

Documentary-Making Methodology: Step-by-step Documentation of Life after Grey

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Abstract:

One of the unnoticed snares of a first-time documentary filmmaker, besides insufficient research and clear objective(s), is lack of specific knowledge of research methodology. Documentary filmmaking is a separate genre, with many sub-genres, which varies from commercial to alternative/art filmmaking. There is plenty of available literature in books and research articles that deal with separate aspects of this genre of filmmaking in terms of modes and approaches of documentary, research, preproduction, production, postproduction, and so on. However, there is hardly any academic book or article in the Bangladeshi context that comprehensively provides the step-by-step guide to documentary filmmaking, particularly through a pragmatic demonstration of a film that has been made for the purpose of emphasizing the methodology. Theory and practice may not always conform; in such case(s) overcoming unanticipated challenges that threaten an entire project is imperative. This paper endeavours to portray the step-by-step methodological journey of documentary filmmaking from the initial stage of idea generation, through research phase to pre and post production until the official screening from a first-time filmmaker's perspective. The methodological steps are based on the making of documentary *Life after Grey* (2015).

Rationale

In spite of abundance of literature on documentary films (see Schmidt & Thompson, 2015; McClintock, 2015; Nichols, 2010; Barsam & Monahan, 2010; Aufderheide, 2007), a first-time filmmaker's worst nightmare is when things do not go according to plan. Bookish knowledge in the form of 'history of' and/or 'introduction to' documentary making, coupled with academic lectures can provide the theoretical foundations that need to be combined with the practical aspects of filmmaking with anticipated and unanticipated outcomes. Such a combination may not always be applied in a balanced proportion in the graduate and undergraduate programmes of public and private universities in Bangladesh. Consequently, a gap remains between the presumption and purpose. So, how does one combine the predictably theoretical knowledge with the potentially unpredictable spur-of-the-moment decisions in documentary filmmaking? Whether the decisions are well planned out or spontaneous, they should always be aligned to meet the main objective of the project at hand. Any decision that is contrary to the main objective, can have repercussions in the long run, and can have detrimental impact in the final production of the documentary. This paper delineates a step-by-step framework for combining theoretical aspects of filmmaking with informed spur-of-the-moment resolutions. The procedural progress of a first-time documentary filmmaker is demonstrated from the inception to the screening of the documentary *Life after Grey* (2015)², keeping the methodological framework in mind.

² *Life after Grey* (2015) is a 35 minutes documentary film on the theme of rescue and rehabilitation of underage girls forced into the flesh-trade. It was made by Wafi Aziz Sattar and Muhammed Shahriar Haque as a requirement of CMN 662: *Television and Video Documentary*, which was a specialization course for the MSS in Media and Communication programmed, at Independent University Bangladesh (IUB). The film is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V1Rqk6QWwT4>

Significance of Documentary History

Documentary is an exercise in the interpretation of factual and fictional information from the director's viewpoint. Whether such a statement is debatable or not, it seems rather commonsensical to be informed of the past when working on the present. Hence, before choosing a topic or issue for a documentary film, one should get to know about the history of this genre of filmmaking to lay a solid foundation and to develop schematic background based on what has been done in the past in this field. History of documentary filmmaking would provide the first time filmmaker with the knowledge of relevant techniques, methodologies, approaches—whether experimental or traditional—in order to embark upon the journey of making a film of this nature.

What is a documentary film?

It is quite difficult to provide a definition of documentary that may be unanimously accepted by scholars and professionals in the field. However, for the sake of understanding, a simplistic definition may be provided; that is, a documentary is a piece of journalistic endeavour at capturing, documenting and portraying a particular dimension of real life event, incident, an individual's life or a group's way of life on film with rational integrity. Subsequently, "documentary film is ... concerned with the recording of reality, the education of viewers, or the presentation of political or social analyses" (Barsam & Monahan, 2010, p. 65). However, to think that just because "actual people, places, and events" are used as "source material", documentary filmmakers "always reflect objective truth" would be inaccurate (Barsam & Monahan, 2010, p. 65). In other words, documentary film according to Barsam and Monahan (2010, p. 547) is "a nonfiction film that presents the filmmakers' perspective on actuality", and "regardless of approach, every documentary is shaped by the filmmaker's intent and subjective interpretation of ideas and actual events". Chapman (2009, p. 48) says the "trend over the last twenty years or so has been towards greater reflexivity and subjectivity". Likewise, Aufderheide (2007, p. 2) argues that since "documentaries are about real life; they are not real life". He elaborates by saying that they are "portraits of real life, using real life as their raw material, constructed by artists and technicians who make myriad decisions about what story to tell" (Aufderheide, 2007, p. 2). In other words, a "documentary film tells a story about real life, with claims to Truthfulness", says Aufderheide (2007, p. 2), which does not always have to be based on "complete truth" and can "employ poetic license from time to time". Over the years the definition of observational documentary has been contested due to the influx of subjectivity (Goodarzi & Tamjidi, 2014, p. 298). Rabiger (2004) considers this type of film making to be a 'young art form' where 'there are no rules'.

Emergence of documentary and movements

Whether the earliest moving pictures had any documentary value may be subject to debate, but Musser (1996, p. 88) does not consider them to 'function within the documentary tradition':

The very earliest motion pictures, whether *Sadow* (Edison, 1894), *Bucking Broncho* (Edison, 1894), *Rough Sea at Dover* (Paul-Acres, 1895), *The German Emperor Reviewing His Troops* (Acres, 1895), or *Sortie d'usine* (*Workers Leaving the Lumiere Factory*, Lumiere, 1895), had 'documentary tradition'.

