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Introduction

The coronavirus pandemic has made things difficult for a lot of Americans. However, things like stimulus packages, in which adults get \$1200 and an extra \$500 for each dependent seventeen years old or younger, make things easier for the majority of Americans. This relief program, though, failed to include a fairly large portion of the population, a group that is far from happy about how they are being handled. This group is college students, as many college students are claimed as dependents. Due to their age and their dependency status, they are not getting the \$1200 check, nor are their parents getting a \$500 check. One article I found on this issue was “Stimulus Checks: College Students Lash out After Largely Being Excluded,” which consists of an explanation of this issue and then lists some tweets from college students, explaining their struggle.

Artifact Description

This article focuses on the lack of stimulus checks for American college students, showing how it is making things hard for these students to make ends meet. This article was written by John Connor Coulston, a writer at popculture.com, which is where the article is found. There are also contributions from various college students, as their tweets are used to supplement the information in the article. It was written for an American audience, particularly those in

power, as it brings attention to a major issue, and to Americans unaware of the difficulties that college students are currently facing during this pandemic.

Although ethos and logos aren't really in this article, pathos is abundant. In the writing of the article, there are many sentences that help set up this pathos, like "Even if they work full-time, are not financially supported by their guardians or have off-campus housing to cover, they get absolutely nothing," in which it is clear that the author wants the readers to feel bad for the students who are getting nothing (Coulston, 2020). In addition to this and other similar sentences, the author lists several tweets in which the students talk about the struggles associated with the virus and how the stimulus check would have helped, had they been eligible for it. This continues to make the readers feel bad for these college students, as these tweets act as testimonials, making this all seem more personal and, quite frankly, sad. This makes people want to act, pushing the point of this article, which, as aforementioned, is to inform the American public of the struggles of current American college students during this pandemic, in the hopes of sparking change so that the students are included in the stimulus package.

This artifact has two parts. The first of these parts is a few introductory paragraphs written by the article's author. These paragraphs give the readers a good idea of why college students would be upset. It also provides other vital pieces of background information needed to understand what is going on, and it begins the pathos in the article. After this introduction, there are a series of tweets. These tweets make the issue more personal and significant, as they give a face and a voice to the information. It makes it clear that someone is being affected by what is going on, pushing this idea better than could be done with a simple report.

The language in this helps set the tone, helping establish the idea that this isn't some high brow problem. It is an issue affecting real, imperfect people who don't talk like dictionaries or

robots. The word choice seems fairly casual, but it is clear. It mimics the way a person might talk about this issue to an uninformed friend. It even has some grammatical issues, as seen in things like “Some even not they cannot even” (Coulston, 2020). This tone, however, could also make readers think that the issue wasn’t serious, as it appears as if the author didn’t spend much time on the article. Thus, readers get two very different messages from the introductory paragraphs. The tweets are also fairly informal, with many of them including emojis, gifs, and all caps words. This casualty, however, tends to only push the idea that there are real people affected by these issues, as these extra components help communicate frustration, anger, and sadness. It would also seem unrealistic if all of the tweets from college students were written formally, as this population tends to use a lot of things like emojis and gifs while communicating on social media.

This artifact relies heavily on the current pandemic, as it covers an issue that is the direct result of the pandemic, pushing for action that will no longer be necessary after the pandemic is over. Without the COVID 19 pandemic, there would be no quarantine. If there was no quarantine, college students would still be on campus. As on campus expenses were generally expected, a stimulus package wouldn’t be needed. However, no longer on campus due to the pandemic, many students are needing to find housing while no longer being allowed to work. They are facing a plethora of hardships, and yet they are being neglected while the rest of the country receives aid. Thus, this article is completely dependent on the current state of the world and the response that the United States government has had to this crisis.

