



Factual Fictions

*An Investigation into Audience Understandings of
Documentary*

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to investigate audience understandings of documentary. A review of the relevant literature was carried out on the areas of: the Evolution of Documentary; Subjectivity, Objectivity and Truth; Reality TV; and Audience Research. A survey was also conducted on 200 participants from Mary Immaculate College, Limerick in order to discover their views on documentary. The main findings showed that the majority of participants thought that the dictionary definition of documentary was an adequate descriptor of it. They also thought that while documentaries may be factual they are not necessarily truthful and that they should include a level of objectivity and balance. Further qualitative and extended quantitative research in this area in relation to the discernment of audiences' definition of documentary and its related terms: objectivity, subjectivity, truth, fact, and balance, is recommended in order to come to a fully contemporary definition of what documentary is from an audience perspective. Audience involvement in future redefinitions of this area should also be crucial. An accompanying documentary film which works as an appendix to the thesis was also made based on the research generated from the thesis.

Declaration

College: Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick

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Degree: Master of Arts by Research and Production

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Declaration: I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and that it does not contain the work of any other individual. All sources that have been consulted have been identified and acknowledged in the appropriate way.

Signature of Candidate: _____

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Signature of Supervisor: _____

Nicky Fennell

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I would like to acknowledge a number of people for all their help in completing this project.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 What is Documentary?

The term ‘documentary’ is a contentious subject. Because of its claims to truthfulness and its constant reinvention (Ellis, 2005) there always seems to be some litigious argument surrounding films or programmes made under this banner. This may be because there is no clear definition of what exactly makes something a documentary and “(n)ames come with expectations” (Aufderheide, 2007:4).

The definition of documentary has always proven problematic. This may in part be due to the fine line it walks between science and aesthetics (Renov, 1993). The first definition was given by John Grierson as “the creative treatment of actuality” which still stands as the most accepted definition to date (Saunders, 2010). This may be because “even though documentary has evolved continuously from its inception, its purview and methods remain ambiguous, and its parameters keep enlarging” (Rabiger, 2004: 4), therefore a definition which can incorporate these evolutions might be seen as the most beneficial. However, while suitably vague enough to incorporate those elements, it is also vague enough to allow for contention, as such a definition allows for almost anything that is based on reality in some form to be called a documentary: “Every film is a documentary ... (as it) gives evidence of the culture that produced it” (Nichols, 2001: 1).

Aufderheide (2007:2) tells us that a documentary is a “film (that) tells a story about real life with claims to truthfulness”, and that this is part of the problem surrounding the genre as they are stories *about* real life and not real life itself. According to Ellis (2005:342), “(d)ocumentaries are constructs, yet they seek to reveal the real without mediation”, which involves (for both the viewer and the makers) reaching beyond this artifice to find the “authentic self beyond”. From this we could deduce that documentaries are attempts to engage with reality through a fictionalising medium in order to portray a truth or truths about this reality. This appears to a paradox.

Fergusson (2006:54) defines documentary as “an engagement with an audio-visual film production of insight into a real subject”. However, while on the surface this definition appears adequate it does not address the issues of truth and reality which are “essential ingredients” in documentary (ibid: 47).

The definition of documentary in the Oxford English Dictionary is “using pictures or interviews with people involved in real events to provide a factual report on a particular subject” (Oxford Dictionaries(e), n.d.). This, again, on the surface appears to describe what you see when you watch most documentaries, but it does not cover all of them, for instance, films which are overtly skewed to a certain viewpoint, (e.g. Michael Moore’s renowned documentaries), or animated films such as Folman’s *Waltz with Bashir*¹ (2008), which was more concerned more so with the experiences of the veterans than the facts of the war. Also in opposition to this are films like *Zeitgeist*² (Joseph, 2007). The film’s argument is dependent on the notion that documentaries reveal truth and fact, but provides incorrect information or misleadingly construes the correct information in order to convince the audience of his point of view. The dictionary definition however is the one that most people would be familiar with. Therefore it is essential that the most available definition is the one that most accurately describes what a documentary is for its audience, so that people know what to expect from it:

“Audience expectations are also built on prior experience; viewers expect not to be tricked and lied to. We expect to be told things about the real world, things that are true”

Aufderheide (2007: 3)

Plantinga (2005) reveals that the audiences’ response to documentary is integral to its definition. “People *do* expect of documentary that it is intended to offer a reliable account of, argument about, or analysis of some element of the actual world” (ibid:112 original emphasis). He believes there is some confusion between the terms documentary and nonfiction. Documentary can be seen as a sub-set of nonfiction, but not all nonfiction is necessarily documentary. It is possible that audience members are not

making this distinction and perhaps having unrealistic expectations of the genre. It would be important therefore for the audience to be aware of this distinction by defining what exactly makes a documentary.

Academics believe that audience expectations do have an impact on how documentary is defined: “(d)ocumentary is defined and redefined over the course of time, both by makers and by viewers” (Aufderheide, 2007: 2). Saunders (2010) claims that part of what makes something a documentary is the way in which the audience member watches it. Despite this, research into audience perspectives on documentaries is limited, particularly in Ireland³. I believe quantitative and qualitative questioning of an audience about their expectations for documentary and then using that data to inform a new definition of documentary would be the most appropriate way to classify what exactly makes something a documentary. This thesis will act as a stepping stone on that journey of discovery by looking at how an Irish audience perceives documentary.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

There are three main aims and objectives to this research. The first is to examine what constitutes documentary in modern society through an assessment of the chronological history of documentary, as well as the appraisal of principal contemporary concepts, debates and controversies in modern academic discourse. The second is to analyse the perceptions of documentary held by the Irish audience, a sample of which will be recruited from Mary Immaculate College, Limerick City, through the utilization of quantitative methodologies (a questionnaire) in accordance with the terms and requirements of the Mary Immaculate College Ethics Committee (MIREC). The third objective is to make a documentary film about the aforementioned research which will work both as a standalone document and as an appendix to the thesis but will also have the purpose of both making the research more accessible to the general public and as a teaching aid for media students. It will be made by conducting filmed, semi-structured interviews with documentarists and members of the Irish audience. It will also use information from the thesis to provide a narrative for the results of the thesis to be presented, and any other necessary visuals shall also be filmed.

1.3 Literature Review

This section will give an overview of the literature and sources used for the subsequent chapters: the evolution of documentary; subjectivity, objectivity and truth; reality TV; and audience research. It will also give a brief synopsis of the sources used in the accompanying documentary film. It was decided at the outset, that wherever possible recent publications would be used as primary sources in order to provide the most up to date information, however there are three seminal works in the area worthy of mention: *Theorizing Documentary* - a collection of works compiled by Michael Renov (1993), *The Art of Record: Critical Introduction to Documentary* (Corner, 1996) and *Introduction to Documentary* (Nichols, 2001). When first approaching the study of documentary, these books provide a formative introduction. When first approaching the study of documentary, these books provided a formative introduction and grounding in the key theories, although they are not used as core references in the dissertation.

The Evolution of Documentary

For the chapter on the evolution of the documentary, a number of sources were read, however the following were found to be the most useful: *Film History: An Introduction* by Thompson and Bordwell (2003), *Documentary Film* by Patricia Aufderheide (2007) and *Routledge Film Guide: Documentary* by Dave Saunders (2010). While *Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film* (1974) by Erik Barnouw is a corner stone resource in non-fiction history, it was not used as a core reference in this work as it does not go in depth into the arguments presented here.

Film History: An Introduction discusses the history of film from its inception to the time of print (2003). As such, it is a suitable starting point for the beginnings of this research. The chapters deal chronologically with the various movements in film, including specific chapters on documentary: *Leftist, Documentary and Experimental*

Cinemas 1930-1945, Documentary and Experimental Cinema in the Postwar Era; 1945 – Mid – 1960s; Documentary and Experimental Film Since the Late 1960s. These chapters give a broad overview of the movements in documentary during these periods in a global context. In this book, the authors investigate how documentary has changed over time, and how the production and distribution of documentary has evolved during this period alongside its international trends (Thompson and Bordwell, 2003). The scope of this book was limited, however, in that it only covered a particular period of documentary history (1930s to 1980s).

Documentary Film: A Very Short Introduction, written by Patricia Aufderheide, was published in 2007 and provides a very concise thematic history of documentary. The book has been described as a “vivid survey” of “identity, history, evolution, and major controversies” in documentary (Amazon, n.d.). Aufderheide begins her review by addressing the issue of definition.

“What is documentary? One easy traditional answer is: not a movie... Except when it *is* a theatrical movie ... a movie that isn't fun, a serious movie, something that tries to teach you something – except when it's something like Stacy Peralta's *Riding Giants* (2004) ... a movie about real life. And that is precisely the problem; documentaries are *about* real life; they are not real life...a movie that does its best to represent real life and that doesn't manipulate it, and yet, there is no way to make a film without manipulating the information... A documentary film tells a story about real life, with claims to truthfulness.”

(Aufderheide, 2007: 1-2)

She discusses how it came to be named, the importance of that name, and how a documentary can be identified. She introduces us to the three figures she cites as the founders of documentary: Robert Flaherty, John Grierson and Dziga Vertov. Finally she discusses what could be considered to be one of the most momentous movements in documentary – the Direct Cinema/Cinema Verité movement, before discussing documentary in more depth at a sub-genre and categorisation level. A number of issues in documentary practice are alluded to in this evaluation: Ethics⁴, Accuracy, Truth, Categorisation, and Subjectivity/Objectivity.

A more in-depth discussion of documentary history is provided by the *Routledge Film Guidebooks: Documentary* by Dave Saunders (2010). It begins by examining the definition of documentary, its purpose, and its major movements.

“Partly what makes a film a documentary, it must be said, is the way the viewer (or spectator) watches it. The way we look at, react to, and anticipate a film, crucially, has a bearing on how ‘real’ we perceive it to be... we should perhaps take documentary to mean a ‘mode’ of filmmaking, as opposed to a style or genre”

(Saunders, 2010: 14-15)

It then goes into more detail on specific documentaries which it identifies as being influential. These case studies highlight the need to explore the area of hybrid documentaries, and problems with defining the genre, in addition to the aforementioned issues.

Secondary reading which provided some useful historical backdrop for this chapter included: *New Documentary* by Stella Bruzzi (2000), *The Documentary Handbook* by Peter Lee-Wright (2010) and *Documentary: Witness and Self-revelation* by John Ellis (2012). A useful tertiary source was also the Internet Movie Database which was invaluable for discovering the production details endnoted on many of the documentaries mentioned in this chapter.

Subjectivity, Objectivity and Truth

The debate surrounding subjectivity and objectivity and truth in documentary is extensive. *Issues in Contemporary Documentary* by Jane Chapman (2009) conducts an in-depth exploration of this debate, establishing early on that; “Documentaries can be seen as either objective or subjective attempts at uncovering the truth” (Chapman, 2009: 70). However she does argue that it is possible for subjectivity and objectivity to co-exist in the same film, but this is dependent on the filmmaker’s view of his or her subject.

Michael Whitney Van Laanan puts forward a similar idea in his thesis *The Pose of Neutrality in Social Documentary Films* (2010). He accepts that while there is subjectivity in the selective production process of documentary, it may also be possible to have levels of objectivity in regards to the subject being dealt with in the film which can aid both documentarists and audience members in their pursuit of truth.

“I disagree ... that absolute objectivity is possible within documentary film. However, I believe that there are levels of objectivity that can be applied to nonfiction films. I hold to the belief that the interplay of the objective/subjective dichotomy is in actuality just one more tool available in the filmmaker’s toolbox”

(Van Laanan, 2010: 19)

Latson in *The REALity of Ethics in Documentary Editing and Reality Television Documentaries* (2003) explains that while documentary production is subjective this does not give documentarists carte blanche to make un-realities of documentary footage.

“(D)ocumentary film... will usually lead to a distortion of the event, whether it is intentional or not. This distortion could lead to a misrepresentation of the subjects in the documentary ... But editing is a necessary process in order to form the footage into something presentable ... ethics standards should be applied, or at least considered, by the filmmakers and editors when cutting footage”

(Latson, 2003: 3)

While this thesis concentrates primarily on the universal context of documentary, two specific films were also relevant to this chapter: *The Pipe* (O’ Domhnaill, 2010) and *The Shame of the Catholic Church* (Miller, 2012). *The Pipe* is a subjective observational piece about the plight of a community in Co. Mayo. It highlights the importance of documentary’s claims to search for truth and the deliberation over subjectivity and objectivity. We can sometimes be uncritical of emotive documentaries and *The Shame*

of the Catholic Church emphasises the effect documentary's truth claims can have on the actions of the audience members⁵.

The pursuit of truth is addressed in Spence and Navarro's *Crafting Truth* (2011). We expect to learn from documentaries, and as such, we trust in them to reveal the truth of the issue and be accurate in their portrayal of the facts. Butchart's *On Ethics and Documentary: A Real and Actual Truth* (2006) reminds us that audience expectations are indeed crucial to documentary and so documentaries should follow through on the truth claims they make. Williams argues in *Mirrors Without Memories: Truth, History, and the New Documentary* (2005), for a postmodern truth where we illuminate the lies in documentary as opposed to the truth.

Other author's which provided secondary information on the topic included: Aufderheide (2007), Ellis (2012), Rabiger (2004), Sparkes (2010), and Rodriguez-Mangual (2008).

Reality TV

It was determined it would be appropriate to look into the issue of hybrid documentary as this seems to be an area of confusion for audiences. The hybrid which was chosen for this is Reality TV due to it being a relatively new genre and also because of the negative impact it is perceived to have on documentary. Three authors were of particular assistance in discovering the issues at large in this genre: Andrejevic (2004), Pozner (2009), and Hill (2005).

Reality TV: The Work of Being Watched written by Mark Andrejevic (2004), traces the origins of reality television from its documentary roots, and highlights some important points relating to its definition and appeal to viewers.

“(T)he rather loosely defined genre of reality TV has continued its rapid growth, as demonstrated by the fact that at the close of 2002, the genre was still going strong ... No longer an off-season summer phenomenon, reality TV has become a dominant prime-time programming staple, easily dominating the ratings in many of the most coveted time slots.”

(Andrejevic, 2004: 7)

Jennifer Pozner in *Reality BITES Back: The Troubling Truth About Guilty Pleasure TV* (2009), while also addressing these issues, in addition raises the issue of manipulation through editing in reality television programmes and where it has been used irresponsibly.

“Many of us are aware that reality shows play fast and loose with context and editing. We know they’re at least somewhat ‘fake’. That knowledge doesn’t stop us from passing judgement about the behaviour and personalities of the people who appear on reality TV”

(Pozner, 2009: 23)

Reality TV: Audiences and Popular Factual Television by Annette Hill (2005) considers these subjects from an audience perspective and argues that audience input on these matters is invaluable when deliberating on these issues.

“Reality TV is a catch-all category that includes a wide range of entertainment programmes about real people. Sometimes called popular factual television, reality TV is located in border territories, between information and entertainment, documentary and drama ... It is commonly assumed that audiences cannot tell the difference between entertainment and information, or fiction and reality in popular television. With such concern regarding audiences and reality TV it is necessary to explore the development of this genre, and audience relationships with these types of popular factual output.”

(Hill, 2005: 2)

Other prominent authors who supplemented information for the chapter on the history of Reality TV and the various disputes surrounding it include: Latson (2003), Lee-

Wright (2010), Weber (2009), O'Connor (2007), Bruzzi (2006), Nabi (2007), Papacharissi and Mendelson (2007), and Skeggs and Wood (2008).

Audience Research

The final literary chapter of this thesis deals with audience research. Schroder, Drotner, Kline, & Murray (2003) in *Researching Audiences* and Luers (2007) in *Web 2.0 and Audience Research: An Analysis Focusing on the Concept of Involvement* outline the history of audience research movements as well as the various methods which can be used to conduct audience research including both qualitative and quantitative methodologies.

Barrie Gunter goes into more detail specifically on survey research in *Media Research Methods* (2000). Kelly & O'Connor (1997) in *Media Audiences in Ireland* review the audience research which had been conducted to date.

“We have collected the existing qualitative research in audiences in one volume and are thus making available research findings which explore the rich cultural terrain at the interface between media, power and the subcultural discourses and identities of a wide range of audiences”

(Kelly & O'Connor, 1997: 3)

Only two of these studies were of particular relevance: Kelly's research on the *Right to Learn* programme and O'Neill's study on *The Arts Show*⁶.

Two international documentary audience studies which were identified were Austin's (2005) study on *Etre et Avoir* (2002) and Hardy's (2008) longitudinal study on documentary audiences in Spain, Austria, the Netherlands and the UK. These studies found issues in the audiences' perception of documentary in regards to: definition, truth claims, authenticity, purpose, and confusion surrounding hybrid documentaries. Other secondary works which augmented this chapter include: Chapman (2009), Jensen (1991), Devereux (2007), O'Neill & Titley (2011) and O'Connor (2007).

There were numerous websites (referenced in the bibliography) which were also invaluable for providing extra information to illustrate the arguments made in each of the chapters, including Oxford Dictionaries.com for providing definitions of terms used in this thesis. The next section of this chapter will deal with the methodology of the survey conducted as part of this thesis.

Factual Fictions: The Documentary

There were many sources used in the construction of the documentary film which accompanies this thesis. Primarily it utilises interviews with 4 sets of interviewees: Sunniva O’Flynn (Curator at the Irish Film Institute), Ross Whitaker (a documentary filmmaker), Anna Rodgers (a documentary director and producer), and finally, Alan McAuliffe and Ciara Younge (Postgraduate Students in Mary Immaculate College). The film is constructed using the points made by these interviewees which supported the overall argument made in this thesis. The film also incorporates a presenter/voice over to relay background information, as well as the results and main arguments made in this study. This was performed by Mary McDonnell. Finally, it makes use of supporting footage and music sourced from the internet.

1.4 Methodology

There are a number of concurrent approaches undertaken in this study. It aims to examine the pre-existing body of work on documentary theory relevant to the themes I have chosen to examine and to relate my analysis of these sources to the results produced from a quantitative survey which I have conducted concurrently on Irish audiences and documentary. These findings will also be presented in the format of a documentary film which will act as a learning tool for other students interested in researching this area. Details of this along with a DVD of the film can be found in the appendix.

Examining the current theories in relation to documentary will provide a focus for the thesis, and enable me to explore what the contemporary concerns are for documentary theorists. This will be based on the literature review conducted in the previous section. I intend firstly to examine both the history of documentary and its key movements before exploring specific areas of debate or controversy in more depth. These areas will then be discussed in relation to the results from the survey section of the research.

Audience research will be discussed in more detail in a later chapter. However it is important to note that there has been relatively little research of this kind conducted in Ireland on documentary (Kelly & O'Connor, 1997). This is one of the primary purposes of conducting this investigation: to contribute to and enhance the current body of work in this area. This is also the reasoning behind conducting a quantitative study: to give an overview of the general perceptions of the audience on the issues, which may be later developed in further research through mixed mode or qualitative methods. Of the various forms of quantitative designs, a survey strategy was chosen. The benefit of choosing this is that it allows the researcher to look at quite a large number of quantifiable data from one point in time in order to discern any patterns of association (Bryman, 2001).

The questions selected for the questionnaire were chosen in order to elucidate audience views on the following areas:

- ❖ The definition of what documentary is
- ❖ The categorisation of film sub-genres as part of the documentary genre
- ❖ The categorisation of specific television programmes and films as documentaries
- ❖ Subjectivity, objectivity, truth, balance and the purpose documentary fulfils for the viewer

These areas were chosen so as that they could be both looked at individually but also compared to each other in order to give a comprehensive view of the respondents' opinions. The purpose of a survey is "to observe, find patterns, map and understand everyday use of various media, *in real time across a number of people in space* ... it is necessary – because we wish to obtain results that are generalizable to a larger population" (Schroder et al, 2003: 173, original emphasis), and it was for this reason that this format was chosen.

The purpose of this questionnaire was to explore what audiences believe documentary to be. Theorists (for instance Brian Winston) claim that audience members are aware that not all documentaries are objective and factual and this study aims to examine whether or not this is the case. The questionnaire followed the Mary Immaculate College Ethical Committee's (MIREC) rules for questionnaire administration and was approved by it before implementation.

The participants were recruited through self-selection methods. "A sample is self-selected when the inclusion or exclusion of sampling units is determined by whether the units themselves agree or decline to participate in the sample, either explicitly or implicitly" (Sterba & Foster, 2008). Participants were recruited from Mary Immaculate College, Limerick City. A target sample size of 200 was chosen as according to Schroder et al (2003: 191) "A customary sample size for academic study is 100 ... (however) Precision increases steadily for samples up to 200 in size, but after that point there is a more modest gain in the margin of error." There were 207 in total but some of the questionnaires were incorrectly filled out so this number was reduced to 200, with 140 females and 60 males responding. Other demographic considerations included: age,

education status and whether they had ever watched a documentary. Figures for these questions can be seen in the Results section of the thesis.

The questionnaire (see Appendix) was a self-completion paper survey, filled in by pen with the interviewer present as described below. The first section gathered demographic information on the participant, for example: age, gender and education. The second section dealt with their definition of documentary, how frequently they watch it and how knowledgeable they feel they are on the subject.

The third section dealt with sub-genres of documentary. The participants were asked to rate on a Likert scale of 1-5 (1 being strongly agree and 5 being strongly disagree) whether they perceived this sub-genre to be a type of documentary.⁷ The fourth section was similar to the previous section in that it used a Likert scale also, with the scale running from 1-6 this time (1 being strongly agree, 5 being strongly disagree and 6 being unfamiliar with the programme). However in this section they were asked to rate specific films or television programmes as to the likelihood of them being a documentary. The website *Entertainment.ie* was used as a source for listings of television programmes currently being shown on television, and internet searches were used to discover other well-known documentary programmes and films. The sub-genres and programmes used in these sections were all selected because they could technically all be perceived to be forms of documentary, or in the case of current affairs programmes, have documentary segments.

Section 5 contained a list of statements and asked the participants whether they agreed or disagreed with them, working off the same scale as used in the previous sections. It also contained questions with which the respondents had the options of answering yes, somewhat, not at all, and don't know. These statements and questions all dealt with the issues of objectivity, subjectivity, truth and balance in documentary. The questionnaire was ended with an open ended question asking what purpose documentary provides for the participant.

The questionnaire was administered to participants by the researcher. They were given the information sheet and consent form before administration (see Appendices for information sheet and consent form). Once the information sheet was read and the consent form signed the participants were assured that they could withdraw without penalty from the study at any time and the questionnaire was handed to them. The researcher was on hand for any questions. Once completed the questionnaire was collected by the researcher and the debriefing form given to the participants (see Appendices for debriefing form). The questionnaire answers was analysed using “SPSS” - a statistics package software. Due to the aforementioned chosen sampling procedure inferential statistics tests could not be conducted. Therefore descriptive statistical tests including crosstabulations, and frequencies were used and will be reported using tables and graphs in the Results chapter. All data protection guidelines for the storing of data have been and will continue to be implemented in order to assure the anonymity and privacy of the respondent’s questionnaire data.

1.5 Structure of Chapters

Chapter 2 will deal with an overview of the evolution of documentary through time, from its beginnings with the Lumière Brothers in the late 1800's to the present day, concentrating specifically on the Direct Cinema Movement of the 1960s.

Chapter 3 will then explore the concepts of Subjectivity, Objectivity and Truth in documentary and their relevance to its current stature in society.

Chapter 4 will discuss a form of hybrid documentary: Reality TV and how its involvement muddies the waters of what exactly constitutes a documentary.

Chapter 5 will give an overview of what audience research is, some current Irish research in the field and which of its methods have been implemented in the research part of this thesis.

Chapter 6 will report and discuss the results of the research conducted and shall be split into seven segments: *Demographic Results*, *Defining Documentary*, *The Purpose of Documentary*, *Factuality and Truth in Documentary*, *Objectivity and Balance in Documentary*, *Genres and Programmes*, and *Summary*.

Chapter 7 will contain the discussion of these results in the global context of the thesis and concluding arguments.

Chapter 1 Notes

¹ *Waltz with Bashir* (2008) is an animated documentary. It concerns the effects of the Lebanese War on the soldiers who fought in it. It was directed by and starred Ari Folman, who interviewed (though it had more of a feel of a discussion as these people were friends) other soldiers who had fought in the war. What makes it more unusual, is that it also included dreams that the interviewees had at the time about it and discussed with him.

² “*Zeigeist*” (2007) is a film by Peter Joseph which was originally released on zeitgeistmovie.com. It puts forward Joseph’s views on three topics: Christianity; the American banking system; and how these relate to the wars being fought by America currently (IMDb(i), n.d.).

³ The majority of Irish audience research currently available can be found in the sources used in this thesis including: Horgan, J. O’Connor, B. & Sheehan, H., (2007), Kelly, M. J., & O’Connor, B., (1997), and O’Neill, B. & Titley, G., (2011).

⁴ While ethics is of huge importance in documentary practice, it was not chosen as an area of coverage in this thesis as it was felt that it could not be done justice in a study of this size and would be more suited to a study which concentrated primarily on this issue.

