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Authors

Camacho, Sayil
Rivera-Salgado, Gaspar

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Lost in Translation "en el Fil": Actualizing Structural Humility for Indigenous Mexican Farmworkers in California

Sayil Camacho, PhD, Vanderbilt University

Gaspar Rivera Salgado, PhD, University of California, Los Angeles

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Abstract

This study demonstrates how we espoused a structural competent point of reference and operationalized the concept of structural humility for the purposes of conducting a communication evaluation strategy in support of California farmworkers. Strengthened by Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and the principles of Critical Race Theory, a two-phase qualitative research process was developed to understand if state agency resources were adequately addressing workplace vulnerabilities in the agricultural fields. The research process included first, a comprehensive content analysis of labor educational resources, and second, a series of focus groups with California labor agency staff, community advocacy organizations, and farmworkers of mestizo and indigenous Mexican origin. This study makes a significant contribution to structural humility scholarship by demonstrating how the use of critical frameworks realized and extended the definition of structural humility, addressing structural systems of power that perpetuate the marginalization of immigrant and indigenous farmworkers. The methodology and findings of the study advance support for organizations that work with immigrant and indigenous populations and seek to interrogate sociopolitical inequities.

Introduction | En el Principio | Aa yee nii?[1]

California produces more agricultural commodities than any other state in the nation. The state's agricultural production is valued at $46 billion and accounts for 18 percent of the total US agricultural output (California Department of Food and Agriculture 2016). Inextricably tied to California's agricultural bounty are farmworkers' labor experiences. Farmworkers earn poverty wages[2] and are subject to a myriad of socioeconomic challenges that include inhumane working

and living conditions (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2018; Fox and Rivera-Salgado 2004; Hernandez and Gabbard 2019; Garcia and Sanjuan 2013). The farmworker occupation is classified as one of the ten most dangerous jobs in the United States (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2018).

Most California farmworkers were historically and are currently Mexican immigrants (California Research Bureau 2013); 68 percent of California farmworkers migrate from Mexico, and one in three are Indigenous (Mines, Nichols, and Runsten 2010). Compared to other ethnic groups, Indigenous farmworkers experience higher levels of poverty and more prejudiced attitudes both within and outside the workplace (Hester 2015; Oaxacalifornian Reporting Team 2013). What is often overlooked is that Indigenous farmworkers are both a multi-ethnic and multilingual population. For example, the four primary Indigenous groups from Mexico speak Mixteco, Zapoteco, Triqui, and Mayan (Fox and Rivera-Salgado 2004). For those who do not speak Spanish or English, farmworker labor challenges are compounded by linguistic and cultural communication barriers. Because of these challenges, California farmworkers may find themselves lost in translation *en el fil*.[3]

The language barriers and exploitative workplace conditions that California farmworkers face result from and contribute to the precarious place in society that they occupy—additionally complicated by their immigrant status and indigeneity (Holmes 2013). When English- and Spanish-speaking state agency service providers, researchers, stakeholders, and community-based organizations seek to provide Indigenous farmworker populations with support, they are engaging in cross-cultural and cross-lingual communication. However, cross-cultural and cross-lingual communication may be experienced as ethnocentric, as it may assume dominant standards of culture, lack understanding of sociopolitical structural realities, and fail to

acknowledge the systems and processes that marginalize farmworkers' experiences and identities (Kuo and Chew 2009). To understand how the multi-ethnic and multilingual needs of Indigenous farmworkers are rooted in socioeconomic structures requires a structural competency approach. Similarly, to address the communication power dynamics rooted in socioeconomic structures requires an engagement in critical self-reflection that structural humility approaches provide.

The concept of structural competency was developed in the health sciences to incorporate social science frameworks into clinical training and health delivery. This concept originally appeared in *The Protest Psychosis*, where psychiatrist Jonathan Metzl (2010) contends that racial assumptions, tensions, and biases are historically "structured into clinical interactions before doctors or patients enter examinations rooms" (xi), and continue to remain "embedded into the very DNA of healthcare delivery systems" (202). Cultural competency training prepares healthcare providers to recognize and respond to the socioeconomic structures that affect the health and well-being of historically marginalized populations. Structural humility is a practice that was developed to strengthen structurally competent healthcare approaches (Hansen and Metzl 2019; Metzl and Hansen 2014; Neff et al. 2017, 2019). Structural humility is the shift in attitude that healthcare providers must adopt to effectively interrogate the socioeconomic structures that permit power imbalances between healthcare providers and historically marginalized populations (Hansen and Metzl 2019; Neff et al. 2017, 2019; Tervalon and Murray-Garcia 1998).

For this study, we incorporated a structurally competent point of reference and structural humility for the purposes of conducting a communication evaluation in support of California farmworkers. The California Labor and Workforce Development Agency (LWDA)[4] requested that the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Labor Center assess the LWDA's

educational resources for California farmworkers (see Table 1), with the purpose of ensuring that workplace rights and health and safety information was accessible to farmworkers, including Indigenous populations.

INSERT TABLE 1

The LWDA and its affiliated labor agencies wanted to know whether their resources adequately addressed workplace vulnerabilities in the agricultural fields, such as language barriers, low literacy rates, and lack of access to labor protection resources. To identify best communication policies and practices, a structural competency approach—which takes into account the structural forces that determine the workplace vulnerabilities facing immigrant and Indigenous farmworkers—needed to be established from the onset. We operationalized structural humility in our analysis so state service providers examining the social structures that make Indigenous farmworkers vulnerable—in particular to worker rights violations, on-the-job injury, and even death—would be more inclined to adopt internal practices (or exhibit a shift in attitude) that would allow them to realize systemic change and address the multiple workplace challenges that Indigenous farmworkers face.

