How Can Existing Theories of Psychology, Anthropology, Sociology and Semiotics Be Applied to Event Design in Terms of Predicting and Influencing Audience Behaviour?

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This research project was undertaken as part of course requirements for topic TOUR3104/5 Tourism Research Project and the research result provided should be read in that context. I certify that this research project does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief, incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

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1.0 Research Project Title:
Investigation of existing theories of Psychology, Anthropology, Sociology and Semiotics. Informs research into audience behaviour.

2.0 Introduction:
Predicting and influencing Audience Behaviour is an invaluable tool for an Event Designer. If we can predict and influence Audience Behaviour we can reduce incidents at Events including accidents, injury, criminal activity, medical incidents and even deaths. We can also increase audience enjoyment and the likelihood of optimal experience (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990).

Currently literature on Event Design is reasonably independent of the Social Sciences, but in recent times the disciplines of Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology and Semiotics have started to sneak into Event literature. The information has proved incredibly relevant but has been brief and relatively unexplored. The applications for this information is endless, and so this research project will endeavour to bring together these four disciplines to find out more about Audience Behaviour and consider applicable Event Design techniques.

This research will be of great use to the entire Events industry. It is also of use to law enforcement officials and emergency services who operate within Events, as it can reduce the need for their intervention, and help them to understand circumstances in which the audience are likely to respond in a negative way.

3.0 Aims & Objectives:
The purpose of this research project is to further explore these scientific disciplines through conducting a literature search in the four disciplines of Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology and Semiotics and selecting relevant material. This will explore theories that have already been considered in Event Literature but could benefit from further explanation, as well as considering theories that have not yet been applied to Event Design, but could provide insight. By leveraging this existing research in disciplines that have existing for far longer than Event Design literature,
this report will endeavour to provide incredibly relevant information about the motivation of audiences, how the human brain works, and how we can influence it to create a safer and more enjoyable event.

4.0 Research Questions

4.1 Main Research Question:
How can existing theories of Psychology, Anthropology, Sociology and Semiotics be applied to Event Design in terms of predicting and even influencing Audience Behaviour?

4.2 Research Sub Questions:
- What existing theories in the disciplines of Psychology, Anthropology, Sociology and Semiotics can be applied to Event Design?
- How do these theories help us to predict Audience Behaviour at Events?
- How could these theories be used when designing an event to influence Audience Behaviour?

5.0 Methodology

For this project, the ‘Interpretive social sciences’ paradigm will be used. This is because the Interpretive Social Sciences paradigm “considers the world is constituted of multiple realities” (Jennings, 2010) and “assumes an inductive approach to research” (Jennings, 2010). The interpretive Social Sciences paradigm attempts to explain phenomena and builds theories out of these generalisations (Jennings, 2010).

The project will use a qualitative methodology. The researcher will conduct a literature search in the areas of event literature, tourism literature, psychology, sociology, anthropology and semiotics. Relevant articles and texts will be selected and interpreted by the researcher to draw conclusions and answer the research
questions. An annotated bibliography will be produced, and from this the researcher will produce a discussion answering the research questions.

6.0 Discussion

Research into the four disciplines as well as existing Event Design and Tourism principles was extremely revealing in answering the research questions. By collaborating information across all four disciplines, answers as to how audience behaviour could be explained and influenced became apparent.

The first important thing for us to consider in Event Design is theories in Psychology regarding motivation. Motivation explains why an audience will attend an event, why they will behave in a certain manner and thus how we can influence their behaviour. In his discussion of motivation, Berridge (2007) discusses needs, and how audience members express choice by attending an event, even though it was designed by someone else. This is because the Event fulfils their needs. In looking at motivation to attend an event, a relevant concept is the tourism concept of ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors in that the ‘push’ factor is what is pushing us to go to an Event, but the ‘pull’ factor is what draws us to a specific event, based on it resonating with our desired identity or fulfilling our needs (Weaver & Lawton, 2006). Another relevant tourism concept is the concept of allocentrics and psychocentrics, in that allocentrics are drawn to risk and wish to experience new cultures, where psychocentrics are drawn to the familiar (Weaver & Lawton, 2006). This is similar to Freud’s bipolar theory, which states that there are two poles, one for people who seek out risk, and one for people who avoid risk, and that each of us gathers around one of these (Lipscombe, 2005). In understanding audience behaviour it is also important to consider Maslow’s five psychological motives, which are: to keep alive, to feel safe, to be social, to feel respected and to do work we like (Laird & Laird, 1967). It is important to understand this because all decisions made by humans are based on needs, people will always choose the option that most fulfils their needs. Thus, motivation can be understood and influenced through considering people’s basic needs, and understanding that a person will always make the choice that most fulfils their needs.
In the fields of Sociology and Anthropology, research gained insight into the social identity of both individuals and the community. We discovered that the two identities are interrelated, and that Events are critical to a person’s identity. Woodward and Ellsion (2010) discussed the manner in which humans form a sense of self and relationships with others based on forging and maintaining relationships with non-human things such as events and performances. Allen et al (2011) extends on this theory, stating that “people seek and embrace experiences that enrich their lives, and that resonate with their images of themselves and of their desired or imagined lifestyles”. Furthermore, in his article on risk-taking behaviour Lipscombe (2005) explains that risk-seeking is a desirable cultural trait which satisfies peoples desire for shared experience. Many authors also discussed the concept of an ‘imagined community’ (Carter, 2006) in that within cultural and social groups we “somehow feel or ‘imagine’ that we share something fundamental” (Carter, 2006). Within this ‘imagined community’ we are all ‘performing’ our culture, and all social events are actually a performance (Snow, 2010). Thus, through understanding the importance of the ‘imagined community’ we have insight into each person’s identity. In an Event situation this means that people belonging to the same imagined community are more likely to follow one another. Siokou (2002) discusses the passive nature of a shared consciousness at a Rave Party, discussing how peoples sense of connection to one another stops aggression and crime, creating a safe environment. Furthermore, Bessant & Watts (2002) discuss young people and their imagined community formed by bad press. Bessant & Watts (2002) discuss the attributes of this social group in that they are anti-authoritarian, so that if a performer or person “sticks it to the man” the community will engage with them, whereas if the Event or performer shows an authoritarian attitude the community will rebel against it. Thus, the importance of connecting to this community through making the event relevant to their social and cultural demographic is paramount, so that when one person behaves in a particular way, others of the community will follow suit. We can however, also see the dangers of the imagined community from an Event Design perspective, in that risk-taking is a desirable cultural trait, and so where one member of the community becomes frustrated or aggressive, others may do the same.

