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81

Calderon-Berumen, F. *Resisting Assimilation to the Melting Pot: Validating the Cultural Curriculum of the Home*

Resisting Assimilation to the Melting Pot: Validating the Cultural Curriculum of the Home

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Abstract

The melting pot metaphor suggest that people from different backgrounds come to the United States and through the process of assimilation adapt to a new lifestyle integrating smoothly into the dominant culture. This article argues that immigrants from diverse cultural and ethnic groups that try to keep some of their cultural traditions may encounter conflict when trying to adapt to their life in the new context. The author contends for a cultural curriculum of the home endorsing family cultural values and traditions that is overlooked by schools and educators, disregarding its potential for enhancing children's learning process and academic achievement.

Keywords: Resisting Assimilation, Education, *Educación*, Cultural Curriculum of the Home

Introduction

Part of American history is explained through the metaphor that American society is a melting pot of different cultures. However, if the new culture does not assimilate or is not allowed to assimilate into the dominant culture, then it becomes absent from the discourse and ignored from the practices of educational processes. The notion of assimilation does not permit different cultures to interact interdependently. The melting pot metaphor conveys the idea that people from different cultures or backgrounds join the American society by a process of "assimilation" in order to resemble one another and to *blend in* with the dominant culture. Fraga et al. (2010) maintain that "Assimilation was characterized as a 'straight-line' progression whereby all immigrants eventually conform, abandoning their original cultural attributes and adopting the behaviors and customs of the Anglo-Saxon majority as they advance both socially and economically" (p. 41), setting the precedent of erasure of home cultures in order to fit into the new environment, more even so to the new generations. Nonetheless, individuals acknowledge that assimilation is not a simple or easy process— it is a complex and multilayered one. Becoming an immigrant implies a process of adapting and integrating into the host country. Such a process produces changes in regards to personal and cultural identity, and those

changes make sense only in this context. That is, if a person migrates to another country the transformations he or she is going to experience will be different depending on the new social, cultural, economic, and political context. In this sense, as diverse groups of immigrants integrate into American society, they shape it through both a demographic transformation and constructing new ways of being and doing. In this way, American society is also morphing and evolving along with its inhabitants. These changes are happening whether one is aware of them or not. They emerge as immigrant children grow up and merge the learning from their households with the outside culture they acquire from their communities, schools, and other institutions.

If one agrees with the premise that knowledge is constructed through tangible, active, and intersubjective interactions between individuals, then it is appropriate to recognize families and communities as sites of knowledge production. There is a documented effort to highlight the significance of the knowledge that one develops from the home and community and the relationships we form with others (Grumet, 1988; Delgado-Gaitán, 1994; Springgay and Freedman, 2012; Malewski, 2012;). For instance, Erik Malewski (2012) recalls the ways in which his mother supported and empowered him through ways of knowing engendered and embodied that are not included as "public/official" knowledge. He argues for scholarly work that aims to break down mainstream canonical and disciplinary models of education, calling for more diverse scholarship on mothering to discompose socially constructed categories and frameworks that essentialize mothering, and "that enable its subjugation and erasure" (2012, p. 348). Although the need is acknowledged, the task is still messy and incomplete. The scholarship studying and theorizing mothering practices and the role of mothers as educators and as carriers of cultural knowledge is still scarce.

In the educational research field, the role of mothers as educators is frequently underestimated, overlooked, or even erased. The focus of such a role has changed from one that identifies mothers as primary educators— who teach values, mores, cultural traditions, interpersonal relationships, and household activities, among other things — to one that deems them as merely helpers with schoolwork (Moreno & Valencia, 2011). This is particularly relevant to ethnic groups that are categorized as non-dominant or minoritized groups that have cultural traditions and ways of being which diverge from the dominant culture, and to the ways these groups are racialized in the United States (Villenas, 2001). Of particular interest for the purpose of this article is the case of Latina mothers. Deficit culture perspectives applied to Latina mothers too often lead to schools and educators recommending that they attend parenting classes. Latina mothers are often seen as lacking the right skills to prepare their children for schooling, at least in the way that the dominant culture expects them to do so (Monzó, 2013). The experiential and cultural knowledge (Delgado Bernal, 1998; Elenes & Delgado Bernal, 2009) acquired at home is too often disregarded as an input for the relevant to the development of the child's learning processes. Typically, children and their mothers develop a strong bond through their daily interactions. This a determinant in how that child will engage with the rest of the world and form other relationships in the future. Interacting with other people through different kinds of relationships is how individuals form their own epistemologies or ways of knowing pertaining to their communities or surroundings. As communities are diverse, each

