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Will Rogers' 1920s (1976), An American Family (1973) and The War Room (1993): A Cowboy's Guide to the Pristine Sunshine and Wars in the Name of Peace

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Abstract

The study compares the responses of an artist, a common man and an American president to the times by analyzing the content of three documentary films: Will Rogers' 1920s: A Cowboy's Guide to the Times, An American Family (1973) and The War Room (1993) from the twentieth century. Will Rogers' 1920s gives an insight into the simple life of a jongleur and a troubadour, cowboy cum actor, Will Rogers who was famous for topical humor in 1920s and whose life size sculpture occupies space in the American White House to keep an eye on the deeds of the greatest world leaders. An American Family, the world's first ever reality show, documents real life events of seven members of a common American family and provide a contrast to the perfect Hollywood family portrait in 12 episodes. The War Room focuses on the president Clinton's political agenda during his 1992 election campaign. The authors reviewed literature on the said documentaries and history of documentary film, American institutions and movements by Jack C. Ellis and Betsy A. McLane, Jeffrey Ruoff, Peter C. Rollins, Peter Ian Crawford, Klin Richard, Chris Hegedus, Shawn J. Parry-Giles and Trevor Parry-Giles. The study finds that Will Rogers learned to share his inherent happiness with the American audience by mollifying and disciplining many of their anxieties in the context of industrialization and the world war in 1920s. An American family is disturbing yet hilarious and presents a real portrait of the American family against 70s "culturally polyglot confluence backdrops" (Ellis and McLane 254). Pat Loud divorces her husband on air and their son Lance Loud becomes the first gay icon of the 'gay decade,' as several feminist, gay/lesbian, and civil rights, antiwar, ecology, and environmental protection movements takeover America. An American Family shows the mundane truth of everyday life in its social context. Its controlled realism reflects the filmmaker's social conscience for audience's identification and political action. The War Room celebrates the ideology of war during the president Clinton's election campaign.

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
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INTRODUCTION

A documentary is the first of the film forms conceived in the late 19th century. Ever since, Russian, French and American filmmakers have experimented with various methods and styles of documentary film production to reflect on actualities and real world events. Sergei Eisenstein reconstructed the mutiny and the Odessa steps massacre during Czar's era to produce a violent Battleship Potemkin (1925). Dziga Vertov invented a range of cinematic techniques while producing the experimental *A Man with a Movie* (1929) that gives an insight in the lives of rich and poor in Kiev, Kharkov, Mosco and Odessa cities of Russia from dawn to dusk. Leni Riefenstahl preplanned every frame of the lyrical *Triumph of the Will* to shoot Hitler's Nuremberg rallies in Germany with 34 cameras while many believe documentaries are shot with one camera and have a pre-and-post-shoot script.

Pierre Schoendoerffer used embedded journalism techniques to shoot *Anderson Platoon* (1967), following young American soldiers for six weeks during the Vietnam war. Henry Saloman used real World War II footage captured from the American ships and Japanese kamikaze fighter planes to edit 26 episodes of *Victory at Sea* (1952) that kept the spirits of common Americans high during the Vietnam war. Kevin Rafferty, Jayne Loader and Pierce Rafferty compiled a hilarious *The Atomic Café* (1982) from the archival footage, comprising newsreel, advertisements, U.S. government films, music, television and radio programs to shed light on the paradox of the atomic holocaust on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

While the production approaches vary, the significance of documentary film in the human life and history remains constant. The study comprises papers on three documentary films: *Will Rogers' 1920s: A Cowboy's Guide to the Times* (1976), *An American Family* (1973), and *The War Room* (1993). *Will Rogers' 1920s* gives an insight into the simple life of an American cowboy cum actor whose life size sculpture occupies space in the American White House to keep an eye on the deeds of the greatest world leaders. *An American Family* documents real life events of seven members of a common American family and provides a contrast to the perfect Hollywood family portrait in 12 episodes. *The War Room* celebrates the ideology of war during the president Clinton's 1992 election campaign.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study reviews literature on conventions of documentary film production by various authors, including Peter C. Rollins, S.I. Hayakawa, P.I. Crawford, Jack C. Ellis, Betsy A. McLane, Richard Klin, Jeffrey K. Ruoff, Shawn J. Parry-Giles, and Trevor Parry-Giles. Rollins focuses on various approaches to documentary film production while discussing the visual content on the lives of a Cherokee actor, an American president and a common American family against a perfect family portrayed in Hollywood films (1973/1976; 1988). McLane and McLane focus on the conventions of American documentaries from decade to decade (2005). Ruoff focuses on the conventions of sound in documentary films, and says, "voice-over was not considered an acceptable technique" when "when Leacock and Pincus taught documentary filmmaking at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the