Now that we understand the concept of the imagined community and the likelihood of a chain reaction when an individual becomes aggressive, we can look into the
reasons that an individual may become aggressive at an Event, and seek to prevent it. Going back to motivation and needs, one of Maslow’s five psychological needs was ‘to feel safe’ (Laird & Laird, 1967). This need is particularly relevant in understanding aggression. From a sociological perspective, fear of crime results in either anti-social/avoidance behaviour, or sanctioning behaviour (Philips, 2004). Anti-social or avoidance behaviour tends to result in fear and disgust, whereas sanctioning behaviour in defence of the community results in anger. In Philips’s study, he found that 53% of people exhibited anger in a situation of fear of crime. From a psychological perspective, Freud’s life and death urges should be considered. This theory states that there are two dominant urges amongst humans: the life urge, which concentrates on preservation of race, and the death urge, which concentrates on preservation on self (Laird & Laird, 1967). The death urge often results in anger and aggression, and is more prevalent in men. This backs up Getz’s event design theory which states that inter-male aggression is extremely common (Getz, 2007). Aggression is also more likely to occur when it is hot because there are pheromones from sweat. These pheromones activate primal sexual instincts that may result in aggression (Gerrig & Zimbardo, 2005) Another common reason for aggression at Event’s is frustration. This can be for a number of reasons. For example, if sound is coming from an illogical place the brain becomes confused and, the audience will become frustrated (Gerrig & Zimbardo, 2005).

Furthermore, the human brain likes things to be organised, and when they are not it becomes frustrated and thus persons can become unfocused or aggressive. This is called perceptual organisation. The human brain groups objects that are close together or similar in pattern/colour/texture (Matthews, 2008). The human brain also seeks to find meaning in everything; humans create patterns out of stimuli intended to be meaningless (Sternberg & Smith, 1988). In considering perceptual organisation, cognitive maps are also of relevance, as they demonstrate the human brains preference for continuing lines over abrupt turns (Matthews, 2008). The human brain rejects randomness and prefers continuing lines and patterns and so this shows the importance of ensuring all elements of event design are logical and purposeful. If an Event Design has too much randomness the brain will become confused and frustrated, which could result in aggression, frustration and prohibition of optimal experience.
The concept of Optimal Experience can be seen across a wide array of psychology and Events literature, even if it is not articulated to be this phenomenon. Optimal experience can be defined as a state of deep concentration on the activity at hand so that the person “not only forgets his or her problems, but loses temporarily the awareness of self that in normal life often intrudes in consciousness” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008). In Event Design, Optimal Experience is the ultimate goal. It bonds together the imagined community, creating a safe environment and highly enjoyable experience for all. Siokou unknowingly documents this experience at Rave parties in her sociological study when she discusses a ‘vibe’, stating that, “it is through the sharing of emotion... that the disparate individuals can become bound into a crowd, a ‘single being’ in which a collective mind, albeit transitory, is tangible” (Malbon in Siokou, 2002). Respondents in her study stated that when they were in this state they felt ‘free’ and ‘safe’. As we have acknowledged, ‘to feel safe’ is one of Maslow’s Psychological Motives’ (Laird & Laird, 1967), and is a major influence in aggressive behaviour. Thus, if we can achieve ‘Optimal Experience’ we can decrease or even prevent aggression and violent behaviour through creating a safe environment.

The social sciences provide us with an array of clues as to how we can create Optimal Experience. The design of the Event must be logical and purposeful, because of perceptual organisation, in that the brain likes to find meaning and group things via patterns. Where the brain cannot find logical groupings or meaning it may become frustrated or distracted and thus optimal experience will be prevented (Sternberg & Smith, 1988). Furthermore, Gendron (2005) documents Optimal Experience in listening to music, stating that happier, faster tempos are more likely to result in activity in the pleasure centre of the brain. Semiotics also gives us clues to how we can create Optimal Experience, of particular interest is mirror neurons. The concept of mirror neurons states that when a human observes physical movement, the observers brain reacts as though it is making the same movement. The brain will experience the same emotions and may even create the same vocalisations and breathing patterns as the person performing the movement (Waisman, 2010). Mirror neurons employ a variety of senses, and so enhance the likelihood of Optimal Experience. In his tourism literature on interpretation Jamieson (2006) discusses
how when all five senses are engaged people become more engaged in the activity. Thus, to enhance the likelihood of Optimal Experience the Event Designer should ensure that the physical design of the Event is logical and purposeful, use fast “happy” tempos in any music that is being played and ensure that as many senses as possible are targeted in the audience. This includes considering mirror neurons and their ability to involve the audience in such an engaging way.

Environmental psychology is also relevant to creating Optimal Experience. Bowdin et al (2011) talk about controlling light, sound and flow to “compel the audience to completely focus on the stage”. Furthermore, Matthews (2008) discusses environmental psychology in regards to the cognitive process and idea generation. Matthews (2008) states that “the need for setting the right external environment conducive to facilitating the cognitive process is essential to successful idea generation”. The cognitive process plays a key role in creating Optimal Experience. Thus, in order to create Optimal Experience the external environment should be considered and where possible controlled to make the audience comfortable.

A field that is very easy to influence in audience behaviour is the Psychology school of Behaviourism. Behaviourism concentrates on stimuli and response. If stimuli is recognisable, the human brain responds to it in an almost machinistic way (Gauld & Shotter, 1977). This is because the appropriate response is a product of learning. For example, if the audience know from experience lights coming up means the beginning of a performance, the audience will recognise the stimuli and behave appropriately. This machinistic response can be influenced through ‘classical conditioning’ (Gauld & Shotter, 1977). ‘Classical conditioning’ is where we expose an audience to stimuli and show them the response. With repetition, the brain will quickly learn to recognise the stimuli. However, it is important to consider how different cultural and social groups and individuals may react to stimuli differently. Stimuli is basic, but peoples different perception involves higher-order cognition in the interpretation of sensory information. For this reason our response is filtered through the context of our knowledge of the world (Solso, 1979). Thus, in many cases stimuli and response is machinistic and can be influenced through classical conditioning, however different people and social/cultural groups may react
differently to stimuli as their response will be filtered through the context of their knowledge of the world.

Behaviourism is very much affected by Anthropology and our cultural group. This is because each culture has a set of cultural rules. These “rules are learned through symbolic communication and by inference from behaviour” (Spradley, 1972). For example, through observing the behaviour of others in Western culture, we know it is appropriate to stand when a bride enters at a wedding. Mental rules that are a part of our culture and have been taught to us since birth take a high priority in our brain, for example ‘do not kill’. Thus, if when creating an Event we formulate rules that conflict with these mental rules, the mental rule will take priority in the brain over the formulated rule.

Semiotics and use of Language also provides us with an insight into how we can influence audience behaviour. “the way we use language can affect such basic cognitive functions as perception, memory, judgement, reasoning and problem solving” (Gerrig & Zimbardo, 2005). It is important to use language you share with the audience or person so as not to alienate the audience. The sociological idea of ‘class’ comes into play here, as people tend to group together by socioeconomic status, and language varies amongst these groups. Thus, using appropriate language for the demographic and class is important so as not to alienate the audience. ‘Framing’ is also useful in influencing audience behaviour, as people will always choose the situation with the biggest gain or smallest loss for them. If we use language to ‘frame’ a situation to take advantage of this we can influence the audiences decision.