JCVE
www.cultureandvalues.org
Journal of Culture and Values in Education
Volume 2, Issue 1, 2019

83

Calderon-Berumen, F. *Resisting Assimilation to the Melting Pot: Validating the Cultural Curriculum of the Home*

community constructs its own ways of knowing and doing, and sometimes those ways of knowing and doing conflict with others, sometimes with those of the mainstream culture.

This article presents a critical perspective in regards of the melting pot metaphor and ways that minoritized parents resist the assimilation to the dominant culture. The aim is twofold: (1) to argue for parents from diverse groups to claim their right as educators and to define their involvement in that process, and (2) to call school-based educators and policy makers to reconsider a broader and more positive perception of parent involvement in schools as well as outside in a way that includes the culture of the home. In doing so, I reclaim the role of mothers as educators and producers of cultural knowledge, specifically Latina immigrant mothers, from a Chicana/Latina feminist perspective. First, I articulate a distinction between education and *educación,* a difference when recognizing parents as educators as opposed to complying to a parental involvement determined by schools, and the detriment assigned to minoritized groups by the deficit model. Second, I argue for a reconceptualization of parents as educators centered in the notion of the pedagogies of the home framed within a Chicana/Latina feminist perspective validating the cultural curriculum of the home mothers create. Lastly, I present a discussion of the implications to education highlighting the need to dismantle the myth of deficit around diverse families and concentrating our efforts in endorsing a variety of parent involvement recognizing them as creators of a cultural curriculum.

Education and *Educación*

President Barack Obama declared, "If we want America to lead in the 21st century, nothing is more important than giving everyone the best education possible — from the day they start preschool to the day they start their career" (National Archives and Record Administration). This raises questions as to what exactly it means to get the best education possible. Does it mean simply to attend *good* schools? Does that imply that a person who completes 20 years of schooling will be well *educated* and that those who do not will not? Does it mean there are schools that are "better" than others? By what criteria is *the best* education determined? According to what standards? The answer to these questions hinges on the answer to the one that asks, what exactly does *education* mean?

The word education comes from the Latin *educere,* that means to pull out, or *educare,* that means to form or to guide. Thus, to educate would mean a process through which individuals acquire knowledge, values, ways of being, expected behavior, and understandings of the world aligned with the cultural environment in which he/she is immersed. This process, when carried out in formal institutions such as schools, involves transmission through particular forms of oral and written language, the language of the school, by individuals officially prepared to conduct such transmission, and through particular patterns of action, behaviors, feelings, attitudes, and thoughts that are not exclusive to schools but are endorsed by the dominant culture. The definitions of the word education usually refer to a person receiving systematic instruction at a school or other institution, connote the practice of teaching, and indicate that a body of knowledge will be acquired. This conceptualization of education suggests while the experience is a personal one, it takes place within a particular social context. Individual development occurs as the person is surrounded by groups of people or communities, who influence the process in

JCVE
www.cultureandvalues.org
Journal of Culture and Values in Education
Volume 2, Issue 1, 2019

84

Calderon-Berumen, F. *Resisting Assimilation to the Melting Pot: Validating the Cultural Curriculum of the Home*

many ways. The most influential people in a child's development are the parents and/or the people (extended family or other caregivers) who take care of the child and spend the most time with him or her affecting his/her ways of being. Hence, education is multifaceted and involves processes that occur within and outside school settings.

