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Cultivating Parental Participation and Community Engagement Through Building a Culinary Garden and Teaching Kitchen: Latinx Perspectives on Parental Participation in a Community School

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CULTIVATING PARENTAL PARTICIPATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
THROUGH BUILDING A CULINARY GARDEN AND TEACHING KITCHEN: LATINX
PERSPECTIVES ON PARENTAL PARTICIPATION IN A COMMUNITY SCHOOL

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

by

Jaclynne Michelle Medina

May 2023

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The Designated Thesis Committee Approves the Dissertation Titled

CULTIVATING PARENTAL PARTICIPATION AND COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT THROUGH BUILDING CULINARY GARDEN AND
TEACHING KITCHEN: LATINX PERSPECTIVES ON PARENTAL
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by

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APPROVED FOR THE DOCTORAL PROGRAM IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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May 2023

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ABSTRACT

CULTIVATION PARENTAL PARTICIPATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT THROUGH BUILDING A CULINARY GARDEN AND TEACHING KITCHEN: LATINX PERSPECTIVES ON PARENTAL PARTICIPATION IN A COMMUNITY SCHOOL

by Jaclynne Michelle Medina

This study researched how a school could increase parental participation and community engagement while building a new Culinary Garden and Teaching Kitchen project. This engagement was foundational for expanding parental participation opportunities and further developing the community school. The study explored ways to balance power relationships between the home and school to develop an implementation plan that better reflects the community being served. Theoretical lenses such as CRT and LatCrit were the basis for centering the voices of Latinx families and valuing their various forms of capital consistent with the Community Cultural Model. Participants influenced the design of the garden and kitchen space, inform the curriculum, infuse health and nutrition, teach environmentalism, provide more opportunities for volunteers and community activities, and ensure the wealth of knowledge from the community is revered and taught to the youth. This study is significant because it offered an alternative form of parental participation, expanded community engagement to a level of shared leadership at the school, and resulted in collective pride and sense of ownership for the program developed. The school saw increased participation in volunteer opportunities because the project was an access point for connection.

DEDICATION

This research study is dedicated to the incredible students and families of Helensville, California. Your dedication and commitment to a healthy community serves as a model to guide schools and districts. May your community assets and cultural traditions always be embraced in the school community because you are rich with knowledge and that is something that cannot be ignored. Your leadership is what makes Estrella Elementary School a beautiful place to learn, work, and be in community with others.

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Although this research project was a labor of love for me, there are so many people to thank. Without their support, I would not have been able to fulfill this professional and educational life goal. Thank you to my advisor and committee chair, Dr. Rebeca Burciaga. Rebeca taught me so many aspects of educational leadership and authoring a dissertation. However, it is not the “things” she taught me, it was her way of being that sticks with me the most. She is a model for Latina leadership and exemplifies how one leader can lift others. I have watched her put her mentees in spaces with other transformational leaders. She helps “bring them to the table” with our role models in the field of social justice education. She has supported me in my educational endeavors, but more importantly has modeled how to lift and inspire others.

Thank you to my committee members, Dr. Eduardo Muñoz-Muñoz and Dr. Jean Gottlob, for their guidance utilizing their vast experience working with Latinx communities in California. Your keen eye with editing and comprehensive understanding of our local school systems supported me in reaching families and shifting ideology about parental participation at Estrella.

My dear friend, Kate Pavao, served as my thought partner, provided editing support, and participated in the study. Her deep understanding of the project and commitment to social equity served me well because she always understood where I was trying to go with my thoughts even when I could not find the words to articulate. You are such a talented community leader and dear friend.

This nationally recognized project never could have become a reality without the work of our small but mighty Tiny Team: Linda Bixby, Nancy Sherrod, and Andrea Willy. This Tiny Team brought funders and advocates to embrace the project. Not only did you raise \$1.6 million for the project, but you also brought depth to our community and fostered relationships that are sincere and lasting.

I cannot thank my mom, Linda Gaudenti, enough for her love and support. Beyond your editing and moral support, your encouragement helped push me through. I know I made you proud. Thank you for always lifting me up.

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Introduction

Like gardens, elementary schools flourish with careful tending. Seeds need water, sun, and nutrients; schools need supportive learning environments, parental participation, and an engaged community. Estrella Elementary School bridges garden and culinary education across all content areas while cultivating home and school relationships.

La libertad no necesita alas, lo que necesita es echar raíces. Octavio Paz¹

With a school garden and culinary project, schools plant seeds, both figuratively and literally, in pursuit of better educational outcomes. Once these seeds take root, schools take steps towards social justice and, ultimately, a freer society. Octavio Paz's quote suggests we do not need to fly elsewhere for freedom; rather, seeds planted locally need to take root for freedom to actualize. This study was a model of community engagement and an access point for parents to engage in a school's decision-making and development of the school's vision for a garden and kitchen project. Because Helensville is an agricultural center, the parents were the experts, and their engagement was central in developing an implementation plan. Parents and community members had the opportunity to expand their role in the school and the school's role as a hub for the community.

Background

Students in California reflect a myriad of cultures, customs, and communities. The California Department of Education reports our schools are comprised of the following

¹ *Freedom does not need wings, what it needs is to take root. – Octavio Paz*

student demographics: 5.2% Black, .50% Indigenous American, 12.3%

Asian/Filipino/Pacific Islander, 55.3% Hispanic or Latinx, and 21.7% White (California Department of Education, n.d.). Jiménez-Castellanos et al. (2016, p. 95) claim the current education system is unlike any other in the history of the country because the White student population is declining while the Latinx population has significantly grown over the last two decades. There is great opportunity for learning about and developing healthy communities through the presence of this diversity. As school leaders continuously refine and improve instruction, they must also focus on community engagement. Grounded in the Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) model (Yosso, 2005), this study focused on inviting Communities of Color to bring their rich culture and experience to the school setting. It collected data on parents' perspectives of school participation while developing a vision for implementing the Culinary Garden and Teaching Kitchen (CGTK) program.

This distinct program incorporated garden education and culinary instruction through a curriculum that crosses all content areas. Currently five programs flourish across the United States using a unique curriculum grounded in experiential learning and science. The Culinary Garden and Teaching Kitchen programs have been granted and erected across the country in the following cities: Belle Chasse, Louisiana; Austin, Texas; Washington, D.C.; Helensville, California; and New Orleans, Louisiana. In Helensville, the site of this study, there is a small agricultural community and Estrella Elementary School, where Latinx students and families comprise 98% of the population. Estrella Elementary School is a dual-language school focused on hands-on learning. Estrella's acceptance into this national program was

significant; it recognized the rich resources—both in the soil and in the people living on it—that already exist in small, Latinx communities.

The study offered an alternative model of community engagement grounded in culturally sustaining practices and the CCW model (Yosso, 2005). Yosso defines CCW as “an array of knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed and used by Communities of Color to survive and resist racism and other forms of oppression” (Yosso, 2005, p. 154). Among the community partners involved, the study invited leaders in garden and culinary education, science integration experts, families, staff, and organizations focused on overall community health. This process invited community experts to share their knowledge about cultivating ancestral seeds and crops native to specific regions of Mexico and California. Families brought their agricultural experiences to the vision because the school is in the heart of an agricultural community in which many work. Local agricultural businesses and community-health organizations also contributed to the development of this community resource. Community-based knowledge will provide the foundation for the Participatory Action Research (PAR) portion of the project. Later, families were interviewed and asked to share their perspectives on parental participation within a community school.

Context

Traditionally, parent engagement at schools had been based on assimilation models for Latinx communities. These models are defined by school personnel, who often do not reflect the needs of diverse communities. Although in California our demographics are diverse, schools tend to replicate traditional models of participation serving the White paradigm, and Communities of Color are expected to assimilate into that model (Jasis & Ordoñez-Jasis,

2012; Petrone, 2016). If families fail to shift to fit the mold of school that fits the White, middle class construct of participation, then their participation may not be valued. Khalifa (2020) writes schools should avoid the colonization of “parents by ‘training’ them to accept school centric views...[and] suggests that authentic parent/community perspectives only enrich schooling and learning” (p. 90). Kalifa’s use of the word “training” illustrates one way assimilation models work. These models are narrow in their consideration by asking parents to assist a teacher during school hours, plan a fundraiser, or manage homework in the evenings. These tasks do not engage our Communities of Color in authentic ways. This sort of “training” presumes families who fail to participate in these prescribed ways are inadequate. This study, however, made a distinction between parental involvement and parental engagement. Parental engagement is a more collectivist approach involving power-sharing and, ultimately, full participation in the decision-making process (Theodorou, 2007). Jiménez-Castellanos et al. also make a clear distinction concerning how we engage our families in school, specifically for Latinx communities. They say shifting from parent “involvement” to parent “engagement” is making the leap from an “accommodationist” or “assimilationist” models to a “transformative” and change-oriented approach to incorporate the values and priorities of the community, namely the parents (Jiménez-Castellanos et al., 2016). Schools need to shift away from this deficit-minded focus and reconsider engagement. When unequal access to schooling exists, schools often focus on what students and families lack. Jiménez-Castellanos et al. (2016) claim Latinx parents are frequently viewed as uninterested in educational matters, incompetent in child rearing, and overly passive in their involvement in schools. On the contrary, Tara Yosso (2005) suggests with her CCW model

that there is much richness and wealth to gain from our Communities of Color. A fresh approach to engagement focuses on what families possess and bring to the school community rather than what communities lack.

Developing a school garden and culinary program is extremely relevant in Helensville, California as it is a farming community, and many families work in the agriculture and food service industry. This small rural community is rich in knowledge and has immense pride in its contributions to the global economy, especially in berries and apples. Helensville and Estrella Elementary School's perfect blend of advocacy, engagement, and CCW make this school the perfect place to develop an incredible school garden and cooking program as a new community resource. Not only did students learn life skills around gardening and cooking, their families and community members were the experts, guiding the school as it develops these new community resources. Community partners who lead local gardens shared their ancestral seeds from various regions of Mexico and offered students access to plant, cultivate, and eat these foods from their families' ancestral lands. Together, families and community members were invited to share their collective expertise.

Theoretical Frameworks

This study found its foundation with Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Latinx Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) in that it rejected deficit frameworks to explain educational inequality (Covarrubias et al, 2018; Bernal, 2002; Solórzano & Bernal, 2001), instead beginning with looking at what knowledge and talents the community already contains. While utilizing this lens, the study had strived to validate the experience of typically marginalized populations and incorporate their wealth of knowledge into the school's vision and decision-making. The

goal was a transformative response to oppression and the engagement of underrepresented minoritized student and community groups. CRT provided the theoretical foundation explaining how racial subordination persists through racist structures embedded into our society, but LatCrit narrowed this focus to reveal the unique impact on Chicano and Latinx communities.

The work of Daniel Solórzano et al. discusses the five main tenets of CRT and LatCrit and how they relate to educational settings. These five tenets are: (1) the centrality of race and racism and intersectionality with other forms of subordination, (2) the challenge to dominant ideology, (3) the commitment to social justice, (4) the centrality of experiential knowledge, and (5) an interdisciplinary perspective (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001, p. 312-314). This parental participation model focuses on the needs and desires of the community and levels the power dynamics for decision-making.

Scholars are using CRT and LatCrit to bridge previous notions of Social Capital to more current understandings of CCW. In Bourdieu's (1986) model of Social Capital, one has access and social status by one's connections to specific social networks. This is seen as an instrument of control to determine what is valued in society. Under this model, White, middle-class culture is the norm and is what is desired by society and what perpetuates the status quo. In contrast, the Community Cultural Wealth Model celebrates and validates the richness Communities of Color bring to the school setting. Yosso (2005) offers six alternative forms of capital, which include: aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistant. These are considered alternatives because they encompass more aspects of capital and are specific to the wealth of knowledge Latinx communities bring to

social and educational settings. This study used theory grounded in CCW to break down barriers and elevate communities in pursuit of a more socially just education for Students of Color.

Cultivating Purpose

This study began with a review of the literature on community engagement within the context of a Latinx, multilingual, immigrant population. The literature is organized into three areas: theoretical frameworks, parental participation, and community schools. The purpose of this study was to build on assets and provide more opportunities for the community to engage in the educational system. The aim of this study was to engage the community, reflect the goals of all stakeholders, and collect alternative stories and perceptions as to what Latinx parental participation means within a community school. This study engaged families to co-create a vision for implementing a new CGTK.

Research Questions

The following research questions intended to engage the community, reflect the goals of all stakeholders, and collect alternative stories and perceptions as to what Latinx parental participation means within a community school. This dissertation study was led by three guiding questions:

- What are the current experiences and future aspirations of Estrella Elementary School's community regarding garden and culinary education?
- How can Estrella Elementary School better reflect the needs and desires of the community through developing a Culinary Garden and Teaching Kitchen?

- How does Estrella Elementary School incorporate and sustain Community Cultural Wealth in the development of a Culinary Garden and Teaching Kitchen?

These research questions drove the study to build a better understanding of how the school currently engages the community. They will also reveal the aspirations the community has for the school. In essence, they explore what the school does now and what the community would like to see in the near future. The second question interrogates how Estrella Elementary School can do better in understanding the community's priorities and what actions the school can take to meet those goals. Finally, the last question will explore Yosso's (2005) concept of CCW and how the school broadens the perspective of Social Capital to incorporate this knowledge into the development and implementation of the CGTK.

Definitions of Terms

Culinary Garden and Teaching Kitchen. The CGTK in this study was a specific program designed and partially funded by a celebrity chef as a legacy project for his foundation. There are only five programs in the United States, and Estrella Elementary School's program was the fourth to launch. There are specific curriculum and program requirements that must be included in the development of the program.

Communities of Color. Communities of Color refer to communities that are not from European or Anglo descent. This study referenced Latinx families and community members from the Estrella community and related their experiences to other Communities of Color in the United States, not only Latinx ones.

Community Engagement. In this study the community included stakeholders involved in the educational community, such as teachers and staff and parents and extended family members, as well as community and business partners.

Review of the Literature

This study sought to understand parental participation within a Latinx school community. The PAR study engaged families in co-creating a vision for implementing a new CGTK.

Cada persona, en su existencia, puede tener dos actitudes: construir o plantar. Los constructores un día terminan aquello que estaban haciendo y entonces les invade el tedio. Los que plantan a veces sufren con las tempestades y las estaciones, pero el jardín jamás para de crecer.

—*"Brida" (1990), Paulo Coelho*²

The epigraph captures the spirit of the study. Instead of using a participation model dictated by the school, which can run dry of authentic participation, a school can plant seeds for the community to grow and develop a project over time, persevere despite bad weather, and flourish through the seasons.

Introduction

The literature review outlined three areas: theoretical frameworks, parental participation, and community schools and gardens. The literature presented in this section connects research directly to the design of the study. The chapter begins with theoretical framing that

² Each person, in his existence, can have two attitudes: build or plant. Builders one day finish what they were doing and then boredom invades them. Those who plant sometimes suffer with storms and seasons, but the garden never stops growing.

includes CRT, LatCrit, and CCW, described by their theoretical influence on the structure of the study. These foundational structures are all related in that they look at equity and access for minoritized groups of people. The theories examine structures and look toward justice for marginalized populations. Second, literature regarding parental participation is presented—this literature provides a basis for why authentic participation includes limiting barriers, considers multiple perspectives on participation, and implements specific strategies that create a more collectivist approach to home–school relationships (Theodorou, 2007). Aspects of community schools and school gardens close the chapter. These final concepts are discussed because they were the foundation for the action portion of the study. A community garden was built in a school to leverage parental participation and engagement.

