

The HEAR.US Project

Humanize | Empathize | Accept | Raise awareness for immigrants in the US

Supporting rationale and introduction

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*The HEAR.US Project toolkit can be found by visiting Tacoma Community House's
website and selecting the "Resources" tab: tacomacommunityhouse.org*

Welcome

Welcome to The HEAR.US Project - A culmination of past experience, new knowledge and a refueled passion for social justice and equality for immigrants in the community. This introduction will explain a bit of the behind the scenes development of this project and provide context in several different areas of The HEAR.US Project's conception. Below, you will find brief commentary on the historical undertones, the target population and need, relevant NASW guidelines, a description of the theoretical frameworks along with guiding assumptions involved and finally, an explanation of the intervention itself and its desired outcomes. Thank you for taking the time to learn a bit more about immigrants in your community and the world over; the knowledge you learn will not only empower immigrant community members, but yourself as well.

Historical undertones

It seems that as long as white settlers began immigrating to our young nation in the early 17th century, xenophobia has been a lingering cultural component among those in the New World. Throughout our nation's brief history, we have had a contradicting message projected to those who look to the United States for a new life and fresh start. The Statue of Liberty stands tall on Liberty Island brandishing a welcoming statement to all: "Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free..." (excerpt from *The New Colossus*, located on the base of the Statue of Liberty) (Lazarus, 1883). Despite this misleading proclamation, no matter what nation of origin or color of skin, newcomers are often greeted by unfriendly neighbors and dehumanizing generalizations called anti-immigrant myths. Myth is not only an extension of anti-immigrant sentiment, but also a perpetuating element, which has also served to sustain

and spread unfavorable attitudes over time. These myths are often a result of a lack in educational awareness coupled with racism and the fear of difference. Given the historical prevalence of anti-immigrant myth and sentiment, it appears to be human nature to fear the unfamiliar. Yet, it is anything but humane to act upon these misconceptions and fears. That is where The HEAR.US Project, a community awareness educational toolkit, comes in.

Target population

The toolkit has been created with two levels of target populations. First and foremost, it was designed to enhance the knowledge of local community members in the Tacoma/Pierce County area, yet, the content was presented in a manner where the information would translate to the wider community of the entire United States. Targets include individuals who accept anti-immigrant myth as truth and/or harbor anti-immigrant beliefs. Additionally, this intervention will target individuals who are either pro-immigrant or neutral to the cause, providing information that can help sway the neutral and uninformed as well as resources and motivation for those inspired to advocate for immigrant issues. *Needs statement:* □ Community members need education in order to eliminate anti-immigrant sentiment and myth for an inclusive and just society. Ultimately, the toolkit will address this statement of need, providing the education needed to intervene and prevent the acceptance and spread of anti-immigrant myth and sentiment.

NASW guidelines

The HEAR.US Project incorporates several aspects of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) principles and values as well as Tacoma Community House's

(TCH) mission and values. Some examples from the NASW Code of Ethics (2008) inherent to this project include but are not limited to: The “ethical responsibility to broader society” (6), “cultural competence and social diversity” (1.05), and the value of “dignity and worth of the person.” The values of “service” and “social justice,” go hand-in-hand with each other in which service puts the aims of social justice into action (NASW, 2008). By educating community members about anti-immigrant myth and sentiment, the toolkit hopes to enact TCH’s vision of “a society where social justice matters and everyone participates” (Tacoma Community House, 2015). The toolkit was designed on the precipice that it would embody the pursuit of social justice at its core, which is reasonably the core of social work philosophy as well.

Theoretical framework

The HEAR.US Project is based on several supporting theoretical frameworks and theories. The problem can be described by the social scientific theory of “othering.” Essentially, “othering” can be understood as a social method of identifying individuals thought to be different from one’s self or culture, most specifically the majority culture, that creates or emphasizes dominance and subordination (Johnson, Bottorff, Browne, Grewal, Hilton & Clarke, 2004). This can be simplified into the practice of labeling a group of people as “outsiders” of the majority population. The intervention (toolkit) itself is based on two different theoretical foundations. First, the broad scope of macro community intervention is based upon Ann Jeffries’ (2014) Collaborative Community Development, specifically the Capacity and Awareness Promotion (CAP) and Social Campaigns (SC) quadrants. Jeffries’ CAP and SC models are quite promising for the goals of intervening in the face of ignorance and myth, which build on educational

awareness, community empowerment and wide-scale information sharing (Jeffries, 2014). Jeffries' concepts serve as a framework for approaching a problem through the lens of community education and social campaigning methods. Finally, the toolkit's content and structure are based off of an extensive collection of research conducted by the Frameworks Institute. The Frameworks Institute has provided evidence-based communication methods for approaching immigration issues with the general public, which will ideally keep the audience engaged while addressing the issues that are involved with immigrant rights and immigration policy in the United States. This framework incorporates three main tenets: Lead with a moral argument, follow with pragmatic knowledge correcting misconceptions and close with the notion of a shared prosperity among all (O'neil, Kendall-Taylor, & Bales, 2014). This method has been proven to work best in several peer-reviewed studies. An assumption has been made that once individuals have improved their knowledge about immigrant community members that their attitudes towards immigrants will then change to incorporate this new knowledge.

Intervention type

The HEAR.US Project is a macro intervention, which utilizes an online educational toolkit to expand a community's general knowledge of immigrants for the purpose of reducing anti-immigrant sentiment and myth. The content includes personal success stories of immigrants, a collection of myth debunking facts presented in visually appealing infographics, helpful terms and new policy information that effect families and a collection of resources to become active in immigration advocacy as well as many avenues to gain a deeper understanding of immigration policy in the United States. This

content is arranged in a manner consistent with the communication framework provided by The Frameworks Institute in order to appeal to a diverse range of viewpoints and get the main points across in an engaging and non-confrontational manner.

Outcomes intended

The goal of The HEAR.US Project is to educate community members on the facts about immigrants while emphasizing that immigrants are humans, just like you or I. This will ideally create an outcome in which anti-immigrant myth and sentiment will be reduced in community members, which will hopefully encourage an increased acceptance of immigrants as not only viable, but desirable community members. This could be reflected in interpersonal interactions among community members or appear in legislative changes showing increased acceptance of immigrants in the reduction of restrictive immigration policy. In order to describe these desired outcomes in a manner, which will make them easier to measure, they have been operationalized into two separate outcomes (1 & 2) with two outcome indicators (a & b) for each:

1. Increase in shared values for the community
 - a. Professes common beliefs
 - b. Acknowledges shared values
2. Increased knowledge of underlying community concern.
 - a. Knows neighborhood issues
 - b. Sees trends in neighborhood issues

These outcomes will then be measured by surveying community members who utilize the toolkit by use of an online questionnaire conducted both before and after viewing the toolkit. It is intended that educational awareness among community members will reduce

anti-immigrant myth and sentiment from the increase in knowledge about immigrants and thereby create a more accepting environment for all community members.

Thank you for engaging in the The HEAR.US Project. By learning the facts of immigrants in your community, you can HEAR their cause.

References

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