However, it may be assumed that their contribution paved the ground for documentary filmmaking. Rabiger (2004, p. 19) says that the "documentary spirit is first evident in Russia with the Kino-Eye of Dziga Vertov and his group" who "stylized fictional life presented by bourgeois cinema" and believed "passionately in the value of what he called *kino-pravda*, a 'film-truth' cinema of real life captured by the camera". Vertov (in Winston, 2011a, p. 85) claims that *Kinoglaz: Zhizn'*

vrasplokh (Kino Eye: Life Caught Unaware, 1924) was the “world’s first attempt to create a film-object without the participation of actors, artists, directors; without using a studio, sets, costumes” and “all members of the cast continue to do what they usually do in life”.

According to Swann (1989, p. 1) the terms ‘actuality’ and ‘documentary’ are “synonymous with Britain as neorealism is with Italy and New Wave with France”, and the trends interestingly enough emerged in order to rival the “colonial control of the American film in their respective countries”. After World War I, the discourse of the British government, who wanted a better relationship with the mass people, included terms like ‘general public’ and ‘public opinion’, which was a result of an influential book by Walter Lippmann titled *Public Opinion* (Swann, 1989, pp. 2-3). Swann (1989, p. 3) says that this book paved the way for “John Grierson and others who imported American propaganda and public relations expertise into Britain in the 1920s”.

Aufderheide (2007, p. 3) says that the term ‘documentary’ originated in the late 19th century when people started to “record moving pictures of real-life events” which some called ‘documentaries’, while others called ‘educationals’, ‘actualities’, ‘interest films’ or ‘travel films’ depending on their subject matter. The term ‘documentary’ was first coined by John Grierson in 1926 (Barsam & Monahan, 2010, p. 66). Aufderheide (2007, p. 3) says, John Grierson defined documentary as the “artistic representation of actuality”. However, Barsam and Monahan (2010, p. 66) point out that after Grierson started making documentaries he described the approach as the “creative treatment of actuality.” They (Barsam and Monahan, 2010, p. 66) consider Robert J. Flaherty’s pioneering documentary *Nanook of the North* (1922) to demonstrate the “complex relationship between documentary filmmaking and objective truth”. This ethnographic documentary not only “included authentic ‘documentary’ footage but also incorporated a great deal of staged re-enactments”, where Flaherty “reportedly encouraged the Inuit subjects to use older, more ‘traditional’ hunting and fishing techniques for the film instead of their then-current practices” (Barsam and Monahan, 2010, p. 66). Winston (2011a, p. 85) says that *Nanook of the North* is “conventionally considered as the first documentary” which achieved “amazing commercial success”. Grierson (Winston, 2011a, p. 85) in a New York newspaper review wrote about the ‘documentary value’ of Flaherty’s second documentary *Moana: A Tale of South Seas*. After returning to UK from USA, Grierson established a movement which prompted in “making short films for a variety of organizations from the post office (e.g. *Nightmail*, 1936, Harry Watt and Basis Wright) to the energy utility companies (e.g. *Housing Problems*, 1935, Edgar Anstey and Arthur Elton)” (Winston, 2011a, p. 85).

Movements

The changes in documentary continued with the advancement of filmmaking. It was Grierson who introduced a form called city symphonies in “First Principles of Documentary” produced in the late 1920s until the 1930s, particularly in the works of Walther Ruttmann’s *Berlin, Symphony of the/a City* (1927) and Dziga Vertov’s *Man With a Movie Camera* (1929) (Beattie, 2004, p. 35). The cycle of the city symphony films bore a testimony to the “shift in cultural outlook associated with documentary”, that began with Charles Sheeler and Paul Strand’s *Manhatta* (1921), which “took a modernist look at metropolitan life” of Manhattan (Musser, 1996, p. 90). This documentary was unnoticed in America, but due to its wide circulation in Europe, it may have influenced the theme of Alberto Cavalcanti’s *Rien que les heures* (‘Only the hours’, 1926), which focused on “cosmopolitan Paris, often contrasting rich and poor”, as well as Ruttmann’s *Berlin: Symphony of a City* (1927), that refuses to “humanize the city” and “asks the spectator to view the film abstractly and metaphorically” (Musser, 1996, p. 91). Hence, the city symphony movement jumped from USA to France, to Germany, and to Russia where it influenced Michail Kaufman to make *Moskva*

(Moscow, 1927) (Musser, 1996, p. 91). However it was Kaufman's brother, better known as Dziga Vertov, who became internationally renowned with the city symphony film, as mentioned earlier, *Man with a Movie Camera* (*Chelovek kinoapparatom*, 1929), which is a "manifesto for the documentary film and a condemnation of the fiction feature film" that he fought "against in his various manifestos and writings" (Musser, 1996, p. 93). But before this famous documentary film, Vertov started realizing the power of cinema with *Cine-Pravda* (Vertov, 2007, p. 6). Subsequently the *Cine-Eye* movement began, which is an "attempt to create a manifesto for a grassroots movement of cine-journalists whose purpose was to transform society, along with relations to creativity and technology" (Vertov, 2007, p. 15).

In the meanwhile, 'Free Cinema' movement emerged in Britain in the 1950s which included the work of Lindsay Anderson and Karel Reisz (Corner, 2008, p. 14). The Free Cinema "was created to combat the seriousness of the Griersonian oeuvre, with topics such as a teenage dance (*Momma Don't Allow*, 1955, Karel Reisz and Tony Richardson) (Winston, 2011a, p. 87). The documentary seemed to stop with the decline of the Free Cinema movement towards the end of the 1950s despite its impact of cinema and television (see Corner, 2008, pp. 14-15).

Gradually there was a shift in free cinema of UK (1950s) and cinema verite of France (late 1950s) to the new documentary movement in America in the 1960s (see Dixon & Foster, 2008). According to Dixon and Foster, (2008, p. 280), "this new method of cinema verite, known as 'direct cinema' in Britain, became the dominant documentary style of the 1960s", where the crucial rule "was not to interfere, to keep shooting even when things got dull", because unanticipated things could happen, and to stick with the "subject all the time for total emotional and physical intimacy". The fact that there was no narration gave the documentary films a "rough, raw look, which made them seem like newsreels more than anything else" (Dixon and Foster, 2008, p. 280). In other words, direct cinema, popularly known as "fly-on-the-wall" documentary (Winston, 2011b, p. 167), which used handheld 16-mm equipment, is an "observational approach that minimized the interventions of the filmmaker" (Winston, 2011a, p. 88). Dixon and Foster, (2008, p. 79) says the film that started the ball rolling in this movement was "*Primary* (1960), which covered the 1960 U.S. presidential race, made by four men who would become the key players of the new, handheld, sync-sound documentary tradition: Albert Maysles, Robert Drew, D. A. Pennebaker, and Richard Leacock".