Theoretical Frameworks

The theoretical framing of this study builds on CRT, LatCrit, and the CCW model. First, the literature explored CRT as the foundation for this work and its focus on the experiential knowledge of People of Color. Second, LatCrit narrowed the focus by centering Chicano and Latinx communities and their experiences in educational settings. Third, the literature presented traditional notions of Social Capital in conversation with Yosso’s (2005) CCW model, which foregrounds how Communities of Color brought unique capital and perspectives to the educational setting. These theoretical constructs frame how the study sought to incorporate the values of the community as the community engages and becomes part of the school’s general practices. By using the broader theory of CRT as foundation and then narrowing the focus to LatCrit and then CCW, we reframed deficit thinking about the

contributions of Estella's community and began building a framework that could be used by other Latinx communities and even apply to different Communities of Color.

Critical Race Theory and LatCrit

Critical Race Theory. For this study, CRT offers an important theoretical lens because it examines historical policies and practices that negatively impact racialized groups in specific ways. CRT was developed in the 1970s by a group of lawyers, activists, and legal scholars as an extension beyond the Civil Rights Movement to analyze the experiences of historically underrepresented populations (Ledesma & Calderon, 2015. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) and Solórzano (1998) applied the study of CRT to the realm of education. While the roots of CRT are in the legal world, scholars apply it to education to acknowledge and eliminate racist practices in our schools. Ledesma and Calderon (2015) examine CRT in education through curriculum and pedagogy, teaching and learning, schooling in general, and policy and community engagement. CRT scholars enact Critical Race pedagogy “to empower students of color while dismantling notions of colorblindness, meritocracy, deficit thinking, linguicism, and other forms of subordination” (Ledesma & Calderon, 2015, p. 207). This study applied CRT and Critical Race pedagogy to the praxis of parental participation.

CRT was key when considering parental participation in schools that serve Latinx communities. Social justice educators use CRT to better their understanding of disproportionate outcomes in schools. In *Critical Race Theory*, by Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (2017), the authors assert, “The Critical Race Theory (CRT) movement is a collection of activists and scholars engaged in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power. The movement considers many of the same issues that

conventional civil rights and ethnic studies discourses take up but places them in a broader perspective...” (p. 3). CRT’s academic advocates emphasize supporting community and group empowerment. (Delgado & Stefancici, 2017, p. 6).

It is critically important for schools to incorporate the voices of marginalized communities and center their perspectives in decision-making. Solórzano and Yosso (2001) states that “CRT finds the experiential knowledge of People of Color legitimate, appropriate, and critical...Critical race research in education views this knowledge as a strength and draws explicitly” (p. 7) from their words, lives, traditions, and realities. There is a call for social justice as schools define parental engagement and how school decisions are made. This study aligns with the Yosso in valuing the experiential knowledge of the community. The Latinx agricultural working community truly are the experts in this PAR study, and their knowledge is regarded as legitimate and critical to the success of the study.

LatCrit. CRT provides the theoretical foundation explaining racial subordination. LatCrit, a subdiscipline of CRT, further narrows this focus to reveal the impact on Chicano and Latinx communities. Together, CRT and LatCrit create space for educational researchers to explore the function of race and racism in our schools as defined by the educational experience of students of color, and in this case, specifically Latinx students and families (Jones & Velez, 1997). Latinx families have been marginalized in school settings and are often left out of the decision-making process. Families can experience barriers to participation due to their language, literacy, and immigration status, as well as time and financial constraints (Theodorou, 2007). This study looked critically at how Estrella Elementary School better reflected the needs and desires of the community. In particular, the

study sought to understand how Latinx parent participation took shape at the school. CRT and LatCrit grounded the study in its pursuit of bringing marginalized voices to the center and creating greater access to decision-making at the school. Taken together, the five tenets of CRT with a LatCrit focus provided a framework for the study.

The first tenet discussed the centrality of race and the intersectionality of other forms of subordination (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). This connected directly to the study because the parent participants primarily consisted of Latinx, undocumented farmworkers living below the poverty line. More than 91% of the families in this school are considered socioeconomically disadvantaged and more than 66% of the students in the school are English Language Learners. Estrella Elementary School serves a community that has been marginalized through various forms of intersectionality, such as race, language, socioeconomics, and immigration status.

The second challenges the dominant ideology that traditional notions of equality exist in schools (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). This examines the current school structure and how parental participation is constructed. Rather than following the traditional PTA or engagement structures, where parents join activities planned by school leadership, this tenet shifted the focus to parent experiences to create alternatives, including bilingual presentations and discussions, shared decision-making, and efforts to eliminate barriers to participation.

The third tenet was a commitment to social justice and the empowerment of underrepresented minoritized groups (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). This study was grounded in the CCW (Yosso, 2005) model to create space for parents to share their expertise and cultural capital as they relate to agriculture, gardening, and farming while developing the

vision for the garden program. Also, parents' knowledge and experience in the culinary arts defined the priorities of the culinary instruction program.

The fourth tenet focused on the centrality of experiential knowledge. LatCrit places an emphasis on drawing from lived experiences through methods such as *testimonios*, oral history, and counter storytelling (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Parents were invited to participate in Focus Team meetings and had opportunities to share their priorities for the CGTK project. The participants' lived experiences were central to constructing knowledge. Furthermore, families shared their perspectives on how parental participation was captured, or not captured, by the study.

The final tenet discussed the interdisciplinary nature of community engagement (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). The study captured the family's priorities when it comes to health, wellness, agriculture, science, sociology, and community empowerment. Discussions supported an assets approach for Communities of Color and rejected deficit mindsets, informing a more inclusive framework for parental participation. The PAR team depended on this framework as it co-develops action plans that meet the needs and desires of the community.

Community Cultural Wealth

CCW (Yosso 2006), a theoretical construct that informs this research, is grounded in CRT and challenges traditionally defined notions of Social Capital. Social Capital Theory helps analyze the networks of relationships among people who live and work within a particular segment of society and how their "capital" influences their social mobility, or ability to advance personally or professionally (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu also discusses

how Social Capital influences school communities as a tool of reproduction for the dominant class. More specifically, his work has been used to emphasize structural constraints and unequal access to institutional resources based on class, gender, and race. This lens is helpful for research and practice in schools to evaluate institutional values and ask how these values support or constrain marginalized groups. Understanding Social Capital was part of the conversation but does not capture the ways marginalized, poor, undocumented Latinx communities without traditional capital contributed to society generally and schools specifically.

In Yosso's (2005) work *Whose Culture Has Capital? A Critical Race Theory Discussion of Community Cultural Wealth*, she recognizes Bourdieu's work as being an organizing function of hierarchical society while challenging traditional interpretations of Bourdieu's assertion. In particular, she rejects comparisons between White, middle-class culture and Communities of Color groups. In brief, she acknowledges that Bourdieu's work helps explain why "the academic and social outcomes of People of Color are significantly lower than the outcomes of Whites" (p. 70). By using the White middle class culture as the norm, however, the theory fails to recognize the rich contributions Communities of Color offer to our schools and communities. In response, she presents CCW, a framework that rejects notions of cultural deficiencies possessed by students of color and Communities of Color. (Yosso, 2005, p. 70). Experiential knowledge of Communities of Color is recognized as "legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding, analyzing, and teaching about racial subordination in the field of education" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001, p. 91). Yosso's work relates to previous work by Vélez-Ibáñez and Greenberg (1992) and their concept of Funds of Knowledge,

which suggests schools should incorporate the assets and bodies of knowledge students bring with them from their home. These cultural assets can be used as a foundation to draw from while educating children. Both frameworks seek to involve the assets of students and the greater community. Grounded in a PAR approach, this study used the CCW model to incorporate the six forms of capital Yosso outlines: aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant capital (p. 78).

First, the study incorporated the community's aspirational capital as participants were invited to share their hopes and dreams for the school, their children, and the CGTK. The community's aspirations were at the center of knowledge construction and drove the priorities set out for implementation of the project. Second, Estrella Elementary School is a Spanish/English dual-language school, and linguistic capital is already a high priority. Therefore, there was an opportunity for community members to share how language was to be represented in the project, whether this was through instruction, signage, or other components of the project. Third, familial capital was served to center the parents' cultural knowledge, including family traditions, food traditions, gardening practices, and notable events and holidays as extensions of the community. Fourth, Social Capital did connect participants' networks of people and resources. Being deeply invested in agriculture, culinary arts, and food service, the Estrella community had a multitude of connections that did support the project's development. This network provided knowledge and resources for techniques, ancestral seeds, labor to construct the garden, recipes, and many other, endless possibilities. Fifth, navigational capital invited participants to share their collective knowledge on accessing materials and resources necessary to develop a high-quality garden and culinary

program. The sixth and final point was resistant capital. This study provided an arena for community members to have direct access to decision-making and, therefore, challenge unequal access to school governance. These six forms of capital were at the center of the research because CCW was the driving force for community development in the community school.

Parental Participation

This portion of the literature review reflects four themes within PK–12 parental participation research: 1) types of involvement, 2) distinctions between involvement and participation, 3) Latinx perspectives, and 4) barriers limiting parental participation. This section explored what parental engagement is, how it is commonly portrayed, and how it can look different based on the community of the school. This literature developed how the study could better incorporate strategies to fully engage a low-income, farm-working Latinx community.

There is an abundance of literature about parental participation in K–12 public schools in the United States. Nearly all researchers would agree that parental participation generally has a positive impact on student success regarding attendance, academic achievement, and developing social skills (Newman et al., 2019). However, mainstream parental participation is defined by fundraising efforts or volunteering. Marginalized families may experience resistance to these types of models, especially when they do not feel like part of the mainstream culture of education. This study's aim was to understand how families most effectively participated and created home and school partnerships.

Mainstream examples of parent involvement are not reflective of the student population of Estrella Elementary School, where this study took place, nor the student demographics of the state of California. Estrella Elementary School has a student population of 98% Latinx students, and the state of California reports more than 54% of all students are Latinx (California Department of Education, n.d.). Given the percentage of Latinx students in these educational settings, this review of the literature focused on parental participation in Latinx communities and, specifically, within a community school.

Home and School Relationships

Educational researchers agree that parental participation has positive effects on students regarding attendance, behavior, academic achievement, and social success in and out of school (Newman et al., 2019). Educators also recognize that engagement presents in many forms. Epstein (1987) outlines a framework of six typologies of parent involvement: 1) parenting, 2) communicating, 3) volunteering, 4) learning at home, 5) decision-making, and 6) collaborating with the community. These typologies help educators develop more comprehensive home–school relationship and participation models (Epstein, 1987). These components of involvement include different practices of partnership and reflect multiple models of participation. Researchers critique parental involvement models that are developed and defined by school personnel rather than co-created between the school and parents. Theodorou (2007) claims these models fail to integrate various vulnerable groups and further their marginalization.

Participation v. Involvement

Theodorou (2007) discusses the distinction between parental participation and parental involvement. Parental participation refers to a more collectivist approach to home–school partnerships that is characterized by power sharing. Participation allows access to the decision-making process and focuses on the welfare of the entire school rather than just one’s individual child. Contrarily, parental involvement is typically defined by school personnel as more individualistic and focused on volunteer work and attendance at school events for the benefit of a parent’s child (Theodorou, 2007). Parental participation in this study was approached from a PAR perspective, and, therefore, is grounded in what the community wants and needs. The reciprocal relationship was focused on mutual benefit, as determined by the community in collaboration with the school. This contrasted with more traditional models for involvement, which is dictated by the wants and desires of the school and its administration.

Latinx Parents in Schools

Considering that Latinx communities are the fastest growing populations in the United States, Petrone (2016) posits there are significant implications for the country and how we educate Latinx communities in our schools. She asserts that schools need to improve their cultural knowledge and linguistic resources to welcome the input and participation of Latinx families in schools. Schools should recognize that many Latinx families see their role in education as it relates to moral well-being, checking homework is complete, and teaching their children respect for others. Furthermore, bilingual communication is vital if schools genuinely want families to understand the messages going home. Current assimilation

models use a deficit-minded approach that falls short of serving our diverse communities, she argues. Assimilation (or assimilationist) models ask parents to “leave behind their cultural perspectives on child rearing and education when they enter U.S. schools, [because] they are often subject to parental education programs which deem their parenting skills as insufficient” (Petrone, 2016, p. 69). This framing suggests that educators may see Latinx parents' culture as the source of the problem and this perspective creates distance rather than bridging home–school relationships (Petrone, 2016). Jiménez-Castellanos et al. suggest the relationship between Latinx families and U.S. schools should be better understood through a sociohistorical and sociopolitical context that includes asymmetrical power relationships (Jiménez-Castellanos, 2016, p. 95).

Definitions of parental participation should be expanded to include less visible forms of support, such as “a loving home, academic expectations accompanied with consistent support, and healthy parent-child communication are the most vital forms of parental involvement” (Petrone, 2016, p. 70). Contrary to deficit perspectives, Petrone found Latinx families to be more likely to place a high value on education—more likely to attend parent meetings, support daily homework, and meet with teachers on a monthly basis—in comparison to White families in U.S. schools when school practices considered the cultural and linguistic needs of the community (Petrone, 2016). This is to say, schools must include the cultural capital of the community, including linguistic richness. Furthermore, definitions of parental participation should be expanded to include less visible forms of support, such as “a loving home, academic expectations accompanied with consistent support, and healthy parent-child communication [which] are the most vital forms of parental involvement”

(Petrone, 2016, p. 70). While Mexican American parents believe their support comes in the form of moral well-being and respect for others, they also see formal education as the domain of the schools and teachers (Petrone, 2016). Rather than seeing lack of participation as disinterest, for Latinx families, it should be seen as a layer of respect. (Petrone, 2016).

Maria Estela Zarate conducted a study, *Understanding Latino Parental Involvement*, in 2007 through The Tomas Rivera Policy Institute to gain a broad understanding of how schools currently engage our Latinx communities and make recommendations on how they can improve. A central theme in this study is that education can be viewed in two parts: One is the formal education that takes place at the school, and the other is the life education that takes place in the home. Parental participation among Latinx families is more prominently seen through *educación*, or the life education provided by a home with strong values. Zarate writes, “Latino parents equate involvement in their child’s education with involvement in their lives: participation in the children’s lives ensures that their formal schooling is complemented with *educación* taught in the home” (Zarate, 2007, p. 9).

