THE GEORGE GERBNER CONFERENCE ON COMMUNICATION, CONFLICT AND AGGRESSION

JUNE 14-15, 2013
Budapest College of Communication and Business
+36 (1) 273 3095
# PROGRAM

## FRIDAY, JUNE 14, 2013

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## SATURDAY, JUNE 15, 2013

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<td>Visual Representations of Violence and Vulnerability</td>
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<td>Closing Remarks by Rebecca M. Chory, West Virginia University, United States of America</td>
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FRIDAY, JUNE 14, 2013

09:00 – 09:15: Conference Welcome by Dr. László Vass, Rector of Budapest College of Communication and Business Hungary

09:15 – 10:45: Studies on the Role of News Media in War and Revolution

Democracy vs. Opportunity: Revealing the Nature of Conflict Communication following the “Arab Spring”
Thomas B. Christie, University of Texas at Arlington, United States of America (2012 Gerbner Conference Award Recipient)

Cycles of Contention & Social Movement Networks: New Mass Media Linkages and Transnational Collective Action during the 1848 & 2011 People Revolutions
Amina Asim, Northwestern University, United States of America

Vass, Rector of Budapest College of Communication and Business Hungary

Press Narratives on War against Terror in Sri Lanka
Pradeep Nishantha Weerasinghe, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka

Chair: Cristina M. Viray, Polytechnic University of the Philippines, the Philippines

10:45 – 11:00: Break

11:00 – 12:15: Biological, Personal, and Social Predictors of Aggression

The Intersection between Communication Competence and Alcoholism Recovery
Frances Spellman, West Virginia University, United States of America

Predictors of Cyber Aggression
Kumi Ishi, Western Kentucky University, United States of America

“Survival of the Fittest” or The End of a False Myth
László Gyula Jobbágy, Budapest College of Communication and Business, Hungary

Chair: Christina M. Willingham, Florida State University, United States of America

12:15 – 13:15: Lunch

13:15 – 14:30: Aggression in “Love” Relationships

Dowry Violence in India as Aggressive/Violent “Negotiation” Strategy: An Analysis of Media Coverage and Cultural Meaning
Peter M. Kellett, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, United States of America

Thomas Matyok, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, United States of America

Romantic Partner Surveillance as a Predictor of Relational Conflict, Aggression, and Satisfaction
Shannon T. Carton, West Virginia University, United States of America

Explorations and Redefinitions of Human Sexuality and Relationships in the Era of New Media Technology (Videochatting and Social Networking): The Invigoration of Exploitations of Filipino Men and Women
Joseph Reylan Viray, Polytechnic University of the Philippines, the Philippines

Kriztine R. Viray, Polytechnic University of the Philippines, the Philippines

Amalia C. Rosales, Polytechnic University of the Philippines, the Philippines

Chair: Gabor Hardy, SUNY Oswego, United States of America

14:30 – 14:45: Break

14:45 – 16:00: New Directions in Cultivation and Storytelling

The Multiple Scary Worlds of Television, An International Perspective on Gerbner’s Cultivation Theory
Jan Van den Bulcke, University of Leuven, Belgium

Retesting Cultivation Theory on the Origins, Causes, and Predictors of Aggression: The Case of Pre and Post Genocide Rwanda
Agnès Lucy Lando, Daystar University, Kenya

Linda Muthuri, Daystar University, Kenya

Everlyne Oiteno, Daystar University, Kenya

Jean Wanjia Macharia, Daystar University, Kenya

Stella Nsubuga, Daystar University, Kenya

Martin Mwengah, Daystar University, Kenya

Paul R. Odira, Daystar University, Kenya

Remediating Aggression: Humbaba, Mythic Transformation, and Virtuality
Elaine Sponholtz, University of Florida, United States of America

Chair: Gordon Coonfield, Villanova University, United States of America

16:00 – 16:15: Break

16:15 – 17:30: Communication Undermining Student Learning, Development, and Research

The Ethical Implications of the “Cool” Professor
Rebecca M. Chory, West Virginia University, United States of America

Evan H. Offstein, Frostburg State University, United States of America

Martin Mwengah, Daystar University, Kenya

Joan Wanja Macharia, Daystar University, Kenya

Everlyne Otieno, Daystar University, Kenya

Linda Muthuri, Daystar University, Kenya

Agnes Lucy Lando, Daystar University, Kenya

Communication Dynamics Addressing Conflicts Encountered by Researchers Working in Groups
Divina T. Pasumbal, Polytechnic University of the Philippines, the Philippines

Elyn D. Arciaga, Polytechnic University of the Philippines, the Philippines

Camille M. Corral, Polytechnic University of the Philippines, the Philippines

Alvin John M. Fernandez, Polytechnic University of the Philippines, the Philippines

Knowledge Creating Conversations: Endlessly Unfolding Inquiries of Discovery and Invention
Arthur Brogden Male, University of London, England

Chair: Kriztine R. Viray, Polytechnic University of the Philippines, the Philippines

17:30 Dinner
SATURDAY, JUNE 15, 2013

09:00 – 10:30: Aggression and Conflict among Children

Double Dose: The Joint Effect of Media Violence and Family Conflict on Adolescents’ Aggression
Karim M. Fikkers, University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands
Jessica Taylor Piotrowski, University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands
Wouter D. Weeda, University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands
Helen G.M. Vossen, University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands
Patti M. Valkenburg, University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Constructing Televisual Violence as an Issue in Children’s Speech
Anca Velicu, The Romanian Academy, Romania

Empowering Dialogue in Intercultural Conflicts between Children
Vittorio Iervese, University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Italy

Ostracism: The Powers and Effects of the Silent Bully
Timothy Gozanski, West Virginia University, United States of America

Places of Personal Identity, Places of Violence: A Research on Contemporary Film about the (Near) Future
Monica-Elena Mitarca, Dimitrie Cantemir Christian University, Romania

The Rhetoric of Gun Violence: Blurring the Focus, Blaming the Lens
Christine M. Willingham, Florida State University, United States of America
Margaret K. Chojnacki, Barry University, United States of America

Hard-Knock Life: Exploring Prisoner Perceptions of Media’s Influence on Society and Crime through In-Depth Interviews and O-Methodology
Savannah R. Overton, Syracuse University, United States of America

Chair: Natascha Zowislo-Grünewald, Bundeswehr University Munich, Germany

10:30 – 10:45: Break


The Barabbas Complex: Targeting the Wrong Villain in the Global Warming Debate
Gabor Hardy, SUNY Oswego, United States of America
Eyub Yegen, SUNY Oswego, United States of America

