
Rhetorical Analysis Of Identity Speech By Andrew Solomon

When people decide to have children, they never expect to be the few parents who children are born with differences from their own. These differences can be a disability, sexuality identity, or even their ability. What happens when these parents end up having children with differences from them? Andrew Solomon who “is a writer and lecturer of politics, culture and psychology, and a professor of Clinical Psychology at Columbia University” decided to research these “parents who not only learn to deal with their exceptional children, but also find profound meaning in doing so”. He discusses his research, and his time spent on studying the topic, of parents with children who have differences from them. Which verifies to the audience that he is knowledgeable about the subject he is discussing. He also discusses how he writes for the NY Times, which also verifies his credibility to the audience. Using neo-Aristotelian criticism I will examine Andrew Solomon’s use of rhetoric to persuade those to love others because of their differences, I will “determine whether or not this goal was met or what happened as a result of the rhetoric.”

Growing up Andrew Solomon was faced with having his own mother love him because of his difference. Solomon’s speech was geared to those who struggle with loving and accepting others who have differences from them. Growing up with identity differences from his parents is what drove Andrew Solomon into researching the argument that we need to love and accept people because of their differences. Solomon started researching this subject after doing a story for the NY Times on the Deaf community. Through this he learned how people with a disability learned how to have an identity with their disability. This is called “Disability identity refers to possessing a positive sense of self and feelings of connection to, or solidarity with, the disability community.” This identity surprised Solomon, because he didn’t realize that “this phrase refers to the affirmation – rather than denial - of one’s reality as a person with a disability and incorporating this group membership into one’s identity.”

Through this research of disability identity Solomon was exposed to how parents love their child who has these differences from them. He uses specific examples from his life and other families he has studied to draw to his conclusion. There are two sides to the argument that Andrew Solomon is trying to justify. There are those who believe that we should love people because of their differences, and there are those who still see peoples differences as a reason not to love them. Throughout our time in history, we have become more and more accepting of others and their differences. However, we are in a time in a history that “even if a majority of Americans are embracing the country’s increasingly diverse demographics, and vocal minority is resisting the

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change with every weapon at its disposal.”

Andrew Solomon is arguing that we need to love our children because of their differences. The reason that there is backlash to this argument is because people think it's easier to love their child if they didn't have the differences. Their children are put outside of what is considered normal. We don't necessary want to be outside normal even though we claim to embrace diversity. Solomon is arguing that we need to love people because of their differences. To support his central argument Solomon uses both external and internal proofs. Solomon uses external proofs through the use of quotes and stories that he has gathered using his research. For example 06:36 minutes into Solomon's speech he tells a story about a dwarf he met and how his mother loved him no matter what and that is why he was successful. This story of the dwarf reinforced the central argument Solomon was arguing. The use of stories and quotes from outside sources helps reinforce the audience belief to support Solomon's argument. This is best for the audience, because it shows the audience there is a problem in the world and here is how you can fix it. throughout the speech Solomon develops his central argument. Solomon sets up his speech by making a claim, and then supporting that claim through outside sources. Each claim Solomon makes supports his central argument, for example at 04:15 into his speech Solomon claims that “there are really two kinds of identity” he then goes on and discusses these identities and uses this claim to support his central argument. The claims that Solomon makes is backed by stories and examples from the research he has conducted. This verifies to the audience that his claims that he makes, is supported by evidence. However, the audience may question his scientific reasonings behind his claims. Many of his claims he makes such as the two kinds of identity, is not backed by scientific research. These claims are backed by his own observation. Though the audience may believe Solomon's claim, there is still doubt due to the lack of scientific evidence. Solomon uses personal stories, and stories of others to appeal to his audience's emotion. The use of stories made his claims come to life, the audience is able to visualize the reality of loving people with differences. The audience then is moved to act on those emotions, by loving those who are different around them. His use of word love in his argument, plays with the audiences emotional appeal.

People do not want to hear that they may not love a family member, or people around them. So it makes the audience uncomfortable with the fact that he is claiming that they may not fully love the people around them. This moves the audience to act, and to fix that problem. Not only does his word choice and stories make his speech persuasive. Solomon's tone throughout the speech makes the audience listen to what he has to say. For example Solomon starts off his speech with a powerful quote then directly goes into why he is standing on the stage, “and my question is, how did we get from there to here? How did an illness become an identity?”. Diving right into the reason why he is on the stage sets the tone for the speech, it shows the audience he knows why he is here and that I should listen to what he has to say. Solomon wants his audience to know that they need to go out and accept people because of their differences. To

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do this he addresses the needs of his audience. He sets up the why this is a problem, and that there needs to be a change now. To support his why, Solomon uses personal stories and stories of others to satisfy the needs of his audience. The stories both answered the why and showed the audience ways they could solve the problem at hand. Solomon does a good job at persuading the audience, using various strategies. However, he needs to support his claims more with facts and not just specific stories.

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