Our background research confirmed that structural competency offered a lens through which we could understand both the socioeconomic structures that affect Indigenous farmworkers and their experiences using information from different state agencies to claim their labor rights in the agricultural fields of California. Though structural competency scholarship has identified structural humility as a practical strategy to address the broader structural drivers of inequality for poor and marginalized populations (Neff et al. 2017, 2019), a methodology that operationalized structural humility in a manner that presupposed the sociopolitical context that immigrant and Indigenous farmworkers navigate had not been developed for the purposes of

evaluating communication strategies. Operationalizing structural humility so we could understand and responsibly attend to structural vulnerabilities required our methodology to be grounded in and guided by the lived experiences and active collaboration of Indigenous farmworkers (Hansen and Metzl 2019; Metzl 2010; Metzl and Hansen 2014; Neff et al. 2017, 2019). Structural humility, or active resistance to both cultural and social stereotyping, addresses how modes of communication intersect with sociopolitical histories that reify both racial and social hierarchies and structural inequality.

This study models structural humility through a two-phase qualitative evaluation process. We first present the theoretical underpinnings of our methodology to demonstrate how critical frameworks—Paulo Freire's (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and critical race theory (CRT)—allowed us to realize and extend the definition of structural humility throughout our research process. The two-phase qualitative methodology included, first, a comprehensive content analysis of labor educational resources and, second, a series of focus groups with California labor agency staff, community advocacy organizations, and farmworkers of mestizo and Indigenous Mexican origin. The critical content analysis assessed the readability, message and linguistic nuance (level of literacy), scope of translation (language barriers), and accessibility of educational resources (attainable and usable information), which in turn identified key workplace communication vulnerabilities that immigrant and Indigenous farmworkers experience. We then detail how structural humility and our theoretical orientation were further authenticated in the second phase of the study through collaborations that amplified the experiences of immigrant and Indigenous farmworkers.

This study actualizes and builds upon structural humility scholarship to facilitate workplace rights for immigrant and Indigenous farmworkers. While contributing to structural

humility scholarship is a noteworthy academic pursuit, our primary motivation and ultimate contribution to the field of Latino studies is to decolonize modes of communication that oppress and repress historically marginalized populations. This study calls upon the Latino studies community to recognize our multi-ethnic, multilingual histories, traditions, and origins, as well as the profoundly violent consequences of adopting modes of communication that negate diverse identities and reify racial and social hierarchies. We recommend that Latino studies scholars, practitioners, and stakeholders suspend colonized beliefs about Indigenous Peoples so as a community, we can truly listen and elevate an Indigenous-led liberation.

Theoretical Orientation | Sin Colonizar | Chala gunebia gio?[5]

In order to fully assess the communication strategy of California's labor agencies that monitor compliance and educate farmworker communities about their labor rights and well-being on the job and to promote and equity and social change, we needed to go beyond the prevalent models of cross-cultural communications based on cultural competency and cultural sensitivity frameworks. The main criticism against these cultural-based models is that they tend to omit the economic, political, and social structural context that shape the exploitative conditions and racism experienced by Indigenous farmworkers (Hester 2016). Prevalent cultural competency models may perpetuate power dynamics that permit cultural differences to be regarded as deviant by people who have more power (Hester 2015, 2016). Because cultural competency mainly focuses on the synergy between a set of behaviors, attitudes, and policies that address cross-cultural communication, cultural competency can also be a passive point of reference rather than an active shift in attitude (Tervalon and Murray-Garcia 1998).

The shortcomings of cultural competency are somewhat addressed by the concepts of cultural humility and structural humility. Both concepts include a change in attitude that stems

from critical self-reflection and a lifelong commitment to rectifying communication power imbalances (Neff et al. 2019; Tervalon and Murray-Garcia 1998). According to the concept of cultural humility, power imbalances can be identified through self-examination, by acknowledging how one's own culture and identity may contain biases and prejudices. The concept of structural humility also includes the consideration of socioeconomic structures that perpetuate inequality and reinforce power dynamics (Neff et al. 2019). The process of self-examination for both cultural and structural humility may include various pedagogical approaches, such as group discussions, critical reflection writing exercises, cultural awareness workshops, constructive feedback, and observing cross-cultural interactions (Neff et al. 2019; Tervalon and Murray-Garcia 1998). Both cultural and structural humility are strengthened when self-examination is accompanied by working in partnership with community and advocacy organizations that support historically marginalized populations (Neff et al. 2019; Tervalon and Murray-Garcia 1998). These partnerships provide a better understanding of the needs of disenfranchised populations and can serve to mediate existing power imbalances.

