JOURNEY OF JEOPARDY:

USING MULTIMEDIA STORYTELLING TO HUMANIZE THE IMMIGRATION EXPERIENCE OF CENTRAL AMERICAN FAMILIES SEEKING ASYLUM IN OREGON

by

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Jon Palfreman

My project consists of two parts: a production section, in which I explore the ways in which multimedia journalism can communicate stories that are otherwise inaccessible or weakened when confined to one medium, and a written analysis of my production process, stylistic choices, reasons for choosing this topic, and effectiveness of my multimedia project.

The written component of the project analyzes the use of various forms of media and assesses the capabilities of multimedia journalism in telling in-depth stories that have the power to engage viewers and give voice to child immigrants from Central American countries. As journalism adapts to evolving online platforms, the integration of various mediums – photography, writing, interactive design, video, podcasts – presents reporters with new opportunities in digital storytelling. In conceptualizing my own project – which tells personal stories of the immigrant community specifically in Eugene – I have analyzed and drawn inspiration from recently successful multimedia pieces .

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Introduction

Immigration is not a new issue in the United States. From the 19th century rush of European immigrants – Irish, Spanish, Swedish, and German – to the increase of Chinese immigrants in the early 20th century, to importation of braceros in the 1940s, U.S. border regulations have changed based on shifts in cultural ideologies, social outlook and labor needs of those within the nation. Politically and economically charged, the debate over border policy lies broadly between citizens who see the capitalistic, U.S.-instigated conditions of Central American countries as viable reasons to allow refuge-seeking immigrants asylum in the U.S., and those who claim stricter border policies should be implemented to prevent an immigrant labor force from affecting the economy and domestic job market.

In recent years, immigration has acquired a new layer of complexity, one that forces citizens to consider more closely the people whom border policies affect. In 2014, a record number of unaccompanied youth and partial families surged across the U.S.-Mexico border. The Council on Foreign Relations estimates as many as 63,000 unaccompanied minors crossed the border between October 1, 2013 and July 31, 2014, "nearly twice the number of child migrants who came during the same period the previous year" (Renwick). Not all of these children, however, were Mexican. Many originated in Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador – a growing trend in the history of U.S. immigration. Due to recent wars and political unrest in these Central American countries, the children and families have come to seek refuge. To make their long journey to the U.S. border, they subject themselves to numerous risks, including war and drug violence, sexual abuse, starvation, harsh weather conditions, and risky forms

of transportation. Their arrival in the United States is just the beginning of a struggle to reunite with family, find work in a foreign nation, and negotiate a complex legal system to gain legal residency. Once captured by Border Patrol, children go to one of numerous shelters across the U.S. within 72 hours of their detainment. Immigration cases begin for the children, and they are often placed with relatives or foster families while they await asylum hearings (Why Are So Many Children). The hearings determine whether the children will be granted legal stay in the U.S., or face deportation.

Until recently, most immigrants coming from the south to the U.S. crossed the border from Mexico, many fleeing drug-related violence or seeking jobs as migrant workers. In the fiscal year 2013, the U.S. Border Patrol caught 38,833 unaccompanied minors, a "59 percent jump from the year before" (Gordon). A chart published by *Mother Jones* magazine shows a rapid increase from about 5,000 to 20,000 of apprehended immigrant children from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, while the number from Mexico has only increased by approximately 5,000 children during that time. While minors do emigrate from other countries around the globe, "74 percent of the surge" comes from "Central America's so-called Northern Triangle," which refers to Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador (Gordon). This jump correlates with recent political unrest, violence and poverty in these nations.

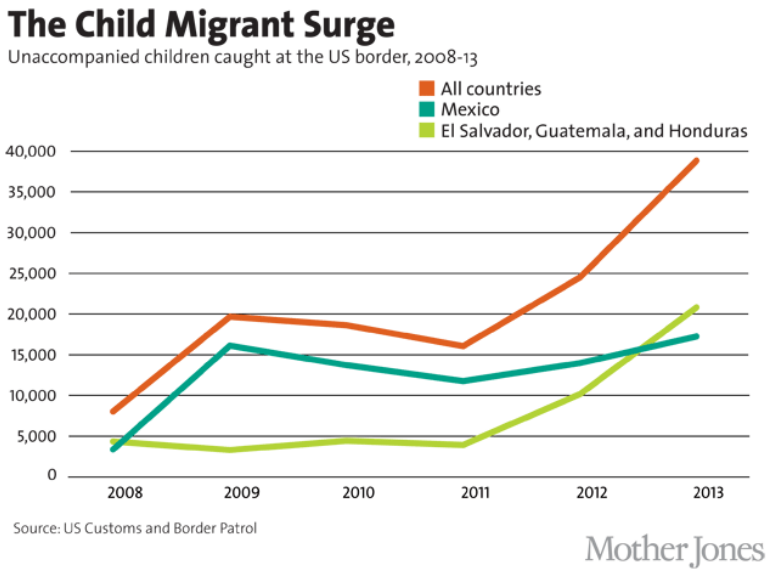

Figure 1: Surge of Child Migrants from Central American Countries (Gordon).

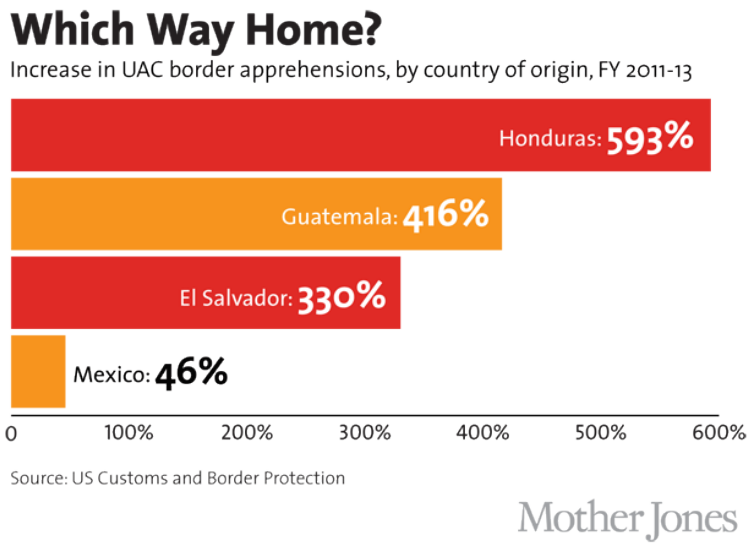

Figure 2: Increase in UAC Border Apprehensions by Country of Origin (Gordon).

