Vol.5 Iss.3 2024
https://doi.org/10.37420/j.adr.2024.041
Art & Design Research

Three Meanings of “Graduation”——The Role, Producer and Creator

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Abstract:
The documentary "Weekend Graduation Trip" is a profound exploration of youth, growth, and farewell. In this film, the director not only serves as a creator, but also deeply participates in the production process and establishes a special familiar relationship with the shooting subjects. In terms of form, the director skillfully combines narrative with documentary, using the techniques of realistic recording and artistic processing to convey the emotions of the documentary. This article analyzes the impact of various relationships, including the roles of characters, creators, and subjects, on the creation process of the documentary "A Graduation Trip on the Weekend." Specifically, it examines the lesser-seen familiar relationship between creators and subjects and its influence on the film's creation. The article argues that the content of a film influences its structure, and that the structure of a film should be determined early in the planning and shooting process in order to find a more suitable form that highlights the theme.

Keywords:
subject matter selection, content influencing structure, editing completing reconstruction, relationship between the shooter and the subject

1 Introduction

"*The Weekend Graduation Journey*" is a documentary that records the series of performances of the original music stage play "*The Weekend Graduation*" created by teachers and students of China Media University. It tells the story of a group of creative and responsible graduating students who are responsible for operating a musical drama about graduation stories. The documentary director will also use this film as his graduation thesis for his graduate studies. The relationship between the characters, the creators, and the documentary creators presents a unique "one word, three meanings" relationship about "graduation." The characters in the play, the creators of the play, and the documentary creators, both on stage and off stage, are experiencing and portraying "graduation stories."

In the current era of artistic creation, "three meanings" are not deliberately intended, but rather a clever design that is similar to a plot-driven film, and all comes from life and respects facts. This unique relationship between characters, creators, and documentary creators will have what different impact on documentary creation? Can it inspire special creative expression? And what problems should be avoided? The complex and

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intimate relationship between the three that naturally emerges as roles, creators, and documentary creators can provide what experience-based summaries?

2 "Center Point" selects the form structure of the content

There have been many scholars who have studied and elucidated the dialectical relationship between content and form, with content determining form and form serving content. They are mutually dependent and mutually restrictive. Content plays a leading and decisive role. Content not only determines the form structure, but mature creators also use tools such as "implied readers" to select the most suitable and brilliant form based on the needs of the content. The film Inception by Christopher Nolan is a commonly cited example of a film with layered structure. The film sets up four layers of suspense, forming four layers, each of which is a dream. People are fascinated by the multiple possibilities of the ending and are bewildered by the open-ended ending, marveling at how the layered structure makes the audience confused and fascinated, even finding it ingenious. The inherent layered structure of "dreams" and "dream within a dream" is used to organize the film and form the structure, naturally and suitably carrying the content expression. The documentary *"The Road to Fame"* records the rehearsal and performance of the graduation play of the Central Academy of Drama - the American classic musical "Fame". The graduates perform American youth striving for fame on stage, while searching for ways to survive in the Chinese entertainment industry after graduation in a complicated and competitive real world. They also find their own paths to fame in the real world. This relationship between on-stage and off-stage, which is determined by the event itself, is a form of documentary.

2.1 The first section "Graduation" is the central point of this documentary

Determining that "Graduation" is the central point of the documentary is not easy. There are many possible events, and there are many angles that can be explored. Additionally, as the film crew's life is better understood, more information is obtained, making the choice even more complex. Therefore, grasping the process of selecting the theme is a test of the documentary filmmaker's creative ability.

