

2009 CMR Senior Seminar Presentations: 10:00-11:40 am in HFA 6

April 28: Mike Leutmer

Vicki Vandercreek

Nick Maciej

April 30: Justin Kemppainen “Failure and Frustration: Discovering Reasons for Aggressive Behavior in Gamers”

Several research studies suggest video games increase aggression for the people who play them. It is often insinuated that this aggression comes from the violent content of the game, but there is rarely conclusive evidence to support this idea. In addition, thus far there has been little or no attempt to discover the reasons why the person who plays the game experiences an increase in hostility.

The question of this experiment is: Does a person experience hostility based upon frustration, regardless of violent content? My hypothesis is that frustration results from failure, which in game terms means losing, dying, etc, and this can in turn lead to the aggressive/hostile behaviors.

In this study, research subjects play selected similar video games, one violent and one nonviolent, in five sessions. In the first, they acclimate themselves to the game's controls and objectives. In the next two sessions, the subjects play the nonviolent game on the easiest and most difficult settings. In the final two sessions, the same occurs for the violent game. Player response survey data is collected to determine which sessions produced the highest level of aggression for the participant.

This kind of study could pioneer a more efficient method for video game research, one that discriminates by genre and provides reasoning for observed behavior. It could also suggest new areas of study, considering player-focused research questions.

Jena Magee “How to look good naked”: The effects of thinness in media images and the perceptions of adult women.”

Contemporary mediated images of women often present stereotypic concepts of beauty. The Lifetime Television show “How to look good naked” is very popular among women ages 12-44. The women appearing on this show represent issues that real women have about their body and weight. This project questions: Do the ways the women on the show perceive their own body image seem to be realistic, or are perceptions often distorted because of media images? The distorted views that these women have all vary but can be related to unhappiness because of the thinness of the models that they see in magazines. To find patterns in the program guests' ideas about their own body images this project applies social comparison theory and uses two research methods. In social comparison theories the researcher examines if people looking at one possible factor relate it to another factor and demonstrate patterns of behaviors that show conclusions of similarities. The first research method focuses on the nature of popular entertainment, the presenter and how he interacts with the guests and the audience. The second method analyzes “the text and talk” and looks for patterns and sequences, to create contrasts among all of the guests on the show. These methods used to examined an entire season of “How to look good naked” (13 episodes), suggest the women on the show have a distorted view of what their body really looks like and state that they have more positive feelings about their body after appearing on the show. Findings from this study may be used to enhance concepts of media literacy in regards to healthy body images for women.

May 4: Matt Gandrud “Considering Images of Power and Race: A Rhetorical Look at Allen Iverson’s Appearance(s)”

Many connect certain attire with a particular lifestyle? Additionally, mediated images can transmit racial stereotypes. This project examines cultural interpretations of athlete appearances, and describes the possible messages those style choices send to fans and casual viewers. In particular, this study asks if the clothing and accessories worn by Allen Iverson, who is African American and is a professional basketball player in the National Basketball Association (NBA), further the stereotype of African American athletes. Social semiotics theory and critical cultural theory were used to conduct this analysis of images and messages. Semiotics is the general study of the processes and effects of the production and reproduction, reception and circulation of meaning in all forms, used by all kinds of communication. Essentially semiotics interpret images through signs. Critical cultural theory investigates the communication of race, status, and power within society, and in particular the NBA. This research suggests Iverson's changing appearances and self presentation contrast with the NBA's perspectives, especially in light of the 2005 dress code banning several garments and accessories favored by several African American athletes of the NBA. Since today's athletes are viewed as role models and iconic figures in American society, and because the NBA is one of the largest and most successful "industries" in the country, the ways their athletes dress and act signal messages about lifestyles, and communicate to many people social conclusions regarding race, identity and power in contemporary society.

