

# CRAFTING THE CHARACTER: EDITING AND THE POLITICS OF PERSONHOOD IN IMAGE-BASED SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

WORKSHOP PROPOSAL SUBMITTED TO: *36th Annual IVSA Conference 2018*

Keywords: EDITING; FILM; VIDEO; CHARACTER; PERSON

## 1. DESCRIPTION OF THE WORKSHOP

Image-based social science research is often fueled by an alleged intention of giving voice to hitherto voiceless people. But as “untold stories” gain material expression as ‘storylines’, we are urged to consider the implications of the passage from ‘person’ to ‘character’. How does the border-crossing into pictorial territory transform the represented? This workshop aims at exploring some of the intricate dilemmas inherent to the endeavour of portraying people from the perspective of the editing room.

The workshop is composed of two sections: during its first third, participants will be presented to the fundamentals of professional editing process and to a reflection about its particularities in academic settings, as well as to a theoretical starting point from which to consider matters of personhood and representation. Towards the end, participants will be introduced to a decision-making-based editing framework that is specifically designed to address key challenges of representing people. In addition to building a common vocabulary and the necessary theoretical grounding, this first stage will comprise the screening of multiple audiovisual examples - the majority of which derived from the lecturer's own work -, as well as the discussion of real-life editing room situations.

Following this section, participants will be invited to present their own audiovisual material - from snippets of raw footage, to work-in-progress scenes and sequences, to finalised assets - and engage the group in a discussion about representational challenges they faced or anticipate facing in the editing process. For their presentations, participants are encouraged to “open the black-box” of their editing processes, either by exploring in depth one particular moment, character, or dilemma, or by offering a broad account of the challenges facing their editing process experience. Alternatively, participants may choose to explore an edited piece (e.g. a film, a sequence, or a scene) and analyse how its characters emerge from an editing style or from particular editing decisions\*. It is suggested that all participants lead a brief debate following their presentations.

\*: Note that this will be the only presentation format accepted of **participants without own material**.

## 2. OBJECTIVES

This workshop is designed with the following objectives in mind:

1. To provide participants with a broad understanding of the editing process of audiovisual assets - e.g. films, videos, etc -, with a clear focus on editing for image-based social science research.
2. To engage participants in a debate about different perspectives on representation and personhood.
3. To provide participants with a decision-making-based editing framework that is specifically designed to address key challenges of representing people, with a focus on highlighting how theoretical contributions inform practical dilemmas in the editing room and vice-versa.
4. To allow participants to work with, and present their own audiovisual materials, therefore making the learning experience more tangible, meaningful, and fruitful.
5. To engage participants with each other's audiovisual materials, therefore highlighting collaboration and discussion as powerful tools in the learning and editing processes.

## 3. CONTENT & PRELIMINARY AGENDA

- **25 JUN 2018: DAY 01**
  - General introductions and overview of workshop content (15 min)
  - PART I: The editing process: What differences between industry and academia? (30 min)
    - Who is the editor?
    - The editor-director relationship
    - Ranking editing priorities in the industry
    - Editing for academia: what priorities?
    - The editor-researcher relationship
  - PART II: Disciplinary perspectives on representation and personhood (15 min)
    - What is a ‘person’ and what is a ‘character’?
    - Representation and the crossing from ‘person’ to ‘character’
  - PART III: Unpacking key challenges of representing people as editing decisions (60 min)
    - Ethics, aesthetics, and epistemology
    - ‘Audiences’ and ‘subjects’ as sources of conflicting commitments

- Matters of conflicting cultural sensibilities
    - Scales of 'personhood'
    - Person vs character: the matter of authenticity
    - Person vs character: the matter of veracity
    - Person vs character: the matter of objectification
    - Presence vs absence
    - Suffering, joy, beauty, and other moods
    - Dealing with language variance and diversity
    - Consent, agreement, and matters of personal harm, dignity, and ideology
  - Info about participant panels and closing remarks
- **26 JUN 2018: DAY OFF**
- **27 JUN 2018: DAY 02**
  - Participant panel part I
    - Participant 1 presentation + debate (30 min)
    - Participant 2 presentation + debate (30 min)
    - Participant 3 presentation + debate (30 min)
    - Participant 4 presentation + debate (30 min)
- **28 JUN 2018: DAY 03**
  - Participant panel part II
    - Participant 5 presentation + debate (30 min)
    - Participant 6 presentation + debate (30 min)
    - Participant 7 presentation + debate (30 min)
  - PART IV: Turning dilemma into decision (20 min)
    - How theory informs representational challenges arising in the editing room
    - How the editing process feeds back into the theoretical dimensions of research
    - How to transform a representational challenge into an editing decision to be made
  - Closing remarks and farewell (10 min)

Total required time: 2h\*3 days = **6 hours**

#### **4. TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS**

- Room with blackout option
- Projection screen and whiteboard
- HD projector with HDMI input option
- Stereo sound system and/or loudspeakers with P2 or P10 input option

#### **5. PARTICIPANTS**

This workshop is designed to accommodate a **maximum of 7 participants**, and allows for two distinct forms of participation:

1. **Participants with own material**, i.e. participants that will be working with and presenting original audiovisual material, (e.g. snippets of raw footage, work-in-progress scenes or sequences, a finalised asset) of which they are authors themselves, or in whose production they are/have been substantially involved (i.e. in decision-making capacities). Preference will be given to participants opting for this mode.
2. **Participants without own material**, i.e. participants that will be working and presenting an existing audiovisual asset (e.g. a film, video, or reportage) of which they are not authors themselves. This mode of participation is designed to accommodate in the audience - if there are places available - enthusiasts and early practitioners that, for one reason or another, do not have any original audiovisual material with which to work during the workshop. It is asked that optants of this mode of participation list, in their application, 3 audiovisual assets, ranked by preference, with which they would like to work during the workshop. A final decision will be made by the lecturer in order to maximise the overall experience of participants.

All participants, regardless of their chosen mode of participation, must dispose of a computer capable of adequately displaying the audiovisual materials chosen for their presentation. A computer able to run an editing software is highly recommended, although not required.