Despite the fact that the education of a person is influenced by many forces, mothers play an essential and critical role in the education of their children. However, the scholarship on mother as educator is still scarce. Arguing for a validation of experiential knowledge acquired through family interactions, Madeleine Grumet (1988) indicates, "The experiences of family life, of bearing, delivering, and nurturing children, were absent from [curriculum theory] discourse" (p. xv). She further affirmed, "as we study the forms of our own experiences… we are also recovering our own possibilities" (Grumet, 1988, p. xv), calling us to be attentive to how schools might be dismissive to the cultural experiences of the students, and thus to the potential learning that could be integrated from them. Another important assertion that Grumet (1988) makes is that one's knowledge evolves through human relationships. As mentioned above, one of the first and most important relationships a child has is with his/her mother and it is determinant for the formation of future relationships. It is through these future relationships that a child learns and appropriates the culture. The mother, then, influences how the child interacts with others, affecting his/her ways of knowing, thinking, and doing. Hence, by interacting with other people in ways determined by the relationships they form, an individual develops his or her own epistemologies, his or her own ways of knowing. What happens then, when the culture of the parents and immediate family differ from the mainstream culture, and when the parents' role of being primary educators responsible for the development of the child's ways of being, doing, and knowing are subsumed by the societly sanctioned educational institutions and different and contradictory ways of thinking and being are endorsed?

In the Latino culture, it is not uncommon to hear that *la educación empieza en la casa,* meaning that one's first learning starts at home from the parents. Espinoza-Herold (2007) affirms that *educación,* in the Latino community is a broader concept about personal development than the notions of intellectual development and academic learning that the term education traditionally conveys. Rebeca Burciaga (2007) argues that, "in the Mexican American culture, education, or schooling, is no more important than *educación*, or integrity" (p. 74), integrity in this context meaning being respectful, honest, and with good behavior. According to her, *educación,* along with integrity, teaches selflessness, dignity, humbleness, and community. These are morals, attitudes and values possessed by those Latinos consider to be *personas bien educadas*, well-educated people. Parents acknowledge that it is their responsibility to teach these elements of integrity which they demand their children to enact towards teachers. Latino parents consider teachers and educators to be important authority figures so children are expected to show them respect and take responsibility for their own actions when in school (Valdes, 1996; Valenzuela, 1999; Yosso, 2005). Villenas and Foley (2011) declare that the concept of being *bien educado* "is a broad moral notion of education that includes *respeto* [respect], humility, hard work, and family loyalty" (p. 179), and explain that that ethnographic studies of working-class Latino families provide evidence of how their practices differ from those of the mainstream. While these parental practices preserve Latino cultural traditions, seen through the lens of the dominant culture they might not be deemed as appropriate or

JCVE
www.cultureandvalues.org
Journal of Culture and Values in Education
Volume 2, Issue 1, 2019

85

Calderon-Berumen, F. *Resisting Assimilation to the Melting Pot: Validating the Cultural Curriculum of the Home*

correct. Therefore, often times these parental practices contradict what children learn from the American culture in which they live, and moreover, from the school culture that seems to be disconnected from their community practices. The ways in which Latino parents understand their role in raising their children and the concrete actions that schools expect them to take to demonstrate their involvement might not be aligned all the time. In order to seek a balance in the acquisition of both cultures, it is essential for educational institutions to revise their conceptualization of required parental involvement and actions.

Parents as Educators vs. Parental Involvement

In the United States, and more specifically, in the context of educational research, the exploration of the role of parents in relation to their children's education is somewhat limited to their involvement in the school and the support the school needs for the children's academic achievement. Parent involvement is considered a key component for students' academic achievement, yet it is not quite clear what exactly that involvement entails (Olivos, Jiménez-Castellanos, and Ochoa, 2011). Poza, Brooks, and Valdés, (2014) denote that parent involvement entails the resources that parents provide the child including time, materials, skills, social activities, athletics, and morals. Such an understanding of parent involvement requires noting important distinctions among differing cultures. Moreover, Monzó (2013) notices that the notion of parent involvement that schools demand is conceptualized from the dominant culture's perspective that perpetuates certain values, attitudes and dispositions. Accordingly, parents are expected to meet schools' expectations that might contradict their own traditions and customs. Annette Lareau indicates that research informing schools' policies and practices conceptualize a notion of parental involvement that includes:

