

“I like guns. I hate guns.”

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Abstract

This paper examined the use of logos during a fifteen minute section of comedian Jim Jefferies' special performance "Bare." This paper analyzed and evaluated the overall effectiveness of logos on the performance with the topic of gun control, and how its success is drawn from argumentation and reasoning.

Introduction

Since the start of the Revolutionary War American citizens who live in the United States and abide by the constitution have stood divided. From rules and regulations to cultural norms and political values, there is not one idea that all people living in America can agree on. This schism is what makes our country's politics so unique. As Americans we express our individuality by electing and voting for candidates who best embody the values and ideas we want to see expressed in government policies. Some popular themes that have swept elections in the past and current years are marriage equality, immigration, health care, and gun control. Within these topics the division is drawn between wanting a stronger or weaker version of the proposed law. One of the biggest divisions that weighs heavily on American politics is the topic of strong or limited gun control.

The 2nd amendment of the Constitution awarded American citizens the right to bare arms in 1791, and over the last 200 years many Americans have chosen to access this right. Unfortunately, many citizens have co-opted guns in a different manner than the intended purposed of defending oneself, ultimately leading to injury and death.

In his 2014 special "Bare", Australian comedian Jim Jefferies addresses many of the significant issues surrounding the right to own guns in America and the specific problems that

owning guns has caused. As a native citizen to a country that banned guns after a deadly massacre, his points and views on the history and use of guns in America provides an interesting and surprising perspective to a highly debated topic. His fifteen-minute discussion and development of logos (arguments) allowed him the opportunity to present opinions that divide Americans.

In this paper I develop a focus on three parts. This includes a description of the artifact, Jim Jefferies fifteen-minute comedic speech. A description of the unit of analysis logos, which focuses on the advancement of arguments and evidence used. Lastly, I will make sense of the overall effectiveness of the comedic speech through its development of logos.

Description of Artifact

Within the comedy world the name Jim Jefferies comes as no surprise. A stand-up comedian, as well as a writer and actor, Jim Jefferies is known for his insult, black, and observational comedy. His work is defined by his willingness to lay everything out on the table, a quality most expressed in his quote, “There’s a formula in stand-up comedy: The more offensive the joke, the funnier it has to be. It’s simple math.” It is this exact kind of behavior that shapes his special “Bare,” released August 29, 2014 on Netflix.

The performance “Bare” is Jefferies fifth special to be released and covers a range of topics from his life with his new kid and girlfriend, to sex and drugs, and everything in-between (Netflix). Jefferies himself stated, “The new special is probably the most confrontational special that I’ve ever brought out.” (Split Sider) The part of his performance that I analyze is his fifteen-minute segment on guns. With the same up-front attitude as shown in the rest of the performance, Jefferies leaves little room for interpretation on his views and statements covering guns, gun

ownership and gun control in America. This specific performance bit helps to convey the message that along with other American policies, the policy on guns is a very controversial and highly debated subject, however, his specific message clearly comes across. For example, he matter-of-factly states, “First reason, I’m making good points. Second reason, I’m foreign,” when addressing the 10% of the audience he claims is “furious.” (Jefferies 34:00) He also doesn’t shy away from comparing the gun usage to that of his home country, Australia. It’s that mix of facts, event details, and having an outsider’s personal opinion that helps him to carry out his comedic and thought-inducing performance, creating an experience like no other.

Unit of Analysis

The primary subject matter of this analysis is logos. When the focus is on logos, the analysis highlights the persuasive reasoning through close attention towards the arguments made and evidence used. Logos, Aristotle’s favorite rhetoric device and Greek for *word*, “Refers to the internal consistency of the message—the clarity of the claim, the logic of its reason, and the effectiveness of its supporting evidence.” (Durhamtech) Logos is simply the use of logic within a source. It is the evaluation of the points being made and whether they are being drawn from fact or value. The two different forms of reasoning are inductive and deductive. Inductive reasoning is drawing from observations to form a conclusion while deductive reasoning is forming a conclusion from points that are generally assumed to be true. One relies on fact while the other relies on value.

The main analysis of Jefferies’ “Bare” will be focused on the supporting evidence used for his arguments and the amount of logical reasoning created. By analyzing the specific evidence and support used in the artifact of interest a conclusion can be made on whether the

arguments were formed and supported by value, fact, or both. Logos addresses the use of testimony, authority, opinion, comparisons, and analogies used to state the specific argument.

Analysis

Presentations, performances, and speeches both formal and informal rely on logos, the use of logical evidence of fact and value, to present sufficient arguments to their audiences. Presentation of these arguments using evidence is used to persuade the audience with reason rather than emotion and credibility. Jim Jefferies uses argumentative reasoning based off of value and fact to persuade his audience about the influence of guns in America.

