

THE POSE OF NEUTRALITY
IN SOCIAL DOCUMENTARY FILMS

by

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ABSTRACT

From the outset, documentary filmmakers have sought to achieve the unobtainable goal of re-presenting reality in a purely objective manner. What began with an attempt to document a dying/evolving culture in Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* led to a century of debate about how closely documentary film could come to achieving the ultimate goal of representing our historical and social world accurately, objectively, and truthfully. The stem cell research debate has produced three documentaries that illustrate two models of filmmaking process: engaged filmmaking and non-engaged filmmaking. Within these two models, the filmmaker may utilize certain aesthetic techniques of vision and voice that reveal subjective manipulation. I intend to show how the rhetoric of the filmmaker presides over the content even when he presumes to maintain an objective stance.

INTRODUCTION

I don't know what truth is. Truth is something unattainable. We can't think we're creating truth with a camera. But what we can do is reveal something to viewers that allows them to discover their own truth. —*Michel Brault*

As documentary filmmakers, we tell stories about our perception of the reality before us. During the myriad of decisions we make throughout the production process, we inevitably import some of ourselves into the finished piece. Our translation of that reality finds its way into the final product. Hence, we can never hope to achieve a purely objective presentation of reality, nor can we hope to remain absolutely neutral in our presentation of it. As film critic Stella Bruzzi states,

Because the ideal of the pure documentary uncontaminated by the subjective vagaries of representation is forever upheld, all non-fiction film is thus deemed to be unable to live up to its intention, so documentary becomes what you do when you have failed.¹

I will argue that like pure objectivity, absolute neutrality in documentary film is a myth.

In an online syllabus to his 2004 course in Engaged Journalism, international journalist and Dean of the Edward R. Murrow College of Communication at Washington State University Lawrence Pintak poses this question.

Often, the words and images that move nations are the product of a journalist's own anger, pain or despair. What is the impact when reporters take sides, on society, on the coverage and on the reporters themselves?²

This question points to a central problem facing documentary filmmakers today: whether to take an engaged (personally involved) or disengaged (impersonal) approach to the rhetoric of persuasion in film.

The choice of the filmmaker to move to the forefront of his argument (engaged) or to step back to a putatively invisible position of neutrality (disengaged) presupposes a moral stance each documentarian must face. One issue may hold within it many views.

Whether presented through the lens of engaged or non-engaged filmmaking, film may distort the perception of an issue. Philosopher Ken Wilber discusses a neutral framework that can be used to bring more clarity, care and comprehensiveness to any situation.

Wilber presents a basic orienting generalization: "... an action is moral or ethical the more perspectives it takes into account."³ In filmmaking, this means that by adopting a pose of neutrality and presenting more sides of the subject, the filmmaker is less likely to distort.

The title "documentary filmmaker" carries with it the perception that the filmmaker is presenting a true historical record of an event or social issue. I contend that we as documentary filmmakers do not record history. In fact, we can only hope to comment on an issue or an event, even when we adopt the pose of journalistic neutrality. I will frame a comparative analysis in terms of a rhetoric of persuasion using three films that speak about the embryonic stem cell research debate. Two of the films choose the polar extremes from which to present their cases within the model of engaged filmmaking. The third, my thesis film *Lines in the Sand*, presents the issue from a middle ground, defined as a posed neutral position in a non-engaged film model. Through an examination of the styles, strategies and structures utilized by each filmmaker to create a film's distinctive voice, as well as an analysis of their arguments, I intend to show how

the rhetoric of the filmmaker presides over content even when he presumes to maintain an objective stance.

THE FOCUS

When asked about the use of the term documentary, Jill Godmilow responded.

