Nothing For Us, Without Us

Getting Started with Community Engagement and Culturally Responsive Evaluation
Just a reminder of who I am: LaShaune P. Johnson

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Live session: a review

- Introduce levels of racism and define race equity
- Discuss community engagement and its value for equity
- Briefly review the history of cultural competence for evaluation
- Outline the tenets of culturally responsive evaluation
- Plan for initiating community engaged, culturally responsive evaluation
Today’s goal

• Review our key terms for racial equity and culturally responsive evaluation
• Introduce another meeting tool—Meeting Agreements
• Introduce a case study: Superheroes Among Us
• Introduce more methods
Review: What is Race Equity?

• **RACE EQUITY**: The condition where one’s race identity has no influence on how one fares in society. Race equity is one part of race justice and must be addressed at the root causes and not just the manifestations. This includes the elimination of policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race.

• **RACE EQUITY CULTURE**: A culture focused on proactive counteraction of social and race inequities inside and outside of an organization.

• **RACE EQUITY LENS**: The process of paying disciplined attention to race and ethnicity while analyzing problems, looking for solutions, and defining success. A race equity lens critiques a “color blind” approach, arguing that color blindness perpetuates systems of disadvantage in that it prevents structural racism from being acknowledged. Application of a race equity lens helps to illuminate disparate outcomes, patterns of disadvantage, and root cause.

• From Equity in the Center’s “AWAKE TO WOKE TO WORK: Building a Race Equity Culture”
Culturally Responsive Evaluation centers values and cultural beliefs on the evaluation of a program or policy. It provides a particular focus on groups that have been historically marginalized, asking how power is distributed, which relationships are valued, and which are privileged in an evaluation (Hood, Hopson, & Kirkhart, 2015).
Review: Important new change: Equitable Evaluation

- CREA/CRE is moving increasingly towards CREE
- **Culturally responsive and EQUITABLE Evaluation.**
- Statement from EEI: “Imagine if evaluation was conceptualized, implemented, and utilized in a manner that promotes equity. Everyday narratives that continue to marginalize, minimize, and disrespect people of color and those with less privilege could be replaced with ones that do not demonize and place blame on the individual. They could instead lift up the historical, contextual, and powerful dynamics that create and sustain oppression and shed light on the strategies and solutions which can shift the “rules of the game” so that equity is achievable.”
- **EQUITY is now the center of culturally-responsive evaluation!**
Review: Community engagement happens at the intersections

- This slide is Nexus Community Partners, “Impacts of Community Engagement Model”
- This circle helps us think about all the possible arenas that public libraries could be involved in to create equity and to facilitate cultural responsiveness.
Activity for you to try

• If you are stuck with how to get started and/or trying to remove the barriers that block your work, why not try to integrate meeting agreements into your staff and community meetings?
• On the next slide, you will see a sample of workshop agreements?
• What would you add? What might you take away?
• How might beginning a conversation with agreements change your culture?
Meeting Agreements

(This is in the shared files.)
Application Practice
Superheroes Among Us

- The local libraries, which have long been the site for homework clubs, arts clubs, and workforce development workshops, are going to partner with the teachers to offer a “Hero Lab”, where local artists will be available to help the student teams draw and write up their bios. You will see quotes from a community conversation. How would you handle this?
A few tools and tips to get started
Start a Project with these Guiding Principles (this is about research, but it fits well with evaluation)

• Examine their own backgrounds and biases.
• Make a commitment to dig deeper into the data.
• Recognize that the research process itself has an impact on communities, and researchers have a role in ensuring research benefits communities.
• Engage communities as partners in research.
• Guard against the implied or explicit assumption that white is the normative, standard, or default position.

• This document is in the shared files.
More Childtrends: Opportunities to Weave in Community and Equity

• **Landscape Assessment**: Before the study begins, the researcher should gain a better understanding of the context in which the research will be conducted by engaging stakeholders to gather their perspectives on the issue or concern of interest. Community stakeholder engagement will shape the research process and may uncover root causes of the issue.

• **Design and Data Collection**: The researcher should develop research questions and designs that aim to advance racial and ethnic equity. To this end, researchers can involve racially and ethnically diverse research teams, construct a research design that is accepted by the community, develop research questions that target root issues, and address equity when identifying data collection methods and instruments.

• **Data Analysis**: In both qualitative and quantitative analysis, the researcher should disaggregate data, explore intersectionality, discuss data trends with appropriate context, beware of implicit bias, and involve the community, where possible, in data interpretation.

• **Dissemination**: The researcher should include the community as one of the multiple primary audiences of research findings, consider various formats for reporting findings, and prioritize actionable research findings that the community can use.
Childtrends, Landscape Assessment
(all are great, this is most relevant for our case)

• Who is affected—positively or negatively—by the issue you plan to study? Why? How?
• How is power distributed in the community? *What power differentials exist within the community?* (For example, are elders treated as gatekeepers or final authority?)
• *Which relationships are prioritized? Which relationships are discouraged?* (For example, how is the relationship between the community and law enforcement?)
• How does the community like to be approached and *what is the appropriate gateway?* (For example, are there key community leaders who need to “give their blessing” for others to agree to engage?)
• How do you *refer* to individuals in your setting?
• What are the *historical and cultural antecedents of the community?* (For example, what is the history of racial dynamics in the community?)
Chicago Beyond: “Why am I always being Researched?”
This document is in the shared files.

- **Access**: Could we be missing out on community wisdom because conversations about research are happening without community meaningfully present at the table?
- **Information**: Can we effectively partner to get to the full truth if information about research options, methods, inputs, costs, benefits, and risks are not shared?
- **Validity**: Could we be accepting partial truths as the full picture, because we are not valuing community organizations and community members as valid experts?
- **Ownership**: Are we getting incomplete answers by valuing research processes that take from, rather than build up, community ownership?
- **Value**: What value is generated, for whom, and at what cost?
- **Accountability**: Are we holding funders and researchers accountable if research designs create harm or do not work?
- **Authorship**: Whose voice is shaping the narrative and is the community fully represented?
Things to think about (Chicago)

• Now that you’ve seen a bit about the values the guide culturally responsive equity-focused evaluation, take some time over the next few weeks to consider the following:

• Think about your most recent event/initiative, and ask yourself these two questions from the Chicago Beyond list from the previous slide:
  • **Access:** Could we be missing out on community wisdom because conversations about research (OR EVALUATION) are happening without community meaningfully present at the table?
  • **Authorship:** Whose voice is shaping the narrative and is the community fully represented?
  • **Reminder:** Be kind to yourself! You are still learning!
More Racial Equity/Social Change resources

- SPARQ Tools: [http://sparqtools.org](http://sparqtools.org)
- Racial Equity Tools: [https://www.racialequitytools.org](https://www.racialequitytools.org)
Final thoughts

• Be kind to yourself. You and your colleagues are still learning.

• When you are surprised/hurt by a community comment/response, turn to wonder: are there ways to engage in a constructive dialogue about power or historical/cultural context?

• Evaluation is an ongoing conversation—not everything needs to be formal to be useful.

• Engage community members early and often in planning and evaluation—they are experts on their lived experiences!
Thank you!

- Thank you for your time.
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