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Rhetorical Appeal to Upstate Students

Young adults are faced with major decision ahead of them, to either stop their education after high school or go to work, or to continue on to college either a two-year or four-year school. Many writers have published articles trying to persuade high school students one way or another. Two articles published in the *New York Times* – Liz Addison’s “Two Years are better than Four” and Rick Perlstein’s “What’s the Matter with College?” – look at college in two different ways. Addison argues for the value of attending a two-year college instead of immediately enrolling in a four-year college right after high school. By contrast, Perlstein makes the case that too many students are making their decision to go to college in purely practical terms, without any desire to enjoy themselves while learning or to explore unusual paths of study. In the end, Liz Addison uses the three rhetorical appeals in a way that would be more effective in persuading students at USC Upstate than would Rick Perlstein’s rhetoric.

“Two Years are Better than Four,” written by Liz Addison, uses the three rhetorical appeals to persuade the reader that a community college is just as good if not better than a four-year university. Liz Addison’s ethos at first is not strong because she is lacking the educational qualifications to be talking about this topic, until she tells her readers that she herself attended two two-year colleges. This gives her the experience based qualifications. When Addison wrote this article she was thirty eight years old, this may be seen as having a

positive or negative affect on her ethos. If the reader sees her age as old then she may seem just like all the other adults trying to tell teenagers what they should do, on the other hand if she is seen as young it could make her more relatable to the reader.

Addison use of pathos connects with the emotional side of the reader, being in touch with her reader's emotions is a great way to persuade the audience of USC Upstate students. The number one way she does this is by the use of her language and dialect. This makes Addison's article makes it easily understood by the average reader, as well as her use of sarcasm gives the article a light upbeat feeling that sarcastic teenagers can relate too. Another way Addison uses pathos is by making the reader get a negative feelings about Rick Perlstein. As Addison states that Perlstein was at his highest point in college, "It mattered so much to him that he never got over his four-years at the University of Privilege" (211). By using the words "University of Privilege" Addison gives the reader the idea that Perlstein is just another rich kid no student at USC Upstate can relate with.

Lastly Addison's use of logos gives the reader the idea that she is a logical person with a thought out argument. Such as the way Addison uses analogy: "The Community College system is America's hidden public service gem" (211). She also uses testimony and authority when she quotes Thomas Jefferson, a man well-known to most people: "Everybody should have an education proportional to their life" (212). Through the use of this quote from Thomas Jefferson the reader is able to see that not everyone needs to go to a four-year school if they do not need it for their future job. Addison's use of logos gives her article a logic appeal; it makes her argument seem valid and well supported.

The second article "What's the Matter with College" written by Rick Perlstein, is on the opposite end of the spectrum from Addison's article. Perlstein has strong extrinsic

ethos because of his prestige of writing two books and having many articles published in the *New York Times*. He is also thirty eight at the time his article is published, but his writing style makes him seem older, thus making him harder for college kids to relate to at USC Upstate. If his article was being read by an older generation his ethos may have a stronger effect, but the average age group at USC Upstate will not be able to relate to him because of his professional writing style.

His use of pathos targets the older generations because he is trying to instill nostalgia in his readers, but the people he refers to are not ones known by the younger generations. Instead of feeling nostalgia, the readers from younger generations are given the feeling of hopelessness for their future in college because he believes it will never be the same as it was when he was in college. When he writes that “[c]ollege as America used to understand it is coming to an end,” he is sending a message that would make a high school student consider not going to college at all. But at USC Upstate the students are already enrolled and there would not be much effect on them. Perlstein makes it seem that nothing is the same as it once was, but many say college now is better than it ever could have been in the past.

Lastly his use of logos was predominantly found in the quotes from the 600 undergraduate students he interviewed for his research. As well as supporting generalization with examples, when he talks about the iconic image of college with drinking and partying. According to Hamilton Morris, a college freshman Perlstein interviews, many students think, “College sucks anyway, so I might as well stay here.” Living in the small town of Spartanburg, many students do not go far and most USC Upstate students are

commuters, so they cannot relate to moving away and hating it. Also USC Upstate has many things for students to be involved in so college does not suck so bad after all.

Liz Addison and Rick Perlstein each wrote articles to persuade readers in favor or either two-year schools or against college in general. After an analysis of the two articles for the one that is most persuasive to USC Upstate students, it is clear that Liz Addison's article is more persuasive. From her use of the three rhetorical appeals as well as the fact that Upstate is located in Spartanburg, a city with many two-year colleges within close proximity. This aspect gives the students at Upstate an idea of what community college is like without them actually having to attend a community college.

Works Cited

- Addison, Liz. "Two Years Are Better Than Four." *They Say / I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*. By Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein. 2nd ed. New York: W.W. Norton, 2010. 211-14. Print.
- Perlstein, Rick. "What's the Matter With College?" *The New York Times*. N.p., 30 Sept. 2007. Web. 28 Jan. 2016