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“‘Concussion’ doctor says kids shouldn’t play these sports until they’re 18.” Rhetorical Analysis

In the article “‘Concussion’ doctor says kids shouldn’t play these sports until they’re 18”, the author, A. Pawlowski, interviews Dr. Bennet Omalu about the dangers of concussions in contact sports. Dr. Bennet, a forensic pathologist, uses pathos to convince his audience, particularly parents of children in sports, that concussions are more prevalent than they seem. His main audience is parents, and considering Dr. Bennet is a father himself, he is a reliable source. In the article, Pawlowski does an excellent job catering to a specific audience, using reliable sources, and eye-catching photos; however, there is only one side of the argument represented.

Pawlowski clearly uses pathos in this article because her source is passionate about the topic of concussions. Pathos is a strategy used by authors that plays on the reader's emotions. Dr. Bennet says, “You wouldn’t let your child drink a glass of cognac or smoke a cigarette, so why would you send him out on a football field to risk brain damage?” This quote is quite accusatory, and it would cause parents of children in contact sports to think twice before letting their children participate. The six main sports Dr. Bennet is referring to are, “American football, ice hockey, mixed martial arts, boxing, wrestling and rugby” (Bennet).

Another way the author caters to her audience is by quoting Dr. Bennet when he says, “Which is more dangerous: a cigarette or a concussion of the brain? A concussion of the brain, of course. If that is not the definition of child abuse, what is it?” Again, Dr. Bennet is quite bold in his statement. This could be seen as dramatic to some parents, but Bennet says it actually makes

parents emotional. Bennet says, "I've not met any parent who disagrees. Some parents will say, 'Don't put it like that; that makes me feel bad.'" Most people don't think about comparing playing sports to smoking a cigarette or child abuse, but coming from a doctor and parent, people are more inclined to listen.

That leads into the second point about this article, which is the fact that the author uses a credible source. The article is about the dangers of concussions in sports, and Pawlowski chose to interview a forensic pathologist. A forensic pathologist--commonly known as a medical examiner-- is a doctor that examines corpses to identify the cause of death. Because Dr. Bennet has this background, he is a credible source. Not only is he a doctor, but he is a parent. Other parents are more likely to relate to him because of that. Dr. Bennet said, "My son is almost 8 years old and he'll be the first to tell you that football is not good for your brain." It is strategic for Pawlowski to include this quote because it makes the fact that Dr. Bennet is a father more real to readers.

One downfall of this article is that, although Dr. Bennet is a great source, he is the only source. There is no argument against Dr. Bennet explaining why it is safe for children under 18 to play contact sports. This is a negative because it makes the author appear biased. That would turn off many people who read it and disagree. If the article is one sided, those who oppose will most likely not change their opinion, no matter how great of an argument the author makes.

Lastly, a helpful tactic Pawlowski uses is including visuals, such as pictures and videos. There are two videos from "The Today Show" that were stories about the effects of concussions. One was about an ongoing study of how 8-13 year old boys' brains change through one season--with hope to continue through multiple seasons-- and the other story is about NFL

players who have been affected long term by brain damage while playing football. Both these videos add great substance to the article because they show both current effects and long term effects of concussions. The thumbnail of one video is a picture of a boy, who is holding his head as if he is in pain, playing football. This is useful because when the reader sees it, they associate football with head injuries, which is the whole point of the article.

This article succeeded in trying to persuade a specific audience that children under 18 should not participate in contact sports. Pawlowski uses a reliable source, however, where this article is weak is in the fact that it only shows one side of the argument. Overall, the author did a satisfactory job using pathos to convince a specific audience that concussions need to be taken more seriously. She used a credible source and included relevant photos and videos. If she would have included another perspective, the article would have been more relatable to more people; therefore, better.