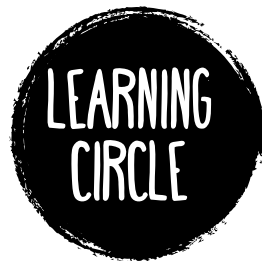


A WINDOW INTO THE LIVES OF MIDDLE YEARS CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

POLICY CONVERSATIONS MADE PERSONAL



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Pain points & Segmentation

Our pain point

Our initial pain point was: *Some caregivers and parents of children age 6-12 are feeling stretched, and may need more help.* Families with children age 6-12 were our original user group.

After 10 ethnographies with children and parents we revised the segment of families we were interested in to: *Caregivers / parents of children age 6-12 who are feeling stretched AND who have difficulty participating in 'traditional' methods of public engagement.* We recognized that stretched families are the least likely to have time to attend public consultations.

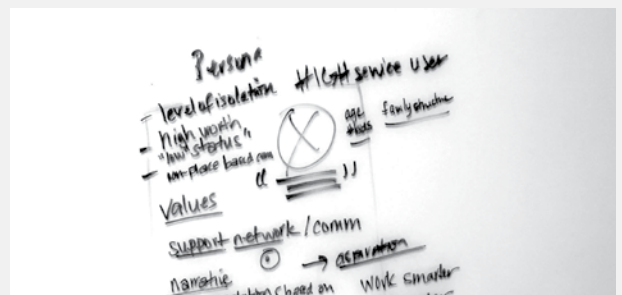
How did we get to know our families?

Finding families who are stretched means going to where they are. We set-up a recruitment booth at an afterschool program. We also worked with another community centre to locate families who may face challenges attending a typical community engagement session.

We did several ethnographies with children and parents. In these conversations we used a variety of prompting tools including a mini-profile, relationship maps, maps of the local area, timelines and prompt cards with different outcomes.

We wrote-up our ethnographies as rich narratives, including quotes.

From the ethnographies, we have seen how strong local communities can amplify family resiliency. We've also seen how sharing real life stories helps other parents to feel comfortable sharing their own. These personal stories deepen the policy conversation.



Ngawang's story

I met Ngawang at his daughter's after school program, one of the only times during the day where he had a moment to talk. He told me about coming to Canada and raising his daughter here. Ngawang said that things were going pretty well, generally. His family was healthy, his daughter did well in school, and she got along well with other kids. "The economic situation can always be better" he said, but other than that he did not have much to complain about.

But it wasn't always this way.

Ngawang told me he felt trapped when he first arrived in Canada, because he didn't know anyone. And he said that while he came to feel at home here, he really only felt at home in Parkdale – as soon as he would leave his community, he wanted to go back.

Ngawang told me about his family's weekly schedule. Tenzin had regular activities outside of school, such as after-school programming, homework club, and Tibetan guitar classes. It was a lot to get through, and still leave time for dinner and homework. To make it work, Ngawang works 7am-3pm and his wife works 3pm-11pm. They saw each other once or twice a week, on days off.

Ngawang had found supportive people in the community who could lend a hand, such as his neighbours and the after-school drop-in staff. His concern was making sure Tenzin learned about her Tibetan culture.



Ideas & prototyping

Three ideas

Re-group



Different segmentations of caregivers and families, based on ethnographies, that can be used to generate insights and policy that best match different families' needs and aspirations.

Engagement Guide



A script and set of materials for policy makers to use, across Ontario, to hear the perspectives of families. Ethnographic conversations could sit alongside our other public engagement tools.

Persona kit for policy makers



A persona template to share the stories of caregivers and parents. This is one way to better integrate small data as one of our evidence streams, and in turn to influence policy discussions.

Prototyping

How could personas of the real life families we meet be used by policy makers during the strategy development process? What information does a persona need to contain to be useful?

We have mocked-up a template for this persona, based on our actual research. We will test using this template, and creating visual assets (e.g posters or slide decks) to bring a range of family voices into our discussions and meetings.

Persona name	age <i>40</i>	level of location
number of kids	background	service usage
family structure	family structure	service interactions
key words	key words	social network/ community
values - what's important to them?	aspirations - what do they want in the future?	routines - what does a typical day look like?
strategies to share	narrative - what's the story they tell themselves?	
workshop challenges/barriers	decision-making drivers, trade-offs	

What's next?

Burning questions & Future opportunities

Going deep, and wide. Our scope is province-wide. How can we conduct more ethnographies in diverse communities across the province?

Amplifying opportunities to connect one-on-one. Within a policy context, how can opportunities to connect with individual service users be incorporated more organically in daily work?

Prototyping versus planning. Prototyping can be constrained by pre-existing conditions and norms. With planning, you tend to try to minimize all of the risk upfront. Prototyping challenges this.

What are we taking away ourselves?

Finding the unusual suspects

It takes time to recruit and mobilize people you don't usually hear from, but it's important to reach out.

User research can be used in strategy development

We see how ethnography and prototyping methods can be used at all levels of the service system - from the frontline to policy. They can also be used at the frontend of a policy development process, not just to evaluate programs.

Changing the relationship between government, service providers, and the public

We observed how challenging it could be for service providers and families to see government in this open, exploratory role - rather than as program funders.