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WRIT 3160
Rhetorical Analysis

**Introduction**

Gender inequality is one of the biggest social issues at this time. Women in the Sports and Entertainment Industries are witnesses of this injustice almost every single day. As a young woman that is in this field, this topic something that I am interested in researching and analyzing in order to understand it more. I have chosen to rhetorically analyze the broadcast of KNBR San Francisco’s Damon Bruce. Damon Bruce is a talk show host that covers local sports. He gained viewers and supporters from being straight-forward while also adding in some humor. On his live show in 2013, Bruce goes on a full-on rant about his belief that women should not be in sports. After listening to his rant, I noticed a few key persuasion errors or fallacies in his message. I transcribed his message, and I also browsed various blogs and articles to see the popular opinion and to see if others picked up on this man’s poor attempt to persuade his audience. His rant perpetuates the myth that women don’t belong in sports by giving his own reasons about them not giving any sort of contribution to the sports industry. This myth works to persuade people of discrediting women in the sports industry through the humiliation of women by saying they are the reason that sports has lost its way, men are becoming too feminine and that women have made no significant contribution.
Bruce’s Audience

Bruce’s rant is an audio piece that has been provided for people to listen to on SoundCloud. Something that already puts him behind in his argument is that people may only find his show from news and blog articles that have ripped him apart and then have linked the audio within their review. Because the audience already has an idea that his argument is completely invalid and shows sheer stupidity, they are already going into listening to the audio with a mindset that he has no argument. When the audience first listens to it, it just seems like some random man that has been fed up with certain things occurring within the sports world and finally decides that he wants to say something about it. When I first heard it, I didn’t think that he had any credibility whatsoever, and I think that other people that listen to it probably think likewise. The people that have consistently listened to him have a different perspective than people that have never listened to him. Because this rant went viral, there was a new audience that had not previously heard of him, and in turn, do not know his style. His previous audience already know his disposition and how he goes about talking about things, so they may have a different outlook on his rant. People like me that have never heard him think that he is a misogynistic person that is obviously more upset about something that may not even be a big deal.

Persuasion Tactics

A pattern that I picked up on throughout his rant was that Bruce used a very “matter of fact” tone when giving his opinion which was almost the whole nine minutes of the show. What I mean by this is that he was straight-forward when he would make a comment and would follow up by saying that he didn’t care what people would think, or he would say something along the
lines of, “that’s the truth.” For example, in one of his opening statements he said, “For some of you, this is going to come across as very misogynistic. I don't care, because I'm very right.” In this specific case, he is inserting his dominance and lack of care for the listeners’ responses.

Bruce also joked around when talking about the possibility of women contributing to sports– he actually denied that there has been. He laughed many times throughout the show when he brought up the possibility of women making contributions to sports. There was also no hint of doubt from his voice – he didn’t retract ant statements, and his voice never quivered; he was strong in his stance. This goes back to his “matter of fact” tone that was just mentioned. His carelessness and carefree attitude gave him the chance to laugh off bold statements.

His sentences and phrases were full of “I”s.” This showed that he’s most likely extremely full of himself, and his opinion is important. This is one of the ethos moves that he makes. He knew that people were going to call him a misogynist, and he acknowledged that by saying that he didn’t care and that he is “very right”. A few of the many “I” sentence-starters are, “I don’t care, because I’m very right,” “I enjoy many of the women’s contributions to the sports – well that’s a lie. I can’t even pretend that’s true.” His use of the pronoun “I” seemed to make him seem like he was a little less confident. He tried to make points relevant to himself without providing actual instances from the sports industry. This might have been a logos move that he attempted to make because of the ethos he has built up with his audience, but it doesn’t seem that is was the best choice he made.

The style of his show was also very informal because it was on his personal show. He used words and phrases such as, “I’m gonna tell you,” “well that’s a lie,” “pretend,” and “freakin’” that helped to create the tone of his opinion. These phrases are informal because these are typically phrases or words that would be said in a casual conversation and not in a formal
setting. By continuing the informality of his show, he maintained his own branding. By keeping the tone of his show informal, he was able to use his own humor in order to make people feel bad. It would have been a little harder for him to use his personality and the “usual” informal tone of his show had he decided to make it more of a formal setting for the purpose of his rant regarding why he believes women don’t belong in the sports industry. This also helped him to maintain his ethos with his previous audience. His previous audience has this knowledge of how he usually acts and talks on his shows, so he felt like he had the ability to be critical and speak in the way that he did without feeling bad about it.

You can tell that he was very serious and was trying to get his point across because he made every effort to make it known that the sports realm is a “man’s world.” Because he doesn’t make any effort to see things from the other side of the myth that women don’t belong in sports, he isn’t really able to persuade people into thinking the way he does – only further fuels the people already persuaded. When he talks about a “man’s world,” he is saying that the sports setting is for men, and men only. “All of this world of sports, especially the sport of football, has a setting. It’s set to men… It’s a man’s world.” Although he is speaking on behalf of men, he wants the women sportscasters to know that it’s a setting that isn’t meant for them. It’s almost as if he is sure that the absurdness of his rant will reach the women that he is referring to.