⁵ There have been many calls for the resignation of Cardinal Sean Brady since the airing of this documentary

⁶ The first was relevant because it concerned a documentary programme, and the second because it included quantitative analysis.

⁷ These sub-genres were sourced from Patricia Aufderheide’s book *Documentary Film: A Very Short Introduction*, *Directing the Documentary* by Michael Rabiger and *Reality BITES Back: The Troubling Truth about Guilty Pleasure TV* by Jennifer L. Pozner.

Chapter 2

The Evolution of Documentary

“Documentary is a young genre in the young art of cinema and has only just begun exploring the limits of its potential”

(Rabiger, 2004: 94)

According to Lee-Wright (2010: 90) there is one thing that ties all of documentary’s history together and that is “the search for the ‘kino-eye¹’ that sees things the way the audience wants to see it”. On the “factual pyramid²”, it has customarily held the apex, however in order to do so it has had to periodically adapt itself to the viewers’ changing perceptions³. It appears to lie somewhere on a continuum between news and fiction (Ellis, 2012; Renov, 1993) and the parameters of what falls into this genre keep growing (Rabiger, 2004). It is the aim of this chapter to provide a concise synopsis of documentary’s evolution from its beginnings to its current form in order to draw attention to the changes which have already occurred in the genre. It will do this by looking at films produced in various countries but primarily in the United States and Britain.

Documentary can be said to have its origins in the “actualities” made by the Lumière Brothers in the late 1800s (Saunders, 2010; Lee-Wright 2010; Barnouw, 1974). They developed the first portable camera which was capable of capturing “real life” outside of a studio setting as it was happening (Saunders, 2010). It weighed only 5 kilograms, which is reported to be a fifth of the weight of the camera concurrently invented by Thomas Edison (Barnouw, 1974). They filmed a series of films including *L’arrivée d’un train à La Ciotat*⁴ (1896: France) and *La sortie des usines Lumière*⁵(1895: France) which can be said to be the ultimate predecessors to the modern documentary.

However it did not take long for the novelty of actualities to start wearing thin. Many filmmakers aspired to capture footage of extreme situations which would pull the audiences’ attention away from the increasingly popular fiction cinema and back to the

yet to be named documentary genre (ibid). In order to do this there was a need for documentary to move away from films which showed snippets of unedited real life and instead attempt to incorporate some of the technical and dramatic characteristics of fiction films. The first to succeed in this was Robert Flaherty's film *Nanook of the North*⁶ (1922: USA/France). This film came about after Flaherty accidentally burned the footage from his first attempt to make a film about Eskimo life (Barnouw, 1974). *Nanook* is comprised of a dramatic story of man's eternal struggle with nature, beautiful scenic footage which was characteristic of the currently popular travelogue⁷, the novelty of peering into a "primitive" culture which you could empathise with, and it also followed a similar structure to that of the fiction films of the time (Aufderheide, 2007). However, while the film was more dramatic than its predecessors in the genre, it was also more fictive in its content. Flaherty changed *Nanook's* name from the hard to pronounce Allakariallak, concealed the differences of Inuit family life by making it appear more Western, staged events that would not have ordinarily taken place⁸, did many retakes, and used clever editing techniques (ibid; Saunders, 2010), and if it were released today it would be called a docudrama instead of a documentary as:

"In the documentary aesthetic of the period, there was no requirement that the cameras should capture events as they happened, especially if those events could not be anticipated or predicted in advance, or were too difficult to obtain."

(Ellis, 2011: 12)

However, the 'seeking of truth' in the documentaries of this era did not come from filming things always exactly as they happened but in the research that was carried out beforehand (ibid). Despite this, many Inuits still appreciate the traditions of their heritage that this film keeps alive regardless of its reconstructed elements (Aufderheide, 2007).

Similar issues applied to his film *Man of Aran*⁹(1934: USA). O'Brien (2004: 46) referred to it as "a story film" which reconstructed a realm which may never have, but certainly no longer, existed. The islanders were taught and instructed to revive the dangerous activity of hunting basking sharks specifically for the film (Thompson &

Bordwell, 2003) and Flaherty also excluded two main elements of their lives from it: that it was the absentee landlords who were responsible for the harsh lifestyle the islanders led and that they traded their fishing catches with the mainland to support themselves (Aufderheide, 2007).

It has been suggested that *Nanook* is “the most significant documentary ever made” and it was the film which earned Flaherty the title of the “Father of Documentary” (Saunders, 2010: 88) alongside the small number of other films¹⁰ he made in his lifetime which have been described as “touchstones of documentary” (Aufderheide, 2007: 27).

During this same time frame in the Soviet Union, experiments were being carried out in film to assess its potential to help the Communist cause, and after the 1917 revolution a film subsection of the Department of Education was set up (Saunders, 2010). It was thanks to this that in 1922 Dziga Vertov, began to produce his series of non-fiction films. Vertov¹¹ believed in “the unique truth value of “life caught unaware,” or the unrehearsed moment. He alleged that documentary was “the perfect medium for revolution” and that fiction films should be abolished (Aufderheide, 2007: 38). He also believed that the camera was “the Mechanical Eye” a machine which could unbiasedly show the world exactly as it really is (ibid: 38). While Vertov expounded on the brilliance of the camera’s capacity for truth telling, he still claimed the editor’s right to manipulate that footage and argued that the camera’s capacity for storytelling was greater than that of a human (ibid). His films, which were not widely viewed in Russia at the time of release, included *Cinema-Eye*¹² (1924: Soviet Union) which was his first documentary, *The Eleventh Year*¹³(1928: Soviet Union), *Man with a Movie Camera*¹⁴(1929: Soviet Union) which is perhaps his most famous film, *Enthusiasm*¹⁵(1931: Soviet Union) and *Three Songs of Lenin*¹⁶(1934: Soviet Union) (Aufderheide, 2007; Saunders, 2010). He attracted much criticism for his views from other Soviets at the time as his films

“indubitably (appear) to be caught up in the very frivolity (they undertake) to denigrate, revelling in formalistically composed vignettes whose representative nature echoes their subjects”

(Saunders, 2010: 118).

Esfir Shub began her film career in the early 1920s as a film editor (Film Directors Site, n.d.). She is credited with introducing the “compilation” film with her first three films: *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty*¹⁷ (1927: Soviet Union), *The Great Way*¹⁸ (1927: Soviet Union) and *The Russia of Nicholas II and Leo Tolstoy*¹⁹ (1928: Soviet Union). The compilation film relies heavily on the use of archival footage, pieced together to form a narrative.

The Prometheus film company was established by the International Worker’s Relief in Germany in 1926 in order to distribute Soviet films (Thompson and Bordwell, 2003). They also produced a number of German films, most notably, *Kuhle Wampe*²⁰ (Slatan Dudow, 1932: Germany).

In America, the Film and Photo Leagues were established in 1930. They used silent cameras and shot footage for newsreels about strikes and other forms of demonstrations around the country. Several members of these leagues went on to form the company Nykino which loosely translated means Cinema Now. They only made a few films and by 1937 they had become Frontier – a not-for-profit filmmaking firm (Thompson and Bordwell, 2003). Other filmmakers who started in the Film and Photo Leagues moved into government sponsored filmmaking, including, Pare Lorentz, who was given a \$6000 budget from the American government to make *The Plow that Broke the Plains*²¹ (1936: USA). They increased his budget the next year to make *The River*²² (1937: USA) and President Roosevelt admired it so much that he made him the head of the new Film Service which was created to make various government agency films. However due to his inefficiency at administration the service was disbanded in 1940 (ibid).

The Empire Marketing Board (EMB) Film Unit was also established in 1930 under the guidance of John Grierson. It was at this time that “Documentarists, newly so named, began incorporating voiceovers and audio effects, putting sound *and* image to synergetic, educational usage shaping their nations’ hearts and minds” (Saunders, 2010: 43, original emphasis). He made the only film that he would ever direct himself in 1928 called *Drifters*²³ (Aufderheide, 2007). Grierson gathered together a team of young and upcoming filmmakers, including his sister Ruby, as part of this film unit whose purpose was to create films which were devoted to informing the public on important social issues and “notions of responsible service” (Saunders, 2010: 43).

The EMB Film unit was dissolved in 1933 but later became the General Post Office (GPO) Film Unit (Thompson and Bordwell, 2003). Their number included 60 odd filmmakers such as: Basil Wright, Paul Rotha, Arthur Elton, Edgar Anstey, Humphrey Jennings, Alberto Cavalcanti and Stuart Legg (Saunders, 2010). The Unit was government funded primarily but also sought industry financing and tended to work on small budgets. Their films took a patrician outlook on life, were highly romanticized, well-meaning, and had great respect for the working class. They placed a lot of emphasis on using “scripts, sets and reconstruction” (ibid: 44; Corner, 1996). They believed in using non-actors to tell real stories and to show “life itself” through documentary and promoted the use of documentary as a tool for educating people and to encourage social integration (Aufderheide, 2007; Corner 1996). However, they continually fell short of this goal because of a penchant for “worthy tediousness” (Saunders, 2010: 44). Despite this, they continue to have a pervasive effect on documentary with films including: *Industrial Britain*²⁴ (1932: UK), *Housing Problems*²⁵ (1935: UK), and *Night Mail*²⁶ (1936: UK) which was maybe “the movement’s most iconic work” (Ibid; Saunders, 2010: 45). Grierson left the GPO in 1937 leaving Alberto Cavalcanti to take over. Cavalcanti decided to move away from the strictly educational approach that Grierson was concerned with, and they “produced films which drew more upon narrative techniques of commercial cinema” (Thompson and Bordwell, 2003: 313).

Concurrently, the majority of German documentary output at this time was short films and newsreels, with some propagandistic element (Thompson and Bordwell, 2003). According to Saunders (2010) there were two German films of note during this era, both made by Hitler’s favourite filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl. These films are *Triumph of the Will*²⁷ (1934: Germany) and *Olympia*²⁸ (1938: Germany).

“Standing as valuable documents of a pivotal epoch, and as spectacular films even when regarded outside the darkened vaults of historical reflection, Riefenstahl’s fascism odes to Nazi gods represent the propaganda-documentary (which as the war took hold, became a globally represented form not unique to Germany) at its ideologically excruciating peak.”

(Saunders, 2010: 51).

Some other notable films from the period include: *Misery in Borinage*²⁹ (Storck & Ivens, 1933: Belgium), *China Strikes Back*³⁰ (Dunham, 1937: USA), and *Spare Time*³¹ (Jennings, 1939: UK) (Thompson and Bordwell, 2003).

In 1939 at the beginning of World War II, Grierson was sent to Canada where he set up the National Film Board (NFB). This would become the model for film boards all over the world (Saunders, 2010). The GPO Film Unit was absorbed by the Ministry of Information³² in 1940 and the unit became instrumental in wartime documentary filmmaking (Thompson and Bordwell, 2003). It was renamed the Crown Film Unit, but was abolished in 1952.

As the Second World War began, documentary films became more concerned with exhibiting the interests of those involved in the conflict. Leftist sympathisers joined with capitalists in order to oppose fascism, and fiction filmmakers turned to non-fiction to show the events that were taking place both at home and abroad (Saunders, 2010). After America joined the war on the side of the Allies because of the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbour, Hollywood began to produce propaganda films in favour of the war such as the *Why We Fight*³³ series. Some other American films of the time include: *Memphis Belle*³⁴ (1944: USA), *The Battle of San Pietro*³⁵ (1944: USA), and *Let There Be Light*³⁶ (1946: USA). Canadian films of the era included: *Food - Weapons of Conquest*³⁷ (1942: Canada) amongst many other films made as part of the *Canada Carries On*³⁸ series, and in Germany, the non-fiction filmmaking of the time mainly consisted of newsreels promoting a socialist agenda, while in Russia they showed hardships faced by their soldiers and their victories (Saunders, 2010). These films included: *Defeat of the German Armies near Moscow*³⁹ (1942: Russia) and *Fight for Our Soviet Ukraine*⁴⁰ (1943: Russia).

After the war, the idea of “personal cinema” (Thompson & Bordwell, 2003:477) was renewed as directors turned from politics to individual expression. Post-war non-fiction film in America was defined by three feature-length documentaries, according to Thompson and Bordwell (2003), which were: *Louisiana Story*⁴¹ (Flaherty, 1948: USA), *The Quiet One*⁴² (Meyers, 1949: USA) and *All My Babies*⁴³ (Stoney, 1952: USA). In France they described *Night and Fog*⁴⁴ (1955: France), *Blood of the Beasts*⁴⁵ (1948: France) and *Hotel des Invalids*⁴⁶ (1951: France), as the defining documentaries with

*City of Gold*⁴⁷ (Koeing and Low, 1957: Canada) and *Blood and Fire*⁴⁸ (Maccartney-Filgate, 1958: Canada) defining documentary production in Canada. However, with the advent of television, theatrical documentary became less prevalent. The first wave of television documentary was marked by the extensive use of ‘talking head’ interviews in the early 1950s. This was used to convey information for which no footage existed (Saunders, 2010). Programmes which included this technique and which have been identified as influential at this time include: *See It Now*⁴⁹ (1951-1958: USA), *Project XX*⁵⁰ (1954 – 1970: USA), *The Twentieth Century*⁵¹ (1957–1966: USA), and *The Race for Space*⁵² (1958: USA).

In the late 1950s observational documentary intensified in Britain, France, Canada and the USA⁵³. The use of lightweight cameras and new sound recording equipment meant that voice-over and pre-planned structures could be eliminated. Magnetic sound recording on tape was used to capture sound on site with the use of a tape recorder (Thompson and Bordwell, 2003) which triggered a fascination with filming unpredictable events. As this new practice developed it instigated new expectations in documentary (Ellis, 2012).

In Canada the NFB’s “B Unit” began work on their form of observational documentary. They used primarily non-synchronised sound captured with a light-weight Nagra tape recorder, and 16mm cameras (Saunders, 2010). It “began as a slap in the face of social moralism – (but) became a central style, ironically for a unit started by John Grierson” (Aufderheide, 2007: 47). The filmmakers made a point of letting their stories emerge from the editing which was a trait peculiar to Canada at the time. They were not concerned with having a proper narrative arc or discernible intention, which at times could make them appear aimless (Saunders, 2010). Examples include: *The Days Before Christmas*⁵⁴ (1958: Canada), and *The Back Breaking Leaf*⁵⁵ (1959: Canada) made by Terence Macartney-Filgate, *Pour la suit du monde*⁵⁶ (Brault and Perrault, 1962: Canada), *Lonely Boy*⁵⁷ (Koeing and Koitor, 1962: Canada), and *Les Raquetteurs*⁵⁸ (Brault and Groulx, 1958: Canada).

The late 1950s also saw the rise of Direct Cinema in the United States. This movement has been seen as “the single most significant intervention into documentary filmmaking history” and remains the most influential (Bruzzi, 2006: 73). Documentarists realised that having a camera at an event would make that event more significant and as such they began to consider their impact on the subjects they filmed. In an effort to countermand that impact they toyed with the notion of not participating in the events and just letting them unfold as they naturally would have if the camera was not present (Ellis, 2012).

The movement began with Robert Drew who focused on the discreet collection of footage (Saunders, 2010). He perceived documentary as a way of telling stories dramatically and used what became known as the crisis structure⁵⁹ in order to do this (Thompson and Bordwell, 2003). There was a commitment to the concept that by utilizing these methods of filmmaking it was possible to make a film that was free of its makers influence (Lee-Wright, 2010; Bruzzi, 2006). Its aim was to arouse emotion through the showing of conflict, suspense, and a decisive outcome. It was based on feature journalism which highlighted balancing facts with subjective judgments (Thompson and Bordwell, 2003).

He gathered together a selection of filmmakers who were known at the time as The Drew Associates. They were made up of Drew himself, Alan Pennebaker, Richard Leacock, David and Albert Maysles and Terrence Macartney-Filgate. According to Saunders (2010: 62) Direct Cinema; “in its strictest sense mean(ing) observational, sync-sound filmmaking – was born equally from new technology, and the initial employment of this technology in subtle service of its originator’s political masters”. These films preferred to use film to tell the story as opposed to using a “voice-of-god” narration which was favoured by other filmmakers at the time. They utilized the natural light and sound on location whenever possible and discouraged interaction with and the direction of its subjects. The first film by the Drew Associates was *Primary*⁶⁰ (1960: USA) and others included: *The Children Were Watching*⁶¹ (1961: USA) and *The Chair*⁶² (1962: USA).

They disbanded in 1963 but continued to make films in this style independently from each other, which included: *Happy Mother's Day*⁶³ (Leacock, 1963: USA), *What's Happening!: The Beatles in the USA*⁶⁴ (1964: USA) by the Maysles Brothers (which was "the first observational documentary to do entirely without voice over or narration" (Saunders, 2010: 68)), *Don't Look Back*⁶⁵ (Pennebaker, 1967: USA), *Monterey Pop*⁶⁶ (Pennebaker, 1967: USA), *Woodstock*⁶⁷ (Wadleigh, 1970: USA) and *Gimme Shelter*⁶⁸ (Maysles and Zerwin, 1970: USA).

Frederick Wiseman, while never having worked with the originators of Direct Cinema, is perhaps its most famous purist⁶⁹ (Ibid). He began his career as a lawyer and then turned filmmaker, primarily exposing the workings of various institutions (Aufderheide, 2007).

"Nearly always relying solely on diegetic sound, and never using subtitles, story-type narratives or voiceover, Wiseman's slide-puzzle-like films are frustratingly nebulous and grimly austere, yet at times devastatingly acute to American social malaises in their depiction of ordinary Americans trapped in an unfair system and let down by federal democracy."

(Saunders, 2010: 69)

His film *Titicut Follies* (1967: USA), which showed the conditions for patients in a state mental institution, was banned even though it won many awards, because he had not gained the permission of all participants in the film to be filmed. It was because of this that the issue of informed consent gained the attention of documentary filmmakers. He referred to the films as "reality fictions" and claimed that he had not intended for them to be objective representations but were only a way of showing what he found interesting (Aufderheide, 2007). While Direct Cinema has had a lasting pervasive effect on documentary and cinema in general, there are few filmmakers other than Wiseman who still stick closely to its strictest rules (ibid). He showed that by using subtle editing techniques it was possible to turn observational footage into something that could create strong emotional responses (Thompson and Bordwell, 2003).

Concurrently, a more provocative version of observational filmmaking was happening in France with the Cinema Verité movement (Aufderheide, 2007). It came about from Jean Rouch's ethnographic films in which he insistently questions his interviewees. He "encourages (his) subjects to define themselves through performances for the camera" (Thompson & Bordwell, 2003:487). He also preferred to retain the use of a narrator. The most influential of Rouch's ethnographic films was *Chronicle of a Summer*⁷⁰ (1961: France) where he collaborated with sociologist Edgar Morin. In this film he sought the approval of the interviewees for the version of the film which had thus far been edited together. This hints at the reflexive movement which was yet to come. Rouch chose this method of filmmaking because he realised regardless of Direct Cinema's insistence on effacing the camera, no matter how invisible he might try to make himself in the film and how "unself-conscious" the participants in the film might appear, "filming is a real act performed in the real world with real consequences", and that it would only be through provoking his subjects that he could reveal their "deepest truths" (Rothman, 2004: 282). In this form, it is the subjects' voice which should be most authoritative and there should be no other distracting from it.

Much controversy surrounded both Cinema Verité and Direct Cinema because of their claims to truth (Aufderheide, 2007). "Direct Cinema, in one guise or another, continued to be the most powerful force in documentary" (Thompson and Bordwell, 2003: 579). It was felt by Joris Ivens that the name Cinema Verité had implicit connotations of truth to it, and also therefore implied that documentaries which came before it did not. (It is because of these debates that Rouch and other French filmmakers later began calling their work Direct Cinema instead (Aufderheide, 2007). However, while "(t)he approach has lost its novelty (it has not lost its) ability to convince viewers that they are present, watching something unconstructed and uncontrovertibly real" (ibid: 55).

According to Saunders (2010), much of the changes which have occurred in documentary since the Direct Cinema and Cinema Verité movements ensued as a rebellion against their naïve assumptions of reality and lack of bias. A new form emerged in the 1970s, known as synthesised documentary. This method combined the interview filming techniques of Direct Cinema, "scenes shot on the fly", and compilation footage, and was brought together through the clever use of music and commentary (ibid: 583). The film which pioneered this technique was Emile De

Antonio's *In the Year of the Pig*⁷¹ (1969: USA) and this style has continued to dominate documentary production ever since. This format was particularly used to for biographies⁷² and films which involved lengthy filming processes⁷³ (Thompson and Bordwell, 2010). Both in its pure form and in this hybridised version, Direct Cinema "sustained political filmmaking throughout the 1970s and 1980s" (Thompson and Bordwell, 2010: 541). Examples of synthesised documentaries include: *The Rocky Road to Dublin*⁷⁴ (Lennon, 1968: Ireland), *The World at War*⁷⁵ (1973-74, Britain, Thames Television) *Grey Gardens*⁷⁶ (1975: USA), *Harlan County USA*⁷⁷ (Kopple, 1975: USA), *The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter*⁷⁸ (Field, 1980: USA), *The Day After Trinity*⁷⁹ (Else, 1980: USA), *Shoah*⁸⁰ (Lanzmann, 1985: France), *Tongues Untied*⁸¹ (Riggs, 1989: USA), *Nobody's Business*⁸² (Berliner, 1996: USA) and *Bright Leaves*⁸³ (2004: USA/UK).

At the same time documentarists also began to become more reflexive in their approach to documentary filmmaking. They turned "a critical eye on documentary tradition itself" (Thompson and Bordwell, 2010: 542). Some even made films about the impossibility of making the actual film originally intended known as meta-documentary⁸⁴ (Thompson and Bordwell, 2003). It was common for these films to demystify certain aspects of the documentary form itself⁸⁵. These films "explore the idea that any documentary carries a large freight of artifice - in its conventions, its appeal to ideology, and its reliance on the tricks of fictional filmmaking" (ibid: 586).

By the late 1980s documentary had become an "endangered species" on British television (Ellis, 2005). This led to the rise of a new form known as docu-soap. This form in turn led to the rise of the reality television programme (the history of which is discussed in a subsequent chapter), and both of these forms have been referred to as the "new form of observational documentary" leading on from the Direct Cinema tradition, and replacing documentary in television's factual programme slots (Bruzzi, 2006; Saunders, 2010).

In the 1990's however, theatrical documentary finally saw a resurgence in the United States. This was due to the growth of American independent cinema; documentaries were cheaper to produce than fiction films; and they offered something distinctive in comparison to the usual television fare (Thompson and Bordwell, 2010). Successful

theatrical releases include: *Hoop Dreams*⁸⁶ (James, 1994: USA), *Roger & Me*⁸⁷ (Moore, 1989: USA), *Etre et Avoir*⁸⁸ (Philibert, 2002: France), *Capturing the Friedmans*⁸⁹ (Jarecki, 2003: USA), *Fahrenheit 9/11*⁹⁰ (Moore, 2004: USA), *Super Size Me*⁹¹ (Spurlock, 2004: USA), *Grizzly Man*⁹² (Herzog, 2005: USA), *An Inconvenient Truth*⁹³ (Guggenheim, 2006: USA), *King of Kong*⁹⁴ (Gordon, 2007: USA) *American Teen*⁹⁵ (Burstein, 2008: USA), and *Encounters at the End of the World*⁹⁶ (Herzog, 2009: USA).

To date, the issue remains the same. Theatrical documentary is thriving in the United States. While there are more documentaries being released theatrically here in Ireland than before⁹⁷ there is still nowhere near the amount of theatrical documentaries as there are fiction films shown in the cinemas. As for televisual documentary, there are fewer and fewer slots being given over to documentary on our national broadcasters schedules. The majority of factual programming timeslots are being taken up by reality television formats instead. What little documentary output that otherwise remains is relegated to specified channels such as The Discovery Channel, which you only have access to if you subscribe to a cable or satellite television package. This move away from traditional documentary forms has been evident since the early 2000s, and has gained pace with its culmination in the “rejection of the observational form” (Bruzzi, 2006: 222). This issue will be further addressed in the chapter on reality television.

It was the aim of this chapter to give a brief overview of documentary history from its beginnings to its current form in order to provide a backdrop for the subsequent chapters. As we can see there have been many changes in the documentary form since it first arrived in the 1800's. However, one thing has remained constant throughout its history, and that has been its central aim of representing reality - as best it can – and to bring the truth of a story, event or situation, however subjective, into the public eye. Following on from this the next chapter will delve into the notions of subjectivity, objectivity, fact and truth in documentary.

Chapter 2 Notes

¹ The Kino Eye (or camera eye) as a machine shows you the world as only it can see it (Tamés, n.d.).

² Factual programming, while including documentary is not limited to it (Rabiger, 2004). Rabiger places documentary, as the highest regarded form of factual programming, at the top of a “factual pyramid”.

³ In the past audiences’ have made the mistake of thinking that all factual programming is documentary (Ellis, 2012).

