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## **Parent Involvement Practices of Farmworking Immigrant Mothers in a Rural Community**

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### **Abstract**

This qualitative study documents the experiences of farmworking parents with their local school system. More specifically, this investigation examines the parent involvement practices of farmworking immigrant mothers. The data for this study was collected through parent workshops discussions. Utilizing critical counter storytelling and Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005) to framework this study seeks to bring the voices of farmworking parents to the forefront of the discussions about parent involvement. Findings from this study revealed that parents become involved in their children's education by engaging in three main practices: 1) homework help; 2) *consejos*, and 3) parental coaching. This study contributes to the existing literature that challenges the deficit arguments that low-income Latino parents are not involved in their children's education (Chavez-Reyes, 2010; Delgado-Gaitan, 1992; Faltis, 2006; LeFevre & Shaw, 2011; López, 2001). Findings from this study have implications for practitioners and policy makers interested in developing culturally-relevant community-campus partnerships that aim to bridge the home and school.

### **Introduction**

The educational literature suggests that integrating the participation of parents in the educational process is beneficial to the academic success of students (Delgado-Gaitan, 1990; Durand, 2011; Moll & González, 1997). More recently, empirical studies have demonstrated a positive relationship between parent involvement and student outcomes (Barnard, 2004; Durand, 2011; Lee & Bowen, 2006; LeFevre & Shaw, 2011). The academic literature also suggests that parent involvement can have a higher impact on the academic achievement of minority students (Alfaro, Umaña-Taylor, & Bámaca, 2006; Jeynes, 2003). However, parents and educators hold conflicting views of what constitutes parent involvement. On the one hand, educators understand parental involvement as the practices that require parents to be active participants by: 1) tutoring children at home; 2) helping children fundraise; 3) volunteering as

chaperones; and 4) assisting with Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) activities (Epstein, 1995). On the other hand, Latino parents engage in informal parent involvement practices that include cultural narratives, emotional support, and parent-child discussions (Auerbach, 2007; Barnard, 2004; López, 2001). The conflicting views on parent involvement may be due to the lack of acknowledgment of less visible forms. Mainstream parental involvement frameworks are limited as the research has been based on homogenous white middle-class groups and do not account for the non-traditional forms of parental involvement practiced by underrepresented groups.

In primarily immigrant communities, the lack of mainstream practices of parent involvement is interpreted as a lack of concern for their children's education (Payne, 2008; Stone, 1998). The perception that parents are not involved in their children's education creates a tenuous relationship between schools and parents. According to Olivos (1999), this relationship is a result of the differences in culture, power, and knowledge of the school and community. Olivos' explanation of the tension that exists due to the differences in culture, power, and knowledge provides an alternative argument to the lack of mainstream practices of parental involvement. More specifically, this tension creates "asymmetrical relationships of power which hinder their authentic participation in the schools, often causing them to become resistant to the efforts of the schools and at times even challenge them" (Olivos, 2003, p. 8). Furthermore, Olivos explains that the tensions can lead parents to resist and challenge the school system; however, those instances of resistance and challenge can create opportunities for positive change. More specifically, scholars within the community-based and empowerment literature (Burt, 1992; Fraser & Honneth, 2003) would argue that the instances in which parents are resisting and challenging the system can be opportunities for empowerment.

The literature on parent involvement is clear on the need for parent participation in the education system and their children's education. However, the literature fails to acknowledge the ways in which parents from non-mainstream backgrounds become involved in their children's education. Studies have demonstrated that parents of underrepresented students hold a high regard for education and become involved in forms not recognized by mainstream society (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992; López, 2001). López (2001) demonstrated that farm workers have a unique way of instilling in their children the value of education. For example, a farm-working family may transmit to their children the value of education through hard work, which often consists of taking their children with them to work in the fields. Through this practice,

parents seek to help their children build an understanding of the work they do and how important it is for them to continue their education so that one day they will not have to perform the same work. Furthermore, research by Delgado-Gaitan (1992, 1994) also concludes that Mexican families use their sociocultural practices to help transmit a highly-regarded value for education and to become involved in their children's education.

Aligned with the literature on *consejos* (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; López, 2001), Godinez (2006) examines how the concepts of *educación* and *consejos* shape the educational experiences of Mexican women. Godinez (2006) defines *consejos* "as the telling about values, symbols, and ways of thinking and knowing" (p. 31). The cultural knowledge practice imparted through *consejos* is what allows students to redefine their thinking about their educational identity and also helps them become motivated to strive for better educational outcomes (Godinez, 2006). Delgado-Bernal (2006) also extends the literature on the ways parents and families contribute to their children's education by introducing the concept of pedagogies of the home. Delgado-Bernal (2006) indicates that "pedagogies of the home provide strategies of resistance that challenge educational norms" (pp. 113). Pedagogies of the home extend the discussion of parent involvement by situating cultural knowledge and practices at the forefront to examine the ways in which farmworking parents engage in their children's education. Similarly, Moll (1999) defines *funds of knowledge* as a pedagogical approach in which communities implement their cultural knowledge and resources to develop meaningful learning experiences.

