Activity: Rhetorical Analysis of Data Advocacy Projects

Overview

This activity 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.

Time Needed:

2 Classes, each 1 hour and 15 minutes

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 skillsets for doing data advocacy

Data Advocacy Projects

https://www.sandyhookpromise.org/

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

https://www.k12insight.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/School-violence-infographic-FINAL-low-res.jpg

Agenda

1. **Analyzing Data Advocacy in Action**
2. **Share and Discuss**
3. **Identifying Skill Sets for Doing Data Advocacy**
4. **Wrapping it All Up (10 minutes)**

Pre-Instructional Activity

Instructor Note

For this activity, assign students a particular data advocacy project, making sure that at least 3-4 students are assigned the same project. Then, ask individual students to first peruse all the data advocacy projects and then zoom in on their assigned data advocacy project and complete the following Journal Prompt.

Journal Prompt:
Using the questions below, rhetorically analyze the data advocacy project assigned to you. To perform this analysis, address all the questions in the order as they appear in the following handout in relation to your assigned example of data advocacy. Use evidence from the data advocacy project to support your answers. Be prepared to share and discuss your rhetorical analysis with your group and the class as a whole.

Rhetorical Analysis Handout

Part 1: Rhetorical Analysis

TITLE OF DATA ADVOCACY PROJECT:
RHETORICAL SITUATION:
1. *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?*
2. *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?*
3. *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.*
4. *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.*

RHETORICAL CHOICES:

5. *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.*

6. *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?*

7. *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?*

8. *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 2: 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? Why or why not? Be specific and in-depth with your explanation.

1. Analyzing Data Advocacy in Action (15 minutes)

Arrange students who worked on the same data advocacy project into small groups. Ask students to share their analyses and evaluations with each other, to identify similarities and differences in their responses. Tell students that they will give a 15 minute presentation in which they will share their rhetorical analyses with the class as a whole, providing specific evidence from the project at hand to support their answers. If major differences in analysis and evaluation exist among group members, they may share these differences with the class and open up a discussion.

2. Group Presentations (45 minutes)

Give each group 15 minutes to share their rhetorical analyses with the class as a whole, providing specific evidence from the project at hand to support their answers. Allow time for discussion after each presentation, making sure that everyone in the class rhetorically understands each data advocacy project.

3. Discuss (15 minutes)

As a whole class, and based on their rhetorical analYses and discussions, raise and discuss the following questions: How does the rhetorical situation seem to impact the choice of

genre and rhetorical strategies in each case of data advocacy? Considering the author's objectives, targeted audience, and desired actions, which action of data advocacy do you think is most effective and why? What ethical considerations for negotiating the rhetorical politics of accountability seemed to come up across all examples?What can we learn about doing data advocacy from these examples?

As students share their answers with the class as a whole, make sure they provide specific evidence from the action at hand to support their answers. Use this discussion to emphasize how genres of data advocacy are highly dependent on the rhetorical situation and that no single action of data advocacy is better than others per se, just more strategic considering one's rhetorical situation and needs for negotiating the rhetorical politics of accountability.