With that being said, Bruce’s overall claim is that women don’t belong in sports. Some of the points that he attempts to make in order to back his claim is that, “it’s a man’s world,” “sports has lost its way” because they [men] have “got women giving us directions,” and because “women are too emotional”. Some of the evidence he provides is that women completely overreact in the case of serious injuries, such as severe breaks or ACL tears. This evidence can’t really support one of his main points that women are too emotional because there are plenty of
men that also react to serious injuries – everyone reacts to them, but some people react differently than others. If you watch social media, specifically Twitter, after a gruesome injury on live television, there are both men and women reacting to it. He also believes that women being emotional beings is causing the men to be too feminine. In this case, he specifically said, “There is a serious group of you fellas out there that have just been so feminized by the sensitive types out there who continue to now interject their ultra-feminine sensitive opinions into the world of sports.” Bruce gives no evidence to the reaction of injuries by men and these “feminized” men, but implies that women react to it much more sensitively than men. Something that hurt his logos here is that he makes little effort to provide evidence or reasons to back up these points he’s attempting to make. There are no specific moments that he specifies.

**Fallacies and Persuasion Fouls**

The first fallacy that Heinrichs mentioned that I picked up on when listening to his rant falls under the *false comparison*. He said, “I don’t expect women to understand men’s stuff anymore than they should expect me to be able to relate to labor pains”. This is a very weak comparison because the “men’s stuff” that he is referring to is football. Football is something that anyone can become familiar with if they watch games, recaps, or do statistic research. There are some women that can’t even relate to labor pains if they have not had a child. The next fallacy falls under the *lack of examples*, which goes back to his point that women are too emotional. He doesn’t give any type of supportive claim to persuade his audience into thinking this. He starts by saying, “Every single time somebody goes down with an injury – God forbid a gruesome injury, watch the way women react to it on Twitter. It’s different than the way men do.” He then mocks a women’s voice or reaction saying, “oh my God, oh my God, oh my God.”
He never says how men react to it, which shows this lack of example issue because there is a chance that men may also react to “gruesome injuries” in the same way.

Some persuasion fouls that Bruce makes include, humiliation, utter stupidity, and truthiness. He tries to humiliate a broadcaster named Wendy by building her up, saying that she has a lot to contribute to the baseball world and other women have made good contributions, then said, “well that’s a lie. I can’t even pretend that’s true”. This is humiliation because after having her on his show, he tries to make her seem that she has made no contributions to the sports industry, and that he doesn’t even take her seriously. His utter stupidity comes across when he can’t even realize his own fallacies within his rant. At this point, his credibility is decreasing because he starts to completely discredit women without providing how a man would react, or how men go about their sports contributions. Lastly, I am going to talk about his truthiness foul. As he insinuates, he has no desire to think anything other than his stance that women don’t belong in sports – again, he even mentions that he doesn’t “expect women to understand men’s stuff”. The one thing that may cause Bruce to persuade someone is that he doesn’t use any doubt; however, he doesn’t even do a good job of persuading in general. He only might have persuaded people that already have the same mindset. His audience is people in the San Francisco Bay Area that are also as dedicated to the area’s sports team as he is. He has built up a credibility with this audience, but goes into an area – talking poorly about women in the sports industry, that many people may not view the same as he does.

**Text Structure**

The structure of Bruce’s rant is pretty simple, and it doesn’t really help build his argument. He starts off by talking about the idea that the sports world is different and goes on to
say it’s because of women. The rest of his rant includes him giving reasons why women are to blame and giving the women that still choose to be a part of the sports world a word of warning. He warns women that they are stepping into his box, and anything that happens to them is their own fault, and they asked for it. He wants women to know that they have to follow the rules that the men set, and they shouldn’t try to change this setting or try to feminize it. Throughout the whole audio, he structures his points around the idea of a “setting”. He says that sports has a “set,” and it’s set to men. He also talks about the idea of a thermostat – only men can adjust the “setting.” He uses this repetition of “setting” to help build his argument that the sports “setting” is for men only. He ends his rant by saying that if women want to be involved, then they need to know that it’s not going to be friendly for them. This use of repetition does help build his logos because it keeps him a little on track with the point that he is trying to make. He’s trying to make up logic to make people believe that women cannot fit into the “setting” that men have created within the sports industry.

I also want to talk about some juxtapositions within this audio piece. As I previously mentioned, Bruce opens his live show with mentioning that sports has lost its way – an effect. He then goes on to say that the cause for this occurrence is the fact that women have started to become more involved and trying to turn it another direction. In this move he makes, Bruce is trying to show a correlation to help men see what’s happening, and who is responsible for it in order to help build his side of the argument that women don’t belong in sports. Next, he tries to show that women can’t relate to sports just as he can’t relate to labor pains. He really thinks that this is helping him build logos, but there are some women that can’t even relate to labor pains because they have never had a child, so this point becomes invalid. Later in his rant, Bruce finally says that if women are trying to become involved, then that’s ok. His only addition to that
statement is that if they step into the sports world, they then have to be able to defend themselves in the case that someone calls them out on comments or contributions they attempt to make. I do think that this is probably one of the best points he made. I do think that in a male-dominated workplace it’s important that women should know that they need to keep up in order to build their credibility within their profession. That is something that goes for any profession – you can’t walk into the medical field and try to make contributions without having any background or having done research in that specific area.