⁴ *L’arrivée d’un train à La Ciotat* (1896) was filmed and produced the Lumière brothers in France. It shows the arrival of a train at La Ciotat Station (IMDB(ii), n.d.).

⁵ *La sortie des usines Lumière* (1895) was also filmed and produced by the Lumière brothers in France. It shows workers leaving a factory (IMDB(iii), n.d.).

⁶ *Nanook of the North* (1922) was made by Robert Flaherty about the lives of Inuit Eskimos in the Arctic and released in America (IMDB(iv), n.d.).

⁷ Examples of travelogues include: *Mirrors of Nature* (Holmes, 1920), *The Birds and the Beasts Were There* (de la Varre, 1944), *Colorful Colorado* (Fitzpatrick, 1944), and *Under Carib Skies* (Dudley, 1957).

⁸ Such as the scene where Nanook bites into a record (Saunders, 2010).

⁹ *Man of Aran* (1934) was directed by Robert Flaherty and portrayed the lives of the people who lived on the Aran Islands in Ireland (Alexander, n.d.).

¹⁰ Flaherty’s other films included: *Moana* (1926), and *Louisiana Story* (1948).

¹¹ Originally named Denis Arkadievich Kaufman gave himself the name Dziga Vertov (meaning Spinning Top) while in college (Aufderheide, 2007).

¹² *Kinoglaz* or *Cinema Eye* (1924) was released in the Soviet Union and directed by Dziga Vertov about life in a Soviet Village (IMDB(v), n.d.).

¹³ *The Eleventh Year* (1928) was directed by Dziga Vertov, released in the Soviet Union and is a celebration of the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution (Harvard film Archive, n.d.).

¹⁴ *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) was directed by Dziga Vertov and released in the Soviet Union. It is “at once a documentary of a day in the life of the Soviet Union, a documentary of the filming of said documentary, and a depiction of an audience watching the film” (IMDB(vi), n.d.).

¹⁵ *Enthusiasm* (1931) “deals with the Five Year Plan of the late 1920s”, is directed by Dziga Vertov and was released in the Soviet Union (Harvard Film Archive, n.d.).

¹⁶ *Three Songs of Lenin* (1934) is based on three anonymous songs about Lenin and his involvement in the creation of the Soviet Union (IMDB(vii), n.d.).

¹⁷ *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* (1927) was directed by Esfir Shub and released in the Soviet Union. It uses archive footage to follow the chronology of Russia from 1913-1917 (IMDB(vix), n.d.).

¹⁸ *The Great Way*(1927) “as drawn from newsreels covering the years 1917 through 1927, and was notable because it incorporated intimate scenes of Soviet revolutionary Nikolai Lenin, the first time these scenes had been seen by Soviet audiences” (Answers.com, n.d.).

¹⁹ *The Russia of Nicholas II and Leo Tolstoy* (1928) “covered Russia from the birth of motion picture films to the eve of World War I” (Murray-Brown, 2009).

²⁰ *Kuhle Wampe* (1932) is the story of a working class Berlin family in 1931. It was produced by Prometheus, directed by Slatan Dudlow, was filmed in black and white and the original cut was 80 minutes in duration (IMDB(viii), n.d.).

²¹ *The Plow that Broke the Plains* (1936) was Pare Lorentz’s first film, and was about the Dust Bowl (Hogan, 1998). It was 25 minutes long and was distributed by the U.S. Resettlement Administration in the United States (IMDB(xi), n.d.).

²² *The River* (1937) was directed by Pare Lorentz and shows the importance of the Mississippi River in the United States. It was produced by the Farm Security Administration, shot in black and white and was 31 minutes in duration (IMDB(xii), n.d.).

²³ *Drifters* (1928) was directed by John Grierson and produced by the EMB Film Unit, shot on 35mm black and white, silent, and is “(t)he story of the North Sea herring fisheries, filmed at Lerwick, in the Shetlands, Lowestoft and Yarmouth and in the North Sea” (Sexton, n.d.).

²⁴ *Industrial Britain* (1932) was directed by Robert Flaherty and produced by the EMB. It is a “survey of industry in Britain, emphasising the importance of craftsmanship” which was shot in 35mm black and white, and is 22 minutes in duration (Anthony (a), n.d.).

²⁵ *Housing Problems* (1935) was produced by Arthur Elton and E.H. Anstey and concerned how local councils deal with the issue of slums. It was shot in 35mm black and white, and was 13 minutes long (Birchall, n.d.).

²⁶ *Night Mail* (1936) was the “most iconic work” of the GPO and the British documentary movement (Saunders, 2010: 45). It was directed by Harry Watt and Basil Wright, filmed on 35mm black and white lasting 24 minutes in duration and showed the postal service procedures involved in delivering the mail (Aitken, n.d.).

²⁷ *Triumph of the Will* (1935) depicted the Nuremberg Rallies in 1933 and “contrived to show Hitler and his deputies as avatars descended to bestow inspiration and nationalist spirit upon their subjects” (Saunders, 2010: 51). It was shot in black and white and was 114 minutes in length (IMDB(xiii), n.d.).

²⁸ *Olympia* (1938) was directed by Leni Riefenstahl and portrayed the Olympic games of 1936 in Berlin. It was filmed in black and white and released in two parts (IMDB(xiv), n.d.).

²⁹ *Misery in Borinage* (1933) was directed by Joris Ivens and Henri Storck. It was about the miners’ strike in Borinage, was shot in 35mm black and white and was 34 minutes in length (European Foundation: Joris Ivens(ii), n.d.).

³⁰ *China Strikes Back* (1937) was filmed by Harry Dunham, produced by Frontier Films, was 23 minutes in length, and showed what was happening in China at the time (Huffman, 2001).

³¹ *Spare Time* (1939) was directed by Humphrey Jennings about Britain’s leisure activities (Thompson and Bordwell, 2003). It was produced by Cavalcanti and the GPO, shot in 35mm black and white with a 15 minute duration (Anthony (b), n.d.).

³² ³² Some notable films from the period sponsored by the Ministry of Information include: *The First Days* (Jennings, 1939), *Britain Can Take It!* (Jennings, 1940), *They Also Serve* (Ruby Grierson, 1940), *Merchant Seamen* (Holmes, 1941), *Target for Tonight* (1941), *Listen to Britain* (Jennings, 1942), *Fires Were Started* (Jennings, 1943), *Desert Victory* (MacDonald, 1943), *World of Plenty* (Rotha 1943), *A Diary for Timothy* (Jennings, 1945) and *Burma Victory* (Boulting, 1945).

³³ *Why We Fight* (1942-1945) was a series of seven films primarily directed by Frank Capra: *Prelude to War* (1942), *The Nazis Strike* (1943), *Divide and Conquer* (1943), *The Battle of Britain* (1943), *The Battle of Russia* (1943), *The Battle of China* (1944), and *War Comes to America* (1945). They were filmed in the United States and their purpose was to encourage the American troops to fight in WWII. Information regarding the specific films can be found on Internet Movie Database.

³⁴ *Memphis Belle* (1944) was directed by William Wyler, distributed by Paramount Pictures Inc in the United States and concerns the last bombing mission of the aircraft of the same name (IMDB(xv), n.d.).

³⁵ *The Battle of San Pietro* (1944) was directed by John Huston, was produced by the U.S. Army Pictorial Services, and concerned the battle of San Pietro (IMDB(xvi), n.d.).

³⁶ *Let There Be Light* (1946) was directed by John Huston, and followed a number of soldiers who were in therapy for severe trauma, with whom he had unrehearsed interviews. The United States government banned it until the 1970s because it depicted the plight of these people so perfectly (Thompson and Bordwell, 2003).

³⁷ *Food - Weapons of Conquest* (1942) was directed by Stuart Legg, and was one of many films in the *Canada Carries On* series. It was a newsreel of the food shortage in Nazi-occupied countries (NFB.CA, n.d.).

³⁸ *Canada Carries On* ran from 1940 until 1959, was the National Film Board's longest running series, filmed in 16mm black and white and was instigated by John Grierson and Stuart Legg (Morris(a), n.d.).

³⁹ *Defeat of the German Armies Near Moscow* (1942) or *Moscow Strikes Back*, was directed by Ilya Kopalin and Leonid Varlamov. It was produced by Central Newsreel Studios, filmed in black and white, released in the Soviet Union and was 55 minutes in length (IMDB(xvii), n.d.).

⁴⁰ *Fight for Our Soviet Ukraine* (1943) was directed by Aleksandr Dovzhenko and Yuliya Solntseva, produced by Central Newsreel Studios, filmed in black and white, released in the Soviet Union and was 80 minutes in duration (IMDB(xviii), n.d.).

⁴¹ *Louisiana Story* (1948) was directed by Robert Flaherty and concerned a young boy and his pet racoon. It was produced by Robert Flaherty Productions Inc., filmed in black and white, and was 78 minutes in length (IMDB(xix), n.d.).

⁴² *The Quiet One* (1949) was directed by Sidney Meyers, and concerns an emotionally disturbed boy undergoing treatment for his trauma. It was produced by Film Documents, filmed in black and white, and was 65 minutes in duration (IMDB(xx), n.d.).

⁴³ *All My Babies* (1952).was an educational film used to teach midwives. It was directed by George Stoney, and produced by the Georgia Department of Public Health and was 55 minutes long (IMDB(xxi), n.d.).

⁴⁴ *Night and Fog* (1955) was directed by Alain Renais and showed the remains of several concentration camps in Poland. It is 32 minutes long, was filmed in black and white, produced by Argos Films, and released in France (IMDB(xxii), n.d.).

⁴⁵ *Blood of the Beasts* (1948) was directed by Georges Franju and records the happenings at a slaughterhouse outside Paris. It was produced by Forces et voix de la France, released in France, filmed in black and white and was 22 minutes long (IMDB(xxiii), n.d.).

⁴⁶ *Hotel des Invalids* (1951) was directed by Georges Franju. It examined a war veterans hospital, was produced by Forces et voix de la France, released in France, filmed in black and white and was 22 minutes in duration (IMDB(xxiv), n.d.).

⁴⁷ *City of Gold* (1957) was directed by Colin Low and Wolf Koenig. It looks at Dawson City during the period of the Klondike Gold Rush. It was produced by Tom Daly for the NFB, was filmed in 16mm black and white, released in Canada and was 22 minutes long (CFE, n.d.).

⁴⁸ *Blood and Fire* (1958) was directed by Terence Macartney-Filgate and produced by Wolf Koenig and Roman Kroitor for the NFB. It was part of the *Candid Eye* series of films and was concerned with the Salvation Army. It was filmed in 16mm black and white, and its runtime was 29 minutes (MacIntosh, n.d.).

⁴⁹ *See It Now* (1951-1958) was a news magazine programme hosted and created by Edward R. Murrow. It was produced and distributed by Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) and released in the United States (IMDB(xxv), n.d.).

⁵⁰ *Project XX* (1954 - 1970) was a news magazine programme directed by Donald B. Hyatt and produced and distributed in the United States by the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) (IMDB(xxvi), n.d.).

⁵¹ *Twentieth Century* (1957–1966) was a documentary television programme which reported important news and events stories for the 20th century. It was hosted by Walter Kronkite and produced and distributed in black and white by CBS (IMDB(xxvii), n.d.).

⁵² *The Race for Space* (1958) is a television documentary film about the space race. It was directed by David L. Wolper, filmed in black and white, was 55 minutes in length, and produced by Wolper Inc (IMDB(xxviii), n.d.).

⁵³ This trend was known by many names including: Candid Cinema, Uncontrolled Cinema, Observational Cinema, Cinema Verité and Direct Cinema (Thompson and Bordwell, 2003).

⁵⁴ *The Days Before Christmas* (1958) was directed by Stanley Jackson, Wolf Koenig and Terrence McCartney-Filgate as part of the *Candid Eye* series. It does not have a proper storyline, and was produced and distributed by the NFB (IMDB(xxix), n.d.).

⁵⁵ *The Back Breaking Leaf* (1959) was directed by Terence Macartney-Filgate. It was produced by Wolf Koenig and Roman Kroitor for the NFB as part of the *Candid Eye* series. It is about the tobacco harvest in Ontario. It was shot in 16mm black and white and was 29 minutes in duration (Morris(b), n.d.).

⁵⁶ *Pour la suit du monde* (1962) was directed by Pierre Perrault and Michel Brault. It was produced by Jacques Bobet and Fernand Dansereau for the NFB. The film documents the lives of the islanders of Île-aux-Coudres. It was shot in 16mm black and white, in French and is 105 minutes in length (CFE(ii), n.d.).

⁵⁷ *Lonely Boy* (1962) was directed by Wolf Koenig and Roman Kroitor. It was also produced by Roman Kroitor for the NFB. It was shot in 16mm black and white, in English and was 27 minutes in running time dealing with the life of teen heartthrob Paul Anka (CFE(iii), n.d.). It was this film which started the trend of celebrity backstage films (Aufderheide, 2007).

⁵⁸ *Les Raquetteurs* (1958) was directed by Gilles Groulx and Michel Brault. It was produced by the NFB, was shot in 35mm black and white, in French and was 15 minutes in duration. It concerns the snowshoers congress that was held in Quebec in 1958 (CFE(iv), n.d.).

⁵⁹ The crisis structure involves focusing the film on “high-stakes” situations that can be resolved speedily, which arouse emotions in the audience “by showing conflict, suspense, and a decisive outcome” (Thompson and Bordwell, 2003: 485).

⁶⁰ *Primary* (1960) was directed by Robert Drew, produced by Drew Associates, was filmed in black and white, has a running time of 60 minutes, and follows the presidential candidates during the 1960 primaries (IMDB(xxx), n.d.). ABC refused it air it because it looked like “rushes” – “the unedited day’s footage” (Aufderheide, 2007: 47).

⁶¹ *The Children Were Watching* (1961) was produced by Robert Drew and Richard Leacock for the ABC series *Close Up!* It looks at the integration of black and white students in a school in New Orleans and has a running time of 25 minutes (Drew Associates, n.d.).

⁶² *The Chair* (1962) was produced by Gregory Shuker and the Drew Associates production company alongside Time-Life Broadcast, was 58 minutes in length and concerned the attempts to stop Paul Crump from death by electric chair (Drew Associates, n.d.).

⁶³ *Happy Mother’s Day* (1963) deals with the first quintuplets to survive birth in the United States. It was directed by Joyce Chopra and Richard Leacock, filmed in black and white and was 26 minutes in duration (IMDB(xxxi), n.d.). ABC recut Leacock’s footage in order to turn the film into a heart-warming story. He later released the original (Aufdeheide, 2007).

⁶⁴ *What’s Happening!: The Beatles in the USA* (1964) was directed by Albert and David Maysles, filmed in 16mm black and white, produced by Susan Fromke and Neil Aspinall, is 81 minutes long and is an account of the Beatles’ arrival in the United States (Maysles Films, n.d.).

⁶⁵ *Don’t Look Back* (1967) was directed by D.A. Pennebaker, produced by the Leacock-Pennebaker production company, is 96 minutes in duration, was filmed in black and white and concerns Bob Dylan’s 1967 tour of England (IMDB(xxxii), n.d.).

⁶⁶ *Monterey Pop* (1967) was directed by D.A. Pennebaker, produced by The Foundation, distributed by Leacock Pennebaker Inc., was filmed in colour, has a running time of 78 minutes and recorded the happenings at the music festival of the same name (IMDB(xxxiii), n.d.).

⁶⁷ *Woodstock* (1970) was directed by Michael Wadleigh, produced by Wadleigh-Maurice Ltd., distributed by Warner Bros. Inc., was filmed in technicolour, has a running time of 184 minutes and chronicled the music festival of the same name (IMDB(xxxiv), n.d.).

⁶⁸ *Gimme Shelter* (1970) was directed by Albert Maysles, David Maysles and Charlotte Zwerin. It was produced by Maysles Films, filmed in colour, was 91 minutes in length, and documents the Rolling Stones 1969 music tour (IMDB(xxxv), n.d.).

⁶⁹ Examples of his films include: *Titicut Follies* (1967), *High School* (1968), *Law and Order* (1969), *Hospital* (1970) and *Basic Training* (1971).

⁷⁰ *Chronicle of a Summer* (1961) was directed by Edgar Morin and Jean Rouch, produced by Argos Films, distributed by Pathé Contemporary Films (1965) (USA), filmed in black and white and is 85 minutes in duration (IMDB(xxxvi), n.d.). It documents the conversations of a small group of people chosen from Morin's circle of friends (Aufderheide, 2007).

⁷¹ *In the Year of the Pig* (1969) looked at the beginnings of the Vietnam War. It was directed by Emile de Antonio, produced by Emile de Antonio Productions and Turin Film Productions, distributed by Pathé Contemporary Films, was filmed in black and white and is 103 minutes in duration (IMDB(xxxvii), n.d.).

⁷² This would include such films as: *Lenny Bruce without Tears* (Baker, 1972), *The Times of Harvey Milk* (Epstein, 1984) and *Let's Get Lost* (Webber, 1988).

⁷³ This would include films: *So That You Can Live* (Channel 4, 1981) and the *Up* series (the first *Seven Up!* was directed by Paul Almond in 1964 and subsequent films directed by Michael Apted).

⁷⁴ *The Rocky Road to Dublin* (1968) was directed by Peter Lennon, filmed in black and white and was 99 minutes in duration, and looked at contemporary Ireland at that time (IMDB(xxxviii), n.d.).

⁷⁵ *The World at War* (1973-74) was a documentary television series produced by Thames Television, created by Jeremy Isaacs and narrated by Laurence Olivier. It consisted of 26 episodes chronicling World War II. The production costs of creating it at the time were record breaking (IMDBxxl, n.d.; theworldatwar.com, n.d.).

⁷⁶ *Grey Gardens* (1975) was directed by Ellen Hovde, Albert Maysles, David Maysles and Muffie Meyer. It was produced and distributed by Portrait Films, was shot in colour and was 100 minutes in length. It depicts the lives of a mother and daughter who live at Grey Gardens (IMDB(xxxix), n.d.). The main appeal of this was that they were related to Jacqueline Kennedy. It is "a post-*vérite* masterpiece of benign voyeurism" and perhaps the Maysles Brothers "last work to achieve any significant presence" (Saunders, 2010: 73). It was also remade in 2009 as a drama documentary.

⁷⁷ *Harlan County USA* (1975) was directed by Barbara Kopple and concerned a miners strike. It was produced by Cabin Creek, was filmed in colour and has a running time of 103 minutes (IMDB(xl), n.d.).

⁷⁸ *The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter* (1980) was directed by Connie Field, filmed in black and white and colour, and is 65 minutes long (IMDB(xli), n.d.).

⁷⁹ *The Day After Trinity* (1980) was directed by Jon Else, produced by KTEH, distributed by the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) in the United States, was filmed in colour and was 88 minutes in duration (IMDB(xlii), n.d.).

⁸⁰ *Shoah* (1985) is a film about the holocaust which was directed by Claude Lanzmann, produced by Ministère de la Culture de la Republique Française, distributed by New Yorker Films, filmed in colour and was 566 minutes in duration (IMDB(xliii), n.d.).

⁸¹ *Tongues Untied* (1989) was directed by Marlon Riggs, filmed in colour, is 55 minutes long and celebrates the love between homosexual black men (IMDB(xliv), n.d.).

⁸² *Nobody's Business* (1996) was directed by Alan Berliner, was produced by Cine-Matrix and Independent Television Service (ITVS), was filmed in colour, is 60 minutes long and concerns his conversations with his father about their family history (IMDB(xlv), n.d.).

⁸³ *Bright Leaves* (2004) is about the tobacco production in North Carolina. It was directed by Ross McElwee, produced by Channel 4 Television Corporation, Homemade Movies and WGBH, was filmed in colour and is 107 minutes in duration (IMDB(xlvi), n.d.).

⁸⁴ Examples of this would include: *Far From Poland* (Godmilow, 1984), *Waiting for Fidel* (Rubbo, 1974), *The Atomic Café* (Rafferty, Loader & Rafferty, 1982), and *Of Great Events and Ordinary People* (Ruiz, 1978), *Sans soleil* (Marker, 1982).

⁸⁵ This is typified by Errol Morris' *The Thin Blue Line* (1988). "While revealing documentary artifice, Morris also tries to penetrate the truth of a murder case" (Thompson and Bordwell, 2003: 586).

⁸⁶ *Hoop Dreams* (1993) was directed by Steve James, and explores the lives of two young African American boys trying to become professional basketball players. It was produced by KTCA Minneapolis and Kartemquin Films, filmed in colour and is 170 minutes long (IMDB(xlvii), n.d.).

⁸⁷ *Roger & Me* (1989) is the story of Michael Moore's pursuit for answers from General Motors CEO Roger Smith about the closure of his factory in Flint, Michigan. It was directed by Michael Moore, produced by Dog Eat Dog Films and Warner Bros. Pictures, filmed in colour and has a running time of 91 minutes (IMDB(xlviii), n.d.).

⁸⁸ *Etre et Avoir* (2002) is about an idyllic rural school in France and the interactions of its students with their teacher. It was directed by Nicolas Philibert, filmed in colour and is 104 minutes in duration (IMDB(xlix), n.d.).

⁸⁹ *Capturing the Friedmans* (2003) was directed by Andrew Jarecki, and follows the lives of a middle class Jewish family. It was produced by HBO Documentary and Notorious Pictures, filmed in colour and is 107 minutes in duration (IMDB(l), n.d.).

⁹⁰ *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004) concerns Michael Moore's views on the September 11 attacks and the Bush administration. It was directed by Michael Moore, produced by Fellowship Adventure Group, Dog Eat Dog Films and Miramax Films, filmed in colour and is 122 minutes in length (IMDB(xli), n.d.).

⁹¹ *Super Size Me* (2004) concerns Morgan Spurlock's experiment to consume nothing but McDonalds' food for a month and see what the effects would be on his health. It was directed by Morgan Spurlock,

produced by Kathbur Pictures, The Con and in association with Studio On Hudson, and filmed in colour with a running time of 100 minutes (IMDB(lii), n.d.).

⁹² *Grizzly Man* (2005) concerns the life of Timothy Treadwell a grizzly bear activist who was killed while living among the grizzlies in Alaska in 2003. It was produced by Real Big Productions, filmed in colour, directed by Werner Herzog and has a running time of 103 minutes (IMDB(lii), n.d.).

⁹³ *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006) was directed by Davis Guggenheim and depicts a lecture given by Al Gore on the effects of Global warming. It was produced by Lawrence Bender Productions and Participant Productions, filmed in colour and is 100 minutes long (IMDB(liv), n.d.).

⁹⁴ *King of Kong* (2007) was directed by Seth Gordon, was produced by LargeLab, filmed in colour with a running time of 79 minutes and follows Steve Wiebe's attempt to gain the Donkey Kong world record (IMDB(lv), n.d.).

⁹⁵ *American Teen* (2008) is about an American high school in Indiana. It was directed by Nanette Burstein, produced by 57th & Irving Productions, A&E IndieFilms, Blacklist, Firehouse Films and QuasiWorld Entertainment, filmed in colour, and 95 minutes long (IMDB(lvi), n.d.).

⁹⁶ *Encounters at the End of the World* (2009) covers Werner Herzog's journey to Antarctica. It was directed by Werner Herzog, produced by Creative Differences Productions, Discovery Communications and in association with the Discovery Channel. It was filmed in colour and is 99 minutes long (IMDB(lvii), n.d.).

⁹⁷ For example *His and Hers* (Wardrop, 2009).

Chapter 3

Subjectivity, Objectivity & Truth

“Documentaries can be seen as either objective or subjective attempts at uncovering the truth, and all documentary filmmakers usually strive to achieve a sense of truth in their work”

(Chapman, 2009: 70)

Vision. No two people have the exact same eyesight; there are always differences, however minute. One person may see something as a cream colour where another may see it as yellow. These differences impact on how we interact with the world around us. Just like vision, our perceptions of the things around us are affected by our personal views or beliefs. These perceptions can be changed or adjusted by the things and people we come into contact with in our daily lives, but ultimately our perceptions still affect our interactions with that world. Therefore, it can be said that my experience of the world around me is subjective, dependent on these perceptions, and it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible for me to create something from or with an objective viewpoint.¹ “(T)here is no such thing as an objective view, an unselective eye” (Ellis, 2012: 91). Documentary has long been associated with truth telling and objectivity, both of which are hampered by subjectivity. Recently, practitioners have begun to question truth and objectivity as a basis for creating documentaries (Winston, 1988). It is the aim of this chapter to explore the concepts of subjectivity and objectivity in documentary and their relationship to the concept of truth and its importance for this genre.