However, neither concept provides a systematic critical self-reflection process or a methodology to deconstruct bias, prejudice, and communication power imbalances rooted in socioeconomic structures. While different pedagogical approaches, including structural competency, promote self-examination, the ability to address communication power imbalances depends on identifying power constructs from the perspective of marginalized populations, which in turn requires an understanding of how communication power dynamics function at the intersections of sociopolitical histories, racial and social hierarchies, and structural inequities. Just as importantly, an authentic shift in attitude brings with it the responsibility to be an agent of change and an advocate for organizational change. Therefore, a key objective in this study was to

build upon structural competency and provide a better understanding of inequity, exploitation, and discrimination experienced by Indigenous farmworkers, while operationalizing the concept of structural humility in a manner that addressed the limitations of self-guided examination. This practice avoids the "list of cultural traits" approach to cultural competency models and thus prevents cultural and social stereotyping—causal relationships among social structure, stereotypes, and prejudice (Caprariello, Cuddy, and Fiske 2009). We sought to contextualize our research process within farmworkers' sociopolitical realities and account for institutionalized systems of power that perpetuate their disenfranchisement.

We used two additional theoretical frameworks friendly to structural competency to elevate the experiences of immigrant and Indigenous farmworkers: Paulo Freire's (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and CRT as developed by scholars Derrick Bell (2004), Patricia Williams (1992), Kimberlé Crenshaw (1988), Mari Matsuda (1987), and Daniel Solorzano (1998). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* presents a philosophy of education that stems from the critical pedagogy movement, a decolonizing teaching and learning ethos that enables historically marginalized populations to affirm their identities within the knowledge production process. This theoretical framework recognizes and brings to light the power dynamics embedded within postcolonial societies that perpetuate racial and social hierarchies. Education can serve to develop critical consciousness and as a mechanism that social actors can use to disrupt oppressive policies and systems. We apply Freire's framework along two tracks: first, as a means to understand the role of the LWDA and state labor agencies in educating immigrant and Indigenous farmworkers about their labor rights; and second, to affirm the lived experiences of migrant farmworkers as agents of social change. Freire's theoretical framework emphasizes ethical participation in the teaching and learning process. We needed to ensure that our

evaluation process prioritized the experiences of the farmworkers, confirmed that they are the experts of their lived experience, and recognized and honored their diverse identities. We used Freire's framework to ensure that farmworkers and educators (the LWDA and state labor agencies) were equipped to support one another and to challenge inequities experienced in the workplace.

To complement Freire's theoretical framework and to specifically recognize the power dynamics that farmworkers experience in the United States, we also turned to CRT, which asserts that racism and structural inequities are pervasive constructs rooted in white supremacy. The defining elements of CRT provide a mechanism to examine race and power in the United States. By excavating how race and power determine cross-culture communication, modes of communication, and the cultural values that are assumed in communication, CRT can be used as a tool to understand how the concept of cultural competency can perpetuate the status quo. The most recent political and philosophical analysis of cultural competency resources for immigrant and Indigenous populations confirmed that cultural competency can be a tool to promote assimilation and discount the sociopolitical context that Indigenous Peoples experience. When service providers do not fully examine their own biases, prejudices, and racism, they can perpetuate institutionalized language access barriers (Hester, 2012, 2015). By including CRT within the operationalization of structural humility, we could conduct an analysis of race and power and not rely solely on the practitioner's self-guided power analysis.

While structural humility calls for the disruption of communication power imbalances, a worldview that recognizes sociopolitical inequities is necessary to identify power imbalances. Freire's (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and CRT expand the definition of structural humility and provide frameworks to understand the broader sociopolitical power structures that perpetuate

the marginalization of disenfranchised populations. These frameworks allowed us to establish how the sociopolitical history of the workforce determines current working conditions, their racial and social stratification, and the ways in which their subjugation benefits the status quo. These frameworks also place the onus for rectifying those power dynamics on those in power, in this case, the labor agencies, requiring them to accept that responsibility and engage in a power analysis of their operating values, assumptions, and practices. The power analysis also must include an understanding of how the labor agencies' modes of communication omit farmworkers from the knowledge production process. By situating the interpersonal communication efforts of the labor agencies within a broader sociopolitical context, they can better understand communication power dynamics and how they reinforce ethnocentrism. More importantly, by undergirding structural humility with this framework, labor agency representatives will have the ability to engage in a guided, critical examination of their work and become better advocates for the workforce.

To realize key concepts from the critical frameworks and extend the breadth and depth of structural humility, we created eight guiding principles. These principles were implemented within our structural competency evaluation process and served as methodological research objectives: (1) recognize past and current socioeconomic and political conditions of the workforce and how current work systems and structures perpetuate inequality, (2) establish opportunities for workers to take action and build coalition-based support, (3) include diverse worker experiences as a point of reference when developing educational materials, (4) create opportunities for workers to become instructors and use their knowledge to advance the collective well-being of the workforce, (5) account for the lived experiences of the workers so those experiences can be recognized within the current social and political conditions of the

workforce, (6) establish a sense of trust and capacity in the workforce to realize their agency, (7) identify intersectional and collective experiences of the workforce, and (8) form a space in which the creative production of knowledge is cultivated with and for the workforce. Implementing these principles also allowed us to mediate our preconceived assumptions and biases about the workforce and further establish accountability in working with immigrant and Indigenous populations. We demonstrate how we implemented these principles in the methodology section of this study.

Literature Review | Los Académicos Dicen | Ki-niah sa-ré[6]

Diversity and Workplace Challenges

Because of the marginalized space that California farmworkers occupy, their ability to access and understand information pertaining to workplace rights and occupational health is paramount to their well-being. To achieve structural competency, we needed to examine the characteristics of the population and their experienced workplace challenges. The majority of California farmworkers are Latina/o (92 percent), non-US-born (86 percent) and noncitizens (77 percent); Mexican-born immigrants make up the majority of farmworkers (California Research Bureau 2013). Among those, there has recently been an exponential increase in Indigenous farmworkers. For example, in 1993, only 7 percent of Mexican-born immigrants identified as Indigenous whereas by 1998, the population increased to 29 percent (Mines, Nichols, and Runsten 2010).

