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QUE PODEMOS HACER?:[1] ROLES FOR SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS WITH MEXICAN AND LATINO MIGRANT CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Abstract: The economic and health situations of Mexican and Latino migrant farmworkers and their children are severe, yet employment continues to be available and migration substantial. Recent public policy initiatives at both state and federal levels have increased the stress they experience. For school psychologists, questions persist about how best to support the learning and mental health of children and families engaged in migrant farmwork. This literature review includes social and cultural information needed by school psychologists serving migrant children and families, examples of successful school-based programs, and implications for public policy and practice.

Mi gente son el color de la tierra.[2] Alma Luz Villanueva (1994)

Early every morning in June and July, Mexican and Latino immigrants go to work harvesting strawberries in Oregon, Washington, and Northern California. On the Gulf coast of Texas and the southwestern coast of California, migrant farm workers spend their days harvesting citrus fruits that ripen as early as February and as late as October. Migrant farmworkers and their families may move from harvesting lettuce and cauliflower in Arizona, to sugar beets in Utah, to potatoes in Idaho. They may move along the East coast following seasonal crops from Florida to upstate New York. Across the United States, the fruit and vegetables we bring to our meals are harvested primarily by people who have immigrated to our country from Mexico and the countries of Central America (Fix & Passel, 1994; Oliveira, Efland, & Hamm, 1993).

Over 80% of these migrant and seasonal farmworkers are U.S. citizens or are legally in the country (Fix & Passel, 1994; Mines, Gabbard, & Boccalandro, 1991). They earn wages below the federal poverty level, most workers earning less than \$7,500 per year (Oliveira et al., 1993). They live in substandard housing or are without homes (National Advisory Council on Migrant Health, 1993). In many cases, family poverty

forces all able family members to work. Because labor laws set the age of 12 as the legal lower limit for farmwork employees and allow exemptions for children as young as 10 or 11, many children help to support their families by joining their parents in the fields (Bell, Roach, & Sheets, 1994; Martinez, Scott, Cranston-Gingras, & Platt, 1994; U.S. General Accounting Office, 1992). With the current political tension questioning the rights of immigrants as recipients of social services like education and health care (Rodriguez & Carey, 1995), consideration of the experiences and concerns of Mexican and Latino migrant farmworkers, the largest and least economically privileged of any immigrant group, seems advisable.

The U.S. Bureau of the Census (1993) estimates there are 22.4 million Hispanic citizens of this country. Hispanic is the term used by the Bureau of the Census to refer to U.S. citizens who were either born in or have direct ancestry from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Central America, South America, or other Spanish cultures or origins. In the 10 years between 1980 and 1990, the Hispanic population increased 53% (Vobejda, 1991). This ethnic group as defined by the Bureau of the Census is growing more rapidly than any other in the United States. Mexicans and Latinos (people from Central and South American countries) make up the largest subgroup of the Hispanic population (Garcia, 1994), most of that subgroup entering the country as documented and undocumented workers on the circuit of farm harvests, the migrant stream.

Over one-half of these workers enter the U.S. in California (Fix & Passel, 1994) where recent elections reflected voters' concerns about immigration. In November of 1994, California voters endorsed state law that would prohibit the provision of any public service to nondocumented aliens; that is, people who cannot prove their legal status as immigrants or citizens. In that state, voters attribute the inadequacy of social resources reflected in overburdened prison and education systems, and competition for employment to the presence of illegal immigrants (Fix & Passel, 1994).

Controversy runs high in California and across the country about the costs and benefits of immigration, and the accuracy of data reflective of the situation is often limited. For example, Fix and Passel (1994) reviewed local studies in Los Angeles and San Diego counties and noted statistics in both reports that understated the revenues from immigrants and failed to make clear the comparative cost for public service to the U.S.-born population--a cost consistently higher than outlays for serving immigrants. Inaccuracies in data fuel biased public outrage and obscure the real concerns of groups like migrant farmworkers.