These scholars have engaged in culturally relevant research to describe the parent involvement practices of Latino immigrant families. This study builds on their work, and redefines the parent involvement practices of immigrant farmworking mothers. Furthermore, this study seeks to expand the literature by examining the ways educators can begin to acknowledge and validate these practices to develop culturally-relevant parent involvement models. This qualitative study documents the parent involvement practices of immigrant farmworking mothers within their local school system in a rural community in California. The following question guides this study: *What are the ways that farmworking mothers become involved in their children's education?*

## Theoretical Framework

First, through a counter-storytelling method, I aim to challenge the majoritarian narrative that rural farmworking parents are not involved in their children's education. Counter-storytelling is rooted in critical race theory, and it is utilized to provide alternate narratives to the "majoritarian" stories of People of Color (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). As explained in Solorzano and Yosso (2002), critical race methodology is an approach that "challenges the traditional research paradigms, texts, and theories used to explain the experiences of Students of Color, and offers a liberatory or transformative solution" (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 24). Therefore, a counter-storytelling method approach values parents' experiential knowledge and places them at the center of the analysis. In the process, it legitimizes farmworking parents' non-dominant forms of parent involvement.

### Community Cultural Wealth

Second, I draw from Yosso's work on Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) to analyze how parents implement their community assets and knowledge into their parent involvement practices. Yosso (2005) challenges the traditional model of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) that has been used to argue that Students' of Color academic underachievement is a result of not having the same forms of capital that make the middle class and predominately white communities successful. Bourdieu's theory is used to reinforce the idea that cultural capital possessed by middle class and predominately white communities is the only valued capital in mainstream society. However, the traditional perspective on cultural capital has a very narrow focus that only includes a specific set of skills and abilities that are valued by the dominant group in our society. While Bourdieu's theory focuses on the narrow forms of knowledge and skills valued by the privileged group, Yosso's CCW model encompasses a greater array of skills and knowledge possessed by People of Color (Yosso, 2005).

Yosso's work focuses on the cultural knowledge, skills, and resources that communities of color possess. Yosso (2005) builds her theory of CCW from the work of Solórzano and Villalpando (1998) by conceptualizing six tenets of cultural wealth that are interrelated and build on each other:

- I. Aspirational Capital: "The ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future even in the face of barriers" (pp. 41).

2. Linguistic Capital: “The intellectual and social skills learned through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style” (pp. 43).
3. Navigational Capital: "The skills of maneuvering through social institutions such as schools, the job market, health care and judicial systems" (pp. 44).
4. Social Capital: “The networks of people and community resources” (pp. 45).
5. Familial Capital: "The cultural knowledge nurtured among *familia* (kin) that carry a sense of community, history, memory, and cultural intuition” (pp. 48).
6. Resistant Capital: “The knowledge and skills cultivated through behavior that challenges inequality” (pp.49).

Using Yosso’s work allows me to examine different forms of capital that parents possess and how they incorporate CCW in their parent involvement practices. Using CCW also helps me redefine mainstream parent involvement practices and identify ways that educators can integrate the cultural assets and knowledge of parents in their parent engagement initiatives. In rural communities, parents may not possess the economic capital or the dominant forms of cultural capital that can easily be activated in the mainstream school system, however, other forms of capital may help them and their children navigate the U.S. school system.

Furthermore, supporters of cultural capital would argue that Latino students are failing because they lack the requisite cultural capital to be successful in school. However, as Yosso (2005) proposes, it is not that they lack the cultural capital, but rather that their particular types of cultural capital are not recognized and validated by the school system. Additional research by Lareau and Horvat (1999) suggest that the value of cultural capital depends on the social setting. When educators’ perspectives of the required cultural capital for a school does not match that of the population they serve, students’ and families’ cultural capital may not be acknowledged. Yosso’s CCW model helps us understand the cultural capital possessed by Latino parents, and how these types of capital are assets to students' educational experience.

## **Methodology**

For this study, I employed a community-based participatory research (CBPR) methodology (Israel, Eng, Schulz, & Parker, 2005) to develop a community-school partnership in collaboration with community members, and a cultural practice approach (Figueroa & Sánchez,

2005) to facilitate the fostering of trustful relationships with the participants. The difference between traditional research methodologies and CBPAR is that CBPAR takes a different stance and advocates for “partnerships *with* community members to identify issues of local importance, develop ways of studying them, collect and interpret data, and take action on the resulting knowledge” (Smith, Bratini, Chambers, Jensen, & Romero, 2010). Figueroa and Sánchez (2005) suggests that engaging in a “cultural practice” when conducting qualitative research is a more appropriate epistemology when working with Latino communities. More specifically, this approach allows Chicana/o researchers to gain a deeper understanding of the emerging themes and facilitates their engagement in culturally relevant methodological approaches (Figueroa & Sánchez, 2005).

The data for this study was obtained from parent workshops that I facilitated as part of my dissertation research. Before developing the parent workshops, I conducted focus groups with parents to explore the barriers to education in the community and to identify workshop topics. Parents expressed a lack of understanding of the educational system and what educators expected from them and their children. More specifically, many parents wanted to be more involved in their children's education, but did not know how to approach teachers or make connections with the school system. Furthermore, they felt they did not know how to help their children in attaining successful academic outcomes. As a result of these parental concerns, the *Academic Success* workshops (*Talleres Para el Exito Académico*) were developed and focused on topic areas that would improve parental understanding of how to navigate the school system and identify successful educational strategies to help their children academically. There are four general topics that were discussed in Spanish during the *Academic Success* workshops: (1) the structure of the school system; (2) grade level state standards and California state testing requirements; (3) how to build strong parent-educator partnerships; and (4) how to support completion of homework assignments.