Mexico is an ethnically diverse country with many different languages, customs, and cultures (Fox and Rivera-Salgado 2004). The Mexican government recognizes sixty-eight Indigenous languages (INEGI 2015), and approximately twenty-three Indigenous Mexican languages are spoken among California farmworkers. Though the majority of farmworkers speak

Mixteco, Zapoteco, or Triqui (Mines, Nichols, and Runsten 2010), there are dialectal variations among those languages. Since immigrant, Indigenous farmworkers from Mexico have varying Spanish speaking, reading, and writing abilities, communication needs are not uniform throughout the workforce.

Because of the physical nature of the work and the sociopolitical marginalization of agricultural workers, California farmworkers experience various workplace challenges. The most salient workplace experiences are (a) poverty wages, (b) harsh work conditions, and a (c) lack of healthcare coverage. The physical nature of the job exposes farmworkers to various occupational risks and hazards, including work accidents, pesticide-related illnesses, musculoskeletal and soft-tissue disorders, and respiratory or reproductive health problems (Farquhar et al. 2008; Mobed, Gold, and Schenker 1992; Villarejo et al. 2000). Occupational risks and hazards are cumulative and increase as farmworkers get older (Varney 2017; Holmes 2013), and public benefits, including Medicaid, remain largely inaccessible for farmworkers (Rosenbaum and Shin 2005).

For Indigenous farmworkers, challenges in the workplace are exacerbated by longstanding racial and class discrimination. The colonization of Mexico and the United States established racial and social hierarchies resulting in the exploitation and disenfranchisement of Indigenous Peoples (Fox and Rivera-Salgado 2004; Rivera-Salgado and Escala Rabadán 2004; Hester 2015), accompanied by higher poverty rates, lower educational outcomes, and higher infant mortality rates (Garcia and Sanjuan 2013; Mines, Nichols, and Runsten 2010). A representative study of California Indigenous farmworkers found that one-third were earning less than the minimum wage, and they were more likely than non-Indigenous farmworkers to experience wage stagnation (California Research Bureau 2013; Fox and Rivera-Salgado 2004; Garcia and Sanjuan 2013). Lower educational outcomes are also more likely among Indigenous

Peoples due to their inequitable access to quality education (Villarejo et al. 2000; Kresge 2007). In comparison to other ethnic groups, Indigenous farmworkers also experience more prejudiced attitudes both within and outside the workplace (Hester 2015; Oaxacalifornian Reporting Team 2013).

Best Policies and Practices

To respond to these sociopolitical and economic realities, advancing language access for Indigenous populations requires developing a multimethod, popular education approach that is grounded in the work of ethnic and cultural community groups. Whenever possible, practitioners and stakeholders need to work directly with Indigenous populations to solicit feedback on services and how resources could be more helpful (Rivera-Salgado and Escala Rabadán 2004).[7] Central to these efforts, practitioners and stakeholders need to develop structurally competent approaches that affirm diverse perspectives and seek to codevelop resources with the served population (Jenks 2011).

Unfortunately, cultural competency is generally the approach used by practitioners and service providers, which may or may not include a popular education model that seeks to codevelop resources with the population. The majority of scholarship pertaining to cultural competency praxis for immigrant and Indigenous populations has been conducted with the goal of providing better services in the fields of social work, healthcare, education, and law enforcement (Hester 2015). Though this research has helped practitioners and stakeholders understand and develop culturally competent approaches in their fields, a critical examination of how sociopolitical histories and structural inequalities influence providers' engagement in the process is not generally a component of cultural competency training (Beagan 2003; Beach et al. 2005; Carpenter-Song, Nordquest Schwallie, and Longhofer 2007; Hester 2015; Kleinman and

Benson 2006; Kumas-Tan et al. 2007; Shaw 2005; Taylor 2003). For example, "The Strategic Plan for Language Access in California" (Judicial Council of California 2015) presented a statewide language access plan for all "Limited English Proficient" participants in California's court system. However, the report does not consider how the court system has historically displayed prejudice toward immigrants and Indigenous Peoples nor the racist court rulings that gave rise to the need for these policies. This limitation is particularly significant to our study and serves as our point of departure.

Moving beyond cultural and social stereotyping requires an intentional decolonization effort on behalf of the educator. In developing our research process, we responded to the limitations Rebecca Hester (2012, 2015) identified in the current practices of cultural competency work by realizing structural humility research practices that are grounded in decolonial frameworks. We reject the belief that Eurocentric modes of communication and knowledge production are inherently better, universally understood, or encouraging of our collective well-being as a society. To reject this belief is also to recognize that we have been socialized to adopt Eurocentric modes of communication; that erasure (conquest) of our Indigenous past has been detrimental to the Latin American diaspora and has resulted in exploitation and violence toward Indigenous Peoples.