In June 2014, President Obama referred to the influx of child immigrants as an "urgent humanitarian situation" (Obama). This year, the number of children apprehended at the border "is expected to reach 74,000, and then rise to an estimated 140,000 children in 2015" (Torres). The reasons for this increase go beyond seeking of labor opportunities. Conditions within these countries create violent, frightening living

for citizens. Journalist Elizabeth Kennedy lived in El Salvador to investigate the reason for the influx of children migrating to the United States. She sites “extreme poverty, and family reunification” as key factors as children decided to emigrate, but “crime, gang threats, or violence appear to be the strongest determinants” (Kennedy 1). Ninety percent of the 322 minors Kennedy interviewed had family members already living in the United States. Approximately half of these children reported having at least one gang in their neighborhood, and many reportedly survived on “less than USD $150 per month” (Kennedy 3). She also notes that immigrating to the United States is oftentimes thought of as the last resort for these frightened, desperate children (Kennedy 4). Families who make the decision to send unaccompanied children do not trust their government to protect or aid them.

Honduras, considered one of the most dangerous countries in the world, is another nation plagued by years of political corruption, violence and human rights crimes. The nation contributed “more than 18,000 unaccompanied Honduran children” to the US influx in 2014 (Trade, Violence and Migration). The journey north is risky, requiring travel across thousands of miles of dangerous terrain. The decision to make the journey is also a major risk because it requires parting with family members that travelers may or may not see again. This decision is often a last resort. The likelihood of entire families reuniting and obtaining legal residency in the United States is low. Still, the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations concludes that conditions in Honduras will continue to push citizens to leave the nation until they can “exercise their rights without retaliation and access decent work, all of which

require concerted policy changes in the United States and Honduras" (Trade, Violence and Migration).

Increasing violence in recent years can be directly attributed to the Honduran government, but is indirectly linked to long-lasting U.S. dependency. For decades, Honduran labor forces have focused on satisfying foreign investors at the expense of local businesses and labor needs, which transformed the nation into a "banana republic" – a country dependent on foreign investments, beginning with the establishment of the United Fruit Company in the early 1900s. In addition, "the Honduran government historically has received military support from the United States" (Waters). The U.S. utilized the nation as a military base during several Central American military interventions, shaping the Honduran government into a military and corporate-focused political platform. Finally, a 2009 coup d'état led to an escalation in military rule, violence, and lack of fair labor in Honduras, as the coup ousted the more politically stable president, Manuel Zelaya. Little attention has been given to investigation of cases of impunity, and labor leaders in Honduras state that "the climate for workers under the current government is the worst is has been since the 2009 coup" (Waters). The influx of children in the Summer of 2014 reflects a long-neglected need for policy changes away from the long policy of deference to the economic needs of the U.S

When they arrive in the United States, these children are faced with asylum procedures. The United Nations Human Rights Council urged "continued access to asylum procedures" for these children in a July 9 press release. It called out "development agencies, human rights actors, and donor governments," as key actors in helping "the countries of Central America analyze and address the poverty, lawlessness,

and other factors that force people to seek a better life or to escape harm" (Children on the Run). The council recognized the need for long-term methods to address the catalysts for child border crossings, but also the immediate support of children who have already made the journey as a result of this deep dysfunction.

The ethics of the decision to admit or deport these children back to the instability of their countries of origin is now at the forefront of the politics and policy of immigration. Young and alone, these children remain statistics in news reports that consistently address other questions, such as how U.S. immigration policy affects U.S. citizens' quality of life, economic needs, and political desires. News reports frequently include anti-immigrant sentiments and jargon that reinforces stereotypes about immigrant communities and magnifies heated immigration reform politics within the United States. General news coverage of the subject fails to explore the perspectives of immigrant communities, who have embarked on the journey of a lifetime, often full of hardships, cultural struggles and poverty, to reach the United States. This superficial news coverage too often fails to address stories of integration, the dynamics of local immigrant communities, and the efforts of citizens themselves in meeting the needs of new arrivals.

In my project, I experiment with creating a multimedia platform that lets me switch between print, photo, audio and video to tell in-depth, personal stories from the immigrant community in Oregon before and after crossing the border. The project, titled "Journey of Jeopardy: Stories of hard work, anxiety and reunion from an Oregon community," primarily focuses on one reunited Honduran family struggling to gain political asylum and remain together in the United States. The online tumblr platform

lays the groundwork for a continuation of the project, with the ability to adapt to changing immigration policies and incorporate new voices over time. Through the conceptualization and production process, I explore the use of various forms of media and test the capabilities of multimedia journalism in telling in-depth, personal stories that have the power to engage viewers and give voice to new arrivals from Central American countries, transforming statistics back into stories about people.

Multimedia Reporting in the News

Journalism exists in many forms, and in many mediums – audio, video, photography, writing, interactive design and more. In addition to traditional short-term news reporting, U.S news organizations sometimes use long-form, investigative reporting strategies to explore an issue, using many forms of media to tell the same story in multiple perspectives. *Mother Jones* magazine and the *New York Times* both published investigative reports about the influx of unaccompanied minors that incorporated maps, charts, photos and writing. The *Mother Jones* article grabs the reader's attention with the personal story of the journey of a Guatemalan boy called Adrián, before delving into a deeper explanation of the immigration trend (Gordon). The *New York Times* report utilizes a Q&A layout style with maps and charts to show where the children travel from, and how rapidly the number of minors has increased in recent years (Park). Both reports remain text-heavy but provide a breakdown of the issue that makes it easier for readers to understand. Coupled with the appearance of personal stories on daily news forums, this style of reporting begins to offer a deeper understanding of current policy changes and the reasons behind the influx. CBS's

online “Immigration Crisis” feature page serves as a platform for a variety of stories that track the immigration reform controversy that has escalated in the United States since last summer’s influx of unaccompanied minors and families (CBS). This multimedia presentation attempts to supplement written news stories about the heated immigration debate in Congress with video interviews of families facing the complexity of U.S. immigration policies.