The Department of Labor has found that most seasonal agricultural workers have children (Mines, Gabbard, & Boccia, 1991). Census figures indicate that among Hispanic children (the larger category including the children of Mexican and Latino farmworkers), 38.4% lived in poverty in 1990 as compared with 18.3% of non-Hispanic children (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1993). Migrant children are affected by lack of child care, exposure to pesticides, and inadequate living conditions, all of which are linked with the poverty plaguing many of these families. The economic and health situations of Mexican and Latino migrant farmworkers and their children are severe (National Advisory Council on Migrant Health, 1993), yet employment is still available and migration continues to be substantial (Fix & Passel, 1994). For school psychologists, the question remains how best to support the learning and mental health of children and families of Mexican and Latino migrant farmworkers in prevailing societal conditions.

This article seeks to provide a review of educational and psychological literature that speaks to the experiences and concerns of Mexican and Latino migrant farm families and their children. This literature is quite limited, however, and empirical research is practically nonexistent. My search of the data bases cataloguing the last 10 years of literature in psychology and education revealed 32 articles focused on the experiences of Mexican and Latino children and families engaged in migrant farm-work in the U.S. The six research articles in this group included studies gauging attitudes toward education (Velazquez, 1995), considering the effect of maternal social support on developmental outcomes for preschoolers (Siantz, 1990; Siantz & Smith, 1994), investigating correlates with successful completion of high school (Manaster, Chan, & Safady, 1992), surveying the reported experiences of youth in migrant farmworking families (Martinez et al., 1994), and describing outcomes of a graduate preservice curriculum for public health nurses (Jones, Jones, & Schenk, 1995). Related articles on cross-cultural psychology (e.g., Altarriba & Santiago-Rivera, 1994; Salzman, 1995; Soriano, Soriano, & Jimenez, 1994; Sue, 1990) and bilingual/bicultural education (e.g., Esquivel & Keitel, 1990; Garcia & Ortiz, 1988; Lopez, 1995; Schiff-Meyers, 1992; Thomas, 1992) were more numerous. Reports from federal agencies monitoring this population and narrative accounts of migrant farmworkers' experiences provided the most useful information but offered limited insights to guide school psychological service delivery. Within the

information, but offered limited insights to guide school psychological service delivery. Within the limitations of the available literature, I have concentrated my effort on identifying for school psychologists (a) social and cultural information for professionals who serve Mexican and Latino migrant children and families, (b) examples of programs that have successfully responded to the concerns of migrant children and families, and (c) implications for school policy and practice.

The Lives of Farm Workers

All school psychologists who were not raised in migrant farmworking families are limited in their understanding of the lives of these families and children. Our first obligation as service providers to people of any culture different from our own is to act on our respect for them by becoming informed about their epistemologies, their ways of knowing, and the psychosocial conditions framing their lives (Henning-Stout & Brown-Cheatham, in press). The way a person makes sense of the world is influenced profoundly both by culture and life circumstance. Because I am an educated and employed middle class woman of European ancestry, my description of the lives of Mexican and Latino migrant farm workers is an example of an outsider coming to know a culture she serves. What follows is, therefore, a limited and partial view.

Sociocultural Considerations

As a part of their commentary on school violence, Soriano, Soriano, and Jimenez (1994) provided a helpful overview of the cultural variables influencing Mexican and Latino families. They suggested that behaviors of children in schools are best understood in the context of the multiple variables mediating their world views. For all children, these variables include their kinship systems, the education levels and values of the adults in those systems, and the family's economic status, internal politics, spiritual values, physical and emotional health, connection with the community, and expression of traditional folkarts. Soriano et al. went on to suggest that, for immigrant children, their experience of school is further mediated by a second layer of the same list of variables as arranged by the White American host culture. This presents a rather complex picture, one that challenges school psychologists and educators to move carefully in identifying the best ways to support children from Mexican and Latino migrant farm families. Along with its complexity, the paradigm of Soriano et al. also provides a framework within which to consider the sociocultural forces bearing on the lives of these families and children.

Kinship. Mexican and Latino migrant farmworkers enter the U.S. in search of living wages. In most cases, these workers have exhausted all possibilities for supporting their families in their homelands and enter the migrant stream seeking relief from desperate financial circumstances by pursuing seasonal farmwork in this country (Davis, 1990; Mendoza, 1994). Most migrant farmworkers travel to the United States from rural areas in central and southern Mexico, a smaller number come from Central American countries like El Salvador and Guatemala.