We committed to accomplish the following in our research process: (a) identify existing inequalities, per the experiences of farmworkers, to advance parity between the holder of knowledge (LWDA) and California farmworkers; (b) provide opportunities for educators (LWDA service providers) to understand their biases, subjectivities, and cultural preferences and examine how those influence modes of production (educational materials); (c) provide opportunities for educators (LWDA service providers) to acknowledge their limitations, the

damaging effects of assuming superior knowledge, and their race- and class-based assumptions about themselves and their respective employers; and (d) instill and affirm worker agency. As practitioners working for and with immigrant and Indigenous populations, we earnestly responded to Hester's call to not minimize cultural differences and to destabilize the othering of immigrant and Indigenous populations. This study builds upon the most recent structural competency practices for immigrant and Indigenous populations by actualizing a decolonial methodological and epistemological research approach.

Methodology | Nuestra Habilidad | Ni-thad sí a-mí stah- chuu[8]

Overview of Study

In an effort to better inform California farmworkers about their labor rights and workplace health and safety information, LWDA requested that the UCLA Labor Center conduct an evaluation of their educational resources.[9] We[10] developed a two-phase qualitative study that comprised the evaluation process. In the first phase, we implemented a comprehensive content analysis process to examine (a) the readability of text-based materials; (b) message, implicit assumptions, and linguistic nuance; (c) scope of translation; and (d) the capacity and accessibility of educational resources. We used the research findings to inform the second phase of the research process: focus groups with California labor agency staff, community advocacy organizations, and immigrant and Indigenous farmworkers of mestizo immigrant or Indigenous Mexican origin. Findings from the assessment provided LWDA and its affiliated labor agencies with recommendations on how to best revise and develop educational resources for California farmworkers.

Conceptualizing a Structurally Competent Research Approach

To begin the content analysis, we first requested that LWDA and its affiliated labor agencies provide us with the educational resources that California farmworkers needed to access. A total of eighty-six educational resources were identified, and we cataloged these by identifying (a) where each educational resource was located, (b) how each resource could be accessed, and (c) what languages each resource had been translated into. The purpose of cataloging all educational resources was to understand what tools and abilities farmworkers needed to access information (e.g., the internet, a computer, familiarity with labor laws, or the ability to interface with a service provider or agency) and which populations had information available to them in their native languages.

During this phase of the research process, we also searched for evaluation models that were rooted in critical theoretical frameworks and developed to support Indigenous populations. Since there were no existing models that suited our research objectives, we outlined the guiding principles of Paulo Freire's (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and CRT with the intent of integrating those frameworks into our methodology and building on the insights of the structural competency concept. For example, the majority of educational resources that we received from LWDA were text-based. Because Indigenous languages are oral, and communication is not text-based, our theoretical perspective allowed us to recognize that Indigenous populations were disenfranchised from the onset, and our methodology needed to address this. We also understood that our ability to authenticate structural humility would be based on our ability to work in collaboration with immigrant and Indigenous farmworkers.

We selected forty-six educational resources for our sample (53 percent of the total). We elected to evaluate all of the Spanish educational resources because they constituted an appropriate sample (thirty-seven) of the educational materials and, given the importance of

understanding cultural and linguistic barriers, evaluating translated materials allowed for a more meaningful engagement with resources that had been developed for nonnative English speakers. To determine how the Spanish resources could be translated into Indigenous languages in a way that supported the needs of the population, we conducted focus groups with mestizo and Indigenous populations to discuss our findings, generate recommendations, and amplify marginalized perspectives. We began the content analysis process by developing a five-step process: (1) determine *classification and topic*, (2) determine *topic and engagement*, (3) assess *readability*, (4) conduct *critical analysis of educational materials*, and (5) conduct *final evaluation.*

Phase 1: The Structural Competency Tool and Evaluation Process

We first identified and categorized the educational resources for workers in the *classification and topic* section of the evaluation tool to catalog the resource into five main categories (text, image, infographic, audio, and video) that supported a series of subsequent questions about how the content was presented (See Figure 1). We assessed the general topic and whether it was indeed an educational resource by reviewing (where possible) the title, summary, introduction, main content, and conclusion. If any of these sections communicated that the resource's purpose was to depart knowledge, we proceeded to complete the analysis.

INSERT FIGURE 1

The second step, the *topic and engagement* section, examined the material topic(s) and method(s) in which the content was presented and engaged the workforce (See Figure 2). This step included determining the length of the text, cataloging accompanying images and infographics, assessing the organization of the content, checking for LWDA affiliate logos and contact information, and providing an aesthetic description of the resource. The aesthetic

description included whether text-based materials used colors, emphasized key words, and organized fonts and design elements to support access. This phase of the analysis also included an assessment of which and how many key terms were used and if they were defined.

INSERT FIGURE 2

We examined the *readability* of the educational resources and used readability scales in English and Spanish to confirm the reading grade level, the level of education needed to understand the material, and the reading ease of each educational resource (See Figure 3). When the text was longer than two paragraphs, we examined three separate samples from the resource. We noted all disparate reading levels between texts and assessed the quality of translation from English to Spanish per our native Spanish speaking, reading, and writing abilities.

INSERT FIGURE 3

For the *critical analysis of educational materials* phase of the analysis, we developed twenty-four questions pertaining to cultural biases, assumptions, worker experiences, and accessibility of the educational resources (See Figure 4). This step in the evaluation process allowed us to assess explicit and implicit messages and was a key step to operationalizing structural humility in the first phase of the methodology. Guided by our theoretical orientation, the questions not only provided an opportunity to interface with the educational resources and understand how the workers were disempowered but also illustrated how the workforce was being characterized by the labor agencies, which was especially important in identifying ethnocentric modes of communication. This phase of the analysis allowed us to think about how we could collaborate with the workforce while simultaneously considering farmworkers' sociopolitical context.