While drawing on different multimedia components, the reporting remains U.S.-centric, focusing more on the heat of immigration policy more than on stories of legal and familial struggles, lack of aid, and U.S. policies towards Central America that have led to the increase of refugees. Adorned with heavy use of statistics and charts, these news media reports make apparent the urgency for immigration reform and finding solutions to address this sharp increase in child immigration. However, the reporting falls short of tracing stories beyond the border that focus on long-lasting legal struggles, family relationships and community building that are integral in understanding the full scope of the journey of an undocumented immigrant.

CBS News’ “Immigration Crisis” page fails to highlight the complex relationship between the United States and Central America that has contributed to this “crisis”, and also to report in depth the personalized stories that set one story of an undocumented immigrant apart from the homogenous group referred to in policy debate as “immigrants” (CBS). The site includes stories of families and individuals facing immigration struggles, but uses a short, impersonal news flash style that does not offer the same connection to subjects as more documentary-oriented narratives. These personal voices become lost in the collection of articles primarily focused on policies

and responses surrounding immigration in the U.S. political atmosphere. They do not explain with enough depth and meaning of these personal experiences of immigrants residing in the United States is not explained. (CBS)

Without these stories, much news coverage focuses mostly on perspectives of U.S. policy-makers and lacks personal stories of immigrants that provide balance to border policy discussion. For example, a CNN article published in June 2014 describes Texas as "overwhelmed" by the immigration crisis; Arizona Governor Jan Brewer is quoted expressing her annoyance with immigration policy that has left her with the task of devising a plan to address the "'endless waves of illegal aliens'"; a quote by Oklahoma Governor Mary Fallon voices strong concern that the "'endless cycle of illegal immigration'" is something that "'the American people are paying for'" (Caldwell). While these concerns are valid and important for Americans to know, the opinions expressed in such reporting are more focused on American politics and less on the struggles of immigrants themselves. Personal stories of people who have made this highly risky journey would provide context and insight into the immigration crisis that would contribute to an understanding of the root of the immigration crisis in the United States.

Similarly, an article published by the *Washington Post* at the start of the recent influx of unaccompanied minors analyzes the consequences of the rising number of unaccompanied minors on the U.S. political atmosphere. It pins one of the main reasons for the influx on Obama's attitudes towards immigration policy, which Republicans claim has built a misconception among Central American immigrants that it is easy and possible for them to stay in the United States upon arrival. The report succeeds in

mentioning that “the influx of minors is being driven foremost by widespread gang-related violence in Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador,” which begins to address the unstable political and socioeconomic environment in Central America as a major cause of the recent influx (Nakamura). However, the article serves primarily as a political report that reinforces the voices of American politicians. A personal story of a person who can attest to the reasons they left their Central American home would nicely compliment an article such as this, providing an outside perspective and understanding of an individual’s reasons for emigrating – the ultimate goal of the article. Integrating multiple forms of media and reporting styles would enrich these articles.

As journalists grapple with ways to report on a complex issue in an engaging, balanced way, reliance on multimedia and online platforms becomes key innovating new forms of information presentation. Recently, *The Guardian* and *The Texas Observer* collaborated to produce an interactive multimedia platform titled “Beyond the Border”, which succeeds in weaving together personal stories of immigrants and ranch owners alike to tell the larger story of the recent immigration spike in Texas (del Bosque). Structured in a four-part series, each chapter begins with a video at the top, followed by text, photos and interactive charts to show immigration trends and increasing violence towards immigrants in Texas. The project delves deeper into the complexity of immigration concerns than traditional news reports, yet still maintains statistics and facts that news reports present. While chapter one begins with the story of an immigrant and explains the difficulties of crossing the border, chapter two focuses on ranchers, who feel “caught between protecting their property and saving lives” as immigrants cross the border (del Bosque). The last two chapters incorporate the

perspectives of lawmakers and local authorities. In this way, the project represents many sides to the immigration policy debate, specific to one community of people. This more personalized and well-rounded reporting and story structure presents varying viewpoints in a way that creates a dialogue surrounding border policy, and has potential to generate conversations within the community and beyond.

Just as this project seeks to explore community sentiments regarding the immigration spike in Texas, mine aims to create the foundations for a similar project that incorporates voices of immigrants in an Oregon community. Texas is a state that receives a lot of attention in the national discussion of immigration and border policy; thus, the "Beyond the Border" project offers a unique and personalized look inside the live of people affected by immigration on all sides of the issue. Oregon, in contrast to Texas, receives less attention. Farther from the U.S.-Mexico border, the needs and existence of a small but growing immigrant and refugee community are less noticeable. Still, immigration controversy exists here, too, as local communities struggle to decide how to respond to the recent influx of unaccompanied minors and families. With a smaller immigrant population, social services, education programs and access to legal representation are more difficult to obtain in Oregon, often requiring travel to Portland. A project following a similar model to "Beyond the Border" could contribute to an understanding of immigrant needs and experiences in Oregon, a state with much less immigration policy attention. Although a project such as this requires much time and a team of photographers, writers, video producers and web designers, I aim to develop the beginnings of a project that can be effective in Oregon on a smaller scale, and in the long run can be expanded into an interactive multimedia entity similar to this.

Buildup to a Border Crisis

Before making connections and beginning interviews in the Eugene community, I sought to understand shifts in attitudes toward immigration in the United States, and then I narrowed my focus down to the Eugene community. Immigration policy and attitudes in Oregon can be tracked from the influx of Chinese and Japanese laborers in the earlier part of the 20th Century, to the switch to a primarily Latino-based labor force in the 1940s. The United States needed cheap labor after World War II, so the government started the Bracero Program, which brought Mexican workers to the United States to work under temporary labor contracts. When U.S. post-war desire for a domestic workforce increased, Operation Wetback flourished. The operation deported thousands of illegal Mexican migrant workers, and led to an increase in violations in labor contracts and workplace safety (Gonzales-Berry and Mendoza 53).

