

Language analysis (Not about sex)

The Opinion Piece 'Not about sex' written by Robyn Riley was published in the Herald Sun on the 7th of October 2007. The Opinion Piece is accompanied by an image taken by Brianne Makin. 'Not about Sex' was written in response to the assumption that parents are not allowing their daughters to have the Gardasil vaccine because they are worried that it will make their daughters promiscuous, when the real issue is women's health. Riley contends that parents who refuse the vaccine are irresponsible and are potentially putting their daughter's health in jeopardy. She supports this contention through the use of experts, inclusive language, an attack and an image.

People are more likely to agree with the author's contention if the piece contains information from an expert in a particular field. In this piece, Riley has included the use of experts in order to add a greater depth to her argument that the Gardasil vaccine is a positive initiative. Riley has used the educated opinion of Natalie Jerkins, 'the chair of the Gynaecological Awareness information Network' who agree with Dr Edith Weisberg (a reproductive health research expert) who says that educating children about sex makes them more responsible. By including the opinion of women's health specialists, the reader is encouraged to agree with the contention as it appears to be reasonable and logical. The author also included the opinion of Tony Abbot (Federal Health Minister), known for his strong religious views. This, along with being a father of three teenage daughters it would be expected for him to be against anything that promoted promiscuity. However Riley makes the connection that the Gardasil vaccine is not about sex, but rather the health of his daughters and any other young women. Riley has also chosen to use inclusive language to support her contention.

People will think differently about an issue if they feel as if they are going to be affected by it. Riley has used the 'us verse them' mentality throughout her piece to allure the reader to support her contention. As a woman, Riley constantly uses the word "we" as a call to arms for women to take control of their health. Due to 20% of young girls not getting the vaccine, Riley has made the assumption that it is the parents that are not allowing them to have the vaccine. Riley says "I am gobsmacked. We don't live in the dark ages." By using the 'us verse them' mentality, the readers feel obligated to feel the same way as Riley does. By accusing anyone who does not allow the injection Riley is segregating them from the wider community and making their stance undesirable to others. By using inclusive language, it helps encourage people to believe that they do not want to be in the small minority that the author is claiming to be ignorant and irresponsible. In using inclusive language it builds support behind Riley's attack on those parents who she assumes are not letting their daughters have the injection because it may cause sexual promiscuity.

Alienating a particular viewpoint makes the opposing side of the issue seem negative and thoughtless. In this piece Riley has used an attack of parents who have not allowed their daughters to have the vaccine in order to make her contention more

legitimate. Riley states in an emotive tone that “it is ignorant disrespectful and I think bordering on a form of abuse”. Riley is attacking the parents who avoid the vaccine as she believes they should be disappointed with their actions because their daughters are at risk of obtaining cervical cancer. Riley is manipulating her readers as no parent would like to think that their actions around their children are connected to child abuse which therefore manipulates the readers to agree with Riley’s argument that irresponsible parents are letting their children be exposed to a “deadly cancer.” Riley further manipulates her readers by stating that “we don’t live in the dark ages,” which makes the reader feel alienated because they do not want to be considered anything but a modern day progressive Australian. The use of an attack persuades the reader to feel that any view other than the authors is irrational and thoughtless. Just as attacks weakens an opposing argument, the use of an visual aid also helps position the reader to agree with the author’s contention.

The writer has used a positive representation of the Gardasil vaccine in order to persuade the reader to agree with their contention. The image has been used to persuade the reader into believing that Gardasil is a good thing. The use of a dark background suggests that the photograph is staged however, Professor Ian Frazer and Therese Raft have been positioned in a positive light through their happy expression to be receiving a potentially lifesaving vaccine. This positive light supports Riley’s contention that every teenage girl should be receiving the Gardasil vaccine. The focal point of the image is the needle that attracts the reader’s attention first and then draws them into the happy and healthy looking young Therese. The positioning of the light on Therese’s face highlights her glowing clear complexion and shinning hair. This persuades the 20% of parents who have refused their daughters the Gardasil vaccine to look at Therese and see how perfect a daughter she looks. A daughter that any parent would won’t. It aims to make the 20% of parents refusing the vaccine feel guilty that they are denying their daughters this opportunity, while persuading the other 80% that they have absolutely done the right thing. The image helps to support the author’s contention that parents not allowing their daughters to have the vaccine are ignorant and irresponsible for believing it will make their daughters promiscuous.

In the Opinion Piece published in the Herald Sun on October 7th 2007, columnist Robyn Riley employees a number of persuasive strategies to persuade readers to support her contention. She contends that parents, by not allowing their daughter to have the Gardasil vaccine, for fears that it will make them promiscuous, are ignorant and irresponsible. In an outraged and at times sarcastic tone, Riley uses expert opinions to add more weight to her argument and encourage readers to believe that the argument is more reliable. In addition she uses inclusive language as well as a distinct ‘us and them mentality’ to persuade readers to support the author’s contention rather than support a suggested minority. Furthermore, the author uses an attack that aims to make readers see the author’s argument as more logical and

rational. Finally Riley's contention is supported through the use of Makin's photograph which helps to reinforce the soundness of her contention that parents refusing the vaccine are irresponsible and potentially putting their daughters wellbeing at risk.