Later Developments

In the 1970s, due to the liberal climate in western counties, documentary filmmaking started exploring riskier topics like prostitution, lesbian and gay issues, race, ethnicity, motherhood, pornography, black women, and so on (see Basu, 2008; Juhasz, 2008; Austin & de Jong, 2008; Panse, 2008; Knudsen, 2008; Holmes & Jermyn, 2008; Couldry, 2008; Corner, 2008). In the 1980s, the analog video started to change and documentary filmmakers started to explore digital video technology and the Web 1.0 (the Internet) in the 1990s, and later on in the 2000s Web 2.0 (social media) as well (see Austin & de Jong, 2008; Birchall, 2008; Juhasz, 2008; Vicente, 2008; Zimmermann, 2008). Meanwhile, in the midst of all these changes, Michael Moore "adopted a satiric tone" in documentary filmmaking, through *Rodger and Me* (1987), which is an "attack on deindustrialization in the United States" (Winston, 2011a, p. 90). His other productions were also quite satirical, controversial and big hits at the box-office as well as in terms of winning awards: *Sicko* (2007), *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004), *Bowling for Columbine* (2002), just to name a few. However, documentaries are essentially serious in nature and tend to deal with serious issues ranging from human crises to espionage and political sabotage. Despite the fact that Edward Snowden is branded

a whistleblower and a traitor by America for leaking its surveillance tactics of spying on allies by NSA, it was the in America that a documentary on him and his work titled *Citizenfour* that won the 2014 Academy Awards as well as various other awards. The film not only tells the viewers about the dangers of being monitored by modern technology like phone, e-mail, credit card, internet, but also make them feel the impending danger that they are being constantly watched, mainly because of the methodological style of approaching this genre of filmmaking. The approach that Laura Poitras, the director, adopted lends to the feeling that you are in a Matrix movie where you cannot get away from omnipresence of technology that tracks your every movement.

Categorizations: Modes, approaches, subgenres

Documentaries can be categorized into various subgenres. However, different authorities on documentaries have provided lists that are somewhat similar but also differ to a certain extent; some have divided them in terms of subgenres while others have used categories. According to Nichols (2001, p. 99), “every documentary has its own distinct voice”, and “individual voices lend themselves to an *auteur* theory of cinema, while shared voices lend themselves to a genre theory of cinema”. Nichols (2001, p. 99) categorizes documentary films and videos into “six modes of representation that function something like sub-genres of the documentary film genre itself”, as can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1: Nichols’ Categorization of Documentaries

Sl	Documentary Mode	Period	Major Characteristics	Deficiencies
1	Poetic documentary	1920s	reassemble fragments of the world poetically	lack of specificity, too abstract
2	Expository documentary	1920s	directly address issues in the historical world	overly didactic
3	Observational documentary	1960s	eschew commentary and re-enactment; observe things as they happen	lack of history, context
4	Participatory documentary	1960s	interview or interact with subjects; use archival film to retrieve history	excessive faith in witnesses, naive history, too intrusive
5	Reflexive documentary	1980s	question documentary form, defamiliarize the other modes	too abstract, lose sight of actual issues
6	Performative documentary	1980s	stress subjective aspects of a classically objective discourse	loss of emphasis on objectivity may relegate such films to the avant-garde; “excessive” use of style

(Source: Adapted from Nichols, 2001, p. 138)

Aufderheide (2007) has divided the subgenres of documentaries as in Table 2:

Table 2: Aufderheide's Categorization of Documentaries³

Sl.	Categories	Examples
1	Public Affairs	In UK, the BBC launched <i>Special Enquiry</i> (1952-57) and <i>Panorama</i> ; in USA CBS's <i>See It Now</i> (1951-58), <i>The Selling of the Pentagon</i> (1971), NBC's <i>White Paper</i> , ABC's <i>Close-Up!</i> (1960-63)
2	Government Propaganda	<i>Triumph of the Will</i> (1935) by Leni Riefenstahl; <i>London Can Take It</i> (1940) by Humphrey Jennings; <i>Song of Ceylon</i> (1934) by Basil Wright; <i>Why We Fight</i> (1943) by Frank Capra
3	Advocacy	<i>The Spanish Earth</i> (1937) by Ivens; <i>The Battle of Chile</i> (1975-79) by Patricio Guzman; Brave New Films's <i>Iraq for Sale</i> (2006), Citizens United's <i>Border War</i> (2006)
4	Historical	Wars— <i>The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty</i> (1927) by Esfir Shub, <i>The Civil War</i> (1990) series by Ken Burns; Biographies—Kirby Dick and Amy Ziering Kofman's <i>Derrida</i> (2002); Cultural memories—David Wolper's <i>Hollywood: The Golden Years</i> (1961)
5	Ethnographic	Flaherty's <i>Nanook of the North</i> (1922); <i>Chang</i> (1927) by Merian C. Cooper
6	Nature/ Environmental	Davis Guggenheim's <i>An Inconvenient Truth</i> (2006); Steve Irwin's <i>The Crocodile Hunter</i> television series (an international hit until his death in 2006); Luc Jacquet's highly popular international hit <i>March of the Penguins</i> (2005); Disney's nature— <i>Seal Island</i> (1948), <i>The Living Desert</i> (1953)

(Source: Adapted from Aufderheide, 2007, pp. 56-124)

Barsam and Monahan (2010, p. 66) says that “historically, documentary films have been broken into four basic approaches: factual, instructional, persuasive, and propaganda”.