Anti-immigrant sentiments continued, and they are reflected in the Willamette Valley. In 1985, PCUN, Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste, formed in Woodburn as the first treeplanters' and farmworkers' union to address mistreatment of migrant workers in Oregon. Often undocumented – but necessary in Oregon's agricultural workforce – migrant workers face difficulties in fighting for safety of the workplace and living conditions without a union to protect them. In the 1990s, fear and negative attitudes towards undocumented workers resulted in INS raids in Lane County, during which Immigration and Naturalization Services agents entered workplaces and forcibly removed undocumented workers, chaining them together in handcuffs in holding rooms until deportation could be arranged (Migra Raid Task Force). In a May 15, 1998 article, the *Register-Guard* reported that "immigration agents arrested 78

allegedly illegal workers at seven businesses in the Eugene-Springfield area" in one nine-hour series of raids alone (Neville). A community group called La Migra published a report on the raids in December 1998. The report includes economic facts and personal testimonies from people directly involved in the raids. The report sites the use of "psychological and verbal abuse," "sexual harassment," "denial of due process" and "entry without warrant or consent" by INS authorities as abuses of power, and calls these actions violations against human rights. Furthermore, the report admonishes the INS agents for damaging the building of the local immigrant community, acting unlawfully in a manner that "is reaping casualties not just among the first generation immigrant population, but among the second and third generations as well" (Migra Raid Task Force i).

Thus, as economic and labor needs change within the State of Oregon, so do attitudes towards immigration and border policy. Some analyses site immigrants as a "scapegoat" and "something to blame for the distressing conditions" that face the U.S. economically and politically, skewing interpretation of the real situation (Gonzales-Berry and Mendoza 105). U.S. immigration policy can be described as a constant "war" on the overwhelming amount of immigrants entering the United States, especially with the "militarization of the border" in recent U.S. history (Gonzales-Berry and Mendoza 111). Yet the immigration controversy is more complex, and necessitates consideration of over a century of U.S. relations with Central America. The United States often fails to acknowledge its policies that contribute to problems that plague the home nations of illegal immigrants, and the news media does not often explore ways in which these policies lead to increased immigration. Stricter border policy only appears to offer a

short-term solution. A long-term plan that could decrease the number of adults and children fleeing their home countries "must focus on reorienting US policy so that instead of continuing its historic and ongoing practice of plundering Central America through military interventions and trade deals that further impoverish farmers and workers, the US collaborates with other local states to foster sustainable economic development and restore public safety across Central America" (Torres). Whether it's poverty in Mexico or the aftermath of Cold War era military-based U.S. policies in Central America that leads to gang violence and political corruption in Honduras, failure to address the root of the issue will only ensure the continuance of illegal immigration. News media must acknowledge these complexities and report accordingly to contribute to a deeper understanding of possible solutions to immigration needs.

Immigration and Community Need in Oregon

Within Oregon, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services granted $3.7 million of federal money to the Portland-based non-profit foster care program, Morrison Child and Family Services (Kullgren). Issued in July 2014, as many immigrant children were relocated to Portland, the program added to the debate about how to handle this influx of children. Supporters of the legislation held welcoming demonstrations in Portland, and governor John Kitzhaber formally welcomed the 50 children sponsored in Oregon, expressing a need for "more responsible immigration policies" in Congress (Kitzhaber). Local efforts sparked by grassroots organizations aim to address the issue of lack of legal representation for these unaccompanied minors, and build educational and trauma relief services for them. Unfortunately, most immigration

and legal services available to refugees exist in Portland, making it difficult for those living outside the metro area to seek aid.

Specifically in the Eugene/Springfield area, a group called the Kids on the Border Committee (KOBC) formed in response to the influx of unaccompanied minors by providing aid to refugees in the local community. They fundraise for support services such as the Immigration Counseling Services in Portland, help find legal assistance for unaccompanied minors, and gauge community need. As of January, 2015, Springfield High School, with an enrollment of over 1400 students, reported that approximately twelve students from Guatemala had enrolled in classes. The KOBC frequently meets with counselors from the school to understand ways in which community members can contribute to immigrant students' integration and education. For example, they raise funds for bus tickets so the students can participate in after school activities.

Although the KOBC has hosted public forums and educational events, this specialized attention to the issue of aid to unaccompanied minors outside the Portland metro area has little attention in the news media. Reporting on personal stories tracking need, integration into a predominantly white community, and the building of local immigrant communities post-border crossing remains minimal in the Eugene/Springfield community.

Why Multimedia?

I chose to present my investigative report in the form of a multimedia presentation because it allows for the personalization of an issue that is often presented

in a fact-based, inverted pyramid-driven story structure, such as the *Washington Post* article about the possible causes for the influx of unaccompanied minors. The article begins by clearly stating that children believe they will be allowed to stay in the United States under Obama's immigration policies. It then incorporates statistics and quotes by officials that further explain this reasoning, ending with political opinions of Obama's current action on deportation. The article remains purely political. However, humanizing a highly political, controversial issue provides a more nuanced perspective to audiences still evolving their attitudes toward child immigration.

In moving toward more personalized reporting on the issue, the major dilemma journalists face accessibility, which lengthens the timeframe for the completion of such projects. It is often difficult for journalists to gain permission or rapport needed to tell these stories, especially concerning sensitive personal material and requests of anonymity from undocumented persons, which causes news outlets to limit the number or depth of personal stories on immigration published. Multimedia platforms offer a way of addressing such issues. With multimedia, journalists can adapt stories to incorporate various forms of media so that each element contributes to the telling of a full story. When a visual is unavailable, text can be used to communicate and enrich the story; similarly, portraiture and photography can round out an audio interview. The ability to navigate a story and determine which medium fits which portion best is the current challenge for journalists working in the field of multimedia, which leaves room for exploration, experimentation and the creation of new types of multimedia platforms.

