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THE CREATION OF CLOSENESS: IDENTITY TOURISTS IN *WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?*

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This article examines the techniques used by the makers of a popular documentary series that may encourage interest in identity, genealogical, ancestral, roots, or even diaspora tourism—where individuals travel to discover more about their ancestry. By adapting Jens Eder’s theory of character closeness to a nonfiction series, this article identifies the means by which the producers of the Australian series of the television program *Who Do You Think You Are?* have created a “closeness” for the viewer to the featured identity tourism celebrities.

Key words: Identity tourism; Genealogy; Closeness; Celebrities; *Who Do You Think You Are?*

Introduction

Genealogy is described as a practice through which ideas of personal, familial, collective, ethnic, and sometimes national senses of culture, location, and identity are shaped, imagined, articulated, and enacted (Nash, 2002). It is the practice of tracing one’s ancestral heritage or furthering the search into what is generally referred to as the “family tree.” Individuals who travel to destinations to trace their ancestors may expect to experience emotions such as intimacy and affinity, and because they are finally in a place of emotional importance, sometimes “shivers down the spine” and “goose bumps” confirm the significance of aligning genealogy with geography (Nash, 2002, p. 37). On the other hand, some people may not

necessarily have a positive experience for a range of reasons including “different, and cross-cutting identities and identifications” (Nash, 2002, p. 43).

Identity tourism is a comprehensive term used when “collective identities are represented, interpreted, and potentially constructed through the use of history and culture” (Pitchford, 2008, p. 3). In this study, the term “identity tourism” was chosen to describe the genre of tourism that emerged in the documentary series *Who Do You Think You Are?* (hereafter abbreviated to *WDYTYA*). The term encompasses the concept that finding out about one’s ancestry is something that has broad appeal and, when combined with tourism, creates a new experience for the tourist and, consequently, a new genre within the broader tourism industry, namely, identity

tourism. Such tourism may be contrasted with the common perception of tourism as involving “the gaze” (Urry, 1990) whereby tourists do not interact with the destination. Instead, identity tourism often involves the generation of significant personal meaning for the visitor and an increased appreciation of the destination they are visiting because it plays an important part in the story of their ancestors.

The article emphasizes the individual or personal genealogical quest of the identity tourist—as distinct from Pitchford’s (2008) focus on collective identities. Thus, our definition refines the concept of identity tourism as the genealogical journey which largely stems from the individuals’ drive and passion to know more about who they are. The very title of the documentary series plays into the strong desire and yearning of the individuals who are piecing together their personal story and thus trying to find deeper meaning for their own existence. In the process of further developing the overall sense of self, the individual comes into contact with many others (including living relatives and even vicarious ancestors—through photographs, stories, and a range of other documents). As such, the individual journey and the collective or shared journey are not necessarily mutually exclusive ones.

The original television series of *WDYTYA* was released by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in 2004 and focused on well-known public identities searching for evidence that would shed light on their family history. The search involves finding vital records such as birth, death, and marriage certificates; court records such as wills and criminal sentences; church records including baptisms; news recorded in newspapers or magazines; military records; passenger lists from ships; census records; family photographs; and other similar documents in the possession of aunts, uncles, grandparents, and others. The program was originally broadcast in the UK, and the format was then exported, by the series production company Wall to Wall, to Canada, Australia, Poland, Israel, and the US.

The program tapped into the enthusiasm for genealogy, public history, and “identity-driven history” and showed tear-jerking scenes of various media personalities finding out about illegitimate offspring and resolving family mysteries (Hunt, 2006). Audience members were also encouraged to investigate their own family history by showing the available

research facilities and offering genealogical advice to those viewers keen to pursue their own family history (Hunt, 2006). Heather Garnsey, executive officer of the Society of Australian Genealogists, argues that *WDYTYA* has “popularized family history” and generated a second boom in family history requests—with the first boom occurring after Australia’s 1988 Bicentenary (Webb, 2011). Thus, the television series provided the catalyst for interested individuals to trace their family tree and travel to the sites associated with their ancestors. Based on the significant number of television viewers and the number of hits on the show’s web pages (BBC, 2008), the series appears to have reinforced an interest in genealogy and its associated travel-related research activities.

The Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) first aired the UK series of *WDYTYA* in 2007. Based on the popularity of the UK series, SBS commissioned the Australian episodes that were broadcast in 2008. The first episode of the Australian series featured Australian actor Jack Thompson (described in the series as “the quintessential Aussie bloke” and whom we discover is connected to the country’s origins through Banks’ journal on the *Endeavour* ship in 1770). On the night that the first episode was broadcast, SBS recorded their highest ranking show ever with 863,000 viewers (News Limited and SBS, 2011). Executive producer Brian Beaton explained that the appeal of *WDYTYA* was that it showed us that “you can go much further than just doing a family tree with names and dates” (Webb, 2011). As of August 2011, three Australian series of *WDYTYA* have been broadcast. Similar to the first two Australian series that are closely examined in this article, the third series also featured six well-known Australians (three men and three women) covering a range of ages in order to encourage a wider demographic spread among the audience.

This article explores how the filmmakers encourage audience members to relate to the on-screen characters depicted in *WDYTYA*. In particular, this article considers what techniques filmmakers used in a sample of *WDYTYA* programs to influence the cognitive and affective responses of audience members in response to characters depicted in the program, how they made viewers feel close to the on-screen characters, and how they might attempt to elicit various emotions from the audience. If the filmmakers can use such techniques to encourage viewers to relate to the on-screen characters then these audience

members may be encouraged to search for their own ancestors. In so doing, the viewer may engage in various tourism-related activities and create a corresponding increase in identity tourism.

Literature Review

Genealogy is the world's fastest growing hobby and is the third most popular subject on the Internet (Birtwistle, 2005). The pursuit of our ancestors through the popular hobby of genealogy is effectively a search for our own identity and can be described as a "quest to better understand ourselves and our place in the world" (Manktelow, 2002, p. 2). Whereas genealogy is a hobby for most, it is undertaken because we often have an insatiable curiosity about those who came before us (Powell Crowe, 2011). Coles and Dallen (2004, p. 14) argue that "members of diasporic communities make trips in search of their roots and their routes with aims of reinforcing and reaffirming their identities." Despite the enormous popularity of identity tourism, researchers have paid "scant attention to the notion of diaspora and tourism" (Dallen & Teye, 2004, p. 111). Although the situation is slowly changing, tourism research in this area remains largely neglected despite the enormous popularity of genealogy and television shows such as *WDYTYA*.

Two key characteristics of the media are that they reach a large number of people, and are privately consumed. Media products are also shared, regulated, rely on sophisticated technology, and are modern (in that they are up to date) and expensive (Rayner, Wall, & Kruger, 2001). Whereas "the media" is constantly changing, the term encompasses a range of media forms including newspaper, television (both free-to-air and cable), radio, magazine, and the Internet. "Media studies" is generally divided into three main subgroups: analysis, audiences, and institutions. This article is particularly concerned with reading the media (sometimes also referred to as textual analysis). In media studies, the word "text" is used to describe a media product such as a newspaper article or an advertisement. Media texts are understood through the use of codes, namely, the rules or conventions by which signs are put together (Rayner et al., 2001).

Using social psychology theory, cognitive film theory researchers have considered how audience members engage with the fictional characters they witness

on-screen (see, e.g., Plantinga & Smith, 1999; Smith, 1995) and have identified that there are different dimensions, levels, and types of viewer responses. Eder (2006) uses the term "being close" to describe the relationship between the audience and the character being observed on the screen. Eder explains that recognizing a sense of closeness provides a means to understand and analyze the viewers' imaginative and affective relations to characters. Filmmakers (or creators of the media text in question) can create closeness by creating an on-screen world inhabited by the characters and encourage the viewer to become immersed in this world.