In mathematics, a regular triangle is a typical analytical model, whose special feature lies in the fact that its center of gravity, centroid, center of concurrency, and circumcenter coincide, which is called the center. In the documentary *"Graduation Trip on the Weekend",* "graduation" is a multi-functional point, serving as a narrative point, emotional point, common point, and feasible point. The narrative point is the story, and *"Graduation Trip on the Weekend"* is the story of graduation. The documentary's subject is graduates, and the story is their unique graduation story. The emotional point is the emotional basis of the documentary, where all difficulties overcome and all arguments and laughter hide the sentiment of graduation. The common point is the shared life experience between the creator and the subject of the documentary. The feasible point refers to the fact that "graduation" is the area of collaboration and adjustment between the creator and the subject of the documentary. The story of *"Graduation Trip on the Weekend"* is about "graduation" and "love," both of which are possible in the creator's life. However, in reality, they have no time to pursue their inner love and devote all their love to their work on the crew. Moreover, when the subjects of the documentary face the camera, they are exceptionally shy, and traditional customs and taboos regarding love are obscure. Combining all the information, it is feasible, reliable, and easy to cooperate with to track the theme of "graduation."

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What is meant by the central point of the subject matter is the focus of the content. Once it is established, it actually defines the direction of the shooting, making the shooting work appropriate and more focused throughout the entire process, knowing what to shoot and what not to shoot. It can effectively allocate energy and time, control production costs, and rationally arrange human and material resources. For a film crew like that of *"The Weekend Graduation,"* which has a complex and large shooting object group, the establishment of the theme is even more important. What happens on the crew is often coordinated work at the same time, and when one task is launched, it involves different people and different relationships between people. Each event has different entanglement relationships and multiple perspectives that can be presented, thus forming many different aspects of the theme. In this case, we cannot follow the events involving all the people involved, human and material resources are a realistic consideration, and more importantly, it will increase the post-production workload, so selective shooting and preliminary content screening are needed. Different events are shot from a relatively unified perspective of the characters involved, forming a complete structure. The basis for this selection is the filmmaker's grasp and judgment of the shooting theme. In the process of documentary filming, the creator needs to have the ability to make quick decisions in response to unexpected events. The progress of events cannot be predicted and is often in a state of change. The creator needs to have a keen eye and familiarity with the subject matter and shooting experience to quickly make judgments and direct the camera to capture the most important information, and maintain a flexible response.

Of course, events don't always unfold according to our preconceived themes, and clarifying the theme helps us make choices when shooting. But when events deviate from our expectations, creators must also be flexible and ready to adjust their direction as events unfold. Canadian documentary filmmaker Rupert Rudd was filming *"Waiting for Fidel"* when his goal was to follow two Canadians to Cuba and document the entire process of their visit to Castro. Although these Canadians spent several weeks in Cuba, they were unable to meet Castro. The intended shooting purpose was completely thwarted, so Rudd decided to focus the camera on his two Canadian companions, one of whom was a right-wing media magnate, and the other a left-wing politician. As a result, the entire documentary became an event in which two Canadian citizens with different political views engaged in heated debate in Cuba. Although this was quite different from the original shooting purpose, director Rudd had the courage to adjust his shooting direction halfway through the filming process, saving the shooting work and making the film a successful documentary nonetheless.

This documentary focuses on the theatrical creations and the current state of college students, with the main subject being the record of the crew's work, staff members, and their tasks. The theatrical producers are the main shooting objectives of the documentary, while the theatrical roles are the secondary objectives.

2.2 Multiple alternative structures should be chosen based on the facts

For the editing of TV documentaries or feature films, there are many similarities in terms of techniques and skills, but there are also many characteristics of documentary editing. First, the unpredictability and variability of the pre-shoot content of documentaries determine the uncertainty of their shooting. Although some shooting content will be planned in advance, new changes and new problems will occur during actual shooting. Second, documentary creation does not have the same rigorous literary script, standard camera positioning, and standard actor deployment as feature films. The "wait - choose - shoot" scenario on the spot is a common situation, and there are more cases where pictures are obtained through "grabbing shots, snapshots,

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and following shots." Such materials cannot be very smooth, which determines that the footage faced by documentary editing is much more complicated than that of feature films. Third, in the editing of documentaries, the use of techniques should follow the truth of events and avoid ambiguity, and avoid the "Kuleshov effect." Different editing methods form different film structures. When using some editing techniques, such as montage and special effects, caution should be exercised to avoid ambiguity.

