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ASSIGNMENT - Asset-Framing in Community Problem-Solving

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ASSIGNMENT

Asset-Framing in Community Problem-Solving

A critical skill in community problem-solving is the ability to characterize communities and individuals by their aspirations and assets rather than the problems they face. Trabian Shorters calls this skill Asset Framing, and this assignment gives students an introduction to what it is, why it's important, and how to put it into practice.

Step 1: Listen

Listen to the On Being (a podcast hosted by Krista Tippett from February 3, 2022) episode with Trabian Shorters: "[A Cognitive Skill to Magnify Humanity.](#)"

Step 2: Summarize

- What is the skill that Trabian Shorters is talking about in this episode?
- What does it look like in practice?
- Why does this skill matter?

Step 3: Reflect

Reflect on the application of the episode to your experience.

- What is at least one example you can think of where you have seen a population spoken about or story or narrative told from a deficit perspective?
- What is at least one example of where you have seen a population spoken about or story or narrative told from an asset-based perspective?
- Have you noticed a difference in how you think about or imagine in your mind the people the narrative is about?

Step 4: Apply

The following excerpts are based on real examples of narratives used by nonprofit organizations to fundraise, though some wording and all names of people and places have been changed to make them anonymous. After you read these, do the following:

1. Underline places where you notice deficit-framing language being used.
2. Use asset framing to rewrite the excerpt.
3. Write a paragraph in which you summarize and analyze what was problematic about the original language, and discuss how your proposed revision shifts the narrative to focus on assets (while not neglecting the reality of the problems at play).

EXAMPLE 1

*With the economic hardships many families in the region are facing, students like Devon and Taylor are relying on our organization more than ever to meet their needs. According to academic research, children with family incomes below the poverty line experience **significantly more learning loss over the summer compared to their more affluent peers**. This gap is **even worse for children living in rural communities**. Given the extraordinary challenges children in these communities are facing, **it is essential that our organization continues to provide students with the emotional and academic support they need**. [Emphasis in the original.]*

EXAMPLE 2

We recently traveled to Littleton, where more than 1 in 5 residents live in unsafe or unstable housing. In another city nearby, 1 in 3 people live in poverty. These communities face considerable challenges, from hunger and malnutrition to poor physical and mental health to lower life expectancy. While the region has made some progress, there is still much work to be done. To help with this crisis, our company is donating time and money to local organizations to improve the standard of living for local residents. When we first visited these communities, we were overwhelmed by the challenges and found ourselves unsure that these problems could be solved. But as we met with national leaders who were committed to helping this local community, we were reminded of the power of community to make change possible. Whether they are supporting families with small children or providing resources to hospitals, national leaders like those we encountered are heroes to the local people.

Step 5: Analyze

Find at least one specific example online of each kind of framing (from an organization's website, a news story, or some other source).

Then, using a shared online space for the class, such as Google Docs:

- Share a link to the specific page where you found each example, then copy and paste a portion of the respective texts that most clearly illustrate each kind of frame.
- Briefly (in 1–2 sentences) share your analysis/reasoning for classifying each example as one or the other.
- Pick at least one example of a deficit frame submitted by another student, and submit and bring to class a revision that reflects an asset-frame approach.