### **Research Site and Sample Selection**

The school district is composed of five rural communities in Central California within a 50-mile radius. There are four K-8<sup>th</sup> grade schools that feed into one high school. The total student population for the school district is 1,831 students (CA Department of Education, 2015). Because some of the families within these communities lack access to transportation,

the workshops were facilitated in each of the district communities. Workshop participants identified a local church, a classroom in one of the elementary schools, and a local community center as convenient locations for those who did not have access to transportation. The four workshops of the *Academic Success* series were offered once a month in each of the communities during the 2012-2013 school year. The total average number of participants for the workshops was 27 mothers (Table I. Workshop Attendance).

Table I  
*Workshop Attendance*

<b>Workshop Title</b>	<b>Number of Workshops</b>	<b>Total Attendance</b>
<i>The U.S. Education System</i>	3	27
<i>Educational Requirements in California</i>	4	28
<i>School-Parent Partnerships</i>	4	23
<i>Homework and Academic Success</i>	3	30
<b>Average Attendance</b>		<b>27</b>

All of the workshop participants were of Mexican-origin. The workshops were available to all parents in the school district. However, only mothers attended the workshops. The average educational level of the mothers was 9.09 years of education. The average age of the mothers was 32.7 years. The mothers in this community have been in the U.S for an average of 14.97 years (Table 2. Sample Demographics).

Table 2  
*Sample Demographics*

<b>Demographics</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>
Family Size	4.98	1.35
Age of Mother	32.7	6.5
Years of Education (Mother)	9.09	3.38
Years in the U.S. (Mother)	14.97	6.31

**Recruitment and compensation.** Recruitment methods for workshop participation included automated phone calls through the school district's automated calling system, personal calls to participants, and flyers distributed at the local open market and posted in public spaces throughout the community. Everyone who attended the workshops received one raffle ticket. At the end of every workshop, all workshop participants would enter their raffle tickets in a basket for an opportunity to win a \$20 gift card. Participants were informed that the workshop discussions were going to be utilized for research purposes and that the conversation would be audio recorded. Participants were informed of my interest in learning about the way they navigated the U.S. school system, the barriers they faced, and how they were involved in their children's education.

**Workshop context.** The workshops were facilitated in a focus-group discussion format. Each workshop was guided by a specific topic, while allowing the parents to engage in discussion amongst themselves and with me, the workshop facilitator. As a way to encourage discussion from the participants during the workshop, the rooms were organized in circular arrangement. I guided the workshop discussion with a PowerPoint presentation highlighting research-based information on the topic of each of the workshops. However, the level of the information was adapted to the literacy level of the communities. All workshops were facilitated in Spanish. In addition, throughout the presentation, I would weave in personal narratives of my experience as a first-generation Mexican immigrant in the education system. This strategy proved to be successful in soliciting the participants to share their experiences.

**Qualitative data analysis.** After the workshops were recorded they were transcribed by an undergraduate student fluent in Spanish and originally from one of the communities. For the coding of this data, I followed a deductive approach based on Strauss methodology (Strauss, 1987). The first round of coding that I conducted by hand—or the open coding stage—generated ample categories based on critical words and associated forms of statements in which the parents identified their forms of parent involvement. I then transferred all of the transcription files to Dedoose 4.7.1, a qualitative data analysis software. Dedoose 4.7.1 provides a structure for the storing, organizing, and the analysis of the data. Using Dedoose 4.7.1, I created the parent helping child with homework, parent advising child (*consejos*), and the parental coaching codes based on the initial open coding of the data. The qualitative analysis was guided by the research question and the theoretical framework

employed in this study. The parent codes generated in Dedoose 4.7.1 were specific to my research question. I analyzed each of the transcripts separately using the same codes across all 14 transcripts. Once, I finished coding all transcripts, I translated the quotes used in this study from Spanish to English. In the next section, I discuss the findings of my study based on these codes.

### **The Parent Involvement Practices of Latino Rural Parents**

Through the analysis, I noticed that although the majority of the parents were not familiar with the U.S. school system, they were very interested in being involved in their children's education. However, due to the language barrier and the disconnect they experienced from the school system, they were not able to engage in dominant forms of parent involvement. Nonetheless, they were actively involved in their children education by: 1) helping their children with homework assignments; 2) encouraging their children to continue with their education through their *consejos*; and 3) advising other parents on what to do when they encountered a problem. The analysis also confirmed the fluidity of the CCW framework as various forms of capital intersected in the examination of parent involvement practices. In the sections below, I present the counterstories of the parent involvement practices of the mothers in the rural farmworking community and how they implemented navigational, linguistic, familial, aspirational, resistant, and social capital within their practices to engage in their children's education.

#### **Homework Help**

Helping their children with homework assignments was a common practice that the mothers identified as a way to engage in their children's education. In the initial workshops, many of the mothers began to discuss their desire to be involved in their children's education by helping with homework assignments. Many of the mothers also stated that they did not know how to go about helping with the homework assignments, or if their practices were appropriate. As a result, they requested that one of the workshops focus on ways to help their children with homework. The last workshop, *Homework and Academic Success*, focused on strategies that they could engage in to help their children with homework assignments. More specifically, I listed basic strategies for parents on how they could help their children organize

the homework assignments and align them with specific academic goals, such as reading at grade level. Throughout the discussion of the basic strategies, mothers began to describe their own strategies on how they help their children with the homework assignments. The mothers see homework as their responsibility and contribution to their children's education.

