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### The Fight for Equal Pay

March 24, 2021, was a historic day not only for women but for members of the LGBTQ community around the country. Megan Rapinoe, a prominent voice for women's rights and a member of the LGBTQ community herself, was invited to speak at the White House about the gender pay gap. The United States Women's Soccer Team has been in a large legal battle since 2016 when they first sued the US soccer federation on the basis that they should be making as much as their male counterparts. Megan Rapinoe, an active player for the USWST has been one of the most vocal members in the fight for change. By looking at Rapinoe's use of argument and audience through a rhetorical lens, we will identify how these theories and theorists played such a prominent role in the overall success of her speech.

In any speech having a clear and concise argument is crucial in being able to relay the message to your audience in a successful way. Yet one's ability to effectively communicate and spread her message to her audience is equally as important. One of the ways in which both of these things are done begins with the rhetor's ability to establish ethos logos and pathos in the particular speech. In order, ethos pathos, and logos are defined as such. "that which is in the character of the speaker". "that which leads the audience to feel emotion". "that which relies on the argument itself, by showing or seeming to show something". (Palczewski et al. 15). It is vital for any rhetor to be able to show these three things early on in the speech and that is exactly what Rapinoe does. "I'm a member of the LGBTQ community with pink hair" (Rapinoe). "I'm also a professional athlete". (Rapinoe). By establishing her presence in the LGBTQ

community and her career as an athlete, she immediately demonstrates her credibility to speak on both the issues she faces in her career as an athlete and that which revolves around the gender pay gap, and also her ability to speak on the difficulties that surround being a member of the LGBTQ community. In terms of logos, Rapinoe builds legitimacy by acknowledging her accolades in her field. "I've helped, along with all of my teammates virtually here today, and one teammate literally here today, win four world cup championships, and four Olympic gold medals for the United States" (Rapinoe). Anyone with success in their given field gives off the confidence and the ability to speak with a sense of authority on the topic at hand. Finally, tugging on the emotional strings of the audience it gives the rhetor the ability to appeal to and persuade the mass audience. "Despite those wins, I've been devalued, I've been disrespected and dismissed because I am a woman" (Rapinoe). It has been proven time and time again in speeches that when a rhetor delves into and utilizes all three aspects of ethos pathos and logos early on in a speech it both boosts the argument being made and the ability of a rhetor to resonate with the intended audience.

Argument can be defined as "reasoned discourse that seeks to persuade by presenting support for a position" (Palczewski et al. 101). In almost every speech argument is used by the rhetor to hopefully convince and persuade the audience of the rhetor's ideas. In this case, Rapinoe is arguing for the fact that men and women who do the same job need to be paid the same amount, something we see very little of when it comes to professional sports. At a very base level, Rapinoe's argument can be broken down with what we call syllogism. Syllogism is defined as "a statement in which a conclusion is inferred from the truth of two premises" (Palczewski et al. 106). You start with a major premise, lead into a minor premise and those

lead to a final conclusion. The major premise of this speech is that men and women at any level should make the same amount if they are doing the same job. The minor premise is the fact that the USWNT make less than the men's national team while by definition they do the same job. It is evident that in conclusion, both the men's and women's national team should be making the same amount of money. While not saying it directly it is well known that the USWNT is much more successful than their male counterparts, yet they still seem to be so undervalued in terms of monetary gain. While she doesn't blatantly say that she uses what we call enthymeme to let the audience fill in the blanks for what she leaves out. An enthymeme is defined as "a syllogism based on probabilities, signs, and examples, whose function is rhetorical persuasion. Its successful construction is accomplished through the joint efforts of the speaker and audience, and this is its essential character" (Palczewski et al. 107). Rapinoe, while not wanting to talk down on the success of her male counterparts, does want to highlight the success of her team. "You see despite all the wins, I am still paid less than men who do the same job that I do. For each trophy, for which there are many, and for each win, for each tie and for each time we play its less" (Rapinoe). Being in the audience you might reflect on those words and put the pieces together of how illogical it all seems. Rapinoe is quick to talk about the success of her team how she mentions all the trophies and wins they have accumulated. It is well known the men's team rarely wins trophies, so why is it that the more successful team earns less. Saying that directly in her speech would come off in the wrong light, and she knows that, so letting the audience infer that for themselves is a brilliant job on her part of using an enthymeme.

As we continue on with our discussion of argument within Megan Rapinoe's speech, I would like to break it down even more by using one of the most famous methods of analyzing an argument, the Toulmin model. The Toulmin model can be used to test how valid an argument really is. The Toulmin model is broken down into 6 components "claim, data, warrant, qualifications, backing, and conditions for rebuttal" (Palczewski et al. 109). Rapinoe's claim is that men and women who do the same job should get paid the same. She illustrates that quite clearly when in her speech she says "I'm still paid less than men who do the same job that I do" (Rapinoe). We all know that no claim can stand alone, we need to be able to see the data that backs the claim and until that happens the point of the claim is mute. In almost every professional setting you are rewarded with money based on the good work you do, the better you do the more you end up making. Well according to Rapinoe that is not the case when it comes to her USWNT. To support her claim she pulls direct data of how she has seen herself be unappreciated for all the hard work she has put in because she is a woman. She tries to prove her claim by describing that "despite those wins, I've been devalued, I've been disrespected and dismissed because I am a woman, and I've been told that I don't deserve any more than less because I am a woman" (Rapinoe). She uses this proof of data to show that no matter how successful, and how both these men and women athletes have the same job, she will never make the same amount solely because she is a woman. So how do we get from this data to the claim? Here is where we learn about the warrant. The warrant is described as "bridges, or the generalizable "rules" and "principles" that link the data to the claim" (Palczewski et al. 112). As quoted above she directly mentions the four World Cups, the four Olympic gold medals, and the array of trophies that her team has won. Her ability to use these statistics bridges the gap