Organizational Exit: Communicating Dissent in the Workplace
Virginia Nardi, West Virginia University, United States of America

Study of Aggression and Conflict in Relation with Deviance in Indian Workplace
Pooja Malik, Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur, India

Microaggressions of Japanese American Women of the U.S. World War II Internment Camps: Reading between the Lines of Shame and Silence
Precious Yamaguchi, Cedar Crest College, United States of America

Self-Categorization Theory and Racism
Megan Quirk, West Virginia University, United States of America

Chair: Divina T. Pasumbal, Polytechnic University of the Philippines, the Philippines

12:15 – 13:15: Lunch

13:15 – 14:30: Communication Management and Misuse in Micro and Macro Organizational Processes

Strategy Communication and Security Policy –Towards a Communicative Centrum Gravitatis?
Natascha Zowsilo-Grünewald, Bundeswehr University Munich, Germany
Alexender Paquée, Bundeswehr University Munich, Germany

Ligation as Aggression: Use of the Legal System and the Media for Bullying, Not Justice-Seeking
Donald Papy, University of Miami, United States of America

Sights of Conflict, Aggression, and Transformation: Vernacular Visual Tactics in the Struggle for Post-Conflict Memory
Christina M. Morus, The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey, United States of America

War as Routine: The Normalization of Violence and War Photo-Journalism in Israel
Eva Berger, College of Management Academic Studies, Israel

Chair: Agnes Lucy Lando, Daystar University, Kenya

14:45 – 16:00: Ethnicity, Race, Diversity, and Antisocial Communication

16:15 – 17:30: Presentation of Gerbner Conference Award by Dr. Jolán Róka, Budapest College of Communication and Business Hungary

Closing Remarks by Rebecca M. Chory, West Virginia University, United States of America

6:00 – 16:15: Break


The Writing on the Wall: Graffiti and the Circulation of Vulnerability in Everyday Urban Life
Gordon Coonfield, Villanova University, United States of America
The period following the “Arab Spring” movement revealed new ways people receive their news and information about major international conflicts—news often communicated by new media and used to form public opinion about the movements. This study examines how leading Western newspapers framed issues in the Arab Spring and contrasts them to issues found in regional public opinion polling. Framing, agenda-setting and agenda-building theories of mass communication research are used as a foundation for understanding the possible influence of both new media and traditional news coverage of these conflicts on public opinion. Key objectives are:

1. To identify the major issues of the Arab Spring movement that received coverage by three major Western newspapers during this timeframe.
2. To examine how the ranking of these issues compares with the ranking of issues noted by public opinion polling in the region—a region using social media and other new media sources.

The methodology of the study employs a computer-assisted content analysis beginning with the coverage of the violent Tunisian incident in December 2010. It examines media coverage throughout 2011/2012 and identifies key issues. The study then compares the key issues in media coverage to those revealed by public opinion polling throughout Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, UAE and Iran. The study concludes by summarizing the stark contrast between the communication of traditional media issues defining the Arab Spring (based largely on Western democratic themes) and issues defined by public opinion polling in the region (expanding economic opportunity and ending political corruption).

The declaration on January 28, 2004 by David Kay, former head of the U.S. Iraq Survey Group to the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee that there was no evidence of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) in Iraq reinforced calls for the scrutiny of the Bush administration’s case for war. Many political analysts argued that claims made by the administration that Saddam Hussein’s Iraq was developing WMD and that the former Iraqi leader had links with Al Qaeda were either not true or exaggerated to influence American public opinion and win popular support for the 2003 Iraq war. Consequently, news media critics questioned the role the media played in forming public opinion and framing support for the war. This study, therefore, examines the relationship between the official U.S. government rhetoric supporting the 2003 Iraq war and the news framing of the conflict prior to the war in order to understand the role of news media in the development of international conflicts. Using as a case, the study examined if the New York Times Framing of the U.S.-Iraqi conflict in the period preceding the war reinforced, legitimized or challenged the U.S. official war rhetoric. Drawing on news framing as selective representation of reality, the study, conducted through content analysis, found that deontological and consequential moral frames dominated the New York Times stories in the buildup to the 2003 Iraq war. And by giving prominence and dominance to official U.S. sources and their moral frames in support of the war, while excluding pro-diplomatic frames, New York Times stories in the built up to the Iraq war exerted a “strong emotional appeal” on the U.S. public and provided a moral justification for the 2003 Iraq war.

A pride of place and function has been assigned to mass media in the social, economic, political and cultural life of the contemporary world. Hence the mass media, though existent within society itself can deviate and spread its powerful authority over the society. The impact of the shock waves of thought sent by mass media through society, on the consciousness, mind, feelings and behavior of individuals has been argued. The ethnic conflict has been given first priority in the national agenda of Sri Lanka for the last few decades. The division in the island state of Sri Lanka between the Sinhala majority and Tamil minority has already taken a heavy toll. The role of the mass media within the ethnic conflict is something which the news paper narratives influence the minds of the reading public. For this purpose Cultural Media Theory, Structuralism Media Theory and Media Effect Model were employed. The findings were obtained from Sinhala newspapers through interviews and analyzing narratives on the last months of the war against terror. A survey was conducted to examine the extent to which narratives of newspapers affected the ideology and the behavior of the reading public. The finding indicates that the Sinhala newspapers followed a double standard of language in reporting the loss of lives in the Sri Lankan army and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam (LTTE). The study found the facts embodied in the newspaper narratives of the ethnic conflict are not properly verified in creating heroes and villains to justify the journalist’s purposes. In such reporting, the characters and incidents created by newspapers fall into binary oppositions like righteous or unrighteous, black and white, moral or immoral. The paper argues that the influence exercised upon the mentality of readers by narratives built by the newspapers in a society facing an armed conflict based on ethnic differences obstruct the ability to look at the ethnic conflict critically.
The purpose of this literature review is to assess addiction behaviors. Relevant research suggests that the central features of addiction behaviors and experiences consist of decision-making, ambivalence, and conflict. More specifically, this review considers how addiction often leads to negative communicative behaviors in contexts characterized by conflict. It reviews the applicability of several cognitive-behavioral components of the Relapse Prevention (RP) model (Marlatt & Gordon, 1980; 1985) and conceptualizes the ongoing process of excessive alcohol use and anger dyscontrol. Appraisal of a high-risk situation, coping responses, self-efficacy and outcome expectancy are also considered for individuals seeking treatment. In addition, Bandura’s Social Cognitive Learning Theory is assessed within the context of alcohol abuse. This is an interesting consideration as the central tenet holds that cognitive experience engenders learned efficacy expectations. These are reinforced for good or ill by success or failure to respond adequately to high-risk situations involving interpersonal conflict. Also, behaviorally-oriented social skill instruction a greater degree of enhancement of self-efficacy for sobriety compared with the cognitively-oriented instruction on interpersonal conflict is considered.