To this point, there has been no in-depth multimedia project about the current issue of unaccompanied child immigrants in Oregon. Multimedia journalism has the

ability to combine facts with voices from varying perspectives. My project will not tell people which opinions to form about the subject of child immigration and deportation, but simply allow for family members in this situation to share their stories from a first-person perspective. Multimedia platforms also allow for the website content to be updated as the situation changes, whereas documentaries or print publications are generally unchanged after publication. As my project evolves, immigration legislation – especially concerning the asylum hearings of child immigrants – will likely change. Website content can be easily updated to reflect the most current situation.

The definition of multimedia journalism is elusive, as it is still being shaped. Typically, "various media types are employed and interconnected, and, ideally, each one is used in a way that makes the most of its strengths" (McAdams 188). Some are interactive, some offer options for navigation through a website, and some offer a more comprehensive investigation of a topic rather than a fully developed narrative story arc. The National Public Radio show, *Planet Money*, recently published a multimedia site titled "Planet Money Makes a T-Shirt", which tracks the production process of a T-shirt across the globe, from cotton growers in the South, to manufacturers in Colombia, to the consumers. The site offers personal stories of key people involved in the process, and involves the physical distribution and tracking of the cotton T-shirts. In addition to combining photography, radio, video and infographics, the project is a form of participatory journalism, relying on the participation of consumers to carry the project through to the end. The audience, as consumers, could participate in buying a t-shirt as part of the reporting process, contributing to the tracking of t-shirt purchases. The site

design further encourages participation through comments and interactivity (Planet Money).

To understand the capabilities and effectiveness of multimedia journalism, it is helpful to consider its similarities to another form of in-depth storytelling: documentaries. On a basic level, both forms incorporate a narrative, complete with a tone and style of presentation. While news reports are often referred to as stories, documentaries possess aspects similar to a story format found in movies or fictional narratives. A documentary has identifiable characters and scenes that "engages the audience on an emotional and intellectual level," captivating them to learn more. Similarly, a multimedia presentation may hook the audience with an introductory video or teaser that appears first on a website, or compelling text that frames the issue or story set to unfold. Documentaries "grab and hold audiences through creative, innovative methods" and "compel viewers to consider and even care about topics and subjects they might previously have overlooked" (Bernard 1). The power of a multimedia presentation lies in the experiential aspect of the project. In-depth storytelling can "bring viewers on a journey, immerse them in new worlds" (Bernard 1). Whereas hard news reports, documentaries explore. Multimedia can add layers to this exploration, throwing viewers into a mix of audio, text and visuals that work together to lead them through an issue in the form of a story or narrative. In addition, multimedia allows flexibility, increasing story accessibility. As a documentary relies solely on video and audio components, a full multimedia platform can switch mediums depending on content availability. A video may introduce a topic, but writing and photos can take the

viewer into a deeper understanding of the story. In piecing together a larger narrative where not all parts lend themselves to one medium, the ability to switch media is key.

For example, the *New York Times*' "Snow Fall" presentation pieces together a chronology of a day's tragedy, switching mediums to incorporate many voices and pieces of information crucial to the understanding of the day's events. Launched in 2012, the presentation broke ground in the world of multimedia journalism. It provides interactive content, videos and audio clips of interviews interspersed in text, together telling the story of one fateful day on the slopes of the Washington Cascades, during which three expert skiers lost their lives in an avalanche. Many of the key players died that day, and the avalanche existed only as an undocumented event of the past, making reporting with visuals difficult. Still, written content, animated maps, and video interviews with the survivors provided a combination of visuals and textual imagery that succeeded in bringing the story to life and creating a compelling multimedia story. The format of presentation allows the viewer to navigate through the days' events, reading about the key players involved and the events and thought processes that led them to make the decision to ski on a high-risk day on the mountain. The team of journalists who produced the content of the site decided which medium to use for each portion of the site, and the order in which they presented information. These decisions, like the decisions made by a documentary director, set the tone and pace of viewers' processing of the story, and, ultimately, influence the emotional state of the viewer at the end of the story. Although this makes the presentation arguably subjective, it maintains the quality of any journalistic work, "grounded in fact, not fiction," and

works within implicit ethical guidelines (Bernard 5). As in documentaries, “trust is the key to the form’s power and relevance” (Bernard 6).

“Snow Fall” begins with a title page with text that establishes the tone and frames the story. It then leads the viewer through the story in parts, which can be navigated with either tabs or scrolling. Each section, from “Decent Begins” where the skiers begin down the dangerous slope, to “Discovery”, where bodies are uncovered from the snow, offers another layer to the story, drawing the viewer deeper into the story. It ends with a section titled “Word Spreads”, which examines the aftermath of the tragedy (Branch). In contrast, a news report, such as the Associated Press report published by CBS on the same Tunnel Creek avalanche, most often works in a fact-based, inverted pyramid format (Schultz). The AP report offers photos and the basic information required for understanding the tragedy, but does not personalize the story as “Snow Fall” does – we understand only one layer of the story, which may not be the layer that matters most. In the AP article, interview subject Elyse Saugstad is quoted saying, “I was completely buried except for my head and hands” (Schultz). But the severity of the statement and the emotions connected to it are not apparent. In Snowfall, the viewer sees the expression on Saugstad’s face as she recounts her thought process at the time of the avalanche. The viewer watches her struggle to find the words to describe the feeling of asphyxiation, and then hears her say, “Are you serious? This is really the way I’m going to die?” (Snow Fall). “Snow Fall”, as a comprehensive multimedia presentation, personalizes and thoroughly examines an event that otherwise remains a one-page incident report on a news channel’s website or print publication’s front page

that, after a few days, becomes lost in the midst of more tragedies and events that cycle through news outlets daily.