> "Preparing children for school (for example, teaching children the alphabet; talking and reading to children to promote language development), attending to school events (for example, parent-teacher conferences), and fulfilling any requests teachers make of parents (for example, to play word games with their children at home). Others include in the definition providing children a place to do homework and ensuring the completion of homework." (as cited in Moreno and Valencia, 2011, p. 197)

Within educational discourse, Lopez (2001) indicates that parent involvement is generally understood in terms of specific practices such as bake sales, fundraisers, PTA/PTO membership or participation, open-house nights, and/or parent-teacher conferences. These parent involvement practices denote volunteering in schools, attending school activities, as well as serving on parent advisory boards. In addition, parent involvement within educational discourse also refers to activities performed in the home to supplement classroom instruction, such as reviewing student homework and becoming familiar with the curriculum and pedagogical strategies implemented by school teachers, such as reinforcing literacy practices. Hidalgo (1997) suggests that even the term "parent involvement" delimits who the primary players are – or ought to be – in terms of deciding how and when parents are supposed to be involved or intervene in their children's education.

JCVE
www.cultureandvalues.org
Journal of Culture and Values in Education

Volume 2, Issue 1, 2019

86

Calderon-Berumen, F. *Resisting Assimilation to the Melting Pot: Validating the Cultural Curriculum of the Home*

A comprehensive understanding of parent involvement is problematic, particularly when it comes to culturally diverse families. Olivos, Jiménez-Castellanos, & Ochoa (2011) stressed that policy makers and researchers define parents' involvement in schools, and that school officials and other educators rather than the parents themselves are the ones who determine the extent of that involvement: "For bicultural parents, meaningful and authentic participation in the schools is elusive, despite professed intentions by educators and decision makers to the contrary" (p. 2). Given the multicultural demographics currently represented in the United States, this situation might be problematic for families with culturally diverse background, including transnational families, as there are almost 200 million migrants living transnationally around the world (Sánchez and Machado-Casas, 2009). Transnational parenting practices are very likely influenced by cultural customs resembling those of the homeland; and therefore, these are likely diverging from the dominant culture standards that are the ones validating in schools.

When children of a minoritized group do not meet academic standards, the blame falls on their personal and cultural background. As a counternarrative, Valdés (1996) offers a different perspective for understanding poor academic achievement from children of color, specifically, for Mexican-American communities. She describes the genetic argument, the cultural argument, and the class analysis argument on blaming the children and their communities or backgrounds for school failure, and explains how schools might perceive non-mainstream parents as not valuing education or not being as involved in their children's education as it is required by schools' standards. The phenomenon of parental involvement is quite complex as it implicates many factors such as, socioeconomic status, parents' level of education, family dynamics, language proficiency, immigration status, and so on. Furthermore, Valdés indicates, "teachers' views about parent involvement seem to center around the notion that parents should receive training so that they can adequately work with their children at home" (1996, p. 38), showing that teachers have limited knowledge regarding cultural and linguistic backgrounds and tend to perceive communities of diverse people negatively (Villenas and Foley, 2011), and as uncaring, or uninterested (Monzó, 2013).

From an education stance, a parent involvement perspective aims to instruct parents with certain behaviors and expectations to meet educators' requirements or schools demands disregarding parents desires or expectation of their children. As a result, the kind of parental involvement needed is: "parents helping children learn at home, with most targeting a change in academic performance, including reading skills, mathematics skills, spelling, and homework completion" (Fishel & Ramírez, 2005, as cited in Olivos, Jiménez-Castellanos, and Ochoa, 2011, p. 3). Since parenting practices of Latino families tend to differ from schools' expectations, the nature of the involvement in Latino households is often disregarded or not appreciated by schools (Stanton-Salazar, 2001). In order to understand parents' involvement in a culturally diverse context it is necessary to recognize the home site as a rich sociocultural context and as a resource of learning and cognition, even if it 'differs' from that of the dominant culture (Olivos, Jiménez-Castellanos, and Ochoa, 2011). To legitimize the learning acquired at home and community sites it is necessary to revise and contest the assumptions implied by the cultural deficit model assigned to cultural groups and find ways to validate the *educación* and integrate other models of parent involvement.