1970s" (1993). In the 1970s, the soundtrack recorded by state of the art TV stations like P.B.S. was also so garbled in the world's first reality show/documentary, *An American Family*. Ruoff adds it was "very, very hard to hear and our feeling was you miss half of it and all of a sudden realize" what Pat Loud was saying and "you haven't heard the front half" (1993). Directors dubbed and overdubbed documentaries for improving the impact of the actualities. Ruoff says, "they had me do overdubs. They would just give me rough outlines of areas they wanted me to talk about" (1993). Parry-Giles "explores a new form of political communication the meta-image, or the communicative act whereby political campaigns and their chroniclers publicly display and foreground the art and practice of political image construction" by examining "a compelling example of meta-imaging-the 1993 film, *The war room* (1999). Giles "identify how the film functions as a reflection of the hyperreality of U.S. politics" through "the use of naturalized military metaphors" that work "toward the edification of image making as a normative campaign process and a reaffirmation of U.S. national identity" (1993).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study uses Ellis and McLane's theory on the conventions of documentaries decade by decade (2005), Rollins' approaches to production of documentary films (1973, 1976, 2003, 2007), Ruoff's the conventions of sound in documentary films (1993), Parry-Giles' (1999) documentaries as the form of political communication, the meta-image, or the communicative act that functions to reflect "the hyperreality" of politics and "naturalized military metaphors" in order to reaffirm national identity (1999) for discussion. The study also refers to Maxwell E. McCombs' and Donald L. Shaw's (1972/1994) agenda-setting theory, as films and media play an imperative role in influencing political views of audiences and determining the pictures of their immediate political worlds while disseminating content as is shown in *Will Rogers 1920s* and *The War Room*, and their social world as is shown in *An American Family*. Just like reporters who first decide which news to follow and which to let go, the filmmakers decided which direction to take in *The War Room*. Similarly, *Will Rogers 1920s* hints at various international agendas of the countries involved in war and peace building efforts. *An American Family* hints at the agenda of their makers for exploring the 1970s social trends through the film. These components have the power to assemble, mould, and establish the view of reality. Content exhibited for longer time gets more attention by viewers than that aired for limited time. As this is known as the agenda-setting, the examination of the films from the perspective of agenda setting phenomena helps in understanding how films construct narrative to meet needs of their makers or audiences and most importantly decide which story is worthy of attention and space.

METHOD

The research uses content analysis method to analyze the content of three 20th century documentary films: *Will Rogers' 1920s: A Cowboy's Guide to the Times* (1976), *An American Family* (1973) and *The War Room* (1993). The films focus on the lives of an actor, a common American family and an American president. "William Penn Adair Rogers (November 4, 1879 – August 15, 1935) was an

American stage and film actor, vaudeville performer, cowboy, humorist, newspaper columnist, and social commentator from Oklahoma. He was a Cherokee citizen born in the Cherokee Nation, Indian Territory” (google). An American family provides a contrast to the perfect Hollywood family portrait in 12 episodes. The War Room celebrates the ideology of war during the president Clinton’s 1992 election campaign. The papers below provide the content analysis of the three films in the light of the reviewed literature.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Theoretical discussion and analysis of the content of the films duly supported with literature on the decade-wise conventions of documentary film production and agenda behind the issues covered in the films, or behind the production of the films follow in the form of three short papers:

Will Rogers’ 1920s: A Cowboy’s Guide to the Times (1976):
A Jongleur and a Troubadour Cherokee Comment on
the American White House and the Wars in the Name of Peace

