

FIRST THINGS FIRST EXTERNAL EVALUATION

Family Community Case Study

FTF Board Presentation Handout

June 15, 2010

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Family and Community Case Studies-Family Portrait

"Pues, soy papá y mamá,"

(Alma, interview transcript)

Alma is the mother of four children ages 11, 4, 3 and 3 months. Originally from Mexico, Alma has lived here in Arizona for the last 13 years. Six years ago she bought the trailer where she lives now in South Phoenix. While she would love to own a house, Alma lives within her means, and only takes on what she can afford. Over the last 13 years Alma has at times struggled to adapt to American life, but believes that she has learned most of what she knows here, in the U.S. She works hard to care for her children, though does not want her children to look to her as a role model. Rather she hopes that they will bear witness to the struggles she has faced as a single mother and aspire to something more. As she reflects on her childhood in Mexico, poor with often not enough food to eat, she hopes her children will never have to suffer as she did. She longs for them to graduate from high school and attend university where they can study to be what ever they choose.

Faced with periods of unemployment over the last decade, Alma now works as a seasonal worker in a carrot packaging plant. For eight months out of the year she works long hours, six days a week, but still feels as though she must be extremely cautious with her money. "Every dollar I spend is one dollar less to pay my rent". Though it is difficult for her children to be without their mother so frequently, she reminds them, "If I work, it is for you, so that you have a place to live, as little as it may be." Like many mothers, Alma would love to stay home with her children, but she works so that she can provide for them. "Well, you see, I am the father and the mother." She is not embarrassed to say that she works in a packaging plant, because she does it so her children can have a better life. Finding quality childcare, however, has been a struggle for Alma. Having taken her children out of few different day care centers for what Alma described as inappropriate care, she now leaves her children with her aunt who lives just a few miles away. It has been hard for her to trust someone to care for her children as she would, but has been able to find that sense of trust in her aunt and appreciates the way she cares for them.

As Alma has few close family members that live in the area, she must look for support in other arenas. She has been able to take advantage of several services provided by the state of Arizona, particularly when she is not working for those four months out of each year. During this time, she is able to receive help from DES including WIC and AHCCCS. Her four-year-old son attends the local Head Start, and all that he is learning there impresses her. While she still struggles to adapt to some aspects of American culture, as there are things she doesn't know or understand, her involvement with the Fresh Start Women's Foundation, has helped her to learn to better care for herself and her children. Alma is very happy with the programs offered by the Women's Foundation and believes they have made her a better mother and a better teacher for her children.

Alma spoke of the American Dream, but for her, the American dream is not to come to this country with the expectation that she have endless amounts of money. Rather, she sees the American Dream as the ability to live and work just as everyone else does. She asks for nothing more than this, "well, I don't live richly, but I have food to eat." Yet, due to her undocumented status, Alma lives with the constant worry that she will be deported. She teaches her eleven-year-old daughter how to care for the younger children if something should ever happen to her, if she were ever to be taken away.

Family and Community Case Studies-Family Portrait

“So you are caught in the middle?” “Stuck between a rock and AHCCCS”

(Matthew, interview transcript)

Matthew is the father of four children, two of which live in other states. He and his fiancée, Andrea, live in Tucson, Arizona with his two younger sons, four month old Charles and five year old Matthew Jr. The family moved to Arizona three years ago because Andrea is originally from the Tucson area. Unfortunately, although Andrea’s parents live close by, they do not play an active role in their children’s lives. The family lives in an apartment complex that Matthew describes as noisy, disorganized and unclean, but what the family can afford. Matthew has expressed concern regarding the safety of the area and for the lack of services and resources for his children. Finding places to take the children can be challenging and the only park close by is inside a school and unavailable to the community.

Matthew’s family is experiencing real economic hardships and fortunately is able to benefit from state resources such as food stamps, ACCCHS and WIC. While Andrea receives a discount from the daycare where she works, they are still unable to afford childcare. Instead, Matthew, who is currently unemployed, stays home as the primary caregiver for his children. While Matthew enjoys being at home and caring for his children, this already full-time job makes it difficult for him to find the time to seek employment outside of the home. Their neighbors are occasionally available to watch the children, though this is not consistent or sufficient enough for Matthew to fully invest in a job search. This lack of support and lack of affordable childcare affects many aspects of the family’s life. “Because I’m not working, we can’t get childcare and, how am I supposed to go out and look for a job? I have an infant. You know what I mean?”