According to Eder (2006), there are at least five different ways of creating closeness with on-screen characters. First, physical closeness in space can be evoked on-screen by framing and sound techniques. This is called "spatiotemporal proximity." Filmmakers can also create closeness by the frequency and intensity of attention given to an on-screen character. In so doing, the viewer is encouraged to engage with a character more frequently and may thus develop a closer connection with him/her. Second, the development of mental closeness occurs when a person feels that they understand a character well and feels familiar with them. This cognitive or affective response is indicative of a particular understanding and perspective taken by the audience member. Third, an intimate closeness can be created when people are provided with private information. Sharing certain character emotions with the viewer allows for a special relationship between the on-screen character and the viewer to occur. To encourage this, the filmmaker provides the viewer with information about a character and their inner life that would not normally be known. As such, perceived social relations of similarity and familiarity are developed. Fourth, closeness can be created because of the imagined interaction with the on-screen character. Parasocial interaction (PSI) and parasocial relationships (PSRs) are then developed. Finally, affective closeness occurs when the viewer empathizes with or desires the character and develops a connection with the associated moods created by the filmmaker via images and music. If one or more of these techniques are used by filmmakers, audience members are very likely to feel various forms of closeness to individuals they see depicted on-screen. Thus, filmmakers are able to encourage audience members to

feel close to the characters that are created—be they fictional or real.

Eder (2008) also considered how spectators react emotionally to film and identified four levels in the development of the emotional episodes experienced by audience members. First, the direct perception of sounds and images, for example, via music, stimulates particular moods in the viewer. Second, the on-screen world may help generate emotions that reflect the story such as suspense, sympathy, and empathy. Third, thematic emotions are activated when spectators recognize indirect meanings in the on-screen world, such as social norms or individual values. Finally, when reflecting on the film, audience members may evaluate the film in light of their own responses, the assumed responses of other viewers, and with respect to the filmmakers' intentions. This overall reflection may result in the creation of a range of emotions such as moral outrage or fear of the social consequences that viewing the film might have. Eder suggests that these levels of emotion interact with each other so that a complex web of emotional stimuli and processes can develop based on experiencing the film. Eder (2010) applies the model to the closing scene of the movie *Casablanca* and notes the potential emotions experienced among contemporary Western adult audiences viewing the movie for the first time. He suggests that, via the frame composition and music, viewers may experience a melancholic mood on the perceptual level; they may experience tenderness, nostalgia, and sadness because of similar personal experiences of separation; they may experience empathetic sadness due to the voices and facial expressions of the actors, and also sympathetic alignment with the main characters.

Methods

The article uses Eder's (2006, 2008, 2010) theory of character closeness to identify the means by which the producers of the Australian series of *WDYTYA* have created a "closeness" for the viewer to the featured celebrities. To achieve this, 12 episodes of the two Australian series of *WDYTYA* were examined by using a combination of content analysis and a semiotic reading of the visual and acoustic channels (the vision plus the accompanying audio, music, and other sounds). The first two Australian series were chosen, as the authors of this article (two

Australians) are more familiar with the personalities in those series. The decision to focus on these two series also reflects the need to confine the analysis to a sample size that was indicative of the series, yet not overly exhaustive. As Australia is a country where much of the population are descendents from people born in other lands, the Australian version of *WDYTYA* usually involves the celebrity traveling to a range of heritage destinations overseas in search of their identity. The software package QSR NVivo 8 was used to conduct further content analysis on the qualitative data. Two researchers independently coded the data, and then the coding outcomes were compared and closely examined. Each episode was transcribed and viewed several times. The information contained in the visual and acoustic channels was then categorized under the headings identified by Eder's research.