The original concept coined by Herbert Spencer in his “Principles of Biology” (1864) after reading Darwin’s theory of “natural selection” and then repeated by Darwin himself had a tremendous impact on human thinking.

Spencer’s powerful metaphor fit perfectly into the dominating “story” that ruled the human mind in the past centuries, namely economics. It was thought that human survival, as well as the success of human societies, depended on a selection principle that favored the “fittest”. Human existence was perceived as a constant struggle for survival, and the stronger, the more efficient, the fitter have always prevailed.

Thus, competition, violence and human aggression were perceived to be the driving force for survival.

What is that truly motivates human beings?

Is it really a struggle for survival what fundamentally drives us?

Has 21-century science confirmed Spencer’s theory of human nature?

How do we explain human actions and objectives that seem to contradict to this theory?

Spencer’s metaphor will be examined, interrogated and in the light of the findings of 21-century Neurobiology, Psychology and Anthropology ultimately discarded.

Human biology, the motivational and reward systems of the human brain revealed a very different picture from Spencer’s concept.

Human beings are motivated not by some survival instinct, rather the overwhelming motivation is for social attachment, mutual acceptance and recognition.

In reality, Neurobiology has confirmed that the effort of the self to get personal recognition overrides biological instinct for self-preservation.

Consequently, the true cause of human aggression has more to do to social attachment or to a lack of it.

In other words, humans could become aggressive for being part of a community or for the opposite, being ostracized, excluded, humiliated and lonely.

Thus, aggression instead of being the glorified tool for survival will have to be approached as the sign of dysfunctional personal, social, or communal relationships.
DOWRY VIOLENCE IN INDIA AS AGGRESSIVE/VIOLENT “NEGOTIATION” STRATEGY: AN ANALYSIS OF MEDIA COVERAGE AND CULTURAL MEANING
by Peter M. Kellett, Thomas Matyok
University of North Carolina at Greensboro, USA

The dowry system of securing marriage agreements has been illegal in India since 1961. Despite this, such practices are still quite common in certain regions of India, as well as other south Asian countries. Dowry payments can be framed and understood as negotiations within complex familial and social systems that cement and secure particular “deals” between families and married couples (the marriage and fair treatment of a daughter, for example). Many such deals are, however, rarely fixed or final. In fact they are frequently subject to the aggressive renegotiations (demands) of the groom and his family who can assume the power to “change the deal.” One common storyline, for example, is that the bride’s family comes back for more dowry payments which the bride’s family is often unable to pay. The bride is then subject to the threat or actuality of violence and other mistreatment at the hands of her husband and his family. The violence or threat of violence, and sometimes more subtle emotional pressure and abuse, can easily fracture the fragile “negative peace” of marriage agreements and lead to violent conflicts. Violent conflict often leads to attacks on the bride, and sometimes her death.

This paper provides an analysis of five years of dowry violent cases (approximately 100 cases) reported in the Times of India and The Hindu. These cases are examined for content around the three most prevalent aggressive negotiation strategies typical in such relationships of dramatically unequal power. Aggressive communication and behavior such as threat based leverage, extortive revisions of agreements, and violent displays of punishment and discipline/shame for non-compliance with extortion and more subtle emotional abuse, can easily fracture the fragile “negative peace” of marriage agreements and lead to violent conflicts. Violent conflict often leads to attacks on the bride, and sometimes her death. Such negotiation strategies are then understood against the cultural and narrative backdrop in which they are often viewed as reasonable and justified forms of conflict communication and behavior by grooms and their families. The implications are examined for how media coverage of dowry violence cases help cultivate and reify, as well as challenge and call for changes to, the cultural assumptions around the use of aggressive and violent (gendered) negotiations.

ROMANTIC PARTNER SURVEILLANCE AS A PREDICTOR OF RELATIONAL CONFLICT, AGGRESSION, AND SATISFACTION
by Shannon T. Carton
West Virginia University, USA

Partner surveillance occurs in a variety of ways, including via interpersonal electronic surveillance (IES; Tokunga, 2011). Tokunga defines IES as, “surreptitious strategies individuals use over communication technologies to gain awareness of another user’s offline and/or online behaviors.” Dainton and Gross (2008) argued that relational satisfaction is the mechanism which explains use of negative maintenance behaviors. For example, Dainton and Gross (2008) identified that threat based leverage, extortive revisions of agreements, and discipline/shame for non-compliance with extortion and more subtle emotional abuse, can easily fracture the fragile “negative peace” of marriage agreements and lead to violent conflicts. Violent conflict often leads to attacks on the bride, and sometimes her death. Such negotiation strategies are then understood against the cultural and narrative backdrop in which they are often viewed as reasonable and justified forms of conflict communication and behavior by grooms and their families. The implications are examined for how media coverage of dowry violence cases help cultivate and reify, as well as challenge and call for changes to, the cultural assumptions around the use of aggressive and violent (gendered) negotiations.

With that in mind, the goal of the present study is to examine how the negative maintenance behavior of partner surveillance predicts conflict style, aggression, and satisfaction in romantic associations. Specifically, hypotheses predict that surveillance will lead to less productive conflict, aggression, and lower relationship satisfaction. For example, Dainton and Gross (2008) argued that relational satisfaction is the mechanism which explains use of negative maintenance behaviors. However, the nature of that research prohibited directional or causal claims, so it could be that (dis)satisfaction predicts negative maintenance behaviors, but it could equally be true that satisfaction is predicted by the negative maintenance behavior.
EXPLORATIONS AND REDEFINITIONS OF HUMAN SEXUALITY AND RELATIONSHIPS IN THE ERA OF NEW MEDIA TECHNOLOGY (VIDEOCHATTING AND SOCIAL NETWORKING): THE INVIGORATION OF EXPLOITATIONS OF FILIPINO MEN AND WOMEN
by Joseph Reyhan Viray, Kristine R. Viray, Amalia C. Rosales
Polytechnic University of the Philippines, the Philippines

The advent of the new media technology introduces many ways to cultivate sexual connections between and among individuals across boundaries and geographical territories. Various forms of relationships, which several decades ago would not have been possible, have been cultivated. Sexual passions and desires were observed by many scholars and psychologists to have been more grounded on virtuality than physicality. These apparent changes in sexuality and relationships brought implications and ramifications to modern social lives. Aggressions and exploitations among men and women of various nationalities including Filipinos have been observed. To explore this situation, this research paper would have the following objectives:
1. Describe the phenomenology of virtual relationships through the testimonies of Filipino women and men who are indulging themselves in this kind of relationships;
2. Explore the motivations and drives of both European and Filipino men and women in indulging in virtual relationships;
3. Describe and classify sexual deviations and sexual neurosis that may likely developed from virtual relationships;
4. Explain the possible exploitations of Filipino men and women that may be caused by these sexual interactions through the digital and internet technology; and
5. At the conclusion of the research, the researcher would be producing two artistic outputs based on the research. (a) Photo Painting Collage of Filipina Men and Women in the act of virtual sexual interactions; and (b) an audio-video collage of men and women while indulging in virtual relationships. In these artistic outputs, the researcher would show the likely scenarios that may be brought about by these virtual relationships.

