

Introduction

Gun control and violence has been a growing topic in the United States as the number of shootings continues to grow. Since the beginning of 2019 to May 1st, 2019 there have been a total of 121 shootings in the United States. From January 1st to May 1st there are 121 days; in these 121 days there were 121 shootings, which means, on average, there was a shooting a day in America (*Mass Shooting Tracker*). Although this statistic makes the answer appear to be simple, an issue arises because of the American citizens' right to keep and bear arms. Some Americans fear that enacting gun control will infringe on their Second Amendment Right. America is now split into two polarized groups causing the issue to become extremely controversial. Some believe gun control is needed due to the high number of shootings and deaths that have occurred because of gun violence, while others do not want to see their right to bear arms taken away. As the United States is stuck in a stalemate regarding this topic, urgency for discussion and action continues to grow as the number of violent, gun-related events continue to rise.

Artifact Description

This artifact is an example of one side of the gun control argument, it is a short Instagram video edit that was made by Stefanie an Instagram user called @steffisedits. The main focus of this artifact brings awareness to this controversial topic of the need for gun control legislation, and the content in this video reinforces this one side of the argument. It is apparent that the author's own personal opinion perseveres through the rest of the content. This video clip supports the group that believes the nation needs more gun control and wants to end gun violence. This is most obviously illustrated through the hashtag that she uses as a caption,

“#endgunviolence”. The author’s Instagram page has a total of 72,500 followers who would be considered the targeted audience of this video. However, because her account is public every Instagram user has the opportunity to view this video. 71% of Instagram users are under the age of 35 so the audience would be mostly young people (Clarke). The video did reach more than just her account audience since the video has over 100,000 views in total. Overall, because the video aims to raise awareness about gun control and violence in America, its audience could be any citizens of the United States who are or have been affected by this current issue.

The message of this artifact is conveyed through video clips, photographs, and music/audio. These items are edited together into one larger video with a common theme, gun control in America. One of the most noticeable techniques the author uses to convey her message is how the speed of the video changes. For example, when public figures such as President Donald Trump, David Hogg, and Emma Gonzales are speaking, the music is slow-paced and the video clip appears for a longer amount of time on the screen. However, this changes when the clips of protests shootings, and music videos are shown. During this portion of the video, the music becomes more intense, louder, and pictures move across the screen at a faster pace. The music plays in the background of the video clips and photographs that are being shown on the screen, which are edited together to follow the fast pace of the music. The slower pace of the speaking portion allows the audience to focus and take in the messages being said by the speakers, while the faster pace helps convey a message of intensity and importance while the photographs and videos are being shown.

This video is connected to the current movement for gun control that is being spotlighted by American politicians and activists. It contributes to this movement by visually portraying the

view of one side, the side that is currently fighting for more active gun control. By creating this Instagram video edit, the author also contributes to this movement by utilizing the power of social media in order to reach a larger-scaled audience and spread her viewpoint on the controversial topic to more people. Posting it to Instagram also allowed for people from both sides of the issue to start conversations about it in the comments. Two of the main videos that feature David Hogg and Emma Gonzales are also from the March For Our Lives movement. This movement began after a shooting occurred in Parkland, Florida on February 14th, 2018. After the shooting, surviving students organized the March For Our Lives movement in hopes of pushing government leaders to enact change and enforce gun control. By including this in the video, the author is contributing to the larger gun control movement as well as promoting the March For Our Lives movement.

Critical Analysis of the Artifact

The music playing throughout the video stands out because, without it, the message would fall flat. As stated previously, the music is directly tied to the pacing of the video. The slower music helps us focus when there is a clip of a speaker, while the fast-paced music helps show the intensity of the movement. The song that plays in this edit is called “Sick Boy” by the Chainsmokers. As the author intends, the three short video segments are also a prominent portion of the clip. It is obvious that these are the parts that she wants the audience to recognize and remember because of their significance to the movement.

After further analysis, it appears the author utilizes many different styles and techniques in order to purposefully convey the main message. The message itself is a very simple one, the author is saying gun violence must end. However, the way the message is communicated is

complex due to the combination of video clips, photos, and music. Furthermore, the video is complex due to the choreographed movements of the photos to the pace of the background music. This brings a sense of rhythm to the video. The video has a lot of content, there is not any repetition of images. The only repetition comes from the background music and the recurring lyrics that say, "Feed yourself with my life's work How many likes is my life worth?" and "I am from the East side of America..." and "I am on the West side of America..."(The Chainsmokers). The artifact does not include any types of humor. Instead, it utilizes both a factual and informational style. In order to persuade people to her side, the author includes graphic visual clips from the aftermath of actual shooting events that occurred. Other photos include scenes of actual protests, and videos of real movements. There are historical and factual events that support the argument for gun control. Overall, the purpose of the video is to spread awareness and provide information to the audience in hopes of recruiting more supporters to end gun violence.

