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### ***50 First Dates and The Three Means of Persuasion***

#### **Foundations of Communications Final Paper**

I have loved learning about all the different concepts and theories throughout this quarter. One concept that I found particularly interesting this quarter is the idea of persuasion. The article *Argumentation and persuasion in patient- centered communication* stated, “it is concerned with how people present justifications or reasons to support or refute standpoints that are in play between them” and then continued on to say that “the theory encompasses a broad set of related theoretical approaches and domains of interaction, from argumentation in formal settings such as law courts to the dynamics of ordinary human interactions in which people seek to influence each other – like doctor–patient interaction” (Salmon 543). In other words, the theory of persuasion is the concept of convincing someone to do something or think a certain way by using ethos, logos, and/ or pathos. Persuasion is used within communication in many forms and after reading about this concept on my own and learning about the concept within class, I have a better understand of what persuasion really is.

Persuasion is used every day whether one realizes it or not. Persuasion can be used through many different mediums, with many different end goals. One way that people can persuade or be persuaded is through email: “the primary means by which organizations recruit new donors is by using written persuasive appeals sent by direct mail” (Austin, Clark, Sigmar

15). The authors then go on to state, “one of the most persuasive rhetorical strategies in both spoken and written discourse” (Austin, Clark, Sigmar 15). This, along with many other forms of communication, are ways to be persuasive. The concept of persuasion is broken into three different aspects: Pathos, Logos, and Ethos.

The theory of persuasion made me think of the film *50 First Dates*. This movie revolves around two main characters, Henry Roth, who is played by Adam Sandler and Lucy Whitmore, who is played by Drew Barrymore. Lucy suffers from brain damage due to an accident she was in earlier in her life, making her think that every day is the same. The concept of persuasion is used every day to convince her that it is in fact that same day, every day.

#### **EXPLAINING YOUR CONCEPT/THEORY:**

The first means of persuasion is ethos. Ethos is described as the wisdom, trust, and goodwill of persuasion. Ethos gives an individual credibility and allows the audience to trust the individual's perspective about the topic of persuasion. The concept of ethos takes a long time to build because one needs to gain a sense of trust or knowledge on the given subject. Ethos is used all the time. An example of this is when professors explain their academic backgrounds on the first day of class. Although this may seem boring and unnecessary at first glance, they are actually stating that they are credible and are giving you a reason as to why you should listen to them and trust what they have to say.

Credibility is especially important within the education world, because you do not want to take in information that is not trustworthy. Many news sources or magazine articles may seem invalid because there are copious amounts of bias present in those sources. The most trustworthy

and credible sources are the ones that do not have a lot of bias present, rather it solely presents facts and information, which is what most professors do within their classes.

A second part of persuasion has to do with pathos. Pathos appeals to one's emotions ranging between affection, joy, sorrow, and everything in between. The two emotions that are used the most within pathos are fear and pity. Using one's emotions to persuade someone is a dominant way to do so.

An example of pathos that is present within our everyday lives is the way advertisements and commercials are presented to their viewers. When a commercial is sad and shows terrifying photos of battered animals or humans, you want to help, which in turn leads you to make a donation to their cause. On a more uplifting note, pathos is also used in commercials to make you buy a certain product. A specific example of this is the Budweiser commercial during the Superbowl. This commercial has a horse and a puppy and it shows their relationship and how they do not want to leave each other. This commercial personally resonated with my family, and for some reason convinced my dad to buy only Budweiser from there on out.

The last type of persuasion is Logos. Logos is the logistical side of persuading an individual. This type of persuasion uses exact evidence and or facts to further an argument. Within logos, there are four types of reasoning which include specific instances, principles, casuals, and analogical reasoning.

Politicians tend to use logos a lot within their campaigns and help their persuasion techniques. They rely heavily on facts and statistics when talking about a certain subject such as climate change. To show that climate change is a problem, most candidates used statistics and factual evidence to back up their argument and hope to persuade their audience or future voters

to vote for them because they know the facts and know the right way to go about fixing issues like these.

Persuasion is a technique that people use in their everyday lives to help in many aspects like, gaining information, convincing someone to do something or for pure manipulation.