The counterstories from the workshops with the mothers indicate that despite the lack of high levels of education and the language barrier, parents were actively engaging in the homework process. In fact, most of the participants indicated that language limited the way they helped their children with their homework, but that did not stop them from assisting their children. For example, one of the mothers who participated in the workshop indicated, "*pues es lo que yo hago, asegurarme que hagan la tarea. Aunque yo no le entiendo pero si me aseguro que la terminen.*" [What I do is make sure they do their homework. Even though I don't understand, I make sure that they complete it.] In this instance, although the mother cannot directly help the child with the homework assignment, her way of assisting with homework completion is by ensuring that the task gets done.

Although not being able to understand the language has been documented to be a barrier to mainstream parent involvement practices, the mothers engaged in practices that allowed their children to complete their homework that at the same time helped develop children's bilingual skills. For example, in the excerpt below a mother indicates that she asked her child to translate the homework to Spanish for the mother to understand the homework assignment. Once the mother knew what the homework assignment was asking for, she then explained the concept to the child in Spanish. The child then worked through her homework in Spanish and finally completed the assignment in English.

*Primero le pregunto que qué aprendieron en la escuela y ya me empiezan a decir lo que aprendieron. Y ya les digo, "¿Y que te dejaron de tarea?" porque casi siempre es lo mismo que aprendieron en la escuela, es el trabajo que no terminaron adentro del salón es lo que les dejan de tarea. Entonces ya empezamos a repasar lo que no entendieron y porque el inglés yo no lo entiendo muy bien, pero Socorro [hija] me explica más o menos y yo más o menos me baso a lo que ella me está diciendo y es de la manera que le puedo ayudar.*

[First I ask about what they learned in school, and then they [children] begin to tell me what they learned. I then ask what they were assigned for homework because

oftentimes it is the same thing they learned in school, and whatever they didn't finish in the classroom is what is assigned as homework. Then we begin to review what they did not understand; and because I really don't understand English, but Socorro [daughter] somewhat explains it to me. From what she tells me, I guide myself and that is how I am able to help them.]

Some of the parents indicated that they would ask the child to translate the homework for them. However, parents indicated that the child would become frustrated. The parents would then find ways to translate the homework to be able to explain the concepts to the child. For example, a parent indicated that she used the dictionary to translate the assignments.

*Les tenía un diccionario bien grande...sabían que ahí iban a encontrar cualquier palabra que no les entendía. Y mis hijos también saben que cuando ocupemos algo, sacamos el diccionario y a buscar la palabra.*

[I used to have a big dictionary...they [children] knew that there we would find any word we did not understand. My children also know that when we need something, we take the dictionary out and we find the word.]

In the example provided in the section above, it is clear that the mothers were vested in helping their children with the homework assignments. Although, the majority of them did not understand the language, they found ways to translate the homework and in order to be able to help their children with their assignments.

Within the framework of CCW, the homework help practice presented various forms of capital including navigational, linguistic and familial. Yosso (2005) describes navigational capital to be the ways that resiliency developed by individuals is used to navigate through systems or institutions. In the case of the homework help practice, parents demonstrate that one way to help their children progress through the school system is by helping or ensuring that the homework assignments are completed. Furthermore, they demonstrated their navigational capital within the homework help practice in the instances in which they maneuvered to find strategies such as asking their children about their classwork in order to determine how to help their children with homework. Additionally, within the homework help practice, parents also

implemented linguistic and familial capital. Yosso (2005) defines linguistic capital as the skills individuals learn to communicate in more than one language, and familial capital as the social and personal resources in an individual's familial and community networks. For example, the parents' strategy to ask their own children to translate the homework demonstrates the parents' ability to resort to other family members in order to help their children with homework. Furthermore, their capacity to find ways to translate the homework from English to Spanish using a dictionary or asking their children to translate for them demonstrates their linguistic capital.

In general, the mothers did what they could to help their children with the homework assignments. As one of the mothers mentioned, "*Yo les ayudo todos los días, y eso es mi trabajo.*" [I help them everyday, and that is my job.] The mothers did not only see helping their children with their homework as an option, but also rather saw it as their "job" to do what they could or find ways to help their children. For some mothers, this was on top of already working a full day in the fields. It is interesting to note that many of the mothers engaged in practices such as translating the homework to be able to explain the concepts to the children, but still felt that they were not doing enough. This finding indicates that the non-dominant forms in which the mothers were engaging in to help their children were not being validated.

### **Consejos**

This section focuses on the practice of *consejos* (advice). The concept of *consejos* is defined as the sociocultural practice of transmitting the value for education through the telling of one's lived experiences (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; Godinez, 2006). The mothers recognized that because they themselves did not go to school in the U.S., they believed they were limited in the advice they could provide their children. Nonetheless, they still managed to use their own lived-experiences to encourage their children to continue their education. Furthermore, through this practice of *consejos*, they transmitted to their children the value of hard work (López, 2011). The mothers indicated that they begin to engage in this practice early on as a form to begin motivating their children to aspire to a higher education.