“There is a constant tension between subjectivity and objectivity, which has emerged in different ways throughout documentary’s history”

(Chapman, 2009: 49)

Heretofore it has been assumed that documentaries are objective (Rabiger, 2004). Dziga Vertov was the first to confront the challenge of objectivity in documentary directly by showing that “subjectivity, and conversely objectivity, are present in every aspect of production” (Chapman, 2009:49). Consequently, documentary filmmakers who claim to be capturing “reality” are actually controlling and influencing the content of the film during each step of the process, from pre to post production (Hodge, 2007). A contributor to the confusion which surrounds this issue is the initial claim of documentary: the camera does not lie² (Chapman, 2009). The images a camera captures offer trace evidence of the existence of the phenomena it has filmed, and it is because of this “indexical connection to the real” that documentary’s claims to “truth telling” were assumed and its meaning “unshakeably linked with its real-world referent” (Swender, 2009: 3). This, alongside documentary’s pursuit of truth and the influence of both investigative and observational forms of documentary, merged to inhibit the effect of subjectivity on early documentary. Another factor which has been identified is the “fly on the wall” approach of Direct Cinema³ (Chapman, 2009). It was thought that because these filmmakers did not interfere in the filming process and captured the action as it naturally unfolded, that they somehow came closer to capturing the truth or “reality”. The advent of synthesised documentary in the 1970s, with its reliance on interviewees meant that in order to remain impartial documentarists would have to trust that their interviewees, would tell the truth.

“(T)he problem of objectivity in the context of documentary in one sense or another concerns the idea that the camera *does not lie*, that there is some kind of essence to any scene that unfolds, and that it is a documentarian’s role to capture this scene and bring it to the screen in as unbiased, unfiltered and truthful a form as possible”

(Butchart, 2006: 429, original emphasis)

“Objective” is defined in the dictionary as “(of a person or their judgement) not influenced by personal feelings or opinions in considering and representing facts ... not dependent on the mind for existence; *a matter of objective fact*” (Oxford Dictionaries(a), n.d. original emphasis). It is believed that by showing more sides of an issue it is less likely for it to become distorted (Van Laanen, 2010). Thus, the purpose a

documentary is intended for becomes a crucial factor when it comes to how subjectively or objectively the truth of the situation is pursued. Currently, it is primarily in journalistic filmmaking⁴ that a degree of objectivity in the reportage of current affairs is still fashionable (Chapman, 2009).

While there is a connotation in the title of “documentary filmmaker” that induced the viewer to believe what they are watching is a “true” presentation of fact, all documentarists can really accomplish is to comment on the issue or event (Van Laanen, 2010). This is due to the non-repeatable⁵ factor of human behaviour, which stops documentary from achieving the same objective standards as science (Chapman, 2009). The editing of a documentary also causes issues. In order for the audience to get a comprehensive view of the topic in a short space of time, documentarists must edit their films and because of the nature of documentaries they are usually “found and shaped during the editing process” (Latson, 2003: 2). There is a huge freedom involved in this process but with this freedom comes a responsibility to represent the subject fairly. However, documentarists are not the only people who follow this ethic⁶ and moreover, not all documentarists follow this ethic. As such, objectivity should not be used as a defining characteristic of the genre (Chapman, 2009).

An example which highlights this can be found in *The Pipe*⁷. *The Pipe* (O'Domhnaill, 2010) is about the proposed building of the Corrib Gas Line in Rossport, Co. Mayo and the protests of the local community against it. In the film the residents of the community reveal their point of view on the topic and how it will affect their lives as well as their fight against it. It appears to be filmed in almost an observational style with its fly-on-the-wall recording of community meetings⁸. In terms of the interviews, the interviewees address the camera almost as if they are addressing the audience members personally. There is no obvious formality between the camera and the interviewee⁹. The film also uses title cards to relay important information instead of voice over. At a screening of the film in The Loft, Limerick City on the 26th of January 2011, the director Risteard O'Domhnaill revealed that this was because the villagers of Rossport told their story much better than he could. He also disclosed that he does not view his film as a documentary, but just as a film. He indicated that the label of “documentary” was too constrictive and connotational.

O'Domhnaill's background¹⁰ is in journalism. Traditionally, journalism has been associated with giving an objective and balanced view of an issue as well as subscribing to an ethic of fairness. In the interest of balance, he did contact Shell Oil Company and asked them to be involved but they declined to do so. As such it would have been impossible for this film to have been made in the traditional journalistic documentary style. O'Domhnaill also explained that the reason he decided to make the film from this perspective is because he felt that the reporting of the events in the media were biased in favour of Shell Oil and he wanted the "truth" from the Rosspport Community's view to be known as well. He attempts to represent the views of an underrepresented group from the stance of an observer¹¹. Yet even if it were possible for his input to be completely removed from the film, it would still be a subjective portrayal of events because it only shows the events from the Rosspport perspective. Nonetheless, it *is* impossible to completely remove the filmmaker's influence from a film. Therefore objectivity, taken in its most literal sense, cannot be considered to be a characteristic of the genre as a whole if such films as *The Pipe* are to be considered documentaries.

"(D)ocumentary is at its best when it is impassioned as well as informative"

(Chapman, 2009: 57)

The dictionary defines "subjective" as "based on or influenced by personal feelings, tastes, or opinions ... dependent on the mind or on an individual's perception for its existence" (Oxford Dictionaries(b), n.d.). "Documentaries are constructed artefacts" and "authored constructs" (Winston, 1988: 33; Rabiger, 2004: 52) and as such there will always be an element of subjectivity involved in their production. The existence of this subjectivity is now academically accepted: everything we do as documentarists is subjective: the choice of what to film, who, even down to the choice of when to press record on the camera. Even if it were possible to remove subjectivity in the treatment of the subject, this level of subjectivity would remain.

However, audiences' do not seem to accept subjectivity in documentary as readily as the academics. Some recent documentaries have been criticised for their subjectivity: personality led films like *Bowling for Columbine*¹² (Moore, 2002) have been deemed to be too partisan, biased and subjective. *An Inconvenient Truth*¹³ (Guggenheim, 2007) was disparaged for not showing challenges to the ideas it was trying to convey by allowing people with opposing opinions to contest Al Gore's (the presenter) view or to show alternative perspectives on the issue. However, personalised documentaries about migrant workers, which because they show events from the migrant's perspective are subjective, are widely accepted as a "creative approach for documentary communication" (Chapman, 2009: 68). The audiences' reaction to subjectivity then appears to be based on the "level of personalization applied" (Ibid, 69) and the way in which the subjectivity is employed.

"A documentary film tells a story about real life, with claims to truthfulness"

(Chapman, 2009: 2)

A central issue at the heart of the discussion of subjectivity and objectivity in documentary is that of truth. "The documentary tradition relies heavily on being able to convey to us the impression of authenticity" (Nichols, 2001: xiii). Spence & Navarro (2011) tell us that because documentaries claim the events on screen took place in a certain way and are accurate, it is not surprising that people associate documentaries with truth. They attempt to show us something worth knowing about the world: "Their makers manipulate and distort reality like all filmmakers, but they still make a claim for making a truthful representation of reality", despite the levels of fabrication involved in documentary production (Aufderheide, 2007: 10; Corner, 1996). However, this can be problematic for documentary as it is an "aesthetic" form which requires it to be pleasing to viewers who may not see facts as facts if they are portrayed as too aesthetically pleasing (Renov, 1993). According to the dictionary, truth is "the quality or state of being true", "that which is true or in accordance with fact or reality", or "a fact or belief

that is accepted as true” (Oxford Dictionaries(c), n.d.). In a documentary context however, it is based on perspective (Butchart, 2006).

“Arguably, all filmmakers imbue a sense of their own cognitive perspective of the world in their films, whether fictional or non-fictional. To individual documentary filmmakers, as it is with every individual in the world, it is how they interpret and cognitively process their experiences in this world that is their ‘truth’.”

(Sparkes, 2006: 51)

Intertwined with the notion of truth is that of fact. A fact is “a thing that is known or proved to be true” (Oxford Dictionaries(d), n.d.). According to Rodriguez-Mangual (2008: 298) “while documentary film purports to be based on facts, in the technological process of filmmaking itself some elements of fiction must exist”. Facts cannot exist without fiction and vice versa and it is for this she reason terms documentary: “factual fiction” (ibid). Documentaries can be so persuasive that viewers forget about the information the documentarians did not include (Spence & Navarro, 2011). “(T)hey seem to offer proof” of the truth of the story they are telling (Ellis, 2012). They do this by weaving facts into a comprehensible argument by examining the “evidence” before them on the topic.

This raises the issue of trust. “Trust is an important foundation for documentary” (Nash, 2010: 28). People watch documentaries to be informed, to learn. This involves an element of trust; we trust that we are not being misinformed by those who would educate us (Spence & Navarro, 2011). In order to gain the trust of the audience, it was believed that documentaries should show an objective or unbiased account of the facts (Ibid). “(W)e do expect that a documentary will be a fair and honest representation of somebody’s experience of reality” (Aufderheide, 2007: 3). It is because of this that the audience may then have expectations that the documentary should follow through on its truth claims and only give correct and verified facts (Butchart, 2006).

This is highlighted by a recent documentary on BBC as part of their *The World* strand called *The Shame of the Catholic Church*¹⁴ (2012) which aired on May 1st. The aim of this programme was to examine the allegations of sexual abuse made against two Catholic priests in the 1970s and 1980s in Ireland. During the programme, one of the men who had been abused revealed that the Primate of Ireland, Cardinal Brady, had been told what was happening, and who it was happening to, and did nothing about it. Since the programme aired, there have been numerous calls for Cardinal Brady's resignation because of this. The audience called for this because they trust and believe that the interviewee who made this claim was telling the truth and revealing all the facts of the story. They were affected by the documentary's claim to truth, although they may not have realised this¹⁵ (Spence & Navarro, 2011). If audience members were then to discover that there was misinformation given in the documentary; that these allegations were incorrect, for whatever reason, they may become disillusioned about documentary's truth claims which may lead to real life consequences for the people involved.

To avoid this, the Canada Broadcasting Commission (CBC) has introduced a policy regarding the transmission of documentaries. This

“policy (has been) introduced permitting executives to select any documentary for transmission, even if ‘biased’, so long as it was factually correct and not funded by any organisation with a direct interest in the content”.

(Chapman, 2009: 58)

This however, begs the question of what we consider to be factually accurate and by what criteria. This notion of factual accuracy is based on the ideals of current affairs. There is currently a perception that current affairs programming should be balanced. Unfortunately this can lead to the fringes being omitted and which may make people more inclined to sit on the fence about the issue (ibid). With the advent of new media technologies, it has also become easier for amateurs to distribute their own documentaries. These documentaries may not follow the guidelines of fairness already stated. As such they may unwittingly misinform their audience with incorrect information, who may then believe it to be true (ibid).

Examining them from the point of view of their dictionary definitions, we can see that the terms “fact” and “truth” are inextricably linked: perhaps even dependant on each other. In an attempt to separate them however, it could be hypothesised that maybe facts traditionally have a strong relationship with objective science methodologies, whereas truth can be more subjective. It can be seen from this where the confusion may also lie in terms of subjectivity and objectivity. If it is factual, and facts are objective then it is plausible to think that the documentary is factual, objective and truthful.

However, putting aside the inherent subjectivity of the form, truth can also be subjective, despite its intertwinement with fact. A fact can be a stand-alone point¹⁶, it does not necessarily need human interaction with it to give it meaning. Truth on the other hand is a completely human construct; it can be made up of facts¹⁷ but is ultimately woven together and given meaning by a person, be it the person who tells it or the person who hears it. As such, because of this human involvement, it automatically becomes a subjective construct. Yet this is in opposition to how we discuss truth. Particularly in a documentary context, truth is discussed as if there can, or should, be only one “objective” – uninfluenced – truth. This indicates that there may not be an awareness among the documentary audience of the inherent subjectivity that is automatically a part of what makes up this concept.

Chapman (2009) does tell us however that it can be possible to find an “objective¹⁸” truth amongst the subjective truths in a story. *Tarnation*¹⁹ (Caouette, 2003) is about a boy’s relationship with his schizophrenic mother. Through the use of subjective footage²⁰ Caouette establishes the subjective truth of his love for his mother, which would be almost impossible to do from an objective standpoint (ibid). His love for his mother is a constant truth throughout the film which supersedes the “truth” of individual circumstances that occur in the film.

Williams (2005:61) argues for a “postmodern truth – a truth which, far from being abandoned, still operates powerfully as the receding horizon of the documentary tradition”. She claims that past events can only be cited from memory and thus can never fully be represented. Each person’s truth is affected by their memory which is of course imperfect. Consequently, unless a camera captures the event we cannot know the exact happenings of the incident in question as what the person recalls is not the full

story. On the other hand, what a camera captures can be misinterpreted in significant ways and the truth may still not come to light²¹. Conceivably, it may be impossible to completely know the truth of a situation and all we can hope for is to come to an approximation of the truth.

Instead of focusing on the truth, maybe we should be concentrating instead on the lies in documentary (Williams, 2005). It is easier to point out what is wrong with something than to say what is right about it. Some documentaries such as *The Thin Blue Line* can “show how lies function as partial truths to both the agents and witnesses of history’s trauma” (ibid: 69). In the film, Morris interviews a number of people about a murder. They each have a different story to tell about it; their subjective remembered account of what they saw that night. They each, for whatever reasons, have several inconsistencies or lies in their stories, and by comparing them to each other Morris is able to expose the inaccuracies. This exposure is what shed enough doubt on the matter to allow for Morris to interrogate the man who accused Randal Adams of the crime, to the point where he revealed information which led to Adams being released from prison. Perhaps by following this example and revealing the erroneousness or inconsistencies in a story it might be easier to come to an approximation of the truth in documentary.

From this examination of the concepts of objectivity, subjectivity and truth in documentary, we can see that these notions are very complex and are complicated further by the imperfect interpretations of human beings. Perhaps a redefinition of these concepts is needed.

It has been determined here that objectivity in documentary, in the strict dictionary definitional sense of it, is impossible. There will always be subjectivity involved in the production process of a film as it is a series of selections made by a subjective person. In terms of the treatment of the subject matter, while it may be possible to treat it impartially (showing all sides of the issue) which would allow the viewer to make up their own mind on the subject, this is not always an option (as in the case of *The Pipe*). Ideally it could be said that documentarists should only use factually correct information in their films, but this is hampered by the assessment of what is considered to be factually accurate: who’s responsibility is it to decide what makes something factually accurate and by what criteria. How also does the relationship between fact and

truth impact on the audiences perception of documentary. Can a documentary be factual but not truthful, or truthful but not factual? Can you have a documentary that is neither? Which harkens back to the question of how to define the genre.

These questions need to be addressed further and relayed to the documentary audience. An exchange of viewpoints between academics, filmmakers and audience members may be a way of moving forward from this current impasse. Through an exploration of these viewpoints – like Morris’s exposure of the inconsistencies of the witnesses in the Randall Adams case – a “truth” may be discovered in documentary as to what place these concepts have or should have in relation to it. These concepts, in particular those of fact and truth, have particular importance in relation to the next chapter on reality TV as the misrepresentation of events and people in these shows is seen as a differentiating feature between these two categories of viewing.

Chapter 3 Notes

¹ This notion is in part based on the Humanistic Approach to psychology as described in Gross (2009: 288-299). Gross states that each person lives “in a world of our own creation and have a unique perception of the world” (288), that in fact a person is not shaped by what happens in the “external reality” but by how they perceive the reality themselves”. “Behaviour, therefore, must be understood in terms of the individual’s *subjective experience*, from the perspective of the actor” (289).

² While the “camera” may not lie, our interpretations of what it shows can definitely be incorrect, as the Rodney King case in America proves. The footage of this man being beaten was used to different ends in a court case, as they were interpreted differently and parts used selectively by both the prosecution and defence. “The trial verdict, and the arson and insurrection that followed, were prompted by rival interpretations of images that were assumed by all to be unambiguously ‘real’, even though their meaning was contested. Yet people were wrong to believe that the images spoke for themselves; we know now that this is not the case.” (Chapman, 2009:53).

³ Direct Cinema, as discussed in a previous chapter, was a documentary movement which originated in America and was instigated by Robert Drew. Practitioners of this model of filmmaking tried to be as unobtrusive as possible during the filmmaking process as they believed that they then would have little to no impact on the situation they were filming and that it would then unfold naturally, as it would have if they had not been there.

⁴ This type of film-making would include investigative documentaries such as the Channel 4 “Dispatches” series, news programmes and current affairs programmes such as RTE’s “PrimeTime”.

⁵ The term non-repeatable is used in the sense that no person will react the exact same way to a stimulus upon a repeat presentation.

⁶ An Ethic of Fairness involves documenting people's claims accurately, using captions to highlight archival footage and verifying the facts.

⁷ *The Pipe* (2010) concerns the battle between the community of Rosspport in Co. Mayo and the Shell Oil Company over a pipeline they planned to build in the community. It was directed by Risteard Ó Domhnaill and produced by Rachel Lysaght, filmed in colour and 83 minutes long (IMDB(lviii), n.d.).

⁸ It would seem that by the time of these meetings the people being filmed have become used to the camera's presence and have forgotten that it is there. They share their views, aggressively in some cases, with no regard as to how it might be perceived. The audience is drawn in and made to feel that they are a bystander in the actual room where the meeting is taking place.

⁹ This may be because the residents of Rosspport knew O'Domhnaill well as he had relatives living there.

¹⁰ O'Domhnaill originally began filming in Rosspport as part of a news report on the issue, however, he was unhappy with how the people of Rosspport were being represented in these reports and so decided to make his own film about it (Moon, n.d.).

¹¹ He does not make any personal comment on the activities, but simply films what he sees.

¹² *Bowling for Columbine* (2002) is a 120 minute film directed by Michael Moore exploring the roots of gun violence in America (IMDB(lix), n.d.).

¹³ *An Inconvenient Truth* (2007) concerns a lecture given by Al Gore on the dangers of Global Warming. It was filmed in colour, directed by Davis Guggenheim, produced by Lawrence Bender Productions and Participant Productions, with a running time of 100 minutes (IMDB(lx), n.d.).

¹⁴ *The Shame of the Catholic Church* (2012) was directed and produced by Allison Miller for the BBC. It is one hour in duration and deals with the allegations of sexual abuse made in the 80's against two priests which were incorrectly dealt with by the church (BBC(b), n.d.).

¹⁵ Viewers may not realise that they can make automatic assumptions of truth when watching a documentary. They become so emotionally involved in a story that they may forget to be critical about its sources.

¹⁶ Such as the sun rises in the east and sets in the west.

¹⁷ Or mistruths

¹⁸ By this a universal truth is meant. Something that is true regardless of the ins and outs of the situation.

¹⁹ *Tarnation* (2003) is about a boy's life living with his schizophrenic mother. It was directed by Jonathan Caouette, and is 88 minutes long (IMDB(lxi), n.d.).

²⁰ The film was shot over a period of 20 years.

²¹ As in the aforementioned Rodney King Case.

Chapter 4

Reality TV

“Why is reality TV pretending that it’s real, so that we may cannily believe its phony, when it accurately portrays the reality of contrivance in contemporary society?”

(Andrejevic, 2004: 17)

The debate surrounding hybrid forms of documentary has raged since the 1930s (Corner, 1996). Reality TV is a genre of programmes which claim to show the “real” by using documentary footage, and as such can be classed as a hybrid form of documentary. It stems from the observational documentaries which became popular in the late 50s and early 60s (Morreale, 2003; Lewis, 2008). According to Hill (2005: 59), documentary is one of the genres in factual television in which viewers place significant trust in the “truth claims of audio-visual documentation”. Its techniques have “invaded every audio-visual field” since the 1980s (Lee-Wright, 2010: 115). However, the principal intention behind reality TV appears to be entertainment (Hill, 2005), which is in opposition to the traditional perception of documentary which is to inform and educate¹. It has led to a blurring of the boundaries between fact and fiction and as such:

“The relationship between documentary television and reality TV is cause for concern amongst documentary practitioners and scholars, as the form and content of (these) programmes ... are somewhat removed from traditional documentary values.”

Hill (2005:18)

It is because of this concern and the blurring of boundaries that it is important to look at reality TV in some detail and to analyse its relationship to documentary. This is the aim of this chapter, which will take a brief look at the history of reality television and some of the more prominent issues concerning it: definition of the genre, its appeal, its manipulation of documentary footage for entertainment purposes, and surveillance TV.

4.1 The Evolution of Reality TV

The first recorded instance of what could be categorised as “Reality TV” is the programme *Candid Camera*² in 1948 (Latson, 2003). However, it was *An American Family*³ in 1973 which is attributed with being the precursor to modern reality television. It was shot in a documentary style format and explored the lives of the Loud family, including displaying on screen the breakup of Mr and Mrs Loud’s marriage and the revelation of their son’s homosexuality (IMDB(lxii), n.d.). *An American Family*, often described as the “Ultimate Soap Opera” established the foundation for future programmes like *Big Brother*⁴ (Andrejevic, 2004: 71). The UK equivalent arrived in 1974 in the form of *The Family*; which is the attributed forebear of the British docu-soap (Lewis, 2008). This was followed by *Living in the Past* (1978)⁵ and *Police*⁶ in 1982 (Morreale, 2003). Concurrently in the U.S were programmes such as *PM Magazine*⁷ (1976), *Real People*⁸ (1979), and *That’s Incredible*⁹ in 1980 (Slocum, n.d.).

These programmes remained few and far between however until the late 80’s and early 90’s (Hill, 2005). In America, *Unsolved Mysteries*¹⁰ began airing in 1987, *America’s Most Wanted*¹¹ in 1988, and *Cops*¹² in 1989. These programmes, the latter ones in particular, involve a mish-mash of “seemingly spontaneous action with on-camera commentary, dramatic recreations, and voice-over narration” (Morreale, 2003:5).

In Britain, 1993 saw the beginning of the rise of the docu-soap with *Sylvania Waters*¹³ - which has been described as the successor to *The Family* (ibid) - and *Children’s Hospital*¹⁴ (Lee-Wright, 2010). It received much critical attention for its hybridized features (Corner, 1996). The docu-soap has “no hard and fast definition” but stems from a “long running fascination with the fictional everyday life of ordinary people”¹⁵ which arose from the observational documentary (ibid: 110; Bruzzi, 2006). It was this “randomness of individual behaviour which was at the heart of docu-soaps”. These programmes were followed in 1996 with *Airport*¹⁶ and other doc-soaps such as: *Hotel*¹⁷ (1997), *Driving School*¹⁸ (1997), *Vets in Practice*¹⁹(1997) and *The Cruise*²⁰ in 1998 (Morreale, 2003). According to Lee-Wright, there were four docu-soaps on the air in

Britain in 1995. This had increased to 22 by 1998. However, the “gold rush” was over by 2001 when the hours allocated by the BBC to docu-soaps fell to 26 from 48 (ibid).

Reality TV game shows entered the mainstream in 1992 with MTV’s *The Real World*²¹ (Andrejevic, 2004; Ponzer, 2010). It has been described as an updated version of *An American Family* for the “MTV generation” and suggested that its success lies in its combination of documentary-style footage with the game show structure (Andrejevic, 2004:72). However, it was not until the summer of 2000 that the real reality TV boom, and in particular reality TV game show boom, began. *Survivor*²² aired, became a massive hit and turned out to be the most popular summer series on American television to date (Andrejevic, 2004). *Big Brother* also aired for the first time in both the U.S. and the U.K. but was a bigger hit in the U.K. during its first season with 10 million UK viewers (ibid; Hill, 2005). That same year, over 70% of the population in the UK were watching reality TV programmes on a regular basis (Hill, 2005). The first Irish made reality TV programme was *Treasure Island*²³ in 2001 with ratings figures of 120,000 viewers (O’Connor, 2007). By 2003 the reality TV style had become the dominant filming style for television programmes and had instigated the creation of two new categories in the U.S. Academy of Television Arts and Sciences awards: one which deals with the game show component and one for the programmes which contend with events from “real” life (ibid: 7). By 2004 there were more than 50 reality based formats on cable and network television in the U.S. (Andrejevic, 2004) and by 2006 in Ireland, there were 595,000 people watching *Celebrity Jigs ‘n’ Reels*²⁴ (O’Connor, 2007). Currently “reality TV is an integral part of the contemporary Irish cultural landscape” (Ibid: 189).

4.2 Reality TV – Definitions, Appeal and Analysis

Everyone has an idea of what the label “Reality TV” refers to, however this varies from person to person, and academically speaking, it is a “loosely defined genre” with no clear delineation (Nabi, 2007; Andrejevic, 2004:7, O’Connor, 2007). It has been used as a “catch-all category” to describe an extensive range of programmes based on real people which “incorporate(s) an element of audience interaction” (Hill, 2005: 2; Andrejevic, 2004: 12; Papacharissi & Mendelson, 2007). One of the first attempts to define it included: “a hybrid mix of presenter talk, verité material, dramatic reconstruction and various forms of audience participation”) but this was later deemed “notoriously imprecise” (Kilborn, 1994 as cited in O’Connor, 2007; O’Connor, 2007: 189). While it utilizes documentary techniques in its production process, there is a crucial difference between the two genres: “(r)eality TV is format based” with a much higher rate of predictability, although what occurs within the format is not necessarily constructed and did happen as a response to an actual situation (Ellis, 2012: 9; Bruzzi, 2006; Skeggs & Wood, 2008).