JCVE
www.cultureandvalues.org
Journal of Culture and Values in Education
Volume 2, Issue 1, 2019

87

Calderon-Berumen, F. *Resisting Assimilation to the Melting Pot: Validating the Cultural Curriculum of the Home*

Cultural Deficit Model

The cultural deficit is a model that entails beliefs and assumptions in regards to the ability, aspirations, and values of systematically marginalized groups of people (Irizarry, 2009), ascribing them as deficient. Under this model's lens, students of color and low-income students fail to achieve school's standards due to perceived "cultural deprivation" or lack of exposure (Irizarry, 2009) to cultural models more consistent with the dominant culture. Flores asserts, "historically, Latino/a students' underachievement in school has been explained from an intrinsic cause-and-effect point of view. Usually, it has been attributed to their cultural or linguistic background or both" (2005, p. 75). Delgado-Gaitan (1991) affirms that deficit perspectives depict the lack of presence or active participation of parents in the school as incompetency and an inability to help their children because they have a different language, work long hours away from home, belong to different ethnic groups, or are just not interested. The cultural deficit model blames children's academic, social, and economic success, or lack of it, on the home and community environment. Moreover, Garcia (2014) notices that current practices in US classrooms use a subtractive bilingualism approach in which the child's first language is subtracted as the second language is taught, which she calls disglossia. Using a disglossia approach is a way of erasure the first language, reinforcing the belief that non-english languages spoken at home fall into the deficit category. Instead, she proposes transglossia, an approach that involves language practices of bilingual and multilingual societies disrupting colonial practices and resisting the privilege of the dominant culture and language.

The deficit model brings about or sustains inequalities in schools and other social institutions that keep Latinos and other minoritized groups at the margins. Perceptions of deficit prevent marginalized communities from really advancing or achieving social and economic mobility, which makes the idea of social justice and equal opportunity for all something hard to believe and impossible to achieve. In order to attain different results and truly contribute to the construction of a democratic society, all members of the society should get access to the same resources and have the same perception as human beings as they deserve.

Reconceptualizing Parents' Role As Educators

Without a doubt, parental commitment, involvement, participation, or contribution has a direct influence on children's achievement and academic success. As long as teachers and educators continue perceiving children as "deficient" because their parents have limited English proficiency, low levels of education, and/or lack of presence at schools without accounting for other ways they participate or are involved in their children's education, the cultural deficit model will continue stigmatizing minoritized families in the United States. Parent-children interactions occur mainly at home and community settings and are not necessarily visible or accountable as meeting the expectations of mainstream schools. While many educators and policy-makers continue ignoring and even denying the learning outcomes that emerged from the interactions among family and community members at home and in the community, there will not be a comprehensive understanding of what it means to be bilingual, bicultural, or multicultural within a society that mostly privilege dominant culture practices. Bridging the gap between school and home cultures requires expanding the understanding and

‹JCVE
www.cultureandvalues.org
Journal of Culture and Values in Education
Volume 2, Issue 1, 2019

88

Calderon-Berumen, F. *Resisting Assimilation to the Melting Pot: Validating the Cultural Curriculum of the Home*

conceptualization of parental involvement, the meaning of such involvement for all parts, and the validation of the role that parents decide to play in their children's education.

A reconceptualization of parent involvement must take into account personal experiences related to cultural knowledge and cultural practices among diverse groups, multiple linguistic interactions and recognition of the values and practices of diverse families. Instead of viewing the home as a learning environment parallel to the classroom, Moreno and Valencia (2011) suggest a more balanced approach in which educators develop a new understanding of family-school relationship as collaborative. Recognizing the need of this reconceptualization, a growing body of scholarship (Guo, 2012; Guzmán, 2013; Villenas, 2001; Durand, 2011; Delgado-Gaitan, 1994), aiming at influencing educators and policy makers, endorses the cultural knowledge that parents practice at home and thus children bring to school that can enrich the learning outcome. For instance, Reese et al. (1995) argue that Latino/a immigrants are often from an "agrarian model," which favors loyalty and intergenerational reciprocity, obedience and respect for elders, and relies on kinship networks. However, they maintain that agrarian values are not in opposition to educational achievement if seen as supporting the attainment of both emotional support and a strong sense of personal and cultural identity. Hidalgo (2005) identifies a Latino/a epistemology as the collective experience of oppression within a racialized system that is founded on shared cultural values, resistance to subjugations, and validation of their cultural values and traditions through the connections to the homeland and the relationships with and among multigenerational extended family members. An essential component of Latino/a families' epistemologies is the concept of "familism," the strong emotional commitment and identification with family life, where the pedagogies of the home emerge and are cultivated.

