NARRATIVES THAT RESONATE

POWERFUL NARRATIVES AND EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY FOR ADULT ESL PROGRAMS

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ADVOCACY

➢ The act or process of supporting a cause or proposal (merriam-webster.com/dictionary/advocacy_)

➢ Public support for or recommendation of a particular cause or policy (oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/advocacy)

➢ Advocacy is a political process by an individual or group which aims to influence decisions within political, economic, and social systems and institutions. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Advocacy)

THE REQUEST

➢ We will be looking at teaching of English as a second language with adult learners.

➢ Do you know of a source that provides data about the educational outcomes for non-native English speakers, preferably for the adult sample we are focusing on?

➢ I assume that in general the outcomes are not great, but I don't know where I would find any statistics about this.

THE QUESTIONS

➢ Why does the general public lack knowledge about adult basic education, ESL, and continuing education?

➢ What types of messages will increase the general public's understanding of the value and effectiveness of adult education and motivate them to support it?

➢ What can adult educators do to create and disseminate those messages? What tools do they need?

RESEARCH REPORTS

➢ U.S. adults lag far behind adults in other countries when it comes to skills needed for the workplace, especially when it comes to complex problem-solving skills, a new report finds. In fact, across three subject areas tested – literacy, numeracy and digital problem-solving – the average scores of adults in the U.S. were significantly lower than the scores in as many as 16 other countries. The U.S. performed particularly poorly in digital problem-solving, barely besting only Poland. (U.S. News & World Report, http://www.usnews.com/news/blogs/data-mine/ 2016/03/10/us-adults-lag-behind-in-workforce-skills)

➢ In a 2014 report entitled "Literacy Ladders: Increasing Young Children's Language, Knowledge, and Reading Comprehension," a group of education professionals have once again noted the importance of educating adults as a means of helping close reading achievement gaps between children from undereducated parents and those from more highly educated parents. …The importance of educating adults because they are the parents and initial educators of their children, including their role in developing their children's oral language, has long been recognized. (T. Sticht, email correspondence, 4 April 2016)

INDIVIDUAL STORIES

➤ Resonate with hearers / readers

➤ Show relevance of ABE/ESL to specific contexts

  ➤ Christopher Kush, *The One-Hour Activist: The 15 Most Powerful Actions You Can Take to Fight For the Issues and Candidates You Care About* (Jossey-Bass, 2004)

➤ Minnesota Adult Basic Education's Hot Ideas 2015: Why ABE Matters

  ➤ Jodi Versaw's talk: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yum1c-3FiuY

EPISODIC V. THEMATIC FRAMING

"Research shows that the close-up portrait is not an effective storytelling method for catalyzing community change, that it does not encourage the public and policymakers to think systemically, or to see a social problem in its full context. The result is an inability to consider public solutions to social problems—and in the process, implicit support of the status quo."

FrameWorks Academy, Wide Angle Lens course
http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/frameworks-academy.html

CHALLENGES

- ➢ Research reports focus on broad trends and may have limited resonance with the general public

- ➢ Individual stories focus on individuals and may not connect to wider effects or implications

- ➢ Often, neither one

    - ➢ Effectively represents the value of ABE/ESL programs to the community

    - ➢ Successfully promotes the idea of community support for programs that educate adult learners

FRAMING

➤ Frameworks are ways of organizing information

➤ "Each primary framework allows its user to locate, perceive, identify, and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences defined in its terms."

Erving Goffman, *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience* (1974)

Two frameworks that guide understanding in American culture:

➢ Individual responsibility

➢ Social (societal) responsibility

George Lakoff, *Don't Think of an Elephant!* (2004, 2014)

Existing frameworks in adult education

➢ Individual responsibility: Lifelong learning

➢ Social (societal) responsibility: Adult education / lifelong education

Katarina Popović & Maya Maksimović, *Critical discourse analysis in adult education* (2016)

"One of the fundamental findings of cognitive science is that people think in terms of frames and metaphors. The frames are in the synapses of our brains, physically present in the form of neural circuitry. When the facts don't fit the frames, the frames are kept and the facts ignored."

George Lakoff, *Don't Think of an Elephant!* (2004, 2014)

FRAME CHANGE

Dominant frames can be changed:

➢ Recycling

➢ Animal welfare and food sources

An asset-focused framework for adult education program advocacy:

➤ Adult education programs are integral parts of their communities

➤ Adult education programs contribute to the overall strength and resilience of the community

➤ A community strengthens itself by supporting and promoting adult education

FRAMES AND PERCEPTIONS

PROCESS

➢ Use the research and information about the context

➢ Use individual or small group success stories

➢ Contextualize them in a frame of reciprocity and social responsibility

➢ Focus on what can happen, not what can't

➢ Identify program strengths / successes

➢ Identify immediate outcomes for adult learners

➢ Identify links to broader / longer term outcomes for the community

AN EXAMPLE FROM HAITI

TRY IT

➢ Identify a strength or major focus of your program: something you do really well

➢ Identify the immediate outcomes for your learners

➢ Identify broader community connections

FINAL THOUGHTS

➢ Put the message together in a way that works for you

➢ Stay on topic

➢ Don't be shy

THANK YOU!

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