Institutional Structures Creating Barriers

While Latinx families are the experts on their children and la *educación* of the home, it is important to consider the challenges presented by school structures and how they impact parental participation at the school. Latinx parents report homework, language barriers, work demands, and school policies as some of the challenges parents face (Zarate, 2007) when it comes to participating at and with the school. These challenges can be attributed to barriers that include but are not limited to Social Capital, their own literacy, negative experiences with the education system, income, fear of authority-based institutions, health, living

arrangements, transportation, and childcare (Petrone, 2016). Social capital in a school can be a barrier if the capital is defined by the White middle- to upper-class norm, which includes things such as money, business connections, and networks of power. Poor Latinx people possess forms of capital that are different than those presented by Yosso's work. Some parents may find their literacy levels a barrier when they cannot read school communication or use technology to enroll their children in specific programs; this may exacerbate negative school experiences for the families. Income can create a barrier when participation requires families to donate to school programs. Many poor Latinx immigrant communities live on tight budgets, and donating to the school would further strain their home economics; at Estrella, for example, more than 9 out of 10 families live at or below the poverty line. As Petrone (2016) mentions, many poor immigrant families have a certain level of fear of authority-based instructions based on their immigration status and may feel isolated and unempowered to challenge school decisions. Transportation is another barrier when the school is not a walking school and parents need to travel significant distances to attend school events or meetings. Finally, many families need childcare to attend school events. Simply providing childcare during meetings alleviates this additional burden on the families and allows more participation.

Poor immigrant Latinx families experience limitations when their own formal education is limited to primary school, and they speak only Spanish at home (Zarate, 2007). Therefore, considering their own limited formal education, some parents feel obligated to check that homework is completed and will let the teacher check if the work is done correctly (Zarate, 2007). Language barriers and lack of formal schooling became bigger problems as children

progress in their schooling. “For many parents, language was an insurmountable barrier to participation in their children’s academic tasks, especially as their children progressed through school and the material became increasingly difficult” (Zarate, 2007, p. 9).

Work schedules create another common barrier to family involvement. Many recently immigrated Latinx families have “inflexible work schedules” and are “hourly workers whose households typically required at least two wage earners” (Zarate, 2007, p. 10). Zarate suggests schools should break down such barriers and invite families to participate in school functions during the hours most convenient for families. This would allow families to participate without having to put their employment at risk by asking for time off to be involved in their children’s education.

The parents in Zarate’s study report that some school policies and practices discourage parental participation. For example, the practices of locked gates and metal detectors are not inviting and “seemed to discourage parents from visiting the school and classrooms without an appointment” (Zarate, 2007, p. 10). Also, parents may be unable to attend school meetings with teachers and staff if the meetings only occur during school hours.

Theodorou (2007) offers suggestions to combat these barriers to participation, such as creating social networks and family friendly practices that are more inclusive of parents from marginalized communities. These include creating greater home and school relationships by investing in the community through resources and providing access to community programs focused on the well-being of the community. These resources could focus on employment opportunities, medical clinics, or food resources. Schools can help create social networks that can present opportunities for families to challenge the status quo and combat the

disproportionate influence some families have due to their greater Social Capital, which is recognized by the school. Theodorou (2007) states, “some groups are more likely to comply with educational policies on parental participation than are others because of differential social resource.” Furthermore, schools have the responsibility to incorporate more family-friendly practices to promote greater inclusion. Schools can promote greater inclusion by providing translation services, transportation, childcare, meals, and flexible meeting times (Theodorou, 2007).

In summary, schools need to see all parents as partners in the community (Zarate, 2007). Zarate’s study provides recommendations for schools to create “long-term, sustainable, or innovative parental involvement programs” that include: an organizational vision for parental participation, a parent center, outreach efforts, incentives, and an understanding of what the families value. An organizational vision could be co-constructed between school leaders and parents to determine structures that are mutually beneficial. A parent center could create space for parents to convene without school personnel and discuss their own priorities to support the school and, therefore, their child. Schools should lead outreach efforts and incentivize participation in these efforts so schools can have a better understanding of what the community wants to see in their school. Finally, it is important for the school to show families how their input is enacted to develop more trust and confirm their input is valued and incorporated into the school’s actions.

Community Engagement

This third and final portion of the literature review outlines community engagement as it relates to a community school. There are three sections that will be explored: features of a community school, components for leadership in a community school, and school gardens.

Features of a Community School

This study engaged families to co-create a vision for implementing a new CGTK. Through this process, the work enhanced the elementary school's capacity to serve as a community school. Researchers, educators, and other human service professionals believe students' basic needs—such as health, food, shelter, and safety—must be met before they can perform or excel in school (Sanders, 2016). By offering the community broad services, such as health, food, housing assistance, and other social programs, the school may address community needs. Sanders identifies some features of a community school as: (a) extended learning opportunities; (b) health, mental health, and social services; (c) family engagement; and (d) community-centered activities and events" (Sanders, 2016). Extended learning opportunities refer to after-school programs schools offer. Social services could include clinics on campus or information about where to find mental and physical health resources in the community. Family engagement, such parent participation, centers the voice of families to influence school decisions. Finally, the school can be a hub for hosting community events and activities. It is reported that “full-service community schools have been empirically linked to better coordinated services for families, lower family stress, and increased family engagement in children's education” (Sanders, 2016, p. 158). Furthermore, tangible and

intangible benefits occur—not only for the families, but also for teachers, students, and the greater community.

Tangible outcomes are more visible outcomes that can be identified for various stakeholders. Students may experience more academic success and educational attainment. Families may experience more engagement with their child’s learning, as well as gain greater access to community resources. Finally, teachers may see a reduction in both health and mental health barriers to students’ learning, as well as greater access to quality material and resources for instruction provided by community partners (Sanders, 2016). Sanders also describes, “intangible outcomes including positive public relations and visibility for the school and community partners; and increased feelings of connectedness for students, families and communities” (Sanders, 2016, p. 160). Furthermore, research claims community schools have unique abilities to provide “socially and economically disadvantaged children and youth with more equitable educational opportunities” (Sanders, 2016, p. 158).

Sanders’ model discusses a community school, but Jiménez-Castellanos et al. extend this framework toward developing transformative engagement practices specific to engaging Latinx communities. Their model calls for parents to not see themselves as “docile listeners and followers whose participation in school activities is as ‘objects’ driven by activities that conform to dominant monocultural values and practices with the school community, but rather as critical co-investigators involved in dialogue, reflection and action” (Jiménez-Castellanos, 2016, p. 96). Thus, authentic Latinx parental participation creates opportunities for schools and communities to recreate spaces that promote access and self-actualization. The authors posit a model for engagement that includes five levels of work: connectedness,

inclusion and belonging, decision-making, PAR, and macro civic engagement. (Jiménez-Castellanos, 2016, p. 96). They call this model the Transformative Education Context Model and this will be further discussed in Methodology. This model strives to develop a home-school relationship grounded in mutual respect with the goal of more democratic schooling systems.

Components of a Community School

A Highly Effective Community School is a full-service educational institution that seeks to provide comprehensive and coordinated services to children and families in low-income and marginalized communities. When evaluating a Highly Effective Community School, there are key components that must be considered: principal leadership, community partnerships, and organizational development (Sanders, 2016, p. 157). Each component must be well developed by the leadership and sustained through strong systems that involve all stakeholders.

First, the principal leadership must be strong at the school site for a community school to be successful. Sanders describes this leadership as “multifaceted with structural, relational, political and symbolic dimensions” (Sanders, 2016, p. 159). To further unpack this description, *structural leadership* pertains to the execution of managerial tasks necessary for the function of the school. For example, a school leader must have budgets and systems to implement school initiatives. *Relational leadership* refers to the connections and relationships the leader has established to support the school in its effort to achieve its goals. This could include the leader’s relationship with community organizations, such as the local food bank or medical clinics serving the area. *Political leadership* considers the use of power

in the community to support the organization's progress. Finally, *symbolic leadership* refers to the actions and behaviors of the leader that express core values of the school and offer inspiration to the community. In a community school, a principal must be a leader who is equally connected to the community, families, teachers, and the political arena (Sanders, 2016).

The second component of a strong community school is the community partnerships developed by the school. This component was especially important to this study as it developed its vision and the implementation model for the CGTK. This new community resource could not sustain itself without strong local partnerships that can provide desired and needed services to the community, from funding to design to labor. Projects work best when community partners have a mission to serve the families that are part of the school community. A reciprocal relationship maximizes benefits, resources, and access for community members. These partnerships provide a variety of services, such as (but not limited to): mental health, counseling services, physical health, social services, food, classes (literacy, computers, etc.), job training, extended learning programs, events, and activities.

Finally, the school needs to be able to offer programming on a wide scale. *Programming* refers to the staff and instruction needed for transformational learning that supports student agency. A quality community school must “retain highly qualified teachers able to individually and collaboratively develop and deliver effective instruction” (Sanders, 2016, p. 169). Retaining teachers allows schools to build on goals year after year with fluidity and coherence; this is the professional capital of the school (Sanders, 2016). Additionally, a community school needs to have the capacity to allocate and manage its resources for

adequate programming, including developing needs assessments to inform spending and addressing the highest priorities of the school and its population.

In summary, researchers and educators must understand the communities they serve, in respect to their needs and desires, and invite their experiences and collective knowledge into the school system. Schools can build upon these strengths while developing strong community bonds between families and schools. This study engaged families to co-create a vision for implementing a new CGTK.

School Gardens

Gardening programs have gained popularity in schools as educators and community members understand the multitude of possibilities through their existence. Emily Ozer (2007) reports there are more than 2,000 school gardens in California used for academic instruction and many more across the nation. School gardens are characterized by growing edible and decorative plants and are places to promote the consumption of fresh produce, aesthetically pleasing spaces for children to play, and “learning laboratories” for formal education to occur outdoors (Ozer, 2007). School gardens integrate learning in subjects such as math, science, nutrition, environmental students, and health and have social-emotional benefits (Ozer, 2007). This section of the literature review explored the proximal (short-term) and distal (long-term) effects of gardening programs. Specifically, the effects were examined by two distinct areas of the research: benefits to students at school and community engagement.

Ozer’s (2007) research presents some proximal and distal effects on students and schools of having a garden site and engagement in gardening activities. In the short-term, students are exposed to more fresh produce, develop positive attitudes towards eating fruits and

vegetables, and develop a greater sense of belonging to the school community through their contributions to the garden. Furthermore, Ozer found that these benefits can stretch into long-term positive outcomes as students increase their intake of fresh produce and can combat obesity and chronic disease. Schools benefit by having an aesthetic improvement to their site and an additional setting for students to learn and interact. In the long-term, Ozer (2007) asserts that students may experience increased pride and, therefore, a greater attachment to the school, lowering risky behaviors and creating higher academic achievement.

Additionally, school gardens can impact the school's core curriculum because integration across content areas can lead to greater interest and engagement in learning. Also, peer interactions improve due to increased opportunities to participate in cooperative group instruction. Furthermore, Cutter-Mackenzie (2009) reports that school gardens give children a greater sense of belonging at the school and develop a sense of interconnectedness between humans and the environment.

In another study, researchers claim that through their participation in school gardens, students have experienced improvements in academics, dietary improvements, increased physical activity, improved psychological skills, and improved attitudes and knowledge about the environment and sustainability (Burt et al., 2018). A well-integrated garden will align to the core curriculum across content areas, provide standards-based instruction, allow hands-on learning opportunities, give students joy through learning, allow more opportunities for outdoor hands-on learning, and cultivate community and parental participation (Firth et al., 2011). Many community partners come together to develop a well-integrated garden program, and this opens the door for parental participation and community engagement.

Community engagement is a vital component of developing a new school garden. A study out of Australia states that school garden initiatives have positive community-building outcomes and promote community benefits, such as food security, human health, local ecology, and community development through education and skills training (Firth et al., 2011). They discuss how school gardens provide opportunities for diverse groups to interact, increase social inclusion, and enhance three distinct types of Social Capital: bonding, bridging, and linking Social Capital.

All three types of Social Capital are important to a strong community. *Bonding Social Capital* refers to the strong ties individuals have within similar sociodemographic situations, such as family members or close friends. This type of Social Capital acts as a social support safety net (Firth et al., 2011). However, these groups can be isolated. *Bridging Social Capital* is outward looking and brings people together from diverse sociodemographic backgrounds (Firth et al., 2011). The third type of Social Capital discussed is *linking Social Capital*, which is concerned with connecting dissimilar people in disparate situations, such as connecting a poor parent with politically or financially influential individuals (Firth et al., 2011). In their study, these three types of Social Capital create a framework and are used to analyze community organizing and social cohesion while developing a garden program in a school.

School gardens are an additional point of access for parental involvement as they create new opportunities for parents to get involved (Ozer, 2007). Parental participation in a school garden can be an especially rich opportunity for input at a school like Estrella Elementary, which is situated in an agricultural community. Cutter-Mackenzie (2009) discusses how gardens can engage the community in language, culture, and the environment. Her study

incorporated a practice of “gardening buddies.” where parents, guardians, grandparents, and community members can work with children in creating garden spaces that reflect their home cultural values and traditions (Cutter-Mackenzie, 2009). The proximal benefits of community participation include the presence of family and community members at the school site, improved communication, and increased knowledge in areas of nutrition, food systems, and conservation for the school and home communities (Ozer, 2007). The distal positive effects are strengthening the school community, collective efficacy, and social networks. This kind of parental participation can lead to stronger ties between the school and community and improve the participation model in the school. Ozer states there is “anecdotal evidence that school garden programs can increase the involvement of parents who—because of low levels of formal schooling or limited English skills—are not comfortable volunteering in classroom activities such as tutoring or working with reading groups. As in the case of students, the garden setting provides a role for parental involvement that draws on skills not necessarily tapped in classroom settings, such as physical strength, agricultural knowledge and visual-spatial problem-solving skills” (Ozer, 2007, p. 858). Finally, Ozer (2007) saw changes in family consumption patterns and family resource conservation practices. In essence, overall capacity and collective efficacy can improve through home and school partnerships and cooperation while developing a garden-education program at the school site.

Methodology

El secreto no es correr detrás de las mariposas...es cuidar el jardín para que ellas vengan hacia ti. —Mario Quintana³

School leadership works hard to improve participation by chasing after the parents to get them involved. Yet, if schools cultivated a space for families that was attractive, like nectar is for butterflies, parents might be more inclined to participate.

Purpose

This chapter outlines methods and procedures that were used in this research. This was a PAR study that examined individual perspectives on parental participation within a Latinx community while building a community and school CGTK. The PAR study involved many members and organizations from the community; however, the focus of data collection was on parent and family engagement. Family members were interviewed using testimonio methodology (Bernal et al., 2012), an activist approach that centers the voices of often marginalized parents. This study was important to the field of educational leadership because it sought to understand parental participation within a Latinx community school. This study engaged families to create a vision for implementing a new CGTK. The families' input was

³ The secret is not to run after the butterflies...it is to take care of the garden so that they come to you.

the driving force behind how this new resource would be utilized by the school and the greater community.

The study intended to offer an alternative to assimilation models of parent involvement and was grounded in culturally sustaining practices and the CCW model (Yosso, 2005). Families and community members were invited to co-create the school's vision for the implementation of a new CGTK. This process launched with an invitation to community experts to share their knowledge about cultivating ancestral seeds and crops native to specific regions of Mexico and California. Families brought a wealth of experience to the vision because the school is in the heart of an agricultural community in which many people work. Local agricultural businesses and community-health organizations also contributed to the development of this community resource: the garden and kitchen. Community-based knowledge provided the foundation for the PAR portion of the project. Later, families were interviewed and invited to share their perspectives on parental participation within a community school, specifically regarding their role in developing a CGTK.