Alongside the words being used, there are a number of other factors in communication that have meaning attached to them. The audience will assign meaning to the loudness and tone of the voice, as well as the gestures used alongside the language. Gestures are “a critical link between our conceptualising capabilities and our linguistic ability” (Armstrong et al, 1995) and so the importance of using them to bridge gaps in linguistic knowledge is critical for the audience’s understanding. We learn gestures through experience and they are recognisable across all human beings, even small children (Waisman, 2010). Furthermore, if we
mimic the posture of our audience, they are more likely to identify with the performer. Thus, when communicating to an audience at an Event, the Event Designer should ensure appropriate use of language, loudness and tone of voice, framing, gestures and posture.

In Event Design, particularly in production, Semiotics can be employed to help create imaginary worlds. However, at all times it should be remembered that semiotics needs cooperation of “a sign, its object and its interpretent” (Eco, 1977). This means the signs must be recognisable within the context of the knowledge of the audience through considering their cultural and social groups. An ‘icon’ is a sign with a formal association or likeness to the object it represents. A ‘symbol’ has no physical similarity to the object it represents, and is learnt through experience and cultural/social conventions. An example of a symbol is the sign of a siren and an approaching fire engine, there is no physical similarity but it is a convention that people recognise. Symbols “not only reduce our dependence upon sensory experience; they also allow us to create worlds which have no empirical reality at all” (Spradley, 1972). Thus the use of symbols and icons in production can be extremely effective. In performances we have more scope to use semiotics because “the dramatic world is assumed by the spectator to exist before he knows anything about it” (Elam, 1980). In theatre a small table may represent a dining table. This is because in a performance situation the audience have already made the decision to suspend their disbelief. A restaurant can be created on stage through a handful of signs such as a table, some chairs, a sign and a person dressed in an apron (Elam, 1980). Thus, there is a great deal of scope in Production to use semiotics because the audience have already made the conscious decision to suspend their disbelief.

The consideration of semiotics in marketing and signage for Event Design is also useful. It is important that an icon shares the same properties as the object it represents, for example number of legs etc. When producing signage, it is also important to consider labour. People are more likely to read a picture than a sentence, because it is less labour intensive. Thus when producing signage, simplicity and use of icons should be used to increase the likelihood of the audience reading the sign.
7.0 Conclusion

Thus, research into the fields of Psychology, Anthropology, Sociology and Semiotics provided a great deal of insight into how audience behaviour could be influenced within Event Design. It was found that to understand people’s motivation, the Event Designer needs to simply consider their needs and understand that they will make the decision that fulfils their needs and has the greatest gain or smallest loss for them. One of these needs was the need to be social, and thus people formed ‘imagined communities’ with people they related to, creating social or cultural groups. These ‘communities’ tended to act as a whole, and individuals within the community would act in keeping with the rules of the community. This means that if one person in the community became aggressive the entire community would follow suit, and likewise within the collective consciousness of this community a safe environment could be created. From an Event Designer’s perspective, this means that by appealing to the collective needs of the community, as a group their behaviour can be controlled.

It was found that aggression was generally a result of fear or sanctioning, and that aggression was more prevalent in men. Aggression could also be a result of frustration or sweat pheromones. Environmental psychology played a role here in that where temperature can be controlled it should be, as an uncomfortable environment could result in aggression. It was also found that Event Design should be purposeful and use continuing lines so as not to frustrate the brain.

This study had a heavy focus on Optimal Experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008). This is because Optimal Experience is the ultimate goal of Event Design and is easily influenced using the Social Sciences. Furthermore, when an audience experiences Optimal Experience their behaviour is controlled and predictable and the environment becomes a lot safer. To enhance the likelihood of Optimal Experience the Event Designer should ensure that the physical design of the Event is logical and purposeful, they should use fast “happy” tempos in any music that is being played and ensure that as many senses as possible are targeted in the audience. This includes considering mirror neurons and their ability to involve the audience physically.
The Psychology field of behaviourism revealed that stimuli and response is machinistic and can be influenced through classical conditioning, however different people and social/cultural groups may react differently to stimuli as their response will be filtered through the context of their knowledge of the world.

Within the disciplines of Anthropology and Sociology we learned that each social/cultural group has its own set of rules. We also learned that mental rules are stronger than formulated rules. Thus, if when creating an Event we formulate rules that conflict with these mental rules, the mental rule will take priority in the brain over the formulated rule, and people will ignore the formulated rule.

In the discipline of Semiotics, Gestures were found to be important in bridging gaps in linguistic knowledge, and it was found that if we used appropriate language in conjunction with gestures, as well as mimicking the audience’s posture, people would identify with the performer. Semiotics were also found to be useful in creating imaginary worlds which would engage the audience, and there was a great deal of scope to use Semiotics in production. Finally, it was found that when creating signage it was important to ensure that the sign was not labour intensive and shared the same properties as the item it denotes in order to increase the likelihood of the audience reading the sign and understanding it.

Thus, the four disciplines of Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology and Semiotics provided a great deal of insight into how an Event Designer can predict and influence audience behaviour.
8.0 Annotated Bibliography:

8.1 Section One: Event Literature

8.1.1 Getz, Donald


Getz is one of very few authors to acknowledge a multitude of social science disciplines in his event literature. He discusses the fields of anthropology, sociology and psychology. However, as opposed to recognising and discussing specific elements of the disciplines, he simply acknowledges each discipline and gives a brief overview of their relevance to events. It is in essence a starting point for the further research into each discipline shown in this report.

Getz first discusses Anthropology, explaining it’s relevance to all aspects of Event Design as it is “central to the explanations of why human beings are what they are and why they do what they do” (Getz, 2007). In Getz’s discussion of Anthropology he makes reference to rites and rituals, explaining that many have mythological or religious significance, whilst others relate to politics and group identity. Getz then demonstrates the importance of recognising rituals in our study of events, stating that:

“while the opening words of a meeting or convention might not carry the cultural weight of a religious blessing (ie sacralisation) they do perform the ‘valorization rite’ that conveys clearly ‘we have begun’ and this place, empty a few minutes ago, is now ours to enjoy” (Getz, 2007).

Getz then goes on to discuss sociology, and it’s relevance to event design. He explains that social behaviour is mostly learned and talks about “social rules and processes” as well as relationships. Finally, Getz discusses the social meaning of events stating that:

“leisure and work take on meanings from social interactions, so that what we mean by work or leisure is in part determined by our social lives ... as well, the ‘festival’ for many people is symbolic of culture, while the trade show is symbolic of commerce. (Getz, 2007)”
In his discussion of sociology, Getz also makes reference to ‘social capital theory’. This theory states that each person invest social capital in their community, and expect others to do the same. A person rich in ‘social capital’ has a great deal of friends and allies, and when this capital is spent they gain emotional, economic, social or psychological rewards.

