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Rhetoric 306

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Gender Identity: Transitional Medical Care

From May 8, 2002 to January 1, 2024, twenty three states have banned affirmative medical care for transgender youth (These States). Furthermore, the restrictions have placed inconvenience on anyone deciding to seek care in the future and is providing additional motivation to those already considering relocation. This situation has caught the attention of Tey Meadow, an associate professor of sociology, who wrote an article in the Washington Post arguing that restricting care for transgender youth is a mistake. The article is a good example of gender rhetoric because it clearly represents opposing sides while also highlighting ongoing events. Additionally, the argument has become an important factor of the debate on gender identity as a whole because gender-confirming medical care can change a person physically, socially, and physiologically. Through her interest in sociology and her connection to the transgender community, Meadow attempts to help the transgender and LGBTQ+ community by convincing an interested but uneducated right wing audience through the use of rhetorical strategies and appeals. Additionally, the article was released on International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation which bring more attention and context to the overall topic through kairos.

In order to explain the overall topic that Meadow discusses, she first presents her audience with personal credibility through ethos. In addition to an introduction stating the author's profession, Meadow states, "As a sociologist who has spent the past decade researching the families of trans and gender-nonconforming children, their physicians, psychologists and

advocates...” (Meadow) The author chooses to use ethos to gain the audience's trust so she can explain transgender care with validity. This is extremely important when Meadow discusses facts that can be used to support her argument. For example, when Meadow says, “Medical transition for adults has been available in the United States since the late 1960s.”, the audience is inclined to believe her because the topic of that sentence falls within her area of expertise. Moreover, the statement was one of the first pieces of evidence Meadow used to support her argument. Presenting a statement that is clearly a fact first is a great use of the rhetorical strategy kairos as Meadow solidifies her credibility after using ethos as the main strategy for her first few paragraphs.

Additionally, that statement about medical transition for adults was followed up by statements supporting logos. Throughout the article, Meadow starts with well structured claims as she opens up with logos while using contextualization. However, the author doesn't back these claims up with good evidence. For example in paragraph 4, Meadows' quote about Medical transition states that promoting care for transgender teens is that the subject has been researched since 1960 and puberty suppression has been studied since 1970. (Meadow) As evidence, Meadows says that the fact proves research credibility towards knowing how transgender care works and states that it can be used in a positive way. Although this rhetorical strategy does use logos to support the author's claim, this is not a strong argument because there is no evidence proving that researchers know how transgender care is used. Additionally, Meadow does not show any evidence displaying how the research has been used positively. Even though ethos is used later on at the end of paragraph 5 as it states that almost every medical governing body supports affirmative care, the author only makes statements and doesn't use any evidence that

solidifies her statements (Meadow). If Meadow is speaking to a hostile audience, then this part of the augment will definitely be recognized.

However, Meadow does make good use of logos in other parts of the article as she tries to convince the reader about the benefits of transgender care. For example, the author provides evidence about topics like puberty suppression and discusses how it's better for transgender people to take it at an earlier age. Moreover, by stating, "...adults who had early access to puberty suppression -- which is reversible -- fare far better psychologically than those who did not," (Meadow) the author can provide assurance to an audience that was uneducated while logically providing evidence to support claims.

While using logos as her main rhetorical device outside of the introductory paragraphs, Meadow also chooses to use pathos indirectly within her statements in order to give her argument a better impact on the audience. For example, when talking about transgender treatment Meadow says, "Trans youths who lack parental and community support exhibit higher levels of depression, early substance abuse and suicidal ideation." (Meadow) By bringing potential negative effects into light while using logos as her main rhetorical device, Meadow attempts to make the audience feel sympathy for transgender youth. Additionally, the author also makes full use of the rhetorical device kairos as suicidal ideation becomes main focus of the next paragraph; indirectly using pathos again.

Although the author uses plenty of rhetorical devices effectively in order to strengthen her argument, Meadow does not fairly represent the opposing side of her argument. Anytime a potential counter argument can be found in the writer's argument, it is immediately downplayed. For example, in paragraph 4 Meadow says, "Contrary to what the legislators assert, we do know how they work. And as successive generations of trans people have earlier access to care and

support, we have increasing evidence that the earlier they are delivered, the better...” (Meadow) First, the author does not explain why the legislators would oppose transgender care. Second, the author does state that she has evidence, but it was never shown to the audience which weakens her argument. The only time the writer represents the opposing side fairly is when they make a concession as shown in the conclusion paragraph, “These lawmakers are right to stress that we as adults hold responsibility to ensure the well-being of trans and gender nonconforming youth... But the best way to help them thrive is to demonstrate to these young people that we love, support and affirm them everywhere.”(Meadow) Not fully acknowledging opposing viewpoints weakens the argument because the audience won’t be swayed from different opinions in addition to a lack of clarity for the author's own argument. However, Meadow does make the right decision when paraphrasing and referencing the statements of lawmakers in the argument. To explain further, the author knows that her right wing audience is at least aware of the conservative lawmakers opinions. Therefore, Meadow attempts to bring these lawmakers into the discussion even though she didn’t fully credit their opinion; leading to the concessions and refutations shown in the quotes.

Despite the negatives, Tey Meadow provides her audience with an argument that leaves the audience plenty of information about the topic even if they don't agree with her. An audience who becomes educated after reading the article will feel sympathetic towards transgender youth in addition to the knowledge gained through the author's use of logos and pathos. Moreover, Meadow’s use of ethos on organizations that don’t include her provide the author's argument with even more validity on her claims. In conclusion, the article is a strong persuader on the topic of gender-confirming medical care as it also challenges the broader debate on gender identity.

Works Cited

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