Even though ‘mockumentary’, has not been categorized as a subgenre of documentary, it could be considered as one. Mockumentaries are “tongue-in-cheek fake documentaries”, and the “humour” depend “on the audience being able to identify the conventions”, for example Rob Reiner's *This Is Spinal Tap!* (1984), *Best in Show* (2000) and *A Mighty Wind* (2003) (Aufderheide, 2007, pp. 13-14). On a serious note, a truly chilling movie made in a mockumentary fashion is Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sánchez's *The Blair Witch Project* (1999) (see Nichols, 2001, p. 23). Much of the impact of mockumentaries or ‘pseudo-documentaries,’ says Nichols (2001, p. 23), “depends on their ability to coax at least partial belief from us that what we see is a documentary because that is what we are told we see”.

Bangladeshi Perspectives

After the partition in 1947, Dhaka became the capital of East Pakistan. Nazir Ahmed, who was assigned by the Pakistan Central Government, covered the “visit of Mohammad Ali Jinnah in East Bengal in March 1948” and produced a newsreel, which was the “first film of newly created East Pakistan”.⁴ The documentary film was titled *In Our Midst*, and had subtitle in three languages, namely, Bangla, English and Urdu (Mohiuddin, 2014, p. 35). Nazir Ahmed, who was the pathfinder of filmmaking in Dhaka, subsequently made a 4-reeled documentary in 1954 called *Salamat* (Mohiuddin, 2014, p. 35). The first film of the newly created Bangladesh was Zahir Raihan's documentary *Stop Genocide* (1971), the success of which prompted the provisional government

³ The table was formed for easy comprehension of the various categories

⁴ In our Midst: First Newsreel. Available at: <http://bangladeshfilmday.weebly.com/in-our-midst.html> Accessed on 02.12.2014

in June 1971 to assign him (i.e. Zahir Raihan) to “produce three more short films *Liberation Fighters* (directed by Alamgir Kabir), *Innocent Millions* (directed by Babul Choudhury), and *A State is Born* (directed by Zahir Raihan)” (Remembering the Legends, 2011).⁵

Contemporary Bangladeshi Filmmakers ⁶

A number of contemporary filmmakers of Bangladesh work in both genres, namely feature and documentary films. The prominent ones who have made a name for themselves nationally and internationally are as follows:

- Manjare Hassen Murad: Rokeya, *Amader Chheler*, Established Bangladesh Documentary Council
- Tareque Masud and Catherine Masud: *Muktir Gaan*, *Muktir Katha*
- Tanvir Mokammel: *Karnaphulir Kanna*, *Banojatri*, *Swapnobhumi*
- Tareque Shahriar: *Kalighar*
- Yasmin Kabir: *Swadhinata*, *Sheshkritya*
- Shahin Dill-Riaz: *Jibon Jole Bele*, *Lobakhor*

Issues in Documentaries

The content of documentaries, unlike mockumentaries, is supposed to be based on real life itself and/or real life events and incidents. However, as discussed in the ‘categories’ and ‘subgenres’ sections (see below), the narrative perspectives, interpretations, propaganda, or ethnographic viewpoint may vary. When considered from a journalistic perspective, such viewpoints make documentaries one dimensional, and therefore biased and unreliable in terms of objectively capturing truth on camera. Chowdhury and Jhuma’s (2014) study of two documentaries on the Phulbari coal mine issue suggests that the views of the filmmakers vary; seven people died and 300 were injured when the community rose up against Asia Energy in Phulbari, Bangladesh, on 26 August 2006. Their (Chowdhury & Jhuma, 2014) analysis reveals that in the documentary titled *Dudh Koyla (Coal Milk)* directed by Molla Sagor, people did “not want any coal mine in their locality” (p. 107); whereas the other documentary *Phulbari* directed by Philip Gain and Ronald Haidar shows that the people are “against the open pit project” but “not against general extraction of coal” (p. 108). It seems that both of the documentaries portrayed a partial dimension of so-called truth, based on arguably a preconceived agenda or notion.

⁵ Remembering the Legends. (26.03.2011). Available at: http://newagebd.com/newspaper1/archive_details.php?date=2011-03-26&nid=13049 Accessed on 02.12.2014

⁶ This section has been compiled from the following sources:

- Breaking new grounds: Grand Prix in Spain goes to 'Jibon-Jole-Bele'. Accessed on 02.12.2014. Available at: <http://archive.thedailystar.net/2003/09/05/d30905140273.htm>
- Extraordinary people make Dill-Riaz's films. Accessed on 02.12.2014. Available at: <http://www.dw.de/extraordinary-people-make-dill-riazs-films/a-16397384>
- Tanvir Mokammel to make docu film on Dhaleshwari River. Accessed on 02.12.2014. Available at: <http://newagebd.net/47101/tanvir-mokammel-to-make-docu-film-on-dhaleshwari-river/#sthash.ZKvd3B91.dpbs>
- Tareque Masud was a unique maker: seminar. Accessed on 02.12.2014. Available at: http://newagebd.com/old_archives/detail.php?date=2013-12-08&nid=75873#.VH7c5NKUd8Q
- Tareque Sharier with his great work 'The Black House' (Kalighar). Accessed on 02.12.2014. Available at: <http://chhobi-banai.blogspot.com/>
- Yasmin Kabir's 'A Certain Liberation' adjudged the best documentary film Pallab Bhattacharya, New Delhi. Accessed on 02.12.2014. Available at: <http://archive.thedailystar.net/2004/02/13/d402131403102.htm>

Methodology of Documentary

Making a documentary is a creative exercise that follows qualitative research paradigm. Even though fact and figures are important in making a documentary, ultimately it is the creator's point of view that is portrayed on the screen. Schickel (2003) points this out in a sarcastic manner:

A documentary is an arrangement (or, if it includes historical footage, a rearrangement) of nonfictional film, structured to support the pre-existing ideas of the filmmaker. Only the terminally stupid or childishly innocent imagine that anyone making a documentary film aspires to objective truth.