Content analysis is concerned with categorizing data. The categories constructed by the researcher should be both exhaustive and mutually exclusive. In an effort to address claims made by some researchers that content analysis deals only with manifest content at the denotative level and is not a useful tool when analyzing a complicated text, a semiological (or semiotic) analysis was combined to examine the more qualitative aspects of the documentary. Semiotics focuses on the signs and codes of the text and the various ways in which meaning is created for the "reader" of the text. The two central concerns of semiotics are the relationship between a sign and its meaning, and the way signs are combined into codes. The Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure proposed the notion that a semiotic analysis could be applied to a vast range of human activities that produce meaning such as music, architecture, fashion, and advertising (Culler, 1976).

An important aspect of a semiotic analysis is the sign, which is composed of two components—the signifier and the signified. The numerous *WDYTYA* key images, words, and themes examined in this article are considered to be signifiers as they are the image of the sign as perceived by the viewer. The interpreted meaning, the signification, which is derived from the sign, is necessarily culturally specific. The readings of the selected documentary episodes examined in this article have taken place at a particular time in history (2010 and 2011) and read through the context of a particular cultural frame.

The episodes would obviously be read differently by decoders from another cultural context at this or any other time. Semiotics is a useful research methodology for analyzing engaging television texts such as documentaries because it is sensitive to the finely tuned nuances in these complex message structures.

Results and Discussion

The Structure of WDYTYA

Each of the 12 episodes examined in the two Australian series of *WDYTYA* follows a very similar structure. Initially the celebrity is shown engaging in a domestic or other intimate activity such as gardening, getting ready to perform, or cooking with their family. The celebrity reflects on why they are interested in tracking down their family history. This scene is then followed by a brief summary of the famous Australian's career. While the voice-over summarizes their professional resume, moving and still vision (such as photographs) are shown. This summary serves the dual purpose of providing a general introduction along with some insights into the genealogical background of the individual whose family history is about to be revealed.

The program then documents the activities of the celebrity as they travel from location to location (locally and abroad) finding out about their ancestors. After each revelation further questions are generated, and the celebrity demonstrates that they are interested in pursuing the line of inquiry further. At regular points in each episode, the family tree (referred to by genealogists as a pedigree chart) is shown and becomes progressively extended further back in time as new information is revealed. The last few minutes of the program involves the celebrity reflecting on what they have learned about their ancestors and consequently what they have learned about themselves. Each celebrity reflects on the benefits they obtained from the experience.

Techniques Used to Encourage Audience Closeness With the Celebrity

Physical Closeness. At the moment when the celebrity discovers a new piece of information, the camera moves from a close-up of the celebrity's face to the document being read, to the face of the expert,

then back to the celebrity's face. With this combination of shots, the audience can immediately see the reaction of the celebrity to the new revelation. The celebrity is encouraged to read the information aloud and this enables the viewer to learn of the often surprising revelation at the same time as the celebrity. In response to the new information, the celebrity may gasp, raise their eyebrows, utter something, or look from the document to the expert (or even to the off-camera producer). Occasionally the camera is trained elsewhere when the new information is read out and the camera quickly moves back to the celebrity's face. For example, when celebrity cook and restaurateur Maggie Beer reads that her ancestors were vineyard workers the camera operator quickly swings back to a close-up of her face to record her reaction. Similarly, when singer Christine Anu sees her family tree as presented by an anthropologist, the camera quickly returns to a close-up of her face as she says, "I'm freaking. This is really great. Oh my God. This is so good. This is fantastic. Thanks Hadden. Good on you. Love you. Love your work. This is fantastic."

Throughout each episode of *WDYTYA*, footage is frequently provided of the celebrity in various modes of transport, namely, cars during domestic travel, large and small airplanes (during international and regional flights), taxis, ferries, and trains. The celebrity is also shown walking through villages, down city streets, and through parks and gardens. This reinforces that genealogists often need to travel extensively to effectively track down their ancestors. This travel also gives color and movement to the program and, from a physical closeness perspective, allows close-up shots to be given of the celebrity as they drive the car or look out the window of an airplane (a technique used numerous times during the episodes).

