

Project Topic and Argument

The burgeoning homeless population is a serious concern in the Bay Area, especially in San Jose, California. For the project task, our team of four posed to hold a meeting to present a solution proposal and seek the cooperation of an audience directly related to this problem. We take a clear stand as members of the mayor of San Jose's "homelessness crisis management team," suggesting a support system as a navigation center with tiny homes in the area for community members comprising of residents and business owners. We do the same keeping in view that they might have some apprehensions towards constructing this facility in their neighborhood. Our argument states that we as policymakers, envision integrating policy solutions with local community support requiring cohesion amongst both. The pitch is aimed to achieve a positive agreement to the goal of providing a rehabilitation facility for homeless people to ultimately eradicate the problem.

Justification of the Claim and Structure with Role delegation

Behind the scenes, the argument was formulated after a good deal of deliberation amongst the team members acting as speakers for the type of audience we decided. In other words, the solution is very relevant to the immediate neighborhood i.e. in San Jose, where the facility is proposed as compared to any other bay area region. We understood the fact and anticipated that this decision about limiting the target audience is likely to invoke more doubts, questions, and reservations than choosing a general bay area population for the subject. Narrowing down the spread of the target audience implied the opposing views were much more imperative to bring forth to make the audience receptive before placing our solution. Therefore, our approach required and justified the Rogerian framework guidelines as our technique.

For this task, we all took specific responsibilities to build our rhetoric using fact-based documentation and consciously employed various types of appeals (pathos, logos and ethos) at opportune moments in the presentation to make an impact rather than just going over the numbers. The group members contributed equally to each aspect of the project be it research, group write, project development or presentation.

We divided the tasks by stages of the Rogerian framework. (*Student A*) took the introduction part to set up the context of the problem, i.e. eliciting concerns of the community and homeless people through data-driven research of San Jose (Santa Clara County) and thereafter highlighting the solution. (*Student B*) undertook the task to examine (through surveys, newspaper articles, and statistical facts) and talk about the myths, and worries of the audience with facts around both: the issue and the solution to address the alternative position in a Rogerian framework. (*Student C*), through his graphs, showcased the solution, its features and how it would bring about a positive change in the particular location to all stakeholders. He also tied it, with facts and figures, to the current navigation center in San Francisco to support the claim with reasoning. (*Student D*) drove the point home by presenting the benefits to the audience documenting before and after illustrations of factual data regarding the construction of the facility and urged the audience to direct an action-willing agreement of the community to the proposal.

Strategy, Appeal & Occasion selection

As policymakers, we took a clear stand to present a solution i.e. establishing a facility to assist the unsheltered homeless transition into normal life. To convince the audience effectually, our argument used a good balance of epideictic and deliberative approaches to illustrate our findings proving persuasive enough towards the solution. Simply put, we intended to do two tasks: One, increase knowledge of the audience of the present situation in the county while also addressing their concerns (epideictic) and two, explain how a

navigation center can drive the change with the support of the neighbourhood (deliberative). For example, explaining graphically with statistical numbers how the people end up being homeless in San Jose and what problems they face to re-establish themselves in the community. Both approaches aimed at the use of solid logos lined with stimulating pathos and significant ethos to make our assertions.

We strategically develop our plan (as 4 stages of the Rogerian structure) around this reason by having a strong opening deploying pathos as the first step towards the goal. Intending to cultivate compassion amongst community members for the chronic homeless population especially, we segue into a claim reinforced by statistical numbers to fortify the argument. In our argument construction, we needed to increase our persuasive power, so we delve deeper into the issue and elicit causation which is the lack of affordable housing and no income/ high competition in jobs. This formed a connection with the audience by fact-laden statements underlined with both pathos and ethos as they face the same issues on their level. We also present what the community thinks when they see homeless people around them to lay the foundation of our rhetoric aimed at the justification for a navigation center in the area. Therefore, the purpose of the introduction to the argument is to educate and bring everybody on the same page and thereafter, perceive it from our point of view.

Eradicating homelessness is always a difficult challenge. Consequently, at step 2 we address the opposing views to our solution by listing all the possible apprehensions of the audience. These viewpoints were collected by conducting extensive research online and by surveys to gain insight about the downsides of a navigation center. Thereafter, we were fully cognizant about our audience's side, following the fundamentals of the Rogerian structure. By taking those into deep consideration in the context, we attempted to eliminate the audiences' concerns and buttress our argument successfully. Logos is one of the methods we used on the worry elimination aspect. Each Prezi slide accompanied with visual data and

comparison made the presentation more dynamic and convincing. For instance, the assault in San Francisco and the RV living issues are unsettling but a reality. Also, the data in Citizen application and Zillow are real facts that cannot be discounted either. In essence, these cases and figures lay out a logical foundation for our argument.