When discussing the discipline of Psychology, Getz focuses on cognitive psychology. He discusses aggression and anti-social behaviour, and how cognitive psychology can help us to understand this aggression. He looks at inter-male aggression, fear-induced aggression, irritable aggression, territorial aggression and instrumental aggression. Getz also considers how ‘ritualized aggression’ helps to explain the human fascination with competitive team sports. In his psychology discussion, Getz also considers attention, perception, cognitive maps, preferred environments and environmental stress. He looks at social cognition, social cognitive theory and the theory of planned behaviour. Finally Getz discusses Environmental Psychology, being “the study of molar relationships between behaviour and experience and the built and natural environments” (Getz, 2007).

Thus, in his literature, Getz discusses potential links between psychology, sociology, anthropology and event design. This book acts as a great starting point for making links between these disciplines and event design, and when used in collaboration with discipline specific texts is invaluable.

8.1.2 Berridge, Graham


Whilst Berridge does not specifically make reference to any of the relevant disciplines, the discussion of motivations and meaning are recognisable as being of great relevance to the social sciences. Berridge discusses the ‘meaning of events’ and asks that we “not only conceptualise how experiences are created but also how both providers and participants give them meaning” (Berridge, 2007). He states that whilst a third party creates the experience for us, we have indicated choice by attending. He then questions how we can study the experiences themselves without considering how we give the information meaning in the first instance. Berridge
believes that the event designer is directly responsible for how each person interprets it. He discusses motivations and needs as being intrinsic to one another, stating that:
“tourist motivations for choosing such experiences are predicated on the same underlying basic needs that have been used to explain leisure, sport and tourism namely needs theory of personality, hierarchical theory of needs and the concept of optimal level of stimulation” (Berridge, 2007).

This concept of motivation and needs ties directly into information on push and pull factors in tourism as we see in Weaver & Lawton (2006). Furthermore the discussion of the ‘optimal level of stimulation’ shows distinctive similarities to the ‘optimal experience’ theory as discussed in Csikszentmihalyi’s (2008) work. Motivations, needs and optimal level of stimulation, can all be influenced and explained through sociology, anthropology, psychology and semiotics.


Similarly to Berridge, in the text ‘Events Management’ Bowdin et al discuss audience behaviour and how it can be influenced without directly making links to social and behavioural sciences. However, their school of thought is clearly relevant to these disciplines and thus the event literature is very relevant. The authors discuss programming and the importance of the audience having times of intensity and times of rest. They also inadvertently discuss environmental psychology when they talk about the advantage of purpose built venues in that they give you control of environmental variables including temperature, light, sound and flow. They state that “this control enables the event team to compel the audience to completely focus on the stage” (Bowdin et al, 2011). They also discuss that whatever site, the event manager should always exploit the surroundings and characteristics to enhance the experience, once again alluding to environmental psychology.
Allen et al (2011) also discuss the concept of identity stating that “people seek and embrace experiences that enrich their lives, and that resonate with their images of themselves and of their desired or imagined lifestyles. Thus lifestyle events that cater to people’s tastes in music, fashion, leisure, food and wine become part of how they define themselves, and how they construct their identity and social networks”. The relevance to sociology is seen in the discussion of ‘social networks’, and likewise, this is also relevant to the field of psychology in that it addresses needs and the field of anthropology as it discusses literature.

Thus, whilst Bowdin et al do not reference any of the disciplines being researched, it is clear that their event design theories are intrinsically linked to the social sciences.

8.1.4 Matthews, Doug

In his production-specific literature, Matthews makes several references to cognition, and attempts to explain how different things are perceived by an audience, and how this can be manipulated in order to influence audience behaviour. Matthews discusses the concept of perceptual organisation, stating that we are more likely to group objects in close proximity to one another. He also discusses how cognition means that we link together objects that are similar in any way including similar in color, lightness texture and shape. Matthews also refers to cognitive maps, explaining that we see lines as continuing in a particular direction rather than making abrupt turns. He discusses our preference for closure, in that we prefer complete forms to incomplete forms, and that cognition means we have a tendency to mentally close gaps. Finally, he notes the human tendency to group together objects moving together in the same direction.

Matthews discusses ‘perceptual constancy’ stating that human beings have a: “tendency to see familiar objects as having standard shape, size, color, or location regardless of changes in the angle of perspective, distance or lighting. This
impression tends to conform the object as it is or it is assumed to be, rather than to actual stimulus” (Matthews, 2008).

Matthews believes that recognising the phases of cognition is integral to understanding how we can use event design to influence audience behaviour. The phases of cognition are:

1. **Preparation**: Problem is presented and relevant information is sought out to solve it
2. **Incubation**: Information and facts are digested and ideas germinated – creative perception may be introduced
3. **Illumination**: “moment of insight or discovery, the ‘eureka’ experience. When the subconscious produces a solution” (Matthews, 2008).
4. **Translation**: turns illumination into reality.

Finally, Matthews discusses the external environment and its role in the cognitive process. He inadvertently acknowledges environmental psychology, stating that “the need for setting the right external environment conducive to facilitating the cognitive process is essential to successful idea generation”. This can be linked with Bowden et al’s theories that controlling the environment allows the audience to completely focus on the stage or performer.
8.2 Section Two: Tourism Literature

8.2.1 Weaver, David and Lawton, Laura

In their book, Weaver and Lawton discuss ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors. This is the motivation of the tourist to visit a destination. The ‘push’ factor is their reason for wanting to travel and the ‘pull’ factor is what is drawing them to that particular destination. This can also be applied to event design in that a ‘push’ factor is what means a person wants to go to an event and the ‘pull’ factor draws them to that particular event.

Weaver and Lawton also discuss different tourist markets. They discuss different ‘psychographics’. They categorise persons on a scale with the extremes being ‘allocentrics’ and ‘psychocentrics’. An allocentric is an adventurer. Weaver and Lawton (2006) describe them as “intellectually curious travellers who enjoy immersing themselves in other cultures and willingly accept a high level of risk”. In contrast, psychocentrics were defined as “self-absorbed individuals who seek to minimise risk by patronising the familiar, extensively developed destinations where a full array of familiar goods and services are available” (Weaver & Lawton, 2006). Weaver & Lawton acknowledge that most people lie somewhere between these two extremes. Weaver and Lawton also acknowledge sociodemographic segmentation, geographic segmentation and behavioural segmentation.

8.2.2 Holden, Andrew

Holden’s book has a specific focus on the social sciences, and so is well suited to this report. Holden (2006) discusses sociology and tourism, stating that “the deepest problems of modern life derive from the claim of the individual to preserve the autonomy of his existence in the face of overwhelming social forces”. Holden suggests that the search for ‘authenticity’ is absent in our lives, and so tourism
provides this. He states that tourism “opposes” every day life, and that that is it’s appeal. He discusses Krippendorf’s work in which social rules are said not to be applicable in tourism because of this opposition. However Holden also states that tourism is not a separate world governed by it’s own rules, but rather a result of current social structures.