The research paper will be using a combination of phenomenology and descriptive method of research. By this methodology, the researcher hopes to explore and elucidate important ideas and themes which would help modern and contemporary philosophers and psychologists in their study of human sexuality in the computer and digital age.

THE MULTIPLE SCARY WORLDS OF TELEVISION, AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON GEBRNER’S CULTIVATION THEORY
by Jan Van den Bulck
University of Leuven, Belgium

In the 1960s Gerbner proposed a cultivation theory of media effects. It argued that the picture of the world presented by TV gradually affects how viewers perceive the real world. Much of the evidence in support of cultivation theory was reproduced in a number of countries.

Gerbner’s theory, however, was developed in the United States of America. American viewers are exposed mostly to content depicting (and produced in) the US. International cultivation studies generally have not taken into account the fact that non-US audiences are exposed to a mixture of US and homegrown (and, often, other) TV content. International cultivation theory should therefore study what viewers learn from homegrown TV (primary cultivation), what they learn about the US from US-TV (secondary cultivation) and whether and how US TV affects their view of their own world (integration).

This paper presents the results of split-ballot experiment in an online survey of 1900 Flemish adolescents. One group received traditional, generic, “Scary World” questions about their estimates of demographics and judgments such as trust in other people. The second group received the same questions, but with the geographic specification “in Flanders”. The third group received the questions with the specification “in the US”. All respondents detailed their exposure to Flemish, US and other TV content. The study analyses relationships of primary cultivation (exposure to Flemish TV and perceptions of Flanders), secondary cultivation (exposure to US TV and perceptions of the US) and integration (exposure to US TV and perceptions of Flanders and general perceptions of the world). Finally it compares these relationships to the results of a traditional cultivation analysis in which overall viewing was studied in relationship to non-geographically specific questions about real world perceptions.

The implications of these results and of the international perspective on cultivation for the validity of cultivation theory and for the study of cultivation outside of the US are discussed.
RETESTING CULTIVATION THEORY ON THE ORIGINS, CAUSES, AND PREDICTORS OF AGGRESSION: THE CASE OF PRE AND POST GENOCIDE RWANDA

by Agnes Lucy Lando, Linda Muthoni, Everlyne Otieno, Joan Wanja Macharia, Stella Nsibuga, Martin Mwarengah, Paul R. Odino

Daystar University, Kenya

Gebner’s Cultivation Theory suggests that television can change or “cultivate” a viewer’s perception of social reality. In other words, a viewer’s belief of reality is shaped by the amount of television watched combined with a continual exposure to media messages over a long period of time. Gebner’s theory in essence focuses on research based on the negative effects, and particularly violence of television programming on consumer behavior and attitude.

In 1994, Rwanda was the site of one of the most atrocious genocides in human history. Rwandan media played a central part in the tragedy. It is worth noting that Rwanda’s public television began broadcasting in 1992. However, the impact of television as a form of media was very limited because only the upper-class elite had televisions at the time, and the middle-class had televisions that only played video cassettes. Radio, on the other hand, played a significant role in fuelling hatred in Rwanda and was used as a channel for anti-Tutsi propaganda. “Hate-radio” served as a voice of the anti-Tutsi campaign, inciting and instructing people whom the hate-propaganda. “Hate-radio” served as a voice of the anti-Tutsi campaign, inciting and instructing people whom to hate and how to kill. Through radio, hate propaganda was responsible for fanning and coordinating the rapid wave of violence that was carried across the country.

While Gebner’s theory focuses on Television as the main channel of violent influence, and inasmuch as the cultivation effects prove true, we see television as not applicable in the case of Rwanda. This is because radio, which was more available to the general public, was more impactful in promoting violence in a context where television had limited reach and audience. We hold that continuous exposure to messages of hate and violence over the radio and the amount of radio listened to played a significant role in causing the Rwandan genocide.

In this paper therefore, we seek to show Gebner’s theory as not only applicable to television but also other media, and in this case, radio. Thus our paper is an attempt to widen the scope of Gebner’s cultivation theory by applying it to aggressive communication behavior due to the amount of radio content continually listened to over a significant period of time. By examining the origins, causes, and predictors of aggression in pre and post genocide Rwanda, our study is guided by the research question: can radio cultivate violent behavior and attitude as television can, where Television is not accessible?

REMITING AGGRESSION: HUMBABA, MYTHIC TRANSFORMATION, AND VIRTUALITY

by Elaine Sponholz
University of Florida, USA

This paper explores themes of aggression, destruction, and transformation in the ancient Epic of Gilgamesh, and the role of Digital Media in the remediation of the world’s oldest written story. Within the context of a contemporary retelling, the monster Humbaba’s position in the narrative as the antagonistic Other is evaluated. The portrait projects how Humbaba, the divinely appointed protector of the Cedar forest, is seen to impede the desire of the foreign invaders for valuable natural resources, the Cedars of Lebanon. Seeking glory, the aggressors, led by the impulsive tyrant Gilgamesh and his companion Enkidu, invade the forest, kill Humbaba, and cut down the sacred cedars. In doing so, they set into motion unintended consequences, divine retribution, resulting in the death of Eniku. The epic chronicles the transformation of Gilgamesh, as he changes from an arrogant ruler into an ethical one focused on serving the best interests of his people. Through the recreation of these scenes from ancient cuneiform texts, parallels are drawn between modern acts of military aggression, and those in the mythic past of Mesopotamia/Ancient Iraq. The project also aligns Humbaba’s environmental consciousness with that of contemporary reforestation activist Wangari Maathai. The author explicates the process of blending an original spoken word performance and live action with 3D avatars in a virtual game engine environment. By employing repurposed Microsoft Kinect sensors with motion capture capabilities, the characters are controlled through Natural User Interface (NUi) by the motions of the actors. With the new possibilities of inexpensive motion capture technology, elements that include 3D virtual characters partnered with live performers on stage create new storytelling experiences. This leads to an examination of the interrelationship between mythic portrayals of conflict and injustice, and the role that Digital Storytelling play in creating a public dialogue about the history of human experience.