*Yo les doy consejos [a mis hijas], están chiquitas pero yo sí les digo que tienen que estudiar para que sean una maestra o doctora o algo que les guste porque si no, van a estar así como su papá—van a ir a trabajar al campo... Les digo van a estar como yo—en la casa todo el día.*

*Les digo yo no tuve la oportunidad porque yo no estudié aquí. Les digo si viviera en México, quizás si tuviera más oportunidad uno, quizás yo pudiera ser profesora pero aquí yo no soy nadie porque no lo estudié aquí y yo sí les digo a ellas que deben de estudiar para que tengan un mejor futuro.*

[I advise them [daughters]. They are young, but I do tell them that they need to study so that they can become a teacher, or a doctor, or something that they like because if they don't, they will be like their dad working in the fields...I tell them they are going to be like me—at home all day. I tell them that I didn't have the opportunity because I did not study here. I tell them that if I lived in Mexico maybe I could've had the opportunity. Maybe I could've been a teacher, but here I am no one because I did not study, and I tell them that they need to study to have a better future.]

The mother who shared her practice of *consejos* describes how she feels about not having a higher education, and she uses her lived-experience as an example to encourage her young daughters to obtain a higher education. Through her narrative, she also describes feelings of invisibility in the U.S. because she does not have a post-secondary degree. She also describes how she perceives that if her daughters do not continue with their education, they will have limited opportunities and end up working in the fields. Mothers using their lived experiences to advise their children was a common practice described in the workshop discussions.

Another example includes a mother who shared the following:

*Mira mi'jo, procura de que tus tareas, todos tus trabajos, los hagas bien porque mira, tu papá está trabajando para lo que tú necesitas. Le digo, el día de mañana, le digo que tú dejes—que no quieras estudiar, ¿a que te vas a dedicar? ¿cómo a tu papá? ¿a andar en el campo?...y le digo, no hijo, tú debes de superarte más ya que tu papá no pudo...Le digo, pero al menos tú, que no te toque eso, le digo, mira lo que él está batallando.*

[Look son, make sure that you complete your homework and that you do all your assignments correctly because look, your father is working to provide what you need. I tell him, one day in the future when you stop, when you don't want to study anymore, what are you going to work in? Like your dad? Work in the fields?...and I tell him, no

son, you need to achieve more even if your father couldn't...I tell him, as long as you don't have to do that. I tell him, look how much he is struggling.]

Here, as a practice, *consejos* help the mother advise her son about doing well in school so that he one day obtains a better job than his father. She also elaborates by reminding her son about the difficult job his father performs for very little money—struggling to make ends meet. At the same time, she reinforces his father's ability to endure and sacrifice to provide for his son.

Similarly, another mother shares the same type of *consejo* to her children:

*Yo les explico que tienen que hacerla [tarea] porque es lo único, eso es su trabajo—ir a la escuela y poner atención. Y les digo, no tú también tienes obligaciones, estudiar y hacer tarea...Tienen responsabilidades y es hacer tu tarea.*

I explain to them that they need to do their homework because that is their only job—go to school and pay attention. And I tell them that they have responsibilities and that is to do their homework.

In this instance, the mother is trying to convey to her children that the parents' responsibility is to work to provide for their children, and in return, the children's job is to do their homework and do well in school.

The practice of *consejos* primarily represented aspirational and resistant capital. Yosso (2005) describes aspirational capital as the dreams and hopes People of Color hold despite the barriers and inequalities. Through their *consejos*, parents demonstrate that they transmit their aspirations for their children to receive a higher education. Parents would provide *consejos* to their children by telling them they needed to do well in school for them to be able to obtain a profession outside of the fields. The parents transmitted their aspirations through their *consejos* by illustrating how hard they had to work in the fields. Additionally, parents also demonstrated resistant capital through their *consejos*. Yosso (2005) describes resistant capital as the skills and knowledge implemented by People of Color to resist inequalities. In this case, the parents demonstrate knowledge that one way to resist the inequalities they face, as farmworkers, is to encourage their children to continue their education. The parents transmit their resistant and aspirational capital to their children through their *consejos* by reminding them that school

should be their primary responsibility and use their personal stories as farmworkers to motivate their children.

As a practice, *consejos* indicate that mothers advise their children to continue their education, but they do so by sharing their lived experiences as farmworkers. More specifically, mothers share how they use their lives and their hard work to encourage the children to aspire to obtain a higher education that will allow them to escape the cycle of poverty as farmworkers. Furthermore, by sharing the *consejos* with their children, mothers convey that as parents they are responsible for providing for their children, and it is the children's responsibility to do well in school.

### Parental Coaching

The *parental coaching* practice is defined as moments where mothers “coach” other moms by discussing how they became involved in their children's education; by using personal examples, these moms advise other mothers on how to do the same. For example, in one instance, a mother describes how she struggles to help her child with homework and another mother interjects the conversation to describe how she uses a dictionary to be able to help her kids with homework.