Peter C. Rollins’ Will Roger’s 1920s: A Cowboy’s Guide to the Times (1976) offers a quick snapshot of Will Rogers’ personal life and public career as an entertainer, a journalist, and a film star during a period when Hollywood played a key role in smoldering familial values of the late nineteenth century. The film highlights Roger’s Arcadian character against a sociopolitical backdrop of, what Rollins calls, the “second industrial revolution” that paralleled a “revolution in morals” making economic power the prevalent institution and “significantly altering the outlook of Americans” (1973, pp. 324-25). As the film reveals, urban social mobility and mass production *modus operandi* had hit the Americans with the mechanization of evolving identities, and demoralization and rejection of familial values: modern superficial woman, sex in the city, and liquor. Against this backdrop, the documentary strategically mirrors Rogers’ serene image as a man who shared his inherent happiness with the American audience by mollifying and disciplining many of their anxieties of the industrialism of the 1920s and the Depression of the 1930s.

Will Roger’s 1920s: A Cowboy’s Guide to the Times highlights the difference between the popular culture and the real culture of an innocent man through, what Rollins calls, his screen personae: the innocent abroad, the rural clown (Jubilo), and “a harmonious America at the turn of the century” (1973, pp. 328-32). These personae project Rogers’ image as a simple man who had discovered the secret of being happy despite his deep topical intellect. Rollins argues that these personae indicate a shift in Rogers’ image from “a darling of the critics” to one “appealing to real and profound popular emotions” (1973, p. 333). These personae bridged “the gap between the old and the new,” as Rogers survived a retreat in the quality of “genuine culture” by maintaining a contact with “The Real Things of Life” (Rollins, 1973, pp. 325-30). The personae made him popular among the elite and common alike. His genuineness touched the popular emotions. Will Roger’s 1920s explores the social and political issues of the period and a latent desire among

1920s and 1930s audiences for a connection to the rustic simplicity of an Arcadian past through Rogers’ innate humor, and social and topical criticism that became his trademark.

Will Roger’s 1920s: A Cowboy’s Guide to the Times reflects insight of the most popular, top-notch trick roper, the humorist—the star (in Cherokee and avuncular roles), newspaper columnist (weekly columns and daily “Will Rogers Says” telegrams) and radio journalist of 1920s. It opens with a montage of archival shots epitomizing Rogers’ political life, artistic career, and the Cherokee heritage. The first shots show the exterior of a theatre entrance that reads “Hollywood, Welcome to our honorable guest Franklin D. Roosevelt of NY.” A funny sequence of Will Rogers leaving bed, twirling a string (like a lasso) to trick a mouse in indigenous cowboy ways follows. The sequence represents 1920s social mobility, alcoholism, liberalism, circus and stage (referring to Rogers’ early career at Zeigfield’s Follies and other similar places). Will Rogers’ 1920s: A Cowboy’s Guide to the Times combines various historic film clips, old photographs, caricatures, title cards (written by Rogers), and documentary style interviews of family members, media and archive professionals that reflect the speed and unease of the period just like silent films and first talkies. The documentary reflects the life and speed in Rogers’ times by juxtaposing melodramatic, comic, and symbolic visual sequences to a multilayered sound track bearing a textural voice, original music, and sound effects. Will Roger’s 1920s examines Rogers’ learned humor and sympathetic insight of the global political scene. He made use of his appetite for reading the daily papers by working up side-splitting interpretation of news and newsmakers. He then gave his monologues to people for reading while he played indifferently ignorant but curiously watched their reactions sideways through scoffing eyes. He would appear on stage in his cowboy outfit, nonchalantly twirling his lasso, and say, “Well, what shall I talk about? I ain’t got anything funny to say. All I know is what I read in the papers.” He would then jibe about the issues of the day and prominent people, quite often politicians. According to Will Rogers Jr., Rogers said, “There’s no trick to being a humorist when you have the whole government working for you.” Will Rogers’ 1920s examines Rogers’ lighthearted political wit even on the serious political stage by including a clip of Democrats’ election campaign from Los Angeles. On this occasion, Rogers said, “There are eighty to ninety thousand people here tonight. That’s the most that people ever paid to see a politician.” He worked really hard to make topical humor his trademark.

