

Review: Coady, Maria R. *Connecting School and the Multilingual Home: Theory and Practice for Rural Educators.*

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Coady, Maria R. *Connecting School and the Multilingual Home: Theory and Practice for Rural Educators.* Blue Ridge Summit, PA: Multilingual Matters, 2019. ISBN 78-1-7889-2326-2.

Maria R. Coady (2019)'s *Connecting School and the Multilingual Home: Theory and Practice for Rural Educators* presents a collection of research studies as well as literature syntheses that elucidate educators' struggles in serving students in rural communities. Coady provides a variety of frameworks that conceptualize and realign essential practices to address the needs of immigrant, migrant, and refugee students and their families in conjunction with an understanding of these groups' ontology and epistemology. More importantly, although Coady's work centers around diverse research models, it aims to use these varied findings as a way to connect the public with resources that can have a practical use. The goal of this book is to connect research to practice, which it does well by making in-depth information on best practices readily accessible for educators.

Connecting School and the Multilingual Home is organized in eight chapters that structure the research sequentially to clearly portray the intricacy and interconnectedness of the themes presented. In the introduction, Coady describes the ever-changing needs of the 21st-century global environment and how demands on education are jointly evolving in response to a surge of multilingual students. In addition, Coady describes the needs of multilingual families specifically in rural areas where access to resources is often scarce. As part of this section, Coady defines relevant terms that are used throughout the text and describes its objectives, structure, and intended audience.

Chapter one presents valuable information on rurality as a way to understand the geographical context within which multilingual families and children operate. Coady points to the ambiguous distinction between rural and urban as independent concepts; to that end, the United Nations notes that the characteristics that distinguish the two are "not yet amenable to a single definition" (as cited in Coady 24). Based on the distance between communities, however, there are three different types of ruralities: fringe, distance, and remote. Understanding these intricacies is essential to rethinking rural physical spaces as social processes that take place within geographical parameters, which helps to discern the ways in which people work, cooperate, and live. This leads to an understanding of the challenges that spatial isolation may cause for multilingual children and their families; consequently, in reframing strategies for engagement, it is important to

consider rurality as part of the multiple systems that may influence home-school interactions.

Chapter two provides a literature review that describes a strengths-based approach for differentiated family engagement, which contrasts with the oft-used deficit paradigm. In this alternative, Coady recognizes the contributions of these families by advocating for linguistically responsive pedagogy. This chapter concludes by delineating the importance of relational trust and care in connecting with families.

Throughout chapter three, Coady reiterates the growing and diversifying nature of multilingual, rural communities, consequently underscoring the essential connection that educators must establish between schools and homes. In order to engage multilingual families in rural learning communities, Coady argues, educators must first seek to understand the cultural differences within each unique cultural group. To mitigate issues of appropriate and efficient multilingual family engagement, Coady points to research that suggests the impact of communication with the child within the home about the importance of education, in addition to prioritizing high expectations for future academic achievement. International research further corroborates that engagement rooted in the home cultivates a love and interest in learning. Although this body of research suggests some practical strategies for parental engagement, the majority of the proposed frameworks are grounded in a Western cultural model of education that disregards parenting as a culturally specific activity. Therefore, Coady emphasizes moving away from adapting a fossilized set of standard practices that does not contextualize according to the cultural backgrounds of multilingual families.

Chapter four further analyzes multilingual family engagement and explores how educators can learn about the needs of rural multilingual families and students. Specifically, in this section Coady suggests a shift in the pedagogical lens to view interactions with these groups as opportunities rather than challenges. As such, it is the educators' responsibility to bridge the linguistic and cultural differences between school communities and families in a way that utilizes these groups' background knowledge to inform possible communication approaches.

In chapter five, Coady underscores practical applications that educators can adopt to engage multilingual families. She conceptualizes an approach for differentiated family engagement using the work of Ladson-Billings (1994) on culturally responsive pedagogy in conjunction with Lucas (2008)'s research on linguistically relevant pedagogy. Both frameworks address the importance of using students' language as a resource for student learning. This chapter makes strong arguments for language as a tool that can facilitate cross-cultural interactions between the home and the learning community.

In chapter six, Coady describes the intersecting challenges that poverty, immigration, and rurality present for Latino families and consequent effects

on the education of children. Specifically, Coady highlights Bronfenbrenner (1979)'s Ecological Social Systems Theory as a way to identify factors that may come into play and affect a child's education. In chapter seven, a focus on the Rural Women's Health Project, an advocacy group, offers additional perspectives in delineating the role of community agencies in service of rural multilingual families.

Lastly, chapter eight concludes by suggesting practical ways to increase understanding of multilingual families and to engage them in rural settings. Learning about the families prior to meeting them is key; the work of educators should begin before the first in-person interaction and this initiative should be consistently maintained throughout the year. In addition, the best approach for engagement is a family-centered, as opposed to school-centered, approach where families' voices can be heard and taken into consideration in culturally and linguistically appropriate ways.

Overall, Maria R. Coady's *Connecting School and the Multilingual Home* presents relevant information in a concise manner; the author adequately provides research that depicts various frameworks pertinent to engaging multilingual families in rural settings and contributes her own personal criticism where appropriate. For example, Coady criticizes the static nature of Epstein (2011)'s work when she argues that any proposed set of activities that is not contextualized to address the varied realities of multilingual families only serves to distance the home from the school community. In addition, the scenarios included in the book serve as points of entry to introduce corresponding research that conveys very relatable, real-life situations for educators. Nevertheless, although Coady's work sufficiently covers a vast array of research-based findings, it lacks recommendations for any potential structural shift that could better accommodate and include multilingual families and children.

All in all, however, *Connecting School and the Multilingual Home* is a valuable read for all educators, not just those working in rural communities. It describes a specific social microcosm that nevertheless serves to inform a wide audience of the importance of creating an equitable and inclusive macrocosm through national educational practices and policies that can extend to all learning communities, regardless of the diversity that resides within the classroom walls.