**Madre 1:** *Y uno que no sabe [inglés], a veces no le podemos ayudar mucho [a nuestros hijos], también a veces que ella [mi hija] se enoja porque dice, “Esta palabra no me la sé en español.” Luego ahí tengo que estar yo adivinando, que medio le atino, que no le atino,*

**Madre 2:** *Por eso es bueno tener un diccionario también. Yo lo que tengo es un diccionario de inglés a español, palabra que no entiende, que no sepa ella [mi hija] en español, la busco y le digo.*

**[Mother 1:** And like, us, we don't know [English] we cannot help them [our children] as much, and sometimes she [daughter] becomes upset and says, “I don't know this word in Spanish.” So then, I am trying to figure it out and sometimes I do and other times I don't.

**Mother 2:** That's why it is good to have a dictionary. I have an English-Spanish dictionary, and when I don't understand a word, or when she [daughter] doesn't know a word in Spanish, I look for it and I explain it to her. ]

In the instance above, the mothers are exchanging their experiences and practices with each other about helping their children with the homework. The two mothers describe that both translate the homework assignments to be able to help with the homework.

In addition to the mothers advising each other on how to translate the homework assignments, they also shared how to help their children with reading and writing.

**Madre 1:** *Mi hijo lo que hace cuando lo pongo a leer, dice, “¿Ma’ puedo leer el [libro] que yo quiera?” Y yo, “Sí, mi’jo...y dice ‘no, hoy el blanco, no hoy el verde.” Le digo, “Cambiale de libros, esos, ya te los sabes hijo”.*

**Madre 2:** *Pero no tiene importancia, es de que vayan practicando esa habilidad [de leer]; de que sigan leyendo, no de que estén leyendo libros diferentes.*

**Madre 1:** *¿No tiene importancia que lean los mismos?*

**Madre 2:** *No, que lean el libro que ellos quieran que les vaya llamar la atención si lo quieren leer. Como yo he leído libros tres veces porque a veces estás leyendo un libro y captas una cosa diferente que no captaste la primer vez.*

[**Mother 1:** When I ask my son to read, he says, “Mom, can I read whichever book I want?” And I tell him, “Yes, son...and he says, ‘no, today the white one, no, the green one.” I tell him, “Switch the books, you already know the content of those.”

**Mother 2:** But the important thing is that they practice that ability [to read]; that they continue reading, not that they are reading different books.

**Mother 1:** It doesn’t matter that they are reading the same books?

**Mother 2:** No, they should read the books they choose because that is what they are interested in, if that’s what they want to read. I’ve read books up to three times because sometimes when you are reading a book and you catch something different that you didn’t catch the first time around.]

In the narrative above, two mothers are discussing reading time with their children. The first mother is concerned that her son always wants to read the same book. She encourages him to read other books. The second mother tells the first mother that she should allow her son to read the book he chooses. She emphasizes that the important thing is that they practice

reading, not that they read different books. She also mentions that reading the same book more than once could be a good thing because, in her case, she has read books more than once herself and every time she reads the book, she learns something new.

Although, the mothers do not have a high level of formal schooling, they still managed to encourage their children to write. More specifically, during the parent coaching discussions about writing, I began to notice that the mothers implemented their strategies, such as telling the child to copy a page from a book or encouraging them to write letters to family members who did not live in the area.

**Madre 1:** *Los míos nunca quieren [escribir]. Les digo, “Mijo me van a escribir una hoja de la página del libro que quieran”... “[Ellos dicen] No, yo no. Hay, qué aburrido, ya escribimos mucho en la escuela.”*

**Madre 2:** *Yo los pongo a hacer cartas.*

**Facilitadora:** *¿Hacerles cartas? Esa es una buena estrategia. ¿A quién hacen las cartas?*

**Madre 2:** *A su tío y luego las escriben en español.*

**Mother 1:** My kids never want to [write]. I tell them that they need to copy a page from whichever book they want...[They say,] “No, I don’t want to because it’s boring. We already write a lot in school.”

**Mother 2:** I ask them to write letters

**Facilitator:** Write letters? That’s a good strategy. To whom do they write letters?

**Mother 2:** To their uncle, and they write them in Spanish.

Within the context of the workshops, the activation of social capital is clearly exemplified by the parental coaching practice. Yosso (2005) describes social capital as the networks and resources that help individuals navigate social institutions. Within the context of this study, the workshops became the community space where parents began to share their practices. More specifically, through the workshops, parents engaged in discussions amongst each other about the networks and resources they used to help their children succeed academically. For example, as demonstrated by the selected quotes, parents shared how they would help their children with homework by utilizing a dictionary to translate the assignments and be able to explain the concepts to their children. In this instance, the parents are also implementing their

linguistic and familial capital by finding other ways to communicate the homework assignment or engaging their children in the process.

Similarly, the practice in which one parent is encouraging the second parent on ways that literacy can be promoted at home demonstrates the manner in which social capital is activated during the workshop. In this instance, the first parent was concerned that her child was not benefitting from reading the same book. The second parent uses her own experience to share with the first parent that reading the same book can promote literacy at home. Again, this example also is indicative of the ways that parents are implementing linguistic capital within their practices at home. Lastly, the example where the parents are sharing their strategies to encourage their children to write demonstrates the exchange of ideas that occurred within the workshops and also demonstrates the different tools the parents use to encourage their children to write.