Moon Lee “Impact of Violence in Video Games on Children”

The mass media portrays many images and ideas that have the ability to worry, frighten, or even traumatize children. Today children and adolescents have many potential sources of violence exposure which may desensitize them to the true consequences of violence, increasing the risk of aggression or even violence. The goal of this study is to determine if there are relationships between real-life and video-game violence exposure and desensitization as reflected in empathy and attitudes towards violence in children between the ages of nine to eleven. A sample of students have been recruited from elementary schools. Participants were asked to complete 4 questionnaires: a background questionnaire with demographic information and questions about video game use and preference, a survey with questions about real-life violence exposure in different settings, an evaluation of children’s attitudes towards violence, and an assessment of children’s empathy. Findings suggest greater exposure to violence in real life and in the media will be associated with lower empathy and stronger pro-violence attitudes, this study tests that assertion. The reason this study is important is because values in violent video games may be more likely to have a greater and lasting impact on children who are still developing moral reasoning than on older individuals with established value systems.

Tara Loomis “MTV’s “The Real World: Hollywood”: Examining reality television”

Viewers of MTV’s “The Real World” are told by advertising to believe what they see is “real” in each show. In fact, there are 4-6 different days in a single episode and 168 hours are filmed and edited to fit into a 1-hour episode. Therefore, what we see the cast members portray in any particular episode of the program are dramatic, unrealistic depictions of social communication behavior(s) and patterns selected for the television viewers. To evaluate this claim, this project examines Season 20 of the reality television series-- “The Real World XX: Hollywood.” All 13 episodes plus the season’s reunion show have been systematically and critically viewed and analyzed using qualitative thematic cluster analysis—employing pre-defined themes and group role terms to describe ways the cast members are understood. Findings suggest particular communication behaviors and character-stated reasons control individual and group behaviors. The findings also suggest these communication patterns are dysfunctional and the “reasons” are based on classic dramatic forms. What is shown to “The Real World” viewers is not “real” but is merely entertainment product based on producer-created situations that have happened over a period of time and are edited to have the appearance of character and setting verisimilitude.

May 7: Michelle Redberg “Paralleled Coverage in Broadcast Media: Agenda-setting analysis of TV news”

The theory of agenda-setting is the notion that the messages delivered by the media have the ability to control what the public ponders. This theory has been supported by various studies, yet the question has yet to be asked if broadcast media outlets are delivering one homogeneous message to those that consume broadcast news, which would involve a cross analysis to evaluate the similarities within the content. A content analysis contains the ability to decipher perception versus reality through a systematic quantitative analysis. People can speculate whether the media outlets control society's agenda by providing consistent messages, but only data can support those claims. My intentions are to shed additional light on the concreteness of the “agenda” that mass media have been accused of setting through the following research questions: What category of stories are prioritized by the four major national broadcast media outlets? Does national uniformity exist, meaning consistency of coverage, within the newsworthy content among the media outlets? What correlations exist, if any, between specific networks and a consistency of category coverage? Through a content analysis I seek to discover whether the three major national broadcast news networks are truly providing the public with a similar message, thus accelerating the potential effects of agenda-setting. The findings will help to build a foundation for future studies regarding mass media, therefore developing a better understanding of the social implications of mass media. This in turn has the potential to be beneficial to our society as a whole.

Todd Thielin “The Rhetorical Situation and Generic Constraints of the *Billy Graham Crusade*”

Reverend Billy Graham, one of the most well known evangelical preachers, has addressed his message with specific solutions aimed toward individual and societal problems, and has even used television broadcast technology to broaden his audiences. Three theories, the “rhetorical situation,” by Lloyd Bitzer, “generic constraints and the rhetorical situation,” by Kathleen Jamieson and “language is sermonic,” by Richard Weaver will be utilized to explore the questions, “How does Rev. Billy Graham define the specific exigence in relationship with the rhetorical situation? And, does he address the rhetorical situation by use of rhetorical discourse while following the sermonic genre or by using plain language that is sermonic? According to Lloyd Bitzer, “an *exigence* is an imperfection marked by urgency; it is a defect, an obstacle... (It) is rhetorical when ... positive modification requires discourse or can be assisted by discourse.” Analysis includes three sermons from the *Billy Graham* *Crusade (Classic) *broadcast* *from the period of the 1960s-80s, which are currently broadcasted via the Trinity Broadcast Network. While Graham may change the main topics in his discourse and scripture for each sermon, his overall message is the same. Graham suggests the same exigence and offers the same modifications or solutions, which would make his rhetorical discourse an invitation for any rhetorical situation.