INSERT FIGURE 4

For the final step in our evaluation tool, we generated *final evaluation* summaries for each educational resource, summarizing the purpose of each resource, its strengths in successfully departing knowledge, its limitations in accessibility for immigrant and Indigenous farmworkers, and our initial recommendations on how to improve the resource and advance access for the workforce. This five-step process and its respective subsections constituted the Structural Competency Evaluation Tool. As the figures illustrate, where possible we included closed and open-ended questions in text boxes to be as descriptive of the content as possible while cataloging information about the educational resources.

As we developed components of the tool, the research team had ongoing conversations about how we defined our operating terms. These conversations mitigated misinterpretations in the content analysis and assisted us in amplifying our theoretical orientation. We initially developed the tool in a shared Excel document using a subsample of five educational resources. After piloting the tool, we had a series of meetings to assess where the tool failed to evaluate identified aspects of the resources or did not serve to amplify our theoretical orientation. We examined how we espoused our theoretical orientation, how our theoretical orientation revealed our own biases and assumptions, and the extent to which the evaluation process considered the socioeconomic and political reality of California farmworkers. Three researchers did individual evaluations of each of the five resources, and we compared them to understand differences in perspective and how we were defining the tool's terms. As a result of these conversations, we revised the tool three times. To help guide consensus among the research team, we consistently deferred to our theoretical orientation, which helped us revise the evaluation components and add additional content analysis questions. Similar to an intercoder reliability process, our process resulted in a collective understanding and agreement on how to apply our evaluation scheme.

The finalized evaluation tool was uploaded from Excel into a Qualtrics survey to support the process of assigning numerical values to the qualitative data and generate descriptive statistics. The descriptive statistics included the number of text-based materials, the average grade level for all text-based resources, the number of images used per resource, and the number of infographics developed in support of text-based material. A total of forty-six resources were evaluated.

We analyzed the accompanying qualitative data, including the *critical analysis of educational materials,* to identify salient themes as they pertained to structural humility, including ethnocentric modes of communication, embedded racial and social hierarchies, and communication power dynamics. To interpret the qualitative data, we employed Richard Boyatzi's (1998) categorical analysis to conduct both inductive and deductive coding. The a priori themes were the eight guiding principles derived from our theoretical frameworks, Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and CRT (See Figure 4), that served to operationalize structural humility. Thereafter, deductive codes emerged respective to each category, and the thematic analysis produced additional codes that expanded across the key concepts. The additional codes were (1) ethnocentric modes of communication, (2) racial hierarchies, (3) social hierarchies, (4) workplace power dynamics, (5) communication power dynamics, and (6) workplace vulnerabilities.

Findings generated from the textual data analysis revealed that educational resources had not been developed with the needs of immigrant and Indigenous populations in mind. In this section, we share selected findings to demonstrate (a) how educational materials reified racial and social hierarchies and structural inequality and (b) how we used this information in the second phase of the study to disrupt communication power imbalances.

Illustrative of how racial and social hierarchies were maintained when communicating with California farmworkers, all of the educational resources that we identified and evaluated were text-based and did not have accompanying audio or video components. None of the materials were translated into Indigenous Mexican languages nor were they considerate of oral-based Indigenous languages, such as Mixteco and Triqui. In addition, fifty-four percent of the materials did not have accompanying visuals, such as images or infographics, to support what was being communicated or to communicate independently of the text. The supermajority of educational resources assumed that workers have the agency to file complaints and follow up with the appropriate agencies and are culturally comfortable with the bureaucratic nature of labor disputes or violations. The supermajority of educational resources were developed to aid the individual worker and did not seek to build the capacity of the workforce to support one another or inform workers about how they can support one another.

Salient findings from the *critical analysis of educational materials* section found that, for the most part, workers were assumed to be capable of advocating for themselves within their fields and enduring workplace challenges using the information provided. The materials did not provide workers with information on what to do if they felt too intimidated to file formal workplace complaints or did not have the resources to sustain workplace hardship (e.g., wage theft). Further demonstrative of this dynamic was the implicit message that was consistently communicated in the materials from various agencies: that it is the workers' responsibility to identity labor violations and take action to rectify the situation. This position reinforces a hierarchy in which employers can take advantage of workers, and the agencies are not held accountable for ensuring that employers comply with labor laws.

Phase II: Focus Groups: Engaging the Community in a Critical Reflection

Following the completion of the textual data analysis, we worked closely with LWDA to organize five focus groups with California labor agency staff, community advocacy organizations, and immigrant farmworkers of mestizo or Indigenous Mexican origin.[11] We began the process by developing separate objectives for each focus group and a format that would allow the operationalization of structural humility. For the focus groups with LWDA staff, we concentrated on demystifying the concepts of structural competency and structural humility while establishing a process for service providers to critically think about how their respective organizational practices divorced California farmworkers from the knowledge production process. With the community advocacy organizations, we sought to understand how LWDA could better collaborate with organizations that work directly with California farmworkers, elevating the organizations' perspective and ability to build capacity within the workforce. In the focus groups with immigrant farmworkers, we facilitated an in-depth conversation on how LWDA did not understand their lived workplace experiences and how service providers could better address workplace concerns and develop educational resources that would be helpful. The focus groups with California farmworkers included Indigenous interpreters in Mixteco and Triqui so that our presentation was translated and participants could have in-depth discussions in their native languages.