Most farmworkers enter the migrant stream considering themselves visiting workers who hope to return to their homelands (Davis, 1990). It is common practice for these workers to send part of their wages home to their immediate or extended families. This practice leaves them without sufficient funds to finance returning to their homes in the winter months. Although most of these workers are men, increasing numbers of families are leaving their homelands to seek livelihoods from farmwork (Bell et al., 1994; Davis, 1990). In addition, many families choose to join the men who have entered the migrant stream when they have saved enough money to make the move North.

For Mexicans and Latinos, families are often central to both value structures and self-understanding. Cervantes and Ramirez (1992) identify three themes emphasized to children that support the value of family: (a) placing high priority on building and maintaining the strength of the family, (b) demonstrating genuine respect for family hierarchy, and (c) developing secure interconnections across extended family. For Mexican and Latino migrant families, individual accomplishment is most often of little value outside the context of family well-being, and self-esteem is closely tied to that well-being.

Education. Poverty interferes with the access Mexican and Latino farmworkers and their children have to education (White, Homma-True, Golden, Gramp, & Lee, 1995). To survive, these workers take the labor intensive and low-paying jobs. Their situations demand that they work long hours and, quite frequently, that their children work as well (Bell et al., 1994; U.S. General Accounting Office, 1992; Velazquez, 1995). Martinez and her colleagues (1994) reported interview responses of middle and high school age children of migrant farmworkers in Florida. 75% of whom stated they had worked or were working in the fields

of migrant farmworkers in Florida, 75% of whom stated they had worked or were working in the fields. The demands of poverty and the value on responsibility to the family combine to take precedence over formal education for many of these children and youth.

In general, the luxury of education has not been one afforded to people who enter the migrant stream. Fix and Passel (1994) reported that over 75% of the immigrants from Mexico, El Salvador, and Guatemala have less than a high school diploma. According to Harrington (1987), migrant workers typically complete 7.7 years of education compared with 12.5 years for the general U.S. population. As a result, the value and relevance of education is often less immediate for migrant farmworking families, and school attendance is a lower priority (Bell et al., 1994). At the same time, however, 96% of the migrant youth Martinez et al. (1994) interviewed in Florida reported liking school, and White et al. (1995) found that Mexican and Latino migrant students in San Francisco who attended school were significantly less likely than their peers to cut classes.

Economics. Most Mexican and Latino farm families have left economically depressed areas of their homeland to take jobs in which U.S. born wage earners have historically had little interest (Davis, 1990; Gamboa & Buan, 1995; Mendoza, 1994). As evident from the preceding discussion, poverty is one of the experiences most likely to affect the lives of migrant families and children. Migrant farmwork requires laborers to be transient and, in this transience, workers and their families are often without adequate housing (Harrison, 1994; Martinez et al., 1994).

Family politics. Soriano et al. (1994) suggested that awareness and understanding of the way power and authority are structured within families are important for effective service delivery. Migrant farmworking families bring with them a variety of cultural values. Perhaps most pervasive is the above mentioned strong emphasis on the well-being of family. The manner in which decisions are made and values enforced within the family can undergo significant change with entry into the migrant stream: Although many families are able to retain their structure and function, some families experience serious disruption as a result of unemployment or job-related illness. For example, a father who became ill following overexposure to pesticides could be forced to depend on the mother and children for survival. In a traditional father-dominated family, such a change could represent significant disruption not only to the economic survival of the family, but also to its psychological functioning (Soriano et al., 1994).

Spiritual values. Mexican and Latino migrant families bring with them spiritual traditions that are often unrecognized within the prevailing culture. Cervantes and Ramirez (1992) described the centrality of mestizo spirituality for many people of Mexico and Central America. This spiritual tradition is an amalgam of the European cosmology brought to the Americas by the Spaniards and the indigenous cosmologies of the people already living on these continents. "Mestizo spirituality emphasizes harmony, interdependence, and respect for the sacredness of one's place in the world" (p. 109). Spirituality carries stories and beliefs explaining good and bad fortune and can be central to family and individual conceptualizations of psychological or educational problems. Cervantes and Ramirez urged clinicians to appreciate and learn this spiritual perspective and to explore carefully the particular religious and spiritual beliefs of the family that may be consistent or at variance with this tradition. They emphasized the likelihood that such beliefs are "psycho-spiritual anchor points" for Mexican and Latino families and likely key to the success or failure of any clinical effort.