THE ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE “COOL” PROFESSOR

West Virginia University, USA and Evan H. Offstein
Frostburg State University, USA

The communication behaviors of classroom instructors at the post-secondary school (college/university) level have largely been examined in terms of their impact on student learning, student perceptions, student out-of-class communication, and student satisfaction. Much less attention has been paid to the negative effects that instructors’ communication may have on students’ character development, value adoption, and ethical conduct. The present study seeks to address this issue by investigating college instructors’ unethical behavior, poor judgment, management of social distance, hurtful communication, and/or professionalism and the associations these behaviors have with students’ ethics-related beliefs, values, and behaviors. In short, this study will examine the following proposition: In an attempt to relate to students by appearing down-to-earth and “cool,” professors may inadvertently be modeling problematic behaviors that their students learn, generalize, and reproduce in the classroom and beyond.

THE ETHERICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE “COOL” PROFESSOR

West Virginia University, USA and Evan H. Offstein
Frostburg State University, USA

The communication behaviors of classroom instructors at the post-secondary school (college/university) level have largely been examined in terms of their impact on student learning, student perceptions, student out-of-class communication, and student satisfaction. Much less attention has been paid to the negative effects that instructors’ communication may have on students’ character development, value adoption, and ethical conduct. The present study seeks to address this issue by investigating college instructors’ unethical behavior, poor judgment, management of social distance, hurtful communication, and/or professionalism and the associations these behaviors have with students’ ethics-related beliefs, values, and behaviors. In short, this study will examine the following proposition: In an attempt to relate to students by appearing down-to-earth and “cool,” professors may inadvertently be modeling problematic behaviors that their students learn, generalize, and reproduce in the classroom and beyond.

THE ETHERICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE “COOL” PROFESSOR

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I. SCOPE AND PURPOSE
This institutional study which was completed in 2011 sought to describe how conflicts between and among members of thesis groups affect the research process. It also looked into the ways by which these members communicate to and deal with conflicting group members. Furthermore, it attempted to describe the communication approaches and strategies that helped them manage and resolve conflicts while in the process of doing their research.

II. RESEARCH DESIGN
In this study, qualitative research design was employed. Participants were selected purposively and focus group discussions were administered to generate the data.

III. HIGHLIGHTS OF RESULTS AND MAJOR CONCLUSIONS
The researchers found out that conflicting situations inevitably arise in research undertakings which are done by a group of researchers. These conflicts are caused by several factors such as meager financial resources, conflicting activities and schedules, adviser’s standards and expectations, among others.

In the midst of these conflicts, thesis group members thought of and employed communication strategies through which conflicting situations that emerged could be addressed. The research team attempted to capture such strategies through this study.

The presentation is outlined as follows:
A. The Factors Considered in Choosing Group Members
B. The Working Environment
C. Conflict situations in Thesis Groups
D. Communication Strategies and Approaches to Resolve Conflict
1. At the onset of conflict situation
2. As conflict situation worsens
E. Major factors that contribute to the resolution of conflict

Knowledge creating conversations revise the fluctuating boundaries of warranted argumentation in intergradient educational discourse: the framework for endlessly unfolding inquiries of discovery and invention. Working together engaging learning relativities, staff and student colleague actioning narratives develop diverse research agendas. Sharing authority, personal voice and learning actions craft experience experiments. Fusing action research, design science, ethnography and grounded theory, doctoral school learning environments are investigated from January 2000 to the present. The purpose of the inquiry is to develop The Arts–Science–Education–In–Performance (ASEiP) Model. Eight community projects, 55 colleague interviews, 10 supervisory relationships and 34 ASEiP demonstrations scaffold engagements with authority. The inquiry utilises humanistic, collaborative–conversational–creative methodology to break new theoretical ground establishing how–what–why formal, mainstream pedagogical practices undermine learner outcomes.

Sharing a sense of infinite probabilities being marginalized, learners of all abilities, ages, conditions and backgrounds are in conflict with perceived understandings of authoritative, hierarchic practice as a ruffled node. The error is to treat controlling situations as the real thing: over investing in competitive learning environments because that is what is happening in the classroom. This leads to the focusing hypothesis: in knowledge creating conversations, individuals experience creative genius, learning heroics and personal transformation. Joy emerges. Study findings:

3. Experience experiments successively approximate the ineffable polysem and infinite probabilities of ontology, epistemology, content, contexts and communication.
5. Diverse fractal-metric-art-forms fuse episodic, evolving, evidentiary events nesting energy within awareness manifesting nine universal elements of education including self expression, memoir stories, spontaneous creativity and universal languages.

Retaining hierarchies of authority and advantage, dogma, disaffection and marginalizing inequalities colonise academy, the workplace and society. Fusing formal and informal educational cultures, intergradient learning processes produce subsequent frames and framings of time, space and form one nested within the other. Utilising educational activities, learning relativity inspires three research questions, (1) How do learners develop new syntheses of expected educational experiences? (2) What learning relativities elicit reciprocity in educational entanglements? (3) Why do awareness trans-formulations facilitate argumentation in academe? All participants in mainstream education are respondents to authority. Knowledge creating conversations counteract constraints. Activating the mostly untried, and untested, universal learner-self, enlightened Renaissance persons coalesce nature, human nature and humankind enabling the next stage of human development. Research recommendations:

1. Engage spontaneous–authentic–original and mimicry–mastery learning encounters
3. Enfranchise humanistic, collaborative–conversational–creative competencies
5. Constitute individual–collective–international trans–disciplinary research projects
CONSTRUCTING TELEVISION VIOLENCE AS AN ISSUE IN CHILDREN’S SPEECH

by Anca Velicu

The Romanian Academy, Romania

One of the issues which seem to be triggered by the abundance of media in our society is the media violence, usually correlated with vulnerable publics, and especially youth. Yet, there is not a unity of opinion regarding the pertinence of the issue or its existence. In the US (Hamilton, 2008), France (Kriegl, 2003), Romania (Dragan et al., 2009) and in other spaces, studies were made regarding the quantity and types of audiovisual violence. Taking for granted that TV violence will negatively affect the children and so, the very presence of violence in the media (televison) is considered a bad thing. Nevertheless, there are voices denying this initial assumption and rather address the ‘moral panic’ or ‘media panice’ (Barker & Pentley, 2001; Frau-Meigs, 2011). Recently some scholars were trying to propose a third, mid-way, and put the problem in the terms of social constructionism and/or new cultural history (Buckingham and Jensen, 2012).