(Schickel, 2003)

Framework: Theoretical underpinnings

In order to make a documentary, it is important to have schematic knowledge of the history, as well as the classifications or categorizations of this genre of filmmaking. Hence, to prepare for this project, many documentaries were watched and analyzed in terms of the various modes (Nichols, 2001, 2010)⁷, approaches (Barsam & Monahan, 2010)⁸ and subgenres (Aufderheide, 2007)⁹ of documentary filmmaking. While making *Life after Grey* (2015), the theoretical underpinnings were constantly kept in mind. In order to get a vibe for *Life after Grey* (2015), as part of my research orientation, I particularly watched a number of documentary films on rape and prostitution namely: *I Will not be Silenced* (2015), *Sex Slaves of Bangladesh* (2015), *United Kingdom's Daughter* (2015), *India's Daughter* (2015), *Daughters of Mother India* (2015), *A Crime Unpunished: Bangladeshi Gang Rape* (2015), *Pakistan's Hidden Shame* (2014), *Sri Lanka's Unfinished War* (2013), *Whores' Glory* (2011), *Taboo: Prostitution* (2010), *The Dancing Boys of Afghanistan* (2009), *Bringing Justice to Women of Burma* (2011), and *The Day My God Died* (2004).

According to Nichols' framework (2001, 2010) *Life after Grey* (2015) could be categorized as having adopted a predominantly 'Expository' mode, which is somewhat 'Participatory' and 'Poetic' in orientation as well. The expository mode in this film endeavours to depict an objective portrayal of ordeals that the underage girls experienced. The participatory and the poetic modes were kept to a minimum, in order to foreground the unprejudiced version of the stories of these girls. This form of empowerment seems to provide the girls with latitude of freedom to express the full range of their emotions. In terms of Barsam and Monahan's (2010) categorizations, this documentary adopted chiefly the 'Factual' approach to documentary making, and to some extent the 'Persuasive' approach as well. With respect to Aufderheide's (2007) classification, *Life after Grey* could be roughly put in 'Public Affairs' subgenre of documentary discourse.

In order to make *Life after Grey* (2015), the following methodological framework was followed:

1. Documentary Proposal
2. Production Logbook
3. Critical Reflection—Self-evaluation
4. Screening
5. Seize the Day

⁷ Nichols' (2001) modes of documentary: Poetic, Expository, Observational, Participatory, Reflexive, Performative

⁸ Barsam and Monahan's (2010) four basic approaches of documentary: Factual, Instructional, Persuasive, Propaganda

⁹ Aufderheide's (2007) subgenres of documentary: Public Affairs, Government Propaganda, Advocacy, Historical, Ethnographic, Nature/Environmental

Step-by-step guide to documentary making

In this section a step-by-step procedure is provided to first-time documentary filmmakers, based on the above methodological framework.

Documentary proposal

It is essential to prepare a proposal before embarking upon any type of documentary filmmaking. Such a proposal entails some specific features: title, objectives, research outline, theoretical approach(es), timeline, and budget. The synopsis of the proposal is provided in Appendix-1.

Production Logbook:

Production logbook (hereafter PL) may seem tedious to maintain; however, it is an integral part of documentary filmmaking. PL is a valuable asset as it connects all the ideas and activities throughout the entire process of the filmmaking project—from the inception to the end. In other words, it weaves a common thread through all the stages of a documentary—idea generation, budget, research, planning (production), communication, pre-production, production, follow ups, and post production.

Idea Generation

a. *Activity*: Idea was generated on May 29, 2015. Before starting brainstorming for ideas, my partner and I decided that our topic should be on a social issue. When we met on 29 May 2015, we narrowed down our ideas to two themes:

- Rescue, rehabilitation, reintegration of underage girls pushed into flesh-trade
- Transgender inequality

b. *Challenge(s)*: It was challenging to finalize a particular theme, as both of them seemed interesting given the social situation of Bangladesh, and were timely. Both of the themes were of social concern to the common people and the government.

c. *Overcoming challenge(s)*: First theme (Rescue, rehabilitation, reintegration) was selected because in the Bangladeshi context it is a more serious social issue, and had a deeper implication. Furthermore, I had connections with an NGO called Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA), who could assist us with our project. It would have been difficult to get in-depth interviews from transgendered communities without any connections.

Budget

a. *Activity*: A minimalist project budget was drafted, which came to approximately Tk25,000/= (see budget in the proposal).

b. *Challenge(s)*: Sponsorship for the project could not be acquired. Even BNWLA, the assisting partner of this documentary film, was unable to help us monetary-wise. Besides the daily expenditure proposed in the proposal-budget, the two-day unanticipated trip to Gopalganj while chasing a criminal, incurred extra expenses.

c. *Overcoming challenge(s)*: Seeing no avenue to secure sponsorship and reduce our expenditure, we decided to self-finance the project.

Research

a. *Activity*: The research was divided into two parts, based on the individual areas of expertise. My partner, the technical expert, conducted filmmaking-centric research while I took care of the social issue-centric part of the documentary. In order to focus on the social issue part of our film, I explored the following: journal articles, news clippings, BNWLA materials (reports, newsletters, publications, case studies, news clippings, etc.), as well as many documentaries on rape and prostitution¹⁰ that dealt with subthemes like rescue, rehabilitation, repatriation, and reintegration. My partner explored the techniques of documentary filmmaking based on social issues.

b. *Challenge(s)*: It was difficult to get research materials from BNWLA before *Eid-ul-Fitr* (one of the biggest Muslim celebrations) vacation, as their office personnel were overburdened with lots of work before the vacation. Consequently, they could not provide us with the relevant materials for research before Eid vacation.

c. *Overcoming challenge(s)*: Alternative sources were used to gather the necessary information by using online journal service provided by the digital libraries, namely East West University and Independent University, Bangladesh.

