ETSU Faculty Works

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Activity: How Does it Feel to be Misrepresented. Equity, Diversity & Inclusion in Teaching Media

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Activity: How Does it Feel to be Misrepresented. Equity, Diversity & Inclusion in Teaching Media

Copyright Statement

How does it feel to be misrepresented?
Shara K. Lange/East Tennessee State University

How does it feel to be misrepresented? was originally part of a series of assignments about integrating ethics into production course that I wrote about for the Journal of Media Education (http://en.calameo.com/read/00009178989899f1688e0). Here it has been adapted as a stand-alone exercise for EDIT Media's teaching materials database. This assignment was designed for entry-level production students who were preparing to embark on the production of their first documentary project.

One of the first hands-on production assignments for entry level production students is to interview each other. However, in order to integrate ethics conversations into the teaching production, in this exercise, I added a new element: not only did students edit their own interviews, they also had to edit a fellow student's interview. And, not only did they have to edit this interview, but they were asked to intentionally manipulate the interview.

In addition to the digital editing assignment, students were given a reading and writing assignment focused on ethics in documentary filmmaking. Students were asked to discuss their feelings about watching videotaped interviews of themselves. This assignment was inspired by the video, "(Hate) Machine," that was part of the Media that Matters Film Festival.

CLASS ONE: Interview Re-Edit Project Introduction & Screening of (HATE) Machine

a. <u>Class discussion</u>: How was it to interview a classmate? What technical challenges did you face? What did you notice about your ability to influence the content of the interview as an interviewer?
b. <u>Assignment</u>: Re-edit a classmate's interview footage to change the meaning of what they have said. You may use simple edits (cuts and dissolves) or you can incorporate additional images and materials (sound effects, archival footage, etc.). You are encouraged to be creative and to think broadly about all the ways that you are able to manipulate the content of your classmate's interview. Final edit should be 1-3 minutes.
c. <u>Screen Example</u>: "(Hate) Machine"
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Ebh0BaY8m0
   Media that Matters Film Festival: 6
d. <u>Homework</u>: Read, "What to Do About Documentary Distortion? Toward a Code of Ethics," by Bill Nichols and write a short paper responding to the questions below:
   http://www.documentary.org/content/what-do-about-documentary-distortion-toward-code-ethics-0

   1. What did it feel like to show your interview to the class? Did it make you more sensitive to potential misuse of audiovisual material? How do you feel

about the fact that someone will be intentionally manipulating your interview in the next assignment?

2. Respond to the following excerpt from this article: "Focusing on the viewer, the link between ethics and representation takes on comparable importance. To what extent are we responsible for the truthfulness of what we say? As filmmaker/educator Jon Else indicated to me in an e-mail exchange, viewers will believe certain things to be true and the filmmaker must shoulder responsibility for promoting those beliefs. To what extent is deception justifiable if the filmmaker speaks from the heart rather than as the hired voice of other interests?" http://www.documentary.org/content/what-do-about-documentary-distortion-toward-code-ethics-0

CLASS TWO: Screen Re-edited Interviews & Discuss

a. <u>Screen</u> re-edits of student interviews done by classmates.
b. <u>Class Discussion</u>: How did you feel about watching your interview re-edited by a classmate? Was there anything that made you uncomfortable? What did you notice about the editing (pacing, rhythm, juxtapositions)? Has your sensitivity to the power that someone has when representing someone else increased or has it stayed the same? What does watching this edit make you think you will do differently when you interview people in the future?
c. <u>In Small Groups:</u> Make a List of the techniques that students used to change the meaning of interviews' content (mis-matching questions and answers--like (Hate) Machine, repetition of elements, editorializing responses with speed or other effects, creating new meanings with stock footage….).

SOURCES

Caron, P. (Director). (2007). (Hate) Machine. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Ebh0BaY8m0

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