English 103-005

10/14/13

Dixon

Hannah Pfohl

Rhetorical Analysis of “Digital Deception”

Claire McIntosh, author of “Digital Deception” and contributor to EBONY Magazine, writes about the deception in the world of online dating. Rather than an innocent place for individuals to meet potential partners, cyber space has created an opportunity for scammers and criminals to deceive and victimize. As a frequent writer on relationships and dating, McIntosh wrote her article for the purpose of informing the public and potential online daters of the risk associated with the online dating industry. In response to the growing size of the online dating world and the increase in abuse, Claire McIntosh wrote “Digital Deception” to reveal the truth about deception in the world of online dating. My analysis of the article presents that Claire McIntosh effectively convinces her audience that online dating is not reliable by structuring her paper to contain evidence that supports her claim and validating her credibility as well as providing pathos to connect readers to her position.

Claire McIntosh’s “Digital Deception” examines the recent increase in the use of online dating. The author discusses how the un-regulation of online dating sites allows people to misrepresent themselves and use fake profiles. This means that online abusers are lying about their identities and use the online world to find victims and take advantage of them through the internet. This allows more opportunities for sex offenders to find their prey and gives con artists an easy way of finding online partners to scam for money. Individuals make fake profiles from stolen social networking sites and sell them to online dating sites so the site appears to be more popular. McIntosh talks about how this online world has created a community of lies and criminal activity and the best way to ensure the truth is by avoiding cyber space all together.

McIntosh’s use of structure is effective in getting her point across because it gives the audience a sufficient amount of evidence that clearly shows online dating is not worth the risk. The article is composed entirely of evidence against online dating, yet she does not present her thesis until the very end. The reader is left to form their own opinions on online dating based on the facts she provides. This is an effective use of structure because she only presents negative evidence about online dating so her audience in turn is also going to form negative opinions towards it. When she presents her thesis at the end, which suggests online dating is better left avoided, her audience is likely to agree with her because they just formed the same opinion based on the facts she presents. This is an extremely effective use of structure because she has utilized the order of content in order to convince her audience to agree with her opinion.

McIntosh presents facts and situations that show the reader the risky and unreliable side of online dating. She begins the article by immediately jumping into a story about a picture perfect couple who met online. The woman learned of her fiancés criminal activity when the police hauled him off in hand cuffs. The man was arrested with charges of fraud and larceny. This is one part of the man’s life that was not included in his online profile. McIntosh includes other examples similar to this one as well as a handful of statistics that show the shady side of cyber-dating. While the audience is presented evidence that is likely to scare them from ever entertaining an online relationship, they are completely unaware of McIntosh’s view on the matter. It is not until the very end of the article that McIntosh closes the article by presenting her overall argument. She says, “The real power to avoid digital deceivers lies in the hand that is clicking the mouse” to finally make her point that it is safer to stick with traditional dating as this eliminates all the deceptive downfalls that coincide with online dating (231).

The article is composed of evidence that supports her final claim. The author uses the content of the paper as her main rhetorical strategy to show that online dating is not trustworthy. Given the rhetorical situation includes a large increase in the amount of people falling victim to online dating scams, it is appropriate for the author to present the risks and potential situations people are involved in through online dating. In doing this, the author effectively shows the audience that online dating is a bad idea and individuals should avoid it. McIntosh presents the statistic, “33 percent of adults have used a fake identity and 45 percent have lied about their personal details,” as evidence to support the idea that most online daters misrepresent themselves (230). Given that this article was written in response to a large increase in online dating, this is strong evidence to show that even though it is main stream, almost half of online daters are dishonest about their identity or are completely pretending to be someone else.

As suggested by the evidence McIntosh provides, scammers create online relationships and convince their online partner to continually send them money. She includes, “stolen photographs are used by international con artists to convince unwitting singles to wire them money in sweetheart swindles” (231). Claire McIntosh also includes a situation in which a woman is suing match.com because “the site is responsible for her being sexually assaulted by a known sex offender” (230). These examples provide content that shows the opportunities for criminal activity in the online dating community. This evidence effectively supports the authors view in opposition to online dating as it is not safe nor trustworthy.

McIntosh includes more examples of singles who were lied to online. By using real life examples the author allows the audience to emotionally connect to an online relationship. In one case a man thought he found “the one” until he drove several hours to find the same someone different than in the pictures. In response to first meeting his online lover, the man said, “when I opened the door, I thought I saw my grandmother” (230). This middle aged man was scammed into believing he was in an online relationship with a young, beautiful bachelorette but really he was talking a mulch older, less attractive woman. McIntosh uses examples like this in the content of the paper to allow her audience to emotionally connect to a situation in which someone was scammed in an online relationship. The author effectively uses pathos to convince her audience how easily an individual could fall victim in an online relationship.

As McIntosh’s audience is the general public, she is in no way a well-known figure. In order to prove her credibility she uses the rhetorical strategy of ethos to gain reliability and in turn be more convincing of her ideas. She briefly explains who her sources are and why they are credible. This strategy reinforces her authority in making her claims. For example, she mentions that “33 percent of adults have used a fake identity and 45 percent have lied about their personal details,” and this information comes from the “2010 Norton Cybercrime Report” (230). Because the name of this report asserts its credibility to her audience, she does not need to further elaborate to her audience what the Norton Cybercrime Report is. In another example, McIntosh quotes LaVonya Reeves and because she understands her audience includes average individuals, she immediately explains that LaVonya Reeves is an “African American head of the online dating company reboundlovers.com” (231). McIntosh gives a short description of LaVonya Reeves and asserts her significance. This informs her audience who LaVonya Reeves is and why she is a credible source. By implying the reliability of her sources to the extent that will meet the needs of her rhetorical situation, McIntosh effectively proves her credibility. Therefore she successfully uses ethos to convince the audience of her purpose.

Claire McIntosh has successfully convinced her audience that online dating is untrustworthy using structure, evidence, ethos, and pathos to enforce her argument. Given the rhetorical situation the rhetorical strategies used throughout the article are effective in making the authors point. By structuring the article to present evidence that implies the author’s ideas without presenting the authors thesis allows an effective argument to be made. This argument is that online dating is better left alone. McIntosh also includes real life examples throughout the content that emotionally connects the readers to online relationships. This as well as her assertion of credibility by catering to the needs of her audience allow for a successful article

Works Cited

McIntosh, Claire. “Digital Deception.” *Authenticity.* Ed. Shane Borrowman. South Lake, TX:

Fountain Head Press. 2012. 229-231. Print.