In this paper, we intend to leave the floor to children (following the study by Van der Voort, 1986) and see what their perception on the issue is and how do they build their discourse around it. What is TV violence to them? Is their discourse on violence matching adults’? Between realistic violence (in news) and film violence (regulated by NAVC), which one is felt by children as ‘being more violent’? How much violence is there on TV? What triggers it? What are their feelings towards it? Is there a relationship between the way they perceive film violence, respectively, violence in ‘classical’ arts? What’s the place of news violence, between information and spectacular? We tried to address all these through a research on children and teens in Romania (in secondary school and high school), data were gathered in 2011, in a self-administered questionnaire with 3,800 respondents and through six focus-groups.

EMPOWERING DIALOGUE IN INTERCULTURAL CONFLICTS BETWEEN CHILDREN

by Vittorio Imera

University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Italy

Dialogue is a particular form of communication, which is contrasted with “attitudes such as aggression, hostility, prejudice, sectarianism, and with conflicts of varying degrees, including war” (Wierbicka 2005, p. 677). Therefore, dialogue is a form of communication in which participants’ positions are intentionally questioned and negotiated, in order to reach their positive interactive and reflexive positioning.

In this respect, it is possible to speak of empowering dialogue as a specific form of communication which creates the opportunity to negotiate contributions and to show positive involvement in the relationships between participants. This idea may be considered normative and idealistic (Rambottom, Woodhouse & Miall 2005) as it embodies a positive evaluation and a social ideal. However, in the perspective of this presentation, empowering dialogue has a technical meaning. Empowering dialogue is based on peculiar cultural presuppositions (patterns of expectations) and implies specific kinds of turn-taking or action-reaction sequences. More specifically, dialogue requires empathy, empathy as an empowerment as cultural presuppositions of communication; it requires equity and empathy as premises for empowerment. Based on equity, empathy, and empowerment, dialogue enhances expression and acknowledgment of children’s conditions for reciprocity. It is supposed to abolish ethnocentric boundaries and promote cross-cultural adaptation.

This contribution tries to understand how dialogue and conflict management can be productive in the interaction between adults and children. For this purpose, the results of field research are presented; they concern videotaped interaction in different groups of children coordinated by adults trying to support children’s conflict management. The data show the adults’ dialogic actions, which may promote children’s conflict management, as well as the problems and limitations of these actions, highlighting coordination between adults’ dialogic actions and children’s agency in intercultural conflicts. In particular, this contribution focuses on the relationship between participation and conflict, and between conflict management and decision-making during CSV educational activities (example 1) and during a project developed by the NGO Oxfam it.
This essay explores the rhetoric of political discourse, scientific evidence, and spiritual myths used within the current dialogue on global warming. It is apparent that social, political, and economic forces have failed to produce any significant halt to the warming of this planet earth. To investigate the logic of denial I employ a form of Cultural Criticism based on the influence of myth: specifically biblical apocalypse. This apocalypse myth from the book of John in the New Testament offers a revealed vision of a world narrative. The rhetoric of three prominent global deniers is analyzed. Through an analysis of the discourse used by these three political and spiritual figures, we link their articulations of global warming denial to modern Western conceptions of “apocalypse” where it is associated with catastrophic end, or near-end, of the human race. Ultimately, I argue that the vision of the apocalypse shapes many political and spiritual viewpoints regarding the validity of the implications of global warming.
**THE RHETORIC OF GUN VIOLENCE: BLURRING THE FOCUS, BLAMING THE LENS**

by Christine M. Willingham, Margaret K. Chojnacki

Florida State University, USA, Barry University, USA

In 1999 two male students of Columbine High School, 17 and 18 years old, went on a rampage killing 13, wounding 28, and, in their final act, taking their own lives. The citizenry of the United States mourned and debated the issue of gun control. Should we seek to place constraints on access to, and ownership of, guns? Or is the problem, as the National Rifle Association (NRA) contends, the people who use guns inappropriately, rather than access to guns? Eventually, the debate lost its urgency. In 2007, a 23-year-old male student at Virginia Tech University killed 32 and wounded 17 before killing himself. Again the nation mourned and public dialogue about gun control rekindled, but as time passed, the gun control debate faded away. In December 2012, a 20-year-old male, after having killed his mother at home, walked into Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut, killing 20 children, 6 teachers, and then taking his own life. This latest tragedy reinvigorated the gun control debate.

According to William Brown’s Rhetoric of Social Intervention (RSI) model, each senseless act of violence was a catalyst that created social disorder, thus propelling the State to assert its “monopoly on violence.” In this case, by promoting further restrictions on access to and ownership of guns. As a result, increased awareness of the incompleteness of this solution among “social arbiters” should prompt social interventions to revise the ideological system by providing other interpretations for our experiences. In particular, the NRA has proposed the new naming pattern of people-kill-people (under which, consequently, restricting gun ownership is seen as an unnecessary violation of Second Amendment rights) as an alternative to guns-kill-people (so we must have more laws to keep guns away from people). In Brown’s model, either the revision of the ideological system, or its reification, avoids a vicious cycle and restores social order.

However, as a result of the above incidents of violence, the ideological system has not changed; neither has there been greater gun regulation. The authors posit two potential reasons: 1) the social disorder created by these acts of violence was insufficient in both duration and magnitude for the ideological system to become truly deviance amplifying; therefore, 2) the anomaly featuring and anomaly-masking communication of the NRA (social interner) was ineffective to enact its intended attention shift. In this paper, we examine the rhetoric of Wayne LaPierre (Executive Vice President and CEO of the NRA since 1981), public opinion polls regarding gun control, and gun legislation passed between 1999 and the present. We provide an analysis of the attempted attention intervention of the NRA, as they encourage the adaptation of a people-kill-people ideology, which would, perhaps, shift the public debate on violence away from guns and toward culture, specifically, the treatment of mental health.

**HARD-KNOCK LIFE: EXPLORING PRISONER PERCEPTIONS OF MEDIA’s INFLUENCE ON SOCIETY AND CRIME THROUGH IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS AND Q-METHODOLOGY**

by Savannah R. Overtan

Syracuse University, USA

Crime and violence are rampant across all forms of media and in every corner of the globe, causing audiences to become increasingly exposed to this type of content. With the U.S. prison population continuously rising, it is vital to recognize the fundamental dynamics of what leads to crime and violence; past research indicates mass media are worthy of investigation in this area. The purpose of this study is to unearth and reveal the perceptions of media’s influence on society and crime of incarcerated persons as well as their individual behavior and lifestyle choices. This study of perceptions uses Q-Methodology as well as in-depth interviews with 15 incarcerated persons at three correctional facilities in the United States regulated by the Massachusetts Department of Corrections. The focus is grounded in how these convicted persons perceive the effects media have had on their individual behaviors, both criminal and non-criminal in nature. From social psychology, anomie and strain theories help to contextualize the individual’s position in society and their relationships; in the field of mass communications, social learning theory, social cognitive theory and cultivation theory, help to offer explanations of media effects as well as have strong influence on participant responses of their experiences. Results indicate that there are two primary factors from the Q-data sorts by the inmates: media’s influence over the individual and over society. The results and themes from the in-depth interviews reveal four major themes: (1) gap between media and society, (2) familial influence and environment, (3) the dichotomy between individual choice and the third person effect, and (4) media’s relationship with crime and violence.