We used popular education techniques in every focus group. We described our role as researchers in a manner that encapsulated our theoretical orientation and personal motivations for supporting LWDA-affiliated labor agencies to better communicate with California farmworkers. After introducing ourselves, we established a collaborative conversation by affirming participants' agency to improve communication efforts and providing them the opportunity to share their reasons for attending the workshop and what they hoped to accomplish. As a

collective, we agreed on the focus group objective and then transitioned to presenting our communication evaluation process and research findings. Our presentation included information on the sociopolitical realities for California farmworkers and what researchers and stakeholders needed to consider when working with the population. In addition to a PowerPoint presentation, we used accompanying image, video, and audio components—an infographic about our content analysis process, Indigenous language videos developed by a California farmworker collective, and sample public radio announcements in Indigenous languages—to illustrate alternate communication approaches and establish opportunities for participants to further engage with key concepts. To ensure that participants understood the major findings from the Structural Competency Evaluation Tool, we had participants conduct their own evaluation of educational resources from their respective organizations. This process allowed California labor agency staff and community advocacy representatives to examine their knowledge-producing processes, the accessibility of their developed materials, and the extent to which they engaged with California farmworkers to develop the resources. And it was an opportunity for California farmworkers to learn more about the resources developed by different organizations and address how the materials were and were not helpful to them.

Recommendations to the LWDA | El Proceso de Descolonizar | K'exoj le tzij[12]

To illustrate how structural humility was authenticated in the focus groups, we share selected recommendations that were generated as a result of the focus groups. The recommendations expand upon the workplace vulnerabilities initially identified in the Structural Competency Evaluation Tool and formed the basis for reconceptualizing educational resources for California farmworkers. These recommendations are taken from the report *Farmworkers' Communication Strategy, Language, and Training: Supporting the Development of Educational*

Resources for the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency (Rivera-Salgado et al. 2018).

Recommendations from California Labor Agency Staff

- Conduct an inventory of the resources being used by various departments, and create materials that are available to all subagency staff. Given the challenges in coordinating efforts between agency departments, it is important that LWDA take the lead and establish a mechanism for communicating between agencies so staff can keep each other updated on their efforts, current campaigns, and opportunities to collaborate.
- Establish a new organizational culture with all subagencies that prioritizes developing structurally competent educational materials. Allocate additional resources to train and support staff to redevelop materials. Increase staffing levels to accommodate new priorities and actualize the following objectives: (1) increase in-person availability for the workforce, and (2) coordinate an effective process to disseminate resources to the workforce. Develop a system in which staff who seek additional training and implement best practices are recognized by the agency and supported by supervisors.
- Digitize future educational materials, and redevelop current educational resources in various formats, including (a) posters, (b) social media posts (i.e., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.), (c) public service announcements for radio and television, and (d) videos that showcase the experience of workers. Establish formal partnerships with Indigenous radio and television networks to promote agency services and disseminate information to the Indigenous community.
- Facilitate and support establishing relationships with community and labor-advocacy groups that work with immigrant and Indigenous populations. Collaborate with

community organizations to develop strategic efforts that are mutually supportive and beneficial.

- Contract with organizations, like the community-based and advocacy organizations that were part of the focus groups, that offer effective translation services and are aware of the linguistic and cultural nuances that need to be considered when developing materials in oral, Indigenous languages. As LWDA develops resources to support staff, prioritize trainings for staff on the following topics: (a) which resources are most helpful to immigrant and Indigenous farmworkers; (b) the different types of social services that are available; (c) how to establish trust with non-Spanish-speaking, Indigenous populations; (d) how to communicate agency roles to the workforce; (e) the impact of agency materials on workers; and (f) how immigration status affects workers' ability to engage with services. To develop the trainings, consult with the community and advocacy organizations that are experts on these topics.

Recommendations from Community Advocacy Organizations

- Learn which local and national organizations work with immigrant and Indigenous populations, and set up informational meetings and workshops to familiarize community and labor-advocacy groups with agency services and resources. Seek out the best ways to collaborate with community organizations and reaffirm the importance of the work that nonagency groups are doing, often with limited resources. Establish mutually beneficial partnerships, rather than just adding to the organizations' workloads. To begin, reach out to the organization partners that participated in the focus groups; researchers have longstanding relationships with the organizations and can help broker these relationships.

- Develop a series of informational workshops for community and labor-advocacy groups that demystify the role of the agencies and create a space for dialogue about specific projects and feedback from workshop participants.
- Be mindful of the existing racial and social hierarchies faced by not only immigrant and Indigenous farmworkers but also community and labor-advocacy representatives, who are often part of the Indigenous community or former farmworkers. Treat community organization representatives as experts, and affirm their sense of belonging and participation.
- Implement the following communication practices: (a) develop workshop resources that are visual in nature and at a primary-education reading level; (b) work with translators from the community to account for linguistic and cultural nuances and ensure accurate translations; (c) ensure that materials do not perpetuate stereotypes; and (d) format resources so workers can easily access and carry resources in agricultural settings. Conduct workshops using a train-the-trainer format so attendees can further disseminate the information.

Recommendations from California Farmworkers

- First and foremost, engage with the workers as much as possible within their place of work to not only increase representatives' understanding of the role of the organization and services provided but also help promote a safer workplace in which the employer is responsible for complying with California labor laws. When agency representatives are present, they are in a better position to hold the employer accountable, and the employer will see that labor representatives are enforcing California labor codes.