Holden argues that the types of social differentiation in tourism are:

- Ability to participate in tourism
- Type and class of travel
- Choice of destination
- Type of holiday, e.g. mass or eco

Holden also discusses links between Psychology and Tourism. He discusses the different schools of psychology that are relevant to tourism. The first school he discusses is behaviourism, which is observable behaviour (stimuli & response). He argues that we can observe this behaviour and even influence it. He then discusses cognitive psychology and mental processes. Next Holden discusses humanistic psychology which he believes is particularly relevant as it refers to the fact that people see and interpret the world from their own perspective. Finally Holden talks about psychoanalytic psychology, and emphasises the role of the unconscious as an important aspect of personality. Holden believes that the push factor of tourism is social interaction or regression to childhood. He discusses extrinsic and intrinsic motivations.

Tourism and Event Design are two fields that are very closely linked. Motivations for tourism and attending events can be recognised as being very similar, persons behave similarly and in many cases audiences are tourists are well. For this reason this book is of relevance as it gives insight into social sciences in terms of tourism, and thus in terms of Event Design.
8.2.3 Jamieson, Walter


In his book, Jamieson discusses interpretation. Interpretation in tourism is a much discussed topic in tourism, but Jamieson defines it succinctly, stating that interpretation is “explaining a community’s story in an engaging, vibrant way”. Jamieson believes that effective interpretation can encourage respect and appropriate behaviour from tourists. Jamieson believes that thoughtful interpretation programs can offer a meaningful experience that celebrates a culture. Jamieson refers to interpretation as an art form which engages all five senses. He states the importance of knowing your audience and using relevant gestures and language.

Thus, interpretation is a way of influencing the behaviour of tourists or an audience through choosing to represent something in a certain way by engaging the tourists senses in a vibrant way. It is important to choose language and gestures that are appropriate for the audience in order for the interpretation to be successful. Interpretation is relevant to Event Design because it can similarly be employed to influence an Event audience.
8.3 Section Three: Psychology Literature

8.3.1 Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly and Csikszentmihalyi, Isabella


Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi’s books discuss the concept of ‘optimal experience’. The concept of ‘optimal experience’ began as a psychological concept, but has made it’s way into Event literature as it has been found to be exceptionally useful. ‘Optimal experience’ or ‘Flow’ is a specific experiential state in which the pleasure centre of the brain becomes especially active. Many respondents have used similar phrases or words to describe ‘optimal experience’ and they wish to repeat it as often as possible. It is described as a state of deep concentration on the activity at hand, it is said that the person “not only forgets his or her problems, but loses temporarily the awareness of self that in normal life often intrudes in consciousness” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992).

Csikszentmihalyi’s work is of particular relevance to Event Design because ultimately it is the goal of Event Programming. If we can create optimal experience the audience enters a state of harmony and we ensure the most enjoyable experience possible as well as managing audience behaviour through having them completely engaged in the event.

8.3.2 Sternberg, Robert and Smith, Edward


Sternberg and Smith cover several schools of psychology thought in an attempt to bring together the best of each to explain human thought and behaviour. This cross-discipline psychology approach is of great use to understanding audience motivation and behaviour.
Sternberg and Smith discuss the school of behaviourism in that behaviourists believe “environmental influences to be the sole determinants of behaviour and overt behaviour to be the only legitimate object of scientific study” (Sternberg & Smith, 1988). They discuss the pros and cons of this school, but in the context of this report, behaviourism is useful as we are interested in variables which are within the control of the event designer which includes the environment.

Sternberg and Smith also discuss cognitive psychology, and the inevitability that the human brain will create patterns as their brains are “actively interpreting experimental stimuli that were intended to be quite meaningless” (Sternberg & Smith, 1988). This discussion also discuss the human beings brains insistence on finding meaning in everything, demonstrating the importance of ensuring events have a purposeful and logical design.

Finally, Sternberg & Smith discuss the importance of language, and the concept that language and imagery are intrinsically linked. They argue that “the way we use language can affect such basic cognitive functions as perception, memory, judgement, reasoning, and problem solving” (Sternberg & Smith, 1988). Suggesting that language can influence what we see in something and indeed our entire perception of it. They talk about framing and bias in that “how a particular situation is stated, or framed, can have a significant biasing effect on decision making” (Sternberg & Smith, 1988).

This text was of particular relevance to Event Design because it attempted to explain human behaviour through outside influencing factors. It’s discussion of the brains need to create patterns backs up Matthew’s (2008) event design theory that humans group objects. Furthermore, the inclusion of a discussion of language showed that framing can affect the reaction of humans to a particular situation, which is extremely useful from an event designer’s perspective.

8.3.3 Solso, Robert
The most relevant parts of Solso’s book from an event design perspective focus on perception, stimuli and response, pattern recognition and consciousness.

Solso discusses our response to stimulation in the form of some sort of sensation. He discusses the difference between a sensation and our perception of it, stating that “the term sensation refers to the initial experience of elementary forms of stimulation... perception, on the other hand, involves higher-order cognition in the interpretation of sensory information” (Solso, 1979). This is important because the major difference between sensation and perception is that our perception is filtered through the context of our knowledge of society and the world. This means that “our perception of reality is directly influenced by our ‘internal’ state as well as by extrinsic stimuli” (Solso, 1979). This theory shies away from a traditional behaviourism approach which studies only stimuli and response, instead considering internal state. Our brain also recognises patterns in its response to stimuli and may categorise them. If our brain can put something in context via contextual information given to it, it will be easier for the brain to categorise it as a belonging to a class of objects. This is because of the “relationship between the stimulus input and the contents in memory” (Solso, 1979). This is something that we are able to take advantage of in Event Design by working within conventions and repeating patterns to help the audience to recognise stimuli and make it easier to predict their behaviour.

Solso also argues that your perception of any event is related to your level of arousal. Solso discusses attention and the consciousness and the discussion amongst psychologists that it is only able to process or focus on one thing at a time. He discards this theory, arguing that whilst the conscious may only have a limited capacity, the subconscious is also processing sensory information surrounding the person which contributes to the cognitive process.

8.3.4 Gauld, Alan & Shotter, John


Gauld and Shotter are primarily concerned with meaning. They argue that all conscious actions have meaning. They argue that “only when it becomes apparent
that what he did he did knowingly under a description which invested it with a place in a framework of thought relevant to his then situation” can we begin to explore the motives and purpose of a human’s action. They argue that actions are a means to achieving a person’s goals.

Gauld & Shotter also explore the machinistic explanation for actions, which argues that in certain situations, human actions are machine-like and predictable, particularly when the stimuli is something recognisable to them.

8.3.5 Laird, Donald & Laird, Eleanor


Laird & Laird’s book explores human’s motivation for everything they do. This is of interest for Event Design because it helps us to understand the motives behind actions and thus influence audience behaviour through changing the stimuli or environment.

Laird & Laird discuss Maslow’s five physiological motives, which are:

- To keep alive
- To feel safe
- To be social
- To feel respected
- To do work we like

They consider this for a basis for motivation in combination with Freud’s theory of urges, the Life and Death urges, as seen in figure 1. Freud’s theory argues that “in most of us both opposed tendencies are easily found, and they live a kind of tug-of-war existence” (Freud in Laird & Laird, 1967). Research has also shown that the death urge tends to be stronger in men.
Laird & Laird explain the application of these theories to explain human behaviour, and thus audience behaviour. Escaping danger and wanting to be secure motivates: taking pills or vitamins, buying insurance, seeking job security, locking the house and avoiding crowds. Seeking companionship motivates: going where crowds are, gangs, avoiding people of other races or beliefs.

