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English 250H

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3 September 2010

Rhetorical Analysis of “A Community of Cars”

In “A Community of Cars”, Ryan Brown makes an argument that our society is car-driven (no pun intended), perhaps too much. In the essay, he shows people a different way of doing things and how things have changed, notably how transportation has changed. Brown is hoping to convince his audience that driving everywhere is the cause of both global warming and obesity. He is hoping to get peoples’ mindset to change in order to revert back to a walking society, and curb those two problems with one solution.

Brown starts his essay with an anecdote about how he used to walk to the local, down-to-earth store to get groceries with his grandmother, and how that store was soon replaced by a supermarket with “more than ample” parking. He uses this anecdote to exert an emotional response from his audience, hoping to convince them of his point by using a fair amount of pathos.

Later, in the body of his essay, Brown begins to use more logos to turn his audience away from vehicles. Several points are made about the pollution caused by driving vehicles and creating the infrastructure used to support the traffic. He even goes as far to show how the infrastructure itself is harming the environment continually. He partially blames this problem on the developers, who assume everyone has a car and wants to drive it, taking urban sprawl farther and farther outwards.

In one of his final paragraphs, Brown never mentions any points that would go against his argument, but he does acknowledge that it is ultimately a decision on the part of the individual to change their way of life, and New Urbanism or the developers can’t do much about it.

Overall, this revelatory argument conveys a powerful message to convince people to turn our way of life around. He artfully combines pathos and logos in a winning combination that changes peoples’ minds. Brown lacks in providing the other point of view, but in this case, many people wouldn’t support it, unless they could benefit from continued driving (i.e. automobile manufacturers). Opposing points would probably detract more than they would add to this complete argument.