### **Discussion of Findings**

In this study, the finding related to homework help demonstrates that farmworking mothers actively engage in parent involvement practices at home. For example, the mothers understand that they are limited in their level of engagement during homework time, but make it a priority to ensure that their children are completing their homework assignments on time. Epstein's (1995) mainstream model of parent involvement includes tutoring at home as one of the practices that parents should be implementing. In this study, the way that the mothers describe their *homework help* practice challenges Epstein's concept of tutoring or learning at home as a form of parent involvement. Epstein's concept of tutoring or learning at home requires parents to have skills and knowledge about each academic subject and to be able to make curriculum-related decisions during the activities with their children. The evidence provided in this study demonstrates that learning at home does not necessarily require parents to have knowledge about a specific subject or be knowledgeable about the curriculum to ensure that their children have learning opportunities at home. In this case, the mothers clearly exemplify how they integrate their CCW to help their children complete their homework.

This finding extends the literature on community knowledge or pedagogies of the home. More specifically, the homework help finding in this study exemplifies the ways navigational, linguistic, and familial capital are implemented by the mothers to create a learning environment

at home. Furthermore, the homework help extends the work of Moll (1999) on *funds of knowledge*. Moll's (1999) defines funds of knowledge as a "pedagogical approach that builds on the cultural resources of local communities" (Moll, 1999). These cultural resources are the bodies of knowledge that underlie everyday, lived experiences of communities. In the definition of familial capital, the mothers in *Madres por la Educación* (Yosso, 2006) explain that the concept is rooted in the kinship that evolves from the relationships of an individual. Essentially, familial capital is akin to funds of knowledge as it encompasses the set of skills and knowledge that we foster in our own home and community setting (Moll, 1999). Similarly, according to the mothers in this study, completing a homework assignment is a family affair in which every member of the family contributes their knowledge to help each other.

As discussed in the literature, one of the reasons why parents may not be able to engage in mainstream forms of parent involvement is the language barrier (Faltis, 2006). However, the mothers in this study have demonstrated that despite not being able to speak English, they are actively helping their children with the homework assignments and actively seeking opportunities to make sure that their children continue their academic preparation at home. In this case, the homework help practice implemented by the mothers is a form of tutoring at home. Furthermore, their use of linguistic capital in their homework help practice has an unintended benefit for the child's literacy and bilingual development (Orellana, Reynolds, Dorner, & Meza, 2003). Furthermore, research indicates that children's language brokering skills are associated with their biculturalism and academic performance (Buriel, Perez, Terri, Chavez, & Moran, 1998). The example in which the mothers are asking their children to translate to Spanish and then back to English exemplifies how parents are unintentionally promoting more sophisticated language skills. This is consistent with the literature on literacy development that indicates how diverse language skills such as translating, describing, explaining, or clarifying concepts for parents promotes literacy development for bicultural students (McQuillan & Tse, 1995; Heath, 1986).

Through the practice of *consejos*, the mothers narrate their stories of migration and hard work as farmworkers to inspire their children and encourage them to continue with their education. This finding contradicts the cultural deficit arguments such as those made by the work of Ruby Payne (2005) which asserts that low-income families will pass on their cultural and social limitation to their children (as cited in Gorski, 2008). More specifically, along with

López (2001) and Delgado-Gaitan (1994), the practice of *consejos* exemplified by the mothers indicates that they understand their limitations and barriers; however, these obstacles do not preclude the mothers from valuing education and transmitting their stories to their children as a form of encouragement for them to persevere and overcome those barriers involved in obtaining a higher education degree. Furthermore, this finding is consistent with the work of Godinez (2006) which indicates that *consejos* help students become motivated and hopeful. Similarly, the mothers in this study through their *consejos* aspire to instill motivation and hope in their children to continue their education.

Epstein's (1995) model of parent involvement calls for parents to provide the home conditions and support for students. This type of parent involvement calls for parenting skills that create awareness amongst students of the importance of school. Through the *consejos* practice, the mothers are redefining their role as parents in their children's education. More specifically, the mothers indicate that part of their responsibility as parents is to provide the moral support and motivation for their children to continue their education. This finding challenges the idea that parents are not involved in mainstream practices of parent involvement. The parents in this study transmit their life lessons through their *consejos* in order create awareness of the importance of continuing education.

Similar to the work of Auerbach (2007), the mothers recognize that part of their role as parents is to be moral supporters for their children. Auerbach (2007) indicates that parents draw from their familial and aspirational capital to foster "moral capital." Furthermore, the practice of *consejos* through which parents act as moral supporters for their children extends the literature on pedagogies of the home (Delgado-Bernal, 2006). Delgado-Bernal (2006) defines pedagogies of the home as the life lessons parents transmit to their children in order to provide strategies of resistances for their children. The mothers in this study integrate their resistance capital in their *consejos* to encourage their children to challenge the oppressive conditions they experience as farmworkers. More specifically, they tell their children that the only way they can have better opportunities is by continuing their education.

The parental coaching practice was an unintended finding that emerged from the interactive format of the workshops. After the first few months of this study, I began to notice that mothers were more vocal during the workshops and began sharing their own lived experiences in the community. The cultural practice (Figueroa & Sánchez, 2005) and

community-based approach (Israel, Eng, Schulz, & Parker, 2005) to this study facilitated the active engagement of the mothers in discussions about the ways they became involved in their children's education. The sharing of strategies through the parental coaching practice is indicative of the way the workshops facilitated production of knowledge based on the mothers' own lived experiences (Sandoval, 1998). Furthermore, this finding validates the method of counterstories as it legitimizes the parents' voices in a methodological approach for knowledge production.

