Elevating Family and Community Voices: Culturally Humble Approaches

Colleen Young, MSW
Ivonne Smith-Tapia, MSW

University of Pittsburgh | Office of Child Development

WHY ELEVATING FAMILY AND COMMUNITY VOICES IS IMPORTANT?

"When parent leaders speak out, their voices carry the **authority of lived experience. They understand how gaps in social, health, and educational services limit their children's future in critical ways**. They learn to work with parents across boundaries of education, race, income, language, and culture. When elected officials and policy-makers listen to parent leaders, they become more aware of how their actions affect children and families, especially those who lack income or education, or who are marginalized by race, language, and culture"

Henderson, A. T., K. G. Kressley, andS. Frankel. 2016. Capturing the Ripple Effect: Developing a Theory of Change for Evaluating Parent Leadership Initiatives, Final Report, Phase I.Providence, RI: Brown University, Annenberg Institute for School Reform.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Community-based Participatory Research: Building on the strengths and resources of the community. Facilitating a collaborative, equitable partnership in all phases of research (Israel at al. 2010)

Parent Leadership: The existing research on parent leadership comes from Early Head Start, Family Support, and K-12 education.

Importance of recognizing and supporting natural leaders as agents of change (Langford and Weissbourd 1997; Toso and Gungor 2012).

In education settings parent leadership is recognize as foundamental for advocating for change at the invididual and system levels. (Cunningham et al. 2012).

OUR APPROACH

- We use data to inform our work but we prioritize listening to families

- We develop relationships with families based on trust and respect

- We work in partnership with organizations, the community, and families

- We make sure to involve families that represent the diversity of the community

- We create opportunities to address structural barriers based on power, race, class, culture, and education

- We create and use appropriate tools to communicate effectively

CASE STUDY

71 Immigrant and refugee parents participated in 7 focus groups and shared their parenting experiences with us.

14 Teenagers shared their perspectives on the support and services needed for their parents

7 Interviews with local service providers, six of them being immigrants themselves

3 Video interviews with Mexican, Bhutanese, and Somali-Bantu families

ASSUMPTIONS

01

Limited access to transportation, housing, interpretation services, and difficulties navigating systems are barriers for parents raising their children. (DHS Scan 2013; Immigrant Blueprint 2016)

02

Parenting is intrinsically influenced by culture. (Bornstein, 2013)

03

Standards for good parenting practices and thus parenting programs often reveal a mono-cultural lens based on Western European-American models. (Lancy, 2015; Renzaho et al., 2011; Bond, 2019; Zhai, 2017).

THE PROCESS

8. Shared report and videos with service providers, immigrant community leaders, and funders

1. Met with service providers, immigrant community leaders, funders to share the purpose of our project

7. Analyzed data and write report

6.Conducted focus groups and interviews and compensate families for their time

2. Created an advisory group to identify areas of need and gaps in knowledge for service providers

5. Conducted outreach process: *Beginning of Spring to the end of Fall 2019*

3. Researched existing literature

4.Identified immigrant/refugee communities

WHAT WE LEARNED FROM PARENTS

1. Parents want to learn new parenting skills while maintaining their culture and traditions

"The culture is different, we are afraid of how to raise our kids in this country because of the cultural differences." (Syrian mother)

"I knew everything about mothering in Turkey, but here I think I know nothing." (Turkish mother).

WHAT WE LEARNED FROM PARENTS

2. Parents need support from teachers and schools to increase their engagement with their children's education

"We don't know the rules here. Is it our responsibility to go to the teacher and ask about our kids ? Or will they contact us? We don't understand the connection between us and the school." (Syrian mother)

WHAT WE LEARNED FROM PARENTS

3. Parents want access to information about how to navigate systems and access affordable and quality housing, transportation, and childcare

"We need more information about how to assimilate to the American lifestyle as an undocumented immigrant, for instance, learn about local laws, how to open a bank account, how to ask for a loan, how to start building a credit history, and how to open their own businesses." (Central American Parent)

Amina's Experience as a Mother

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Collaborate and partner with community leaders and trusted organizations
- Give yourself time to develop relationships and get to know the communities
- Make sure the people you involve represent diversity from the community
- Use appropriate tools to communicate effectively
- Value and compensate community members' time and expertise as much as you do professionals

REFERENCES

Douglass, A.L., Maroney, M.R., Coonan, M. et al. "You have a status": a case study of parent leadership in a U.S. school readiness initiative. ICEP 13, 2 (2019). https://doi.org/10.1186/s40723-019-0058-5

Bolívar JM, Chrispeels JH. Enhancing Parent Leadership Through Building Social and Intellectual Capital. American Educational Research Journal. 2011;48(1):4-38. doi:10.3102/0002831210366466

Flores, O.J., Kyere, E. Advancing Equity-Based School Leadership: The Importance of Family–School Relationships.
Urban Rev 53, 127–144 (2021). https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-020-00557-z

Lund, D. E., & Lee, L. (2015). Fostering cultural humility among pre-service teachers: Connecting with children and youth of immigrant families through service-learning. Canadian Journal of Education, 38(2), 1-30.

Tinkler, A. S., & Tinkler, B. (2016). Enhancing Cultural Humility Through Critical Service-Learning in Teacher Preparation. Multicultural Perspectives, 18(4), 192–201. doi: 10.1080/15210960.2016.1222282