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ENC 1102

Annotated Bibliography

Boissat, Laure, Laura Thomas-Walters, and Diogo Veríssimo. "Nature Documentaries as Catalysts for Change: Mapping out the 'Blackfish Effect.'", September 28 2021, *People and nature*, <https://doi.org/10.1002/pan3.10258>.

Boissat, Thomas-Walters, and Veríssimo explore how the documentary *Blackfish* influenced public perception and policy regarding the captivity of orcas. The authors address a gap in empirical data on the social impact of environmental documentaries by using *Blackfish* as a case study to measure real-world behavioral and policy change. They situate their research within broader discussions of media-driven activism, referencing previous studies on environmental communication, psychology, and public engagement. Using surveys and social media analysis, the authors measure how audiences' emotions and attitudes change before and after viewing the documentary, revealing that emotionally charged rhetoric, especially fear, mobilizes collective activism and policy advocacy. This article is credible because it is peer-reviewed and written by experts in conservation psychology and media impact. It provides measurable evidence that emotional appeals, particularly fear, can lead to real-world activism

and corporate reform. This study directly supports my research by connecting rhetorical emotion to social impact, offering data that links media persuasion to tangible environmental change.

McCormack, Christopher M., Jennifer K. Martin, and Kathryn J. H. Williams, “The Full Story: Understanding How Films Affect Environmental Change through the Lens of Narrative Persuasion.”, *People and Nature*, October 6 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1002/pan3.10259>

McCormack, Martin, and Williams examine how narrative structures in environmental documentaries shape attitudes and motivate behavioral change. The authors position their study within the fields of environmental communication and storytelling psychology, citing theories such as narrative transportation and affect theory. Through a literature review and content analysis of multiple documentaries, including *Blackfish*, they identify how emotional arcs, tension, and resolution foster empathy and influence persuasion. Their findings show that fear-based tension enhances engagement when followed by a hopeful resolution, creating a sense of empowerment that drives viewers to act. This article is credible because it was published in a peer-reviewed journal and written by environmental communication scholars. It complements Boissat et al.’s work by focusing on the narrative mechanics of fear rather than its social outcomes. This source strengthens my research by explaining how specific storytelling techniques, such as balancing fear with hope enhance rhetorical effectiveness in environmental media.

Coyle, Jake, "Review: Put Down That Phone, Urges Doc 'The Social Dilemma.'", *AP News*, December 23 2014, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17524032.2014.993415>

In this journalistic review of *The Social Dilemma*, Coyle analyzes how the film uses fear-based rhetoric to critique social media addiction. He describes the documentary's dystopian tone and apocalyptic imagery, noting how its alarmist style provokes anxiety about technology's impact on society. Rather than relying on formal data, the article provides a journalistic perspective on public reception, illustrating how fear is used as a persuasive emotional tool in the documentary. Although not peer-reviewed, this review is credible because it is published by AP News, a respected media organization. It contributes valuable insight into audience perception and demonstrates how fear resonates with general viewers. This article helps bridge academic analyses of emotional persuasion with public interpretation, offering context for how mainstream audiences respond to fear-based rhetoric in social issue documentaries.

Arendt, Florian, and Jörg Matthes, "Nature Documentaries, Connectedness to Nature, and Pro-Environmental Behavior.", *Environmental Communication*, September 8 2020, https://apnews.com/article/technology-media-social-media-film-reviews-71faa6a6f6aefc216895770e92c05f73?utm_source.com

Arendt and Matthes investigate whether nature documentaries increase emotional connection to nature and promote pro-environmental behavior. Their research addresses a lack of long-term studies on emotional engagement and behavioral outcomes. Using quantitative methods, specifically pre- and post-viewing surveys, they measure emotional responses and intentions to act. They find that fear and sadness can heighten connection to nature, but only

when paired with hope or a sense of agency. This article is credible and peer-reviewed, written by leading scholars in communication studies. It provides empirical data that explains how emotional appeals influence pro-environmental motivation. Compared to other sources, this one broadens the scope by offering generalizable evidence on emotion's effectiveness, reinforcing that fear alone is not sufficient, and it must be balanced with constructive emotion to achieve lasting change.

Staff Writer, "Why You Should Watch 'The Social Dilemma.'", *The Blue & Gold*, October 30 2020, https://maristbluegold.com/1136/opinion/why-you-should-watch-the-social-dilemma/?utm_source

This opinion piece written for a student audience encourages viewers to watch *The Social Dilemma*, describing it as a powerful warning about the dangers of social media. The author summarizes the film's arguments and focuses on its emotional tone, noting that fear is central to its impact. The article participates in broader discussions about digital ethics, data privacy, and mental health, reflecting how younger audiences interpret the film's fear-based messaging. Although not scholarly, this piece is useful because it provides insight into generational perspectives on emotional persuasion. It complements Coyle's professional review by adding a more personal and age-specific response, illustrating how fear rhetoric resonates with different audience demographics. This perspective expands my understanding of how emotional rhetoric functions across varied social contexts.

McSweeney, Katie, and Simon Stephens, "The Use of Fear Appeals to Communicate Public Health Messages." *Irish Business Journal*, January 1 2013, <https://doi.org/10.61862/1649-7120.1030>

McSweeney and Stephens examine how fear appeals function as persuasive strategies within public health communication, analyzing when and why fear effectively motivates behavioral change. The authors review psychological theories of fear-based persuasion and evaluate empirical studies on the conditions that make fear appeals impactful, such as message credibility, perceived severity, and self-efficacy. Although the article focuses on public health campaigns, its findings offer valuable insight into the mechanics of fear as a rhetorical device across media forms. This source is credible because it is peer-reviewed and published by a university-affiliated journal. It strengthens my research by providing a theoretical framework for understanding how fear influences audience attitudes and actions, concepts that can be applied to the rhetorical and visual strategies used in documentaries like *Blackfish* and *The Social Dilemma*.

Reflection

Finding and analyzing my six sources was both challenging and rewarding. Locating peer-reviewed articles on the intersection of emotion, rhetoric, and documentary. Once I identified credible scholarly sources, their findings complemented one another, especially those in *People and Nature*. This process helped me understand how emotional persuasion, particularly fear, can be studied from both psychological and communicative frameworks. I am confident in the credibility and diversity of my sources. The peer-reviewed articles provide theoretical and empirical grounding, while journalistic and opinion pieces contribute to real-world audience perspectives. Together, they create a balanced understanding of how fear functions as a persuasive device in documentary storytelling. Moving forward, I hope to explore additional

research specifically on The Social Dilemma to strengthen the comparative dimension of my project. Overall, this assignment deepened my understanding of credibility evaluation, rhetorical analysis, and the relationship between emotional rhetoric and social impact.