I do use it, for convenience, but I hate it. Why? Because everybody *thinks* they know what the term means, because everybody has seen some television programs labeled documentary...that is, so-called objective journalistic presentations of social problems, or history programs that chronicle certain social movements, or portraits of famous artists or historical figures and the like. Unconsciously embedded in these forms called documentary is the conceit of “the real,” which substantiates the truth claims made by these films.⁴

Godmilow believes the term “non-fiction” also interjects a false identifier to describe this genre of filmmaking, “...but it’s tainted too. It’s a term built on the concept of something *not* being something else, implying that because it’s not fiction, it’s true.”⁵ Godmilow believes that the term “edifiers” or “films of edification” is a more realistic label to place on this genre. She states,

At least this label avoids the classic truth claims of documentary and acknowledges the intention to persuade and to elevate – to raise up the audience to a more sophisticated or refined notion of *what is*.⁶

The historical label “documentary” defined as a “creative treatment of actuality” assigned by John Grierson in 1926 misrepresents the essence of this filmmaking genre.

Godmilow’s new term better encapsulates what we as filmmakers attempt to do when we produce a film.

In *Theorizing Documentary*, Michael Renov lists four fundamental tendencies of documentary: 1) to record, reveal, or preserve, 2) to persuade or promote, 3) to analyze or interrogate, and 4) to express. He states that, “These four functions operate as modalities

of desire, impulsions which fuel documentary discourse.”⁷ When filmmakers decide to produce an artistic representation of life around us, they must first determine what they want to accomplish with the film.

Renov’s first category refers to those documentary films that fall into the category of ethnography, which he relates back to the birth of filmmaking seen in Lumière’s *actualités* and Flaherty’s *Nanook*. He states, “The emphasis here is on the replication of the historical real, the creation of a second-order reality cut to the measure of our desire – to cheat death, stop time, record loss.”⁸

I will focus on Renov’s second category “persuade or promote” in this essay, because the films I will discuss fall into this category. Renov states:

In his *Ideology and the Image*, Bill Nichols recalls for us the Aristotelian triad of proofs operative in the documentary: ethical, emotional, and demonstrative. We can be persuaded by the ethical status of the filmmaker or interview subject, by the tug of heartstrings, or by a barrage of bar graphs.⁹

Renov defines his third category asserting that “Analysis, in this context, can be considered as the cerebral reflex of the record/reveal/preserve modality; it is revelation interrogated,”¹⁰ referring to what Nichols categorizes as the reflexive mode of representation. Nichols defines the reflexive mode as,

...a desire to make the conventions of representation themselves more apparent and to challenge the impression of reality which the other three modes normally conveyed unproblematically. It is the self-aware mode; it uses many of the same devices as other documentaries but sets them on edge so that the viewer’s attention is drawn to the device as well as the effect.¹¹

Renov’s fourth category is an expressive modality that refers to the relationship between “documentation and artfulness.” “In the end,” he writes, “the aesthetic function

can never be wholly divorced from the didactic one insofar as the aim remains “pleasurable learning.”¹²

So how do we as filmmakers persuade the audience to agree with our perspective on a social issue? There are three avenues available to us: we can appeal to reason, we can appeal to emotions, or we can appeal to the audience based on the filmmaker’s, the interviewee’s or the on-screen narrator’s good character. In the case of the three films used for comparison in this thesis, each seeks to sway the audience to its side. Each film utilizes one or more of these options in its quest for authority.

If we are to understand how these filmmakers build their productions, we should also consider the ways in which such factors as veracity, veridicality, context and indexicality weave the fabric of the films’ messages through filmic techniques. Even the indexical nature of the term documentary as it pertains to an audience’s perception of what that term means must be explored.

The voice of a documentary is in part derived from an analysis of the perspective from which the filmmaker presents his version of the social issue in question. In any social conflict, a polarized subset of society voices its opinions as to the right or wrong of society’s current path or stance on an issue. Two of the three films in this essay choose to present an argument in the tradition of engaged journalism by openly promoting their ideals and desires about the embryonic stem cell debate, as opposed to producing a film about this debate as if speaking in the mode of social commentary. These filmmakers choose sides in the debate and voice their films from a subjective point of view.

