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Media Editing and What it Means to Society

Our lives are filled with hundreds—thousands even—of media artifacts on a daily basis. What makes us pay attention, however, is the way they are presented to us—the way they are edited to make us interested. Each individual has his or her own personal taste, but that taste is linked to the culture makers of our time: artists, celebrities, designers, and ultimately, editors. There is no possible way that anyone has the attention span to appreciate every second of every creation, nor do we have the time. No one wants to watch all of the footage of the next blockbuster film, but a plot-oriented, compelling edited film. No one wants to flip through hundreds of mediocre photographs by an artist, but the strongest pieces of works thoughtfully arranged in a gallery or book. Editing becomes as much of the experience (and often more so) as the original artifact or idea. As we increasingly find ourselves in a world where the tools to create are more comprehensible and tangible, editing to impact and draw in an audience are becoming more and more important.

Editing can contribute a lot of meaning to a media artifact. For example, for my Junior Photographic Projects class, we had to make a video about anything we'd like. I had nothing in mind, but ended up shooting a video in my grandparents truck one weekend when they came up to visit. They were in conversation with my mom, but I completely eliminated the context of what happened and ended up with a dramatic, tense one minute long video that had a completely different meaning (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a2jPtoKIXrA&feature=plcp>). By removing sound and any clips with the movement of the mouth, my edit turned a light-hearted conversation into something entirely up to the viewer's interpretation. I also did something similar with a photography series over a year ago (<http://www.flickr.com/photos/amandamollindo/sets/72157625086618685/>). I used

photography to capture dramatic looking moments that occurred around my house and Photoshop to enhance that drama and essentially manipulated the impression that someone would get from looking at these photos. In reality, this series does not reflect the relatively pleasant home life I had growing up, but my objective to change the viewer's experience through editing was achieved. Editing can often play a more important role in what someone will take from the subject matter than the content of the original artifact itself. This is taken to an extreme in the movie "The Final Cut" (<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0364343/>). I believe that, in the future portrayed in this movie, an entire life could be summed up within a two-hour time frame. The "cutter", regardless of how much information is given about that person, has ultimate control over how the audience remembers the deceased. Even the family and friends he or she interviews are giving edited information—we all have, at times, selective memories. In edits of any kind, some things are foregone and other things are enhanced to alter the experience created by the media artifact. Essentially, editing makes the viewer understand the creator's objective, even if it is merely to provoke thought of any kind.

Good editing is important to capturing an audience's attention. Think about that friend (or friends) on Facebook that post EVERYTHING about their lives and more. When I see someone's status that reads "can't live with out him </3" I want to somehow let them know that most of their Facebook friends REALLY don't care. This is an example of poor editing. Editing should arouse interest, and it usually does not involve including extraneous information. A strong edit usually comes in two forms: know the rules and execute them with care or know the rules and break them. During the semester, I watched the documentary, "Helvetica", by Gary Hustwit (<http://www.helveticafilm.com>). For the first part of the film, graphic designers and typography experts rave about how wonderful Helvetica is. It revolutionized fonts and transformed their role in graphic design. Basically, they all agree that Helvetica can do no wrong. They understand the rules of design and how to make something interesting and understandable to an audience. In the second half, however, they show different graphic designers and typographers that reject Helvetica's nature of conformity. Lets

take David Carson for example (<http://www.davidcarsondesign.com>) . Although he claims that he has little formal training in graphic design, he clearly has a great eye and knows how to edit images to pack a punch. Yes, he drives some other designers crazy, but he is well known for his his editing skills are in demand. There is also the movie, “Memento” (<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0209144/>) . It hardly follows the normal start-to-finish linearity of other movies, but its still a fascinating story. If anything, it is merely directed at a different audience.

Editing plays a huge part in society. In class we went over seven different modules that that covered a broad range of ways to edit. I think, however, that we did not even begin to delve into the impact that it has on the world. Take for example, human interaction. We are taught not to say everything we think. We need to develop a filter to be social acceptable. If you blurt out something incredibly hostile to someone you’re mad at, the repercussions are much worse than if you kept it to yourself. We have put laws in place to edit social behavior in a way that is meant to insure common goals. People often dress in a certain manner to project a certain image and attract certain people that hopefully share similar interests. Our choices essentially become a form of life editing and ultimately the root of all types of editing. We choose to go to the movie theater that an architect chose to design in a certain way to see the movie with a plot that a writer chose to develop and a team of editors chose to enhance. Our world is comprised of edits, and creating media artifacts is our way of capturing this large-scale concept and make it into a more coherent idea. We watch movies that turn life into a featured film that can be experienced in a short amount of time. We use Google to navigate through the vast and virtual world of the Internet and select key words to lessen the magnitude of our search results. There is too much in this world for anyone to ever consume and editing provides a way to condense it into something that can be appreciated. We need structure and editing is required to create it. We edit our language, our actions, our environments, and our life much more frequently than we edit media, but is it really all that different of a process? Our consumerist world relies heavily on the edited media culture creators provide to the masses. It influences the way we think and act. Editing attracts and impacts us.