A reconceptualization of parents as educators necessarily compels educators to focus on identifying cultural parent practices of their particular community and work together with families in developing an approach to parent involvement in their schools that is suitable for both the cultural practices of the families and the schools' requirements for students' academic achievement and success. Endorsing the the experiential knowledge and validating cultural practices, Chicana/Latina scholars (Delgado Bernal, Elenes, Godínez and Villenas, 2006) developed a framework that serves the purposes of reconceptualizing the role of parents as educators, named pedagogies of the home.

Pedagogies of The Home

As mothers are pivotal in children's socialization and interactions with the world (Hatfield, Ferguson, & Alpert, 1967; MacDonald & Carrillo, 2010), it is pertinent to pay attention to the ways in which they develop and embody theories, methodologies, and methods that serve as pedagogical tools of survival/subversion of patriarchy, poverty, and discrimination (Villenas, 2006). In their book *Chicana/Latina education in everyday life*, Delgado Bernal, Elenes, Godínez and Villenas (2006) provide several examples to establish how the everyday life experiences of Chicana/Latina women inform their practices of teaching and learning, and their understanding of their realities in order to build communal knowledge as education. These pedagogical tools are significant to mothers' ways of educating their children as well as to the advancement of

JCVE
www.cultureandvalues.org
Journal of Culture and Values in Education
Volume 2, Issue 1, 2019

89

Calderon-Berumen, F. *Resisting Assimilation to the Melting Pot: Validating the Cultural Curriculum of the Home*

feminist thought. Pedagogy, broadly understood as the method and practice of teaching, particularly focused on an academic subject or a specific content, is a concept still undertheorized outside of academic institutions and informal education settings (Delgado Bernal, 1998). Chicana/Latina feminists have battled to expand the academic notion of pedagogy to include everyday ways of learning and teaching that occur in a variety of activities such as conversations at the kitchen table, family gatherings in the backyard, dialogues while driving the car, or during interactions with other members of the society that still remain untheorized as pedagogical forms (Galvan, 2001), or ways of educating.

The pedagogies of the home are the specific actions that Latina mothers enact when interacting with their children. From everyday conversations to taking long trips to spend time with extended family, these women consciously have made decisions regarding what their children need to learn from them at home and in community settings. These pedagogies of the home are ways of being, doing, and knowing that extend beyond formal school settings and that place culture and cultural knowledge at the center, juxtaposed to the dominant culture. Delgado Bernal (2001) suggests that women shape their Chicana feminist pedagogies by personal and collective experiences and community memory. These ways of knowing not only function as cultural knowledge, but are also taught through cultural means such as legends, oral history, sayings, storytelling, customs, habits, and *consejos y platicas* (advice and conversations) intended to be strategies of resistance and survival. These pedagogies of the home convey much more than a list of behaviors, they entail cultural knowledge and intuition (Delgado Bernal, 1998) that children would not acquire from school curricula.

I argue that these pedagogies of the home act as a vehicle for the formation of a cultural curriculum of the home. The pedagogies of the home have to do with the use of Spanish language, immigration, class, social and economic status, generational status, religion and spirituality, ethnicity, nationality, and how all of these factors shape personal, cultural and communal identities. The pedagogies enacted at home stand as a foundation of the cultural curriculum of the home. By endorsing these pedagogies of the home, Latina immigrant women act as educators and (re)producers of cultural knowledge that often differ from the dominant culture and, thus, position them as different, minoritized, and/or marginalized within the mainstream. In this sense, when enacting those pedagogies of the home, Latina women are constructing the cultural curriculum of the home.