The celebrity is often given original documents or artifacts to read and touch (often through the wearing of white gloves to protect the historic and fragile documents). This adds to the authenticity of the genealogical discovery as the information discovered is experienced in its original context such as in old, large ledgers with yellowing pages or on original certificates. In addition, the celebrity often finds it difficult to decipher the handwriting in the original document, which means that they read aloud slowly and carefully, adding to the sense

that a mystery is slowly being solved. In addition, the celebrity may read a name or a place but think they may have mispronounced the word or do not understand the significance of what they have read. In so doing the individual often turns to the expert (or to the producer) and asks if they are correct in their assumptions.

Periodically, the celebrity receives an envelope in the mail that contains important documentation about their ancestor's life. The celebrity is then shown opening the envelope and a close-up shot of their face is used to record their reaction to this new piece of information. This technique has numerous uses; namely, it helps move the story forward, it demonstrates that when researching ancestors there are abundant sources that can be used to access information, and it demonstrates that genealogical searches involve putting together various pieces of information from a range of disparate sources.

One of the recurring techniques used in the program is to use close-up shots of photographs or paintings of the ancestor being investigated. This serves several purposes: It allows an ancestor to become more real to the audience and to the celebrity; it often shows some family resemblance, which reinforces the bond between the ancestor and the celebrity; it reinforces the passage of time and the period in which the ancestor lived by showing the style of clothes worn by them; and it helps develop a physical closeness with the celebrity.

Thus, in the episodes, physical closeness in space is evoked on-screen by close-ups of the celebrity and by the frequency and intensity of attention given to the individual on-screen. As a result, the viewer is encouraged to engage with a character more frequently and may thus develop a closer connection with him or her.

Mental Closeness. Early in the program the celebrity asks a series of questions that they hope will be answered through their genealogical activities. This allows the audience to have a better understanding of the celebrity and allows familiarity to develop. As evidence is gathered, the questions are slowly answered and the narrator often confirms this. For example, when Kate Ceberano discovered that her ancestor was a fellow musician and artist she said, "I just think that I now have an answer to the question

'Why do you do what you do?' . . . It was inevitable that I would become an artist. I come from artist stock and that's a really reassuring feeling for me."

The celebrity learns about their ancestors gradually, which allows the viewer to follow the story without becoming overloaded with too much information at any one time. The gradual revealing of information is also important for the psychological well-being of the celebrity as they are often finding out information about their ancestors, which may have a life-changing impact on them. Thus, the program makers gently drip-feed the information to allow the celebrity to process it fully and come to terms with the disclosures. Similarly, for the audience it is important to be gradually introduced to this information to allow them to carefully follow the story as it unfolds (always back in time through the family tree).

In each episode, the celebrity is shown walking slowly around a tranquil location and looking thoughtful. This usually occurs immediately after a vital or emotive piece of information has been revealed about their ancestors. The footage of the celebrity walking around is overlaid with either the narrator explaining the importance of this piece of information or the celebrity reflecting on what this new piece of information means to the story of their ancestry and/or to them as individuals. Thus, the filmmaker encourages the viewer to develop a mental closeness with the celebrities by providing information to better understand the character.

Intimate Closeness. The producers of *WDYTYA* ensure that a relatively even demographic spread (in terms of gender, ethnicity, and age) is achieved throughout the series. This formula helps to maximize the potential ratings while understanding that it is the 40+ adult who is most likely to be interested in discovering more about their family tree. In Australia, about 45% of those researching their family history are aged between 41 and 60 (Webb, 2011). Of the 12 individuals examined in this article, older men are represented by: football legend Ron Barassi, actor Jack Thompson, barrister and human rights advocate Geoffrey Robertson, and sports commentator Dennis Cometti. The older women are: media personality and publisher Ita Buttrose, celebrity cook Maggie Beer, actor Sigrid Thornton,