Will Rogers’ 1920s explores glimpses of Rogers’ Cherokee heritage in silent films (The Roping Fool) and talkies, as well as problems resulting from Rogers’ improvisation and deviation from the direction and the script that caused a loss of cues for his fellow stars (Doubling for Romeo). It captures the essence of Rogers’ learned grooming and hard work by tracking the threads of his very special relationship with his father, Clement Vann Rogers, who played the role model in his life. Though a wealthy cattleman, a ranch hand with extensive property holdings in the Oklahoma Indian Territory, Clement Vann Rogers’ relationship with his son shows as the main guiding force in Will Rogers’ social approach and career throughout his life. This relationship reflects in his character in a manner as Rollins suggests, “He comes nearer being a jongleur and a troubadour in one — not for a

single community, but for thousands of cities and for the remotest cabins” (1973, p. 330). He brings smiles to all faces, singing their songs, composing their poems, appealing for their safety, ignoring their remotest origins.

Will Rogers’ 1920s: A Cowboy’s Guide to the Times tracks Rogers’ initiation in traveling, keeping his travel logs, maps and itineraries of tours for humanitarian cause and fund raising during the period of depression, earthquakes (Managua, Nicaragua, 1931), floods (the lower Mississippi Valley, 1927), drought (Oklahoma, 1930), and blatant appeals for peace during world wars. It explores Rogers’ disbelief in treaties and proposed diplomatic solutions for peace in his films. It looks into This is London (1930), the clips of his filmic tours to Europe (travelogue series 1927), Britain in particular, and in it, his meeting with the queen and the king in simple Oklahoman ways of cowboys (Cherokee heritage from Claremore, Oklahoma). Rogers speaks to the dignitaries about a world engaged in wars. A message was borne in his schmaltzy ways that Americans have the wisdom, and a smile ever within reach (Rollins, 1973, p. 332). This visit to the Queen’s court reflects the persona of an innocent cowboy figure who, Rollins says, ignores his wife’s desire to come out of his captivating environment and bear “the sophisticated and ‘broad minded’” look of the twentieth-century city-dwellers (1973, p. 331). The persona of the innocent introduces a contrast between the Roger’s jovial simple ways and those of decadent urban personalities. It was Rogers’ greatest contribution to the sanity of the American nation during the period of world wars.

Will Roger’s 1920s: A Cowboy’s Guide to the Times is an important historical documentary film on the views of an artist who was politically philosophical and philosophically political. It spotlights Rogers’ simple yet complex political views and distrust in treaties. Rogers believed more in people than governments for understanding his simple political views for the world’s peace. He expressed his disbelief in politics, as industrialism was leading to a lack of interest in the lives of people in the neighboring countries. Rogers’ message for peace is still valid and appeals to the popular world emotion. Will Roger’s 1920s: A Cowboy’s Guide to the Times reflects Rogers’ faith that the United States must have a democratic president and a powerful army, navy, and air force to effectively play its role in the world politics. Rollins spotlights Rogers’ views on America’s place on the international scene, and an urge to stop wars fought in the name of peace.

AN AMERICAN FAMILY (1973): A LOUD SAGA OF FAMILY REALITIES

Since its first broadcast, the *cinéma vérité* style production, *An American Family* (Gilbert, Raymond, & Raymond, 1973), has not only changed the television history, but also the media scene of American family life. The 12-hour reality show, edited down from 300 hours of rushes, “chronicled seven months in the day-to-day lives of the William C. Loud family of Santa Barbara, California” (P.B.S.). The unfolding real-life drama of the changing values of American families in the forms of Bill and Pat Loud, and their five children, Lance, Kevin, Grant, Delilah and Michele, transfixed an audience of ten million. This prototype of reality television challenged the conventional media model of a perfect, crisisless, puritan middle class American family such as *The Brady Bunch*. In doing so, it depicted the marital tensions that

led to the real-life-on-air dissolution of Bill and Pat’s marriage, and celebrated the materialization of an elder son’s explicitly ‘gay’ lifestyle. Lance Loud occasionally wore women’s clothes and lipstick and took his mother to a show of renowned drag queens (Holly Woodlawn, Candy Darling, and Jackie Curtis) of the period in the second episode of the series. He was the first ‘gay,’ icon in the making, televised as an integral member of American family life.