Implications to Education

Latina immigrant mothers' own experiences and personal processes of adjusting to living in the United States provide them with experiential knowledge. That experiential knowledge plus their own educational experience and *educación* inform them on how to create a unique cultural curriculum of the home, rather than just assimilating to a melting pot. A cultural curriculum of the home is one constantly under construction. The experiences of the everyday life nurture and (re)shape it incessantly. As creators of such a cultural curriculum, Latina immigrant mothers are the constructors of their own roles as educators. In assuming such a role, these mothers attest their commitment and involvement in their children's education. In their narratives, Latina immigrant mothers include many diverse ways of their involvement in

JCVE
www.cultureandvalues.org
Journal of Culture and Values in Education
Volume 2, Issue 1, 2019

90

Calderon-Berumen, F. *Resisting Assimilation to the Melting Pot: Validating the Cultural Curriculum of the Home*

their children's *educación* and education that too often are neglected by institutions of formal education. Because these ways of *educar* or being involved are not the ones traditionally defined by American schools (Lopez, 2001), the knowledge implicit in the cultural curriculum of the home is absent in formal education processes; it is thus erased from the developmental expectaction of the child. Parent involvement already has specific expectations dictated by formal education in a broader sense, as a systemic social institution dedicated to sustain and reinforce the dominant culture. Parental behavior that does not fit into such specific expectations and falls out of the "norm" is thus not considered as parental involvement under schools' standards keeping those parents at the margins and subjecting them to inequalities.

Contrary to the common belief of cultural deficit, scholars have extensively revealed that Latino parents indeed care about their children's education, showing the relevance of *respeto* (Valdés, 1996), the value of *consejos* (Delgado-Gaitán, 1994), the benefits of using funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992; González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005), and ways of developing Chicana epistemology for resistance (Delgado-Bernal, 1998). In addition, other scholars have also expose the existence of a Latino/a epistemology that validates Latino/a ways of being, doing, and knowing (Hidalgo, 2005), as well as the constant demotion of the Spanish language as sign of deficit to blame parents for not reaching for the designated standards of the dominant culture (MacDonald & Carrillo, 2010); and still how these parental practices are identified as subaltern forms of involvement (López, 2001). As long as schools' educators, administrators, and policy makers keep rejecting the idea that parents are the ones responsible for defining their roles in their children's education the problem of parental involvement as it is conceptualized right now will remain unaddressed. The narrative of effective schools is to foster and engender a caring environment and equal opportunity for all children to succeed (Lopez, 2001). However, the reality for minoritized and marginalized groups is that such an environment does not exist when parents are not at liberty to design and determine the ways in which they can be and the role they should play in their children's *educación* and education. Schools keep trying to convince multicultural parents to do practices of parental involvement aligned with the dominant culture standards (Monzó, 2013; López 2001; Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, & Hernandez, 2003) rather than recognizing and legitimizing the practices they already do and value as relevant and meaningful to their culture.

The social and cultural capital that Hispanic/Latino families and communities — as well as other ethnic and cultural groups —endorse would be of utmost value if integrated into school learning; the achievement gap would narrow as the students gain confidence on their cultural knowledge and background, and, ultimately, this integration would contribute to the construction of a society where social justice is a reality, not just a dream. As presented in this work, mothers are a source of (re)producing social and cultural capital as they create and embody their own ways of mothering, or what I call here a cultural curriculum of the home. Glenn (1994) affirms that family is a source of alternative values and is the place where children are socialized to know their place in society. For that reason, she asserts that family is a central locus for resistance to imperial control. Thus, the erasure of the cultural curriculum children bring from home perpetuates the cultural deficit discourse that infiltrates in formal education institutions and sustains such imperialism. The cultural deficit myth will continue pervading educational institutions as long as educators and policy makers are not willing to take cultural

