

Pandemic Documentaries in The VUCA Era: Navigating Misinformation and Societal Impacts in A Post-COVID World

Zhan Xiao

University of Exeter, The United Kingdom

Abstract

This paper critically examines the role of documentary filmmaking in the era of COVID-19, a period marked by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA). Employing case study methods coupled with theoretical insights from Gordon Allport's psychology and Robert Knapp's sociology, the paper probes the intersection of autobiographical memory and identity in the context of creating pandemic documentaries. It foregrounds the imperative to closely scrutinize the potential social impacts that arise from the proliferation of subjective thoughts and personal opinions—particularly those that are unverified—circulated via digital media, advocating for the enforcement of rigorous data practices and the adherence to high ethical standards in documentary filmmaking.

This paper interrogates video footage captured during the pandemic, providing subjective perspectives on these globally tumultuous times. The findings reveal that documentaries about the pandemic play a critical role in disseminating accurate information, engaging audiences in meaningful dialogues, and effectively countering misinformation. The paper aims to evaluate the impact of these documentaries, *Hold-up* (Dir. Pierre Barnérias, French, 2020), *Plandemic trilogy* (Dir. Mikki Willis, America, 2020-2023), *My Mum Is Obsessed With Covid Anti-Vaxx Conspiracy Theories* (Channel 4, UK, 2022) on public understanding and the proliferation of misinformation, emphasizing the ethical responsibilities and challenges faced by documentary filmmakers in an era increasingly dominated by misinformation. This paper makes a significant contribution to the ongoing discourse on media literacy, highlighting the pivotal ethical role of filmmakers in shaping public perception and understanding during historically significant events like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: Covid-19; identity; media literacy; pandemic documentary; VUCA era