Health. Among migrant farmworking families, health is linked immediately with living and working conditions. Unsanitary conditions and limited access to health care contribute to the high incidence of tuberculosis (Ciesielski, 1991). Proportionally high rates of cervical cancer for migrant women, and diabetes, hypertension, and HIV for all migrant farmworkers represent additional health concerns (Ryan, Foulk, Lafferty, & Robertson, 1988; Wilk, 1986). Accidents are most common in agricultural work and compounded with the intensive labor, often in extreme weather conditions, required of migrant farmworkers (Oliveira et al., 1993). Poisoning from exposure to pesticides is a constant threat (Spitzer, 1994). Even in the face of these health issues, Mexican and Latino migrant workers are unlikely to seek public health care (National Advisory Council on Migrant Health, 1993). These workers are reluctant to miss work and, in some cases, may rely instead on the traditional medical practice of curanderismo, drawing on the expertise of healers within their cultural group (Cervantes & Ramirez, 1992).

Other cultural assets appear to afford protection to many of these families. For example, Scribner and Dwyer (1989) noted lifestyle and behavioral factors that significantly lower the incidence of low birthweight among infants of Latino immigrants. The health care and health threats encountered by Mexican and Latino migrant farmworkers may best be understood and addressed by restructuring work conditions that

Latino migrant farmworkers may best be understood and addressed by restructuring work conditions that interfere with the fundamental values supporting health that characterize their cultural beliefs and practices.

Community. By definition, migrant work mitigates against the replication of community experiences many farmworkers have left in their homelands (Siantz, 1990). For many families, transience is an accepted part of their lives and must be taken as central to their worldviews. Nonetheless, the power of community is reflected throughout Mexican and Latino cultural tradition and its absence is likely to have significant effect. For example, there is evidence of a strong relationship between the social support or community experienced by Mexican migrant parents and the benefit their children derive from preschool education (Siantz, 1990; Siantz & Smith, 1994).

The transience of farmwork has other effects. Some families seek ways to leave school-age children in one place, a homebase, where non-migrant friends or relatives can support consistency in their educational experiences (Bell et al., 1994). Still, this splintering of family may cause significant stress for children, especially in the context of strong values on family well-being held by many Mexican and Latino families.

Tradition. Cultural traditions and arts are central to the cultural identity and enjoyment of Mexicans and Latinos (Soriano et al., 1994), yet such practices are difficult to retain in transient communities. Among migrant farmworkers, wide variations in traditional practice occur according to the regions of Mexico and Central America from which they are brought. Even without this variation, the opportunity to participate in any of these traditions is severely disrupted by the demands of migrant farmworking. In addition, school, community, and church settings in the U.S. often fail to recognize or support the expression of these traditions.

Linguistic Considerations

Language consistently mediates each of the cultural variables described above (Altarriba & Santiago-Rivera, 1994). Any time a service provider relies on limited Spanish (Sue, 1990), or translation (Lopez, 1994; Lopez, 1995) for working with Mexican and Latino migrant families, the information she or he is able to gain is necessarily and significantly limited. When a beginning English speaker attempts to give information to a monolingual English service provider similarly significant limitations occur (Gutfreund, 1990).

Along with these linguistic considerations is the increased likelihood that Mexican and Latino farmworkers have migrated from home communities where indigenous languages were their first and continue as their primary languages (J. Goodwin, personal communication, October 19, 1995). In these cases, Spanish is their second language and English their third. Further, there is growing evidence of the way in which language and culture mediate expressions of cognitive ability (Rogoff & Chavajay, 1995), evidence that has immediate implications for service to migrant children and families in educational settings.