**Feminist Theory**

In *The Internet is Full of Jerks, Because the World is Full of Jerks*, by Adrienne Shaw, she explains her frustrations about being a feminist scholar due to the fact that there is a shocking amount of misogynistic people that are online. She wants people to understand the power that technology holds over our society today. The discourses through social media sites have created a new world for bullies. These worlds should be ways for people to express themselves, but it is a double-edged sword as people are there waiting to bash unwelcomed ideas.

There has been an increase of “male-only” zones, and there is no room for feminist ideas because they are “irrelevant,” but feminism is not always just about *women*. This article talks about different ideas and reasons surrounding why people act why they do on social media platforms such as YouTube, Twitter and Facebook. The relationships that we have with people have changed because of the increase of technology and how we use it. These technologies have become more invasive even though we go to them for protection when expressing our ideas and concerns. These online spaces have become a place for vandalizing and dehumanizing – this shows a direct link to Damon Bruce’s rant. His talk show is the “safe space” that he has created
for himself so that he may speak freely on whatever he feels. Although this is a “safe space,”

Bruce made one of his shows a rant about why women do not belong in the sports industry. That
is fine, but he chose to humiliate women and almost dehumanize them to a point that he even
pretended that he favored a woman just to go back to say that it was “a lie.” Because he has
established ethos with his audience, this created a sort of validation for him. He did, however,
note that he would be called a misogynist because of everything he was about to say, but that
didn’t matter to him – he just continued with the show. With that point, it could be wondered if
he would have said the exact things that he did with his mother present, on a live television show
or straight to the face of a female sports reporter.

One thing mentioned in the article that was very ironic was about how in the past,
computer programming used to be “women’s work,” but it has now become a male-dominated
space. The idea of being a jerk comes in to play when someone feels they are in a place of
privilege, may it be a cafeteria, locker room, an online space, or workplace. Again, Bruce’s
male-dominated space, or self-proclaimed “man’s world” was used as a way to talk poorly about
the women in the sports industry. Bruce would be considered a jerk because he felt privileged
enough with his sponsored show that he could be as misogynistic as he wanted without reaping
the repercussions. There are plenty of women that have made significant contributions to the
sports field, but because of his male-dominated sports world, he failed to acknowledge those
contributions. He hurt his chances of persuasion for most people because he provided no hard
evidence or facts about how women have not made contributions to the sports industry. He even
went as far as saying that, “women can’t relate to sports,” just as he, “can’t relate to labor pains.”
He chose to compare giving birth to the sports industry. Yes, labor pains are something that only
women can relate to; however, there are even some women that can’t relate to it because they
have never experienced it. There are women that are just as qualified as men are, but Bruce fails to make that acknowledgment because he firmly believes that sports is a “man’s world.”

Shaw mentions another article where the person is talking about women journalists, and the types of cruel comments and remarks they get online. They go on to say that the male journalist didn’t receive near as many threats as the woman did. Many female bloggers, journalists and writers are scared to post to the public due to these jerks that troll the Internet. Shaw makes an attempt to show that the Feminist Theory does not just try to teach us to celebrate the advancements and development of new technologies but also to use them for a purpose or for self-reflection and self-expression. In understanding this, the purpose of Bruce’s show could have been to explain the frustrations of men in the sports industry. After explaining the frustrations, he could have talked about some things men and women could do in order to help ease the tension. He could have also invited a woman broadcast journalist to the show, and allowed her to talk about what her life is like being a woman that professionally contributes to the sports industry. Because he only provided one side of the argument, and he did not include any specific instances to help back up the points that he made, he’s unable to perform a successful persuasion. By using his talk show to talk about this ongoing argument, Bruce could have been the means to figuring out a solution to the problem; he instead was just adding to the existing problem.

**Conclusion**

In reflection, one point that Bruce fails to admit or say without humiliation or through a joke, is any of the positive contributions that women have made to the sports world. I think that he might have been able to build a better case if he talked about certain things that women have
contributed, but talked about why they weren’t valid or useful. He couldn’t bring up anything that women have positively done or contributed. I think that if he could have done some type of constructive criticism of points that women have tried to make, then it would have helped him out. The fact that he couldn’t do that shows that he isn’t looking for anything that women have done well, which shows that he has no intentions of actually believing that women could possibly be a good asset to the sports world. Another thing that I think hindered his ability to bring out good points is the tone of voice he used and the way he chose to say and phrase things. I felt like I couldn’t take him seriously. For example, I keep going back to the moment when he pretended to believe that the woman, Wendy, had made good contributions to the sports world, but then he laughed and said that he was lying. Again, I think that he should have made arguments around actual ideas that she had rather than just completely discrediting her without any kind of evidence and trying to humiliate her.
References