If Matthew does find a job it would be beneficial for the family in some aspects, yet it would also have a negative affect on the help that they currently receive from the state. If they lose these services, they cannot afford to cover all of the household expenses. “We get a good portion for food stamps but if we make over twenty two hundred dollars [a month], which she almost does by herself, we lose our food stamps. But if we are making over twenty two hundred dollars, or two thousand two hundred, that’s rent and that’s our bills. And, we have like, you know, very little to play with or to do anything with. How are we supposed to get food? How are we supposed to provide diapers?”

Matthew is also concerned with the quality and availability of services that AHCCCS provides for his children. He constantly struggles to schedule appointments due to the lack of available doctors, and the required transportation to get to service locations. They do not own a vehicle and the use of public transportation on a regular basis adds more to an already tight budget. What’s more, Matthew suspects that his oldest son has ADHD, a concern shared by his teacher. Matthew has also noticed that Charles, like Matthew Jr., suffers from asthma. Despite the fact that he has shared this concern with his doctors, they continue to send him home undiagnosed. Matthew keeps a ventilator next to Charles’ crib and worries what would happen if his son had an asthma attack.

Matthew is a caring and involved parent trying to meet his children’s needs to the best of his abilities. He teaches them the moral values and practices that he believes are important and hopes to see them grow up and go to college one day. His children are the most important part of his life and he loves being a parent. Yet, faced with economic hardships and daily battles with the healthcare system, Matthew struggles everyday to provide a certain quality of life for his family.

Family and Community Case Studies-Family Portrait

“I wish I could stay home but sometimes I don’t have the means to do it all, so I leave it up to the daycare, but the daycare personnel are not always qualified.”

(Rhonda, interview transcript)

Rhonda is a 35-year-old Navajo woman living in a rural community in northern Arizona. Rhonda lives with her husband, 16-year-old and 3-year-old sons, and has also recently gained legal guardianship of their ten-year-old niece and six-year-old nephew due to the mental illness and alcohol issues experienced by Rhonda’s sister-in-law. The family has lived in their current home, which they rent to own, for the past eleven months after moving away from the Navajo Reservation where they stayed with various relatives while searching for affordable and adequate housing.

Rhonda works as a teacher on the Navajo Reservation and is a doctoral student at Arizona State University. Her work and schooling both require long commutes. Rhonda’s youngest son Daniel attends daycare provided by the school district where Rhonda teaches, as this is the most affordable option. However, Daniel often stays home with his father who is on permanent disability and cares for their other children before and after school. “I’m lucky,” Rhonda stated, “because the school district reduces the rate for teachers, but there is really nothing else...if you don’t income qualify [for child care] then you are slapped with a big fee and I don’t have any additional money to pay for all these things.” Rhonda expressed dissatisfaction, however, with daycare options available to her family, finding facilities to be outdated and unsafe, and questioning the cleanliness the center after her son contracted a serious infection at his childcare facility. Rhonda also expressed dissatisfaction with the education provided by her son’s daycare. “I can’t teach my child all the values because I’m a working mother. I wish I could stay home but sometimes I don’t have the means to do it all. So I leave it up to the daycare, but the daycare personnel are not always qualified . . . Also, I don’t see a literacy component to the schedule at the daycare Daniel goes to.”

Healthcare has also been a cause of financial hardship and emotional stress for Rhonda’s family. Rhonda finds herself within an economic gap, earning too much income to qualify for AHCCCS, but experiencing difficulty in affording the \$500 per month premium for family insurance through her employer. When asked about the challenges of raising children in northern Arizona Rhonda explained, “My biggest concern is health care. As a working parent and a parent going to school, it’s tough...it’s always tough to get adequate coverage. When I have gone to AHCCCS for help they say that I make enough to afford health insurance but to me that is crazy.”