The contrasting stance is that of a film based on non-engagement, or assumed objectivity. Whereas a filmmaker may pose as objective or neutral, a mere presentation of the facts would fail to produce a film worthy of watching. Because the notion of pure objectivity is often confused with truth, Jane Chapman asserts that

...a wider vision ...depends on the way subjectivity is implemented and the level of personalization applied. ... Plantinga argues for a relative objectivity, fairness and balance which, realistically, could well be the only sort of objectivity available to the journalistic documentary. The Plantinga thesis is that there *is* such a thing as “relative objectivity.” This approach demands a sense of responsibility which involves both engagement and distance: we cannot abandon the elusive practices associated with objectivity, for they are still ethically pragmatic.¹³

THE FILMS

The embryonic stem cell research debate produced three films between 2006 and 2009: *Life is for the Living* (2008), *Cutting through the Spin on Stem Cells and Cloning*, (2006) and *Lines in the Sand* (2009). These films each present an argument about this decade-old conflict from a different perspective. The following section provides a brief synopsis of each film.

Life is for the Living (2008), a pro-embryonic stem cell research film produced by Michael Rubyan and Deborah Orley from the University of Michigan, features a long list of high profile names from the broadcast news, political, and scientific communities. The film opens with Mike Wallace of Sixty Minutes and includes such other notables as Janet Reno, Senator Ted Kennedy, Senator Carl Levin and Dr. Clive Svendsen, one of the world's leading stem cell researchers. Each interview addresses the "hope and promise" of embryonic stem cell research. The filmmakers also introduce the audience to five families that have been affected by disease or injury, highlighting their struggles and the pain they must endure. Each family speaks about how embryonic stem cell research can help cure them and why Federal funding is so important.¹⁴

Produced by Rev. Tadeusz Pacholczyk Ph.D., (Father Tad), a Catholic priest and Neuroscientist from Yale with postdoctoral work at Harvard in bioethics, and the National Catholic Bioethics Center, *Cutting through the Spin on Stem Cells and Cloning* (2006) is an anti-embryonic stem cell research film. It aired on the national Catholic Church Network EWTN in 2006. This ninety-minute documentary is a

staged ten-point lecture filmed on the set of a television studio. Presided over by Cardinal Sean O'Malley on his weekly television show and presented by Father Tad, the lecture presents the anti-research perspective to a captive group of twenty Caucasian people of varying ages. The didactic presentation speaks about the ethical concerns for Catholics regarding embryonic stem cell research and presents a series of facts as interpreted from their religious perspective. A short question and answer forum follows the lecture. Father Tad utilizes this opportunity to define his side of the argument further.¹⁵

Lines in the Sand (2009), presents facts about embryonic stem cell research from a purported middle ground. Following a montage of street interviews and a brief history lesson, Dr. James Thomson from the University of Wisconsin, Madison provides the audience with the facts about his research. Utilizing a journalistic framework Dr. Thomson answers the questions of who, what, why and how about this controversial research. As the narrator, I act as a guide to help the audience to understand the complex science behind the scenes and to focus their attention onto what in my opinion are the key issues of the debate.¹⁶

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The three films in this comparative analysis fall into Renov's second category of documentary films. Each filmmaker claims a position on the polarized debate bell curve. Each chooses accordingly to develop a distinct voice and point of view for his film in the hope of persuading viewers to his side. *Life is for the Living* speaks to us from the liberal left proclaiming the benefits of this new technological advancement. *Cutting through the Spin on Stem Cells and Cloning* speaks from the Christian conservative right presenting a theologically-based argument against the continuation of research based on this scientific discovery. *Lines in the Sand* speaks from a mid-point along that bell curve arguing for a focus on the critical points of the debate. Throughout the production process, the filmmakers made subjective choices based on what they felt would best further their chosen cause.

Renov in *Theorizing Documentary* expounds on his reference to the Aristotelian triad of proofs stating that,

One could argue for the relative merits of, say, emotional versus demonstrative proofs – photographs of the suffering versus expert witnesses. Certainly ethical considerations arise within the context of such a discussion; yet I am not concerned here to weigh the value of appropriateness of any particular persuasive approach. More to the point for me is the claim that the persuasive or promotional modality is intrinsic to all documentary forms and demands to be considered in relation to the other rhetorical/aesthetic functions.¹⁷

Accepting that all three films seek to persuade their audience, we will examine the “voice” that each filmmaker gave to his work. In Bill Nichols' article *The Voice of Documentary*, he defines voice as,

...not restricted to any one code or feature, such as dialogue or spoken commentary. Voice is perhaps akin to that intangible, moiré-like pattern formed by the unique interaction of all a film's codes...¹⁸

The three filmmakers in this discussion each chose a different “voice” for their films. Each seeks to blend a different mixture of the three Aristotelian proofs into his work. The resulting subjective concoction is just one of the components that make up each film's voice.