and singer Kate Ceberano. The younger men are actor Ben Mendelsohn and rock star and activist John Butler. The younger women (who also happen to be indigenous Australians) are athlete Catherine Freeman and singer Christine Anu. The celebrities in these programs have also been carefully selected for their interesting ancestral history and their popularity. If the celebrity is not liked, then the audience would be less likely to care about them and their ancestral journey. Thus, their affability, likeability, and relevance to Australian culture and society is reinforced early on in the program. Even celebrities who are highly popular are not always chosen if their ancestral quest is likely to prove too uninteresting. UK Television host Michael Parkinson was rejected by the producers of the British series of *WDYTUA* because his story was “too boring” (Webb, 2011). Parkinson’s ancestors were miners, laborers, and railway men—no interesting skeletons in the closet or connections to royalty.

During the program the celebrities are seen wearing casual clothes, taking on and off their reading glasses, and are interviewed while driving. These actions help create an intimate closeness between the featured personality and the viewer. In addition, at the start of the program the footage of domestic activities provides an intimate look at the celebrity’s private life. This is an insight into their life that an audience member would not normally have and so provides a level of intimate closeness. For example, Ita Buttrose is seen watering her garden and then looking at the family photograph album with her grown-up children. She points to a photograph and says, “I think that’s the Christmas your Dad came home for dinner.” This is an insight that the audience member would not normally have and thus creates an intimacy.

At the start of the program the celebrity reflects on a strong trait that exists in their family such as determination. At the end of the search, the celebrity reflects on whether their ancestor demonstrated a strong trait during their lifetime. The celebrity then reflects on whether they, their parents, or grandparents had demonstrated the same trait. For example, Ita Buttrose identified herself as being a strong, independent female, and she reflected on this when it was established that her great-great-grandmother had run a private primary school in the 1860s in regional South Australia. Catherine Freeman reflected on the

mistreatment of her Aboriginal ancestors. She says “My god if I had only known this kind of information before I went out and achieved my childhood dream, who knows how fast I could’ve run?” John Butler was particularly impressed to find that his grandfather was a man of morals but even more overwhelmed to later discover that his great-great grandfather (now immortalized with a statue in his hometown) fired the first shot in a nationalist uprising. Thus, the program makers create an intimate closeness by providing private information about the celebrities to the audience and allow for a special relationship to occur between the on-screen character and the viewer.

Parasocial Interaction. The relationship that the celebrity develops with their ancestor(s) is important as it encourages them to find out more about the story of these past lives (and thus their own life). There is an underlying premise in the series that it is important to be respectful of a person’s ancestors because if they had not existed then the celebrity would not exist. For example, Sigrid Thornton said of her ancestor, “And thank god, or else I wouldn’t be here otherwise.” Similarly, the celebrities show their interest in the decisions made by their ancestors such as their decision to emigrate to Australia or to fall in love, marry, and have children with a particular partner. For example, Maggie Beer said of her convict ancestor, “That shows that he had a real relationship with her.”

The relationship the celebrity develops with their ancestor is often revealed when they indicate that they believe their ancestor was handsome or of good character. For example, Catherine Freeman said of her ancestors, “They minded their own business. They kept away from trouble and were hardworking, decent people.” Sigrid Thornton said, “Because he was so dashing handsome and so brilliantly talented he won her heart immediately.” Kate Ceberano said, “He’s so gorgeous. He’s just gorgeous. He reminds me of a boyfriend I once had.” The positive traits of ancestors reinforces the desire of the celebrities to find out more about these people as they were good personalities who had survived hard times or difficult circumstances.

To trace their ancestors, the celebrities meet a series of experts who provide them with information.