In the parental coaching finding, there is a crossover of the homework help and the *consejos* practices. More specifically, in the homework help practice the parents share with each other the ways they help and ensure that their children are completing their homework. Similarly, in the parental coaching practice the parents are sharing with each other their own strategies on how they can overcome challenges to homework help and homework completion. The way they share their ways of thinking and knowing is consistent with the *consejos* definition (Godinez, 2006). This finding also suggest that parents in the workshop were activating their social capital and sharing their skills and knowledge with each other.

The activation and use of social capital is dependent on the relationships people have with each other. The fact that parents in the workshops engaged in discussions about how they can help their children in school demonstrate that they fostered a trustworthy environment where they were developing a common vision for their children's education. Bryk and Schneider (2002) indicate that when teachers, principals, and parents work together, they can implement the necessary changes to create a successful school environment. Thus, the parental coaching practice has potential implications for the way educators engage with parents and develop strategies that validate the parents' voices and their pedagogies of the home. For example, the parental coaching practice that emerged from this study served as the foundation to develop *Puente Cultural*. *Puente Cultural* is a culturally-nuanced program through which parents from this study serve as parent-facilitators, and lead early literacy workshops in the community. Through *Puente Cultural*, the school district began discussions about the ways to collaborate with parent-facilitators, and designated a classroom as the parent center.

An important consideration for parent involvement initiatives is that educators must acknowledge the power differentials that exist between schools and parents. The power differences often are embedded in a deficit-thinking framework, which places the blame on the

individual for their lack of success (Valencia & Solórzano, 1997). In the case of parent involvement, cultural deficit analyses are a result of the lack of understanding of the different ways that low-income students and families express their investment in education. In this study, the workshops created the space where their parent involvement practices were validated and acknowledged as an important investment in their children's education. The social space of the workshops then facilitated the interactions described in the parental coaching practice.

### **Conclusion and Implications**

The counterstories presented in this study demonstrate how the mothers are actively involved in their children's education. Through the implementation of CCW, the mothers' practices emerged from their life lessons and contributed to their children's education in very positive ways. The misrecognition of the parent involvement practices of immigrant parents can be interpreted as a lack of concern for their children's education (Payne, 2008; Stone, 1998). However, as demonstrated by this study, providing the social space for parents to validate their practices and privilege their voices can help build an understanding of how Latino families engage in their children's education. In turn, having an understanding of the ways parents implement their cultural knowledge and assets can help educators and researchers move beyond the deficit orientations regarding parent involvement practices, and help build an understanding of how to develop strategies to engage parents. For example, the community-based methodology and cultural approach to the workshops in this study serve as an example of how educators can collaborate with parents.

This study makes a contribution to theorizing the connections between parent involvement and CCW (Yosso, 2005). Over the years, scholars have been documenting the non-dominant forms of parent involvement as a way to provide counterstories to the majoritarian stories of the academic achievement of students of color. Scholars like Faltis (2006) and Chavez-Reyes (2010) have provided suggestions for more inclusive models of parent involvement. To begin developing a robust theory or model of parent involvement that is culturally appropriate for Latino immigrant farmworking parents, we must draw on multiple traditions and seek connections between theories and disciplines. In this study, I draw from research in education to contextualize the parent involvement expectations immigrant

farmworking parents face. To challenge the notion that parents are not involved in their children's education, I also draw from critical race frameworks and epistemologies. Through the findings of this study, I began to redefine the traditional mainstream definitions of parent involvement. I note the connections between the parent involvement practices of the farmworking mothers and CCW. Further examination of the interconnection of CCW and parent involvement practices is vital to the field and the development of culturally relevant programs like community-campus partnerships that work closely with Latino parents.

As documented by Faltis (2006), barriers such as language, multiple demands, unfamiliarity with the U.S. school system, and negative experiences may hinder more formal practices of parent involvement. Through the homework help practice documented in this study, I have examined how despite not knowing English, parents have been able to overcome the barrier to assisting their children with their homework, and in turn make positive unintended contributions to their children's literacy and bilingual development. Furthermore, although the multiple work demands of parents are seen as a barrier to parent involvement, the mothers in this study express how they used their struggles as life lessons to provide *consejos* for their children. Policy makers and administrators should take an assets-based approach to implement programming that addresses these barriers. For example, policy makers can require school districts or local offices of education to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate programs for parents to become familiar with the school system.

Also, policy makers and school districts should take into account the socioeconomic barriers and develop policies that target the inequalities that arise due to the differences in socioeconomic status. Parents from lower socioeconomic status may not have the transportation or economic resources to be able to engage in practices at the school site; therefore, policies at the local level can focus on providing resources such as transportation to and from the school site to facilitate the physical engagement of parents in the school site. For example, in this study, the workshops were held in each of the communities within the local school district and at locations identified by the parents. Lastly, local school systems can provide workshops for teachers to become familiar with the less visible forms of parent involvement and provide them with teacher training on how they can validate informal parent involvement practices rather than discounting them and formulating deficit perspectives. By implementing policies that address the barriers that hinder parent involvement and

implementing strategies that validate the less visible forms of parent involvement, educators can begin to build collaborations between the school and home.

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