Planning (production)

a. *Activity*: While planning for the production of documentary film, a thorough literature research was conducted and the necessary research materials were gathered from online libraries, news clippings, and BNWLA's case files. The total number of days that would be employed to shoot the documentary was decided at this stage. Furthermore, plans were made to travel to and shoot at Daulatdia, the unofficial world's biggest brothel town.

b. *Challenge(s)*: BNWLA could not provide the case files on time due to approaching *Eid-ul-Fitr* vacation. Permission to shoot at Daulatdia was not granted due to breach of contract by previous organizations in protecting the identities of prostitutes and underage girls.

c. *Overcoming challenge(s)*: The necessary information that was needed from the case files was gathered by talking over the phone with the relevant BNWLA personnel. The hardcopies of the case files were collected after the *Eid-ul-Fitr* vacation. My partner and I had to make an executive decision regarding the Daulatdia shoot. The main objective of going there was to practically show rescue part in our documentary. We got our interviewees to emphasize the rescue and repatriation part in their interviews; thus somewhat fulfilling our objective without going to Daulatdia.

Communication and Shooting

a. *Activity*: It was extremely difficult to communicate with BNWLA. Initially I contacted the President of this NGO. After cancelled appointments, many e-mails, SMSs and telephone conversations, my partner and I got a face-to-face appointment at her house. After that we went to the BNWLA office to meet the Executive Director. Once the negotiations were complete, the shooting phase started, which lasted for five days:

- Day 1: BNWLA premises
- Day 2: BNWLA shelter home at Gazipur

¹⁰ *I Will not be Silenced* (2015), *Sex Slaves of Bangladesh* (2015) *United Kingdom's Daughter* (2015), *India's Daughter* (2015), *Daughters of Mother India* (2015), *A Crime Unpunished: Bangladeshi Gang Rape* (2015), *Pakistan's Hidden Shame* (2014), *Sri Lanka's Unfinished War* (2013), *Whores' Glory* (2011), *Taboo: Prostitution* (2010), *The Dancing Boys of Afghanistan* (2009), *Bringing Justice to Women of Burma* (2011), *The Day My God Died* (2004).

- Day 3: Again BNWLA office;
- Days 4-5: Maksudpur, Gopalganj—journey to and from Dhaka, ferry terminal, car, rest-house, police station, etc.

b. Challenge(s): It was extremely difficult to get appointments with BNWLA. It was difficult to determine the shooting dates of the film at their (BNWLA's) premises before *Eid*. They wanted the shooting to begin after *Eid*—but that would be too late for us as we had deadlines to meet.

c. Overcoming challenge(s): My partner and I were relentlessly persistent in getting appointment with BNWLA by explaining the urgency of meeting the deadlines of our project.

Pre-production ¹¹

a. Activity: My partner and I had to go for location recce at the BNWLA office and their shelter home in Gazipur, as well as to make a list of all the equipment that would be needed for the shoot.

b. Challenge(s): Due to deadlines, we did not get time to go for location recce.

c. Overcoming challenge(s): Since we did not have much opportunity for location recce, we went prepared with basic three-point interview lighting. To ensure we capture little fleeting moments and body language of our interviewees we took a two-camera set-up. For audio, we took with us two lavalier microphones for primary audio, a boom microphone for secondary audio, and a shotgun microphone as a backup. Lastly, for outdoor shooting we took with us a 24 inch and a 51 inch reflector.

Production ¹²

a. Activity: We shot at several locations over a period of five days: BNWLA office, BNWLA shelter home at Gazipur, journey to and from Maksudpur, Gopalganj, ferry terminal, car, rest-house, police station, my partner's house, etc.

b. Challenge(s): On numerous occasions our camera overheated during outdoor shoots. Another problem of outdoor shoot was dust accumulation in camera sensor.

c. Overcoming challenge(s): In order to overcome overheating and dust accumulation during outdoor shoot, a secondary camera was used, until the primary was fixed.

Follow ups

a. Activity: During follow-ups, footage and narrative planning were reviewed.

b. Challenge(s): Since the theme of the documentary film was based on sensitive issues, permission had to be constantly sought from BNWLA to use the footages that were shot.

c. Overcoming challenge(s): A constant state of negotiation was established with BNWLA to assure them that ethical boundaries would not be breached to put lives and identities of the girls (i.e. the subjects) at risk.

Post Production

a. Activity: During post-production the following things were done: editing, re-editing, sound-editing, voiceover as well as writing and correction of the narrative.

¹¹ Wafi Aziz Sattar helped to write the pre-production section

¹² Wafi Aziz Sattar helped to write the production section

b. *Challenge(s)*: Due to shortage of time, major obstacle was to meet the deadline. Furthermore, during post-production, I met with a motorcycle accident, and my motorcycle was seized and kept at the police station for a couple of days.

c. *Overcoming challenge(s)*: In order to meet all deadlines, I was fortunate enough to be able to take a lot of leave from my day job, and worked overtime with my partner, which included numerous sleepless nights.

Critical reflection: Self-evaluation

While critiquing one's work, the creator is the biggest critic. A critical reflection of *Life after Grey* reflects my experience of looking at the video production process, and the strengths and weaknesses of the final product.

The synopsis posted on the poster of our documentary goes like this (see Figure 1):

Watch the shocking stories of underage girls pushed into the flesh-trade. Listen to how they fought against all odds to survive and regain their identity. Life after Grey is a gripping film that gives a resounding voice to the voiceless of our society.