An American Family, the “groundbreaking watershed” (P.B.S.) ceaselessly changed the codes and modes of television programming. Also, it “led the way to more complex [American] family portraits” such as *One Day at a Time* (1975), *Roseanne* (1988), and *The Simpsons* (1989) (P.B.S.). Alan and Susan Raymond, the filmmakers of the original PBS documentary series, also chronicled the experiences of the nuclear family in *An American Family Revisited: The Louds 10 Years Later* (1983) and *Lance Loud: A Death in an American Family* (2003). The entire arc of this brilliant masterpiece brings together truly shattering experiences of real-life drama from an iniquitous, but powerful sequence of Pat Loud filing for divorce in an earlier episode to Lance Loud’s 20 years of suffering from addiction and infections like HIV and hepatitis C leading to his death in the last episode. A magnetically alive kid of the ‘70s, still a cheerful man of the ‘80s, leaves behind extremely painful images (disability and shapelessness) of the ‘90s. The series follows classical narrative processes of exposition, crisis, and resolution; the closures neither offer a conventional “happy ending” nor are left to the varying degrees of the individual imaginations of the audience members, but bring a clear-cut shock of reality in the style of *cinéma vérité*.

An American Family, in the style of *cinéma vérité*, the cinema of truth, combines the naturalistic techniques of documentary filmmaking with storytelling methods of a typical film and aims for extreme naturalism, using nonprofessional actors (or we can say, original characters themselves), unobtrusive filming techniques, handheld cameras, wireless microphones, genuine locations, and naturalistic sounds without substantial postproduction. This series made full use of, what Ellis and McLane, call technical innovations of ‘70s (2005, p. 259) and almost entirely dispensed with traditionally trusted narration techniques (anchorperson, voiceover and standard interviews of the kind of talk shows or investigative reporting). The few voiceover examples from the series include Craig Gilbert’s voiceover in the opening episode that gives way to the tragedy, and Pat and Bill’s occasional voiceovers in the series which lack specific temporal and spatial signatures.

An American Family shows ordinary people in ordinary circumstances, but the issues not being so ordinary form the crux of the series. The exposition in the first episode follows a structure of the most didactic ‘a-day-in-the-life-of-the-protagonist’ flashback that directly leads the viewer into the crisis of Pat and Bill Loud’s marriage through parallel editing and unobtrusive camera technique whilst the rest of the series follows the chronology of imminent events. The dramatic storytelling techniques of the series blur the conventions of documentary and drama forms in a nonfictional account of the Louds’ family life. By mixing the documentary and drama techniques, this exceptional series broke the rules of television production (Rollins, 2003) and also deviated “from the proscriptive rules” of observational

film (Ruoff, 1993, p. 35). This series emphasized the differences in character roles over the plot. The series used a “chronological multiple-focus narrative framework” (Ruoff, 1993, p. 26) which allowed the viewers to look into the lives of seven characters on week to week basis.

All the characters are shockingly recognizable. Unlike the ‘70s documentary traditions of Frederick Wiseman, *An American Family* encouraged audience identification (Ruoff, 1993, p. 24) with individual characters from the opening episode. Where female viewers of the woman-oriented series, expressed camaraderie with Pat as a woman (personal communication with Deborah Carmichael on 15 March 2007), the homosexuals identified with Lance Loud, as Jeffrey Ruoff in *An American Family: A Televised Life* says, for being “a voice of outrage” (Crawford, 1994). According to Peter Ian Crawford, Frank Rich considers “Lance’s television appearance as one of the defining images of ‘The Gay Decade.’” The whole of the second episode is dedicated to the culture of homosexuality with many sequences of the famous drag queens last up to three minutes. The series also allowed ‘70s teenagers to identify with Delilah’s dance recitals, Michele’s chores, and the overloading of younger brothers’ musical band practices from the New Year’s party scenes in the opening episode. On the issue of audience identification with the working parent Bill, Crawford quotes Ruoff who says, “Bill, the inadequate paterfamilias – and in many ways the most unsympathetic of the family – is ultimately a father unable to fathom the terra incognita that are his children” (1994). Bill represents, what Rollins calls, the “crisis of masculinity” during the ‘70s and ‘80s (2003, p. 360). I think, many single parent families with similar problems would identify with him even today.