Finally, the evidence from research on second language acquisition indicates that, although social language skills may be fairly well-established in 2 years of school exposure to a second language, fluency in academic language requires at least 5 years (Garcia & Ortiz, 1988; Roseberry-McKibbin, 1994). In addition, students who are becoming bilingual will frequently lose some proficiency in their first language as they gain fluency in their second language (Schiff-Meyers, 1992; Schiff-Meyers, Djukic, McGovern-Lawler, & Perez, 1994). The difficulty of gauging cognitive and academic status of Mexican and Latino migrant children in schools is significant given the complex nature of emerging bilingualism.

Sociopolitical Climate

The sociopolitical environment Mexican and Latino migrant families enter also has a significant effect on the quality of their lives. In contrast to the history of braceros, Mexican workers who were enticed to Texas and California by wealthy farmers in search of inexpensive labor earlier in this century, current farmworkers meet a far more ambivalent, even openly hostile reception by U.S. citizens (Davis, 1990; Gamboa, 1990; Mendoza, 1994). The history of migrant farmwork reveals trends in the sociopolitical realities experienced by these families (Davis, 1990). In times of economic strength, U.S. citizens have been less willing to do the poorly compensated and heavy labor of farmwork, and migrant farmworkers

have been welcomed. When the economy has weakened, these laborers and their families, previously welcomed guests, have become discounted and disparaged as the intentional agents of the discomfort experienced by U.S. citizens.

In recent years, Mexican and Latino migrant workers have encountered a weak economy and a hostile social environment. For example, a 1993 public opinion poll indicated that 73% of the respondents supported strict limitations on all immigration to the U.S. (Jamieson & Seaman, 1993). This sentiment was directly reflected in the passage of Proposition 187 by California's voters. The first sentence of that bill states, "The people of California find and declare as follows: That they have suffered and are suffering economic hardship caused by the presence of illegal aliens in this state" (Proposition 187, section 1, 1994). Similar sentiment and policy initiatives are reflected in proposed federal legislation, the Immigration in the National Interest Act of 1995 (H.R. 2202, 1995).

Myriad issues immediately affecting the lives of Mexican and Latino migrant farmworking families, regardless of legal status, emerge from such policy initiatives. These effects are apparent both in the extent of legal guarantees and protections, and in the daily experience of these people. Laws like Proposition 187 and H.R. 2202 are problematic on two fronts. First, they are inconsistent with constitutional and legal precedent. For example, the California law is currently under judicial review because of its inconsistency with the state's constitution and other laws. Proposition 187 would ban from public education all immigrants unable to prove legal residence status, yet, the California Constitution guarantees education to all children.

With regard to the access children of Mexican and Latino migrant farmworkers have to education, legal precedent was established in 1982 with *Plyler v. Doe* (1982), the Supreme Court decision which granted access to public education for undocumented minor children based partially on the recognition that those children were likely to stay in this country and become citizens. In that decision, the court held that, because education would reduce the likelihood that these citizens would become dependent on public assistance, educating all children was worth the cost.

The second problem posed with enforcement of legal initiatives like Proposition 187 and H.R. 2202 is the risk of violating the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA, 1974) by requiring school personnel to report any student suspected of being undocumented. FERPA protects the privacy of students in public schools from the disclosure of personally identifiable information without prior written consent of parents or students of majority age (section 99.5). However, there are exceptions in the bill for "law enforcement purposes" (section 99.31) that could be construed in support of identification. The implications of such policy for students and families, both legally and illegally in the U.S. are extensive. With no clear method for public officials to discern undocumented children from documented, naturalized, and U.S.-born individuals, all children are subject to being misidentified. The possible legal mandate for such identification carries the likely cost of refueling overt racism and increasing the hostility encountered by Mexican and Latino families and children in public environments (Bell et al., 1994; Rodriguez & Carey, 1995). These effects have immediate impact on daily life and learning.

Even without the effects of these recent legislative initiatives, migrant families enter a culture that is quite different from their own (Esquivel, 1985). These differences are most stark in urban centers, the first stop for most families (Fix & Passel, 1994). Exposure to violence (Morales, 1992), illegal drug economies (Vazquez, 1991), and aggressive discrimination (Martinez et al., 1994; Soriano et al., 1994) compound the vulnerability experienced by migrants and their children.