Figure 1: Poster of *Life after Grey* (Sattar & Haque, 2015)

Before embarking upon the journey of making a documentary film on rescue, rehabilitation and reintegration of underage girls who were raped and/or pushed into prostitution, I did not think that our subjects would be so forthcoming and spontaneous in voicing out their opinions. I feared that the concept of stigmatization would inhibit the girls from freely expressing their stories. I was overwhelmed with the courage that these girls displayed in telling their stories. They wanted to be heard in order to reclaim their lost identities. In the process of doing this, they wanted to regain their lost dignity, if not for anyone else, at least in their own eyes. During the interviews, I felt that these girls were like any other girls who were either deceived or made a mistake, and then trapped by perpetrators. Despite the fact that these girls had experienced intolerable situations ranging from rape and physical abuse to mental trauma, they braved all odds to embrace life. We wanted to capture this on camera by letting them tell their own stories instead of their stories being told by someone else. I think *Life after Grey* (2015) somewhat managed to do this with minimum interference of the documentary filmmakers.

Strengths

The main objective of *Life after Grey* (2015) was to give voice to the underage victims of sexual abuse. In other words, the goal was to let the girls tell their own stories rather than provide interpreted versions of what happened. In the documentary, the girls did somewhat manage to tell their own stories and express their emotions. The girls were able to talk about the 'grey' part of their lives and what they want to do after their bleak past. This seems to justify the theme of the title, *Life after Grey* (2015). This documentary seems to be able to highlight the rescue, rehabilitation and reintegration of the victims. Most documentaries on social issues tend to use the participatory mode, thereby making the interviews very structured and professional in nature. Such a manner of interviewing victims does not allow them to voice their opinions and tell their stories; rather, their stories are told by the interviewers. In *Life after Grey* (2015) the interference is kept to a minimal when the girls narrate their individual stories. Furthermore, the stories are not generalized; each story is unique and deserves to be told from the victims' individual points of views. Hence, our approach to making *Life after Grey* (2015) seems to be more holistic in nature. Expository mode of documentary filmmaking was employed, as well as poetic mode to some extent.

One of the other strengths of *Life after Grey* (2015) is that it is not merely a series of interviews after interviews, like in *India's Daughter* (2015), which was highly publicized and controversial, where more than 35 people were interviewed in a 54 minutes documentary. *Life after Grey* (2015) has 7 interviews, and its length is 35 minutes. Unlike other documentaries, the interviews in this film are not clumped together; they are spread throughout the 35 minutes. In between the interviews, there are some footage. This documentary has a linear storyline, which is self-explanatory, with an introduction, body and conclusion. The girls were very forthcoming about expressing their individual stories as well as their aspirations and dreams. In this respect, the documentary has been able to fulfil its objective.

Weaknesses

The means through which underage girls that are pushed into the flesh trade and are rescued have been explained in *Life after Grey* (2015) through the interviews of some of the girls. Two personnel from BNWLA, who were interviewed, also explain how girls are rescued and repatriated. However, if real rescue could have been shown in the film, it would have been more exciting and thrilling. That was the original intention. This was planned with BNWLA and MMS (Mukti Mohila Samity)¹³, that is, to go to Daulatdia on Friday 10 July 2015 in order to rescue some girls. However, on the eve of 9 July MMS shelved this plan. They justified their action by saying that due to breach of contract by two previous organizations, which had filmed at Daulatdia for their respective documentaries, further permission was not being given to anyone else to take footage. Previously, Vice News had taken explicit footage and aired it on YouTube without hiding the identities of the interviewees. Similarly, another organization took footage and sold it to National Geographic, which was aired in their 5th episode of the series called *Taboo* titled 'Prostitution'; this documentary also showed explicit footage without hiding the identities of the interviewees, and uploaded the programme on YouTube. Due to the complaint received from Daulatdia, permission was not granted for further filming until the situation had calmed down.

The faces of the girls who were interviewed in *Life after Grey* (2015) were not shown, due to ethical and security reasons, as well as our commitment to BNWLA to keep the identity of our

¹³ Another NGO working with BNWLA

respondents hidden. If their faces could have been shown, this documentary would have been even more emotionally gripping and intense, due to the expressive nature of their facial countenances.

Screening

Screening of a film is a significant part of documentary filmmaking process. It is like a focus group response to a creative production. A specialist audience response is very important in the critiquing process. The audience members during the screening of *Life after Grey* (2015) comprised academics and graduate students from the Department of Media and Communication, as well as a few renowned professional and academic guests specializing in media studies. It is at the screening that the creators get a chance to explain their creation and answer critical questions pertaining to 'why' and 'how' of the creative process. The screening of a documentary film, followed by a 'question and answer' session, in front of an erudite academic audience is a true litmus test for any filmmaker. This exercise provides a conclusion to the entire documentary making process. Without the screening, it may seem that the methodology of documentary production is incomplete.

Seize the day

When it comes to documentary filmmaking, particularly on sensitive issues, sometimes things do not go according to plan, as has already been mentioned in the 'weaknesses' part of self-reflection section. However, at times windfalls might be thrown your way, and you have to seize the day. While making *Life after Grey* (2015), two such situations materialized and opportunities were taken advantage of. During the first day of negotiation with the Executive Director of BNWLA, 16 girls were rescued from India and were repatriated to Bangladesh. Among them, a few were underage girls. Rescued girls are usually kept only for a couple of days in the makeshift shelter home at the office of BNWLA. As soon as we were informed about the rescue, my partner and I went to BNWLA office the following day with the necessary equipment to interview the girls. We were rather fortunate to get those interviews, which were not in our proposal. Our second windfall materialized on the last day of our expected filming at the office of BNWLA, two days before *Eid-ul-Fitr*. While interviewing one of the personnel, she mentioned that immediately after the interview she would travel to Maksudpur, Gopalganj, a couple of hundred kilometres outside of the capital, to file a case and apprehend the criminal husband of one of the victims. We asked whether we could tag along. She said 'yes', and we jumped at the opportunity. We provided the transport. The journey to Maksudpur, Gopalganj, two days before Eid, with a victim and an NGO staff in order to capture a criminal husband who sold his wife (i.e. the victim) was too tempting to resist. This windfall was also not scripted in our original proposal. It is very important to take such unexpected opportunities, as they can make a documentary much more exciting.