In *Life is for the Living*, producers Rubyan and Orley combine a direct appeal to the audience's emotions with an appeal based on the good character of the familiar interviewees. Rubyan and Orley never appear on camera personally, nor do we hear them at any point. The minute amount of voice of God narrative that appears in the film acts only as filler between the ever-present series of interviews and is utilized to explain such things as diabetes and the science behind embryonic stem cell research. The film's true persuasive voice reveals itself in the blended series of on-camera presentations of five families stricken by disease or affliction interwoven with a series of high profile celebrity talking heads from the scientific and political arenas all pleading for the audience to agree with the filmmaker's case for continued federal funding of embryonic stem cell research.

Rubyan and Orley choose to open their film with an on camera thesis statement by Mike Wallace from Sixty Minutes.

The film you are about to see will provide you with a better understanding of the issues surrounding this complex subject. It presents the reasons why many scientists, advocates, political leaders and families from across the country are excited about the promise of Embryonic Stem Cell research.¹⁹

By utilizing Mike Wallace, the filmmakers seek to hook the audience with a trusted journalistic face in the hope that his reputation will lend an air of integrity to their rhetoric. They continue the use of this appeal to the good character modality throughout the film by presenting interview after interview showcasing a Who's Who in the embryonic stem cell research field and a laundry list of well-known political faces. Only twice in the film do we see or hear from the opposing side of the argument and then only two five second clips of congressmen speaking against the research. In this sense, the filmmakers choose a one-sided approach to build the voice of their film.

Rubyan and Orley filmed five families in their homes and neighborhood surroundings. This component of the film's voice is in my opinion emotionally charged and powerful as we not only see and hear from each of them recounting their individual and associated struggles, but we are able to do so from a visual perspective of living rooms, kitchens and backyards -- places that we as the audience can relate to on a personal level. The closing scene of the film typifies this voice of emotional appeal. Here we see a young girl, introduced earlier in the film playing on her little swing set. She is attempting to do her own diabetic blood test. After numerous unsuccessful attempts, we see her run off the screen with her kit while the camera holds focus on the now empty swaying swing. From far away off camera we hear her soft, sad voice calling, "Mommy." Fade to black and hold for a long pause, roll credits. By choosing to film the families in their own homes, Rubyan and Orley seek to give their production a voice, which would connect with the audience on a personal level, appealing indexically to what most of us have or have had at one time -- a family, a home.

Cutting through the Spin on Stem Cells and Cloning is not a standard form of documentary. It is in essence a lecture, structured for presentation to a live audience. It is not a filmic-based argument in the manner of the other two films. However, it has a definite voice, “that intangible, moiré-like pattern formed by the unique interaction of all a film’s codes,” that is the direct result of the choice of an oral presentation with PowerPoint slide show.²⁰ The Catholic Church proclaims this DVD as the video presentation that best states its stance on the embryonic stem cell research issue. Funded and produced by the National Catholic Bioethics Center, the film is available for purchase on the Center’s website.

The Catholic Church’s video production of its argument includes the use of all three Aristotelian proofs: reason, emotions, and good character. The presentation opens with Cardinal Sean O’Malley, a well-known face on Catholic Television presenting the thesis of its argument.

For us as Catholics and as believers, the gospel of life is at the cornerstone of the Churches social teaching. We are committed to defending life in all of its aspects, from the first moment of conception until natural death. We believe that life is precious, that all human life is made in the image and likeness of God. In today’s world science is advancing so rapidly and sometimes we have the impression that if you can do it, it’s all right. And yet we know that there are moral and ethical restraints that have to be brought to bear even on scientific research.²¹

After positioning the film’s stance on the issue, Cardinal O’Malley introduces us to the guest speaker, Father Tad, with his long list of degrees from Harvard and Yale. The filmmakers present us with an expert in the fields of Bioethics and Neuroscience, who also happens to be Catholic priest, introduced by a comfortable, warm, trusted face

in Cardinal O'Malley. Both men attired in traditional Catholic clerical garb speak to the presumably Catholic, target audience with the apparent authority of good character. The sober setting, complete with the occasional image of the dome of the Vatican projected behind Father O'Malley, and the clerical credentials of the presenters presume the power and authority of God as represented by the Church. The audience is asked to accept that what it is about to hear is factual and true.