Research Design

PAR “seeks to understand and improve the world by changing it” (Baum et al., 2006) and is a collective effort by participants and the researcher. PAR is a methodology that enables researchers to work in partnerships in a manner that leads to action for change (Baum et al, 2006). Jiménez-Castellanos et al. share a model to engage bicultural parents based on principles of a democratic education. Their framework “equips school community participants (e.g., students, parents, teachers, administrators, and community stakeholders) to engage in action and reflection in order to transform unequal conditions that disempower the

human condition and work towards inclusion, access, equality, equal encouragement, civic responsibility, and democratic living” (Jiménez-Castellanos, 2016, p. 95). Employing this method around the Community Garden and Teaching Kitchen will allow the researcher to work with participants to co-construct knowledge around parental participation and community engagement.

PAR is also commonly referred to as community-based participatory research (CBPR), which can be described as valuing “collaboration, power sharing, and different kinds of knowledge” (Leavy, 2017 p. 224). Because this study relied on community input, it was flexible by design to consider various perspectives. From Leavy’s perspective, CBPR is social justice driven and strives to address “inequality, include marginalized people and perspectives in all phases of the research, empower disenfranchised groups, and democratize knowledge production and dissemination” (Leavy, 2017, p. 228). These ideals were foundational to the research design of this study and how community engagement is facilitated.

Participants will be invited to take a tour and learn more about the CGTK program, including what the researcher expects to learn from them. Community members were then invited to participate in Focus Team meetings. The goal of these meetings was to gain input from various stakeholders as to what the essential components the school must incorporate into the program are.

The research team was composed of 15–20 community members, including parents, teachers, staff members, project advocates, and community partners. The research participants were also part of the research team. This research approach fully engaged all the

members to drive the study. The study was primarily qualitative with quantitative demographic data. The methods included demographic surveys, questionnaires, face-to-face interviews using testimonio methodology, and focus groups. This PAR study intended to gather meaningful and authentic perspectives by centering the voice of the community while building a community resource.

The bulk of the data collected were gathered through interviews using testimonio methodology between the researcher and the parent participants. The heart of this study was to gain a better understanding of parent perspectives on participation in a community school. Testimonio methodology is an activist approach to center the voice of parents whose voice can be left in the margins in a school operating through a traditional participation lens that assumes an assimilation model for Latinx parents. Assimilation models are deficit minded because they ask parents to “leave behind their cultural perspectives on child rearing and education when they enter U.S. schools, [and] they are often subject to parental education programs which deem their parenting skills as insufficient” (Petroni, 2016, p. 69,). This study intended to bridge school and home experiences and incorporate a common set of values while co-creating a vision for the new CGTK program.

The testimonio approach to the interviews was developed through both a sequence of events planned by the researcher and spontaneous interactions that occurred at the school as a follow-up to previous conversations. The bilingual researcher interviewed parents in their native language (English or Spanish). This allowed parents to share thoughts with greater ease and to represent their ideas in the language they are accustomed to. By implementing this methodology, participants were invited to share their experiences in school, their

perspectives on parent participation, and, finally, their perspectives on their involvement in this study. This methodology offered opportunities for parents to share experiences that may have otherwise been left untold. Bernal et al. (2012) writes that testimonios have the potential of “giving voice to silences, representing the other, reclaiming authority to narrate” (p. 365). In this study, the methodology of testimonio represented the voices of parents through sharing draft questions beforehand, co-constructing next steps, sharing transcripts with parents, and sharing preliminary findings to discuss prior to publication. The intent was to capture perspectives accurately and co-construct knowledge. There were two scheduled interviews. The first interview warmed the participants up to the topic and gave them opportunities to share their ideas. The second interview was less formal and served as a clarifying discussion or allowed the topics to be explored in more depth. Some of these conversations took place on the playground school yard as children were lining up in the morning before school. Other times, the clarifications took place through email or another scheduled interview. The process was not formulaic; it looked different for each participant. However, the process did open more lines of communication between the researcher and the parents who were interviewed. Therefore, the data collected were thorough and gave the researcher a deep understanding of the parents’ perspectives.

Setting

Students in California reflect the myriad of cultures, customs, and communities that make up the state and the country. This diversity provides extensive opportunity for learning and developing healthy communities. As school leaders continuously refine and improve instruction, community engagement must evolve too. Community engagement includes the

educational community of teachers and staff, family involvement, and community organizations and business partners. This study centered the experiences of community members while creating a new CGTK program. Grounded in the CCW model (Yosso, 2005), this study focused on inviting the richness Communities of Color bring to the school setting.

This study was situated in a small agricultural community—Hellensville, California—where Latinx students and families comprise 98% of the population of Estrella Elementary School, a dual-language school focused on hands-on learning. The total school population is 518 students. Among those students, 65% were at one time English Language Learners, and 91% of the students come from socioeconomically disadvantaged homes. This research sought to incorporate the perspectives of parents on engagement and participation in a community school. The study used PAR to explore how a community school engaged families and members of the community to co-create a vision of how the school and community will use a CGTK.

Context

Estrella Elementary School is situated in the heart of agriculture lands and serves many immigrant agricultural working students and families. The school is comprised of 98% Latinx, 91% socio-economically disadvantaged students, 65% of whom are English Language Learners. The school is a TK–5 grade dual-language school educating students in English and Spanish. Through a series of grants and a capital campaign, the school has built a new CGTK project. This is a two-million-dollar project and a significant new resource for the community; many community partners have come together to support this project. This

study focused on their engagement with this new project at the school and, in particular, parental participation.

Entering the Field

The researcher of this project is the principal of the elementary school at which the study is taking place. She has worked at this school for 17 years. She started as a teacher, later served as the assistant principal, and has now been the principal for the last six years. The researcher has many community ties and connections with local organizations. She has collaborated with many organizations relevant to the school and has developed relationships with many stakeholders, including staff, parents, and community members.

Description of the Participants

Participants in this study were grouped into three categories: 1) parents, 2) site and district staff, and 3) community partners. Research participants represented the cultural and linguistic diversity of the community. Because the study engaged with many monolingual Spanish speaking families, all research and discussions were conducted in both English and Spanish by the bilingual researcher. This communication included, but was not limited to, the site tour, focus group meetings, interviews, surveys and questionnaires, recruitment outreach, and consent forms. The researcher developed the tools in English, ran the tools through a translator program, edit the Spanish language translation, and finally had an additional native-language Spanish speaker review the work prior to publishing it publicly.

Many members of these three participant groups had background knowledge about this project because the community had been introduced to the project in various ways. First, staff have received training on the basic components of instruction and the curriculum. Second,

many families were familiar with the new project, and it had been discussed multiple times during the school's monthly parent meetings. Finally, many participants invited to participate in this study had already been introduced to the project through tours offered to the community. The researcher had considerable access to the participants through daily encounters, monthly meetings, and previously developed relationships.

The researcher needed to re-enter the field for the purposes of this study to create an atmosphere of equal participation. She intended to be a facilitator of the project rather than the leader of the project. During the Focus Team meetings, she needed to be explicit about her role as an equal participant and provide space for shared leadership around the community's priorities for this project. To fulfill this intention, she explicitly stated the goals and intentions of community-based participatory research. She facilitated the meetings in a manner that provided space for others to present ideas and share how the team could actualize their ideas for implementation of the project.

Parents

All the participants recruited by the researcher were Latinx parents of students at Estrella Elementary School. They are residents of Helensville, but their place of birth ranged from Mexico to various parts of California. The parents recruited in the study are all Spanish speakers, with varying levels of English proficiency. The participants ranged from 25–45 years of age. All had some connection to work in agriculture or the food service industry through their own profession or that of someone else in their family, such as a spouse or parent.

Site and District Staff

The participants recruited from the school site included three teachers and the office manager. Two of the three teachers are also parents of students in the school. They are both bilingual educators who have worked in the school for more than 16 years. Their contributions to this process were valuable because they offered a broader perspective as both parents and educators. The additional teacher is the school science specialist, who already incorporates outdoor learning in her Next Generation Science lessons. The office manager has worked at Estrella Elementary School for more than 20 years and is a parent of three students in the school district. She is native to Helensville, a Latina, and has connections to the Helensville community extending beyond Estrella.

Specific district office personnel were invited to participate in the study based on their interest in the project. The district grant writer, who had advocated for this project, was invited to participate. She has worked for the school district for five years and had a keen interest in seeing that the project was successful. The school district's public relations officer was recruited based on her interest and advocacy for the project. She, too, is native to Helensville, Latina, and has connections to the Helensville community extending beyond Estrella Elementary School. The school district's director of science education was invited to participate based on his role and expertise in the sciences and integration of this content across all content areas. Finally, a school board trustee who represents Estrella was invited to participate in the study. This person has been a strong advocate for the project on the school board.

Community Partners

The researcher invited various community partners to participate in the study based on their connection to the project. All had a specific interest in seeing the project succeed. Two life lab executive directors were invited to participate. They are leaders in garden and outdoor education and were instrumental in Estrella Elementary receiving the large grant to build the CGTK. They are garden and culinary education experts. The school's current garden educator was invited to participate because he brought a unique perspective as to how the school implements its current garden and culinary program. A retired teacher, who is considered a local hero and is a pioneer of garden education, was invited to join the group as she provided a perspective on how hands-on programs like these develop from their infancy. Finally, two community partners and substantial donors of the project were invited to participate based on their organizations' common interests to see the community have health education in our schools. Both of their organizations promote health, specifically for young people growing up healthy in the county.

Procedures and Methods

Recruitment

There were three groups that were invited to partake in this study: 1) parents, 2) site and district staff, and 3) community partners. Each group was independently recruited by the researcher. All recruitment strategies were presented bilingually, in Spanish and English. For example, parents received an email and overview of the program presented in both languages.

Parents. The researcher used three approaches to recruiting parents and family members for this study. First, parents and family members learned about the study during the school's already established "Community Connections" parent meetings, which occur on the third Wednesday of every month at 5 p.m., through Google's virtual meeting platform. The researcher attended the meeting and provided an overview of the CGTK project, including any recent updates. Second, the researcher contacted other school parents, those who were not active in "Community Connections," by phone or while the parent was on campus, either before or after school. Third, the researcher specifically recruited parents and family members who work in agriculture and culinary professions through phone calls and in-person communication on campus. The study sought to invite 20 school parents to participate.

Once participants indicated interest, the researcher connected with them through phone calls or in-person conversations to answer questions. Initial conversations occurred during the school day or outside of the school, during students' arrival at and dismissal from school. During the follow-up conversations, the researcher reviewed the consent forms with the parents so they could learn more about the expectations of the study and had the opportunity to ask questions of the researcher. If the parents agreed, the participant(s) were invited to come to the researcher's office to sign the consent form (see Appendix B).

Site and District Staff. To explain how Estrella Elementary School incorporates and sustains CCW, it is important to first provide an overview of the culture and climate of the school and the staff demographics. Estrella is a TK–5th grade dual-language school with the core value that instruction in students' primary language is central to their success in school. Nearly 60%, 11 out of 19, of the classroom teachers are People of Color. Of these teachers,

10 are Latinx and one is Asian American. There are 14 bilingual teachers, and three fourths of all classes are dual-language classrooms, where instruction occurs 50% in Spanish and 50% in English. All the classified staff—which includes office assistants, instructional assistants, yard duty supervisors, and custodians—are Latinx, bilingual, and from either Mexico or the city of Helensville. The two administrators are Latina and bilingual. The school seeks to incorporate diversity in all aspects and believes staff must reflect the community being served. Furthermore, the staff has been trained in equity and inclusion philosophies that include anti-racist and culturally relevant pedagogy. Participants in the study highlight these factors as central to contributing to a climate and culture that is inviting for parents and responsive to the community.

Key teachers and staff from both the school site and the district office were recruited to participate in the study. These participants were key to the research based on their experience and interest in the following criteria: math, language arts or science expertise, experience with unit integration, and project-based learning. Ten key staff members were invited. These individuals were initially contacted through email (see Appendix A1 and A2 for recruitment script). Interested participants had a follow-up conversation in-person or using a live virtual platform. During the follow-up conversations, site and district staff members learned more about the expectations of the study and had the opportunity to ask questions of the researcher. Consent forms were provided for all interested individuals (see Appendix B).

Community Partners. Finally, the research will recruit community partners. The community partners represented: garden and culinary educators, the local food bank, county health leaders, and nonprofit organizations that do work related to garden and culinary

education. Ten community partners were invited. These individuals were initially contacted through email (see Appendix A1 and A2 for recruitment script). Interested participants had a follow-up conversation in-person or using a live virtual platform. During the follow-up conversations, parents learned more about the expectations of the study and had the opportunity to ask questions of the researcher. Consent forms were provided for all interested individuals (see Appendix B1 and B2).

Data Collection

This section will discuss data collection. After an initial tour of the project site, data were collected through three methods. The researcher collected Focus Team meeting notes, observation notes, and audio/video recordings of parent interviews.

Tour

Upon consenting to participate in the study, all participants were invited to tour the school, focusing on the implementation of the CGTK project. This tour was given in English and Spanish and provided basic information about the project location, curriculum and instruction, and how the project will fit into a larger vision for the district. The researcher shared more about PAR and why the participants' input was so important to the study. Some data were collected at this time in the form of field notes through observation because rich conversations occurred. Stake (2010, p. 94) writes about the responsibility of the observer to “know what is happening, to see it, to hear it, to try to make sense of it. That is more important than getting the perfect note or quote” (p. 94). Actually being in the proposed space gave participants perspective on what currently exists and the potential for building the new garden and kitchen space. The researcher was able to step into the role of participant and

gather information in an authentic way. She was able to see through observation and feel the sentiments of the participants as they shared their dreams for the space.

Focus Team Meetings

Another component of the study was Focus Team meetings. Consistent with the description provided by Young et al. (2009, p. 195), the participants of the Focus Team meetings were selected because they shared social experiences relative to the themes being discussed. These meetings were socially oriented and encouraged an atmosphere that fostered a range of opinions and a deeper understanding of the project. The meetings elicited a range of perspectives to better reflect the priorities of the community.

All three groups of participants (community members, staff, and parents) were invited to attend the meetings. Each meeting was conducted bilingually, through concurrent translation, in the school cafeteria. The researcher presented the overview of the day in English and had support with a Spanish translator. All participants heard both languages during the presentation. Additionally, a light meal and childcare was provided to minimize barriers to participation. Each meeting focused on a specific theme that pertained to hands-on learning, garden education, culinary education, and the overall vision of the project. However, in the spirit of PAR, the researcher was the facilitator of and guide for the discussions, but ultimately the team decided the direction of the team's actions. The researcher launched each meeting with a *conocimiento*, or icebreaker, activity to build community. Multiple participants were invited to present at and be co-facilitators of the meetings to level the power dynamics and create shared leadership of the project.

The researcher was explicit about the facilitation process to maintain balance among the participants and their ability to contribute their unique perspectives. At each Focus Team meeting, the participants broke into subgroups that contained members from each participant group. Each subgroup also contained bilingual people to make sure language was not a barrier to participation. All notes collected at these meetings were on chart paper or exit ticket documents, and the research took field notes of the discussions and interactions.

