

The “Comadre” Project: An Asset-Based Design Approach to Connecting Low-Income Latinx Families to Out-of-School Learning Opportunities

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Reviewed by: Rishabh Devgon

Critical Review:

Alexander Cho et al. [1] adopt an asset based design approach with the aim to connect low income families with local low cost out of school learning opportunities. The research sheds light on the equity gap and affordances between low and high income families which has a direct impact on the skills required for academic and career success. The researchers sampled first or second generation immigrants from Latin America as the informants for the study. The research deploys an SMS subscription as a means to inform parents about various skill building opportunities successfully. The research is novel as it adopts an asset based community design framework, and it is intersectional, and representative of minority groups and is a step towards a more equitable landscape of opportunities for everyone.

I personally really enjoyed reading the methodology adopted by the researchers, which consisted of a four phase approach that was very well structured and exhaustive. In the first phase, 40 participants were recruited and interviewed to gauge the parent's mediation and involvement within the informal education sphere. In the next stage, the authors recruited 18 families for a follow up design focused interview. This was followed by making personas of the users that they interviewed where they departed from the ABCD approach. The authors have described and justified every scenario's characteristics and traits very well. In the third phase, the authors carried out design sprints keeping in mind the user's needs and assets in mind. The last phase consisted of carrying out focus group discussions with the entire family's involvement, which was further divided into three parts. In this last stage of the research, the application was deployed as a pilot study. I think each phase of the research process was justified and well conducted with the central research theme of the paper being prevalent throughout.

The paper does not specify the selection criteria or the sampling method which would have provided a deeper insight into the whole process of recruitment. The authors could have also offered their positionality and their motivation towards converging/ diverging towards this set of stakeholders. A provision of the method that the authors used for analysis could have provided a clearer insight into their methodology. The recruits lacked racial and gender diversity, with the significant chunk of informants being Latina women. Thus, this study can not be extended to other underprivileged groups. Developing the research and making it more robust and fruitful, there was scope for another fascinating exploration within this research. This could have been to recruit the children availing these opportunities directly because parents acted as proxies for their experiences. There could also be a gap between what a student wants to pursue and what a parent wants their ward to follow, and thus, it may not give a correct representation of the assets possessed by the child, which is essential to the asset based design approach.

The authors haven't really delved into what alternative interventions came out as a result of their design sprints and how they converged to their medium because there was very little justification provided as to why the SMS was established as the means of dissemination and not an alternative widely used platform like calling or WhatsApp or any other form of social media. In this asset based design approach, I felt that the authors could have also better situated the proposed intervention by integrating the rich cultural heritage and traditions of Latin America to better cater to their selected stakeholders.

This research also opens up channels for intergenerational and experiential learning models, which can be adopted in low income families in the future. This direction could also benefit the access and the quality of dissemination of the skills which could benefit students professionally and academically. Another direction that could be explored within this research's purview is to reap the benefits of the online platforms and localise global skill building resources that could offer richer and more decentralised knowledge and skills. I would conclude the review by complimenting the structure of the paper and the clarity of thought. The study does well to realise the primary aim set out by the authors.

References:

1. Alexander Cho, Roxana G. Herrera, Luis Chaidez, and Adilene Uriostegui. 2019. The "Comadre" Project: An Asset-Based Design Approach to Connecting Low-Income Latinx Families to Out-of-School Learning Opportunities. In *Proceedings of the 2019 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (CHI '19), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3290605.3300837>