These people range from professional historians and curators to local historians and enthusiastic relatives who may have also undertaken some genealogy. If the expert is a second cousin or other distant relative the celebrity often hugs and kisses that person. The celebrity is often met at the entrance to a building by these experts where they shake hands or embrace. There is a brief but very intense interaction with these experts as they reveal important aspects of their ancestor's life. The celebrity is shown listening intently to the expert and then responding accordingly such as crying, smiling, or laughing. For example, when Christine Anu found out about the activities of her grandfather during WWII she wipes away tears and says, "It changes a lot of things for me. Do you get a lot of slobbering, crying women around you?" The brief relationship with these experts is important to the entertainment value of the program because if the celebrity did not interact with other people, the program would effectively consist of the individual discovering key information about their ancestors while sitting in front of a computer. This would obviously not make for good television. Instead, relationships are encouraged with experts because of the interactions that occur between them and subsequently the viewer. Thus, the program creates closeness because of the imagined interaction with the on-screen character. PSI and PSRs are then developed.

Affective Closeness. As new evidence is revealed to the celebrity they respond in various ways. Their responses are accompanied by background music, which builds the tension and evokes emotion, such as sadness, from the viewer. Sometimes the celebrity demonstrates genuine interest in the revelations such as when Sigrid Thornton said:

This is pretty exciting stuff. I can hardly bear to read on. This is better than any novel. This is just the most fascinating. I do feel like a private detective and these articles are the most revolutionary of all as they are shedding new light on this case. And it's very clear that something fishy was going on.

Sometimes the celebrity has a physical response to a revelation whereby they may cry or have goose bumps. For example, Ita Buttrose received the news by phone that her cousin owned the original wedding ring of her great-great grandmother. In response she

said, "Oh gosh . . . I've got a cold chill going up and down my spine. David, that's amazing." When Kate Ceberano discovered that her ancestor was musical, she said:

Wow! I don't know why—it just made me go all weird. That is amazing. I don't know why that's so emotional for me but it is. Somehow you can actually inherit artistic qualities. . . . It just proves so much to me about the inheritance of a genetic interest, passion, ability. . . . I'm sorry I don't know why I'm crying. It's just like a revelation to me.

Jack Thompson was equally moved by the revelations he discovered when exploring his past. Amazed at what he had discovered he explained, "That's an extraordinary feeling, particularly seeing the documents in front of you. . . . A presence of something that I've never felt in my life before." Thompson is surprised and excited to discover that he has "the family face" and appears humbled when he describes his ancestors as "all interesting strangers." He speaks about "the exquisite everyday ordinariness of humanity—generation after generation after generation."

In four of the six episodes featuring Australian female celebrities, the celebrity wipes away tears at least once during the program. For example, Catherine Freeman cries when she reflects on the treatment of Aboriginal people. Sigrid Thornton cries when she reads the obituary of her great-grandmother and when she is sitting in a prison cell and reflecting on the treatment of her great-great grandfather. Christine Anu cries when she visits the grave of her great-great grandmother and when she sees a photograph of her grandfather during WWII. Kate Ceberano also cries when she realizes her ancestor was musical. Of the six Australian male celebrities, Jack Thompson, Dennis Cometti, Ron Barassi, and John Butler become quite openly emotional, whereas Geoffrey Robertson and Ben Mendelsohn managed to hold back their tears. A particularly emotional scene is created by the producers when Ron Barassi meets two of the men who fought in the same regiment as his father in WWII. When they explain to Ron that all his father cared about before he died was him, the tears well up in Ron's eyes and the viewer is also swept up by the powerful nature of the disclosure.

In each episode the celebrity demonstrates one or more strong emotion that is generated from their experience. For example, Catherine Freeman felt disgust and anger at the injustices experienced by

Aboriginal people. She said, “This is disgusting. . . . It’s absolutely putrid.” However, she also felt moved by the local people’s support of her grandfather. She said, “I’m really, really moved by what the people have done to honor my grandfather. And the words are so powerful. So this is really special. Yeah, it’s very special.” Christine Anu felt pride in her grandfather’s involvement in WWII. Kate Ceberano felt excitement about being a descendant of landed gentry. Ita Buttrose felt admiration “for the guts that they showed in making the journey at that time. And there was no going back. I mean, they had to survive.” Thus, throughout the series, the program makers use many opportunities to encourage affective closeness to occur by allowing the celebrities to show their emotions on-screen.