Rhonda and Daniel are both eligible for care through Indian Health Services (IHS); however, access to IHS care is not always feasible. The closest IHS facility, located one hour from the family’s home, will not accept Rhonda and her son based on their residential zip code. Instead the family travels for two hours to access the IHS center at which they are eligible. One stormy night, Daniel suffered an infection. Rather than risking the drive to IHS, Rhonda rushed her son to the closest hospital. This hospital visit cost the family \$900 out of pocket, a financial hardship that threw off of the family’s finances for some time following the incident.

Furthermore, Rhonda’s niece and nephew suffer from emotional problems related to their unstable lifestyle while living with their mother and within the foster care system. Yet

counseling services are not provided for children through the schools in the family's community, Rhonda cannot afford to seek private care for mental health, and Child Protective Services has discontinued any health assistance that the children previously received. Rhonda also worries that their behaviors will impact her youngest son as she struggles to teach the children values and rules within their new home.

Rhonda has been a teacher for 15 years and holds two master's degrees. She believes in formal education, but also sees a need to incorporate Native American values into the lessons her children learn at home as well as in school. At home, Rhonda highly values teaching her son the Navajo language, stating that she, "stems a lot of self identity," from her native language. However, Rhonda went on to say that, "I feel this is lacking in my son...I don't want him to be looking at the TV and learning from things that have no value or connection to who we are." Rhonda is aware that the daycares and schools in her community serve a high percentage of Native American children but do not teach traditional cultural practices. She believes other Native parents desire traditional educational experiences within the school, but most are completely unaware of the channels through which Native families may influence the school system. Rhonda hopes to finish her Ph.D. within the next two years. Professionally, she hopes to use her degree to improve conditions in the school system for people of all ethnicities and income levels. Personally, she is counting on her degree to qualify her for a higher-paying position so she can better provide for her family's needs.

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If you're low income, "you can't be no stay-at-home mom."

(Shontelle, interview transcript)

Shontelle is an African American, single woman raising two young children in South Phoenix: Avery, age four and a half and Alicia, age three. They live in a housing project together with Shontelle's friend and her teenage daughter. Originally from New York, Shontelle moved to Arizona ten years ago in search of a slower-paced life. On a trip to Arizona she was immediately drawn to the landscape and the great expanses of sky that the desert has to offer, and made the decision to stay. She first settled in Tucson with a friend, then, in February of 2005, she relocated to Phoenix. Shontelle is very attentive to her children's emotional, educational and health needs, which can be seen in her willingness to seek out resources. She raises her children to have high morals values, a strong belief system and faith, but finds being a single parent difficult: "The most challenging? If it's as far as being a parent is concerned—challenging would be being a single parent. That's my major challenge, because nobody wants to be a single parent, but it's life."

Shontelle loves being a mother, however, and works very hard to raise two healthy and happy children. Faced with complications throughout both of her pregnancies, Shontelle exerted every effort to see to the success of her pregnancies and sought out the best pre-natal care she could afford. Both her son and her daughter, however, were born several weeks premature and Alicia, the youngest of the two, was hospitalized for one week following her birth as her tiny lungs had not yet developed sufficiently to sustain her outside the womb. In-home visitations by staff from Southwest Human Services after Alicia was released from the hospital proved valuable and for this she is grateful.

Shontelle would love to stay home with her children. However, due to financial struggles and the systems' expectation that she work, Shontelle has taken a part-time job. While she is grateful for the help she receives from the Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES) from programs such as WIC and AHCCCS, Shontelle finds the system for qualifying for services to be exhausting and often senseless. She refers to the process as "jumping through hurdles". She admits that she has benefited greatly from various early child services throughout the valley, in both the public and non-profit arenas, but has worked hard to educate herself about the options available to her. With her first child, Shontelle participated in the Phoenix Birthing Project, and believes that their *Sister-Friend* program helped her immensely as she prepared for the arrival of her first child. She was amazed at the support she received during her pregnancy and for the first year of her son Avery's life, and as a first time mother, found comfort in the advice and care they offered her. Avery is in Head Start now. Shontelle understands the importance of quality childcare at an early age and, even with her busy schedule, participates in the policy committee for the Phoenix Head Start so that she can have a voice in her children's education. She has also taken her children the Arizona Literacy and Learning Center for developmental and literacy screenings. With both of her children, she makes sure to seize the educational opportunity in every activity they do together, but finds it difficult at times. "Every time you turn around, they're cutting something educational. How can we raise children to be presidents, and governors, and senators if they keep taking away from education?"