This paper applies socio-psychological theories to the study of media content effects on attitudinal and behavioral choices in a population that is vastly understudied. For individuals involved in a life of crime, it is important to question whether their exposure to this type of content influences their perceptions of the actions they have committed and how aware they are of the media’s role in their lives. The purpose of this study is to discover and understand the perceptions incarcerated persons have of media’s effect on their past individual criminal behavior. This study revealed media content to which participants were exposed, as well as their beliefs on how that exposure affected their criminal or illegal behavior, aggression, attitudes and beliefs.
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND SECURITY POLICY – TOWARDS A COMMUNICATIVE CENTRUM GRAVITASI?
by Natascha Zowislo-Grunewald, Alexander Paquée
Bundeswehr University Munich, Germany

Theoretical Framework
Recent developments in international politics have shown the unabated relevance of security policy questions. Typically, security policy considerations assume that risk situations are to be avoided or dissolved by way of mission engagements. Accepting this premise, the meaning of communication management is restricted to producing communication concepts preparing and explaining military action. Research exploring the topos of security policy from different organizational perspectives, however, point towards a different understanding of strategic communication’s function. Organizations, thus, conclude, in our days cannot be adequately described by way of a mere purpose-means-relation. Instead, organizations such as p. ex. military mission engagements are understood as constructs constituted through the process of communication. In a military security policy context, this rather radical approach would mean that organizational action / a mission engagement is nothing but a social artifact based on communicative attribution. The consequences are severe: When self as well as third party attribution and construct a military action. Research exploring the topos of security policy resulting from a shift towards a communicative centrum gravitatis are determined. It becomes clear that the legitimacy of mission engagements will continue to erode as long as communication management cannot effectively shift its center towards a ‘strategic narrative’ and thus consolidate its efforts of credible image and issue management. A tradable story needs to be enriched with a symbol-laden discourse in a way that connectivity – and thus legitimacy – with all stakeholders involved are secured.

Challenges for Communication Management in a Mission Engagement Context
Based on these theoretical considerations, this paper discusses the professionalization of communication management within a security policy context and the challenges it has to face.

In a first step, the underlying paradoxes are explained, which are the result of different risk perceptions of all stakeholders involved and which need to be differentiated in order to be integrated into a concise concept of strategic (communicative) action. Especially in politico-military contexts of decision making, divergent attributions are unavoidable. Typically, such decisions generate concerned stakeholder groups, who each hold a different perspective as concerns legitimate causes, purposes and goals, consequences, and risk/danger evaluations. However, when trust in the decision’s legitimacy is destroyed, the acceptance for these decisions and of their communicative interpretation cannot be taken for granted.

In a final step, the strategic dimensions of security policy communication resulting from a shift towards a communicative centrum gravitatis are determined. It becomes clear that the legitimacy of mission engagements will continue to erode as long as communication management cannot effectively shift its center towards a ‘strategic narrative’ and thus consolidate its efforts of credible image and issue management. A tradable story needs to be enriched with a symbol-laden discourse in a way that connectivity – and thus legitimacy – with all parties involved are secured.

Solving this core problem of strategic communication is of social relevance, since military core thoughts, thus, can be interlinked with the processes of democratic decision making. A paradox directive holds true: Regaining control over something principally uncontrollable.

LITIGATION AS AGGRESSION: USE OF THE LEGAL SYSTEM AND THE MEDIA FOR BULLYING, NOT JUSTICE-SEEKING
by Donald Papy
University of Miami, USA

Clausewitz famously said that war is politics by other means. Today, litigation has become war by other means. The U. S. legal system has increasingly become more of an actual battleground than a civilized method of justly resolving real disputes. Representing the phenomenon most vividly, wealthy celebrities and affiliated organizations have increasingly brought frivolous lawsuits with the purpose of harassing opponents and stifling legitimate debate. This bullying behavior implicates not only the legitimacy of the justice system but also the Constitutional protections of freedom of speech and the press.

This paper will examine recent examples of this aggressive behavior, including litigation by Donald Trump (real estate mogul and reality TV host) against Bill Maher (comedian and political commentator); Bill O’Reilly (Fox News cable host/author) against Al Franken (comedian/author and now U.S. Senator); and Lance Armstrong (then former cycling champion and now-admitted performance-enhancing drug user) against former friends, associates, and newspapers. The inquiry will address how these cases developed in the courts and the media, the costs to participants and the legal system, and the effect on non-celebrity participants in the justice system and to society as a whole.

Finally, this paper will discuss how court and attorney ethical rules are constructed and the reality of their application in attempting to deter and remedy abusive litigation tactics so that public trust in the legal system can be promoted.

ORGANIZATIONAL EXIT: COMMUNICATING DISSENT IN THE WORKPLACE
by Virginia Nardi
West Virginia University, USA