It has consistently been attacked for being “voyeuristic, cheap, sensationalist television” (Hill, 2005: 7). It creates a situation which would not have occurred outside of the programme, unlike documentaries which traditionally aim to have minimal influence over the situation (Bruzzi, 2006; Lewis, 2008). The use of the term “reality” in the label for this genre has been described as ironic and a misnomer because the situation causes heightened emotions and the use of digital editing allows producers and directors the ability to alter footage far more easily than in the past (ibid; Weber, 2009). In *Road Rules*²⁵ producers cut back on the allotted money and food participants were allowed in order to film them arguing about it (Andrejevic, 2004). Contestants also barter with producers saying that they’ll say what they want them to say, whether it’s true or not, in order to get something they want (Pozner, 2010). On *Joe Millionaire*²⁶ editing techniques were used to make it appear that one of the female contestants had oral sex with the male title character, which did not really happen (Latson, 2003).

One way of thinking about reality television is as part of an emerging genre of “imaginative documentaries” (ibid). These imaginative documentaries use editing tools to create an interpretation of events from documentary footage. These interpretations would not be construed by the audience from the original, unedited footage and allow the filmmaker to reveal the story they want to show. Latson (2003: 5) does argue however, that this is not an excuse for editors “to form a complete untruth or blatantly misrepresent subjects and events”. Reality TV programmes “contain a little reality that is stretched a long way” through editing to make it more dramatic than it might otherwise be (Ellis, 2012: 9).

A question which comes to mind during a study of reality television is: What is the appeal of this genre? One answer might be “its lottery-like ability to make a star of a ‘nobody’.” (Andrejevic, 2004: 4). It allows people who might not necessarily have the talent to make it as an actor, singer etc. to have their 15 minutes of fame on television. While documentaries and other factual programmes traditionally found their own subjects, “(n)ow, significant numbers of the audience beat a path to the producer’s door, desperate for their moment in the spotlight and willing to do just about anything for it” (Lee-Wright, 2001: 228). It is believed that everyone has the opportunity to be on reality TV, no matter their circumstances, be they poor, rich, old, young, black, white, Asian, whatever the case may be. Viewers also claim to more readily identify with the cast members, whom they believe to be non-professional actors (Andrejevic, 2004).

Its appeal can also partially be attributed to the increase in relatively inexpensive technology allowing reality television programmes to be made and broadcast on a fraction of the budget of fictional programmes (Andrejevic, 2004; Pozner, 2010; Weber, 2009). The cheapest ones serve as “air filler”: media producers are “(e)namoured of reality TV’s high ratings, low production costs, and product placement revenue” (Pozner, 2010: 15); as well as its appeal to the 18-24 demographic which is a big draw for advertisers as well as producers (Andrejevic, 2004). Reality TV can also provide escapism: escape from the reality of a life we dislike through the “reality” of another life. Another appealing feature of reality TV is attempting to figure out when the contestants are “being themselves” or when they are “acting” (O’Connor, 2007). Viewers find entertainment in analysing the shows for clues that participants on these

shows are putting on a show instead of portraying the “real” the programme claims to be providing. Audience members consider this to be cheating and get a thrill from identifying reality television participants who are “cheating”. There can also be an element of *schadenfreude*²⁷ involved in enjoying reality TV according to Pozner (2010) where we enjoy seeing other people go through a misfortune so we can say to ourselves, at least my life isn’t that bad.

However, while these factors may be what initially convince us to turn on the programme, what actually “*hooks us*” is how they reinforce “deeply ingrained societal biases” (ibid: 17, original emphasis). One study found that some audience motivations for watching reality TV were:

- It functions as a social ritual
- It appears realistic
- It contains information that the audience may find useful

(Papacharissi & Mendelson, 2007).

It was also found that the more realistic it appeared to be the greater the affinity the viewers had for it. This exposure was linked to a greater appreciation of its entertainment value. This implied that for those who enjoyed it to do so, they first have to accept the reality of the genre and acquire a liking for it (ibid).

As highlighted by the sponsorship advert by Echo Falls which precedes *Come Dine With Me*²⁸ on Channel 4 each evening, with the by-line “Unscripted Moments”²⁹, it is generally believed that what participants on reality TV programmes say is unscripted. However, this is not always the case. “(A)ll reality shows employ writers – just underpaid, non-union ones” (Pozner, 2010: 23). Writers create dialogue for monologues where contestants are asked to say certain things for the camera, or “dialogue can be fed to participants in a pinch” in order to create drama (ibid: 28). The producers can also engage in a process whose term was coined by Pozner as “Frankenbiting”. This is where producers edit down, or edit two different conversations together to change the meaning of the words. An example she gives is of an episode of a programme called *The Dating Experiment*³⁰ where a female contestant was uninterested in the male counterpart picked

out for her by producers. In order to get her to give them what they wanted, the producers asked her to name her favourite actor. She was recorded saying “I love Adam Sandler”. The producers cut this down to “I love Adam” which was the name of the male contestant and broadcast this audio “to support (their) chosen narrative” (ibid: 27).

“(T)he public can’t be blamed for underestimating the depth of deception involved. The central conceit – that participants are “real people” experiencing “real emotions” – is used to hide the storytelling work of casting directors, writers, editors, videographers, and production teams, as well as advertisers who contribute to visuals, dialogue, and plot development. Behind-the-scenes manoeuvrings are hidden off-camera, and the remaining veneer of authenticity allows networks to package this programming almost as pseudo-documentaries.”

(Pozner, 2010: 24)

Reality TV has at times been criticised for its lack of ethics (Hill, 2005). “Manipulation and misrepresentation ... some feel ... have become production devices in these factual formats” (Lee-Wright, 2010: 222). ABC’s *Wife Swap*³¹ switched the wife of an Oklahoma Christian with a gay man, then he alleges, threatened not to reveal where she was, and insinuated that she would leave him, if he did not take part in the programme, which caused him to become mentally ill (ibid). Pozner (2010: 27) accuses television producers of “deliberate casting” where they intentionally choose people who not only fit stock character³² profiles but who will “behave in hypersensitive, bizarre, or stereotypical ways” in order to create drama. Viewers are led to believe these stock characters are the real personalities of these people. However, “real people are not the same as represented people” and the characters we see on these programmes are no more real than those shown on fictional programmes (Weber, 2009: 16). While the majority of viewers on some level may realise that there is an element of manipulation involved, this does not stop them passing judgement on the real people these depictions represent: “Today we talk, blog, write, and read about reality TV participants as if we *know* them” (Pozner, 2009: 23, original emphasis).

In recent years there has been a proliferation of internet webcam programmes which “represent the flip side of sensationalistic reality entertainment: a sheer fascination with the ability to peer into the mundane existence of strangers” (Andrejevic, 2004: 74). In these shows, people put their inner lives on display for the entire world to see, in return for a monetary reward (Papacharissi & Mendelson, 2007). These productions may be perhaps the first authentic presentation of unedited reality. Andrejevic (2004: 121) discusses how this was technique used in the production of *Big Brother U.S.*, in particular the first season:

“Not only was the *Big Brother* version of reality unscripted, undirected, and un-acted, it was also, at least online, unedited; a promise none of the other reality shows could make.”

Essentially the first season of *Big Brother U.S.* was made up of two elements, the televised show which was edited down for a one hour segment of consumption, and the live streaming online which was unedited³³ and broadcast 24 hours a day. It was likened to a social experiment in anthropological investigation of human interaction. However, the use of these two methods of broadcasting highlighted the artificiality of the television programme. Those who watched the online streaming followed by the television programme were able to see where the producers made their edits and changed the programme to fit their preferred narrative. It ended up making previously oblivious viewers aware of just how manipulative the editing process can potentially be (ibid).

Hill (2005: 57) identifies another issue arising from the reality TV genre: “the more entertaining a factual programme is, the less real it appears to viewers”. In order to attract viewers, reality TV programmes are edited and packaged in an entertaining manner; however, the more entertaining the programme is the more the audience is sceptical and distrustful of its authenticity. Editing “will usually lead to a distortion of the event, whether it is intentional or not... But editing is a necessary process in order to form the footage into something presentable with a storyline and purpose” (Latson, 2003). However, if it is possible to manipulate a programme to an extent that it

completely changes the context from which it was shot, then it is possible to make something which people trust to be as accurate as is humanly possible, into a fiction.

“Formats and reality television have not replaced traditional documentary, but repossessed and reimagined many of its techniques in a new dawn for factual television.”

(Lee-Wright, 2010: 233).

It is no longer expected that television producers reflect on the implications of the formats they create: Their job is to make the most compelling programmes”, whereas “(w)anting to make a difference was what motivated most of those who chose to make documentaries in television” (ibid: 233). This highlights the difference in motivations between the makers of programmes in each genre. Documentarists have their search for “truth” and the reality TV producers have their search to find the most entertaining programme which will bring in the most viewers and highest ratings. With such differences in motivation it is important to distinguish between the genres and be sure that audience members do not confuse documentary and reality TV as being the same thing. The reason for this is similar to the previous argument in relation to fact: if people think it is “real”- an accurate reflection of what occurred: they will form opinions based on its reality status. They may then act upon these opinions which could have unforeseen consequences later, not just for them but for how the “ordinary people” on the programmes may be treated after the show. They will also feel betrayed if they then later discover that it was not an accurate portrayal. If the programme is also misrepresented as or confused with a documentary, and has these issues, it will also reflect badly on that genre.

“The difficulty that television audiences have with defining popular factual programmes suggests that broad generic categories such as documentary or reality are shorthand for much more complex and varied formats within factual television”

(Hill, 2005: 172)

For these reasons it is important to ascertain the audiences' view of what they consider to be a "documentary", and if they consider reality TV to fall into this category. According to Hill (2005: 173), viewers think of factual programmes on a "sliding scale of fact and fiction". They are important evaluators of these genres. They value accurate information and truthfulness in their factual programming but need less of it in their reality TV programmes: "(r)eality can be staged, but the staging has to be clearly marked by programme makers for audiences" (ibid: 177). O'Connor (2007: 202) believes that the "subjective reality of (the) viewers" needs to be taken into consideration when determining the relationship between reality TV and documentary. The remaining chapters will begin to examine these issues, beginning in the next chapter with an overview of audience research methodologies and research relevant to the research conducted in this thesis.

Chapter 4 Notes

¹ Entertainment does have a role here as well; it is a secondary perception as the entertainment derived tends to be from gaining this knowledge. It tends to be a much less engineered entertainment than the extremes found in reality television and as such not really comparable.

² *Candid Camera* was a prank show, whereby people on the street, unaware that they were being filmed, were subjected to practical jokes (Latson, 2003). It was created by Allen Funt and ran on a variety of channels from 1948 to 2004 in the United States (CrazyAboutTV.com, n.d.)

³ Aired as a documentary, *An American Family* broadcast on PBS from January 1973 to March 1973 on 16mm film with 12 episodes and was produced by Craig Gilbert. (IMDB(lxii), n.d; Heffernan, 2011).

⁴ *Big Brother* is a reality television game show where a number of contestants are contracted to live together in a house for a specified period of time, completing tasks assigned by producers with the aim of winning a monetary award at the end of the show upon being voted the winner by the viewers. Endemol, a television production company based in the Netherlands first released the format in 1999. Since then it has been exported to a wide number of countries worldwide and continues to be broadcast to the current day (BigBrother-World.com, n.d.).

⁵ *Living in the Past* was a recreation of an Iron Age settlement where 15 volunteers tried to survive for a year with only the facilities that would have been available in that period. It was directed by John Percival for BBC Bristol and ran for twelve fifty minute episodes (Dugid, n.d.).

⁶ *Police* was a 9 part fly-on –the-wall series produced by Roger Graef for BBC1 in 1982. Shooting consisted of following members of the Thames Valley's E Division police force around for a year while they were doing their jobs (Sieder(b), n.d.).

⁷ *PM Magazine* originally called *Evening Magazine*, was a news magazine show which began airing on the 2nd of August of 1976 until the end of 1990 and the format was sold to 92 U.S. television markets allowing it to eventually be seen in 85% of television homes in the U.S. (Crew, 2007).

⁸ *Real People* was also a news magazine show but focused on more comedic stories. It aired from 1979 – 1984, and was broadcast on NBC (Talking Moviezzz, 2009).

⁹ *That's Incredible* as a 60 minute show which focused on “the more unusual sides of nature, medicine and human endeavour” and was broadcast on NBC (IMDB(lxiii), n.d.).

¹⁰ *Unsolved Mysteries* is a programme about real life mysteries which asks for audience participation in solving the case via leaving information on their website. It is produced by Cosgrove/Meurer Productions, was created by John Cosgrove and Terry Dunn Meurer, has been broadcast on NBC and CBS networks and continues to be broadcast to the current date (Unsolved Mysteries, n.d.).

¹¹ *America's Most Wanted* is a re-enactment series of crimes, the information for which is derived from police records, eye witness accounts and court testimonies (The New York Times, n.d.). It ran from 1988 to June 2011 on FOX and was created by John Walsh who was also the host. FOX will instead run four two hour specials as its next season with a change of time slot (Bauder, 2011).

¹² *COPS* is produced by Langley Productions and aired in FOX in 1989 and is still running to date (Langley Productions, n.d.). It uses cinema verité techniques to film police officers going about their duties (TV.com(a), n.d.).

¹³ *Sylvania Waters* was a 12 part series produced by the BBC and ABC which documented the lives of the couple Noeline Baker and Laurie Donaher and their children. It was shot over a period of six months, and was produced by Paul Watson and Pamela Wilson and aired between July and October of 1992 (Lumby, n.d.).

¹⁴ *Children's Hospital* (1993) "followed in the observational documentarists' footsteps ... But where it departed from a conventional focus ... was in its concentration on the human dramas being played out in the children's wards" (Lee-Wright, 2010: 110).

¹⁵ This being the lives of fictional characters on soap operas such as *Coronation Street* and *Eastenders*.

¹⁶ *Airport* was a BBC series which documented what goes on behind the scenes at an airport. It aired between 1996 and 2005 on the BBC channels (TV.com(b), n.d.).

¹⁷ *Hotel* was an 8 part series based on the happenings in the Adelphi Hotel in 1997 (BBC, n.d.).

¹⁸ *Driving School* was directed by Francesca Joseph and producer by Mark Fielder. It aired on BBC1 in 1997 with audiences of 12 million. It followed a series of people as they take lessons to prepare for their driving test (Boschi(a), n.d.).

¹⁹ *Vets in Practice* ran from 1997 to 2002 on BBC1 and was produced by BBC Bristol. It followed some graduates of a veterinary school on their first jobs as professional vets (Boschi(b), n.d.).

²⁰ *The Cruise* gave a behind the scenes look at life on board a cruise ship (Mofgimmers, 2011). It was directed by Christopher Terril and broadcast on the BBC in 1998(IMDB(lxv), n.d.).

²¹ *The Real World* is claimed to have launched modern reality TV (MTV Press Release PDF, n.d.). It was created by Mary Ellis Bunim and Jonathan Murray, shot in the United State, has been running from 1992 to the present and revolves around a group of 7 participants who live together in a house and whose daily lives and interactions in that house are recorded (IMDB(lxiv), n.d.). In the beginning it included diverse casts and addressed issues of homosexuality, race, and abortion in a somewhat sensitive way, according to Pozner (2010:12), but it now seems to have digressed to a point where it "specifically cast(s) for racists, assholes, and agitators... it's like a formula."

²² *Survivor* was created by Charlie Parsons, airs on CBS, and involves 16 participants learning to live as a "tribe", facing challenges and eventually being eliminated until there is only one person left as the "survivor" to claim the one million dollar prize at the end of the programme (IMDB(lxvi), n.d.).

²³ *Treasure Island* was produced by Coco Television for RTE1, it aired from 2001 to 2002 for two seasons, 31,000 people applied to be contestants and the chosen contestants were made to face physical and psychological challenges in order to win a cash prize (Flood, 2001; *Treasure Island* (show), n.d.).

²⁴ *Celebrity Jigs 'n' Reels* was produced by Mind the Gap films for RTE1 and was broadcast in 2006. It was of the ilk of *Dancing on Ice* but with Irish dancing instead of ice skating, and its purpose was to raise money for charity (IMDB(lxvii), n.d.)

²⁵ *Road Rules* was broadcast on MTV from 1994 to 2007 and was created by Mary-Ellis Bunim and Jonathan Murray. It involved putting six strangers into an RV and filming them as they travelled to different locations (Fretts, 1995; IMDB(lxiv), n.d.).

²⁶ *Joe Millionaire* aired for one season in the U.S. in 2003. 20 female participants compete over the right to win the affections of a man who they believe to be a millionaire but who in actuality is a construction worker. It was filmed in France, and produced by Rocket Science Laboratories (IMDB(lxviii), n.d.).

²⁷ Schadenfreude means to take pleasure in other people's misfortune.

²⁸ This is a cookery-game show reality programme where 5 contestants take turns hosting each night for a week and score each other on the cooking and hosting skills, and at the end of the week the winner takes away £1000. It is produced for Channel 4 by Granada Television and has run from 2005 to present (Channel 4, n.d.).

²⁹ This can be seen on the ad break before the program and the intervening ones as it is shown each evening Monday through Friday at 5.30pm on Channel 4 or in the same instances on their website for watching repeat episodes called 4oD: <http://www.channel4.com/programmes/come-dine-with-me/4od#3198421> accessed on 13/7/11.

³⁰ *The Dating Experiment* ran for one season in 2003 in the U.S. It was produced by ABC-Greengrass Productions, D S Entertainment (in association with) and Vin Di Bona Productions. It was distributed by ABC (IMDB(lxix), n.d.). The premise involved participants travelling to a secret destination in order to find love, where they were to live their lives, while there, ruled by a mysterious diary (TV.com(e), n.d.).

³¹ *Wife Swap* is a programme where two families swap wives/mothers for 2 weeks, first broadcast in the UK in 2003 and the US in 2004.

³² Pozner believes that reality TV producers create stock characters to fill their programmes with, which propagate stereotypes and encourage racism. These stock characters include Angry Black Woman and Black Woman as Momma.

³³ Although subjected to a 15 minute delay in order to make sure no offensive language was broadcast.

Chapter 5

Audience Research

“(A)udience research can never claim to find the truth about audience practices and meanings, only partial insights about how audiences use the media in a specific context”

(Schroder et al, 2003: 17).

According to Ellis (2012) the documentary audience has changed and its assumptions about how a documentary should be made may be mistaken. This is important to note as part of what makes a film a documentary is the way in which the audience watches it (Saunders, 2010).

“Scholars have pointed to the *need* for an unspoken moral contract between producer, participant and viewer, with each party *expecting a true and honest version* of places, people and events that are to be filmed. If ‘faked’ material is presented, for instance, this would break the contract. *Assumptions by the audience certainly frame the way they receive documentary.* Audiences watch, knowing how such films are made, and with *expectations that real events will be depicted accurately and truthfully*”

(Chapman, 2009: 134, own emphasis)

Chapman (2009) tells us that research on documentary audiences is an overlooked area. It is therefore necessary to discover audience perspectives and expectations of documentary in order to meet their requirements as there is no point in making a film which will not be seen. It is for this reason that an audience research study shall be conducted as part of this inquiry. The methodology used for this study as aforementioned, will use quantitative methodologies. As such, this chapter will give a brief over view of the differences between qualitative and quantitative methodologies. It will then provide a concise synopsis of the movements in audience studies which are

relevant to quantitative research: Effects Research; the Uses and Gratifications Model; and Reception Research. It will also examine some of the studies conducted on Irish audiences and will end with a look at contemporary research on documentary audiences.

“A key determining factor underpinning the prevalent methodologies of any research era is the dominant paradigm or theoretical perspective of the time”

(Gunter, 2000:22)

There has always been a division between qualitative and quantitative methodologies in audience research (Schroder, Drotner, Kline, & Murray, 2003). Qualitative methods involve sampling a small group of people but receiving in-depth information about the topic. It is because of this the results of such research cannot be deemed to be representative and cannot be generalised. However, when conducted correctly quantitative research, which involves greater numbers of participants, can reveal statistically significant representative results which may be generalised, but which cannot give the same depth of analysis.

“Quantitative observations provide a high level of measurement precision and statistical power, while qualitative observations provide a greater depth of information about how people perceive events in the context of the actual situations in which they occur”

(Frey et al, 1991: 99 as cited in Schroder et al, 2003).

The dominant paradigm, until the 1990s, was the quantitative approach, according to Schroder et al (2003), but a shift towards qualitative methodologies has occurred since then and it is now agreed that each has its own merits and can be used for different forms of enquiry.

The study of media audiences began in the 1920s and 30s because of a growing concern about how the media influenced consumer decisions (ibid). This movement to uncover media effects on audiences’ was known as “Effects Research”. It identifies the audience

as being an anonymous mass of individuals with nothing in common except the attention they pay to the mass media (Luers, 2007). According to “Effects Research” there is no interaction between individual members of this mass audience or between individual members and the media itself and it was primarily concerned with the negative effects of the media on society. However, as explicated by Schroder et al (2003:36) in the 1950s these effects were unveiled to be “weak, delayed and indirect”.

“Positivist social science has been concerned with elucidating patterns of media usage and effects, and it places significant weight on research which provides quantitative measurements of media-related phenomena.”

(Gunter, 2000:22)

The “Uses and Gratifications” approach dates back to the 1940s. It reached its peak around the 1960s and 70s and concentrated principally on the media related gratifications and patterns of exposure reported by respondents (Schroder et al, 2003). It places the power of media consumption on the “active” audience (Luers, 2007) and is a complete reversal of ideals from the earlier model (Schroder et al, 2003). Criticisms of the approach include: its individualistic focus, the limitations of the survey research used as its methodology, and “its overriding concern with psychological needs rather than the contextually and socially differentiated needs created by the social formations that frame people’s lives” (ibid:39).

Reception research can trace its origins back to a paper written in the 1970s by Stuart Hall which described an encoding/decoding model of audience reception (Luers, 2007). It places emphasis on two phases of the communicative process: the “encoding undertaken by media professionals in the making of media messages and the decoding that takes place among audience members once the message has been received” (Devereux, 2007:219). This approach describes a continuum where the power lies in the middle between the audience and the text. Reception analysis considers there to be no “‘effect’ without ‘meaning’” (Jensen, 1991:135). Audience members use four codes to interpret a media text known as the dominant, professional, negotiated, and oppositional codes. This gives the audience the opportunity to resist or reconstruct a media message

(Devereux, 2007). Early studies in reception analysis focused on factual genres such as Morley's 1980 study of *Nationwide*. Such studies also discovered that socio-economic background caused a variety of oppositional or alternative decodings from the preferred reading (Hall, 1973). Concurrent research studied the question of pleasure especially in respect of feminine genres (Ang, 1985; Radway, 1984). Other areas of research included: the relationship between gendered identities and media use (Modleski, 1984) and cultural effects on reception (Katz, 1990).

According to Gunter (2000: 238) "(s)urveys have been a prominent feature of media research" and academic social science alongside market research which preoccupies itself with the measurement of media impact. During this time it benefited from scientific advances in sampling techniques and the designing of scales to measure attitudinal responses (ibid). Researchers choose to use surveys when they want to ask similar questions to a wide number and/or variety of people across a number of potential settings in order to examine possible patterns of audience practices (Schroder et al, 2003). They are usually conducted in reasonably natural settings, allow for the collection of large amounts of data, and are relatively cost effective. However, their validity tends to be lower than that of experiments, and "(t)he biggest weakness inherent in survey design, which it shares with all verbal methodologies, is the gap between what people say and what they do" (ibid: 225). They can provide a "snapshot" of what is occurring at a particular point in time. Nevertheless, there has been significant development in its methodological practice which has led to a growth in this area (Gunter, 2000). There are many types of surveys but the form chosen for this research is that of the cross sectional survey. This style of survey acquires self-reported data from the participants regarding their attitudes or media exposure at one particular point in time. "They can reveal degrees of association between claimed media usage and other attitudinal changes ... on individuals but cannot prove cause – effect relationships" (ibid: 240). Since the 1980s all empirical approaches to media studies have come under significant criticism because it fails to take into account the complex meanings which audiences can derive from the media. It has also been recognised that what effects do occur are not automatic responses to media messages.

Audience research is the most underrepresented of all the media studies output currently in Ireland, according to O'Neill & Titley (2011). This is due to the "slow pace of institutional support" for the whole discipline of communications studies (ibid:1). Early Irish research in this area, beginning in the 1980s, focused on broadcasting and Irish culture. However, a significant amount of time passed before there was a more sustained undertaking to produce audience related studies.

The majority of audience research carried out in Ireland has been conducted by market researchers and as such is not in the public domain for consideration (Kelly & O'Connor, 1997). The first major Irish audience study noted by O'Neill and Titley (2011) was that by O'Connor and Fahey (1990) which supplied Irish respondents views on an international study of the television show *Dallas*. They used focus groups to assess gender and class aspects of participant readings of the programme. Kelly and O'Connor (1997) gathered together the existing audience research at that time in one book. The majority of the research at that time was qualitative and there were only two studies in it of relevance to this investigation: Kelly's research on the *Right to Learn*¹ programme and O'Neill's study on *The Arts Show*². The former was relevant because the audience research was conducted on audience responses to a documentary series and the latter because it used quantitative methodologies. The most recent collection of Irish audience research can be found in *Mapping Irish Media* edited by Horgan, O'Connor and Sheehan (2007). They believe that media effects and influences still remain a primary focus for contemporary Irish audience research. The studies included here cover a range of media arenas. However, none of them have a quantitative focus or discuss documentary audiences.