Cutting through the Spin on Stem Cells and Cloning incorporates an appeal to the audience's emotions in an attempt to persuade people to its side of the argument. The filmmakers remind the viewers what the Church's stance is on life and when it believes life begins. Father Tad states that we should view all life as precious and that use of the frozen "embryos" in research is akin to murder and therefore, "should be stopped immediately!" Here the filmmakers preach dogma from a voice of authority focusing the audience's attention on the emotional side of the discussion. They evoke the fear and guilt reminiscent of childhood catechism classes.

This film also utilizes the third proof in a persuasive presentation, an appeal to reason. Throughout the ten point, slide production Father Tad attempts to build a logical, quantifiable case against embryonic stem cell research. His constructs, however, in particular the premises on which he bases his argument, are false. Hence, the majority of what he says is misleading and only serves to misinform the audience. I state this not to denigrate the film, but rather to point out the difference between a dogmatic interpretation of facts and a presentation of unvarnished scientific facts in themselves.

Early in the film, Father Tad puts up a slide stating a premise that embryonic stem cells have never cured anyone, while tens of thousands of people have been cured utilizing adult stem cells. This statement is factually true and indisputable. He then leads the audience to the conclusion that “We don’t need to spend hundreds of millions of dollars on a highly speculative form of research...money that could have been spent on adult stem cells.”²² The truth is that the goal of embryonic stem cell research is not to directly save a life, as in the instance of bone marrow transplants, but rather to provide researchers with live cultures of all the two hundred and twenty different cell types that are found in our bodies. As Dr. Thompson states in my film, “the bulk of this research focuses on drug and therapy development, not transplants.”²³ Adult stem cell research is over fifty years old, while embryonic stem cell research is just a decade old. Father Tad appeals to the audience’s reasoning with this technique but is dishonest in his presentation of the issues. So, while Father Tad makes his presentation with an open and honestly engaged façade, he is less than truthful in the representation of the facts. Neither *Life is for the Living* nor *Lines in the Sand* seeks to misrepresent the facts about this research.

I chose to incorporate two of the Aristotelian proofs into *Lines in the Sand*, appealing to the audience’s reason and appealing to them based on the good character of myself and Dr. Thomson. In my opening thesis statement, I reveal that, “I don’t care which side of the fence you want to stand on, I just want you to base your decision on the facts.”²⁴ Here I reveal both my intention to present my subjectively chosen set of facts on

the issue and to let the audience know that what they are about to see is a presentation based in part on reason.

I chose to step out in front of the camera, as opposed to hiding behind the veil of a hired narrator or a voice of God narration, to face the audience and allow it to see exactly who is presenting this argument. I believe that it is an important and honest choice for my film and its message, unlike *Life is for the Living* in which the filmmakers choose to conceal themselves from the audience. I believe that my decision is more forthright and open. This tactic has the added benefit of helping to establish my good character for the audience.

The second proof that I chose to incorporate into *Lines in the Sand* was an appeal based on my journalistic educating of the results of ongoing scientific research from a world-renowned scientist who discovered the omnipotent capability of embryonic stem cells. Dr. James Thomson the director of regenerative biology at the Morgridge Institute for Research in Madison, Wisconsin and views of his working lab are indexical pointers to the impersonal and verifiable claims of science. I made the decision to limit the number of interviewees and on-screen faces to two in an effort to maintain the focus of the film on the facts about the research, not about a series of talking heads. The choice to utilize Dr. Thomson was based in part on the fact that he knows more about the history of the research than anyone else, because he was the one who made it. He knows more about the direction and future of the research than anyone else does for the same reason. I rely on his reputation and good character to answer my questions for the audience.