The characters of *An American Family* are too typical for what Ruoff calls, the ‘70s “culturally polyglot confluence backdrops ... the era of mindless, coke-fueled hedonism, ubiquitous kitsch, disco, funny hair and Charlie’s Angels.” New political forces and movements (feminist, gay/lesbian, civil rights, antiwar, ecology, environmental protection) transpired during this time (Ellis, & McLane, 2005, p. 254). Therefore, the identification with real characters and real life problems of an American nuclear family in the chronological multifaceted episodic actuality heightened the audience’s as well as the critics’ tension. “An outgrowth of the [‘70s] social changes” (Ellis, & McLane, 2005, p. 279), the series drew enormous attention, notoriety, and controversy concerning the issues of the representation of reality on television which resulted in the decline of family values, and rise in the divorce rate and trendy sexuality. The critics demanded prohibition of television screening of certain attitudes, points of views, and pictures of reality whether political ideas or “a real view of middleclass life” (Crawford, 1994). Some equated *The American Family* to a false mirror, others appreciated it for realism. Some viewed it as “an indication of a therapeutic society that thrived on the ‘compulsion to confess’ due to the weakening of America’s moral fiber” (Crawford, 1994), others considered it a spectacle because audience identification projected the Louds to media stardom. The *cinéma vérité* style docudrama was turned into, what Deborah Carmichael calls, a real-life soap opera (personal communication on 15 March 2007) because of its serial narrative form and intimate character relationships. The corrective genre cocktail of television’s perfect families with, what Rollins calls, a “divisive family

agenda” (2003, p. 360) became the antithesis of the American dream because of the dissolution of Pat’s marriage and Lance’s sexual mores. According to Crawford, critics like Ruoff, O’Connor, Woods, Alexander, Donohue, Menaker, Roiphe, McCarthy, Aruffo, and Jefferson respectively argue that “the series documented ‘the erosion of traditional values,’ ‘the generation gap,’ ‘the inability ‘to communicate,’ ‘spiritual emptiness,’ ‘conspicuous consumption,’ ‘the disappearance of a central core of belief,’ while the Loud family became ‘a symbol of disintegration and purposelessness in American life’ as ‘material abundance without character is the surest way to destruction’” (Crawford, 1994). The abundance of negative criticism applies: that *An American Family* neither represents the American dream nor the mainstream American family life. Though the series does not represent the American dream, the portraits are representative of the realities of everyday life. The *cinéma vérité* style actualities resulted from an experiment. The experiments are prone to alterations of observational truth. *An American Family* selectively captures some moments and some aspects of highly social seven individual family members in a large home. Additionally, the realism of the handheld camera and direct sound collide with manipulative editing, dramatic continuity and suspense building techniques that foreshadow construction of real life drama; for example, a tarot-card reader in the second episode prefigures Pat’s divorce. The moving camera technique, knockless door entries, and the gay queen entries in Lance’s room also hint at planned movements in the second episode. Lance is shown dressing up in the first episode. In the second episode, he is wearing the same shirt to lead his visiting mother to a show of famous drag queens. Pat and Bill’s voiceovers also hint at ruptures in the spontaneous scriptless action. Though the series does not depend on narration, the manipulative editing allows for troubled authenticity and packaged reality in spite of natural dialog.

The recording mode creates the illusion of a documentary while improvisation leads to fiction and the possibility of artificial circumstances. The generic confusion (Crawford, 1994) of real-life documentary and real-life drama forms brought immense success to the series. Richard Klin says the style was “later absorbed into commercial television in modified forms.” Overt and omnivorous MTV’s *Real World*, *Fear Factor*, *Survivor*, and *Blind date* are examples. *An American Family* is moving, disturbing, and hilarious reality. Not just a simple family profile, the series is an examination of the binaries of fantasy/reality, truth/lie, documentary/fiction, genuine American tragedy/false television drama, perfect screen family/corrective family, male/female empowerment, conventional/liberal, surface/depth, puritan/nonpuritan, and homosexual/heterosexual ways of life. *An American Family* shows the mundane truth of everyday life in its social context. Its controlled realism reflects the filmmaker’s social conscience and political agenda for audience’s identification and political action.

