVE READ THE FORGOING RELEASE AND FULLY UNDERSTAND IT.**

Agreed to this 30th day of July.

(Signature) X [Signature]

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_



**The University of Denver  
The Department of Mass Communication and Journalism  
Release Agreement**

For consideration, mutually agreed upon, the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, I Amanda Cox hereby give the University of Denver and its agents, representatives, successors assigns, all persons acting with its permission or upon its authority, and all persons for whom it is acting (hereinafter referred to as "PHOTOGRAPHER"), the absolute right and unrestricted permission to copyright and/or use, and/or publish photographic portraits or pictures of me (still, single, multiple or moving) or in which I may be included in whole or in part, or composite, or distorted in character or form, in conjunction with my own or another fictitious name, or reproductions thereof, made through any media at its studios or elsewhere for purposes of art, broadcast, advertising, trade or any other lawful purpose whatsoever.

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**I HAVE READ THE FORGOING RELEASE AND FULLY UNDERSTAND IT.**

Agreed to this 30 day of July,

(Signature) X Amanda Cox

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

**The University of Denver  
The Department of Mass Communication and Journalism  
Release Agreement**

For consideration, mutually agreed upon, the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, I Emily Hays hereby give the University of Denver and its agents, representatives, successors assigns, all persons acting with its permission or upon its authority, and all persons for whom it is acting (hereinafter referred to as "PHOTOGRAPHER"), the absolute right and unrestricted permission to copyright and/or use, and/or publish photographic portraits or pictures of me (still, single, multiple or moving) or in which I may be included in whole or in part, or composite, or distorted in character or form, in conjunction with my own or another fictitious name, or reproductions thereof, made through any media at its studios or elsewhere for purposes of art, broadcast, advertising, trade or any other lawful purpose whatsoever.

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**I HAVE READ THE FORGOING RELEASE AND FULLY UNDERSTAND IT.**

Agreed to this \_\_\_\_\_ day of 7/30/11,

(Signature) X \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_