I believe that by limiting the type of questions posed to Dr. Thomson to those of a journalistic nature, I minimized the amount of subjectivity in the finished film.

Oftentimes it is not the answer to a question that we should seek but rather it is the ability to find the right question to ask that leads to our understanding an issue and the resulting decision on where we stand.

Both *Life is for the Living* and *Cutting through the Spin on Stem Cells and Cloning* speak to the audience from an engaged perspective from the polar extremes of the debate, whereas, *Lines in the Sand* speaks to audience from a position of posed neutrality in a non-engaged stance. It could be said that the other filmmakers are acting in a more ethical manner than I am, based on their openly engaged presentation. On the contrary, I believe that the one-sided productions the other filmmakers offer equate to little more than propaganda pieces, having the end result of preaching to the choir. While it may be true that the filmmakers succeed in producing solidarity within their respective communities and possibly even motivated some of their constituents to active participation, I do not believe that they succeed in converting the opposition. Chapman states that, “What one person sees as propaganda another person sees as meaningful didacticism or an appeal to activists for further support.”²⁵ She also states, “Documentary activists tend to believe that the purpose of their films is to convert the audience to a particular perspective.”²⁶ Although these two filmmakers may have accomplished their persuasive goals of solidifying and activating some members, they have done so at the expense of a more balanced point of view. My film, which seeks

only to clarify the issue, provides the audience with the opportunity to discover its own truth and in this way I believe that my choice is more ethically sound.

I agree with Chapman when she states that, “Documentary amounts to a negotiation between image and reality, subjectivity and objectivity, interpretation and bias, in which we need to look at the balance of emphasis....”²⁷ She goes on to say, “The push and pull of subjectivity versus objectivity is demonstrated by activist documentaries – ‘engaged’ filmmaking that particularly sparks debate about balance and agency.”²⁸ Both *Life is for the Living* and *Cutting through the Spin on Stem Cells and Cloning* speak with a single voice from their chosen perspective. While we do hear about the opposing side’s argument briefly in both these films, we are not given a balanced presentation. As filmmakers, we must accept the fact that we are selective in the decisions regarding degrees of objectivity and subjectivity that we apply to the voice of our films; it is in our blending of these two ideals that films speak to their audience.

In *Lines in the Sand* Dr. Thomson and I speak about the facts regarding the research, focusing on who, what, where, when, how, why. I do not plead for or against continued research. I repeatedly acknowledge that there are two polarized viewpoints about this research and remind the audience that this is what democracy is really all about -- that we inevitably have to agree that we will disagree on topics and issues. Again, I believe that I am actually more forthright and honest with the audience in my choice as to how to best present the facts about embryonic stem cell research, even if that presentation voices from a posed stance of neutrality and objectivity.

CONCLUSION

Noel Carroll in his book, *Engaging the Moving Image* argues for a new consideration regarding the dichotomy of subjectivity and objectivity in documentary film study. He believes that both Renov and Nichols are wrong to denigrate the concept of objectivity in nonfiction films. He states,

But, as we have seen in the cases of both Renov and Nichols, the postmodernist attack on nonfiction film is not based on local skepticism about the documentary. In Renov's case, skepticism about the documentary comes in tandem with skepticism about history, whereas Nichols seems skeptical of just about any institution of inquiry and communication.²⁹

One of Carroll's arguments for the scholarly consideration of objectivity in documentary film is based on his belief that if other scholarly disciplines can acknowledge the fact that selectivity exists in their areas of study, why can it not be the same for film studies? He goes on to state, "Surely, we can all agree that objectivity might be difficult to secure; but it is still a possibility for nonfiction film if it is also a possibility for science or history."³⁰

I disagree with Carroll in his assertion 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. All three filmmakers make subjective choices in the construct of their films, utilizing different tools to build the voice of their argument. I contend that they also, knowingly or not, made a choice as

to the degree of objectivity they impart to their finished work. The persuasive voice presented by each filmmaker bears the mark of the choices he/she makes.