THE WAR ROOM (1993): A MARKETING PARADOX OF MILITARISTIC 1992 ELECTION CAMPAIGN

Chris Hegedus and D.A. Pennebaker’s *The War Room* (1993) is a corporate paradox reminiscent of the room in the Little Rock Presidential Campaign Headquarters where Governor Clinton’s team, consultants, and political leaders

George Stephanopoulos and James Carville met. Under the veil of direct cinema (overlaps *cinéma vérité*), this corporate documentary strategically celebrates the ideology of war to portray the devotion, dedication and passion of Clinton's political party which works day and night. The direct cinema creates a paradox of objective realism in their rewardless hard work for constructing Clinton's political image of determinate terms. Clinton's popular political image was created through effective spin control and revolutionary presidential strategies in absentia. From Gennifer Flowers primaries to Clinton's victory dance in Little Rock in 1992, *The War Room* creates a false mirror of the hyperrealistic political campaign through normative rendering of the daily activities, morale building, advertising, press and PR. This normative corporate facade appeals at the subconscious level by textualizing militaristic ideologies of war and scandalizing Bush for his wrongs and ineffective economic policies.

In the ways of the military, the presidential team follows an agenda of creating a strategic vision of the ideologies of war for the election campaign. The first implication of war comes from the title, *The War Room* which, according to Shawn J. and Trevor Parry-Giles serves as Clinton's parallel to Bush's 'Situation Room' in the presidency. The film chronicles the primaries and the strategies of a success story through powerful imagery of war, "past generals coordinating war efforts, enemy targets identified by brilliantly lit maps, and past presidents poised by telephone ready to issue the next orders" (Parry-Giles, 1999, p. 37). In *The War Room*, Stephanopoulos and Carville are the generals who coordinate the campaign, even via phone, and Bush and the GOP are identified as the enemy targets. The war imagery, the opening titles juxtaposed to the loud, spectacular, victorious militaristic explosion of fireworks, Clinton and the War Room products branded to sell in a consumerist society, staff wearing branded t-shirts that read "War Room Staff" on the front and "Speed Killed Bush" on the back paradoxically turn into a campaign of packaged presidency. Just like in the process of corporate marketing and brand advertising the product becomes the hero; the political consultants and image builders sell Clinton as a political war hero in a consumerist market place. Under the surface implications of objective realism and accuracy, the observational cinema techniques serve to construct Clinton's image as a protagonist and Bush's as an antagonist.

The protagonist is the hero of good character and the antagonist, a scandalous failure because his campaign materials were designed in Brazil. According to Parry-Giles, Bush's political campaign scandal becomes a hyperreal event in *The War Room* diminishing the value of the campaign story (1999, p. 34). *The War Room* highlights this scandal to create a negative image of Bush. Further the protagonists in the film deliver speeches and comments to the press to humiliate Bush in an attempt to build Clinton's image, "why doesn't he run the economy and not run his mouth... if he can't, get outta the way" (Carville). The film builds the corporate image of the Little Rock Headquarters and sells Clinton's image through the brand appeal, the greed or the desire of a glorious future and economic growth to the voting consumer. Carville's speeches reflect his endless loyalty, effort, and trust in Clinton for creating better job and health conditions for Americans.

Textually, *The War Room* does not strictly follow the direct cinema or *cinéma vérité* unobtrusive filming techniques. The camera's observational role is substantially compromised. The direct cinema (or the *vérité*) style footage of the film mirrors characters' responsiveness to the camera as well as consciousness of the issues under discussion. This problem is obvious in the dinner scene during the Election Day meal as Carville and Grunwald give gestures like a smile to the camera. Kind of direct address, such shots rupture the illusion of an objective observer of the kind of direct cinema; the camera stimulated behavior ruptures the illusion of unobtrusive filming of the kind of *cinéma vérité*. During the strategizing of Clinton's victory speech, the camera access is limited and controlled. Though this controlled imagery hints at the collaborative preparation of the speech involving Paul Begala, the consultant, and the political team, *The War Room* creates a paradox of Clinton's direct address. Another paradox is mirrored in Clinton's speech tone and passion for the political cause as Stephanopoulos guides him to 'speak from the heart': "If you will be my voice tomorrow, I'll be your voice for four more years" (Clinton). Though Clinton delivers the comment emotionally, Parry-Giles say Carville takes the credit for the good lines. Textually, this comment imbues rhetoric of reciprocation, hence, trade in a consumer marketplace. Carville's self-praise reveals the political team's collaborative effort for the victory speech; Stephanopoulos' agreement to, what Parry-Giles call, "Carville's campaign genius" (1999, p. 34) also points to the complex character of a wary corporate paradox in *The War Room*.

