Assignment: Rhetorical Analysis of Data Advocacy Projects

Overview

This assignment helps students develop a rhetorical eye toward data advocacy projects in order to better understand not only how data advocacy projects are created but also by whom, for whom, and for what purpose.

Prerequisites:

Students should have read and discussed: *A Rhetorical Data Studies Approach to Data Advocacy* © 2024. Laurie Gries. CC BY-NC-ND 4.0. (Available in the DA4All Toolkit).

Learning Goals

- Recognize different genres of data advocacy
- Hone ability to rhetorically analyze data advocacy projects in order to better understand how to do data advocacy
- Identify different ethical challenges and skillsets for doing data advocacy

Data Advocacy Projects for Analysis

Content Warning: *These projects all relate to gun violence. You may wish to offer a content warning to students. You may also choose a set of different advocacy projects to work with for this activity if you think this content may be too disturbing and emotionally laden for your students.*

https://www.sandyhookpromise.org/

https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/11/06/opinion/how-to-reduce-shootings.html

https://nihcm.org/publications/updated-gun-violence-the-impact-on-public-health

Assignment Prompt:

Using the questions below, write a 4-6 page essay in which you rhetorically analyze one of the data advocacy projects linked to above. Please structure your essay in the follow three parts: Introduction, Analysis, Evaluation.

Use evidence from the data advocacy project to support your analysis. Be prepared to share and discuss your rhetorical analysis with your group and the class as a whole.

Part 1: Introduction
Please identify the rhetorical situation of the advocacy project. Your description of the rhetorical situation should include the following:

- *TITLE OF DATA ADVOCACY PROJECT:*
- *AUTHOR:/ORGANIZATION: Who created this data advocacy project? How do they identify on the website? Do some research about this author or organization. What else is important to know about this author/organization?*

- *KAIROS: When was this advocacy project created? What was going on culturally, socially, and/or politically at the time when the organization embarked on this project?*
- *PROBLEM: What specific and pressing community problem(s) does the author/organization care about? Why does the author care about such problem? What impact on a community is the problem having?*
- *AUDIENCE OF STRATEGIC ACTORS: Who are the strategic actors the author/organization is writing to and why? HINT: You can identify these actors by considering where the piece was published, looking within the text to see who the author/organization is directly or indirectly speaking to, and considering the objectives they are going for.*
- *ACTIONS/OBJECTIVES: What are the specific actions the author/organization is advocating for? What does the author/organization want the strategic actors to do? What changes does the author/organization want for the community? Are these reasonable? Why or why not? What are the most ideal outcomes the author/organization envisions to address the problem at hand?*

PART 2: RHETORICAL CHOICES
1. *GENRE: What is the main genre that this data advocacy project is structured in? Website, op-ed, feature article, etc.? What data advocacy genres do you notice at work in this project? Stories, Maps, Visualizations, Reports, Article, etc.*
2. *ARGUMENTS AND APPEALS: What kind of logical, emotional, and ethical appeals are being made in this*

data advocacy work? Which appeals are most often used, why, and to what effect?

3. NUMERICAL DATA What kind of numerical data is presented? Where do you imagine the author got this data? Does the data appear to be presented in ethical and just ways? What specific moves made within the text account for your answer?

4. IMAGES, MAPS, NARRATIVES: What kinds of images (photographs, visualizations, etc.), narratives, and or/maps stand out in this text that you think are particularly effective? What kind of ethical considerations do you think the author/organization made in deploying such rhetorical strategies to negotiate the rhetorical politics of accountability?

10. DELIVERY: In what media and through which publishing
platform was this data advocacy project delivered? Why do you think the author/organization chose those particular media and publication platform to do their data advocacy? Were they appropriate? What other choices might they have made and why?

11. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS: What ethical issues do you think the author likely considered in producing this data advocacy project? How might these constraints have impacted the objectives for this project? Their rhetorical choices?

Part 3: Evaluation

Based on your analysis, as well as evidence from the data advocacy project, do you think this data advocacy project is rhetorically effective in working toward its objectives for its targeted audience/stakeholders? Why or why not? Be specific and in-depth with your explanation, using evidence from your

analysis of rhetorical choices and from the advocacy project itself to support your analysis.