A “High” Analysis of Marijuana Legalization Article

Recently throughout the news, there has been an issue that has had much discussion and debate. From presidential candidates to talk show hosts, the issue of marijuana legalization has been a hot topic. One of the reasons why it is such a controversial issue is that there are quite a variety of opinions about whether or not states should have their own control about how the drug should be used. On the pop culture’s website *Rolling Stone*, journalist Kristen Gwynne published an evaluative argument, “Fighting Marijuana Legalization Is Bad Politics” on August 26, 2015 that explores the issue of legalizing the drug marijuana. This rhetorical analysis paper will examine how ineffective Kristen Gwynne writes her argument using ethos, but argues better using pathos and logos. The use of these appeals is designed to engage the audience of the article and bring them closer to the topic of states’ rights.

The article begins out by saying that Republican respondents agree that states should have the ability to carry out their own marijuana laws without the federal government telling them what to do; the Democrats are indifferent about the topic and want to see how the issue turns out if states are given permission to create laws about marijuana legalization. Donald Trump as well as Jeb Bush both agree that marijuana isn’t very healthy if one were to consume the drug even though both have slightly different opinions about the matter. Chris Christie creates guilt and fear in people who have smoked or consumed marijuana and says to go right ahead and enjoy being “high.” Marco Rubio is totally in favor about states having their own
control about imposing their own laws without federal government interference. Other politicians are indifferent on the matter and want to see how states deal with the issue. As the article concludes, the author says that it is useless to fight against marijuana legalization.

Kristen Gwynne, the author of the article, defines the context as announcing recent polls showing that politicians from two states are in favor in giving states the right to create their own laws without the federal government telling them what to do. The context of the article is to give the reader a better understanding of what politicians are for legalizing marijuana, and which ones are against the issue. What makes the article difficult is that anti-marijuana people who read what Kristen writes can so easily lose interest because of how they believe, or what their opinion is about the issue. Gwynne’s purpose in writing this article is to not only inform the public that a poll shows opinions about the issue of legalization, but to draw people closer to the topic at hand and engage them in thinking about whether or not states should have the right to implement and enforce their own laws. As participants of the article, the people engaged are of course, Kristen Gwynne, the reader, politicians who are pro-legalization, politicians who are anti-legalization, people within the marijuana “black market”, and the federal government. The genre of the work is an online news article posted on a popular website for a younger generation.

Gwynne writes “Fighting Marijuana Legalization Is Bad Politics” as an evaluative argument. Evaluation arguments set out a certain criteria and then judge something, or somebody, to be good, bad, best, or worst according to those criteria. Kristen states multiple times in the article, both in the title, and at the very end, “blocking legalization is the big political loser these days.” What can be inferred from her statement is that it is useless to fight against the legalization of a questionable item, namely marijuana. Not even the president, the greatest
politician in the nation, wants to be any part of the controversy; he simply washes his hands of the matter. Kristen explores the issue of states’ rights of legalization through the use of ethos.

Kristen Gwynne discusses the controversy through her article by gathering information from the PPP, which is short for Public Policy Polling survey. The specific poll that is mentioned by Kristen is run by a group of people called the “marijuana majority” who collected the data and input from the people who had opinions about the states’ rights to allow the legalization of marijuana. Kristen’s information serves as her ethos to the reader, meaning that she is using reliable info about the poll. She also uses multiple quotes throughout her article, signifying that the candidates are a satisfactory source. However, the liability of the author is questionable later on in the article, when she refers to Marco Rubio as “Florida governor.” People who know their politicians know very well that Marco Rubio is not and never was a governor of the state of Florida. It seems as if Kristen is ignorant of the offices held by the politicians that she discusses in her article, giving reason to the reader to think whether or not they should believe what Gwynne writes online. Kristen uses good sources of information but doesn’t research the finer details of the controversy, like the title of Marco Rubio, making the audience think that she is unfamiliar with the issue.

Perhaps the over abundant use of rhetorical appeals that Kristen Gwynne uses in her article is the use of logos, or the use of logic. The most obvious of Kristen’s logical appeal to the reader is her reference to the PPP survey. By backing up her argument with the statistics given by the poll, Kristen illustrates that the majority of the citizens’ opinions in the states of New Jersey and Iowa is in favor of leaving the states to carry out their own marijuana policies without interference from the federal government. Gwynne uses Donald Trump as an example in her logical approach by stating that Trump is ambivalent about the use of marijuana even though he
was in favor of the drug in 1990. Donald Trump is strictly conservative that he even says that it is bad to the human race. He claims that when marijuana is consumed, the drug has “tremendously damaging effects.”

Possibly the most effective use of rhetorical appeals that Kristen Gwynne uses in her article, is the use of pathos, or her emotional appeal to her audience. Gwynne takes the example of Chris Christie and his quote: “if you’re getting high in Colorado today, enjoy it” to incite a sense of fear and guilt in people who read her article. Gwynne wants people to think that marijuana is not a good idea to consume because of the devastating aftereffects it has to the human body, especially to the brain. With this knowledge, people should reason out what the best possible solution is to the issue of marijuana.

As a journalist for *Rolling Stone*, Kristen Gwynne best argues that it is “bad politics” by fighting against marijuana allowance through her use of emotional appeal to the readers. I feel that striking a person’s emotions is the strongest method of persuasion you can effect to another person. If you only supply your audience with nothing but facts, statistics, and how well you trust your sources with information they give you, it means nothing to them. You have to make your audience feel and see your persuasion, not only by seeing. That is what I feel what Kristen does so well in her article. She instills fear into her readers and a sense of guiltiness as well when she quotes Donald Trump about the damaging effects.

What Kristen Gwynne could improve on is by making her argument additionally stronger through the improvement of her use of ethos. Gwynne’s credibility in her article is quite weak when it comes to details about people and the poll. If a person of significant status whether it would be the president, a presidential candidate, or any other politician were to read Kristen’s article online at a teenage pop culture website, the reader would get a sense of skepticism about
how trustworthy her article is. They would tend to think that an uninformed younger generation adult wrote a multitude of nonsense about the people in her article. They will find it very difficult to view and accept her argument because they will question everything else that she is going to say. Gwynne needs to start off strong so she can influence her readers better than she already has.
Works Cited

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