Suggestions for Further Research and Conclusion

The aim of this study was to examine the techniques filmmakers used in a sample of *WDYTYA* episodes to influence audience members’ cognitive and affective responses to characters depicted in the program, how they made viewers feel close to the on-screen characters, and how they might attempt to elicit various emotions from the audience. The article demonstrates that the program makers used a range of Eder’s (2006, 2008, 2010) techniques to encourage viewers to become close to the on-screen characters, and as a result, the programs are more influential and emotional than they might otherwise be. In creating such powerful programs, the viewer is willingly taken on a journey into the life of the Australian celebrity and is able to develop a special relationship with the celebrity on a range of levels including physical, mental, intimate, imagined, and affective. During each episode, the celebrity has what might be referred to as a seminal experience, that is, an “I now know who I am” moment, which often involves a physical response to their travel experiences such as goose bumps or shivers down the spine. The celebrities seem to have an extremely satisfying experience tracing their ancestors. They often appear to have a life-changing experience as a result of being involved in the making of the program. Such an experience may be especially appealing to some viewers, and some may be encouraged to go in search of their own ancestors to replicate this type of experience.

In addition, several other techniques are used by the filmmakers to make the program more attractive to the potential identity tourist. For example, each episode examined family histories that reflected significant waves of European and other regional migration. These stories of immigration and emigration are similar to the experiences of millions of people around the world, and so many viewers may be able to personally relate to these stories as they have similarities to their own history. The cinematography in each of the episodes is impressive as it displays the destinations visited in a favorable manner through the use of good lighting and striking camera angles. The program shows the celebrities entering various impressive-looking buildings such as museums, churches, traditional pubs, and registry offices. Often, conversations between the celebrity and the expert are held outdoors. Consequently, the backdrop to the conversation displays positive aspects of the country visited and the specific location.

The filmmakers ensure that the process the celebrities followed to track down their ancestors appears relatively straightforward. They are shown using computers to access files and documents via the Internet, which appear to be readily available to anyone who wants to trace their ancestors. These documents include birth, marriage, and death certificates; newspapers; and court reports. Occasionally the featured personalities are given special access to back rooms and very fragile documents not normally available to the general public. This sends a message to the viewer that thousands of potentially useful documents exist and may be readily accessible online or by requesting photocopies.

Following the popularity of the first series, and making the most of advertising revenue, the producers of the second series concluded each episode with an advertisement for the website *ancestry.com* who also became a sponsor of the popular show. According to *ancestry.com*, the number of Australians who visit family history websites has risen by 58% since the SBS program began in 2008 (Webb, 2011). The National Library of Australia has also reported a 25% increase in genealogy queries from the public since the Australian series of *WDYTYA* was first broadcast (Webb, 2011). In the second series of *WDYTYA*, an invitation was provided at the conclusion of each program for the viewer to

visit the SBS website and have a live chat with the celebrity featured on that show or with an experienced genealogist. The strategy was designed to encourage viewers to become more engaged with the search process, more connected with the program, and possibly more inclined to trace their own ancestry.

Discovering our ancestors enables us to explore our own identity and better understand our place in the world. Genealogy is a hobby (if not an obsession) for millions, and the mission to find out about those who came before us is an ongoing one as new clues lead to new people and their often fascinating stories. By focusing on the individual, *WDYTYA* reminds us that everyone has the potential to become an amateur detective in their own family history quest and the search can take us on some deeply moving physical and emotional journeys—both within and beyond our everyday worlds.

Based on the significant number of viewers in the UK, Australia, and the US and the number of hits on the *WDYTYA* web pages, the documentary series appears to have successfully reinforced an interest in identity tourism and its associated travel-related research activities. As such, archivists, heritage tourism operators, tourism academics, and others may be interested in the techniques identified in this study in order to better understand the attraction of identity tourism for the individual. Further research might explore how far the findings apply outside the program and the relevance of the findings to identity tourism and the wider tourism community.

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