Shontelle is a resourceful mother who has educated herself on the services available for her children, but she wonders what it would be like if she could see the same doctor every time her children had a problem, for example, or if she didn't have to spend so much time trying to find needed services. As it stands now, Shontelle has to drive to a handful of centers and physicians to be treated. Without resources like the Learning and Literacy center, Shontelle believes she would be left with so many unanswered questions and concerns about her children and their development. She, like so many mothers, wants to be sure that her children are developing and growing and getting the services they need to help prepare them for kindergarten and beyond. She knows there services and doctors exist that can address all of her family's varied needs, but these needed services are cost prohibitive and out of her reach for this single mother living in South Phoenix.

02.Support/Information/ Advice

Lack of Support/Info/Advice	Medical Professional/facility
Loss of	Books/Internet/Media/Marketing
Extended Family	Faith and Religious Community
Friends and Neighbors	Other Affinity Groups
Services/Agencies	

03.Access/Barriers to Services

Cultural	Options/Availability
Religious	Ethnicity
Language	Same Sex
Transportation	Gender
Location	Documentation/Immigration Status
Information/Referrals	Age
Navigation of System	Economic/Eligibility

04.System of Services/Stakeholder Services

Role of Stakeholder/Community Leader	Negative Aspects of System/Gap
Stakeholder Services	Professional Solutions/Strategies to Improve
Agency Eligibility Requirement	Professional Concerns
Expectations	Population Served
Collaboration (absence/presence of)	Fear of
Positive Aspects of System	Improvement of Service

05.Finances/Socio-Economic Status

Lack of Funding	Class Standing
Sources of Income/Funding	Impacts of Funding

06.Early Care and Education (EP)

Legal Guardian Care	Family Childcare Provider
Kith and Kin	Other Child Care Services
Center-Based	

06.Early Care and Education (ED)

Academic Preparation/Readiness	Expectations and Needs
Primary Caregiver Involvement/Awareness of Child Care	Qualification
Selection of Child Care, preschool, and elementary school	Opinions of Early Care and Education Providers
Safety and Trust	

06.Development (DP)

Early Childhood Development

07.Child Acquisition

Birth Stories	Miscellaneous Methods
Adoption Stories	Preparation for Child Arrival
Child Acquisition Decisions	

08.Health

Maternal Health	Child immunizations
Prenatal Health	Health/ Dental Insurance
Child health	Disability or Impairment

Child dental health

Death of a Child

09. Childrearing/Parenting

In Home Activities

Out of Home Activities

Guidance/Discipline/Beliefs

Joys of Childrearing

Challenges and Frustrations of Childrearing

Routines and Practices

10. Household Composition

Single Parent

Primary Caregiver

Partner/Spouse living in

household/Colleagues in Agency

Extended Family living in household

Step/Adopted/Foster Children

Number in Household/Agency

11. Culture/Ethnicity

Cultural Identity

Cultural Beliefs about Influences

Cultural Practices

Immigration

Social and Cultural Capital

12. Language

Use of Language with family and friends/colleagues

Use of Language in School

As connected to cultural identity

Language Loss

Bilingualism (beliefs, values, practices)

English language acquisition

13. Religion

Religious beliefs

Religious influences and Practices

14. Community/Neighborhood

Resources

Neighborhood Safety

Atmosphere in Community

15. Time and Space

Time in AZ/Duration

Changing city of residence

Changing homes/Jobs

16. Work and Family

Roles/Balance

Primary Caregiver Education

Relationship Matters

17. Policy

Immigration Policy

Health Policy

Education Policy

Language Policy

Economic Policy

Social Policy

Arizona State Policy

National Policy

18. Material Cultures/Things

Toys

Books

Condition of Home/Agency

Electronics

19. First Things First

Knowledge of/Awareness

Where (heard about)

FTF-Funding

Regional Partnership Council

Experiences with

Quality First

T.E.A.C.H.