The structuring of documentary footage involves not only the lengthy editing of raw material based on respect for objective facts, but also the condensation of time and the search for the deeper meaning of the shot material by mature creators. They should express and strengthen the dramatic relationships between events, emotions, characters, etc. through editing. Based on the central point of "graduation," there are several possible structures.

The first one is that the creator subjectively intervenes in front of the mirror to string together the story content. The subjective role in the documentary creation process will unconsciously use the thinking that is consistent with the creator's aesthetic preferences as the primary standard for documentary selection. The subjective selection influences the content selection of the documentary creation. Therefore, the creator can walk into the frame as the narrator, introduce and string together the documentary structure. Like the Taiwanese documentary *"The Quest for Love Adventure,"* which records the interactions and dialogues between 20 or so couples, as well as the exchanges between these couples and the behind-the-scenes matchmaker Chen Consultant. The director also included his own story in the film in the first-person perspective. He strings together different stories. Especially at the beginning of the film, it uses a confession by the creator as the opening, which is novel and unique in form and easy to evoke emotional resonance from the audience. The creator may as well actively intervene instead of mechanically separating from the event. It is more explicit in stating the impact of the event as seen by the creator's subjective perspective, and it is also easy to string together different events, making the film more complex and sophisticated in form. However, this choice is more from the perspective of structuring the film and facilitating its completion, rather than enhancing the expression of the shooting object. It may even divert attention to the form and structure.

The second one, the double meaning of graduation in the play and the real life, where the protagonist, Xiaoyu, a senior college student who has secretly loved the school belle, Nanfang, for years, overcomes the malicious interference of his rival, Dongba, with the encouragement of his three quirky roommates, Strong Ge, Baby, and Banshen, and finally confesses his love bravely. Are the filmmakers also hiding some "regrets about graduation" in their hearts, and do they have a girl they secretly love? Such shooting content meets people's desire for sneak peeks, and makes the parallelism between the play and reality more fitting. However, documentaries follow the events themselves, and their development and true appearance may not necessarily conform to the creators' intentions. In fact, during the six-month on-site filming, there were major personnel changes in the crew, and my main shooting object also changed in the front and back. The reason for this was that the shooting object himself was a very introverted personality in the early stage of shooting, and these creators devoted almost all their time to dramatic creation, with the most emotion being only in their hearts. The creators had tried to document Xiaoyu's graduation from the first-person perspective, and at the same time, record the documenting process from a second camera angle. During the concentrated shooting process, due to limited conditions, there were only two camera positions. If we followed this design and required both

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camera positions to appear together, there would be self-imposed restrictions on multiple shooting locations and events. For various reasons, we had to abandon this choice.

The third method organizes multiple performance events in a sequence structure based on the development of a dramatic plot. The film takes inspiration from the method used in *"Harry Potter's Wizarding World"* to resolve multiple materials and characters, and adopts a structure where the tour performance is the main body, with different theater locations serving as layers, extracting the themes and emotional tones of each layer, and presenting the full range of information on the production in multiple angles and levels. Specifically, topics are grouped together, emotions are grouped together, similar shots are concentrated, and bold use of shots is made to highlight the emotional tones of the grouped shots. The story about "the weekend" itself is relatively fixed and serves as one layer of the story; the emotional relationship development between the two main characters - the producers of the play - serves as another layer of the story. Although they are not like the male and female leads in *"The Weekend Graduation"* who have a love relationship, they are close and have arguments, cooperate and speak frankly with each other. The development of the two layers of characters' relationships is hidden in the ups and downs of the entire *"The Weekend Graduation"* project.

The first one has the suspicion of being structured for the sake of structure, the second one cannot be realized due to the limitation of resources, and the third one is structured according to the sequence of deduction in events and the natural order of development of events. Finally, the form structure film that conforms to the dramatic development trajectory and the order of event development was chosen.