Lastly, some multimedia presentations open an opportunity for civic engagement, which capitalizes on the form's ability to incorporate many voices. Civic engagement in journalism involves the participation of communities in the process of informing and storytelling. In a Q&A, Andrew DeVigal, former *New York Times* multimedia editor and current University of Oregon Chair of Journalism Innovation and Civic Engagement, stated, "When it comes to civic engagement, impacted communities have invaluable collective knowledge and we need to enable them to share their expertise" (Q&A). While the journalist may enter the life of a subject during the process of information gathering for an investigative story, the subject in return participates in a dialogue surrounding the topic. This form of participation may come on a basic level through comments and social media participation, or, on a deeper level, through the presentation of individual stories that give shape to the larger issue. First-person accounts, converging in one place, create a unique dialogue among subjects and viewers alike.

For example, *New York Times'* "One in 8 Million" project, which features audio stories of 54 seemingly ordinary humans in New York City. Each story, presented as an interview and black-and-white photos, stands alone as an individual story. However, together, the featured stories are effective in telling a larger story of the diversity of people living and working in New York City (One in 8 Million). This humanized investigation of an issue or topic adheres to an ethical code declared by the Society of Professional Journalists, which states that journalists have the duty to "give voice to the

voiceless" (SPJ). The journalist structures the site, but in the case of multimedia platforms that demonstrate civic engagement, the journalist crafts a narrative or report through the words and experiences of the subjects, thus allowing audiences to connect and engage in the presentation on a more personal level.

Challenges and Opportunities of Multimedia forms of Communication

In my project, I chose to test the effectiveness of multimedia journalism in working with ethical and logistical obstacles to more effectively investigate and present controversial issues than possible with traditional journalistic reporting methods. I did this through the creation of my own multimedia project titled "North of the Border: Stories from an Oregon Community." Can multimedia journalism humanize people who are often treated as statistics? In what ways does it do this, and how does it uphold implicit ethical codes?

I decided to explore such questions through the creation of a multimedia platform surrounding a relevant, current topic of concern in the U.S., the immigration of unaccompanied children and families from Central American nations into the United States. My project aims to demonstrate how using many different media forms while telling a story makes possible the reporting of complex topics that could not be effectively told by someone working in just one or two mediums. I use the personal story of a family who has crossed the border, instead of second-hand accounts told by scholars or experts on the subject. The Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics states that journalists must work to "minimize harm" in their reporting (SPJ). They must "consider the long-term implications of the extended reach and permanence

of publication" (SPJ). In my project, sensitivity to my subjects' legal status on U.S. soil was key. Even if a subject consents to being recorded, he or she may not be able to predict the possible legal repercussions of this consent, especially if legislation changes.

Thus, I hypothesized that multimedia presentations have the ability to tackle complex stories, with equally complex ethical dilemmas, that may be impossible with more traditional styles of reporting. In this way, a journalist can work through ethical obstacles to tell a comprehensive story with many angles, while maintaining a level of personal storytelling that captivates viewers and leads to a deeper understanding of an issue – still respecting the real lives of people whose story the journalist tells.

I further hypothesized that multimedia platforms allow for a more thorough presentation of work that targets diverse audiences, informs on many levels, and utilizes civic engagement. With the rapidity of today's information-gathering and distribution through digital means, multimedia platforms give a home to a story or issue, a place where it can change as information evolves. Comprised of many forms of media, from audio to writing to photography and video, the multimedia platform more actively engages audiences in an experiential narrative or exploration of an issue, thus humanizing subjects, even as it allows telling important stories that would go untold if limited to just one medium.

Issues of Access and Ethics in Multimedia

In October 2014, I began attending weekly Kids on the Border Committee meetings, where I established connections to local immigration activists in Eugene and began to understand the details of unaccompanied children and family reunification in

the Eugene/Springfield community. I met Guadalupe Quinn, who immigrated to the United States in the 1950s and has worked with Eugene's Latino immigrant community for decades. She became my main contact and source of information. She warned me that many stories from new arrivals in Eugene/Springfield would be delicate to tell, as the people may be traumatized and scared. While it would be difficult to gain access, she assured me of a need in Oregon for personalized stories such as these to generate community conversations about ways to support these new members of the immigrant community in Eugene. Through contacts Quinn had in the local school system, I met Marcia Koenig, coordinator of the Migrant Education Program. I made a flier explaining my project, which she distributed to a few families who emigrated from Central America. Finally, she contacted me to tell me that a man named Modesto had invited me to meet him and his family. Koenig coached me in ways to explain my project, and with the help of her translation, I received Modesto's agreement to participate. From this point on, I communicated with Modesto weekly via phone to find times to visit him, interview him, and understand his life.

His story developed into a narrative of hard work, uncertainty and anxiety, and a quest for reunion. He traveled to the United States from Honduras in 2004, leaving his family with the hopes of providing a better life for them away from the low wages and increasing gang violence in Honduras prompted him to take the risk and leave his home to have the chance of supporting his family, sending earnings to Honduras. For ten years, the family remained separated; however, in the summer of 2014, four of his family members made the journey north to join him. They carried nothing but their clothes, and travelled the long route through Mexico with *coyotes,* or guides, to cross

the border on June 28th, 2014. They were caught and detained temporarily, then released to reunite with Modesto and begin court proceedings. Due to the level of political unrest and living conditions in Honduras, the United States gives them the option of applying for political asylum. Although unlikely, they were not immediately deported.

As I followed the family in their home, school, work and interactions with the court, several problems became apparent. First, Modesto is undocumented and currently not going through court proceedings like other members of his family. Although he consented to being photographed, filmed and interviewed and reassured me that he was not worried about the possibility of deportation, I decided to be safe and only show him with his face obscured in some way. I cannot predict the legal repercussions of publishing his face and full name. Secondly, after the family's first court hearing I attended on February 4th, contact with them became infrequent. I continued to call weekly, but finding an opportunity to visit them and photograph or film them in their daily life became difficult. Oftentimes, Modesto would tell me mid-week that I could photograph the family at church on a Sunday, and then call me late Saturday night and cancel. When I asked how things were going, his usual response was, "Muchas cosas en mi mente," – *many things on my mind.* I understood that it was not that he had changed his mind about participating in my project, he just had more important things on his mind. So, even though his family consented to participate, access was still difficult due to the stress and uncertainty of their life.