While there appears to be no contemporary studies on Irish documentary audiences available, three international ones were found. Austin (2005) investigated audience responses to screen documentary using the example of the French documentary *Etre et Avoir* (2002, Philibert). The study examined the issues of: fulfilling or refusing the common conceptions of documentary, the perceptions of the audience on the question of truth claims in documentary and the disparity between the ideas of authenticity and sincerity in documentary. The sample consisted of 36 participants the majority of which were educated to degree level and split evenly in terms of gender. The study was

conducted through the means of a questionnaire but due to the small number of participants could not be said to be statistically representative. However it does provoke questions of relevance to this research including: the legitimacy of documentary as a category to describe the film, the notion of documentary giving access to “the real”, and whether the audience trusts documentary to tell the truth of an issue. Interestingly, six of the participants did not realise the film was a documentary until they had finished watching it. One respondent claimed they went despite it being a documentary, since they consider documentaries to be boring and dull. Some participants considered the film to be an exception to what they usually consider documentary to be, as its emotive qualities were highlighted more so than its factual content. Some expected that a documentary should provide more information than was given in this particular film. Austin also found that while many respondents believed that documentaries do not tell the truth, or at least not all of it, they expect that it should.

Chapman (2009: 144) discusses a survey conducted by the Independent Television Commission and the Broadcasting Standards Commission in 2003 in Britain where 60% of participants “believed that documentary provided accurate information”, 42% thought docu-soaps were accurate, and infotainment shows were 68% accurate. Hardy (2008) conducted a survey on documentary audiences in Spain, Austria, the Netherlands and the UK over a 5 year period from 2002 to 2007. 442 questionnaires were given and 16 focus groups carried out. She found that there was no one audience for documentary films and that they separated themselves by subject interest. Audiences had different expectations for documentary films than for fiction ones: they wanted to “gain a personal experience” and to learn from documentaries. The term documentary was seen as an obstruction to encouraging viewers to watch it as it had connotations of seriousness. The participants were uncertain if re-enactments and reconstructions counted as being documentaries, and their primary reasons for watching one were: to learn something; gain insight; compare their view with the directors; relaxation and entertainment. When asked to describe documentary the key words they used were factual, true, serious, commentary, analysis, informative, worthy and boring. However, when she gave them a specific example, very different words were used: exotic; interesting; exciting; riveting. The audiences’ minds linked documentary to its televisual form and that form’s traditionally educational role as opposed to its cinematic form. She

found that 72% of respondents expected a documentary to be informative and 78% expected it to be thought provoking as opposed to entertaining. She also found that the key motivation for watching a documentary was learning with 57.6% saying it was important and 34.4% saying it was very important.

This overview has highlighted the major movements and theories behind quantitative audience research. It has shown that there is limited research into Irish audiences and there has been very few studies conducted on documentary audiences in particular. It is an aim of this study to help redress this gap in the area. This has been done by conducting a quantitative study which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 5 Notes

¹ *Right to Learn* was a documentary series made by unemployed people for the unemployed in order to give them access to information on unemployment, education and the media (Kelly, 1997). Kelly showed the programmes to 12 groups of unemployed people which totalled 102 respondents and was the programmes target audience. All participants responded well to the programme having been made by unemployed people. She also found three factors which affected how participants responded to the programme: “These included the adult education context of the research which drew on established norms of respectful interaction between adult education participants; secondly differential conversational patterns between men and women’s groups as well as gendered stylistic preferences; and thirdly the socio-political perspectives which groups brought to their reading of the texts” (Ibid:36).

² *The Arts Show* was an arts review programme broadcast on RTÉ Radio 1. The study was conducted by Brian O’Neill and utilized survey methodology. The purpose of the study was to investigate “middlebrow popularisation of legitimate, dominant culture... and ... to examine audience responses to the eclectic mix of art forms that it presents across the cultural spectrum” (O’Neill, 1997:49).

Chapter 6

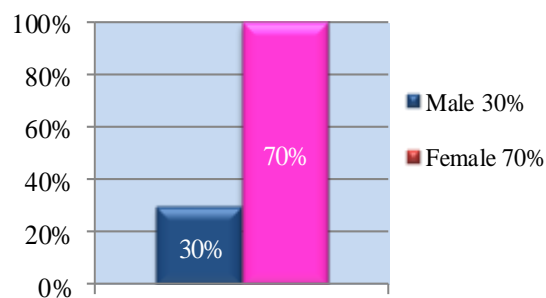
Results

In this section the results of the questionnaire will be reported and discussed. They will be interpreted in the broader view of the entire thesis in the following discussion chapter. This chapter is broken down into a number of sub-sections: Demographics, Defining Documentary, The Purpose of Documentary, Factuality and Truth in Documentary, Objectivity and Balance in Documentary, and Genres and Programmes.

6.1 Demographics

In this study there were 200 participants, 30% male and 70% female (see Figure 1). The study was conducted in Mary Immaculate College in which the female to male ratio is high in favour of females so this result is not unexpected, however it limits the possibility of discussing gender differences in responses.

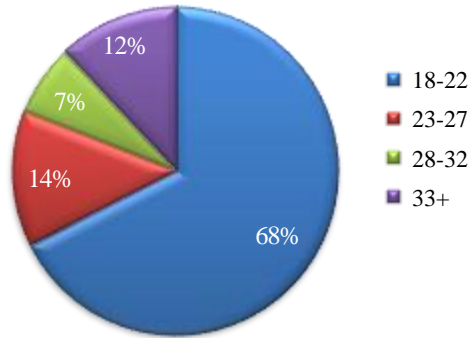
Figure 1: Gender



Self-selection sampling was used to elect participants. Originally there were 10 categories of ages, but due to small numbers in some categories these were compressed to four: ages 18-22 (with 67.5% falling in this category), 23-27 (with 13.5% falling into this category), 28-32 (with 7% falling into this category) and 33+ (with 12% falling into this category). This can be seen in Figure 2. Again, this is not unexpected as the

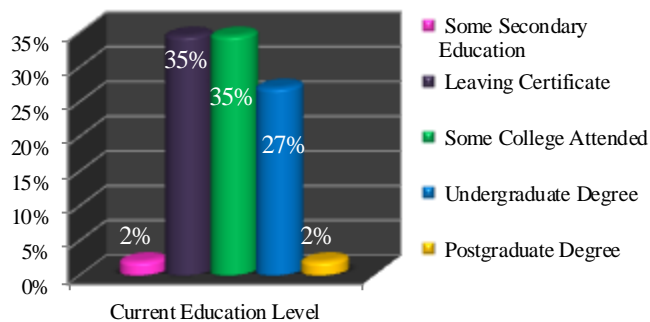
majority of students in Mary Immaculate College are recent school leavers and as such would fall into the 18-22 age bracket and subsequently no associations between age and responses can be made.

Figure 2: Age Ranges of Participants



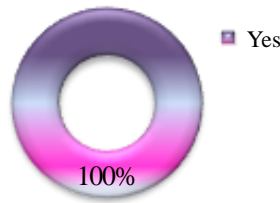
There were 5 categories of current completed education level: *Some Secondary Education, Leaving Certificate, Some College Attended, Undergraduate Degree* and *Postgraduate Degree*. Only 2% had *Some Secondary Education*. Unsurprisingly 34.5% had *Leaving Certificate Education*, and 34.5% had attended *Some College*. This would be due to the aforementioned age range. 27% had an *Undergraduate Degree*, and only 2% had a *Postgraduate Degree* (see Figure 3). Considering where the study was conducted i.e. in a college, these results were to be anticipated and restrain discussion on the effect of education on responses.

Figure 3: Current Education Level



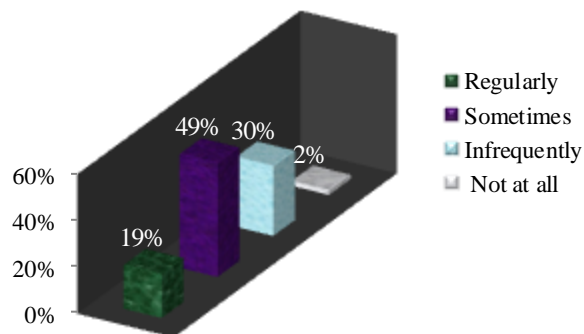
All participants had previously seen a documentary (Figure 4). While this is not unforeseen, it is important in terms of defining what a documentary is. It shows that all participants have seen a programme or film which they deem to be a documentary. If they had not done so then the questions following this one would have been made redundant.

Figure 4: Have you ever watched a documentary?



The following questions were important for similar reasoning. Participants were asked how regularly they watched documentaries. If participants did not watch documentaries at all then their answers to later questions would not be entirely valid. If there were a number of participants also who gave an unusual answer to later questions, these two questions may shed light on why that may be the case i.e. a large number of people who had no knowledge of or who did not watch documentaries. However, 19% answered regularly, 49% sometimes, 30% infrequently and only 2% not at all which implies that the majority of participants watch documentaries casually (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: How often do you watch documentaries?



They were also asked how knowledgeable they feel themselves to be about documentaries. Only 4.5% said very knowledgeable, 28% reasonably knowledgeable, 55% somewhat knowledgeable, and 12.5% not at all knowledgeable (see Figure 6). This indicates that again the majority of participants feel they have an average knowledge of documentary; they are neither overly knowledgeable nor unknowledgeable about it.

Figure 6: How knowledgeable do you feel you are in regards to documentary?



In order to see if there was a relationship between frequency of watching documentaries and knowledge of documentaries a crosstabulation was run. The following was found: 57.9% of participants who watched documentaries regularly claimed to have a reasonable knowledge of documentary. Therefore the total percentage of participants who regularly watched documentaries and thought themselves reasonably knowledgeable about documentaries was only 11%. However, 61.2% of participants who only sometimes watched documentary claimed to be somewhat knowledgeable about documentary. This was an unexpected 30% of the total number of participants. This was followed by 68.3% of those who watched documentary infrequently who claimed to be somewhat knowledgeable of documentary, which is 20.5% of the total number of participants. Finally 75% who did not watch documentaries claimed to have no knowledge of them which was only 2% of the total population (see Table 1). This suggests that overall the majority of participants have a passing interest in documentary and perhaps because of this, feel that they have limited knowledge on it. This may have impacted on the responses they gave for later questions and should be controlled for in any future studies.

Table 1: Participants frequency of watching documentaries and their perceived knowledge of documentary

Do You Watch Documentaries:	In regards to Documentary would you say you are:				
	Very Knowledgeable	Reasonably Knowledgeable	Somewhat Knowledgeable	Not at all Knowledgeable	Total
Regularly (No. of Participants)	8	22	8	0	38
Percentage of Participants	21.1%	57.9%	21.1%	0%	100%
Sometimes	1	28	60	9	98
	1%	28.6%	61.2%	9.2%	100%
Infrequently	0	6	41	13	60
	0%	10%	68.3%	21.7%	100%
Not at All	0	0	1	3	4
	0%	0%	25%	75%	100%
Total	9	56	110	25	200
	4.5%	28%	55%	12.5%	100%

6.2 Defining Documentary

The participants were asked whether or not they agreed with the following quote as a good definition of what documentary is and to explain their reasoning.

“using pictures or interviews with people involved in real events to provide a factual report on a particular subject”

(Taken from Oxford Dictionaries Online, n.d.)

The answers to this question were collated and coded into various categories based on themes that arose in the responses. Only 14% of participants said that they did not believe this to be a good definition of documentary (see Figure 7). The top four categories given as answers for this were: that subjectivity and bias can be involved in documentary making; documentaries can be dramatized and/or use actors; not all documentaries are factual and/or accurate; and it is a narrow and/or not a good definition (see Table 2). Individual responses which sparked interest are shown below and listed under the category they were coded into.

This is what a documentary should be:

- *“This is what (documentary) should be. The current definition should include a "from a particular viewpoint" at the end.”* (Participant No.5)

Not all documentaries are factual/accurate

- *“It's more than that. (It) uses other sources as well to get information. However not all documentaries are 'factual' and can't be relied on”.* (Participant No. 17)
- *“Sometimes documentaries don't tell the truth of it all”.* (Participant No. 117)
- *“Not always factual reports - endeavour to be but not always”.* (Participant No. 171)
- *“(B)ecause sometimes information given isn't factual, people say what they want to say”.* (Participant No. 175)

Subjectivity and bias can be involved

- “I think a documentary is an overview of what the maker is trying to get across. It is more than interviews and pictures”. (Participant No. 55)
- “Documentaries are edited and framed always with certain bias or singular view”. (Participant No. 83)

It is narrow/not a good definition

- “It is decidedly narrow and does not encompass many sub-genres of documentary”. (Participant No. 66)

Figure 7: Is this a fair definition of what you think documentary is?

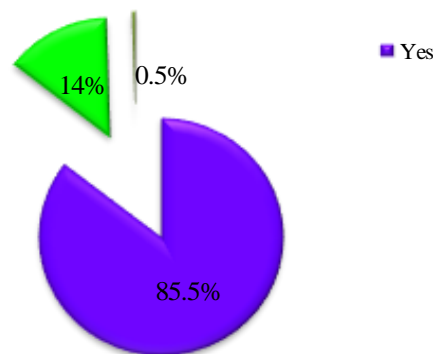


Table 2¹: Reasons why participants disagree with definition

Reasons Why Disagreed with Definition	No. of Responses	Percentage
Subjectivity and bias can be involved in documentary	5	2.5%
Documentary can be dramatized or use actors	4	2%
Not all documentaries are factual/accurate	6	3%
It is a narrow or not a good definition	6	3%
Other Responses	8	4%
Total number who disagreed with the definition	28 responses	14%

The participant responses above highlight a number of things. They show that while there is a small number of people who are aware that documentary is not as straightforward as the dictionary definition would imply; that it is a narrow definition and doesn't cover the effects of subjectivity and objectivity on documentary, it also indicates a naiveté on behalf of the documentary audience whereby they still expect that documentary should incorporate these concepts, even if it does not currently do so.

An astonishing 85.5% of participants agreed that this was a good definition for what they perceived documentary to be (see Figure 7). Again, the answers were collated and coded into various categories. The highest ranking response was no response with 24.5% of respondents choosing this option. It is thought that due to the majority of participants not feeling overly knowledgeable on documentary that they may not have been willing to show this ignorance by clarifying their opinions by availing of this option. The four highest ranking categories after that were: Documentary is a factual report (17.5%), the definition describes what documentary is (17%), documentary is a first-hand account involving interviews and/or is based on real people and events (15.5%), and documentaries provide information at 5.5% (see Table 3). More individual responses which merit discussion include:

Documentary is a factual report

- *“It is factual, used to convey the facts. Not really for entertainment. Provides a realistic picture of the content under discussion.”* (Participant No. 18)
- *“Yes, because the purpose of a documentary is to provide factual, accurate and reliable information on important topic.”* (Participant No. 21)
- *“Because a documentary should be based on fact”.* (Participant No. 93)
- *“Getting real details about the topic/event – less likely for information to be changed”.* (Participant No. 142)

These responses highlight the staggering result found whereby the majority of people, almost unquestioningly it appears, accept that documentary is a factual account of a topic. Interestingly, participant 18 notes that it is also “not really for entertainment”, which highlights the difference again between it and reality television (as already discussed in Chapter 4) where documentary’s focus is much less on entertainment, the topic in itself provides the entertainment in most cases.

Documentary is a First-hand account uses interviews and/or is based on real people and events

- *“It is always about a real-life event, and normally involves people talking about the event.”* (Participant No. 25)
- *“Usually consist of interviews with people with first-hand experience on subject”* (Participant No. 167)
- *“Primary sources give you a balanced and clear insight into an event”* (Participant No. 168)
- *“Because all the documentaries I have watched refer to real people and real events and the impact of these events on our lives”* (Participant No. 183)

Documentaries provide information

- *“Purpose of a documentary is to inform and anything after that is a bonus”.* (Participant No. 45)

These quotes again reiterate the point that documentary is considered to be based on real events and its purpose is to provide information on these events, at least from an audiences' point of view. They describe the most common types of documentaries which you would expect to find on television: synthesised documentary and journalistic documentary. Perhaps this is the reason for their opinion: these are the only types of documentary they are really familiar with and as such they believe all documentaries are like this.

It describes what a documentary is

- *“It describes exactly what a documentary is in my opinion.”* (Participant No. 47)
- *“Because it describes in a nutshell the basic concept of a documentary”.* (Participant No. 54)
- *“Yes because it clearly explains what it is and one knows what to expect.”* (Participant No. 115)

The responses of participants 47, 54 and 115 above, emphasises the notion that the majority of the documentary audience is completely unaware of the changes taking place in the genre and are entirely trusting in their assumption that documentaries are factual accounts of events. Intriguing is the statement by participant 115 where they point out that “one knows what to expect” from this definition. This underscores points made in previous chapters where the audience should know what to expect when they sit down to watch a documentary and as such there is a need for its redefinition.

Documentary is factual/unbiased/objective

- “Because documentaries usually portray real events that have happened in a factual, non-biased way.” (Participant No. 52)
- “I expect a documentary to be factual, illustrated by film/pictures/interviews and to be presented in an unbiased manner”. (Participant No. 160)

This definition is what a documentary should be

- “Documentaries should be based on fact and provide eye-witness accounts. This is what you’d expect when watching” (Participant No. 205)

Table 3²: Reasons why participants agreed with definition

Reasons Why Agreed with Definition	No. of Responses	Percentage
Documentary is a factual report	35	17.5%
Documentaries provide information	11	5.5%
The definition describes what a documentary is	34	17%
Documentary is a first-hand account, uses interviews and/or is based on real people and events	31	15.5%
Other Responses	18	5.5%
No Response	42	24.5%
Total number who agreed with the definition	171	85.5%

These quotes again illustrate the aforementioned perception that documentaries should be factual and biased, but what is most interesting is the wording, where again the word “expect” arises. Audiences expect certain things from documentaries. Clearly these expectations are crucial to their reasoning for watching documentaries.

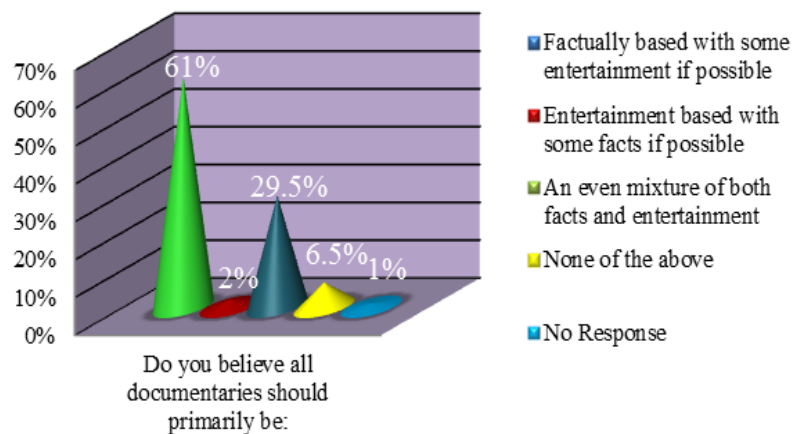
6.3 The Purpose of Documentary

There were two questions in the survey which related to the purpose of documentary. The first asked participants whether they believed documentaries should primarily be:

- Factually based with some entertainment if possible
- Entertainment based with some facts if possible
- An even mixture of both facts and entertainment
- Or none of the above.

61% believed that documentaries should be factually based with some entertainment if possible and 29.5% said it should have an even mixture of both (see Figure 8). This implies that gaining factual information is more important to a documentary audience than being entertained. If a documentary can provide both without compromising the facts then that is a bonus.

**Figure 8: What ratio between Fact and Entertainment
Participants believe documentary should be**



The second question the participants were asked was what purpose documentary provided for them and was an open ended question. The responses to this were again collated and coded into common themes. The five highest ranking categories were:

- Documentaries purpose for them is to provide information (39%)
- Documentary's purpose for them is to provide a factual account (12%)
- Documentary's purpose for them is to provide insight and understanding into the topic (9%)
- Documentary's purpose for them is to be informative and entertaining (9%)
- Documentary's purpose for them is educational (8%)

6.5% gave no response to the question (see Table 4). Below are more thought-provoking responses given by participants:

The purpose of documentary is to provide a factual account

- *“An interesting look at something I may not be very knowledgeable on. I expect the facts to be somewhat true, if they are not, I would not consider it a documentary but an entertainment programme.”* (Participant No. 1)
- *To provide facts and eye witness accounts and testimonies. They are a reliable source of information”* (Participant No. 18)
- *“A relatively factual account of a particular side of an event with interviews, pictures and videos to back up the facts made”* (Participant No. 27)

The purpose of documentary is to be biased

- *“It allows me to consider one side of an argument. I dislike when a documentary sells itself as objective.”* (Participant No. 16)
- *“Documentaries can be very one- sided”* (Participant No. 66)

The purpose of documentary is to provide a balanced/objective/truthful account

- *“It provides further facts or insight into a topic. I would hope to learn something from a documentary. I wouldn't necessarily watch it with entertainment in mind”* (Participant No.21)
- *“Giving me more knowledge on a topic that interests me objectively and truthfully”* (Participant No. 23)
- *“It presents us with information (factual/truthful) hopefully being objective to inform us in various methods”* (Participant No. 35)

The purpose of documentary is to provide information

- *“Informs me about the subject matter, entertainment is secondary as I would not watch a documentary if I was not interested in the subject matter” (Participant No. 34)*
- *“Information on subject matter I might not see or heard anywhere else, sometimes interesting, sometimes dull and boring” (Participant No. 134)*
- *“Should provide correct information on the relevant subject and in cases of docu-dramas use the real facts and events as a base and provide entertainment stemming from the actual event” (Participant no. 138)*

The purpose of documentary is to provide insight and understanding into a topic

- *“Documentaries provide me with a greater understanding of whatever topic the documentary covers” (Participant No. 41)*
- *“It gives me an insight into certain ways of life, providing me with facts yet still leaving somewhat up to the imagination” (Participant No. 114)*
- *“An insight into an issue/event/theory/experience that is given by primary sources or first-hand accounts and looks at the issue holistically” (Participant No. 173)*

The purpose of documentary is to be educational and entertain

- *“Inform, Educate and Entertain in that order. I should be allowed to hear the two sides of the issue and decide for myself” (Participant No. 45)*

The purpose of documentary is to be informative and entertaining

- *“Information; education; highlight important things; make me care about an issue; some entertainment if possible; I love nature docs because I get pleasure from them” (Participant No. 72)*

The purpose of documentary is to be factual and objective

- *“I would like a documentary to be factually based, informative and objective” (Participant No. 90)*
- *“Unbiased facts” (Participant No. 122)*

The purpose of documentaries is to be informative and biased

- “Documentaries are a source of information however they are filled with bias sometimes so I don't know if I should always take what they say 100%” (Participant No. 121)

The purpose of documentary is to you the ability to make up your own mind on the subject

- “Insight into an event that is both educational and enjoyable and enables me to make my own judgement” (Participant No. 151)

The purpose of documentary is to be factual and biased

- “Documentaries should be factual but 'documentary makers' (e.g. Michael Moore) add bias and often show unbalanced information. This may be due to personal reasons or to encourage people to watch it i.e. make it more entertaining” (Participant No. 170)

The purpose of documentary is to be factual, objective and entertaining

- “Factual documentation in an objective manner of the chosen subject with use of entertainment to create a pleasurable experience” (Participant No. 198)

Table 4³: What purpose documentary provides for participants

What purpose Documentary provides for participant	No. of responses	Percentage
Factual Account	24	12%
Educational	16	8%
Insight and Understanding	18	9%
Information	78	39%
Informative and Entertaining	18	9%
No Response	13	6.5%
Total number of responses to the question	200	100%

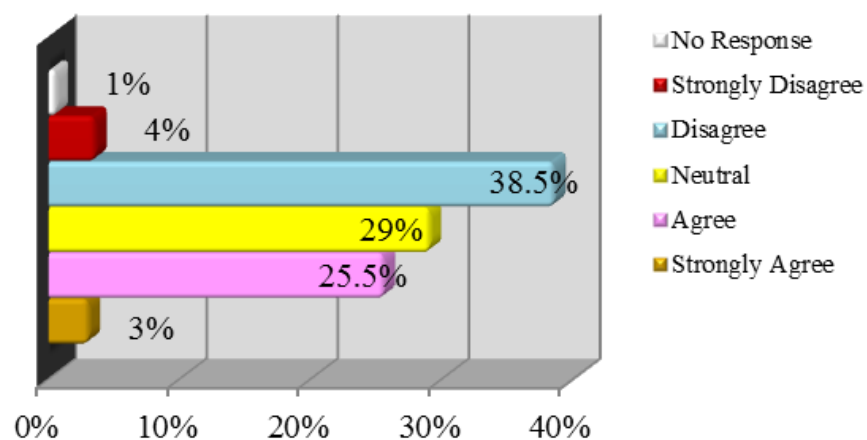
These quotes draw attention to the reasons viewers may watch a documentary. The majority of participants gave similar reasons as to how they defined documentary: it is a factual, balanced, objective, truthful insightful account of something which provides us with information⁴. However, some participants also gave different reasons. As shown above, participants 16 and 66 both believe that the purpose of documentary is to show just one point of view on the subject. Participants 45 and 72 above allow that it must

entertain them, but from examining the wording of the responses, it is a tertiary concern, as information and education are more important. This comes alongside their expectation for it to be balanced by showing both sides of an issue. Participant 121 shows an awareness that perhaps they should be more critical of documentaries and not automatically believe everything in them. Overall the responses pertaining to the purpose of documentary seem to tie in closely to how the majority define documentary. The reasons they choose to watch a documentary are similar to their explanations of what they believe documentary to be.