3 The multiple relationships between creators and subjects on documentary production

The relationship between the creator and the subject in documentary filmmaking not only affects the film's visual authenticity, but also has a bearing on the film's narrative angle and structural conception. In this shoot, the play's producer serves as the subject, and the documentary filmmaker is both a classmate in terms of learning and a partner in terms of work, as well as an artistic collaborator. With multiple relationships, different identities, and different perspectives, how should the creator handle the relationship between the two?

3.1 Utilizing familiar interpersonal relationships to minimize the impact of the camera on the subject

3.1.1 Cameras enter people's lives, and unconscious behaviors inevitably appear

The subjects, creators, and authors of the documentary are the subjects and creators of the film, and the relationships between them have been stated earlier. In real life, they are already familiar with each other. This state is different from the state of strangeness, suspicion, and mistrust that often occurs in documentary filmmaking between the creators and the subjects.

Although familiar, however, the unconscious behavior that arises when cameras are introduced into people's lives is inevitable. Using the dramaturgical theory perspective, there is a necessary distance between the film's reality and objective reality. According to the "dramaturgical theory," "in general, when an individual is

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in front of others, he often injects various symbols into his behavior, which dramatically highlight and outline certain ambiguous facts."Because the camera enters the subject's life and expands their existing life, the camera, as a medium, gives the subject the opportunity to reshape their self-image and be recognized by strangers. Even some subjects have a strong sense of self or have a clear self-identity positioning, and they will display themselves according to their self-positioning. The "dramaturgical theory" also provides an explanation, "This is because an individual's activities must be noticed by others in order to be effective, and he must make his activities appear to demonstrate the various abilities he claims to have in the interaction process, and also demonstrate this ability at a certain moment in the interaction." Therefore, the unconscious, unnatural behavior of the subject when the camera is introduced into their lives is inevitable.

It is essential for documentaries to eliminate or minimize this unreality. The aesthetic principles followed by documentaries require that the presentation of images must respect their authenticity. Authenticity is considered the soul of documentaries, and it is also the greatest charm that distinguishes documentaries from fiction films. The most direct expectation that viewers have for a documentary is the shock they feel from its authentic images. So, how can this unreality be eliminated or minimized?

3.1.2 Familiarity with the relationship helps eliminate the performative aspects of the subject's behavior

A familiar and harmonious relationship between the photographer and the subject allows for the possibility of the machine entering the subject's life ahead of time. Work and learn with the subject as much as possible, and always carry photography equipment, creating a subconscious mindset that the equipment, the creator, and the subject are one. The photography equipment should appear in the subject's daily life in a normal way, which will reduce and numb their sensitivity. Convert the familiarity between the subject and the creator into familiarity between the subject and the lens.

Effective communication is necessary to clarify the content and dimensions of the shoot, as well as the theme and meaning of the final product. Provide the subject with materials to view. People's resistance often stems from a form of self-preservation. Gaining the trust of the subject makes it easier to shoot smoothly. And the familiar state is more conducive to expanding trust in daily life to work.

Analyze the individual characteristics and make the machine a tool for communication. Be familiar with the subject matter, so you know their interests and hobbies. For example, if there are classmates who like taking pictures, you can take advantage of your free time to take more beautiful photos of them and send them to them in a timely manner. This will increase the subject's positive feelings towards the camera. Shooting experience also shows that it will make the subject more willing to approach the camera actively, even find the camera to express themselves. The subject has changed from the passive role in the shooting work relationship to an active one who interacts with the camera.

From the final presentation of the documentary, whether the characters in the shot are natural or not, and how the film's direct and authentic sense is perceived, is basically determined by the closeness of the relationship between the creator and the subject matter.

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3.2 A rapport between the photographer and the subject can lead to cooperative performances by the subject

The creation of a documentary film director is essentially a collaborative relationship with the subject based on real images. While familiar relationships can be beneficial in shooting, they also have drawbacks.