Conclusion

This paper endeavours to elucidate how theoretical knowledge, practical experience and unforeseen challenges and opportunities may combine in the process of a documentary production. This mechanism was demonstrated through a first-time effort of an actual documentary film *Life after Grey* (2015) from its inception to the final screening. The 21st century has put a camera in almost everyone's hands through mobile and portable devices. So, technically speaking, everyone can claim to be a filmmaker if he/she wishes to do so. However, he/she will obviously make blunders as an amateur without the historical, theoretical and methodical knowledge of documentary filmmaking. Conversely, this does not mean to suggest that those with such knowledge and technical knowhow will be successful every time. When it comes to filmmaking there is no specific formula that can guarantee its success. Despite that, if any first-timer follows the above

procedure in a step-by-step methodological sequence, he/she should be able to avoid some of the major pitfalls of documentary filmmaking.

[Acknowledgement: I would like to thank Wafi Aziz Sattar, who is a young filmmaker, for his in-depth knowledge of the technical aspects of filmmaking. While working on *Life after Grey*, he demonstrated his foresight in overcoming some of the technical glitches which may occur during production and editing stages.]

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Appendix-1: Synopsis of documentary proposal:

Sl.	Proposal Criteria	Description/justification
1.	Title: <i>“Life After Flesh-Trade”</i> or <i>“Life After Hell”</i> or <i>“Our Girls”</i> , or <i>“Life after Grey”</i>	Summary: This documentary film will be about the life of underage girls who have been deceived into entering the flesh-trade, that is, prostitution. The girls are usually handed over by their parents to trustworthy members of their communities to take them (i.e. the girls) to Dhaka, and get them good jobs. However, these so-called saints/well-wishers sell the girls and/or force them into a life of prostitution. There are certain organizations working in this field to rescue these girls. After being rescued, many parents reject their children due to the fear of stigmatization. This film will look at what happens to these underage girls after being rescued from being enslaved in the flesh-trade industry. It will mainly focus on three Rs: rescue, rehabilitation, and reintegration. The girls will tell the stories in their own words. The girls will have the latitude of expressing their opinions regarding their past, the flesh-trade industry, the rehabilitation process, and their future ambitions and/or dreams.
2.	Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rescue, rehabilitation, and reintegration • giving voice to subalterns 	The main objective is to look at the life of underage girls after being rescued from the flesh-trade industry, by focusing particularly on how they are rehabilitated and reintegrated into society. Through the mechanism of rescue, rehabilitation, and reintegration this film would like to give the girls a voice to express themselves and tell their individual stories.
3.	Research outline: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Books, journals, news articles • Documentaries on prostitution - local & foreign • BNWLA library, newsletters, annual and quarterly reports 	The research on the above topic began from the 3 rd week of May. Books, journals, news articles as well as various documentaries on prostitution (local & foreign) were reviewed. Furthermore Bangladesh National Woman Lawyers’ Association (BNWLA) reports and books from their library will also be reviewed.

Sl.	Proposal Criteria	Description/justification
4.	<p>Theoretical Approach(es):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mode: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Expository (mainly) ➤ Participatory (partly) ➤ Poetic (partly) • Audio-Visual Representation Technique: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Actuality ➤ Audio/Visual Exposition ➤ Direct Interviews ➤ Video Montage ➤ Narration • Expected Outcome: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Hermeneutic ➤ Experiential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This documentary film will predominantly adopt the Expository mode, but will also have elements of Participatory and Poetic modes. • Technically, the film will be in actuality and have no figments of fiction in its thread. The audio/visual exposition will serve to establish the theme of the film at the very beginning, and through various interviews conducted with the victims, we will have a firsthand understanding of the experiences of life before, during, and after the dark days in the sex trade. The visuals will be further strengthened through the creation of video montages created using footages shot separately from the places similar to the victims' previous abode(s) during their life in the sex trade. • The expected outcome from the film is such that the main subjects—the victims—will guide viewers through their emotional journey; thereby, the notion of approach will be hermeneutic in nature for the experiential knowledge gained from the film to be absolute. • In the post-production stage, full anonymity of the victims will be ensured by blurring out their faces and not using their real names in Lower Thirds (Astons). In this way, their identity can be protected.
5.	<p>Timeline - 12 weeks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Phase: 6 weeks • Negotiation with BNWLA: 1 week • Location Recce: 1 week • Planning: 1 week • Filming: 2 weeks • Post-Production: 1 week 	<p>The approximate timeline for the entire project to be completed in is approximately 12 weeks. 6 weeks will be spent on researching the subject matter in both a global and local context; 1 week will be spent in negotiation with BNWLA to seek their permission and support for conducting the interviews and using their premises, followed by location recce and plan for filming. At least 2 weeks will be required (for multiple visits) to ensure all necessary footages. Post-production will take approximately 1 week. If things go according to plan, it is expected to be completed by the second week of August 2015.</p>

Sl.	Proposal Criteria	Description/justification
6.	<p>Budget (in BDT) - 25,000:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport: 5,000 • Food: 5,000 • Production Assistants: 3,000 • Post-Production: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Video Editing: 3,000 ➤ Subtitling: 2,000 ➤ Voiceover: 1,000 ➤ Audio Mastering: 2,000 • Miscellaneous: 2,500 • Contingency: 1,500 	<p>The justification for the budget is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport: During the filming period, equipment has to be taken to different shooting locations. Taxi-cabs will have to be hire to transport the equipment safely to various shooting sites for a number of days. • Food: Lunch and snacks will be needed during shooting at different locations • Production Assistants: The Production Assistants need to be compensated for their help • Post Production: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Video Editing: The Video Editing personnel need to be compensated for their help ➤ Voiceover: The Voiceover Artist needs to be compensated for his/her help ➤ Audio-mastering: The Audio Mastering personnel need to be compensated for their help • Miscellaneous: There might be a few unanticipated expenditure which were not considered in advance • Contingency: In case the budget exceeds the limit due to unforeseen reasons

(Prepared by Wafi Aziz Sattar and Muhammed Shabriar Haque)