In addressing these two issues of access and ethics, I considered the work of photojournalist and writer, Mary Beth Meehan. Meehan has worked for years in New England, where she "navigates the communities…trying to meet her neighbors and

describe what life is like for the people around her" (Meehan). Her work lives on a tumblr blog, which serves as a place to present her works in progress: *Seen, Unseen* and *Violence Unseen*. When working with undocumented individuals, she finds creative ways to obscure their faces in her portraits. A photo of a man, referred to as Leonidas, from New Bedford, Massachusetts, resembles the strategy I used while photographing Modesto. Leonidas was violently attacked with a knife by a thief who had broken into his home during his lunch break. Still, he continued to go to work out of necessity. Meehan wanted to tell his story of violence towards Guatemalan immigrants in New Bedford, but did not want to endanger him. To protect his identity, the photo of him at his scallop processing plant obscures his face. Meehan intentionally captured a moment in which Leonidas' hat hid his eyes (Meehan). Knowing this going into the story, she was able to show his story in powerful visuals, while keeping his identity hidden.

To gain access to stories such as these, Meehan advised me to think of people not as subjects, but as collaborators in their story. The stories she tells require patience, relationship building and creativity to successfully humanize an issue, such as violence toward Guatemalen immigrants of Mayan decent. The issue itself is simply a topic; the people involved become real and compelling through her photography and writing. In recognizing the power of these stories to generating conversations and understanding within her community, she can communicate the importance of individual stories to people with whom she collaborates.

After my access to Modesto became problematic, a conversation with Meehan prompted me to approach him in a different way. I explained again the importance of the story in the Eugene community, and explained to him the parts of his life I felt most

accurately portrayed his family and asked if I could be present at those times. I explained that in order to tell his story most effectively, I would need to gather more visuals. Two days later, he allowed me to come to his home. There, I sat at the table with them and chatted about topics unrelated to my project. I then explained my ideas to his entire family, and asked them for input. When I asked them which object held most importance to them while crossing the border, Cristell told me she would like to show me her grandfather's sweater, which she carried with her the entire way. For the first time, she let me follow her to her room, which she shares with her son, Cristopher. She then showed me the cabinet where she keeps cooking items, and posed for a few portraits with Cristopher. This collaboration led to a series of the strongest images I had gathered yet, which held more emotion and genuine relationship than they had previously; in return, I gave them printed photos from my previous visit, which Cristell hung on the door of her closet. Later that week, Modesto allowed me to come photograph his son arriving home from school, and him at work on a construction site. Each time I saw him, I remained conscious of our interactions and noted the differences. Modesto and his family are more than just labels, they are people living a life of uncertainty, tied together through the strength of their family and desire to stay together. If the purpose of my project is to show them as real people going through this journey, then my conversations with them need to be foremost human-to-human, not journalist-to-subject. In the last month of my project, changing this interaction allowed me greater access and generated more trust and comfort from Modesto and his family.

Choices in Media

Dilemmas of ethics and access reinforced the idea that multimedia would best serve me providing a unique, personal look into the life and experience of Modesto and his family. At first, I envisioned the project primarily as a video, which would show A-roll interviews of the family, supplemented by writing and an interactive timeline to frame the issue of immigration in Eugene, and a small photo gallery. I would include additional information about legal aid available to families in the Eugene area, and community support provided by organizations such as the Kids on the Border committee. After meeting Modesto, I came to two realizations: Modesto's story is powerful and potentially diluted by an attempt to include an array of background information and stories of other immigrants, and I would need to protect him by hiding his identity. I then decided to focus on photos that obscure his face, and record video with the rest of his family. A written component would serve to tie each element of his story together, and provide just enough background information where needed.

This approach quickly deteriorated the day I went to court with Keyla and Cristell. I had already recorded A-roll interviews on camera, and I traveled to court ready to record more. I filmed them preparing breakfast in the early morning hours, arriving in Portland, and walking into the courthouse. However, I was not allowed to take my camera or audio recorder into the courtroom. During the hearing, I grabbed my pencil and notebook and wrote notes and observations. Afterwards, I switched back to video and interviewed Keyla and Cristell outside of the court building. When I returned home, I decided to write an experiential piece that would take the reader into the anxiety-filled day at court. As a documentary filmmaker, or a photojournalist, reporting

on the court hearing in detail would not have been possible; however, pieced together, the story offers an experiential understanding of the court process and the women's emotions and anxieties associated with it. The viewer can see this on their faces in A-roll interviews and the B-roll of court preparations; then, they are taken into the courtroom, where the writing describes the atmosphere and proceedings.

I then shifted my approach to the entire project, envisioning it in four sections: the first, "Something Beautiful," tells the story of Modesto and his family's journey north, seeking to reunite for the first time in ten years as a family. The second chapter, "Removable by Law," follows their anxieties and uncertainty as they try to seek political asylum. The story ends in uncertainty in the third chapter, "Perpetuating Journey"; although unfinished, it is left open for continuation as their story develops. Currently, Modesto plans to take his family back to Honduras because of the difficulties they have faced in trying to stay together in the United States. Thus, the third and final part of their story aims to close the current chapter of their story, while indicating the continuation of their long journey. I chose to incorporate photos of their most recent day going to court, and a few sections of interviews that point to the future and what they hope will change concerning their situation.

Lastly, my website includes a section titled "Evolving Stories." It includes the beginning of a story of Jonathan Kevin Cruz, who journeyed to the United States eleven years ago as a ten-year-old unaccompanied minor and finally obtained his citizenship in February 2015, and a segment about Guadalupe Quinn and her experience working in the immigrant community, as an immigrant herself. The start of these stories provides the foundation for the inclusion of stories of success and integration into the Eugene

community in the continuation of my multimedia project. Cruz's story would imply the long journey ahead of a family or unaccompanied minor who wishes to stay in the United States. Quinn's experience places Modesto's story in the context of a changing community, broadening it out to include community awareness and action generated by the Kids on the Border Committee, need for legal representation and aid, and a deeper understanding of needs of the immigrant community in Eugene.