In America, the current organizational environment is ripe with change. A large number of Americans are leaving the workforce and entering retirement. In their place, a younger generation, known as the Millennials, are entering the workforce. During this time, organizations will be preparing to both lose current and gain new employees. This process of change can have short term and long term effects on members of the organization and the organization as a whole. Organizational exit, which refers to the process by which current members of an organization prepare to leave their organization (Davis & Myers, 2012), will become an invaluable area of study during this time. Specifically, this literature review focuses on “planned exit,” which is an area of organizational exit study in which the time of departure from the organization is predetermined. During this process it is not uncommon for pent up feelings to be released through a wide variety of behaviors. Often organizational members engage in organizational dissent, which is the process of the employee expressing their feelings of disagreement or contradiction to organizational policies and practices (Kassing, 1997). Communicative behaviors which play an interesting role in communicating dissent during organizational exit include verbal aggressiveness and gossip. These behaviors will be discussed as they affect the organization as a whole, and the individual organizational members during the process of organizational exit, and after that process has ended.
Pre-liberalisation era of India is marked by presence of trade unions that helped the workers in larger units to enjoy various benefits. Whilst the workers in smaller units worked on lower wages, they were forced to live in conditions of squalor. This resulted in a significant gap between these two classes of workers. Hence the conditions of conflict and aggression were rarely present among these different classes of employees. However the importance of labour unions diminished in the era of globalisation. Companies started paying three times salary to a highly skilled employee instead of employing three employees in the workplace. In addition to this, a marked increase in off shoring of backend operations in the Information Technology and other sectors by Western organizations attracted the lowest paid employees and thus provided a common platform for both less paid and highly paid employees to work together. Currently the ratio of earnings of the highest paid to the lowest paid is estimated to be well over 800:1. These income disparities coupled with the changes after liberalisation i.e. simultaneous existence of employees belonging to different cultures and social classes, holding dissimilar attitudes, personalities and perceptions led to an increase in intercultural interactions which further resulted in possibilities of misunderstanding and clashes between co-workers coming from diverse backgrounds. One can safely assume that these clashes may have had a bearing in intercultural interactions which further resulted in possibilities of misunderstanding and clashes between co-workers coming from diverse backgrounds. One can safely assume that these clashes may have had a bearing on deviance in the workplace. These clashes and deviant behaviour in addition to disrupting the flow of work often result in huge costs for organizations in terms of resolution, employee turnover and the like. Social tensions could deteriorate to a point where it disrupts the growth process. Diversity at the workplace, in addition to resulting in tensions in the workplace also leads to significant benefits for the organization. These benefits include innovative ideas, improved quality at reduced cost, integrated processes, and brand image all of which contributed to an increase in revenue for organizations. A careful and thorough review of literature revealed that the disadvantages of diversity and the possibility of deviance in the workplace, even though seemingly evident, remain largely unexplored. This paper begins with an exploration into the factors affecting aggression and conflict in workplaces with high levels of diversity, especially in regions where backend office operations have been off-shored. This is followed by an exploration into the possible connection between intercultural misunderstandings, resultant conflict and likely aggression, and deviance in highly diverse workplaces. The discussion then moves on to specific examples from India that highlights and support the above mentioned assumptions and claims. The paper ends with a discussion on strategies that can be adopted to manage diversity in ways that can help reduce its impact on conflict, aggression, and deviance in the workplace.

In order to communicate one must have the capacity to affect and be affected (agency). Put differently, the contexts and modes of communication are each characterized not only by the usual suspects—number of interlocutors, the nature of mediation, the level of “feedback” between communicators and audiences—but also, more importantly, by the circulation of vulnerability and the particular forms it takes. This paper draws on the work of Judith Butler to explore the proposition that vulnerability’s circulation and formation are inherent to communication. Drawing on Excitable Speech, Giving An Account of Oneself, and Precarious Life, this paper takes up the task of developing an account both of the role of vulnerability in the performance of communication and its significance for the constitution of oneself and that self’s responsibilities for others.

To elaborate these theoretical concerns and their stakes, this paper examines graffiti as a particular form of urban communication. The use of the term dates from 19th century descriptions of drawings and writings scratched into the walls of ancient Egyptian and Roman ruins. But graffiti remains a ubiquitous feature of Western urban life. Whether it appears on a bathroom stall or on the side of a bus, whether it is categorized as “political” or simply as “tagging”, whether it is the work of an inner-city gang member marking his territory or of a “street artist” like Banksy critiquing modern surveillance—graffiti is by definition a deviant, illicit activity. While graffiti has been studied from numerous disciplinary perspectives, the majority of this scholarship almost exclusively focuses on graffiti as representation: as particular instances of written or visual communication of specific messages. This paper explores graffiti’s significance to urban everyday life through an analysis of examples taken from a number of locations in the US, the Caribbean, Europe, and South Africa. The goal is not to universalize the cultural differences in graffiti’s practice, but rather to consider its importance as a global “imagination” practice (Appadurai). Nor is the emphasis on the content, characteristics or qualities of particular images or messages. Rather, this paper views graffiti as cultural performance— as a culturally-marked, embodied, tendentious, and recognizable “doing.” Rather than focusing on its “presence” or the ways graffiti “mediates” time and space, the emphasis in this paper is on the constitution of a movement-duration unique to this performance. And rather than focusing on the intentions of its creators—to assert individual identity, mark territory, engage in political or aesthetic speech—this paper emphasizes the agency of those performances and the ways they exploit the vulnerability inherent in contemporary forms of urban mobility. After exploring the implications of this theoretical shift, this paper considers the ethical questions which arise—not simply about the ethics of graffiti, but about the ethical situation presented by particular formations of vulnerability in urban life.
More than fifteen years after the end of the Yugoslav wars of secession, competing narratives of the 1995 Srebrenica massacre have been at the forefront of divisive ethno-nationalist discourse on all sides. According to witnesses and survivors, Serb forces killed 8,000 men and displaced 30,000 people to “ethnically cleanse” Srebrenica of Bosniaks. Still, many Serbs deny Serbian culpability, claiming themselves as Srebrenica’s true victims. Fortunately, the context to shape the present through the past has not only been the nationalists’ domain. Grassroots organizations are visually engaging public space to foster inter-ethnic consubstantiality through more expansive conceptions of history and contemporary identity.

In 2005, the 10th anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre, Belgrade’s Youth Initiative for Human Rights (yiHR) displayed photographs of Srebrenica’s mass graves and the words See, Know, Remember – Srebrenica on 36 billboards around the city. The campaign challenged the culture of denial in Serbia with evidence of Srebrenica’s crimes, igniting controversy in the Serbian press and public. Soon after they were erected the reaction of the vandals, press, and public suggest that vernacular visual tactics can force a space for previously invisible and viable. The reaction to yiHR’s billboards and their defacement imply that vernacular visual tactics can challenge dominant historical and political paradigms. Had the nationalist vandals not viewed the billboards as a threat, they wouldn’t have needed to deface them. The combination of signs and symbols that receive different meanings by different readers, but within the framework of a given social and cultural context.

Through a rhetorical analysis, informed by visual semiotics, this essay critically considers the competing images in the 2005 yiHR case as vernacular visual tactics. It asserts how such tactics can affect public consciousness in post-conflict contexts over history and identity. Such images do more than simply bear witness to historical events; they are “epiphanic, forcing a psychic transformation of the citizenry by rupturing imagined conceptions of identity” (Johnson, 2007, p. 8). They act as a sort of mnemonic frame in the present through which stories of the past can be activated and interpreted in the light of contemporary events. They can also play a role in helping to establish moral accountability (Zelizer, 2002). Their use in public space offers possibilities for transcending the essentialized subjectivities upon which intractable conflict is predicated.