The third step presented the features of our proposal backed by relevant data to convince our audience. This in the Rogerian framework is the writer's position. Along with graphically representing what features the navigation center will comprise of, we also incorporated various lessons learned on argument strategy in the semester so far. One of the lessons that we include very well is pathos. Since our presentation was about homelessness, we felt it was important to appeal emotionally since many people feel somewhat numb to the omnipresent crisis of homelessness. We explained the difference between a navigation center and a shelter for the homeless. One main difference is that residents can bring pets, partners, and possessions to the navigation center but not into the shelter. We asked the audience how they would feel if they were homeless and the only way they could receive shelter would be to give up a significant other, a beloved pet, or their priceless possessions? This rhetoric appeal solidified the understanding of the difference between the shelter and navigation center in an emotional fashion. Thus, the utilization of pathos made it very clear to our audience why some homeless people choose to stay on the street rather than receive help from a shelter. Everyone can relate to the attachment with their loved ones and prized possessions, so pathos was an effective tool to explain why a shelter is insufficient and a navigation center is necessary.

Finally, in the last part- the benefits to homeowners and business owners of San Jose, we were able to document our argument adequately adhering to the structure of the Rogerian framework. By building our argument in a non-confrontational configuration to fully, fairly and sympathetically examine the issue from the opposition's point of view, we present

solutions based on facts and consensus. Concluding the presentation with pathos: “We urge you, every one of you, help us solve homelessness in our community.”, we appeal on an emotional level to our audience which was timely and well-positioned to emphasize the importance of their help and cooperation.

Self-Critique

Evaluating our presentation now we are confident that the problem was well understood with a clear solution in place: what it is and why it is important. We did not face any refutation, instead invoked quite a few questions about the working of the solution. As a success indicator evidenced by the feedback metrics of the audience, 80% of the audience was persuaded by the subject. We made use of rhetoric devices for argumentation in our speech to make an impact. For example, the use of triads at strategic places for our audience to remember it subconsciously. “Out of many reasons, the top three are loss of jobs, family issues and drug use.” is a clear illustration of that approach. Aiming for both head and heart, we brought liveliness through our speech and injected appealing visuals, keeping in mind the gravitas of the topic, with positive images of the solution and animation of a homeless person transitioning to normal life through the facility. To further capture attention, we asked some rhetorical questions as a punch in an attempt to move the audience with a hint of antithesis and persuade them to take an action : “Are you ready for your “Silicon Valley” to now be called “the City of Rejected”? It seems so because...” is one of the examples of a successful application. This draws audience’s attention to provide a serious consideration towards the issue.

Although we made a conclusive argument under the Rogerian framework, in the hindsight, a few shortcomings affected our argument strength. Firstly, we decided that the presenters should influence the audience by captivating speech to cover the essential data from the slides and explain through the slides wherever required, refocusing on the solution.

For this task, two people changed the slides during the presentation. However, probably due to nervousness, the slides were not transitioned as per the speaker's flow which led to people being confused about the amount of data being presented and keeping up with the information.

Furthermore, the critique of our classmates elicited one aspect we overlooked to make the argument strong. Specifically, one audience member asked us how we were going to fund the construction of the navigation center and tiny homes. In retrospect, this question seems an obvious question that would be asked. Lack of information on costing and where will it be coming from may have put us in an insincere position of not informing them that the stakeholders will cover a part of the costs. We should have shown some analysis of the tax charge that will be used for the funds needed for the homeless navigation center. Because the costs were minimal, it would have made our argument more convincing. The justification that the facility will be executed on a two-year trial basis won't cost that high considering the larger benefits it would provide to the community. Therefore, if we formulated and presented some basic figures for the budget of the center, we would have done a better job. San Jose has a current population of about one million. The fact that the budget is \$5 million a year and that a major chunk of it will be paid for by wealthy donors and concerned businesses of the area implies the initial estimate of the tax liability of an individual resident might end up as low as \$20 per year. This would have been a better sell and a much more convincing argument for the community.

Also, the peer review was an insightful exercise. Upon reviewing the feedback from our classmates, we found that perhaps we incorporated too many graphs and charts that made the presentation confusing. We did not fully consider how the 10-minute time limit would interact with presenting the various figures that we researched. Therefore, we ended up rushing through many charts before our audience had a chance to read or understand them.

Another place where our argument fell short was the Q&A part of the session as we concentrated heavily on the presentation preparation. As a group, we could have researched and prepared more about the budget, tax implications, etc. as this would have made a more convincing argument. Even though we explained what a navigation center is with features and timelines for a chronic homeless person in the presentation, we could not research much into the details of working of such a facility due to vastness of the topic and the time limitation for the project and hence, lacked preparation on that aspect. Consequently, we could not answer some questions related to entry eligibility, misuse of facility and cost implications accurately. This somewhat weakened our stand as we lacked in anticipating the questions considering the knowledge of the audience. The questions were still handled well and improvised on the spot with everybody from group adding to the response from their respective research which demonstrated coordination and quick thinking. However, in retrospect, we could have devoted some time to pre-empt some of the questions with data-backed information.

Fundamentally, we did very well in our 10-minute presentation, and made an extremely convincing argument for the construction of a navigation center and tiny homes facility in San Jose to eliminate the issue of homelessness using various strategies we have learned this semester. On re-examination, however, we should have considered two aspects to make our argument more convincing. One, the amount of data fitting into a 10 minute slot. We should have considered the effect too many charts and graphs would have on our audience. And two, the Q&A preparation. We should have set aside more time to brainstorm possible questions that the audience was likely to ask us. Therefore, we feel our fact-based argument was constructed well under the Rogerian framework but was undermined by our inability to effectively address the inquiries posed by the audience members.

Resources

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