Focus Team Meeting Number 1 began with a meal for all participants and their children. Each meeting designated the first fifteen minutes to a light dinner. This was a time for people to casually converse and get to know one another. At 5:45 p.m., children were taken to another space for games and activities for the duration of the meeting. The researcher led a community builder by asking all participants to share with the people at their table their favorite food or recipe. At 6:00 p.m., the researcher led the participants through the school to visit the project site and the existing garden. During this tour, the garden and culinary education team was invited to share about the programs they already had at the school and in the district. By 6:40, all participants returned to the cafeteria to hear from the researcher about the project. The researcher shared the way the project came to the school, the kitchen designs, and the funding sources for the two-million-dollar project. For the following 25 minutes, there was a small group discussion time for the participants. Participants broke out into small groups to discuss why it is important for students to learn garden and culinary skills. Each group charted its responses on a piece of chart paper, and all had the opportunity to share their ideas with the whole group. Finally, there was an “exit

ticket,” which asked participants to share what they would like to see included in the project for both students and the community.

The Focus Team Meeting Number 2 began with food, childcare, and a community builder activity. The community builder for this meeting asked participants to share ways children helped (or could help) at home with either cooking, cleaning, or gardening. The group took another tour of the site of the project because the kitchen construction was active and changing significantly each week. After the tour, the researcher presented the results of the first meeting’s “exit ticket,” which had collected the participant ideas on what should be included in the project for students and the community. Small group sessions looked closely at the feedback, determined which items they thought should be pursued and began to brainstorm how the ideas should be implemented. The goal of this session was to determine how the group could actualize the community’s priorities. The “exit ticket” will ask who we should invite to our next meeting to help us navigate the group’s next steps for the project. Data were collected through observation by the researcher, chart paper notes, and the “exit ticket.” Finally, during this meeting, the researcher began to shift her role from principal researcher to more of a participant and facilitator. She facilitated this meeting with the intention of creating space for the participants to begin to blur the line, to become co-researchers of the study.

Focus Team Meeting Number 3 began with food, childcare, and a community builder activity. The community builder for this meeting asked participants to share how students might learn about science, math, and language arts in the garden and kitchen. The group took another tour of the site of the project because the kitchen construction was active and

changing significantly each week. After the tour, the researcher shared the feedback from the previous session's "exit ticket" about who we should invite to the next meeting. The researcher organized the input into categories. Each category was clustered with various types of input. Participants were asked to self-select a group based on their interest in that category. In small groups, participants discussed action plans to implement the priorities. Implementation included timelines, who to invite to our next session, and determination of next steps. To end the session, small groups shared their plans for implementation.

Focus Team Meeting Number 4 was the final formal session. Like all the previous meetings, it began with food, childcare, and a community building activity. The community builder for this meeting asked participants how individuals could be better stewards of the planet. The group took another tour of the site of the project because the kitchen construction was active and changing significantly each week. This was a working session for most groups. However, there was space and time reserved for presentations for if the group decided they wanted to invite additional guests who might help us fulfill our priorities.

During the mentioned focus groups, all sessions were held bilingually, through concurrent translation and audio/video recording. All participants in the study had opportunities to work in small groups and present to the whole group. Regardless of the participants' primary language, concurrent translation was offered by a team of translators. The translators worked in the whole-group and small-group settings. There were two videographers filming the Focus Team meetings in both the large-group and small-groups discussions.

Semi-Structured Interviews

The researcher selected parent participants to participate in at least two semi-structured interviews using a testimonio methodology. Testimonio is “a critical Latin American oral tradition practice” (Burciaga & Cruz Navarro, 2015, p. 33) that centers lived experiences as the knowledge generated in an interview through a qualitative study. Delgado Bernal (1997) writes about oral history and how this method “employs life histories as a primary method of data collection [and] allows resistance and its impact to be explored from an historical perspective” (p. 44). Testimonio methodology allows for oral history and storytelling to be incorporated into the meaning-making process. The methodology involves the *testimoniadora* (participant) and the researcher in a dialogical discussion, which explicitly challenges more traditional power dynamics between the researcher and participant (Covarrubias et al., 2018). This framework allowed for more rich and complex narratives to emerge through the interview process. Parents received the questions in advance to allow time for more thoughtful responses and allow them to present their responses as they would like them to be portrayed. The interviews were conducted as a dialogue between the researcher and participant. Life experience and anecdotal evidence to support claims were welcomed in this process.

As the researcher sought to understand parental participation, participants were invited to share what does and does not work to support families in the process. Parents were also given the transcripts prior to publication so they could confirm that the researcher’s depiction of the discussion was accurate and indicate how they wanted their responses to be portrayed. Parents shared about their impact on the school and decision-making. Parents were invited to

provide feedback about their thoughts and perspectives on the project and the PAR process. The interviews took place in the weeks and months after all the Focus Team meetings had concluded.

The interviews were videotaped for later reference and transcription. The interviews were conducted in either Spanish or English, depending on the preference of the participant. The researcher is bilingual and therefore there is no need for translation. Parents were invited to a follow-up interview when the researcher needed more clarity prior to publication. Furthermore, parents shared additional thoughts with the researcher through informal conversations during school hours or during volunteer days. Parent participants were eager to contribute their perspectives and to have follow-up conversations to fully convey their opinions about and priorities for the school's new community resource.

Data Analysis

Data for this study were collected from various sources and events. Field notes were taken by the researcher during tours, Focus Team meetings, and volunteer garden-building events. During the Focus Team meetings, data were further collected on chart paper from subgroups and from "exit tickets" from every participant. During the semi-structured parent interviews, the conversations were audio recorded and then transcribed. Notes were also taken during the follow-up conversations that took place with parent participants.

Once the data were collected, the researcher extracted key points and entered them into a spreadsheet. The responses were then sorted as they related to each research question. Themes emerged for each research question, and the data were manually coded for each theme. Some data overlapped among themes and were coded and recorded multiple times, as

appropriate. Using an ethnographic analysis approach, the researcher used an inductive process to discover trends within participants groups (Young et al., 2009, p. 106). This process was concurrent throughout the study and the various events, meetings, and interviews.

Furthermore, data were analyzed through an action-research perspective that recognizes the collective effort involved in generating knowledge and designing action. The researcher used the data to produce understanding and inform future action (Young et al., 2009, p. 108). The data were interpreted by the researcher to support community building and developing a vision for implementation of the project as a community resource.

Benefits of the Research to Human Subjects

Study participants were invited to contribute to the vision of a new community resource. The goal was to invite a multitude of perspectives to improve both the school and the community. The study hoped to capture expertise and the experience of the community while creating a resource that is relevant for the local and unique community. Participants may also have benefited personally from their participation because they learned about other community resources and created networks that may not have already been created. Furthermore, participants developed a greater understanding of how their community could access these new resources. Finally, participants felt a sense of pride in participating in the vision and development of a new community CGTK.

Means Taken to Minimize Risk and Discomfort

Potential risks were minimal. With all research, there is a potential risk of loss of privacy, but measures described next were taken to minimize this risk.

The participant database and electronic data were kept on a password-protected computer, to which only the principal researcher had access. All other physical data, including consent forms, surveys, questionnaires, and transcriptions of audio-recorded meetings, were securely stored in the researcher's home office and password protected. All data will be kept for a period of 10 years, after which time it may be destroyed. Study findings, with all identifying data removed, were shared with the researcher's classmates, who are enrolled in a graduate-level research course at San José State University.

Furthermore, to minimize discomfort of the participants during the procedure, participants were told that they could decline to participate or decline to answer any or all questions, at their discretion and that data collection would be stopped at any time, at the participant's discretion.

Limitations

The researcher recognized that her role as principal of the school may have had an impact on the study. For example, responses may have been biased because participants may have wanted to share information they believe the principal would like to hear regarding parental participation in the school. As stated in the consent form, the researcher explained that her role as researcher was separate from her role as principal of the school.

These limitations may have also applied to site staff members because they may have been more inclined to answer questions in ways they thought their principal and supervisor would like them to. Similarly, as stated in the consent form, the researcher was clear that her role as researcher is separate from her role as principal. Furthermore, the parent perspectives represented were only a small sample from a population of roughly 500 students. The

parents' input may have been skewed because they may have engaged parents who are able to be more active and participatory.

The COVID-19 pandemic was also a limitation. Focus Team meetings were conducted in-person in the cafeteria while all participants wore masks for virus protection. This may have limited participation in the sessions due to perceived health risks, especially when potential participants were immunocompromised. Also, some interviews needed to be conducted in a virtual setting. This setting might have skewed the participants' comfort level in engaging fully in dialogue.

Finally, the CBPAR study was intended to balance power dynamics and allow the researcher to be a participant in the study parallel to the other participants.

Ethical Considerations

To respect each family and the way they manage their home and raise their children, parents were invited to describe scenarios rather than their own practices. To respect the participants' children, teachers were not informed as to which parents were participating in the study. Furthermore, pseudonyms were used rather than parents' names in the study. The researcher will make efforts to protect the identity of all participants.

Another ethical consideration the researcher considered was her relationship to the teachers being recruited for the study. This was mitigated by the fact she had worked with all the teachers for at least 16 years and has had a personal relationship with each one. None of the teachers invited to participate in the study were being evaluated by the administration, nor have any of them had any discipline issues.

Findings

En el jardín crecen más cosas que las que siembra el jardinero. —Unknown⁴

This quote reflects the work being done at Estrella. The garden is growing more than the gardener sows. We are growing a community that is stronger, healthier, and more inclusive and reflective of the community at Estrella.

Overview of the Study

Estrella Elementary School received a large grant and conducted a capital campaign to build a new three-million-dollar CGTK. Appendix D shows images of the kitchen and garden design, as developed with architects. This research study ran parallel to these efforts to collect community perspectives to maximize the potential of implementing the new school program. The purpose of this PAR study was to better understand how a school can build on the assets of the community and provide more opportunities for parents and community members to engage with the CGTK at Estrella Elementary School. Set in an elementary school with a large Latinx student population whose families primarily work in agriculture, this PAR engaged the community, seeking to reflect the goals of parents, staff, and community members. The study collected stories and perceptions as to what Latinx parental

⁴ More things grow in the garden than the gardener sows. - Unknown

participation means within a community school. Through community engagement, stakeholders co-created a vision for implementing a new CGTK.

Three stakeholder groups participated in the study: parents, staff, and community partners. Data were collected through Focus Team meetings, parent interviews, and field notes taken during participatory action events and meetings. During these meetings, data were collected to inform and respond to the three research questions guiding the study.

Findings

The findings for this study are organized by the three research questions and the themes developed for each question. The first research question asked: What are the current experiences and future aspirations of Estrella Elementary School's community in regard to garden and culinary education? This question seeks to uncover the current situation and discover goals for the garden and kitchen project. The findings for this study revealed five prominent themes across all participants. The themes are Life Skills, Education, Environment, Health, and Community Connections.

The second research question asked: How can Estrella Elementary School better reflect the needs and desires of the community through developing a CGTK? After evaluating the current plan for the project, participants explored ways to do better and be more responsive to the needs of the community. The findings led to the development of seven prominent themes: Parental Participation, Volunteer Opportunities, Curriculum, District Educational Opportunities, Events, Community Partnerships, and Design Components.

Finally, the third question explored: How does Estrella Elementary School incorporate and sustain CCW in the development of a CGTK? Through this question, the study

investigated how the community's wealth of knowledge, talents, and skills can be utilized to better support the school and community in the context of the garden and kitchen project.

The following sections are dedicated to answering each of these questions.

Research Question #1

What are the current experiences and future aspirations of Estrella Elementary School's community in regard to garden and culinary education?

Participants represented various stakeholders and offered vast insight into the community values in the current garden and culinary program and shared what they would like to see in the future. There were five themes identified from the data collection for Research Question One: Life Skills, Education, Environment, Health, and Community Connections. Although there was considerable overlap among the ideas represented by the various stakeholders, some themes were more prominent within specific stakeholder groups. Parents and family members focused more on the importance of life skills students would gain from this project. Staff focused on the education and environmental theme. Finally, community partners shared more emphasis on the health benefits and opportunities for community connections. Data will be reported as collected from the three different types of participants: Parents, Staff, and Community Members.

Parents. While all participant groups discussed Life Skills as an important experience students gain from the program, this section will focus mostly on parents and family members. Life skills was the theme most frequently mentioned as an aspiration among families. During our Focus Team meetings and interviews, family members most often expressed the importance of students learning life skills in the garden and kitchen. Parents

described life skills as students learning skills in the garden and kitchen that will help them take care of themselves and gain more independence. Two mothers, Gema and Dalia, were interviewed and shared the importance of children learning how to make healthy choices for themselves while also being able to help care for their family. They expressed the importance of life skills now, as children, as well as when they grow up and have a family of their own one day. During the first Focus Team meeting, parents were asked to complete an exit ticket before the conclusion of the meeting. The exit ticket question asked participants to share what they valued and what they would like to see in the garden and culinary program. Multiple parents stated they want their children to become more independent and they would appreciate the school teaching children how to cook, cut food safely, plant crops, and use proper sanitation when handling food. Students can learn to be more responsible in the home and be safer in the kitchen. They would like to see their children learn how to use tools, such as real knives in the kitchen, and handle meat safely. During one of the garden volunteer days, a young boy learned to use a drill alongside his father and uncle. His mother expressed the value of the life lesson he was gaining while their family was volunteering at the event.

In an interview with Gema, a mother who has had six of her children attend the school, she said, “Como padres, recibimos más apoyo para enseñar a nuestros hijos habilidades para la vida.”⁵ In another example, Ashley, a parent of two elementary-aged boys, recounted a

⁵ As parents, we receive more support in teaching our children life skills.

personal experience she had growing up where her mother fell sick and she and her siblings were forced to learn to care for themselves. Ashley said, “No había nadie más para preparar nuestras comidas porque mi padre estaba trabajando.”⁶ She went on to say that it is important for children to have, “la confianza en ellos mismos de lo que han aprendido en el jardín y la cocina”⁷ A final comment from Lucia, a mother of three children who have attended the school, which made the room smile was, “Me encanta la idea de las gallinas en el jardín y que los estudiantes vean de dónde vienen los huevos.”⁸ The principal of the school was initially startled by the idea of live chickens on the grounds but warmed up to the idea after hearing the overwhelming support for the chicken coop.

Staff. School site staff, district staff, a school board member, and garden educators stressed the educational benefits this project provides to students and the community. They stressed connectedness to nature, hands-on learning, and unique opportunities to teach about nature and the environment. Educators stressed the importance of students getting their hands in the dirt and taking care of the earth. The school board representative, Phoebe, said the fact that students are learning outside allows for a more peaceful sense of self. There was discussion of the mindfulness opportunities students can gain from outdoor learning. Participants want students to learn about a cleaner school environment, which is one free of

⁶ There was no one else to prepare our food because my father was away at work.

⁷ Having the confidence in themselves regarding what they have learned in the garden and kitchen.