between data and claims. She shows the disrespect and devaluation she endures as a woman and proves her point through these accolades that not only should the men and women's national team make the same amount considering they do the same job, but it makes even less sense than they get paid what they do consider the success they have as a team. While in some cases of argumentation there is a need to identify the conditions for rebuttal and qualifiers to make sure the claim and warrant are sufficient, this is not the case for Rapinoe's speech. She uses such conviction in her tone and backs up her claim beautifully with how she has been discriminated against for being a woman and provides cold hard evidence as to why her team deserves equal pay through her explanation of the team's success. It is rare to find a speech that fits so eloquently into the Toulmin model but Megan Rapinoe's speech did all that and more.

Argument and audience go hand in hand when delivering a good speech, and Rapinoe's ability to include her audience throughout and relate to them at the same time is a perfect example of *Kenneth Burke's* theory on identification. Identification is known as "a communicative process through which people are unified into a whole on the basis of common interests or characteristics" (Palczewski et al. 2003). When communicating with an audience, the rhetor is constantly finding ways to relate with the audience while also having audience members identify with each other. "identification is achieved when rhetors use one or more of the three broad types of identification" (Borchers and Hundley 180). Megan Rapinoe is able to use all three of these types in her speech as she was able to truly identify herself with the audience while also keeping the idea that we are all in this fight together. The first type of identification is very simple and direct. It is a way for the rhetor to relate to the audience and

show that I am not the only one in this situation and that women at every level may be going through this type of hardship. She indicates in her speech that “I know there are millions of people who are marginalized by gender in the world and experience the same thing in their jobs” (Rapinoe). By straying away from her personal hardships with the gender pay gap and involving every single person around the world who may face the same, she unites her audience who may be facing this same problem. She is able to do this without them even realizing that they instantly have an identifying factor between them. “The second type of identification uses antithesis, creating an us-versus-them distinction” (Borchers and Hundley 180). In the fight for equal pay, there is no one person at fault for what is happening. That being said, it is hard for Rapinoe to indicate us versus them which we just highlighted as being the second method of identification. Instead, Rapinoe invokes that same idea into whoever supports equal pay is with us and whoever does not is against us. She goes on to say “There is so much work to be done on policies that continue to support equal pay, but also to continue to fight against these injustices and inequalities” (Rapinoe). It really is quite brilliant the way it is phrased. If you support policies regarding equal pay and want to fight injustice between men and women in the workplace, you automatically identify with not only the rhetor, but everyone else in the audience who supports the same things. Finally, the third type of identification “derives from situations in which it goes unnoticed” (Borchers and Hundley 180). It goes on to talk about how rhetors tend to use the word “we” when they are trying to unite an audience. This method is incredibly popular and quite beneficial to a rhetorician’s goal of identifying his audience within him or herself. Megan Rapinoe, like many other speakers, uses “we” a tremendous amount. We see it almost all throughout her speech, but these couple sentences I

am about to share are what I believe to be some of the most powerful attempts made to unite her audience together. “we also know what it means not only to have allies but to be allies. We know what it means when people kneel, to kneel with them” (Rapinoe). She keeps reinforcing that idea of the collective “we” which identifies herself as part of the audience, showing that they all can be part of the solution together.

The idea of identification within speeches to unite the audience and the rhetor together is incredibly important, but one thing I want to touch on before we conclude is the idea of what truly encompasses a rhetorical audience. *Lloyd Bitzer* defines a rhetorical audience as the “audience that consists only of those persons who are capable of being influenced by discourse and of being mediators of change” (Palczewski et al. 202). I think this idea of being mediators of change is incredibly important for most speeches, but in particular, this one because Rapinoe does so well to identify not only the adults who in the time being can be mediators of change but she speaks directly about the youth. To me, this definition of the rhetorical audience doesn’t solely mean who is capable of making changes today but goes to include anyone that makes changes in the future based on what they heard in this particular speech. This idea of mine directly correlates with the youths of today. While possibly not being able to make grand legal changes in their younger days, hearing this speech and being moved by it might one day lead them to make great changes in the fight for equal pay. Rapinoe concludes her speech with “continue to fight against these injustices and inequalities. And not just for ourselves, but for those who are coming after us, who are watching us, potentially watching today thinking to themselves what may be possible for their future” (Rapinoe). These final words I believe relate back to what was said about identification earlier on in the paper. Any parent watching this

who may have a daughter and hear these final words instantly thinks about their own daughter. They think about what they can do so that one day their daughter can follow her desired career path and not have to think about making less than her male counterpart. That parent mentality instantly unites all parents in the room and potentially excels them to become mediators of change. But these final words uttered by Rapinoe can also be the voice of influence on all the young girls around the country who when their times come will also be mediators of change, inducting themselves as the perceived rhetorical audience.

Through doing this analysis of Megan Rapinoe's famed speech at the White House, it is clear how rhetorically well balanced she is and how effectively she was able to communicate her points in such a short amount of time. Her well-driven argument about equal pay in the workspace was proven through the Toulmin method to be an overall success. While this speech may not be very long in length, it is quite rich in detail, which is how she was able to support her claim with meaningful data and a well-established warrant. The way she was able to establish a meaningful connection with her audience through methods of identification and expanding on the rhetorical audience as a whole, was evident as to why she has garnered so much support for the backing of equal pay. It is important to note that the job does not stop here. Rapinoe will continue to fight and push for equal pay between men and women and it is very clear after reading this speech that she will not stop until that becomes the case.

Work Cited

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