Eng 102 Unit 3: Analysis using four articles  
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Note: Details about this assignment are in your handout packet and are also posted at this website. As this is a writing approach quite different from anything you’ve likely written before, I strongly urge you to look these papers over carefully before beginning to write your own essay.

Essay 1

In this paper, note how the student blends his summary with his analytical points. Also note how he compares each editorial with the others he discusses.

Violence in Video Games

violence has become a central theme within the gaming community. Violent games, such as Grand Theft Auto, have sold more than six million copies worldwide (Sales). Players of Grand Theft Auto have the ability to involve themselves in prostitution, gun violence, gang violence and a variety of other aggressive actions. This game, however, is only one of many popular violent video games currently on the market (Sales). With the rise of violence in the gaming world, many adults question how these games can influence the behavior of children. In the following analysis of four editorials, four authors share their conclusions on this pertinent question. The authors do not entirely agree with each other, and their persuasive techniques are not always effective.

In the first editorial, journalist Wendy Stogner uses her experience as a mother to persuade her readers. Her view suggests that while video game violence may be one contributing factor, it is not the lone cause of violent behavior. She further explains that if a child becomes aggressive from playing a game, the root of the problem more likely comes from a different source. To summarize her point, Stogner ends her editorial by stating that, “Games are just the current scapegoat for violence in children” (Stogner).

Her opening paragraph establishes its point immediately, suggesting that video games are everywhere, and that many of them contain violence. The paragraph flows easily, ending with her thesis, that questions if exposure to violence in video games increases violent behavior in children. While she has no statistical evidence to support her claims, she does use her experience with her own children to attempt to validate her conclusions. This, however, can be seen as a logical fallacy. Her conclusion, which is in regard to a general population of children, is only supported by her observance of her own three children.
Like many hasty generalizations, her conclusion is based on too little evidence. Her inability to provide proper proof to substantiate her assertions should invalidate her editorial. However, her article flowed well, had no grammatical errors and her sentence structure was perfect. While she provided no actual proof for her thesis, Stogner’s strong writing skills may effectively allow readers to accept her points without proper critical analysis.

The second editorial by Eric Rhem, a self proclaimed journalist, was thoroughly ineffective. The article contradicted itself numerous times, made claims that lacked adequate support and gave only examples to aid the opposing view. The conclusion, however unsupported, stated that violent video games do not promote violent behavior.

The writer begins his piece by appealing to the readers imagination. “Consider this,” the article begins, “a child plays the game Grand theft Auto. He then proceeds to go out and steal a car….he is only 8 years old” (Rhem). The writer immediately places blame upon the child’s parents and then makes his first unsubstantiated claim; “an eight year old…takes the ideas in the game and uses them in the real world, because he cannot differentiate between reality and the game” (Rhem). Further, in the second paragraph, the writer claims that this was a real event in Ohio. The writer, however, does not give a source for the reader to research the event, nor does he give any support in his psychological evaluation of eight year old's. To add further discredit to the editorial, the second paragraph ends by asserting that, “…many recent studies are concluding that video games don’t promote violence, and in fact can help people with various problems” (Rhem). The example of the eight year old stealing a car contradicts this statement and again the writer makes a claim and gives no information to support it. By the end of the editorial, Rhem no longer placed blame on the parents but was unsure of who was to blame.

The third editorial from an online newspaper was based on several studies and gave a different view then the first two columns. The author’s view was that violence in video games does promote violent behavior in children (Video). In the opening paragraph, the writer reveals that a study, sponsored by Iowa State University’s Center for the Study of Violence, had been completed. The study observed the effects of violent video games on American children. The study measured the aggression of children ages 9-12 over a 3-6 month period. The study was linked to two other similar studies that were completed in Japan (Video). These two studies observed more then 1,200 children ranging from ages 12-18. The studies found that, “exposure to violent video games was a causal risk factor for aggression and violence in the studied children” (Video).

This editorial was very effective for a number of reasons. The writer named the psychologists, mostly university professors, who performed the study, quoted the psychologists on their conclusions of the studies, and used statistical information to support their claim. The highly informative nature of this
column served to promote its view very persuasively.

The fourth editorial by Dr. Kevin Donnelly, an education consultant, takes a different approach towards the negative impact of video game violence. Not only does Donnelly suggest that violent video games promote violent behavior, he also suggests that they have other negative impacts as well. These negative impacts include both an inability to concentrate and a learned lack of patience. Additionally, there can be an increase in overweight children and a problem with children using video games as a replacement for literature (Donnelly).

One reason that this item is much different then the other three is that Donnelly gives a fair amount of space to the opposing view. In one section, a list of the benefits of video games is mentioned. Some benefits include that games can teach hand-eye coordination, decision-making and an understanding that actions have consequences. However, Donnelly suggests that the benefits do not outweigh the consequences. In one paragraph he argues from a point made by the American Psychological Association: “the reality is that violent video games are dangerous. Research suggests that games promote aggressive behavior and make violence more acceptable.” In the later part of his article, he compares literature to video games. He states that reading requires discipline and patience and that video games promote a self centered, egotistical view of the world (Donnelly).

This editorial was persuasive for reasons that the other articles were not. Dr. Donnelly wrote about benefits for both sides of the issue giving the reader the idea that he weighed the pros and cons equally. He also has more authority on the subject allowing his opinion to be more universally accepted.

Considering the writers methods of persuasion, some were more effective then others. As shown by the first two editorials, the information presented is not the only tool used to persuade an audience. The writing skills of the author can clue a reader in to the adequacy of the editorial. In the last two articles, the most persuasive techniques were used. The writers used evidence and statistics to support their assertions. Additionally, they provided the opinions of authoritative experts to add strength to their arguments.