⁸ I love the idea of chickens in the garden and students seeing where the eggs come from.

litter and pesticides. The garden instructor, Fernando, said, “pesticide free gardening will allow students to learn about friendly bugs and insects.” The school’s science specialist, Sierra, shared that she would like to see students learn about “rainwater data collection, water conservation, and environmental education” through the implementation of the CGTK. Sierra shared her ideas about aligning the garden and culinary curriculum with the core content students learn in their regular classroom, “While we are learning about plant life cycles in science class, the students can go out to the garden and actually watch as changes occur in nature.” She went on to explain that outdoor garden education can bring learning to life for students. The ideas gathered from staff may guide the implementation of science learning in the garden and kitchen. Overall, the message from educators stressed that the school needs to bring lessons from books to life. For example, rather than learning about water conservation in a book, students have the opportunity to practice this learning with a rainwater catchment system. The data collected from staff move the school forward and align the curriculum with the aspirations of these participants. The staff input has shifted some of our plans to include a rainwater catchment system and a pollinator box.

As a result of the staff input, a team of educators was created to align curriculum in the kitchen and garden with the curriculum of all content areas. They want to see students experience a thematic instructional day, rather than one that is disjointed with isolated lessons in the garden or kitchen. A team was developed that contained literacy coaches, science specialists, garden instructors, and chefs as experts. The team started by aligning the graphic organizers used in the CGTK with those used in the language arts program. One example is the tool used for comparing and contrasting. The team wants students to further

develop this comprehension skill. This tool could be used for comparing and contrasting helpful and harmful insects in the same way that we can deepen our understanding of two versions of a Cinderella story, for example.

Another example of this curricular alignment took place in the kitchen and was about various kinds of tastes: sweet, sour, tart, and spicy. The students learned about their taste buds, the tongue, and how assorted flavors respond in the mouth. They were able link this lesson in the kitchen to lessons we teach about the five senses during language arts time. This type of integration supports work in the CGTK and can serve as an extension of a student's overall experience at school. A final example of alignment we have seen across content areas is trestle-building. The third-grade students built trestles in the garden to support plants, which is a skill that directly correlates with the engineering lesson they receive in language arts about building bridges.

Although the curriculum is not perfectly aligned across all content areas yet, the team is cognizant of the potential to deepen student learning through this process. They will continue to meet and make connections that will ultimately lead to greater learning outcomes. The goal is for the educators to be explicit about how learning occurs in diverse settings, so students can take the leap to apply knowledge independently, in diverse learning environments.

Community Members. Many of the community members involved in the study represented health/nutrition organizations or garden instruction in schools. They primarily connected to the health and community-connection themes that arose during the Focus Team meetings. Monse, representing the local food bank, shared how a venue like this can support

the food bank's mission to promote healthy habits and eating in the school and the greater community. She would like to see a partnership where the food bank provides food and education classes that are offered to the community but hosted in the new school facilities. The food bank currently distributes food twice a month at the school with the support of parent *promotoras*, but this project and facility can enhance its reach in the community through outreach about health and nutrition education. For example, the food bank could invite parents to a class about a topic, such as cholesterol. The parents could make a recipe with foods that combat cholesterol and eat it together, and then the families could take home the recipe and a box full of foods that would battle this community-health challenge. Workshops and classes were popular ideas among community partners because they see this space as a perfect venue for them to work toward achieving their respective missions around health and nutrition in the community. Orion, from the local community-health trust, echoed this sentiment by saying that the various groups could fill the calendar with events for the community that fulfill their various missions. Community members aspire to see more health- and nutrition-related events at the school.

Colibrí, the director of a local garden-education program, felt this space has the potential to be a place for passing on knowledge and hosting a continuum of knowledge because we have so much expertise in the community that can be passed to students. Furthermore, they want to invite local farmworkers and industry leaders to speak to the youth. There was a discussion about inviting local agricultural leaders to discuss job opportunities available beyond working in the fields. The industry needs soil scientists, biologists, marketing experts, and so much more. Colibrí said, "Why not present to the kids so they see the

possibilities available to them in their home community?” These presentations could also link to the career and technical-education pathways the district has that are relevant to the agriculture business. This was a sentiment shared by both staff and community partner stakeholders.

Overall, each stakeholder group expressed its views about the great opportunities for the community created by using this new kitchen and garden facility—for both the school and the greater community. Stakeholders shared what they value in the current program and their aspirations. Parents want to see students gain skills that will support them in life. Staff members stressed the importance of bringing textbook knowledge to life through hands-on learning. Finally, community members emphasized how their role could better support the community’s overall health and well-being. The data collected for Research Question One are poised to guide the school in implementing decision-making.

Research Question #2

How can Estrella Elementary School better reflect the needs and desires of the community through developing a Culinary Garden and Teaching Kitchen?

Participants shared a broad range of ideas about how the school could better reflect the needs and desires of the school community through the CGTK. There were seven predominant themes identified from the data collection: Parental Participation, Volunteer Opportunities, Curriculum, District Educational Opportunities, Events, Community Partnerships, and Design Components. Although there was overlap among all participant groups and their responses, there were trends within the themes among the specific stakeholder groups. For example, the parent group of participants shared mostly about parent

participation and volunteer opportunities. Staff members focused on aspects of curriculum and district educational opportunities. Finally, the community partners reflected on how the CGTK could support community events and community partnerships. Data have been sorted and are reported from the perspective of the three distinct types of participants: parents, staff, and community partners.

Parents and Family Members. Parents and family members shared that the school could better reflect the community by offering parental participation and volunteer opportunities for families in the garden and kitchen. Monique, mother of three Estrella students, suggested parents could teach a cooking lesson and volunteer to build the garden when it was time for construction. Monique said, “Students can learn how to grow fruits and vegetables from their parents and some parents might have experience preparing meals.” She continued to talk about Helensville and the uniqueness of the community. Monique emphasized that the agriculture and culinary experience of the families should be represented in the project, saying that families there have a lot to offer because of “our Latino heritage, and [the fact that] the farm-working community has a lot of experience.” During another Focus Team meeting there was a discussion regarding parents volunteering in the garden and the kitchen. Dalia has two daughters in the school and shared, in Spanish, “que los papás puedan ser voluntarios en el jardín y la cocina para que también puedan aprender y re-

enforzar en sus casas lo que aprenden en la escuela.”⁹ Parents expressed interest in increasing parental participation and offered a few suggestions. Dalia and Gema suggested that the school be open during the evening and weekend hours so working families can attend school functions and volunteer opportunities. To get more participation, Gema suggested, “the school should make more opportunities available when parents are not working.” During the Focus Team meeting, parents suggested having a clubhouse or a classroom designated for family usage that could be accessed during the school day and after school hours. They believe community-garden build days would be a wonderful way to get more participation, especially because so many families are skilled in gardening and culinary arts. Furthermore, one grandma who participated in the Focus Team meetings recommended that we invite parents and grandparents to come to school to teach lessons and do “heritage cooking” so students can learn from “grandmothers and aunties by topics such as salsa and tamales.” Furthermore, the parent participants in the Focus Team meetings suggested we should recruit presenters from the community to come and share about being a chef, working in the fields, and working in an office in an agricultural business.

Beyond volunteer opportunities, parents want to see more activities, such as family cooking nights, painting or movie nights in the garden, gardening classes, and make-your-

⁹ Parents can be volunteers in the garden and kitchen so they can learn about the program and then reinforce in their homes what students learn at school.

own-cookbook nights, and invite different speakers or local chefs to present to the community. Parents mentioned having “Dinner in the Garden” fundraisers, televised cooking shows led by students, guest speakers, and “mercados,” or farmers markets, led by the students.

As a result of the parents’ input, the school hosted a family cooking night, where a local chef came and taught attendees how to cook a five-course meal. This chef is a local hero and well-known in the community. The families were divided into groups, and each made one component of the meal. At the end of the evening, each group shared their dish to make a complete delicious and healthy meal for the group. The participation was enthusiastic, and they are already asking for another event. Clearly the input from the participants was accurate for what the community wanted to see as a reflection of the desires for implementation.

During the volunteer days and action events, parents were learning alongside their children, but they were also the creators and holders of knowledge in this project. We saw the role of parents in the school begin to shift throughout because parents were experts and were able to lead the volunteers. We saw student agency come to fruition. Students expressed pride in the parents’ knowledge and their community connections during these days. One student’s father provided all the young strawberry plants we used in the strawberry patch. The student was proud his dad provided this resource to his school. The action of actually building something together became an access point for connection between the home and the school. As mentioned in the literature review, participation was not dictated by the school; rather, the parents were at the center of teaching and leading.

Staff. The staff who participated in the Focus Team meetings and are involved in this project included the school’s science specialist, teachers, the school’s principal, garden and culinary instructors, our county’s science specialist district coordinators, and the director of extended learning. Staff mostly reflected on the curriculum and the across-district educational opportunities as ways the school could better reflect the community. There is considerable overlap between the responses to the first question and those to question two in regard to curriculum. For example, teachers would like to align the curriculum so students have a thematic day and not a disjointed experience in the garden or kitchen. During one Focus Team meeting, there was a rich conversation about creating a link from the school to the home, and vice versa. For example, students can take home projects so they can teach their parents what they are learning. Jackie suggested that the students can learn something at school, bring home supplies, and then be able to teach their parents about what they are learning. Mica said this would further spread the ideas about healthy choices, into the home. Our garden and cooking educators, Nemo and Alexandro, suggested the students “talk about their favorite recipes from home and make them with classmates.”

A long topic of discussion in the second Focus Team meeting was teaching students about the history of Helensville and the agricultural community. Our Career and Technical Education (CTE) coordinator, Julie, said students could learn the depth of our local contribution to feeding the country and, in some cases, the world. Various participant groups shared this sentiment and want to highlight and honor our local agriculture community because it is a “point of pride” for us. Staff want to see local history reflected in the curriculum of the new kitchen and garden learning. Also, it is important for students to learn

from local leaders in the agricultural business about the career opportunities available to them in their hometown. These discussions have prompted further discussion about how to plant seeds in youth to pursue careers in agricultural business.

Our extended learning director, Olive, talked about how we can maximize our reach to other programs in the district. Julie talked about mentoring opportunities for high school interns to come instruct our younger students, who may want to enter one of the district's CTE pathways, such as agricultural business. Jen shared how this project could extend into the after-school program and offer field trips to neighboring schools in the district. The CGTK has already hosted two middle school groups in the space. They made fresh pasta and sauce. Like with all classes, engagement among students was high and learning was ample.

Community Members. The community members involved in the study focused on the need to have events and strong community partnerships to reflect the needs and desires of the community. Nina, the executive director of a local nonprofit focused on literacy, suggested we capitalize on partnerships by creating a “Friends of the Culinary Garden and Teaching Kitchen” group. She stressed the importance of an ongoing relationship between the school and community partners and organizations and that we need to harness the energy in support of this project. Numerous partnerships were created during the construction of the project and the capital campaign with organizations such as the local food bank, the county’s community foundation, the local health trust, the local aquarium, entrepreneurs, and agricultural business leaders. By creating a friend’s group, the school and partners could reconvene regularly through events and continue to strengthen their partnerships and maximize their potential for serving the community. They shared events ideas, such as community-cooking nights,

regular health and nutrition classes, highlighting of local chefs, and evenings to highlight local farms and producers. These events could be educational, celebratory, or for fundraising, depending on the various goals of the specific event. By leveraging partnerships, participants believed the community could have access to more types of organizations and services available in the county. Many local businesses and organizations would have the opportunity to reach more members of the community through being in the school setting.

All three participant groups had ideas for the design of the garden and shared what components they would like to see present in the space. For example, they would like to see an outside reading space within a wellness garden that would give students and staff a place to relax and practice self-care. They wanted to see features such as a bee-view box, pollinator flowers, composting station, water-catchment systems, and a worm bin so students could watch science occurring in the garden as they learn about it in their books.

There were seven prominent themes that surfaced in the data collected during Focus Team meetings and parent interviews: Parental Participation, Volunteer Opportunities, Curriculum, opportunities across the district (District Educational Opportunities), Community Partnerships, and the design of the garden and kitchen space (Design Components). Parents shared how the school could better reflect the needs and desires of the school through more parental participation and volunteer opportunities in the kitchen and garden space. Staff participants want to see the garden and culinary curriculum aligned with all content areas and want to broaden the reach of the project to include neighboring schools in the district. Finally, as community partnership, participants want to see a calendar of events that give partners access to the space to offer community programming around health

and nutrition. Furthermore, they want to help establish an ongoing relationship with the school and the CGTK project. The data collected for Research Question Two is positioned to guide the school to better reflect the needs and desires of the community in regard to the CGTK project.

Research Question #3

How does Estrella Elementary School incorporate and sustain Cultural Community Wealth in the development of a Culinary Garden and Teaching Kitchen?

To understand how Estrella Elementary School incorporates and sustains CCW, it is important to first provide an overview of the culture and climate of the school and the staff demographics. Estrella is a TK–5th grade dual-language school with the core value that instruction in students’ primary language is central to their success in school. Nearly 60%, 11 out of 19, of the classroom teachers are People of Color. Of these teachers, 10 are Latinx and one is Asian American. There are 14 bilingual teachers, and three fourths of all classes are dual-language classrooms, where instruction is taught 50% in Spanish and 50% in English. All of the classified staff, which includes office assistants, instructional assistants, yard duty supervisors, and custodians, are Latinx, bilingual, and from either Mexico or the city of Helensville. The two administrators are Latina and bilingual. The school seeks to incorporate diversity in all aspects and believes staff must reflect the community being served. Furthermore, the staff has been trained in equity and inclusion philosophies that include anti-racist and culturally relevant pedagogy. Participants in the study highlight these factors as central to contributing to a climate and culture that is inviting for parents and responsive to the community.

Research Question Three looked closely at the work Yosso developed on the CCW model (Yosso, 2005). In her model, CCW incorporates six forms of capital: linguistic, aspirational, social, navigational, familial, and resistant (p. 78). Her model challenges traditional notions of what capital is and what is accepted, socially and culturally, as capital. Rather than maintaining that the White middle-class perspective is the norm of capital, this model broadens the definition of capital and is more inclusive of the capital Communities of Color bring to the school setting.

Linguistic capital. Linguistic capital refers to Students of Color's ability to develop communication skills through various experiences, such as interrupting and storytelling. The linguistic richness of the school matches the linguistic wealth of the community and opens doors for parents to participate. All parent meetings at the school are conducted in Spanish or bilingually to meet the needs of the participants. Parents can communicate with their children's teachers and other support staff in their primary language. Similarly, all the Focus Team meetings were conducted bilingually, and interviews were conducted according to the primary language of the parent participant. In this way, the school can break down barriers for participation that deal with language. Furthermore, parents want the CGTK project to incorporate the linguistic wealth that the school and parent community represent. Spanish language is incorporated into the curriculum, instruction, signage throughout the new facility, and parent events that take place in the space.

Using the Spanish language became a prominent theme among participants. Layla shared in one Focus Team meeting that she was thrilled to move her two daughters to Estrella because her girls are now formally learning Spanish, which is their home and cultural

language. She continues to share her appreciation of how everything the school does is bilingual, from meetings to newsletters, and all communication with students and families. Because the CGTK curriculum is written in English only, the participants believed adjustments should be made to better reflect the community. The school's two garden and culinary instructors, Alexandro and Noemi, plan to have everything in the new kitchen and garden labeled bilingually for the students and families. Both instructors are bilingual and Latinx. Furthermore, they shared how they plan to deliver instruction in Spanish for the dual-language classrooms.

