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Normal is Boring

By Britney Grisez

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My name is Britney Grisez and I am a senior at Penta Career Center in the Medical Technologies Program. After my high school career, my future plans include going to college for my bachelor's degree in radiology. During the last semester of my junior year at Penta, I participated in the GSW 1110: Introduction to Academic Writing class. From taking this class through BGSU, I received one college credit. I also plan on taking the GSW 1120: Academic Writing class this year, as well. For an assignment in GSW 1110 last year, I wrote a paper for the Analyzing A Visual assignment. The essay needed to include a visual that could be argued in more than one way and analyzed rhetorically by two of the three rhetorical strategies (pathos, logos, and ethos). The intention was to persuade the reader into viewing the visual the same way I did but, I also included a counter argument, which is the additional way to view the visual. The visual I used was street art from the banksy website of a boy painting on a wall and an adult covering the street art up. In the assignment, I described how I envisioned the artist's thinking on the piece. Some revisions I could make to the paper are making my paper more interesting and fixing up some grammar mistakes.

Young generations are often viewed as rebellious and disobedient, but frankly, this is not the case. These young people express themselves in colorful and flamboyant ways that were not socially acceptable to members of older generations. Most members of society are from older generations that were accustomed to simple ways of living that did not include modern technology or electronics. Newer generations are well-known for modern technology and using more efficient ideas in their everyday life. Due to the different ways these generations were raised, older generations tend to put down younger generations for revealing their viewpoints in different ways than what was considered the "status quo." For this reason, members of the younger generations are wrongly viewed as disorderly simply because they were taught in different ways. An image by the street artist Banksy represents society or older generations persuading younger generations to be normal and fit in rather than being unique by expressing themselves in their own way.

To begin, the street artist Banksy created a painting on a white brick wall that summarizes how society tries to cover up the way younger generations express their ideas because it is not traditional. The painting includes a young, brown haired boy wearing a light gray t-shirt, dark jeans, holding a paintbrush while painting the green stem of a flower. The flowers the boy has painted are green stemmed with red petals and orange centers. There are four completed flowers and one non-completed flower that the boy is currently working on: the four completed flowers have gray paint covering the top of the flower and the flower the boy is working on is not covered in gray paint. A tall man wearing gray coveralls stands behind the boy holding a can of paint in one hand and a paint roller in the other. While the man stands behind the boy, the boy has his back to him and the man is facing the boy's back while also standing in slouched manner. Also, the man's face is blacked out to display him as an enemy figure. All the

details of this image make up a story that gives the message that society wants younger generations to be more like older generations.



Fig. 1: Banksy. "New Orleans - Banksy." Custom Puzzle Craft. N.p., n.d. Web. 3 Mar. 2017. <<http://www.custompuzzlecraft.com/Weather/banksy.html>>.

Clearly, the boy was intended to be shown as a young figure; the boy is obviously meant to represent the younger generation. As the boy expresses himself and his viewpoints through painting flowers, he creates an example on how the younger generations express themselves through modern ideas. The boy painting a flower represents the innocence of him expressing himself. Also, as the boy focuses on painting, his back is facing the man who is covering up his paintings with gray paint which represents the boy is unaware that his paintings have done any harm to anything at all. Young generations may not be aware of any harm they are being accused of doing. Furthermore, the man standing behind the boy imitates the older generations who grew up not having the same viewpoints or same methods of expression as younger generations. The older generations believe it is less acceptable to point out certain perspectives in ways that are different simply because it is not considered normal. With reference to the older man's face being blacked out, it shows that the man is the antagonist or enemy figure in the situation in which the boy's flowers are being camouflaged. The blacking out of the man's face also represents society attempting to disguise the expressions of younger generations given the impression that it could harm the environment or how the environment is viewed. In that case, the gray paint that was applied over the flowers symbolizes the idea of society expecting normality: normality is the status of being usual, normal, or typical. The gray paint represents society wanting people to pursue the "status quo" and fit in with the normal expectations that

everybody else follows. Younger generations grew up not following the “status quo” simply because being normal and predictable is uninteresting and dull.

On the whole, the image contains a logical interpretation and an emotional viewpoint on the message the image presents. The logical or logos interpretation is the idea that the older generations of the world do not agree with the younger generation's way of life or habits of expressing themselves in exciting ways. Older generations have the perspective of living a simple life along with operating without modern technologies like cell phones or computers. Younger generations have a different way of expressing themselves. For example, members of newer generations create street art, graffiti, or other forms of modern expressions. Just because these two generations grew up differently and developed unique perspectives does not mean their way of life is wrong. Each generation simply has an opposite way of life than the other. In addition, the image also has an emotional or pathos viewpoint. The emotional side of the image gives off sympathetic reactions due to the boy's flowers being covered up and hidden for no specific reason besides the opinions of people who have authority. Yet, the boy does not have any idea he is doing any harm to anything; he believes he is simply painting flowers. As the boy paints something as childlike as flowers, it represents the innocence of the boy and how something as innocent can do no harm to society.

Although the obvious point of observation is arguing that the boy in the image is the victim of society, but another possible viewpoint of this image would be taking the man's side and stating that younger generations are ruining society and an example would be through street art. Some may also determine younger generations should stick to the “status quo” and fit it because society would function much easier with no trouble. Older generations could be fed up with trying to disguise or whitewash younger generations' problems that they believe is an interruption to society's way of life that is considered normal. Similarly, the idea of the man behind the boy slouching as he stands and having a displaced appearance could quite possibly be for the reason that he is being forced to clean up and hide the imprints the younger generations make on the world. It could be argued that the expressions made from newer generations are changing the environment negatively and the members of the older generations are frustrated with trying to cover it up, as shown in the image. However, this image clearly states the opposite proposing that younger generations should be allowed to express themselves in ways that are not harmful to the environment or society. Forms of expressions, like street art, should be encouraged because it is healthy for young people to express their ideas and viewpoints to the world. In the image, the brighter colors are used to represent the happiness and innocence of the painting emphasizing the point being made that younger generations expressing themselves is not harming society.

To summarize, it is important to inform others about the significance of young generations expressing themselves through ways that makes them unique and different. As being argued through the image, expressing oneself through positive ways, like painting, is not harmful to society if anything it is good for society to understand the viewpoints and lifestyles of the younger generations. This argument is best displayed through a visual because the bright colors shown in the image represent how younger generations express themselves through vibrant ways that stand out. It should be encouraged of the newer generations to express their ways of life for others to see; if others see the unique ways being used to express ideas, they will most likely follow the footsteps.

Work Cited

Banksy. "New Orleans - Banksy." Custom Puzzle Craft. N.p., n.d. Web. 3 Mar. 2017.
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