At the bottom of the homepage, I built an interactive timeline to provide information about immigration policy changes within the U.S. and Oregon. Oftentimes, news reports about the influx of unaccompanied minors over the summer did not include mention of the long history of relations between the United States and Central America. Specifically with a project in Oregon, I wanted to present immigration history in an interactive way that would give readers the opportunity have access to a timeline with further links to background information on policies and immigration actions that would help them understand the personal stories of Modesto's family and Jonathan Kevin Cruz's path to citizenship. For example, I included the outbreak of the Salvadoran Civil War, in which the United States was involved in military training, and used Honduras as a military base. I also included the INS raids in Eugene to provide background information on past immigration sentiments in the local community. The inclusion of a timeline places these personal stories in the context of centuries-long buildup to the immigration reform, political atmosphere and conditions in Central America that exist today, in a way that few other personalized multimedia platforms have done.

My project could have been accomplished primarily in writing, as the *Mother Jones* article did. However, this would not have offered the same experiential element as my videos, A-roll interviews and photo galleries do. Through the A-roll of the interview I conducted two days before Keyla and Cristell went to court, viewers can see the anxiety and uncertainty on their faces, and hear it in their voices. The photos of Modesto's family provide the viewer with a glimpse into their daily life, which accomplishes more than simply a written description. In writing, I could describe Cristell's cramped room, where she keeps her cooking supplies, a small television, and a bed, which she shares with her son, Christopher. A photo, however, shows more than tells, which is the primary goal of a visual storyteller. The photos of Cristell and Christopher show their loving mother-son relationship more than writing or video could because it freezes the intimate moment of interaction between the two. In this way, the integration of many forms of media, and the ability of the journalist to sense which can most successfully tell each piece of the story, can effectively provide interactive and experiential elements to one story that could not otherwise be told completely in just one medium.

Project Limitations and Effectiveness

In the eight months I spent working on my project, much of my time was spent establishing community connections, finding stories, and working to gain access – one of the shortcomings of in-depth, investigative projects. I was able to build a tumblr which functions as the foundations for an evolving multimedia project. Originally, I hoped to produce a solidified story that tells a story of risk, struggle, reunion and family

through my photography, video and writing. However, their story is not complete and could be continued for months to come. As I learned from my interview with Jonathan Kevin Cruz, the legal process and life of uncertainty can last for years. After spending time with the Honduran family, I realize it is a story that will evolve and would be best documented into the future, returning as needed to track their story until an ending is clear: deportation, or a path to legal residency.

Although the story itself remains incomplete, it demonstrates the flexibility and strengths of multimedia. If their story were a news story to be produced on deadline within a week or two, it would not be possible. As a news story, I would have generated a piece about the existence of unaccompanied minors in Eugene to inform audiences quickly about the issue; however, the story would not be any deeper or different from other stories circulating the news media at the time of the influx. I would have interviewed Guadalupe Quinn about her work with the Kids on the Border Committee to begin to understand community need concerning the recent influx of unaccompanied minors, but I would not have been able to establish any connections within the immigrant community itself. It took me three months of attending KOBC meetings, participating in community forums, and making phone calls to people in local school districts to establish enough trust and rapport with people who could connect me with a family with a personal story.

In contrast, if their story was only a documentary film or a photo essay, I would not have been able to show many pieces crucial to the whole story. In court I was not able to take my camera or audio recorder. While a film or photo essay would have ended there, multimedia reporting gave me the option of switching to a different

medium – in this case writing – that allowed access to this bit of their story. In the courtroom, I jotted notes in my notebook – quotes, observations, a description of the atmosphere – and when I arrived home, I wrote about the experience. Paired with the video of their day at court, the material functions as one complete chapter of their story.

My project also succeeded in incorporating the concept of civic engagement. Modesto and his family, Jonathan Kevin Cruz, and members of the Kids on the Border Committee are community experts on the subject of immigration due to their personal experience and involvement in the immigration process. They may not hold the same legal knowledge as a lawyer or immigration scholar, but they can personally attest to the difficulties of the process and explain their personal experiences. It is this information, in addition to statistics, that provides the most insight into the depth of immigration challenges, and holds the most power in influencing immigration sentiments and reform that evolve in the nation. As my project grows, I plan to continue incorporating voices of community members to spark community conversation and tell compelling, powerful, first person narratives about immigration in Eugene.

Managing an Ongoing Story

As the Honduran family continues their struggle to stay together, I will continue to follow them and develop my online multimedia project. Through my project, I have established connections in the immigrant community in Eugene, and learned how to speak with people not just as subjects, but as partners in collaboration. I will follow a similar method to that of Mary Beth Meehan's *Seen/Unseen* blog, and keep my project on my tumblr site so that it can be added to and changed over time.

My current tumblr site, like the *Seen/Unseen* blog, provides a home for these evolving stories. To continue this project, I would work with a web designer to build a site that weaves the content and story structure together in a more interactive way. The chapters serve to take the viewer through Modesto's family's journey and provide the basis for their narrative; as I continue following their story and add voices to the issue of immigration in Oregon, I envision a site structure similar to "Beyond the Border" by *The Guardian*, or "Planet Money Makes a T-shirt." Bold photographs and video clips at the top of the site would lead the reader into the text and infographics below. I wish to present my working site alongside my plans for the continuation of my project to apply for grants to expand the platform in this way. With a grant, I could travel throughout Oregon to explore more stories to add to the site, pay a design team to make the website more interactive, hire translators, and continue following Modesto's family on their journey.

The benefit of my multimedia site is that it is malleable and easily adaptable to change over time, in a way that differs from any other form of reporting that exists in journalism. As the world of journalism continues to evolve in the online world, multimedia journalists must continue to experiment with platforms such as this. In addition, journalists must know how to determine which medium fits the story they are trying to tell, and be able to switch as needed. This ability to switch will provide deeper access to important stories that have the power to influence the way viewers perceive and understand any given issue. My project is one of these experiments.

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