Thus it is easy to see that prominence of the life or death urge and difference motivations can cause completely different behaviour. In the examples given escaping danger causes a person to avoid a crowd, where seeking companionship causes them to go to the crowd. Thus we can recognise that people behave differently based on their tendency toward either urge.

8.3.6 Gerrig, Richard, Zimbardo, Philip & Gendron, Joel

Gerrig & Zimbardo give an overview of Psychology and it’s explanation for human behaviour. They cover all schools including behaviourism, cognitive psychology and
psychophysics. Within their book Gendron explores the psychology attached to stimuli from music. This is particularly relevant for Event Design.

In his article, ‘why does music have an impact on what you feel’ Gendron explores the psychology of how music affects the brain. He notes tempo as an important element of this psychology. Faster tempos strike people as happier, whilst slower tempos strike people as sadder. ‘Happier’ tempos produce more activity in the left frontal cortex, whilst ‘sadder’ tempos produce more activity on the right hand side of the brain. Furthermore, in his study Gendron found that when students listened to their personal favourites heart rate increased, perspiration increased and brain activity increased in the pleasure centre of the brain. This confirms the relevance of music in creating ‘optimal experience’ as theorised in the field of events (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008).

Continuing from Gendron’s article on musical or audio stimuli, Gerrig & Zimbardo (2005) discuss the importance of sound localisation. They discuss the importance of placing speakers in a relevant location to ensure noise is coming from a logical direction. If this is not adhered to the brain becomes confused and as a result the audience will become uncomfortable and frustrated. Gerrig and Zimbardo (2005) also discuss odor stimuli. This discussion involves simple psychological links such as the smell of food making a person crave that food item. However, in a more sophisticated discussion, it notes the stimuli associated with the smell of sweat. This smell contains pheromones which stimulate the sexual centre of the brain. This results in primal instincts and can often result in aggression.

Gerrig and Zimbardo (2005) also discuss perception. They note that there are organisational processes in perception, and that “both your personal goals and the properties of the objects in the world determine where you will focus your attention” (Gerrig and Zimbardo, 2005).

Gerrig and Zimbardo’s book then goes on to discuss the discipline of behaviourism. Behaviourism is a product of learning. For example, if people know lights coming on means the beginning of performance through prior experience, they will recognise and behave appropriately. Horror movies also take advantage of this, with scary
music or silence meaning something bad. In fact, behaviourism is something depended upon in the making of films so much that it has created conventions. Gerrig and Zimbardo (2005) also discuss classical conditioning. Classical conditioning is a tool in which we influence behaviourism through exposing people to a stimuli and showing them the result. After a couple of repeats, the human brain makes the link and recognises the stimuli.

Gerrig and Zimbardo then go on to discuss language use. They discuss the importance of language in communicating with different groups. They say that the most effective way to make a positive impression is to use language that you share with the audience or person. They also discuss ‘framing’ in that people will choose the situation that has the biggest gain or smallest loss for them. If you frame a situation to take advantage of this you can influence their decisions.

Gerrig and Zimbardo also discuss cognitive maps. They have found that people have a tendency to take the shortest route or detour, even if it is not the most obvious.

Finally, Gerrig and Zimbardo discuss motivation. They state that “significant human motivation comes not from objective realities in the external world but from subjective interpretations of reality” (Gerrig and Zimbardo, 2005). They give the example of the Wizard of Oz, in that each of the characters believe they do not have something, such as a heart, courage or brain. However, this is due to their assumptions based on what they have been told and learnt, rather than the reality of truth.

8.3.7 Lipscombe, Neil

Lipscombe discusses risk taking in reference to risk taking and adventure. This book covers both psychological and sociological perspectives and so was hard to categorise.

In his exploration of psychology, Lipscombe discusses the two major psychological views, being:
1. “those who regard the propensity for risk-taking to be a personality trait”
2. “those who regard risk-taking to emanate from intrinsic motivation”

He also discusses Freud’s bi-polar personality theory, which states that there are two types of people, and each gathers around a pole. One pole is surrounded by people who seek out risk, and the other is surrounded by those who avoid it. This psychological theory is synonymous with the tourism theory of allocentric and psychocentric travellers (Weaver & Lawton, 2006).

In his sociological exploration Lipscombe discusses ‘edgework’, being the boundary that people negotiate “between chaos and order”. He discusses how this is an ideal situation for thrill-seekers, which gives a sense of freedom and is a desirable social/cultural trait. It also discusses how these adventure leisure activities are a subculture, and their appeal is in their ability to fulfils a persons desire for community and shared experiences.
8.4 Section Four: Sociology Literature

8.4.1 Phillips, Tim


Phillips discusses incivility in Australia, stating that impoliteness and public rage are a commonplace trend in Australia. Phillips believes that a decline in everyday manners and politeness are contributors to violence and that a ‘fear of crime’ results in one of two results:

1. Antisocial/ avoidance behaviour
2. Induces anger and this produces sanctioning behaviour against perpetrators in a defence of community standards

Fear and disgust are a result of avoidance behaviour, and anger is sanction behaviour. Anger is the most commonly observed emotional response, with 53% of respondents exhibiting this emotion.

8.4.2 Siokou, Christine


Siokou discusses collective identity and sense of community. She discusses the concept of a like-minded individuals having a collective consciousness saying “it is through the sharing of emotion... that the disparate individuals can become bound into a crowd, a ‘single being’ in which a collective mind, albeit transitory, is tangible” (Malbon in Siokou, 2002). Participants in the rave study stated that they “felt free and safe”. This links with the discipline of psychology and Maslow’s five physiological motives and Freud’s theory of life preservation (Laird & Laird, 1967). Siokou discusses the ‘vibe’ wearing off at the end of night, and the evaporation of the
collective identity and feeling of being ‘safe’. The discussion of the ‘vibe’ and sense of a community collective mind could once again be linked to the events theory of optimal experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008).

8.4.3 Woodward, Ian & Ellison, David


Woodward and Ellison discuss the ‘aesthetic experience’. They talk about the concept of entering an ‘aesthetic realm’

The discussion focuses on how humans form a sense of self AND relationships with others based on forging and maintaining relationships with non-human things. This includes objects, performances, animals and other non-human things. This is best exemplified in children, with the example given of children bonding with blocks or other toys. The concept suggests that our identity emerges from our relationship with non-human things, and we forge relationships with other humans via a mutual interest or bond.

8.4.4 Milner, Andrew

Milner, A. (2010). It’s the conscious collective, stupid: Philosophical Aesthetics and the sociology of art. 103(1). 26-34.

Milner speaks about ‘the collective consciousness’ and the overlapping of philosophy and sociology in explaining the ‘collective consciousness’ reaction to art. Milner notes that sociology of the arts is a relatively unexplored subject but is incredibly relevant. Milner believes thatphilosophical discussions about art are dependent on sociology.