The most prominent form of language in the clip, besides the three short videos featuring President Trump, David Hogg, and Emma Gonzales, is the background music. The lyrics mention the East and West sides of America which symbolizes the two distinct groups concerned with gun control. Another symbolic factor is that at the very beginning of the video the author includes a short segment of President Trump talking about American's right to bear arms. The clip of President Trump and former President Obama are in black and white, while the rest of the video is in color. The author appears to highlight key lawmakers, with black and white. The United States President has the ultimate authority and power to initiate a change in gun control policy, however they do not use their position to make needed change. The beginning of the

video feels dark. The author views Trump's side as wrong and her own side as the right; again this reinforces the idea that our society has two polarized sides to the gun control argument. One short segment features a man shooting another man in the back of the head. Upon further investigation, it was discovered this video clip came from a music video from the song, "This is America" by Childish Gambino. By including this clip in the edit, the author is symbolizing how gun violence is further enforced through everyday American media. The editor included this scene to invoke emotion from the audience, and to show gun control and race issues are still a prominent issue today. This controversial video reached millions of people through the use of social media.

The complexity of how the message is communicated both facilitates and obscures the purpose. It facilitates it because it shows the audience many examples of gun violence but at the same time obscures it because the images are moving so quickly that it is hard to keep up with. But by choreographing the photos to the beat of the song and having them move across the screen quickly, the urgency of the message is reinforced. The symbolism facilitates the purpose because the video is trying to show the audience that this topic is important and gun violence needs to end. Because the music video is a symbol of how gun violence is influenced by the media it also brings awareness to how gun violence is a problem buried deep among the roots of society. Due to the controversial topic being discussed, any type of humor would have obscured the purpose of the video. By utilizing both facts and information, the author was able to reinforce the message as being important and relevant.

When critically analyzing this artifact, it is important to take into consideration how audiences would react to it, more specifically, which audiences would react positively and which

would react negatively. Since the video is based on a highly controversial and polarizing topic in America, the reactions are going to be either very positive or very negative. The audience that will react positively to this artifact is going to be from people who agree with the author. More specifically, these are the people who want the country to have more restrictive gun laws in place to prevent gun violence and mass shootings. On the other hand, the audience that will react negatively to this artifact are people who oppose the author's point of view. In this case, these people want to keep their Second Amendment right to own guns to protect themselves. Both sides of the movement will react to this artifact differently from one another.

The main social value that is shown throughout the video is the concern of safety. Guns, more specifically dangerous people with guns, cause a threat to every person's right to safety. Currently, in the United States, an adult can obtain a gun quickly and with ease. Since these guns are so quickly accessible, they can get into the hands of the wrong people. This is exactly what the March For Our Lives movement is trying to prevent from happening to more people. The kids in charge of this movement know first hand of the harm that guns can cause since they themselves lived through a shooting. The larger gun control movement as a whole values the safety of everyone, which relates directly to the message the artifact is trying to promote.

Overall, the impact of this artifact is emotional and inspiring. Intense photographs from school shootings showing families and friends reuniting, and people crying at the graves of lives taken by gun violence spark emotions of sadness and regret. The artifact makes the audience feel upset. How can anyone let tragic events like these happen? The photographs and videos of the protests and March For Our Lives movement creates feelings of hope and inspiration. It gives

hope to the people who want gun violence to end. It is inspiring to see a group of young people lead a large movement in the country, no matter which side of the movement you are on.

Conclusion

The research we conducted early this semester (Project 2) on how students communicate on campus was quantitative focused, using statistics and figures to determine the behavior of students on campus; broken down by age groups. The research assignment we completed on this artifact about gun control is mostly qualitative. Our analysis approach is based on language and content, rather than numbers to understand human behavior. However, we did incorporate some statistical facts and figures from some additional research we conducted (TREADWELL).

The artifact shows how our society is divided between gun control and gun rights. It brings awareness to a cause, for people to take immediate action for gun control legislation. The presentation of the argument, in the artifact, is very persuasive and energizes a call to action. The lack of gun laws and regulations has impacted our everyday lives in our society here in America. Our youth and young adults, continue to fall victim to gun violence today. Mass shootings continue to occur at our schools, churches and other venues around the country. This video exposes the fact that our society desperately needs some form of gun control legislation from our lawmakers. Americans are being violently killed, terrorized, or harmed on a regular basis, from gun violence, and mass shootings while our lawmakers do nothing to address or help prevent these senseless, horrendous acts of terror. In closing, this artifact exposes the fact that many lives are lost or will continue to be impacted due to the lack of regulations. Our lawmakers refuse to take some sort of action because of the American Second Amendment right to bear arms. The

longer our society waits to solve this problem, the more lives will be lost or affected unless there is a movement by the people, as a whole, who demand action. Until then, it appears this matter will go on unaddressed.

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