The manipulative editing and censor control reflect textual limitations in the form of deficient dialogues, though the direct cinema (or the *vérité*) style documentary tends to create a paradox of objective realism through insiders' real look in real time into the Clinton campaign. This evidence reveals that the direct account is strategically controlled for the creation of a specific political image: a paradox. The film strategically involves the viewer in the construction and representation of an ideologically experiential reality. The symbolism of war interlocked with communal identity mobilizes the ideological effect of war to achieve political unity while highlighting an American dream of progress and prosperity, international peace, freedom, and democracy.

The direct cinema technique mediates media stereotypes of the politicians by showing Carville's emotional side in a scene wherein Carville cannot deliver a speech under immense emotion as opposed to his perfect counterbalance Stephanopoulos who always stays cool and calm. Sometimes, the film rolls without voiceover to reveal editing. Sometimes, the camera lingers on nondramatic scenes or negligible issues. The emotional moments or those depicting the frustration of a team member in *The War Room* become much more intimate and real in a delayed scene. The depiction of the politicians' efficiency and commitment without job security creates a powerful impact calling for admiration not cynicism. They give up their personal lives for the length of a national election campaign. Such scenes create a false mirror of objective recording of the events without manipulation or direction. A surface impact full of human warmth and insight and a clean political system is created despite Stephanopoulos and Carville's self-awareness. In doing so, the documentary strategically approaches its audience subjectively with a distinct point of view.

The use of direct cinema technique creates a paradox of objectivity. But unlike the objective documents, the film does not follow a multidimensional nonjudgmental, noncontroversial approach. It excludes the opposition's point of view from the controversial story. It solely strives to establish the opposition as antagonists in a war with the protagonists. The filmmakers do not objectively question Clinton's campaign strategies. Therefore, *The War Room* is a subjective corporate film from the filmmakers' point of view that shot the film in a particular way. The subjective treatment involves the editing choices that affect the mood of the film. The film structure and editing reflect the directors' attitude towards the subject.

The War Room thematically follows the protagonists without exploring their conflict with the antagonists. Strategically, the chronological exposition, crisis, and resolution in the form of Clinton's victory happen in absentia of the antagonist. The chronological timeline explores new ways of political communication whereby chroniclers of the political campaign publicly parade to foreground their art of image construction. Therefore, *The War Room* becomes a compelling paradox of the hyperreality of U.S. politics. The War Room's "naturalized military metaphors" (Parry-Giles, 1999, p. 28), the war imagery, and the emphasis of the unobtrusive objective realism function to create a paradox of a normative campaign through emphasizing authenticity, ideology, national identity in accordance with their political strategies for President Clinton's electoral campaign.

CONCLUSION

Will Rogers' 1920s, *An American Family* and *The War Room* are verite films that give an insight in real lives of both everyday Americans and their greatest leaders. *An American Family* showed that a real American family was normal and different from the ideal family shown in most any Hollywood films at the time. Bill and Pat Louds' disturbing yet hilarious family provided a contrast to the perfect Hollywood family portrait. Will Rogers also provide a contrast to the image of the perfect Hollywood portrait of the American leadership. He considered peace a solution to various global issues and promoted it before the queen of England and various world leaders who were planning wars. The film highlights Rogers' political significance through his sculpture that occupies space in the American White House. *The War Room* celebrated the ideology of war during the president Clinton's election campaign and captured the president Clinton's smile to the camera, compromising the verite technique. Where the leadership failed in mollifying the anxieties of the American public in *The War Room* and Will Rogers 1920s, Rogers himself mollified many of their anxieties in the context of the first world war and *An American family* in the context of civil rights, anti-Vietnam war, and environmental protection movements. The films show how documentary films approach and represent most serious social and political issues before the public.

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