6.4 Factuality and Truth in Documentary

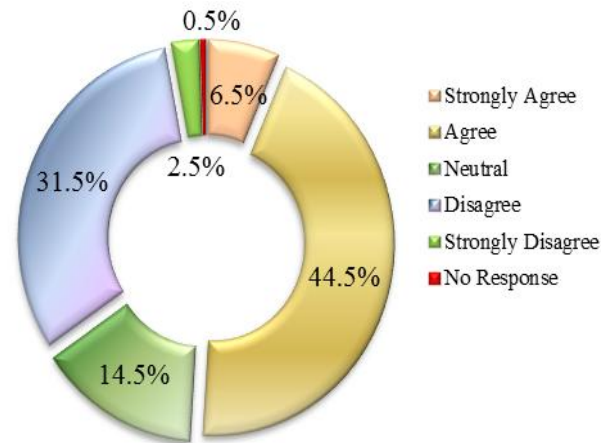
Participants were asked two questions in relation to factuality and truth in documentary. The first question they were asked was in relation to truth and if they agreed with the statement: All information in a documentary is truthful. 42.5% disagreed, 29% were neutral and 28.5% agreed (see Figure 9).

Figure 9: Rating of the statement "All information in documentaries is truthful"



They were then asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement: All information in documentaries is factual. Contrary to the previous question the majority of participants - 51% - agreed that all information in documentaries is factual. 34% disagreed and 14.5% were neutral (see Figure 10).

Figure 10: Rating of the statement "All information in documentaries is factual"

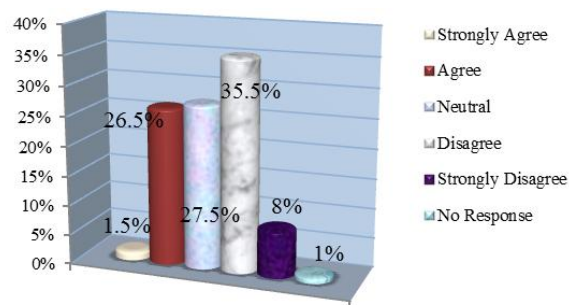


These results are notable as they are contrary to what has been uncovered in previous chapters. Theory suggests that the truth is more important in documentary than facts. However the participants of this study appear to disagree and believe it is more important to have a factual, rather than a truthful, account. However, as already discussed, the terms fact and truth are intertwined at a basic level. Therefore it seems almost impossible that you could have something that is factual but not truthful or truthful but not factual. This suggests that the terms fact and truth perhaps need further refinement in their documentary context.

6.5 Objectivity and Balance in Documentary

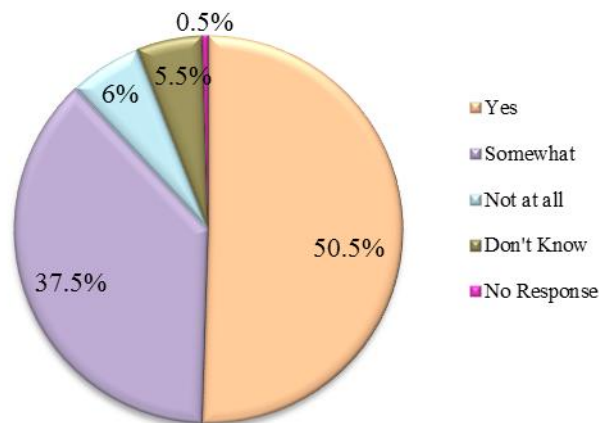
Participants were also asked four questions in relation to objectivity and balance in documentary. The first question they were asked was if they agreed with the statement: All documentaries are objective. 43.5% disagreed, 27.5% were neutral and 28% agreed (see Figure 11).

Figure 11: Rating of the statement "All documentaries are objective"



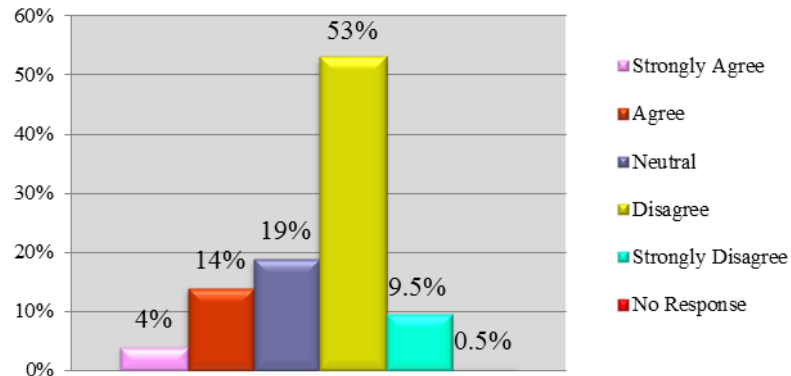
Conversely, when asked if they believed documentaries *should be* objective. 50.5% said yes, and 37.5% said somewhat (see Figure 12).

Figure 12: Participants' responses to the question "Do you believe documentaries should be objective?"



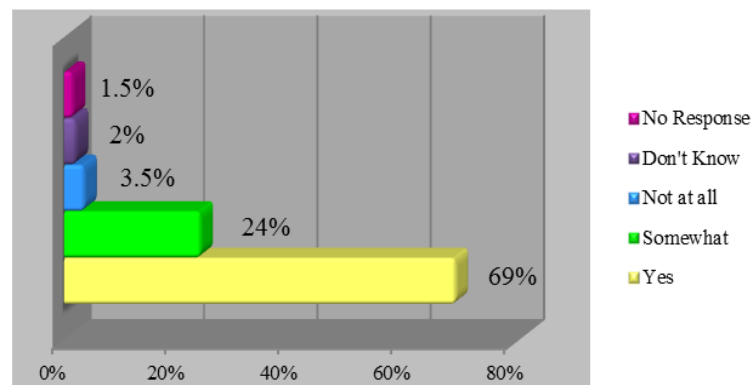
The participants were then asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement: All documentaries are balanced. 62.5% disagreed, 19% were neutral and 18% agreed (see Figure 14).

Figure 13: Rating of the statement "All documentaries are balanced"



And again contrariwise to the above answer when asked if they believed that documentaries *should be* balanced 69% said yes and 24% said somewhat (see Figure 14). These results imply that while participants are aware that documentary is currently not always objective and balanced, they believe that it should be. This harkens back to previous points on redefinition; what objectivity and balance are in a documentary context needs to be evaluated by its audience, as well as their role in its production,

Figure 14: Participants' responses to the question "Do you believe documentaries should be balanced?"



6.6 Genres and Programmes

Participants were asked to rate film and television genres and the programmes that are associated with those genres on a scale from 1 to 5 or 1 – 6 ranging from strongly agree that the programme is a documentary to strongly disagree that it is a documentary (the extra option for the section pertaining to programmes being an “unfamiliar response”). The unfamiliar option was used to determine what programmes could be used for analysis. Any programme which had a response rate of higher than 120 participants (60% of the responses) to the unfamiliar option has been eliminated from the analysis. Non responses have also been removed from the shown values.

Table 5 shows how the genre of Biopics and its associated programmes were rated. This category originally had two programmes which were linked to it but the second one was discounted for having too many unfamiliar responses. Predictably it was found that 59.2% of participants thought that Biopics were documentaries and 68.4% also categorised the television programme *The Michael Jackson Story* as a documentary.

Table 5: Participants' rating of Biopics and its related programmes

Genre and Related Programmes	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Biopics	59.2%	33.7%	7.1%
The Michael Jackson Story	68.4%	19.1%	12.5%

Three programmes fell into the genre of Current Affairs: *Prime Time*, *Nationwide* and *Tonight with Vincent Browne*. 59.5% agreed that current affairs programmes were documentaries. Of the programmes, 52.7% agreed that *Prime Time* is a documentary, 68.9% that *Nationwide* is a documentary and intriguingly 35.4% that *Tonight with Vincent Brown* is a documentary (see Table 6). However, as can be seen from the results in the table below, there was some confusion regarding this last programme. It is suspected that the reasoning for this is that having in their minds already chosen that current affairs falls into the documentary genre, and knowing that *Tonight with Vincent Browne* is a current affairs programme, participants thought that this must automatically also make it a documentary. However, *Tonight with Vincent Browne* is far closer to a chat show in format than a documentary. This highlights the confusion that can take

place when there is a blurring of the lines between genres. There can be current affairs programmes, there can be documentaries and there can be current affairs documentaries, but all current affairs programmes are not necessarily documentaries and vice versa. This is again something which needs to be further examined from an audience perspective; further analysis in an interview setting may shed light on these results. A separate category for current affairs documentaries may also alleviate the confusion to some degree.

Table 6: Participants' rating of Current Affairs and its related programmes

Genre and Related Programmes	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Current Affairs	59.5%	21.5%	19%
Prime Time	52.7%	25%	22.3%
Nationwide	68.9%	16.9%	14.2%
Tonight with Vincent Browne	35.4%	30.9%	33.7%

The genre of “Mockumentary” had two programmes in the questionnaire which could be categorised as such: *This is Spinal Tap* and *The Blair Witch Project*. 53.2% disagreed that mockumentaries are documentaries, only 39.2% disagreed that *This is Spinal Tap* is a documentary, and 68% disagreed that *The Blair Witch Project* is a documentary (see Table 7). The lower number disagreeing about *This is Spinal Tap* may be due to it following all the normal conventions of documentary, with the fictional aspect being that it is about a fictional band. If you were unaware that this was the case it is possible that you might think it to be a real documentary.

Table 7: Participants' rating of Mockumentary and its related Programmes

Genre and Related Programmes	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Mockumentaries	17.7%	29.3%	53.2%
<i>This is Spinal Tap</i>	29.9%	30.9%	39.2%
<i>The Blair Witch Project</i>	13.9%	18.1%	68%

Originally there were two programmes which fell into the genre of Conspiracy Programmes, however, one was discounted as it had a very high unfamiliar response rate to it. 43.4% disagreed that conspiracy programmes are documentaries however 31.2% agreed that it's related programme: *Zeitgeist*, is a documentary, and 45.5% were neutral (see Table 8). *Zeitgeist*, as already discussed in the introduction to this thesis, misrepresents and manipulates the facts in it to provide an extremely biased viewpoint, while at the same time using the traditional documentary methods in order to make it appear objective. It also has a number of incorrect facts in it. However, if you were unaware of all this it would be possible for you to be confused about its documentary status, which may be the explanation for this unusual result.

Table 8: Participants' rating of Conspiracy Shows and its related Programmes

Genre and Related Programmes	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Conspiracy Programmes	26.3%	30.3%	43.4%
<i>Zeitgeist</i>	31.2%	45.5%	23.4%

The genre of Reality TV had a response rate of 74% in disagreement with it being a documentary (see Table 8). The programmes related to this were then separated out into various subgenres: Reality TV Gameshow; Lifestyle/Makeover programmes; Docusoaps; and Other Reality TV. The programmes which fell into the Gameshow section included: *The X-Factor* which had 86.3% of participants disagreeing with it being a documentary; *Masterchef* had 73.2% disagreeing, *America's Next Top Model* had 76.1% disagreeing; and *The Biggest Loser* had 57% disagreeing.

The Lifestyle/Makeover programmes included: *Embarrassing Bodies* with only 44.6% disagreeing which may be due to being presented by doctors and intimating that it is providing correct medical information. Doctors are generally automatically trusted by people and this trust may be the reason for fewer people considering the programme to be a reality television show. *What Not to Wear* had 69.6% disagreeing; *Changing Rooms* had 70.2% disagreeing; *Wife Swap* had 66.1% disagreeing; and *Vacation Vacation* had 60.4% disagreeing.

The Docusoap programmes caused more overall confusion in the ratings of the participants than the other subgenres. They included: *An Idiot Abroad* with only 42.4% disagreeing; *The Osbournes* with 65.4% disagreeing; *Miami Ink* with 59.1% disagreeing; *Ghost Hunters* with 59.5% disagreeing; *Road Wars* with just 47.8% disagreeing; *Cops* with only 43.5% disagreeing; *Wild Vets* conversely had 53.3% agreeing; and *The Real A&E* alongside it an incredible 66.2% agreeing. Finally the Other Reality TV programmes included: *Candid Camera* with 73.2% disagreeing; and *Mythbusters* with just 34.5% agreeing that it is a documentary (see Table 9).

It is hypothesized that again these programmes, which were rated as being documentaries, may have been so because they are closer in format to documentaries than other reality television shows. *An Idiot Abroad*, if it were not for its contrived nature⁵ would almost pass for a travel documentary, as it chronicles the travels of the protagonist around the world. *Wild Vets* and *The Real A&E* are again medical programmes, and it is suspected that the aforementioned trust placed in the medical community may be the reason for this result. *Mythbusters* had very even scores across the board with there being just 0.9% of a difference between the percentages who agreed and disagreed. This may be due to its subject matter. The presenters set out to prove or disprove common myths with scientific experiments. The involvement of science perhaps may be the reason that participants are confused in relation to it as scientific experimentation has connotations of factual accuracy.

Table 9: Participants' rating of Reality TV and its related Programmes

Genre and Related Programmes	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Reality TV	14.5%	11.5%	74%
Reality TV Gameshows			
The X-Factor	4.2%	9.5%	86.3%
Masterchef	8.4%	18.4%	73.2%
America's Next Top Model	8.7%	15.2%	76.1%
The Ultimate Fighter	10.6%	24.2%	65.2%
The Biggest Loser	19.7%	23.3%	57%
Lifestyle/Makeover Programmes			
Embarrassing Bodies	37.7%	17.7%	44.6%
What Not to Wear	9.7%	20.7%	69.6%
Changing Rooms	9.6%	20.2%	70.2%
Wife Swap	14.5%	19.4%	66.1%
Vacation Vacation Vacation	12.9%	26.7%	60.4%
Docusoap			
An Idiot Abroad	35%	22.6%	42.4%
The Osbournes	13.6%	21%	65.4%
Miami Ink	18.3%	22.6%	59.1%
Ghost Hunters	13.2%	27.3%	59.5%
Road Wars	26.1%	26.1%	47.8%
Cops	27.8%	28.7%	43.5%
Wild Vets	53.3%	22.4%	24.1%
The Real A&E	66.2%	19.9%	13.9%
Other Reality TV			
Candid Camera	7.4%	19.4%	73.2%
Mythbusters	34.5%	31.9%	33.6%

The results for the docudrama related programmes indicate that there is some confusion over its status as a documentary: Participants gave a 41.7% response as being neutral about whether docudramas were documentaries or not. Astoundingly 39.5% agreed that *The Kings Speech* is a documentary and 41.3% agreed that *Bloody Sunday* is a documentary. Unsurprisingly 40.9% disagreed that *Schindler's List* is a documentary and 44% disagreed that *127 Hours* is a documentary (see Table 10). Three programmes were eliminated from this analysis for having too high an unfamiliar response rate. This stresses the importance of correctly defining categories so that the audience knows what to expect. It is speculated that the fictional elements involved in docudramas are the influencing factor in this confusion and that better definition of the area may help with this.

Table 10: Participants' rating of Docudrama and its related Programmes

Genre and Related Programmes	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Docudrama	35.7%	41.7%	22.6%
The Kings Speech	39.5%	24.7%	35.8%
Bloody Sunday	41.3%	38.4%	20.3%
Schindler's List	29.9%	29.2%	40.9%
127 Hours	28%	28%	44%

As you might expect, 94% of participants agreed that Wildlife and Nature programmes are documentaries. In line with this 77.2% agreed that *March of the Penguins* is a documentary, 84.4% that *Natures Great Events* is a documentary and 53.4% that *The Crocodile Hunter* is a documentary. Also 86.5% agreed that *Natural World* is a documentary and 42.2% that *Bear Gryllis: Born Survivor* is a documentary (see Table 11). *Crocodile Hunter* and *Bear Gryllis* may have received this lower percentage because they are presenter led programmes which may have subconsciously caused participants to be more critical of them and wonder about their subjectivity and accuracy content, more so than the others in this category.

Table 11: Participants' rating of Wildlife and Nature and its related Programmes

Genre and Related Programmes	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Wildlife and Nature	94%	3%	3%
March of the Penguins	77.2%	9.8%	13%
Natures Great Events	84.4%	10.2%	5.2%
The Crocodile Hunter	53.4%	23.9%	22.7%
Natural World	86.5%	8.5%	5%
Bear Gryllis: Born Survivor	42.2%	31.3%	26.5%

Similarly, 89.5% of participants agreed that Historical programmes are documentaries. 85.4% agree that *Egypt: Finding the Pharaohs* is a documentary and the same percentage also agreed that *Ancient Discoveries* is a documentary (see Table 12).

Table 12: Participants' rating of Historical Shows and its related Programmes

Genre and Related Programmes	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Historical Programmes	89.5%	7%	3.5%
Egypt: Finding the Pharaohs	85.4%	13.1%	1.6%
Ancient Discoveries	85.4%	13.1%	1.6%

The next section deals with genres that would normally be seen to be stereotypical or traditional documentaries. These include: Travel Films with 44.2% agreeing that they are documentaries; Ethnographic Films with 50.3% agreeing; Newsreels with 53.1% agreeing; Programmes about Important Events with 69.3% agreeing; Programmes about How Something is Made with 72.4% agreeing; Thesis programmes with 42.9% agreeing; Environmental Programmes with 83% agreeing; Personal Films with 38% agreeing and Compilation Films with 46.7% being neutral about whether they are documentaries (see Table 13).

Table 13: Participants' rating of Genres which fall into the Stereotypical Documentary Category

Genre and Related Programmes	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Travel Films	44.2%	32.2%	23.6%
Ethnographic Films	50.3%	42.6%	7.2%
Newsreels	52.1%	23.2%	18.7%
Programmes about Important Events	69.3%	23.6%	7%
Programmes about How Something is Made	72.4%	17.1%	10.6%
Thesis Programmes	42.9%	28.8%	28.3%
Environmental Programmes	83%	13.5%	3.5%
Compilation Films	24.9%	46.7%	28.4%

The Programmes related to the above genres were split into film and television shows. 22 of the films had an unfamiliar rate of over 120 participants and as such were not included here. The films which were included are: *The Thin Blue Line* with an unanticipated 48.7% disagreeing; *An Inconvenient Truth* with 54.6% agreeing; *Fahrenheit 9/11* with 60.6% agreeing; *Super Size Me* with 61.9% agreeing; *Bowling for Columbine* with 51.1% agreeing; and finally *My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding* with 51.1% agreeing that it was a documentary (see Table 14). The unexpected result of the *Thin Blue Line* may be due to it incorporating a heavy amount of reconstruction. As noted from the discussion of docudrama, obvious fictional elements in a documentary may be an area of confusion for audience members.

Table 14: Participants' rating of Films which fall into the Stereotypical Documentary Category

Genre and Related Programmes	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
The Thin Blue Line	11.3%	40%	48.7%
An Inconvenient Truth	54.6%	26.9%	18.5%
Fahrenheit 9/11	60.6%	24.1%	15.4%
Super Size Me	61.9%	17.1%	21%
Bowling for Columbine	51.1%	28.1%	20.8%

One programme was eliminated from the television programmes which fell into the stereotypical documentary category. Those included are: *Japan's Tsunami: How it Happened* with an anticipated 91.5% agreeing; *How Does That Work* with 71.6% agreeing; *Wonders of the Solar System* with 87.2% agreeing; *Ross Kemp on Gangs* with 60.1% agreeing and *My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding* with 51.1% agreeing (see Table 15).

Table 15: Participants' rating of Television Programmes which fall into the Stereotypical Documentary Category

Genre and Related Programmes	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Japan's Tsunami: How it Happened	91.5%	6.7%	1.8%
How Does That Work	71.6%	20%	10.4%
Wonders of the Solar System	87.2%	7.2%	5.6%
Ross Kemp on Gangs	60.1%	16.7%	23.2%
My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding	51.1%	19.9%	29%

6.7 Summary

There were some noteworthy points raised by the results in this chapter. While the demographic questions in the participant survey showed no remarkable discoveries, this was not the case for much of the rest of the survey. A large amount of participants believed the documentary definition given in the Oxford Dictionary to be adequate in explaining what a documentary is. The majority of participants (61%) thought that a documentary should primarily be about factual information and that entertainment is secondary to this. When asked what purpose documentary held for them, the participants reinforced this viewpoint with the largest percentage of them (39%) believing that its purpose is to provide information.

While the majority of participants believed that documentaries are not always truthful (38.5%) the majority did believe that they are always factual. Although they believed not all documentaries are objective (35%) a significant portion did think that they should be (50.5%), and similarly, in relation to balance, the majority (53%) thought that not all documentaries are balanced but that they should be (69%).

Generally there was a consensus between the documentary genres, and programmes and films given as examples of these genres in the survey. If participants rated a genre as being a documentary, they also tend to rate the programmes related to it as documentaries and vice versa. Only two genre areas seemed to result in confusion among participants, these were the docu-drama and the docu-soap genres. There was an overall confusion for participants in regards to the docu-drama genre, and its standing as a 'documentary' with the majority of participants being neutral on this point. A similar result was found with programmes and films that related to this genre, with the participants relatively evenly distributed on the agreement/disagreement scale given in the survey. Confusion also arose among participants in the docu-soap genre and the survey section in relation to the standing of the programmes and films that fall into this genre. The examples given in the survey that fall into this genre were deemed not to be 'documentaries' except for two: *Wild Vets* and *The Real A&E*. This may be due to these programmes appearing to be more documentary like than the others in their category.

Overall, this research makes clear that there are a number of areas which need further exploration from this research: how exactly audiences' define documentary needs consideration; what purpose it provides for them; what issues affect their definitions of documentary; and how they categorise programmes and films relating to documentary and by what criteria. These will be discussed in the context of the thesis as a whole in the final chapter.

Chapter 6 Notes

¹ The four categories with the most responses are given in this table but there other responses included: Documentary provides information (1 response), the definition describes what a documentary is (1 response), Documentary is unbiased and objective (1 response), Documentary can involve a wide variety of subjects (1 response), this definition is what documentary should be (1 response) and two participants gave no response to the question

² The categories not included in this table were: Subjectivity and bias can be involved in documentary (0.5%), documentary is unbiased and objective (1%), Documentary can be dramatized/use actors (3%), documentary can be both factual and biased (1%), documentary uses narration (0.5%) and the definition is what documentary should be (1%).

³ The lower ranking categories which were not included in this table were: documentary's purpose for them is to provide entertainment (2%), documentary's purpose for them is to provide a balanced/objective/truthful look at an issue (4.5%), documentary's purpose for them is to be biased (1.5%), documentary's purpose for them is to be factual and objective (1%), documentary's purpose for them is to be factual and entertaining (1.5%), documentary's purpose for them is to be factual and biased (1%), documentary's purpose for them is to be factual, objective and entertaining (0.5%), documentary's purpose for them is to be educational and objective (0.5%), documentary's purpose for them is to be educational and entertaining (1.5%), documentary's purpose for them was to be informative and biased (1%), documentary's purpose for them is to give the ability to make up your own mind on the subject (0.5%) and finally, 0.5% said that it provided no purpose.

⁴ What is not stated here, but certainly implied, is that the information we wish to gain from documentaries is accurate, otherwise what would be the point in having it.

⁵ It involves the lead of the programme, a man named Karl Pilkington, being sent around the world by the comedian Ricky Gervais to places that it is known he will not like, in order to see what occurs. A significant portion of the show involves Ricky laughing at Karl's misfortune, without which the show would be much less of a reality television show.

Chapter 7

7.1 Discussion

The purpose for conducting the questionnaire discussed in the previous chapter was to discern the viewpoints of a sample population of the Irish audience on documentary. These viewpoints appear to be at once both in opposition and in alignment with the academic literature on the subject. It is the aim of this chapter to discuss the similarities and differences between the participants of this study and the academic literature.

“Some people still fondly preserve the presumption that true documentary can be unmediated reality captured on camera and retailed with minimal post-production intervention”

(Lee-Wright, 2010: 277)

As can be seen from the quote from Lee-Wright (2010) above, there is an assumption among academics that the documentary audience still expects it to be “unmediated reality” even though it is commonly known that this is now impossible. The findings from the question in relation to the definition of documentary in this research support this argument as the majority of participants agreed with the dictionary definition of documentary. This definition, which can be found in the previous chapter, with its use of the words “factual report” and “real events” implies a certain amount of “true” reality. It indicates that the happenings that are being shown to us are both real *and* factual, and implicitly accurate and truthful. If this is how the Irish audience perceives documentary (and these results indicate that it may be) then it is reasonable to suspect that they believe documentary is and/or should be the “unmediated reality” put forward by Lee-Wright above.