Milner explains the concept of a collective consciousness through a statement by Durkheim (1976): “a concept is not a concept - I hold it common with other men”.
By the closure of his article, Milner deduces that sociology is more relevant than philosophy in exploring the collective consciousness, and that the two disciplines are intrinsically linked.

8.4.5 Snow, Peter

Snow’s article claims to be based purely in the field of sociology, but there is a great deal of cross-over into anthropology.

Snow discusses the ‘theory of cultural performance’. This theory is the idea that we are all ‘performing’ our culture, and so if an actor also ‘performs’ within our culture we will identify with it and give it meaning.

Snow talks about performance being a key mode of cultural representation (Birringer, 1998), and the concept that all social events are actually performance. In each of these ‘performances’ we are playing a role that will help us connect to the community. Be it at a rally or as part of an audience we ‘perform’ the role that is given to us. If no role is given the audience becomes “a passive beast”.

Snow believes that links between actual performances and social performing are very strong. He discusses a performances ability to both reflect and create culture. This is because “performances work by mobilizing capacities to imagine” (Snow, 2010).

8.4.6 Bessant, Judith and Watts, Rob

Bessant & Watts discuss the concept of identity and of understanding oneself. They state that the constraining nature of society and the rules within it limits what each individual can be and how they can act. Each persons identity must be able to be integrated into society. In order to function, each society needs a set of moral rules
and values that the society will back in order to create social order and moral consensus.

Bessant & Watts discusses ‘figurations’. ‘figurations’ are people we relate to because we share something common with them. For example “empirically discoverable chains of mutual relationships found in families, supermarkets, churches, rave parties, offices”.

For example, young people are a figuration. Negative press brings people aged approximately 13-25 together to form a culture that is “specifically antagonistic to adults, teachers and institutions” (Bessant & Watts, 2002). These people have been grouped as a ‘problem’ by figures of authority. Young people are often attracted to events, ie music festivals. Activities that “stick it to the man” will keep them docile, it is important to not come across as authoritarian, as this is what they rebel against, but rather to come across as one of them, and to give them a voice. Aside from being grouped by age, another very common social distinction is class. Whilst class is a relatively old fashioned idea that is often considered non useful, Bessant and Watts note that people of similar socio-economic status tend to group together.

Thus, Bessant and Watts discuss identity and figurations. This is relevant to event design because if we can identify the figurations attracted to our event we can then look at their social rules and preferences, and design the event accordingly.
8.5 Section Five: Anthropology Literature

8.5.1 Spradley, James


“There are conditions which restrict both the range and patterning of human behaviour. One important class of restrictions – though by no means the only one – is the rules which are learned by members of a society” (Spradley, 1972). These rules are learnt through stimuli and reinforcement. Cultural behaviour is built through following instructions and learning through experiences. “Rules are learned through symbolic communication and by inference from behaviour” (Spradley, 1972). For example, through cultural conventions we know to stand at a wedding when the bride enters. This is learnt through observing or being instructed, recognising the cultural convention and taking it on board.

Spradley also notes that mental rules are more important than formulated rules. For example, if a person has learnt the rule not to kill from their childhood and throughout their life this becomes a mental rule. If you then write on a sign that it is a rule to kill people, people will reject the formulated rule and chaos will ensue. Therefore, rules that are set must be in keeping with culture. Furthermore, Rules that have been applied previously will be stronger. For example the rule “don’t pick up hitchhikers”. The importance of this rule is reinforced in stories of tragedy, but there are a number of factors that influence a persons decision. For example is the person an acquaintance, is it daylight hours, are they a child, are they carrying books. In this situation conflicting knowledge and rules come into play, for example knowledge that generally school kids are harmless and should be helped, daylight is safer. People’s behaviour is influenced by their knowledge, and “that which is known by the individual constitutes his image of the world” (Spradley, 1972). It is because of this that each individual will react differently based on their images, but people in a cultural group are more likely to share a similar image.

“Culturally constituted social groups are as necessary for human existence as are any of man’s vital organs”. These social groups encourage conformity to cultural
rules, there are subcultures within families, and groups can even be made up of a group of people rebelling from cultural norms. Reciprocal roles shared by the members of the cultural group are acquired from those who came before them. All social groups must satisfy the three functional requirements of any society: adaptation, adjustment and integration.

Since customary behaviour is governed by rules, both as individuals and as a group the social group must be able to evaluate and regulate their own behaviour. In some situations there is tension between personal needs and cultural norms, but generally this is resolved in favour of the norms.

Finally, Spradley discusses categorising. Humans like things to be able to be recognised and categorised, and this includes people. We like to be able to categorise each human being as belonging to a cultural group. Thus, in understanding human behaviour we must consider cultural groups, and the rules that exist within each of them. In creating rules for events, we should not formulate rules that conflict with these learned rules, as chaos will ensue.

8.5.2 Barbu, Zev, Bigsby, C W E, Burke, Peter, Craig, David, DeMott, Benjamin, Elzaesser, Thomas, Goodlad, Sinclair, Hodge, Robert, Hood, Stuart, Kress, G R, Melling, Philip, Olive, Paul, Owens, Bill and Williams, Raymond


Popular Culture is a popular topic amongst anthropologists, due to it’s ability to penetrate multiple cultural groups. Pop culture can be defined as: Pop culture definition “any form of cultural activity and product which is by one criterion or another reckoned to arouse a relatively widespread interest, or achieve a high degree of consumption in any given society”. It should however be noted that there is a difference between popular culture and dominant culture.
In their book, Barbu et al discuss how, “popular culture is accordingly seen by turns as epiphanic and apocalyptic, as evidence of social cohesion and social dislocation, as proof of subversive energy and evidence of decadence” (Barbu et al, 1976). They discuss how popular culture is accessible to all levels of intellect and class. Popular cultural is not elitist; it is accessible to all persons, which perhaps is an explanation for its popularity. Barbu et al also state that Pop culture is an ideological superstructure: “built on the foundation of a particular political and economic life” (Barbu et al, 1976).

The machine age has created pop culture through the ability to mass produce. In a way it has destroyed culture and its authenticity and killed tradition, bringing about pop culture and less sub cultures. From an event design perspective this makes society easier to understand; art no longer expresses fundamental human desires but commercially stimulated desires which provide instant gratification.

8.5.3 Carter, David

In his literature, Carter discusses the concept of an ‘imagined community’ within Australian culture. This community is intangible but we feel that we are a part of it. He explains this further, saying, “Although we will never meet or even hear about more than a tiny percentage of other Australians, somehow we feel or ‘imagine’ that we share something fundamental with them – a national identity – and that we belong to the same community” (Carter, 2006). This national identity is formed by a combination of shared values, shared Australian History and stereotypes produced through Australian literature and storytelling, tourism marketing and the media. These things come together to form the image of an archetypal Australian, but not necessarily being inclusive of the huge range of sub-communities and identities that can be found amongst those living in Australia. Carter suggests that we ‘perform’ this image of the archetypal Australian in order to integrate with the imagined community.
The concept of an imagined community is not only present in Australian culture, but in all sub cultures. In order to integrate with a culture and feel they belong to an imagined community, persons find themselves ‘performing’ a culture which they have gathered information about through their experiences.