differences as a valid source of enhancing learning. Cultural differences are a factor that block and control parental participation in schools that endorse only mainstream hegemony. Subsequently, the practices of parent involvement that other cultures bring about are rarely considered as such, except as a source of deficiency in parenting skills (Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, & Hernandez, 2003). Parents and schools together should find other ways of parental involvement that are fit for both sides and are truly beneficial to the children's academic and familial success. Rodríguez Brown suggests the use of a cultural model's approach that integrates cultural and social resources that people bring to their understanding of social situations, and cites Gee to provide a definition, "cultural models as 'storylines' or scripts that people have in their mind when they engage in meaning-making activities. Cultural models influence not only what parents teach their children at home but also how they do it" (2010, p. 355). The inclusion of cultural models will not only provide continuity but will also strengthen school-home relationship. Having better school-home relationships, more effective ways of communicating and understanding, and an acknowledgement of multicultural ways of being and doing will undoubtedly aid in closing the academic achievement gap between minoritized and mainstream groups. In a similar way to the funds of knowledge project (Moll, et al.,1992), the integration of the cultural curriculum of the home that each child brings to school into formal education processes will enrich the learning and development of that student not only at the individual level but also in enriching the learning process of others members of the learning community, as they will learn from and about other ways of being and doing. Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, and Quiroz (2001) insist on educators' lack of exposure to models for understanding how culture and schooling relate to each other as one of the main reasons of their failure to improve home-school relationships.

The creation of a cultural curriculum of the home that each mother builds along with her children is unique and deserves a distinct attention as part of the development of personal and cultural identity. This article aims at challenging the representation and interpretation of Latina mothers as uninterested and uninvolved to a perspective that is more complex and multifaceted as their lived experiences and identities.

Conclusions

My argument here is that Latina immigrant mothers are the creators of a cultural curriculum of the home as they (re)produce cultural and experiential knowledge while educating their children. A cultural curriculum of the home is continuously under construction in accordance to the living experiences and circumstances of each mother and their children. A cultural curriculum of the home gives an account of the multiple and diverse ways in which mothers (and fathers) are involved in their children's education and *educación*. The problem that I highlighted here is that institutions of formal education only take into account only those ways that they already indicate as valid, constructive, and significant parent involvement for educational processes, and too often neglect the aspects related to *educación*. I urge teachers, administrators, educators, and policy makers to recognize the multiple and diverse ways in which multicultural parents, and in particular Latina immigrant mothers, are involved in their children's education and *educación* rather than continuing to categorize as deficient and subaltern forms of education.

Calderon-Berumen, F. *Resisting Assimilation to the Melting Pot: Validating the Cultural Curriculum of the Home*

I differentiate education and *educación* as separate processes; however, I should also emphasize that they complement each other. These processes must go hand in hand, intertwining at times and detached at others, but even when separated, they are still parallel without underscoring one over the other. Both are equally important for achieving not only academic success as defined by the dominant culture, but also an acknowledgement and validation of other languages, communities, and cultures. Eventually, the ultimate goal would be to value all cultures equally and to dismantle the power of one as dominant. As some of the literature presented here has showed, when schools and families work together they build a bridge connecting personal and cultural knowledge with the school's curriculum; consequently, they improve learning outcomes not only on standardized tests results but also on lifelong learning skills, as they are concerned with students' individual interests and needs. I urge all parties involved — teachers, administrators, policy makers, as well as parents, extended family, and community members— to take initiative towards the next step and demand projects that are inclusive of cultural knowledge and that serve as a model for bridging cultures between home-community and schools. Whether requesting professional development relevant to cultural knowledge, designing their own model that works for a specific school because it responds to the community needs, or accepting parents proposals of their own ways of involvement that benefits their children and other students and community members, we all are responsible for taking actions that truly provoke social change and contribute to democratizing American schools.

Note:

Although this paper focuses specifically on Latina immigrant mothers and Latino families, it is my intention that its scope might also be useful in bringing new understandings and create change for other minoritized cultural groups living in and shaping American society. Every child from any group or background brings with him or her a cultural curriculum of home. It is school's responsibility to stop privileging only the dominant culture and begin to welcome and recognize those curricula of the home that differ from the standard.

Calderon-Berumen, F. *Resisting Assimilation to the Melting Pot: Validating the Cultural Curriculum of the Home*

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JCVE
www.cultureandvalues.org
Journal of Culture and Values in Education
Volume 2, Issue 1, 2019

94

Calderon-Berumen, F. *Resisting Assimilation to the Melting Pot: Validating the Cultural Curriculum of the Home*

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Journal of Culture and Values in Education
Volume 2, Issue 1, 2019

95

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