The combination of local and political social realities, along with the transience and poverty experienced by most Mexican and Latino migrant farmworking families, has profound negative effects on their children's formal education (Martinez et al., 1994; Perez & Salazar, 1993). Dropout rates approaching 50% have been reported (Chapa & Valencia, 1993), with the highest incidence among youth who migrate alone or with their families during the end of middle school or the beginning of high school (White et al., 1995). These rates may be low because such counts generally begin with the first year of high school and fail to include the large number of students who do not make the transition from middle school, the children who leave school in the elementary grades, or those who are never enrolled (J. Goodwin, personal communication, October 19, 1995). To serve these children, youth, and families, school psychologists must be aware of the political forces that have immediate implications, and probable influence on the ways migrant people interact with schools and school personnel.

Programs for Migrant Children

In an article describing the notion, *la cultura cura*, the idea that culture cures, Vasquez (1991) provided examples of programs to prevent substance abuse and showed as most effective those programs that were grounded in the cultures of the children and young people they served. "La cultura cura implies that it is not the culture that puts a child at risk, but the conditions that cultural groups must live under" (p. 3). The examples of programs for migrant children and families described below share recognition of the necessity of attending to both the culture and living conditions of the people served by those programs.

Of the program descriptions available for school-based responses to Mexican and Latino migrant farmworking families, most centered on preschool, particularly Head Start efforts. O'Brien, Shannon, Booth, and Itterly (1995) described one such program in which systematic and continuous measures were taken to integrate the Head Start program into the migrant community. The program site was immediately accessible to parents, staff were bilingual, and cultural traditions were recognized and represented in the curriculum. In addition, comprehensive delivery of educational, health, and other social services were facilitated through parent support programs that focused on (a) centralizing storage of parent-held records, (b) training staff and families in ways of supporting the development of young learners directly and (c) training those adults to be the children's advocates. In every area of this Head Start program, families and staff engaged in collaborative relationships on behalf of the children. These relationships were formalized through written agreements (O'Brien et al., 1995).

A second program took place in a southern California school district and focused on involving Mexican and Latino migrant parents in their children's schooling (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991). By sponsoring opportunities for the families of elementary and secondary school children to participate in social and cultural events in the schools and providing bilingual educators as contact people for the families, this program was significantly more successful at engaging parents than were comparison programs that relied on more conventional parent involvement efforts (i.e., approaches familiar to dominant culture parents).

The Texas/Montana Distance Learning Project (Contreras, 1992), demonstrated regard for the cultural and social experiences of migrant children by employing distance learning technology to support learning. This project had as its goal increasing the academic success of migrant students who attended schools in Texas and spent the summer months with their families engaged in seasonal farmwork in Montana. Through interactive television broadcasts, 92 elementary and 66 secondary students were instructed in reading, writing, and math for 4 weeks by teachers in Texas. The measured outcome indicated improved academic skills as evident in these students' work samples and test scores.

In the projects and programs described above and in other listed project summaries, there were no records of systematic efforts to reduce the dropout rate for Mexican and Latino migrant students. Several authors have outlined suggested practices for responding to this issue (e.g., Cranston-Gingras & Anderson, 1990; Reyes & Valencia, 1993); but there is little evidence of successful interventions. The Migrant Student Record Transfer System (MSRTS) was established to provide a central records repository for educators who work with migrant students and was hoped to have an indirect impact on high school completion. This U.S. Department of Education initiative involved transmission of student files to a central data bank in Little Rock, AR so that any teacher in the country could gain access to files on migrant students who came into her or his classroom. MSRTS has been doused in the past year due to budget decisions at the federal level and stands as an example of program efforts with insubstantial effects.

Case Illustration: Preschool Parent Involvement

A project focused on the facilitation of preschool migrant children's transition into public school kindergarten stands as an example of how the spirit and confidence of migrant farmworking families can be supported in schools (Henning-Stout, 1995). This project was based on a collaborative relationship between the migrant education program of a local education service district, the families involved in the Brillante Center preschool program, and myself, as a researcher and coordinator of a school psychology graduate program. I worked directly with the administrator of the migrant education program and the two preschool teachers to develop strategies (a) to learn what the migrant families' concerns and interests were relative to the public school experiences of their preschool children, and (b) to facilitate dialogue...

were relative to the public school experiences of their preschool children, and (b) to facilitate dialogue and a relationship between the parents and school personnel. Twenty families volunteered as participants in the project, and six were randomly selected for in-depth interviews conducted in Spanish and in the families' homes.