The notion of documentary being a “factual report”, which is suggested by the dictionary definition and supported by the qualitative findings regarding documentary’s definition in this study (see pages 73 & 74), is also supported by the aforementioned studies conducted by Hardy (2008) and Austin (2005) who found that the audience

members they sampled were inclined to view documentary as a factual account of the event being filmed. However, if that “puritan definition (of factual accuracy and unmediated reality) was enforced” very few films or programmes would be able to call themselves documentaries (Lee-Wright, 2010: 277).

The literature also suggests that there is currently no definitive definition of documentary outside of John Grierson’s “creative treatment of actuality”; which is suitably vague. However, the majority of participants in this study, as already stated, agreed that the definition given was an accurate description of what documentary is. This may be because “(d)ocumentary is easy to identify but difficult to define” (Ellis, 2012: 1). There were qualifications given, as can be seen in the responses on pages 73 & 74, which included statements to the effect of it should include such things as “from a particular point of view” in it, but primarily respondents were content that the dictionary definition was accurate. However, academic literature does not accept this description as being so because it does not cover the wide variety of possibilities which documentary can be (for example such films as *Waltz with Bashir*). It is clear from this that Ellis’s (2012) argument that both viewers and academics make assumptions about documentary which are mistaken is correct. Ellis also explains that factual programming includes but is not limited to documentary and may contain studio based programmes such as cookery shows.

“Anything nonfiction is routinely called a documentary, even when it may be factually based advertising sponsored by a branch of the travel industry or a pet care film whose agenda is hidden to prove how necessary Contemp Cure Conditioner is to man’s best friend”

(Rabiger, 2004: 9)

Considering some of the unusual results in this study (for example participants considered *Tonight with Vincent Browne* to be a documentary) this may be where some of the confusion is coming from in relation to particular programmes. The boundaries between their documentary content and factual programming status may be blurred causing audience members to miscategorise them.

Ellis (2012) also argues that due to technological innovations in filmmaking, there is now a scepticism surrounding factual footage. The datum that the participants readily accepted the given definition of documentary and the majority gave its purpose to be a factual, informative, insightful and educational account of a topic implies that this is not the case. It seems to support rather Rabiger's (2004: 52) assertion that "the realism of documentary lulls the audience into passively watching "events" as though real and unmediated by any authorship". However, participants did feel that documentary is neither completely truthful, balanced nor objective (even though they believe it should be balanced and objective) which refutes Rabiger's and supports Ellis's contention. This is in contradiction however to their belief that documentaries are completely factual. Academics talk primarily about the "truth" in documentary. It needs to show a truthful representation of reality. However, for the respondents in this study, it was the "factual", as opposed to the "truthful", which formulated their opinion as to what they believed documentary to be. This distinction is important, as while the terms fact and truth are at times used interchangeably, this is not the case here or they would have received similar results.

According to Rabiger (2004: 7) people regularly "assume documentaries are objective because factual television likes to balance out opposing points of view. This is supposed to ensure a fair, unbiased view of the events and personalities in question". This is contradicted in the results of this study where it was found, as previously stated, that the majority of participants believed not all documentaries were objective and balanced. However, respondents did believe that documentaries *should be* balanced and objective which indicates that the naiveté of viewers illustrated by Rabiger, where balance and objectivity ensure a fair portrayal of the events, may still be in effect. They have an awareness that this is not the current situation but a conviction that it should be the way of things. An Irish audience may be inclined towards this viewpoint as "(t)he majority of (Irish) non-fiction films tend towards the journalistic and the expository and do not attempt to challenge either representational or thematic convention"¹ (O'Brien, 2004: 225). Nonetheless, as already discussed in the chapter dealing with this topic, it is academically accepted that this cannot be the case. The filmmaking process is too

subjective for it to allow for this type of objectivity. Therefore a compromise must be reached between these viewpoints.

Reality TV claims to be a “format that offers not an escape from reality but an escape *into* reality” (Andrejevic, 2004: 8). For this reason it is similar in concept to documentary. It can also trace its lineage back to observational documentary and still retains many of its conventions (Hill, 2005).

“The standard critique of reality TV – one that has come to dominate not just the popular press but the fan response – is that the term itself is a misnomer, perhaps even an oxymoron. Despite the promise of unmediated access to the real, viewers are, according to this account, presented with another highly produced product of the culture industry”

(Andrejevic, 2003: 16)

Bruzzi (2006) considers reality TV to not only be a new type of factual programming, but also a new form of observational documentary. She notes that in 2000 it was the factual entertainment of choice in Britain. This relationship between reality TV and documentary, according to Hill (2005: 19), causes concern for documentary scholars as reality TV’s values are far removed from those of documentary as its primary aim is “diversion rather than enlightenment”. There is an anxiety that because of this connection, viewers will perceive one to be synonymous with the other and therefore reality TV may tarnish documentaries good name. This is also important because “(d)ocumentary became one of the standard media of historiography in the twentieth century; sometimes the only one with any degree of popular penetration” which is often the “only form of exposure to history that people have after completing formal education” (O’Brien, 2004: 101, 102). Therefore it is important that documentary contains correct information and that the highly manipulated information in reality television is not confused with it. The results of the questionnaire indicate that for the most part this concern is unwarranted as the participants in this study, overall, identified the reality TV programmes as not being documentaries. There were only a few programmes in that genre which caused issue, reasons for which have been mentioned.

Finally, a number of authors highlighted that the audience has certain preconceived expectations and assumptions about documentary (Aufderheide, 2008; Ellis, 2012; Rabiger, 2004; Hill, 2005; O'Brien, 2004). They expect to be shown “a fair and honest representation of somebody’s experience of reality” (Aufderheide, 2008: 2). For the most part, this assertion seems to be supported by the results of this study. The respondents believed that documentary should be primarily factual with some entertainment if possible. The main reasons they would watch a documentary were to gain information, get a factual account, receive insight or understanding into the topic, to be educated on the topic, and to be informed while being entertained. Some respondents also discussed, primarily, the expectation of objectivity in documentary: some expected it to be maintained, others didn’t. Some mentioned the need for truthfulness also. However, factual accuracy was mentioned more often than truthfulness. This returns us to the original question of documentaries definition. If the audience expects these ideals when they watch a documentary, they should form an integral part of its definition and the terms must be adequately defined so as that the audience understands what it is getting when it watches a documentary.

7.2 Conclusions

“Documentary is indeed a clumsy word: but, even, after nearly a century, stand it must”

(Saunders, 2010: 239)

The purpose of this research was to explore the contentious field which is documentary. It aimed to do this by researching relevant topics of contemporary debate in the academic literature, in order to create a backdrop which could be used to contextualise a first-hand investigation into the views of a sample Irish audience on these themes. This was done through the use of a questionnaire. Concurrently a documentary film was produced which had the purpose of making the findings of this research more accessible to a public audience.

There are a number of tenuous conclusions which can be reached on the basis of this research. We can deduce that the concepts of truth, fact, objectivity and balance need redefinition in a documentary context. The subgenres related to documentary should also be redefined. Completing both these tasks should make great strides in the direction of resolving the confusion which occurs when the lines between fact and fiction are blurred in a documentary. A redefinition of documentary itself is also required. This, alongside a consensus on its purpose from the audiences’ perspective, would also alleviate some of this confusion. It would also contribute to the resolving of issues around the audiences’ expectations of documentaries.

There are a number of suggestions for further research and improvements on this work which have arisen from this research. It would perhaps be enlightening in future work to give participants, both the dictionary definition used here, and the Griersonian definition and ask which and why they perceived to be the most accurate. Another suggestion would be to show audiences’ a number of different documentaries from a variety of subgenres and question them as to their documentary status. A similar scale could be used to assess the need for truth and fact in documentary. On the topic of subjectivity

and objectivity, it would be enlightening to question participants on a scale basis as to how subjective or objective they believe documentary (or specific documentaries) to be.

It is also proposed that a larger-scale study involving mixed modes of sampling would be beneficial. This would involve a statistically representative sample of the Irish documentary audience, where they are initially surveyed as to their views on the issue and a smaller cross-section then interviewed to provide more detailed data of their definitions of the terms used, and opinions given. Finally, group discussions or collusions between filmmakers, academics and audience members would provide a innovative view of the situation.

It is recommended that two main strategies could potentially be implemented in order to pre-empt these issues from occurring in the future. The first is to instigate better communication between academics, filmmakers and audience members in order for a common terminology to be found and therefore misconceptions avoided. The second is to introduce more carefully defined categories and sub-categories of both documentary and its relating genres so as that the audience will know what to expect when they choose to sit down and watch a particular programme. However, whatever methods are used in future studies, one element should be crucial: the inclusion of the audiences' viewpoint on the topic. There is no point in making a programme that will not be seen, therefore audience expectations should be instrumental in the definition process of any filmic genre.

Chapter 7 Notes

¹ Also, while the Irish audience has ready access to more global forms of documentary through television, cinema, and the internet, it is suspected, and may be worth further scrutiny in future research, that the numbers of audience members who actively choose to seek these out would be small.

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- Super Size Me.* 2004. [Documentary] Directed by Morgan Spurlock. USA: Kathbur Pictures / The Con / Studio On Hudson.
- Survivor.* 2000 to Present. [TV Series] Executive Producers Charlie Parsons / Mark Burnett / Jeff Probst / David Burris. USA: Mark Burnett Productions / Castaway Television Productions / Survivor Productions LLC/ CBS Electronics / Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) / DJB / Living Films / Mobile Video Productions Inc./ SEG / Survivor Entertainment Group.
- Sylvania Waters.* 1992. [TV Series] Directed by Paul Watson. UK / Australia: Australian Broadcasting Commission / British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC).
- Tarnation.* 2003. [Documentary] Directed by Jonathan Caouette. USA: Nightlight Pictures / Wellspring Home Entertainment.
- That's Incredible.* 1980. [TV Programme] Directed by Rebekah Jorgensen / George Elanjian Jr. / Arthur Forrest / Sharron Miller / Susan Silverberg. USA: Alan Landsburg Productions .
- The Back Breaking Leaf.* 1959. [Documentary] Directed by Terrence McCartney Filgate. Canada: National Film Board of Canada (NFB) .
- The Battle of San Pietro.* 1945. [Documentary] Directed by John Huston. USA: U.S. Army Pictorial Services.
- The Birds and the Beasts Were There.* 1944. [Documentary] Directed by André de la Varre. USA: Warner Bros. Pictures / Vitaphone Corporation.
- The Chair.* 1962. [Documentary] Directed by Robert Drew. USA: Drew Associates, Time-Life Broadcast.
- The Cruise.* 1998. [TV Series] Directed by Christopher Terrill. UK: BBC.
- The Dating Experiment.* 2003. [TV Series] Directed by Gretchen Warthen. USA: ABC-Greengrass Productions / D S Entertainment / Vin Di Bona Productions.
- The Day After Trinity.* 1981. [Documentary] Directed by Jon Else. USA: KTEH.
- The Days Before Christmas.* 1958. [Documentary] Directed by Stanley Jackson / Wolf Koenig / Terrence McCartney Filgate. Canada: National Film Board of Canada (NFB).
- The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty.* 1927. [Documentary] Directed by Esfir Shub. Soviet Union: Sovkino.

- The Family*. 1974. [TV Series] Directed by Franc Roddam / Paul Watson. UK: British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC).
- The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter*. 1980. [Documentary] Directed by Connie Field. USA: Clarity Films.
- The Memphis Belle: A Story of a Flying Fortress*. 1944. [Documentary] Directed by William Wyler. USA: First Motion Picture Unit, United States Army Air Forces / U.S. Army Air Corps.
- The Pipe*. 2010. [Documentary] Directed by Risteard O'Domhnaill. Ireland: Scannáin Inbhear / Underground Films / Riverside Television.
- The Plow that Broke the Plains*. 1936. [Documentary] Directed by Pare Lorentz. USA: Resettlement Administration .
- The Quiet One*. 1948. [Documentary] Directed by Sidney Meyers. USA: Film Documents.
- The Race for Space*. 1959. [Documentary] Directed by David L. Wolper. USA: Wolper Inc..
- The Real World*. 1992. [TV Series] Produced by George Verschoor / Matt Kunitz / Rick de Oliveira / Anthony Dominici / Russell Heldt / Ted Kenney. USA: Bunim-Murray Productions (BMP).
- The River*. 1938. [Documentary] Directed by Pare Lorentz. USA: Farm Security Administration.
- The Rocky Road to Dublin*. 1968. [Documentary] Directed by Peter Lennon. Ireland: Unknown.
- The Russia of Nicholas II and Leo Tolstoy / Rossiya Nikolaya II i Lev Tolstoy*. 1928. [Documentary] Directed by Esfir Shub. Soviet Union: Sovkino.
- The Shame of the Catholic Church*. 2012. [TV Documentary Series Episode] Directed by Alison Millar. UK: BBC.
- The Thin Blue Line*. 1988. [Documentary] Directed by Errol Morris. USA: American Playhouse / Channel 4 Television Corporation / Third Floor Productions.
- The Twentieth Century*. 1957-1966. [TV Series] Directed by Peter Poor / Willard Van Dyke / Nicholas Webster / Wade Bingham / Robert K Sharpe / Av Westin / Harry Rasky / Burton Benjamin / Earle Luby. USA: Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS).
- Titicut Follies*. 1967. [Documentary] Directed by Frederick Wiseman. USA: Grove Press Inc.
- Tongues Untied*. 1989. [Documentary] Directed by Marlon Riggs. USA: MTR Productions.
- Treasure Island*. 1998. [TV Series] Directed by Unknown. Ireland: Coco Television.
- Tri pesni o Lenine / Three Songs of Lenin*. 1934. [Documentary] Directed by Dziga Vertov. Soviet Union: Mezhrabpomfilm.

- Triumph of the Will*. 1934. [Documentary] Directed by Leni Riefenstahl. Germany: Leni Riefenstahl-Produktion / Reichspropagandaleitung der NSDAP.
- Under Carib Skies*. 1957. [Documentary] Directed by Carl Dudley. USA: Warner Bros. Pictures .
- Unsolved Mysteries*. 1987 to Present. [TV Series] Produced by Raymond Bridgers / Stuart Schwartz / Jim Lindsay. USA: Cosgrove-Meurer Productions.
- Velikiy put / The Great Way*. 1927. [Documentary] Directed by Esfir Shub. Soviet Union: Sovkino.
- Vets in Practice*. 1997- 2002. [TV Series] Produced by Rachel Bell / Amanda Prince / Julian Mercer / Miranda Steed. UK: BBC.
- Waltz with Bashir*. 2008. [Documentary] Directed by Ari Folman. Israel / France / Germany / USA / Finland / Switzerland / Belgium / Australia: Bridgit Folman Film Gang / Les Films d'Ici / Razor Film Produktion GmbH / Arte France / Noga Communication - Channel 8 / Hot Telecommunication / ITVS / Israel Film Fund / Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg / New Israeli Foundation for Cinema and Television / Radio Télévision Belge Francophone (RTBF) / SBS Australia / Télévision Suisse-Romande (TSR) / YLE Teema.
- What's Happening!: The Beatles in the USA*. 1964. [Documentary] Directed by Albert Maysles / David Maysles / Susan Fromke / Kathy Dougherty. USA: Apple Corps.
- Why We Fight: Divide and Conquer Poster*. 1943. [Documentary] Directed by Frank Capra / Anatole Litvak. USA: The War Department / Warner Bros. Pictures .
- Why We Fight: Prelude to War*. 1942. [Documentary] Directed by Frank Capra / Anatole Litvak. USA: U.S. War Department / Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS) / U.S. Army Special Service Division.
- Why We Fight: The Battle of Britain*. 1943. [Documentary] Directed by Frank Capra / Anthony Veiller. USA: Warner Bros. Pictures.
- Why We Fight: The Battle of China*. 1944. [Documentary] Directed by Frank Capra / Anatole Litvak. USA: U.S. Army Signal Corps.
- Why We Fight: The Battle of Russia*. 1943. [Documentary] Directed by Frank Capra / Anatole Litvak. USA: U.S. Army Special Service Division / U.S. War Department .
- Why We Fight: The Nazis Strike*. 1943. [Documentary] Directed by Frank Capra / Anatole Litvak. USA: Office of War Information.
- Why We Fight: War Comes to America*. 1945. [Documentary] Directed by Frank Capra / Anatole Litvak. USA: U.S. Army Pictorial Services.
- Wife Swap*. 2003 to Present. [TV Series] Directed by Various. UK / USA: RDF Media.
- Woodstock*. 1970. [Documentary] Directed by Michael Wadleigh. USA: Wadleigh-Maurice.
- Zeitgeist*. 2007. [Documentary] Directed by Peter Joseph. USA: GMP.
-

Appendix A

Information Sheet



Participant Information Sheet

My name is Kayleigh Swords and I am a Postgraduate student in Media and Communication Studies.

The purpose of this research is to examine your views on Documentary.

If you choose to take part, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire.

It should take no more than 10 minutes to complete.

You are not obligated to take part in this study, there are no consequences for refusing to take part, and if you do you are free to withdraw, without penalty, at any time.

Should you withdraw, any data that you have provided to us up to that point will be destroyed.

All information you provide us with will be kept in the strictest confidence, data will only be accessible to the researcher, supervisor, and examiners.

Mary Immaculate College is subject to the Freedom of Information Act and the research procedures will adhere to the provisions of Data Protection legislation.

Your anonymity is guaranteed.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me at kayleigh.swords@mic.ul.ie or my supervisor Nicholas Fennell at nicky.fennell@mic.ul.ie.

If you have concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent, you may contact:

MIREC Administrator
Mary Immaculate College
South Circular Road
Limerick
061-204515
mirec@mic.ul.ie

Many Thanks.

Appendix B

Consent Form



Informed Consent Form

- I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet.
- I know that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the project at any stage without giving any reason.
- I am aware that any information I give will be kept confidential.
- I am over 18 years of age and able to give my own consent.

Signed:

Date:

Appendix C

Questionnaire

Section 1

Please Circle the answer which applies to you:

1. **Gender:** Male / Female
2. **Age:** 18-22 / 23-27 / 28-32 / 33-37 / 38-42 / 43-47 / 48-52 / 53-57 / 58-62 / 63+
3. **Current Completed Education Level:**
Some Secondary Education / Leaving Certificate / Some College Attended
/ Undergraduate Degree / Postgraduate Degree / Other

If other please state: _____

4. **Have you ever watched a documentary?** Yes / No

Section 2

Oxford English Dictionary definition of Documentary:

“using pictures or interviews with people involved in real events to provide a factual report on a particular subject”

Is this a fair definition of what **YOU** think documentary is? Yes / No

Why?

Please read the following questions carefully and **circle the answer** which **best represents your views**:

1. Do you watch Documentaries:
Regularly / Sometimes / Infrequently / Not at all
2. In regards to Documentary, would you say you are:
**Very Knowledgeable / Reasonably Knowledgeable /
Somewhat Knowledgeable / Not at all Knowledgeable**

Section 3

Below is a list of types of film or television shows. You will be asked to decide **whether this type of programme can be considered a documentary** on a scale from **1** (strongly agree) to **5** (strongly disagree). **Please circle the response that best represents your views.**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Travel films	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
Ethnographic Films	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
Newsreels	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
Propaganda Films	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
Public Affairs Programmes	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
Conspiracy Programmes	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
Historical Non-fiction Programmes	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
Biopics	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
Reality Television Shows	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
Compilation Non-fiction Films	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
Docudramas	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>

Factual Fictions

	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
Wildlife/Nature Programmes	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
Mockumentaries	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
Web Documentaries	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
Programmes about an Important Event	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
“How something is made” Programmes	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
Programmes that make an argument for or against something	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
Interactive non-fiction programmes	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
Environmental Programmes	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>

Section 4

Below is a list of examples of film and television shows. You will be asked to decide **programme can be considered a documentary** on a scale from **1** (strongly agree) to **5** (strongly disagree). If you are unfamiliar with the programme please choose the “Unfamiliar” option. **Please circle the response that best represents your views.**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unfamiliar
“An Idiot Abroad” (TV Series)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“Chronicle of a Summer” (Film)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“Triumph of the Will” (Film)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“Prime Time” (TV Show)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“Zeitgeist” (Film)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“Egypt: Finding the Pharaohs” (TV Series)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“The Michael Jackson Story” (TV Show)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding” (TV Series)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“The King’s Speech” (Film)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“Nature’s Great Events” (TV Series)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“This is Spinal Tap” (Film)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“Japan’s Tsunami: How it Happened” (TV Series)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“How does that work?” (TV Series)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“The Thin Blue Line” (Film)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>

Factual Fictions

	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Unfamiliar</i>
“Seven Days” (TV Series)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“An Inconvenient Truth” (Film)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“X Factor” (TV Series)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“Masterchef” (TV Series)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“Embarrassing Bodies” (TV Series)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“The Osbournes” (TV Series)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“Miami Ink” (TV Series)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“March of the Penguins” (Film)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“America’s Next Top Model” (TV Series)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“The Ultimate Fighter” (TV Series)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“The Biggest Loser” (TV Series)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“What Not to Wear” (TV Series)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“Changing Rooms” (TV Series)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“Wife Swap” (TV Series)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“Candid Camera” (TV Series)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“Ghost Hunters” (TV Series)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>

	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Unfamiliar</i>
“Bloody Sunday” (Film)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“Nanook of the North” (Film)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“The Mad Masters” (Film)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“The Blair Witch Project” (Film)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“The Crocodile Hunter” (TV Series)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“Loose Change” (Film)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“Nationwide” (TV Show)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“Natural World” (TV Series)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“Tonight with Vincent Brown” (TV Show)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“Wonders of the Solar System” (TV Series)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“Vacation, Vacation, Vacation” (TV Series)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“Road Wars” (TV Series)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“Ross Kemp on Gangs” (TV Series)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“Cops” (TV Series)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“Wild Vets” (TV Series)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“The Real A&E” (TV Series)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unfamiliar
“Mythbusters” (TV Series)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“Bear Grills: Born Survivor” (TV Series)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“Ancient Discoveries” (TV Series)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“Alec Baldwin” (TV Show)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“Why We Fight” (TV Series)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“Schindler’s List” (Film)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“Good Night and Good Luck” (Film)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“127 Hours” (Film)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“Fahrenheit 9/11” (Film)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“Super Size Me” (Film)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“Pyjama Girls” (Film)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“His and Hers” (Film)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“First Contact” (Film)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“Burma VJ” (Film)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“The Pipe” (Film)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“Bowling for Columbine” (Film)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“Capturing the Friedmans” (Film)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>

	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Unfamiliar</i>
“The King of Kong: A Fistful of Quarters” (Film)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“Religulous” (Film)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“Etré et Avoir” (Film)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“Food Inc.” (Film)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“The Corporation” (Film)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“Red Mist” (TV Film)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“Jesus Camp” (Film)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“Grizzly Man” (Film)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“Tarnation” (Film)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“Titicut Follies” (Film)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“9/11 Chronicles” (Film)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“Catfish” (Film)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“Death of a President” (Film)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
“A Jihad for Love” (Film)	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>

Section 5

Below is a list of statements. Please read each statement carefully and **circle the response which best represents your views.**

1. All information in documentaries is factual.
Strongly Agree / Agree / Neutral / Disagree / Strongly Disagree
2. All information in a documentary is truthful.
Strongly Agree / Agree / Neutral / Disagree / Strongly Disagree
3. All documentaries are objective
Strongly Agree / Agree / Neutral / Disagree / Strongly Disagree
4. All documentaries are balanced i.e. they show both sides of the issue.
Strongly Agree / Agree / Neutral / Disagree / Strongly Disagree
5. Do you believe documentaries should primarily be:
 - 1) Factually based with some entertainment if possible
 - 2) Entertainment based with some facts if possible
 - 3) An even mixture of both facts and entertainment
 - 4) None of the above
6. Do you believe documentaries should be objective?
Yes / Somewhat / Not at all / Don't know
7. Do you believe documentaries should be balanced?
Yes / Somewhat / Not at all / Don't know
8. What purpose does documentary provide for you? Please answer in the space provided.

Appendix D

Debriefing Form

Debriefing

Thank you for taking part in the study.

This study was to examine the public's views on what exactly they believe documentary to be.

It is thought that people do not realise that they automatically believe what is portrayed in a documentary to be true because of the ideological assumption of documentary being about the revelation of truth.

It is also thought that the public (as opposed to the academic community) may not have the same idea of what exactly constitutes a documentary as the academics believe that they have.

I will be analysing the results of your questionnaire by means of a statistics package named SPSS.

Your name will not be used in the analysis of this information, ensuring the strictest confidentiality.

If you would like any more information you are welcome to contact me through email on

Kayleigh.swords@gmail.com .