The concept of an imagined community is important when influencing audience as a part of Event Design. If we appeal to the values of the imagined community the persons performing within it will act as they are culturally expected to.
8.6 Section Six: Semiotics Literature

8.6.1 Spradley, James

In the discussion of semiotics Spradley notes that “for a sign to function, some organism must grasp the relationship between it and the referent it stands for” (Spradley, 1972). There are three kinds of signs, icons, indexes and symbols. An icon is the “formal association or likeness between two elements” examples of these are that a statue can represent a person, or a drawing of a circle with dashes around may represent a sun. A symbol is an arbitrary relationship. There is no physical similarity between the sound of a siren and the concept of an approaching fire engine yet we relate them. Another example is the wave of a hand meaning departure. These are cultural/social conventions. These symbols are recognised because we learn them through experience.

Symbols have an ability to communicate. For example if we fold our arms, people associate this with us being intimidating or closed off. “Human interaction is essentially symbolic interaction” (Spradley, 1972). Children raise their hand for a teacher to allow them to speak. “Symbols not only reduce our dependence upon sensory experience; they also allow us to create worlds which have no empirical reality at all” (Spradley, 1972).

8.6.2 Eco, Umberto

Eco opens his discussion on semiotics by stating that semiotics must have the cooperation of three subjects, “a sign, it’s object and it’s interpretent:” (Eco, 1977). Signs are a form of communication, a pattern of signification becomes a cultural convention. Eco acknowledges that the labour or effort input/output in recognising a sign is paramount to whether it will be read. For example, a picture is often more broadly read than a sentence, because it is less labour intensive.
An icon needs to share properties with what it denotes. For example a sign representing a dog may be a silhouette of a dog with 4 legs, a head, ears and a snout. If the sign had only 2 legs it would be less recognisable. There must be no doubt as to what the sign is, as if time has to be taken to realise what the icon represents, this is more labour intensive and thus people are less likely to read the sign.

In order to represent an object effectively, signs need to make use of four elements: visual stimuli, colours, spacial relationships and structure. In combination these things can accurately represent an object. For example, a sign cannot have actual water but these elements can be collaborated to effectively represent water.

8.6.3 Elam, Keir

Elam (1980) describes semiotics as, “meaning-bearing behaviour”. He discusses this in the context of the theatre or performance, which is very relevant for event design, as many events have a performance element.

Elam talks about gestural signs and their meaning. Humans have come to recognise gestures to mean certain things and we communicate via these gestures. For example, Charlie Chaplin’s ‘mimes’ were easily interpretable through recognisable gestures.

Elam believes semiotics are most easily understood in the elements of a set. For example in theatre a table has come to be generally excepted to be transformable into a number of things. A small table could represent a large dining table. The table object represents an entire class of objects. Quite often a real object is substituted by a symbol on set in the event that the real object cannot be attained.

Even an actor becomes a sign; he symbolises a character through use of gestures, mimes and representation. For example, an actor could represent a dog if he behaved accordingly.
Semiotics help create imaginary worlds in theatre. For example chairs, a table, a sign and a person dressed in an apron may represent a restaurant. Elam discusses the concept of ‘physical access’, where we show the construct to the audience instead of verbalising it. Elam believes that, “unlike other possible worlds, which come into (conceptual) being only when they have been fully specified or at least (as in the case of a novel) partially described and located, the dramatic world is assumed by the spectator to exist before he knows anything about it” (Elam, 1980).

Thus, the realm of performance has much more scope for semiotics as people are accustomed to suspending their disbelief. In a performance realm we are able to represent things through physical constructs, due to the audiences assumption that the world exists before they have knowledge of it.

8.6.4 Armstrong, David, Stokoe, William and Wilcox, Sherman

Armstrong et al discuss gestures as being symbolic of language. They discuss both physical and verbal symbols which come to mean something. Armstrong et al give the example of making the shape of a gun in the hand as a gesture which is clearly recognised in all parts of the world to symbolise ‘gun’. They also give reference to verbal signs such as pursing your lips and blowing a raspberry, which has come to have a negative meaning attached to it. In discussing language, they note that the loudness or softness of the voice has come to have meaning attached to it also.

Armstrong et al believe that gestures are the most basic primal instinct, and are found not only in humans but also in animals. They give the example of animals making themself look bigger to symbolise dominance. They talk about the two ways we learn to recognise gestures, one being through learned experience (stimuli and response) and the other through an auditory explanation.

Armstrong et al believe that the central role of gesture is to create “a critical link between our conceptualising capacities and our linguistic ability” (Armstrong et al,
Armstrong et al (1995) believe that gesture is “a critical link running through the evolution of perception, conceptualisation and language”.

Armstrong et al argue that gesture is critical to communication, in particular gesture via movement of the hands in order to bridge any gaps in linguistic understanding. They believe that language, gesture, volume and tone can collaboratively communicate with a person even if they have a different or lesser understanding of the language. In terms of Event Design, this shows us that if we use all of these elements we can communicate the most effectively.

8.6.5 Waisman, Orit Sonia


Waisman argues the importance of the body, arguing that it is a reflection of the soul. She refers to tattoos, piercings, haircuts, makeup and clothing as our way of conveying identity through symbols. She recognises the body’s ability to communicate via “eye gaze, facial expressions, proxemics, body postures, kinesis and intonation” (Waisman, 2010). Waisman states that gestures are more widely recognisable by all human beings than language, and that even young children recognise gesture.

Waisman goes on to discuss posture, stating that people identify more with others who mimic their posture. Waisman also talks about ‘mirror neurons’, stating that when we observe a person moving in a particular way we experience the movement as if we are making that movement and the observer’s brain reacts in the same way as if it was the person making the movement. It experiences the same emotions, and can even make the same vocalisation, and breathe in a similar manner.

An understanding of mirror neurons is applicable to both the concept of ‘optimal experience’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008) and the concept of ‘interpretation’ (Jamieson, 2006). When mirror neurons are employed we are activating more senses through
involving the entire body in the communication. This involvement of more senses means more likelihood of optimal experience.

In her book, Waisman also explores pointing gestures. She states that an index finger is most likely to be used to indicate direction, but a head or body movement is more subtle. When an entire open hand is used it also suggests that the object or person should be attended to in a particular way (Kendon in Waisman, 2010).

Thus, Waisman’s exploration of mirror neurons is exceptionally relevant to Event Design, particularly when considered in combination with the concepts of optimal experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008) and interpretation (Jamieson, 2006). The concept of mirror neurons allows us to physically engage the audience by having them experience a performance as though they were the performer, not just an onlooker. Furthermore, Waisman’s exploration of pointing gestures suggests that we should consider how we point at something in terms of how we want that object attended to.
9.0 References