Critical Analysis

This article uses a lot of stylistic features in order to strengthen its point. The tweets, which are particularly interesting to me, make use of humor, using things like emojis and gifs as

well as using ample amounts of sarcasm. These choices help show the emotions that the students are feeling, showing how hard it is for these students, both emotionally and financially. It also makes the students seem a touch more aggressive at times, as their anger is made much more evident by their use of sarcasm. The introductory paragraphs are also fairly simplistic and don't make use of things like symbolism, metaphors, similes, or allusions. This helps send the message that this is a problem real people are facing, as it sounds like it is from a real person, which helps strengthen the idea. However, this simplicity, when coupled with grammatical errors present in the introductory paragraphs, could be construed as carelessness on the part of the author. This carelessness could then hinder the message, as it may seem like this is an unimportant issue if the author doesn't care enough to proofread or use more complex language.

American college students and those closely connected to these students, like their parents, would most likely respond positively to this artifact, as it supports this population, bringing attention to their difficulties. Most people enjoy and appreciate things that support their view. This becomes even more important when a group is excluded, as has been the case with these students and the stimulus package. The casual nature of the writing also invites easy reading, which, during the school year, is generally what college students are looking for (due to the extensive reading required for classes). And, the tweets are both entertaining in a way that generally appeals to this population while also being relatable and informative. Finally, the site this is on is generally one used by groups like the college student population.

However, many groups would be less impressed by this artifact. Many older groups, those who generally don't understand the costs associated with attending school and some of the other expenses that younger generations have as compared to their income may dismiss the message of this article. In addition to this, this population is much less likely to overlook

grammatical errors and are less likely to accept the explicit word choices, emojis, and gifs present in the tweets. These viewpoints and opinions make this artifact less positive, as people in this population may just view the students as “whiny.” They won’t actually look at the validity of the students’ concerns.

This artifact shows a few social and cultural norms. For example, the tweets use many emojis, gifs, and explicit words. This is a norm for how younger generations express their feelings on social media platforms, particularly if they are upset. The issue of the lack of stimulus checks for college students also shows a trend. This trend is based in the fact that older generations tend to dismiss the problems that younger generations face. As older generations are in power currently, this batch of young adults has been excluded from the stimulus package. However, our society also tries to give a voice to those who are excluded, which this artifact does, showing yet another cultural norm.

Due to the different ways that this message can be received, this message is only somewhat impactful, at least in the way it is trying to be. It does a good job showing the side of college students, but the population that would appreciate this generally already supports this issue, before ever encountering this artifact. Then, the grammatical errors and the nature of the tweets may turn older readers away from this topic, impacting them in a way other than was the aim of the artifact, as it does not encourage them to support these students in these trying times.

Conclusion

Unlike other assignments this semester, this assignment asked us to draw from a work that was already created, examining and describing an artifact. Other work in the semester has focused more on synthesizing new work, at times connecting several works in order to create

something new. However, while it is important to be able to create, it is just as important to be able to break down a piece, looking at the different elements contained in this. This is what this project consisted of, allowing us to better appreciate how an artifact can be received and interpreted based on many different elements. Two papers may say the same thing, but they may use different styles, which will impact how the message is seen. This project brought attention to this fact in a way that was far different and more concrete than what was done in the other projects.

This paper examined an article from popculture.com titled “Stimulus Checks: College Students Lash out After Largely Being Excluded,” which examines how college students are suffering after not receiving a stimulus check. It does this using both introductory paragraphs and tweets from actual college students. The style of this piece, though, can cause readers to interpret this as either a serious issue or as a problem that isn’t serious, which wasn’t the intent of the article. It is important to realize how these stylistic choices can affect the readership of an article, as is true with this. Thus, this topic can be taken in various ways, though it is generally trying to give a voice to those excluded.

Reference

Connor, J. C. (2020, May 2). *Stimulus Checks: College Students Lash out After Largely Being Excluded*. Pop Culture. <https://popculture.com/trending/news/stimulus-checks-college-students-lash-after-largely-being-excluded/>