An analysis of the voice of each film reveals the extent to which the subjective choice as to how the filmmakers blend the three Aristotelian proofs to present their case colors the overall tone of each film. All three films meld the appeals to emotion, reason and good character, though in very different combinations and emphasis. While each filmmaker focuses on the embryonic stem cell research debate, each resulting film construct displays the issue from a different perspective that reveals its subjective purpose.

I believe that the rhetoric of the filmmaker presides over content even when he presumes to maintain an objective stance. Both *Life is for the Living* and *Cutting through the Spin on Stem Cells and Cloning* speak from an engaged stance on the issue, each choosing opposite points of view. *Lines in the Sand* presents from a nonengaged or posed objective stance presenting a case for a specific subjectively chosen set of facts about embryonic stem cell research, as opposed to presenting an argument for or against the research in general.

Nichol's argues against a nonengaged presentation because he feels it is deceitful. He sums up the his filmmaker's dilemma as,

The impression of disinterestedness is a powerful reassurance and a seductive ploy. What objectivity itself cannot tell us is the purpose it is meant to serve since this would undercut its own effectiveness (lest that purpose be one that adopts the shroud of objectivity itself as a final purpose: the pursuit of truth, the quest for knowledge, the performance of service for the community good).³¹

I hold with Carroll and Chapman in my conviction that the pursuit of objectivity with regard to the embryonic stem cell research debate in and of itself is a viable and defensible option for filmmakers. My stated goal of providing the audience with an opportunity to make its own decision is a more ethical stance than that utilized by the other two filmmakers. I have no ulterior motive. I chose to argue for clarity about the research and acceptance of the democratic principle that we have freedom of choice with the production of my film, not for or against embryonic stem cell research. I also acknowledge within the narrative of my film that in any given society you will always have differing opinions on an issue, a debate, or a conflict. In a democracy we agree that we will occasionally disagree. I state each of these ideals in person and on camera, directly addressing the audience in what I believe is an honest and straightforward presentation of my argument.

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The story of five American families living with the painful realities of Juvenile Diabetes, Parkinsons, and Spinal Cord Injury set against the national debate over embryonic stem cell research.

15. *Cutting through the Spin on Stem Cells and Cloning* DVD Cover Statement:
 This informative and acclaimed video examines the science and ethics of stem cell research and cloning. Embryonic stem cell research is considered in the light of morally acceptable alternatives, and a careful consideration of the various media myths surrounding this area of science is presented.
 Therapeutic cloning and reproductive cloning are examined both scientifically and morally. The need to carefully protect and safeguard embryonic humans is stressed and highlighted. The video is introduced by Cardinal Sean O'Malley of Boston, and includes participation with a live studio audience followed by a question-and-answer session.
16. *Lines in the Sand* DVD Cover Statement:
 In 1998, Dr. James Thomson perfected a method to grow human embryonic stem cells in a laboratory environment. His discovery sparked a new debate in what historically has been a long line of moral dilemmas initiated by scientific advancements. *Lines in the Sand* provides the viewer with an unbiased presentation of facts regarding stem cell research. This documentary addresses the nature of stem cells, their purpose, origin and future use in advanced medical treatments. Can healthcare truly be transformed through the use of stem cells? Up until now this question has been answered from the heart, not from an understanding of facts. *Lines in the Sand* seeks to reverse this trend and provide individuals the information they need to decide for themselves, free of coercion and spin.
17. Renov 30.
18. Bill Nichols, "The Voice of Documentary," Film Quarterly, 36, No. 3, (1983) 18.
19. Mike Wallace, in *Life is for the Living*.
20. Nichols, Voice 18.
21. Cardinal Sean O'Malley, in *Cutting through the Spin on Stem Cells and Cloning*.
22. Rev. Tadeusz Pacholczyk PhD., in *Cutting through the Spin on Stem Cells and Cloning*.
23. Dr. James Thomson, in *Lines in the Sand*.
24. Michael Van Laanen, in *Lines in the Sand*.
25. Chapman, 70.

26. Chapman, 150.
27. Chapman, 178.
28. Chapman, 179.
29. Noel Carroll, Engaging the Moving Image, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, (2003) 185.
30. Carroll, 185.
31. Nichols, Representing Reality, 198.