Contradictory Evidence

In the essay, “Masculinity as Homophobia”, Michael S. Kimmel explains the importance of fully confronting struggles related to norms of masculinity in order to cause a change in the current societal standards. Naomi Wolf, in her essay “The Beauty Myth”, focuses on the way beauty has hindered the progress women have made in society and she concludes that the only way to change is by shifting the way society looks at beauty. Kimmel’s use of anecdotes and analogies produces an informal, personal tone which builds a connection with the reader, while Wolf’s use of facts and quotes yields a formal, objective tone which persuades her ideas to the audience with credible outside sources.

In Kimmel’s essay, he introduces the idea of men being afraid of femininity and then goes on to give an example of an on-going bet he has with his friend. He explains that he can provoke a fight between young boys on a playground by asking them a single question (147). By sharing this piece of information, Kimmel demonstrates how his experience has gotten him more personally involved with his claim. This particular story also demonstrates personal research and establishes a credible connection by initiating the essay with his own experiment, or “bet”. His connection with the younger generation of males allows men, or the audience, to identify with the author at a more personal level making his ideas credible.

Kimmel’s anecdotes continue to aim at the younger generation of males as he continues to progress into his explanation of arguments. In the second example he provides, he focuses on
young adult males or specifically on his students in his sociology class. He quotes one of his students saying that he was going to wear his new pair of shorts but knowing that they were going to have a discussion about homophobia, he did not believe it was a good idea to wear his lavender and pink shorts (148). Kimmel reveals his profession in this anecdote, if not known before, and he gives details of a specific occurrence that he experienced. Knowing that he works closely with males and he actually teaches them, makes his argument more credible among his intended audience. Kimmel starts establishing a pattern to which he is beginning to incorporate all generations of males into his personal realm of knowledge. Establishing a connection with all ages of males is important to his essay since they are the specific target audience, in turn helping them identify with his message.

Kimmel wraps up his examples by using an analogy to explain the way men feel. He illustrates the chauffeur analogy by explaining that the chauffeur seems to have the power since he is driving but in reality, he is just taking orders and is actually powerless (150). Kimmel’s main focus in this part of the essay are adult males, demonstrated through his usage of the profession of a chauffeur which is a job typically obtained by older men. The context of a job is something that men can relate to in their personal life. Kimmel’s decision to use this analogy aims to connect men with an activity they can identify with: an occupation. This helps the reader understand Kimmel’s example more thoroughly and sets a more credible personal account.

In contrast, Wolf uses facts and quotes from different sources to explain her ideas. When she began introducing her topic of beauty, she started off by stating that, “thirty-three thousand American women told researchers that they would rather lose ten to fifteen pounds than achieve any other goal” (10). She uses this research to bring attention to her claim. Statistics like this are not easily ignored by the public and in specific women who are affected by it. Her usage of
numbers brings an objective account which gets the audience wondering what the context of these numbers are. The context is what the author continues to explain and makes the audience assume credibility since it is backed up by numbers or statistics.

Wolf continues her claim on how the beauty myth has affected women by the use of quotes from other people to show support in her argument. She explains that “in 1962, Betty Friedan quoted a young woman trapped in the feminine Mystique: ‘Lately, I look in the mirror, and I’m so afraid I’m going to look like my mother’” (12). Wolf uses this example to objectively demonstrate the effect that beauty is having on women. She does not incorporate her own personal experience into her essay but rather has these different accounts help her illustrate her concerns. She uses Betty Friedan’s words, who is also a writer, to emphasize the problem she is trying to prove in her essay. Some readers look for certification of claims from not just the writer but from outside sources as well. Her inclusion of these accounts produce credibility because the reader is not only getting her insight but others as well.

Kimmel and Wolf take two different approaches to their presentation of evidence in supporting their claims. This enables them to achieve two different but successful tones in their essays. Kimmel’s informal, objective tone takes on a personalized connection with the audience which improves the distribution of ideas he has to offer to his audience. Wolf’s formal, objective tone can incorporate part of the audience who is skeptical of the ideas that Wolf presents and make it more convincing. This connection between the two essays was interesting because it demonstrates how two completely different approaches to providing evidence can successfully produce credibility and convince readers of the authors’ points.
Works Cited