Interview responses were content analyzed and summarized for review by all of the participating families. This review occurred during a series of evening meetings which consistently opened with a culturally affirming activity or performance initiated by the parents or by the assistant teacher, who was a farmworker in her childhood. Consistent with cultural practice, dessert or a meal was shared at every meeting. As a result of their review of the interview summaries, the parent group identified seven themes encapsulating their primary interests and concerns for their children. The themes are described in Table 1.

The families decided to invite local elementary school administrators, and kindergarten and first grade teachers to a meeting where they would share their concerns and interests and begin establishing relationships they hoped would endure through their children's schooling. I worked with the migrant staff to extend the invitations, and we received consistently enthusiastic interest from both teachers and administrators. In spite of this interest, only one teacher attended the meeting. In response, the families chose to hold a subsequent meeting in which they signed a letter containing their interests for distribution to teachers, administrators, and school board members.

Several outcomes from this small project are notable. First, over the year, families who individually and as a group were initially timid and hesitant, gained skill and confidence as advocates for their children in the public school system. The interview and group review processes allowed the families to act with a united voice. Leaders emerged to move into coordinating roles that were initially filled by the teachers and myself. A second outcome was the engagement of the administration and school board members who received documentation of the thoughtfulness and conviction of the migrant families and were thereby prompted to respond. Related to this, early childhood educators in the district also received information directly from Mexican and Latino migrant families which gave them opportunity to take action in developing their side of the family-school relationship.

Finally, the collaborating preschool teachers and the director of migrant programs gained extensive insight into the culture of the migrant families and became skilled at establishing partnerships with those families. As a result, they determined that interviews, parent meetings, and attempts to link with kindergarten teachers would be built into their regular practice in subsequent years (Henning-Stout, 1995).

Directions for Practice and Policy

Based on considerations of the conditions encountered and survived by Mexican and Latino migrant farm families, three primary areas demand the attention of practicing school psychologists. First, these families and their children must be understood in social and cultural context. Nuttall, DeLeon and Valle (1990) advised school psychologists to learn as much as possible about the stories of culturally and linguistically diverse children and families. School psychologists should know such things as the family's geographic history, birthplaces, time in this country, and educational experience in their home country and in the U.S. Thomas (1992) added the suggestion that school psychologists be particularly mindful of gauging the extent of trauma families have experienced due to war and other conditions of political strife. For migrant farm families, school psychologists also would be well-advised to consider the trauma families may have experienced with migration, poverty, and the danger inherent in farmworking (e.g., accidents, exhaustion, poisoning).

In her article on the experiences of English-speaking immigrants from the Caribbean and Central America, Tania Thomas (1992) suggested roles for school psychologists. Although not specific to work with Mexican and Latino migrant farmworkers, the list bears summarization. Thomas (pp. 573-574) suggested school psychologists: (a) familiarize themselves with the cultural practices and history of the people they serve, (b) identify ways schools can develop programs for helping parents gain functional understanding of American education and cultural practices, (c) act as liaisons with public programs outside of schools, (d) conduct careful interviews with parents and observations of children in settings familiar to them, and (e) actively educate school staff in both the educationally relevant issues faced by immigrants and the richness immigrant families and children bring to classrooms.

A second area for school psychologists' attention is language. As mentioned above, mi-grant families deal in an emerging second or third language when they interact with public schools in this country. Their development as multilingual speakers is often accompanied by temporary limitations to facility with their first language, leading to what might be misinterpreted as linguistic or cognitive deficit (Garcia & Ortiz, 1988; Schiff-Meyers, 1992; Schiff-Meyers et al., 1994). Lopez (1995) summarized the implications of language diversity for school psychologists' work with multilingual children. She noted that multilingual children vary in their English proficiency based on the history they have with the language and the places they use it. For example, the range of language (vocabulary and syntax) used in school varies from the range used at home. Lopez also noted that differences in culture within any community are substantial and influence second language acquisition. Other significant impediments to English acquisition for Mexican and Latino farmworkers and their children that should be considered by school psychologists include the migration experience itself (emotional and economic costs) and exposure to prejudicial racial attitudes in schools and in the community.