Beyond language, this study revealed barriers that would otherwise prevent family participation. To support families, the principal and investigator held the Focus Team meetings at 6 p.m. and provided dinner and childcare for the whole family. Childcare was provided by one classified employee from the school and six high school students completing their community volunteer hours. The children shared how they loved the connection with the other students, and parents were satisfied that the program gave their children such a positive experience while allowing them to participate in study. Kate shared that her daughter was overjoyed because she had two high school students coloring with her and giving her all their attention. Each parent participant was personally invited by the principal through face-to-face or phone conversations following an email or flyer invitation. Personal invites made parents feel welcomed and valued. Fatima thanked the principal and said, "sus invitaciones

me recuerdan que este es un trabajo importante y necesito asegurarme de poder asistir.”¹⁰

These practices explicitly broke down barriers, created a more welcoming environment, and opened doors for more participation. The study was focused on trying to establish a climate and culture that promotes parent leadership at the school.

Aspirational and Navigational Capital. Aspirational capital refers to one's ability to maintain hopes and dreams in the face of real and perceived barriers, while navigational capital refers to the skills and abilities to navigate social institutions, including educational spaces. During the Focus Team meetings, participants expressed the importance of honoring our local agricultural community and wanted the children to know what types of careers are available within the industry. Jimena shared, “es bueno si mis hijos quieren trabajar en el campo. Es un buen trabajo, pero también es un trabajo duro. Tal vez mis hijos puedan ser los jefes algún día.”¹¹ Colibrí said we should invite local leaders in the industry to come and talk about local farming and what it involves. She said, “kids can learn how food gets from the farm to the table.” She continued by saying we can create a space for the passing on of knowledge among students, parents, and industry leaders. She ended by saying, “we can all benefit by the collective knowledge” we have in our community. This study offers another

¹⁰ Your invitations remind me this is important work and I need to make sure I can attend.

¹¹ It is good if my children want to work in the fields. It is good work, but it is hard work too. Maybe my children can be the bosses one day.

way families and students can develop social and navigational capital within the agricultural industry. In general, parents want their children to have an appreciation for their work in the fields but would also like them to have a career that is less physically demanding so they can live more comfortably. Gema said,

“Mi papá trabajaba en los campos de fresas y manzanas. Estaba muy orgulloso de su trabajo. Le encantaba cultivar la Tierra y siempre hablaba de ello con gran aprecio y alegría. Quería que aprendimos sobre la importancia de este tipo de trabajo. Para nosotros, sus niños, quería que encontráramos un trabajo que nos hace felices.”¹²

This PAR study created space for the school to center the people, culture, and insights of the community. By capturing these perspectives, the CGTK seeks to reflect the CCW of the school population and the greater community. All three stakeholder groups brought wisdom and unique perspectives to inform this project. The school was able to maximize the potential for implementing a new project, as well as the engagement of the community, because the participants brought vast expertise in agriculture, food service, nutrition, education, culture, and tradition.

Social and Resistance Capital. Social and resistance capital are grounded in the experiences of Communities of Color in securing equal rights and collective freedom. The Focus Team meetings were attended by various individuals representing a multitude of

¹² My dad worked in the strawberry fields and apple orchards. He was very proud of his work. He loved to cultivate the Earth and always spoke of it with great appreciation and joy. He wanted us to learn about the importance of this type of work. For us, his children, he wanted us to find a job that makes us happy.

community agencies and organizations. This representation expanded the connections being made in the community and seeks to elevate the community's collective Social Capital.

Delia, from the local food bank, wants to use her Social Capital to bring more health and nutrition awareness to Estrella's student community and the greater community of Helensville. She has access to high-quality lessons and information regarding specific health concerns, such as cholesterol and childhood obesity. Another participant shared how his community garden program could bring more awareness and education about cultivating throughout the year. Hugo, a community-garden coordinator, leads a network of community gardens in Helensville; they do work on ancestral seeds from Mexico. He said they have seeds from various regions of Mexico and conserve the ancestral seeds and their genetic integrity. They store and preserve these seeds so the community can grow and enjoy specific foods grown in their home regions of Mexico. For example, they grow Oaxacan corn and tomatillos from Puebla. Hugo wants the community to have access to this ancestral knowledge through lessons and workshops that the community-garden leaders offer students and their families.

Familial Capital. Familial capital was a prominent theme throughout the study, and very specifically to Research Question Three. Participants in the Focus Team meetings and the parents interviewed shared a multitude of opportunities they said we must take to bring in familial capital. For example, participants want to see heritage cooking lessons, where a parent or grandparent comes to school and teaches a favorite recipe. Noemi suggested we have a salsa-making competition and invite all the families to submit an entry of their family's favorite salsa recipe. In an interview with Gema and Dalia, Gema reminisced about

her family's town in Mexico and the Kermes events they would hold. She said, "un kermés es como un carnaval con mucha gente, comida de platos típicos, actividades y música. También, puede ser una celebración de una cosecha."¹³ Dalia shared, "as a Mexican, fields are a point of pride because we feed so many people." The CGTK invited families to bring their knowledge and experience to the school through enhanced parental participation.

The study incorporated Yosso's CCW model (Yosso, 2005). The examples in this section demonstrate how Estrella Elementary School incorporates and sustains six forms of capital: linguistic, aspirational, social, navigational, familial, and resistant (p. 78). Evidence of the model can be found through the study and across all three research questions.

¹³ A Kermes is like a carnival with lots of people, traditional dishes, activities, and music. Also, it can be a celebration of a harvest.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Los sueños del futuro comienzan con semillas plantadas en la infancia. – Linda Bixby¹⁴

This quote was written by one of the CGTK’s capital campaign directors. This is a quote one would see throughout our garden, and even on the T-shirts parents wore at this year’s annual parent conference. We believe we are planting seeds in our students that will blossom now, later, and well into their adulthood.

Introduction

This chapter will provide a summary of the study and discussion of the data reported in Findings as it relates to the theoretical frameworks presented in Review of the Literature. The chapter will also contain recommendations for actions, recommendations for future research, and concluding remarks.

Summary

This was a PAR study that examined individual perspectives on parental participation within a Latinx community during the building of a community and school CGTK. The PAR study involved many members and organizations from the community; however, the focus of data collection emphasized parent and family engagement. This study engaged families, staff, and community partners to co-create a vision for implementing a new CGTK and deepen our

¹⁴ Dreams of the future start with seeds planted in childhood.

understanding of parental participation and community engagement. This dissertation study was led by three guiding questions:

- What are the current experiences and future aspirations of Estrella Elementary School's community in regard to garden and culinary education?
- How can Estrella Elementary School better reflect the needs and desires of the community through developing a Culinary Garden and Teaching Kitchen?
- How does Estrella Elementary School incorporate and sustain Community Cultural Wealth in the development of a Culinary Garden and Teaching Kitchen?

This PAR study researched how a school could increase parental participation and community engagement and understand local perspectives of the school as it built a new CGTK project. This engagement was foundational for expanding parental participation opportunities and further developing the community school. The study explored ways to balance power relationships between the home and school to develop an implementation plan that better reflects the community being served. Theoretical lenses such as CRT and LatCrit were the basis for centering the voices of Latinx families and valuing their various forms of capital, consistent with the Community Cultural Model.

Data was collected through Focus Team meetings and interviews with parents. The Focus Team meetings were attended by three stakeholder groups, which were parents, staff, and community members. Once data was collected, it was sorted and manually color coded to reveal themes from each research question. In general, participants wanted to influence the design of the garden and kitchen space, inform the curriculum, infuse health and nutrition, teach environmentalism, provide more opportunities for volunteers and community activities,

and ensure the wealth of knowledge from the community is held in high regard by and taught to youth.

This study is significant because it offers an alternative approach to traditional forms of parental participation and expands community engagement to a level of shared leadership at the school. The community-based PAR methodology resulted in a collective pride and sense of ownership for the program developed. The school saw increased participation in volunteer opportunities because the project was approachable, comfortable, and, ultimately, an access point for connection. Jimena, the mother of five students that have attended Estrella, said, “Mi hijo está muy orgulloso porque su papá trabaja en las fresas y pudo donar unas plantas chiquitas de fresas para el jardín. Él y su padre compartieron emocionados con esta contribución.”¹⁵ The new CGTK program earned the school and district national recognition for developing a model program for hands-on instruction in a state-of-the-art learning facility. The research and data collection applied to implementing the project will give generations of students and families a unique point of pride in the community.

Discussion

As the school gained a new incredible facility (see Appendix C), it was important to engage the community and solicit input from stakeholders to maximize the potential impact.

¹⁵ My son is very proud because his father works in strawberries fields and was able to donate some small strawberry plants for the garden. He and his father were excitedly about this contribution.”

Given the new facility, this research study was important and timely. The stakeholders shared diverse perspectives and offered insights about how to best serve the students and greater community. The timeliness of the study gave the school a wonderful opportunity to listen to the needs, desires, and aspirations of the community in a culturally relevant manner. Most importantly, this study was able to center the voices of families who have been otherwise marginalized in educational settings. This discussion section of the chapter will discuss parental leadership, power relationships with the home, and the further development of a community school.

Parental Leadership

Schools often ask parents to participate in supportive roles, such as helping with homework or campus cleanup. Theodorou (2007) discusses the difference between parental involvement and parental participation. Her work suggests involvement is dictated by the school staff and has prescribed ways for parents to engage in school events and activities. However, parental participation requires a shift in power relationships between the home and school.

Petrone (2016) found that schools create barriers to participation by not considering the needs of the community, especially Communities of Color. This PAR study intentionally broke down barriers to parental engagement by providing participation environments that are inclusive of Communities of Color. For example, all meetings and interviews were conducted bilingually or in the language of preference for the participant. Meetings and interviews were held outside of typical working hours so families could attend, and dinner and childcare were provided. But Estrella's project invited parents to lead and participate at a deeper level, from

dreaming and planning, to constructing the space, to beginning to grow and cook in the space. By being invited as a partner from the beginning, parents had a much deeper investment. Seeing the pride on the face of the grandfather who built the garden's little free library, and in the voices of the parents who welcomed the community during the opening celebration, one can imagine this parental partnership extending beyond the garden gate and into other areas of the school.

Involvement was extremely varied in the Focus Team meetings, from community leaders to gardeners to parents, neighbors, and more. The act of spending time together talking about favorite food memories helped break down walls that too often divide us. I remember one parent talking about how she transferred her child to the school just for the new culinary garden. She shared a story about her daughter wanting to make a recipe for her family that she had made at school. This continuity from school life to home life is extremely healthy for Estrella's students—and the exact promise of this project.

Every event planned in the CGTK thus far has seen incredible success and high attendance. The parents are invested and connected to this project. Therefore, the school is experiencing a shift in shared leadership and parent engagement. All parent meetings have seen an increase in attendance. Parents are now planning what they want to see next in regard to events and activities. The parent resource room is a tangible outcome of this increased parental engagement. Parents have met without site administration to determine the design of the room, the function of the space, and what materials are needed to fulfill their goals. The space has computers for families to use, both for school-related matters and personal necessities. They have requested a printer so they can print forms, such as medical

questionnaires. They are developing a resource wall that contains information about parenting classes, job opportunities, housing, health clinics, and other useful resources. They requested a wall-sized calendar, microwave, coffee maker, and space for children to play and read. Although this is not a direct outcome of the study, it is testament to how parent leadership has shifted in the school. Parents have taken the lead, and this lead is not dictated by the school administration. This is evidence of the transformational leadership a school can achieve through quality parental engagement.

The study used the literature available to reimagine what parental participation could look like for the school. By collecting parent perspectives, the study learned how to increase participation and shift the school's focus to parent leadership. This study invokes the participation model of engagement for families because parents are the driving force for decision-making and how the school develops its vision for the new project. Simply put, parents informed the researcher how they want to engage and when engagement best meets their needs and availability. In response, participation shifted according to their requests, which resulted in increased participation.

Power

The approach this study used resulted in the deconstruction of traditional power dynamics and decision-making in the school setting. Community-based participatory action shifted the power to collective agency, and shared leadership was enacted. Advocates of CRT and LatCrit recognize that Latinx families have been marginalized in school settings and left out of the decision-making process (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Theodorou, 2007). However, parents and their ideas were central to developing the vision for implementing a new CGTK.

Parent participants told the researcher they want to provide students life skills, develop volunteer opportunities for families, invite local knowledge to shape the curriculum, and create space for families after school hours. Their input, provided to the principal, gave guidance for the project that otherwise would not have been available. Their direct impact has created a more culturally responsive and inclusive garden and culinary education program.

Parent influence went beyond the project and served as the catalyst for opening a new parent resource room that will be available to the community during and after school hours. The creation of a parent resource room is an example of how parental participation has shifted power dynamics in the school. In essence, parents have been brought into the school setting as partners for decision-making about the school's priorities. This example demonstrates the shared leadership that is developing and the empowerment among parents that has taken place. There is a terrific opportunity for parents to develop a clubhouse and space used by them and driven by their own personal priorities for the school.

The study was conducted with the lens and understanding that dominant ideology exists in schools; yet this study intentionally and explicitly centered the voice of minoritized families, thereby resulting in a collective vision for implementation rather than a plan dictated by the school site leadership. The new CGTK project was developed and implemented in alignment with the values, needs, and desires of the community.

Community School

The CGTK project became a connection point for parents, community members, staff, and, most importantly, students. Jimena's quote about the father donating strawberries to the

program is one example of how a father and son have connected through their involvement in this project. Volunteer days in the garden were fun and educational, but without the typical pressures of the academic world. During our community gardening days, one could see children and parents laughing as they dug holes, planted the orchard, and painted signage. The parental participation approach positioned parents as experts in the field of agriculture and, hence, in building our garden. This study created space for parents to lead and teach their children in the school setting, but with content that made participation approachable and comfortable. Participation in this project was an access point for connection, which created collective ownership and pride for the new learning space. Participants in the student population and volunteers alike spoke using “we” when describing the priorities for the space and next steps. The next steps parents discussed involved the CGTK as well as other parts of the school.

Concepts of a community school were further advanced through the participatory nature of the project. Estrella has a long history of being a hub of community resources, such as food, housing, employment, and parenting workshops; however, this study helped strengthen community connections and commitments to service. Many health agencies, youth organizations, and wellness groups committed to serving the community through partnership and engagement with the project. For example, the local health trust plans to offer workshops in the new teaching kitchen. The local food bank will offer nutrition classes and food distribution out of the new facility. Strong site leadership, community partners, and parent engagement are key components of a community school. This study leveraged participation and used the development of a CGTK to transform how the school engages the community

and builds student and family agency at the school site. Furthermore, this project was a catalyst for developing a parent resource room at the school. This unintended positive outcome gives more members of the community access to a space of their own that will include resources for the betterment of the community.

The collective ownership of the new CGTK builds in structures for long-term sustainability. The principal is not the sole leader of the space and is not exclusively responsible for the success of the program. Many stakeholders were involved in the development of a vision and, therefore, collectively responsible for driving its impact and success in the community. Community-driven action research allows for a multitude of priorities and agendas to be fulfilled in the new space. This will further solidify the importance of the project and its relevance for the community, beyond the school and beyond the abilities of the school leadership.