One of the ways that a speaker persuades their audience is to provide factual evidence to support their reasoning and claims. This is made through the presentation of statistical evidence, and calling attention to real-world events. Jim Jefferies approached his arguments by using factual evidence about historical events of massacres and deaths by guns. Use of details from these events help to develop his underlying reasoning that guns in the hands of citizens can cause harm, later using this theme to show what people's many response are to these events. The two events he gathered his main supporting evidence from were the Port Arthur and Sandy Hook massacres. The Port Arthur massacre occurred in Port Arthur in Tasmania, Australia in 1996 when a mentally handicapped man shot and killed 35 men, women, and children in one day (History). While in 2012 another mentally impaired young man shot 26 students and staff members at Sandy Hook Elementary in New Town, Connecticut (ABC News). After referencing these events, Jefferies points out that before Port Arthur there had been ten shootings in ten years and then the Australian government put a ban on guns and since then there has not been another shooting. He then jokes, "I don't know how or why this happened, maybe it was a

coincidence?” (Jefferies 27:23) By gathering this factual evidence he is able to propose the argument, in a joking matter, that the lack of direct access to guns is directly correlated to few-to-zero shootings. This argument is also supported when he makes the comment, ‘After Sandy Hook your government went, “Maybe we’ll get rid of the big guns,”’(Jefferies 28:09) and then continued with the general understanding that half of Americans were mad at the idea of their guns being taken away. By introducing an argument that is supported by factual evidence Jefferies establishes the logical inductive reasoning that unlike in Australia, Americans regardless of past events, do not want a strict ban on guns. This reasoning becomes the basis for his later arguments that are supported by evidence based off of value.

When a speaker is arguing a point that is based off personal value rather than fact it becomes more difficult to persuade the audience of your arguments. As a comedian Jim Jefferies faces this situation every time he performs. When introducing the topic of gun control he states, “I believe in your right as Americans to have guns, I am not trying to stop you from having guns. All I am saying is that this is my personal belief on the matter— I don’t like guns.” (Jefferies 27:08) By putting emphasis on his values he creates a divide amongst the audience, those who share the same values and those who disagree with them. Every argument supported by value targets the audience differently. One point that Jefferies presents with evidence based off value is the arguments he believes the people who like guns use. It is an argument of value because he make personal claims that some of the audience could see as being untrue or feel indifferent about. These arguments include what he believes is correct to use and what is not. Jefferies states, ‘The only argument people have is “I like guns,”’(Jefferies 28:25) while claiming that is its not the best argument but its all they got. The argument he believes is a bunch of lies is, “I

need it for protection.” (Jefferies 28:50) He then goes on to list the reasons people want it including protection for their family and for themselves. To counteract these reasons with the claim, “I’ve never herd of these protection rifles you speak of,” (Jefferies 29:05) in order to emphasis the idea that people who own guns own assault rifles. The values shared by Jefferies were a form of deductive reasoning because he collected points he assumes are true and formed an argument about the American need for guns. Unlike facts, the presentation of values develops arguments in different ways. Audiences believe facts, even if they come from unreliable sources. Values and opinions, on the other hand, take more effort to establish an agreement in if ideas between the arguer and the audience differ.

One of the last ways Jim Jefferies presents his arguments to the audience is through the use of comparisons and analogies. By comparing and forming connections between points a speaker supports their reasoning through common ideas and shared facts and beliefs. One of the points Jefferies makes is that the right to gun ownership in America is attributed by the 2nd amendment, and that like others in the past amendments can be changed. The heavily-weighted amendment he puts forth in support of the argument was the right to own slaves. Jefferies then compares the reasons people today don’t want their guns taken away to the reasons people in the past didn’t want their slaves taken away. He throws out phrases such as, “I’m a responsible gun/slave owner, I use my gun/slave to protect my family, I keep my gun/slaves locked up in a safe.” (Jefferies 37: 50) Another comparison was the idea that it’s just the crazy people who misuse guns so why should the good people be punished. The proposition of this argument is one that leads in many debates among Americans, and is simply the idea that if all people have access to guns then the unstable “crazy” ones have access to guns. To settle this argument Jefferies

states, “That’s the thing about crazy people, they don’t know they’re crazy, that’s what makes them crazy.” (Jefferies 38:40) By creating comparisons of ideas Jefferies emphasizes the main arguments he wants his audience to connect with and find logical. The comparison to owning slaves and owning guns allows for the argument to reflect the idea that guns are bad and there isn’t that many ways to justify owning one. By making the claim that all people could be potentially crazy eliminates the idea that the “good” “responsible” people will miss out on owning guns.

The last point Jefferies ends with in his segment on gun control is the argument that current gun models and policies are in no way comparable to those that existed when the 2nd Amendment was passed. He draws on the fact that the law was written during a time when it was evident that the American people needed the opportunity to form a militia in the event of a rising tyrannical government. However, it has been established that threat no longer exists. His simple statement, “You’re bringing guns to a drone fight,” (Jefferies 41:20) clearly establishes the idea that current situations now do not call a need for guns. His reasoning leaves the audience with a clear ending argument that wraps up and encompasses the whole meaning behind the segment. The audience is left with the persuasion that guns and the ideas behind owning guns as well as the history of guns in America is something of an antiquated laughing matter.

Conclusion

Gun control is a very widely debate subject in America, leaving people divided between those who want them banned and those who own one. When is comes to discussing the topic of ownership and the right to have guns many people are not willing to listen. In order to present and argue a personal opinion on a “hot topic” such as gun control a speaker must develop a

strong sense of reasoning through the use of logos. In his comedic special "Bare" Jim Jefferies develops this strong sense of logical reasoning and many persuasive arguments supported by factual evidence and evidence of value. Without proper evidence an argument that does not appeal to an audience's beliefs will not persuade them to find value or logic in the speaker's reasoning. To avoid this Jefferies relied on evidence drawn from facts about actual events as well as evidence supported by his personal beliefs and ideas. This allowed him to present his arguments thoroughly and establish a comedic as well as valued relationship with his audience. Not many people can make a topic such as gun control humorous while being informative at the same time. However, Jim Jefferies did just that.

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