

Maria Eronen, PhD student
University of Vaasa,
Department of Communication Studies,
m85327@student.uvasa.fi

Dispositional Evaluation in Justification and Condemnation of Violent Behavior – The Case of Celebrities

By behaving appropriately or inappropriately celebrities produce material for audience members' moral considerations. Based on a drama-appreciation theory first introduced by Aristotle and theoretically and empirically revised by Zillmann, attitudes towards characters facing fortunes or misfortunes have a central role in regarding outcomes as deserved or undeserved by the characters. When characters are liked, their fortunes seem right and misfortunes wrong, while negative affective dispositions (negative attitudes towards characters) cause counter-empathic reactions.

The aim of this study is to discuss the role of dispositional evaluation (i.e. positive and negative evaluation of celebrities) in justifying and condemning factual violent behavior. As to the method, psychological perspective is applied to linguistic appraisal analysis. The research material consists of online discussions of Sharon Osbourne's and Megan Hauserman's "catfight". The online discussions taken into account stem from three Internet forums (The Sun, The Inquisitr, YouTube).

Taking into account both positions, celebrity as an object and celebrity as a subject of violent behavior, the role of dispositional evaluation in the evaluation of violent behavior can be clarified. The study suggests that dispositional evaluation and evaluation of violent behavior correspond to each other.