Implications for Action and Actions Taken

This section will discuss recommendations for actions based on the data collected during Focus Team meetings and interviews. The recommendations will be divided by how they relate to each stakeholder group and the highest priorities they presented in the study. Furthermore, recommendations for action, as well as actions that have already been taken, will be presented in this section of the chapter.

Parents

Parent involvement in this study has guided the implementation of the program in regard to the design of the space, curriculum implementation, parental engagement, and volunteer

opportunities. In agreement with their suggestions, it is recommended the following actions be taken:

- Reserve a space for a chicken coop, raise chickens, and teach students how to care for chickens.
- Invite parents and grandparents to teach family recipes in the kitchen. Develop a well-articulated heritage cooking program and events, such as a salsa-making competition.
- Invite parents and grandparents to talk with students about the work they do in the fields.
- Develop parts of the curriculum that teach students about knife skills, disinfection in the kitchen, and how to properly handle meat.
- Implement curriculum in Spanish when appropriate for the school's dual-language classes.
- Send lessons home so families can reinforce learning at school in the home.
- Develop a calendar of events and activities that can be held in the new space, such as Kermes, family cooking nights, volunteer opportunities, and movie nights.
- Create a parent resource room for families to have their own space and to encourage greater shared leadership at the school.

Staff

Through the Focus Team meetings, staff members have suggested numerous ways the school could maximize the positive impact of the CGTK program. Their recommendations influence aspects of the project, such as environmental education, curriculum, and district

opportunities. Based on staff members' input, it is recommended the school make the following aspects of the project:

- Link the curriculum to environmental education through outdoor and hands-on learning.
- Design components should include a rainwater catchment system, a bee-view box, a pollinator garden, and a wellness garden.
- Curriculum should be aligned with the core curriculum taught by classroom teachers across all content areas as much as possible.
- Invite “community heroes” to speak to children and families about careers in agriculture and culinary arts.
- Link the curriculum to the district CTE pathways, such as agricultural business.
- Develop field trip opportunities for students outside Estrella Elementary to benefit from the space. These field trips could occur in the after-school program or during summer school.

Community Members

Community member participants focused their suggestions on health and community partnerships. Their recommendations can be made through the Focus Team meetings and include opportunities to elevate these priorities. It is recommended that the school includes the following:

- Create a calendar for health and wellness events for the community. These events could be led by the local food bank or other health-oriented organizations.

- Develop a connection with the local community-garden leaders to further their mission of preserving ancestral seeds while educating the students and parents about their ancient practices.
- Invite farmworkers and industry leaders to be guest teachers for the students and families to create space for the community to “pass on knowledge.”
- Create a “Friend of the Culinary Garden and Teaching Kitchen” group to harness and perpetuate the positive energy around this project. Their engagement could be through events or newsletters.

Recommendations for Further Research

It is recommended that further research be conducted to see the effects and impacts of implementing the recommended actions. The data collected during the Focus Team meetings and parent interviews offered perceptions of how to best implement the program and how to expand parental participation and the community school. It would be interesting to see if the school was able to implement the co-created vision, increase participation, and deepen its commitment to becoming a community school.

Another follow-up study could look at the health and nutritional impacts of the project because there was involvement from three health-related organizations. These local community partners wanted to use the space for community-health outreach. It would be interesting to see if there is evidence of this having created a healthier community.

Another study could look at additional methods to incorporate CCW. This study looked at gardening and cooking, which are pillars of the local community. Are there other local

industries that could be tapped and incorporated into the local school setting in hopes of obtaining great community engagement and overall benefits for students and families?

Finally, further research could be conducted on how garden education and culinary programs create bridges for the home and school relationship. How do these programs create access points for families to engage with their child at the school? Can these topics be considered part of the capital and local knowledge of the community, which leverages its status as the experts in the school setting?

Concluding Remarks

As the lead researcher and administrator of the school where the study was conducted, it was an honor to implement the new CGTK alongside this research. This project overwhelmed me and my educational endeavors, as well as my professional goals, while giving me a fresh insight into how to be a better transformational school and community leader.

I felt a certain ebb and flow in listening and leading while conducting this research. It was humbling to step back so others could step in and lead. By sharing the floor with so many participants, a multitude of options and dreams were offered and, in many cases, became reality. This study gave voice to our community partners, who have always wanted to offer more to the community. They were given space for their organizations' missions to be fulfilled and to have greater reach in the community. Parents now have a sense of ownership and pride due to implementing a program that reflects the needs and desires of the community. Students have deep pride in the work they are doing and their contribution to bettering the world and the planet. Our garden instructor, Nemo, share her favorite quote of

the year from an Estrella fifth grader: “I feel like when I’m helping the garden, I am helping the world.” There is so much truth in this statement, and these are the exact seeds we are trying to plant in our student’s early education. It is beautiful to hear a student realize and be able to articulate their contribution in such a lovely way. Also, the quote speaks to the student’s agency being developed and the sense of community beyond the gates of our school.

Personally, I deepened relationships with many parents and developed profound respect for individuals, as well as the community. They showed me their commitment to the school and building the best program possible for their children. I admired their bravery in telling the principal what they wanted to see in the program and how we could leverage our community strengths to make these wishes a reality.

This study allowed me to maximize the potential impact of the project while also improving systems pertaining to other aspects of the school operations. I have noticed my staff meetings and parent meetings have shifted to have more shared leadership. I have become a better listener and facilitator of the school’s functions. Shared leadership has proven to be a strong leadership style because more perspectives are available to solve problems, implement innovative ideas, and refresh practices that have been in existence for many years. Our school has already seen the benefits of this program. Participants have created their own “workshop” space as their meeting area to push themselves to further support our school, students, and teachers. My next task is to build systems and structures to ensure the success of the CGTK, as well as ongoing parental participation and shared leadership.

This study and the project are the highlights of my professional and educational career. Attaching my name to this work is an honor, and I am privileged to claim it as part of my legacy at Estrella Elementary School. I am fulfilled to know I am leaving the school better than I received it as principal. May the dreams of the community continue to grow and blossom at Estrella.

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Appendix A1 (English)

Sample Recruitment Script - In Person

Hello Valued Community Member,

As a part of my coursework at San José State University, I am interested in exploring the perspectives of community members like you about the notion of building a community culinary garden and teaching kitchen at Estrella School in Helensville, California. I want to learn your values and priorities in creating such a community resource. Furthermore, it is important for me to listen to varied perspectives to capture our diverse cultural values, professional interests and great experience in agriculture and community development. Your participation in this study will help us collaboratively construct a relevant and real model of community engagement.

If you choose to be a part of this study, you will be part of a research team. Participation in this research team will involve reflecting on yourself and your own values and priorities for the community while developing a program for a Culinary Garden and Teaching Kitchen. The research team will meet 4 times face-to-face with appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) or online as arranged to engage in collective inquiry and sharing of ideas. I would ask that you reflect both verbally or in writing. There will also be a short survey about the research team's demographics and questions about how we have each developed our notion of professionalism or professional identities over time. The exact

questions that guide each meeting will vary as those will be collectively developed and agreed upon during interactions. The guiding theme involves thinking about us and what we value and prioritize for a community resource. Focus group meetings and interviews will be video recorded to accurately capture the conversation and content of the participants' contributions. Study participation will last until January 2023.

If you may be interested in participating in this study or have questions, please call me at 714-514-6228 or email me at jaclynne_medina@pvusd.net . Participating in this research is voluntary.

Sincerely,

Jaclynne Medina

Doctoral Student, Educational Leadership

San José State University

Apéndice A2 (español)

Ejemplo de script de reclutamiento - En persona

Hola valioso miembro de la comunidad,

Como parte de mis cursos en la Universidad Estatal de San José, estoy interesado en explorar las perspectivas de los miembros de la comunidad como usted sobre la noción de construir un jardín culinario comunitario y enseñar destrezas culinarias en Estrella School en Helensville, California. Quiero aprender sus valores y prioridades en la creación de un recurso comunitario de este tipo. Además, es importante para mí escuchar las diversas perspectivas en un esfuerzo por capturar nuestros diversos valores culturales, intereses profesionales y gran experiencia en agricultura y desarrollo comunitario. Su participación en este estudio nos ayudará a construir en colaboración un modelo relevante y real de participación comunitaria.

Si eliges ser parte de este estudio, serás parte de un equipo de investigación. La participación en este equipo de investigación implicará reflexionar sobre usted y sus propios valores y prioridades para la comunidad mientras desarrolla un programa para un Jardín Culinario y una Cocina de Enseñanza. El equipo de investigación se reunirá 4 veces cara a cara con el Equipo de Protección Personal (EPP) apropiado o en línea según lo dispuesto para participar en la investigación colectiva y el intercambio de ideas. Le pediré que reflexione tanto verbalmente como por escrito. También habrá una breve encuesta sobre la demografía del

equipo de investigación y preguntas sobre cómo cada uno de nosotros ha desarrollado nuestra noción de profesionalismo o identidades profesionales a lo largo del tiempo. Las preguntas exactas que guiarán cada reunión variarán a medida que se desarrollen y acuerden colectivamente durante las interacciones. El tema de guía implica pensar en nosotros mismos y en lo que valoramos y priorizamos para un recurso comunitario. Las reuniones y entrevistas de los grupos de enfoque se grabarán en video para capturar con precisión la conversación y el contenido de las contribuciones de los participantes. La participación en este estudio durará hasta enero del 2023.

Si está interesado en participar en este estudio o tiene preguntas, llame al 714-514-6228 o envíeme un correo electrónico a jaclynne_medina@pvusd.net. La participación en esta investigación es voluntaria.

Sinceramente,

Jaclynne Medina

Estudiante de Doctorado, Liderazgo Educativo

Universidad Estatal de San José

Appendix B1 (English)

Latinx Perspectives on Parental Participation in Building a Community/School Garden through a Participatory Action Research Model

Informed Consent

I, _____, state that I am over 18 years of age and that I voluntarily agree to participate in a research project conducted by Ms. Jaclynne Medina, Doctoral Student in Educational Leadership at San José State University. The research is being conducted to understand Latinx perspectives on parental participation within a Participatory Action Research study. Participants will work on the vision for constructing the school's new Culinary Garden and Teaching Kitchen. This is a learning-based program and participants' values and ideas will be included as the core of the vision for the project. Participants will complete demographic surveys and questionnaires, and engage in face-to-face interviews, and focus groups.

Ms. Jaclynne Medina has explained the task to me fully; has informed me that I may withdraw from participation at any time without prejudice or penalty; has offered to answer any questions that I might have concerned the research; has assured me that any information that I give will be used for research purposes only and will be kept confidential. All participant data will be kept in a secure location accessible only to Ms. Jaclynne Medina. The electronic data will be kept on Ms. Medina's password-protected computer. Other physical data, including consent forms, questionnaires, transcriptions, and audio or

video data will be securely stored in Ms. Medina's home office. The reflective meetings will be video recorded if I consent. Data and recordings will be used only for research purposes, such as academic talks or publications. Participants will be invited for permission to use the audio/videorecording if it is used beyond the completion of this study.

I also acknowledge that the benefits derived from, or rewards given for, my participation has been fully explained to me. I understand that I may contact Ms. Medina at 714-514-6228 or Dr. Burciaga, the research advisor, at 408-924-3644, if I have questions about this study at a time following my participation.

Do you consent to participate in the study: Yes, I consent. ____ No ____

Signature of Participant, Telephone Number, Date

Signature of Research, Date

Apéndice B2 (español)

Perspectivas Latinx sobre la Participación de los Padres en la Construcción de una Comunidad/Huerto Escolar a través de un Modelo de Investigación de Acción Participativa

Consentimiento informado

Yo, _____, declaro que soy mayor de 18 años y que acepto voluntariamente participar en un proyecto de investigación realizado por la Sra. Jaclynne Medina, Estudiante de Doctorado en Liderazgo Educativo en la Universidad Estatal de San José. La investigación se está llevando a cabo con el fin de comprender las perspectivas Latinas sobre la participación de los padres dentro de un estudio de Investigación de Acción Participativa. Los participantes trabajarán en la visión para construir el nuevo Jardín Culinario y la Cocina de Enseñanza de la escuela. Este es un programa basado en el aprendizaje y los valores e ideas de los participantes se incluirán como el núcleo de la visión del proyecto. Los participantes completarán encuestas demográficas y cuestionarios, y participarán en entrevistas presenciales y en grupos de enfoque.

La Sra. Jaclynne Medina me ha explicado la tarea en su totalidad; me ha informado de que puedo retirarme de la participación en cualquier momento sin perjuicio ni penalización; se ha ofrecido a responder cualquier pregunta que pueda tener sobre la investigación; me ha asegurado que cualquier información que proporcione se utilizará únicamente con fines de investigación y se mantendrá confidencial. Todos los datos de los participantes se mantendrán en un lugar seguro accesible sólo para la Sra. Jaclynne Medina. Los datos electrónicos se conservarán en el ordenador protegido por la contraseña de la Sra. Medina.

Otros datos físicos, incluyendo formularios de consentimiento, cuestionarios, transcripciones y datos de audio o video se almacenarán de forma segura en la oficina central de la Sra.

Medina. Las reuniones reflexivas serán grabadas en video si doy mi consentimiento. Los datos y las grabaciones se utilizarán sólo con fines de investigación, como charlas académicas o publicaciones. A los participantes se les pedirá permiso para usar la grabación de audio / video si se usa más allá de la finalización de este estudio.

También reconozco que los beneficios derivados de, o las recompensas dadas por mi participación me han sido explicadas completamente. Entiendo que puedo comunicarme con la Sra. Medina al 714-514-6228 o con el Dr. Burciaga, el asesor de investigación, al 408-924-3644, si tengo preguntas sobre este estudio en un momento posterior a mi participación.

Por favor ponga sus iniciales en una de las opciones: Si, doy mi consentimiento ____ No ____

Firma de participante, número de teléfono, fecha

Firma de la investigadora, fecha

Appendix C

Interview Questions

- During the Focus Team meetings, many people mentioned the importance of life skills and students being independent. From your experience, what do you think are important skills for students to learn from the CGTK program?
 - How should we include these skills? What are some things you do at home that are effective?
- Nature and the environment have been important themes for the community. What in your experience informs what you want your children to learn from the garden and kitchen education program?
- What is unique about our community here in Watsonville and how can students learn from what we have here locally?
- From what you know about our community, how do you think we can get more parents involved in this program? Where do you think our parents have a lot of expertise?
 - How can we involve more parents who might not be able to come or are not already attending?
- What kinds of events do you think the parents would like to see in the kitchen and garden space?
- Given everything you have seen today on the tour and our discussion. What excites you most? What could you be interested in leading? What do you think other parents might want to lead?
- Traditional parental participation is driven by the school, but really we want the parents to be leading. We want to be exceptional. What does this look like in your mind?
- During the Focus Team meetings, many people mentioned the importance of life skills and students being independent. From your experience, what do you think are important skills for students to learn from the CGTK program?

Appendix D

Images of the Culinary Garden and Teaching Kitchen