### **FORMULATE RESEARCH QUESTION/JUSTIFY CHOICE OF THEORY:**

While watching *50 First Dates* through a persuasion lens, I was able to formulate a research question that I plan on analyzing in regard to the film. The research question I was able to develop is the following: How can the three means of persuasion help us understand Henry's tactics to help Lucy with her short-term memory loss in the movie *50 First Dates*?

I chose this specific theory of persuasion to analyze these two characters interactions because I would argue that the whole film is Henry trying to persuade and convince Lucy that he loves her each and every day, and as the movie shows, he does this in multiple ways.

### **ANALYZE THREE SCENES FROM FILM:**

Due to a traumatic car accident Lucy was involved in, she wakes up every morning thinking that it is Sunday, October 13. After the accident, Lucy is incapable of having any short term memory. This results in her solely relying on her long term memory, which includes anything that happened before the accident, and nothing that happened after it. The people around her, which include her father Marlin, her brother Doug, and Henry every night after Lucy goes to sleep, 'reset's up' the day to exactly how it was on the day of the accident. Through this constantly resetting of the day, every day, her brother and father have to persuade and convince

her that it is the same day all over again, to avoid the bad days, where she realizes that she had been in a terrible accident. They use the tactics of persuasion to help remind her that it is the same day.

One way her father and brother do this is by giving her the same newspaper every morning when she wakes up. The act of doing this applies logos because it is using logical information, a trustworthy source such as a newspaper, with a time stamp on it to show that it is in fact the day she thinks it is. Another tactic they use to persuade her into thinking it is October 13th everyday, is by having her go to Sue's shop every day for breakfast and having her get the same dish every day. Besides these two specific aspects, the garage is also repainted white every night so she can repaint it, they add soap to the soap dispenser, and every day they celebrate her father's birthday by watching the football game. All of these things, the family does every day to help persuade their daughter and sister that it is in fact the same day, every day.

Another part of the film that similarly does this is when Henry makes the movie that the family decides to have her watch every day when she wakes up in the morning. The little movie he makes for her to watch highlights big events that had happened between the time of her accident to the present day. It explained what happened to her and why she is the way she is. This connects similarly to the other scene because it is using logos to show its logic, but also pathos, and ethos. Pathos is used within the movie to catch up on everything Lucy had missed because it is specially individualized to her and everything she had been through. Her news story is something that is in the movie clip, presidential elections and other things like that. These things are all connected to her emotions and specifically her emotion of fear. Clearly, part of the video that emotionally persuades Lucy is the scene where there is a clip from Lucy and Henry's

wedding. She gets extremely emotional because the home-made movie, in this specific instance, is reminding her that she is happily married. And lastly, ethos is also used within the movie Henry makes because it shows the credibility and wisdom of the situation and does a great job outlining everything she's missed.

The last part of the film that I want to analyse is how Henry must persuade Lucy every day that she is in love with him over and over again. A *Rolling Stones* article about *50 First Dates* states that, “that’s when Henry, whose love life is basically one-night stands with tourists, decides Lucy is the woman for him even if he must persuade her to fall in love with him again every day.” In one explicit scene where they are with all of Lucy’s friends, they talk about how he makes her refall in love with him everyday. He does this by figuring out the things she likes and then bringing them up the next day, because she does not remember the previous day’s conversation. Specifically, one day Lucy tells Henry to bring up lilacs because she does not want him to ‘strike out tomorrow’ and the following day he showed up with lilacs at her door. This appeals to her pathos and ethos specifically. Another specific example is the first time Lucy and Henry meet. She states that she loves the way that Henry smells like fish because her brother and father always spend time on the water and smell like fish. The next day he purposely comes into the diner smelling like fish, hoping to appeal to her pathos because she has strong emotions attached to the smell of fish.

Persuasion is an intriguing lens through which to watch a movie because it focuses on what characters do precisely within each scene. The three means of persuasion help explain to individuals why they do or believe the things they are told to do. Ethos, Logos, and Pathos help explain why we are persuaded to do these things. Each aspect of persuasion is used intentionally

when trying to get one's point across. *50 First Dates* specifically revolves around the idea of persuasion because this was something that the people in Lucy's life had to do every day with her.

#### Works Cited

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