Linguistic considerations should be primary foci for school psychologists working with Mexican and Latino migrant farmworking families and has been explicitly requested by those families (Henning-Stout, 1995). Whenever possible, interactions with these families and their children should be conducted in their primary language. School psychologists who are not fluent in Spanish or in the indigenous languages of some of the families will do best to use interpreters. However, Lopez (1995, p. 1119) described use of interpreters during assessment and intervention as "risky, speculative, and plagued with conjecture." She goes on to suggest that such service be used only as the last resort. For monolingual school psychologists, or those with limited Spanish proficiency, the last resort often arrives quickly. In such instances, great care should be taken to ensure interpreters' training and ability (e.g., high proficiency in both languages, prior experience as school-based interpreters), and their familiarity with education, the cultural background of the student and family, and the special education process (see Lopez, 1995, for a more thorough listing of guidelines for working with interpreters).

Finally, school psychologists who work with Mexican and Latino migrant families must actively support the psychological and educational well-being of these families and children by identifying and working consistently to interrupt bias, modeling cultural and personal respect, and bolstering ethnic pride. For example, providing culturally affirming program settings in which migrant families can voice their concerns and gain confidence in their skills as advocates for their children in schools extends support to these families (Henning-Stout, 1995; O'Brien et al, 1995). These parents desire communication with the school, respect for their culture, contact with other parents of migrant children in schools, and inclusion of their children in the range of school-based activities (Henning-Stout, 1995). In an article addressing the particular needs of adolescent newcomers from Mexico, Central America or South America, Pilon (1995, p. 2) urged parents and school psychologists to encourage students to take pride in their unique capabilities as "bilingual, bicultural and traveled members of society"

School psychology practice and research affords numerous ways to respond to the educational and psychological needs of Mexican and Latino migrant farmworking families and their children. At this point, the information we have for guiding such response is severely limited. As mentioned here our practice can be enhanced by listening well and respectfully to the experiences and concerns of migrant families and engaging those families in the schooling of their children. Research documenting effective programs from early intervention, to parent involvement, to dropout prevention are sorely needed. Basic research on acculturation, learning, and correlates of mental health and emotional distress among migrant families and children also would contribute greatly to the development of responsive school psychological services.

A less frequently discussed role for school psychologists is in influencing public policy. As participants in the educational systems of this country, it is important that school psychologists be active participants in policy discussions affecting immigrants to this country. Our participation in such discussions can bring to the table important and overlooked psychological or educational considerations as well as informed critical analysis of public statistics. When we speak of education for all children, we speak especially of the children most marginalized. School psychology is a profession grounded in the active application of our privilege as educated and employed people to advocate for and support those who have little.

In this regard, perhaps the most powerful and enduring action school psychologists could take would be to support migrant children through public and higher education and into the ranks of our profession. An

appropriate goal for our profession is to become composed of people from cultural and social backgrounds spanning the range of experiences encountered by children in schools. Our considered and assertive effort to support Mexican and Latino migrant farmworking families and their children is urgently needed and can be understood as fundamental to building both a profession and a nation that are truly democratic.

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Footnotes

1What can we do?

2My people are the color of the earth.

Table 1

1. LIAISON -- We are concerned that there be a bilingual and bicultural person in every school with whom we can communicate regarding the problems or needs our children might have.

2. COMMUNICATION -- We would like more communication from the school in ways we can understand.

3. CULTURE -- We expect the characteristics and practices of our cultures to be respected.

4. PARENT-TO-PARENT CONTACT-- We would like the opportunity to have regular contact with each other as parents of school-age children.

5. INCLUSION -- We are interested in our children having equal opportunity and support for developing themselves as leaders in school.

6. TRANSPORTATION -- Our children need reliable transportation to and from school.

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