WORKS CITED

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Essay 2. In this paper, see how this student integrated his analytical points into his first summary as he went along. So the reader understands what points he is making as we're being told what his editorial had to say. Compare with his second analysis where he doesn't do such a good job at explaining what the editorial contained. Another area this student could have improved is including more examples. For example, he praised one writer for his use of "primary sources."
But we don't know what these are. In the second analysis, he discusses emotional appeals and strong words. But he doesn't quote any so we don't understand the student writer's points. So as you read this paper, think about what questions come to your mind. In your paper, answer such questions for your readers.

Zimbabwe Editorials

In the four editorials about the upcoming election in Zimbabwe, the authors all held a similar position. Each deal with Robert Mugabe, the current president of Zimbabwe, who has fixed Zimbabwe's "democratic" elections in the past and is now resorting to the same practices of intimidation and oppression to keep his ZANU- PF party as the controlling power in the country. The authors attempt to persuade the reader that the outside pressure placed on Mugabe to allow a free election has not been sufficient and more intervention is needed to alleviate the misery Mugabe has inflicted on his people. All four writers use a variety of techniques to convey their ideas to the reader. These techniques vary widely based on the different styles and formats of the authors, but throughout all four columns, there are methods that are compelling as well as those less effective.

Michael Booth of the New York Times starts out his editorial by setting a scene in which two political parties are battling for the presidency of their country as the election comes down to the wire. He then interviews a member of Parliament who complains about unethical practices Mugabe has committed against his party. The statesman claims that his election officers are being barred from polling places. This brings Booth to his thesis which states that the election in Zimbabwe is rigged to favor those in power. He goes on to support his thesis with statistics and claims from eyewitness accounts and primary sources. Another technique Booth uses throughout his editorial is to present Mugabe's public relation attempts and then demonstrate Mugabe's insincerity. He mentions that Mugabe agreed to follow fair election guidelines and also invited hundreds of foreign officials to observe the election. The writer immediately follows this mention with facts that demonstrate that Mugabe is not following the guidelines and says the election monitors were let into Zimbabwe only belatedly. This technique pops up again in the very next paragraph when Booth says, "Independent election monitors and international agencies contend - and the government denies - that food has been widely used as a political weapon."(Booth) He goes on to explain that it has been discovered residents cannot buy corn unless they have a ZANU-PF party card. Booth's column is in the classic format of an introduction that grabs the reader, a thesis statement, and support for the thesis with logic and facts from reputable sources.

The second editorial is from the Washington Post, and the author uses a very different format from the first. He begins with a strongly worded thesis as the opening sentence in the editorial but then does nothing but hammer the reader with emotional appeals and a few unsupported facts that the reader may accept because of the force with which they are presented. The author uses
a strong technique of presenting arguments from the opposing viewpoint and then smashing them to pieces. He does this when he says, "Mugabe apologists cloak their support of him in terms like liberator during Zimbabwe's apartheid era. That support, however, is unjustified given Mr. Mugabe's moves to oppress the very people he purports to have liberated." (Schell)

This column is short but powerfully worded and leaves a lasting impression in the reader's mind. However, the author could have done a better job by supporting his claims with stronger backing.

The third editorial in the Chicago Tribune by Robert Buchan grabs the reader's attention with a strong title: "Starving the voters is how Mugabe has rigged the election." Buchan starts his editorial with the strongest thesis of all four columns. "With a parliamentary election set for Thursday, Zimbabwe President, Robert Mugabe, has found a way to reach the voters: starve them to death." (Buchan) This thesis is strong because it starts out slow, makes the reader ask himself a question, and then nails him with a blunt and horrific claim. The reader asks himself how does Mugabe reach the voters? Then Buchan hits the reader with the horrific statement "starve them to death." Did he just say STARVE them? The author has captured the reader's attention.

Buchan supports his claims not with statistical facts, but by using different quotes from officials in the region. When drawn together, these quotes form a very unfavorable impression of Mugabe and his "regime." Buchan's main tactic is description. He describes a nation in turmoil where nearly 3 million people may starve to death. He also describes a people calling out desperately for help. He describes their calls and how they are either falling on deaf ears or being silenced by Mugabe and his thugs.

The fourth editorial by Joe Ambler of the Boston Globe takes a completely different approach from any of the previous articles. He interviewed an official who held a very high position, propaganda chief, in Mugabe's party just a month ago in which Moyo denounced the ZANU-PF party. Ambler used multiple quotes that depict Mugabe as a paranoid madman and charges his party with being a "tribal clique with no respect for democracy." (Ambler) Since he relies heavily on Moyo's quotes, one would expect Ambler to give some background on him showing that he is a reputable source, but Ambler does not. This is his main weakness. Moyo lied for Mugabe as his propaganda chief for years. Why wouldn't he lie in the same manner to attack the party from which he was just expelled? Even so, Ambler organized Moyo's quotes into a very scathing attack against Mugabe and his party.

When all four editorials were compared, the most effective methods seem to be a good introduction that grabs the reader's attention, a strongly worded thesis, and strong support that constantly refers back to the thesis. The most common mistakes the authors made were not showing the validity of their
support. All four authors conclude with a vague statement or quote. These "one-liner" conclusions are well crafted and sum up the main point of the editorial for the reader to digest one more time. The authors' messages are fairly short, use simple wording, and hit you with point after point about how horrible Mugabe's regime is and how nothing has been done. With the exception of the interview editorial, the authors bring the message to the reader like a tornado. They tell the reader what they are about to tell him in their thesis. Then they slam the message into our heads with point after point. Then as quickly as the storm came, it leaves with a short statement such as, "If Mugabe is left unchecked, there is no telling how far he will go."(Buchan) It only takes about two to three minutes to read the editorials but they leave lasting impressions.

("Works Cited" deleted here. All author names have been changed.)