The familiarity of the creator with the subject is equivalent to the familiarity of the subject with the creator. They are also more aware than average subjects of what the creator needs and what types of shooting angles are more visually appealing. Especially for the subject of this documentary film, "*The Weekend Graduation Journey*," which is the creators of the play, artists, and film and television workers, they have stronger abilities to express and present themselves, including their own image, in the process of film and television production. Under the stimulation of the camera, they may even exhibit a strong desire to perform.

Therefore, in the process of documentary filmmaking, the relationship between the creator and the subject is not necessarily the closer the better. Once the subject has formed a self-imagined image of the film's image construction, they will deviate from reality intentionally or unintentionally. That is, the subject may deliberately conform or express themselves according to their guesses about the creator's ideas.

This also happened during the shooting. The subjects would use their experience to estimate the film's appearance and the smoothness of the editing. Because they are all professional students of film and television production, they use their expectations of the subject of creation to guide their behavior. For example, they would deliberately lengthen the cheers, and even actively remind the creator of what they would do next that would be of record-keeping significance.

Therefore, we should preserve the enthusiasm of the subject while making our own judgments about the content of the film. We can shoot according to the subject's desire to tell their story, but when editing the film, we should maintain a cool and objective approach to the creator's accurate expression of events.

3.3 Creators need to have the ability to delve deep and detach themselves from their work

The relationship between the creator and the subject is an important external factor in documentary filmmaking. Flaherty believed that to learn how to shoot documentaries, "the one thing you really need to learn is your subject."

When Ogawa Kenji was shooting *"Sanritsu"* he said, "I felt like writing a love letter to the people who liked it, so I made this film about a village." The existence of such emotions does not affect the documentary's authenticity, but it does infect the audience and convey genuine emotions. A documentary that can infect the audience must be laden with the creator's inner emotions. A thousand viewers will have a thousand Hamlets, and different viewers, based on the creator's mindset, will infer different emotions. On this level, shooting techniques and tricks are not so important. Therefore, the creator must be deeply and emotionally involved in the relationship. The creator can make preliminary judgments about the events and characters being filmed, and clearly select the content to be filmed, effectively implementing this during the creative process. If a documentary's creator has no interest in the event itself, how can we expect the audience to spend time and be interested in watching it?

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For the composition of documentaries, there is a game of chess between the creator and the subject of the film. In the process of creating documentaries, the creator's stance, structure strategy, and approach to be taken during filming will all affect the viewer's perspective and the angle of presenting the true side. If the creator becomes too emotionally involved, the event may be presented in a limited way, with a narrow range of presentation. During the shooting process, the creator should learn to give themselves time for independent thinking. During this shoot, I took the time each evening to review the day's footage and reflect on the day's shooting, which was helpful for me to focus on organizing my creative thoughts. This allowed me to keep my emotions grounded in the starting point and prevent subjective bias.

4 Results

Starting from the human perspective, focusing on the points of entry for content and form in documentary creation, and from the perspective of the special relationship between the subjects in this shoot, this paper discusses the impact on film creation.

At the beginning of the documentary subject selection, the content and the form that may be suitable for it should be comprehensively considered. There is always a combination that makes the two complement each other in content and form. There is a mutually dependent and mutually restraining relationship between content and form. The content of the documentary subject determines the structural form of the film, and at the same time, the content of the film also provides inspiration for the choice of form, which can reveal the structural features of natural existence and conform to the natural structure to form the film structure is what the author considers a clever documentary perspective.

Based on the special relationship between the subjects in this shoot, the paper discusses the advantages and disadvantages of the familiar relationship between the shooting and the subject object on the film creation. It proposes that the advantage of using the familiar relationship is to eliminate the unnatural performance of the subject object in front of the camera, and also stresses that this kind of relationship is prone to flattering performance problems. Therefore, it puts forward a high requirement for the creator to have a high level of self-discipline, and requires him/her to learn to control the in-depth and detachment of his/her own emotions in the creation process.

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