- Partner with community organizations to present in-person workshops that are translated appropriately for the workforce and that demystify information, provide a collective understanding of current policies, and establish a safe space for community dialogue about workplace concerns.
- Create additional policies and processes to ensure that workers are receiving the necessary information, and ensure that farmworkers have actually received training before they are asked to sign documents to that effect. Prioritize employer compliance to relieve vulnerable workers from having to self-advocate and risking employer retaliation. Create a mechanism to ensure that private contracting groups hiring farmworkers are also providing information.
- Develop educational resources in multiple formats, as exemplified by the California Division of Occupational Safety and Health's "Shade, Water, and Rest" campaign. Use multiple formats, including: informational poster boards; pocket-sized leaflets; billboards; radio broadcasts, particularly in Indigenous languages; public service announcements; podcasts; social media; informational videos for various platforms; and television programming. Note that, regardless of primary language, the supermajority of focus group participants had Facebook accounts and used it frequently to share information and remain connected.
- Conduct workshops with language interpretation in smaller group settings on an ongoing basis and promote them using established networks of communication within the workforce. Use educational materials that not only provide information for individual workers but also encourage and support workforce solidarity to create safer work environments.

Recommendations from All Focus Groups

All focus group participants spoke about the current sociopolitical, anti-immigrant climate and how that impacts worker access to educational resources. Specifically, the increased policing of immigrant communities has perpetuated fear and made immigrant and Indigenous farmworkers less willing to seek information from governmental agencies or attend informational workshops. Though California is characterized as an immigrant-friendly state, farmworkers work and reside in counties that have historically been politically conservative.

To address these issues, clarify how the LWDA and its subagencies support immigrant populations, emphasizing that regardless of immigration status, workers have labor rights and access to resources. Do not collaborate with US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) or make personal information available to them. Promote opportunities to learn more about Indigenous culture and participate in community events that celebrate Indigenous heritage.

Discussion and Conclusion | Resistir La Jerarquía | Le kate gat disha cha, ka na gat neda[13]

Through this study, we were able to establish a structurally competent point of reference and realize structural humility, advancing the breadth and depth of the concept by implementing two additional critical theoretical frameworks throughout the research process. The first phase of the study allowed us to develop a mechanism to identify key workplace vulnerabilities, including structures and systems that perpetuate inequalities for the workforce, and how workers are characterized in educational resources produced by affiliated labor agencies. The second phase of the study, where we emphasized structural humility, allowed for a nuanced understanding of how service providers can better support California farmworkers and build coalition-based support as well as how to use worker experiences as a starting point to develop educational materials. Both phases of the study recognized the sociopolitical context of farmworkers and

amplified the lived experiences of the workforce to develop a structural competency approach that required an authentic shift in the framework used by institutions to communicate with vulnerable populations. Without using a structural competency framework, providers and stakeholders analyzing and responding to labor rights disparities may be focusing solely on individual needs or reinforcing cultural stereotypes, rather than examining how larger social structures perpetuate disparities.

By employing a decolonial framework and strengthening structural humility, we advanced structural competency scholarship and praxis. As scholars who also espouse a critical orientation, we did not limit our research process to reviewing best policies and practices, but rather, we facilitated a process through which practitioners and educators could understand how their efforts were received by historically marginalized populations. By grounding our concept of structural humility within critical frameworks, we ensured that our praxis had depth and could affect actual change.

Social science frameworks can enable service providers and governmental institutions to recognize the structural influences on their own organization and practices and develop a deliberate plan to overcome those shortcomings. Critical frameworks can also help state service providers attend and respond to the influence of socioeconomic structures both within and beyond their formal roles as enforcers of polices and service providers. In this case, structural humility serves as the caution for providers and state agency professionals against making assumptions about the role of socioeconomic structures in Indigenous farmworkers' lives and instead encourages collaboration with the served communities to develop an understanding of and respond to structural vulnerabilities (Quesada 2012; Quesada, Arreola, and Khoury 2014; Quesada, Kain Hart, and Bourgiois 2011).

By operationalizing structural humility, service providers and practitioners in state institutions can better identify structural power relations, practices, and policies that exacerbate inequity for historically disadvantaged populations. As a result of our work, LWDA and its affiliated labor agencies are working intentionally with immigrant and Indigenous farmworkers, as well as nonprofit and community advocacy organizations, to develop resources that truly respond to the needs of Indigenous farmworkers in California.

Conducting collaborative work with historically marginalized communities, such as Indigenous farmworkers in California, is a complicated process that necessitates more work. However, this work must be done and must be done with the intent to decolonize. Decolonizing academic research begins by asking for permission to enter other people's space while affirming that they are the experts, intellectuals, and knowledge producers. Even as we finalized copy edits for this study, we had to ask a team of Indigenous interpreters to check our English to Spanish to Mixtec, Triqui, Zapotec, and Mayan translations. Not only did they teach us how our translations were incorrect, but They also offered phrases in their languages that better encapsulated our intentions. To acknowledge Indigenous existence without a colonized lens is to engage and defer to their expertise. Research must always interrogate the power structures that separate academics from community collaborators and research participants. From the outset, we must remember that the process of knowledge production has failed to center and amplify the experiences and voices of Indigenous farmworkers. If we do not speak the languages of the people we are researching, we must recognize that limitation; because colonization has subjugated Indigenous culture, language, and their very existence, our methodology is inherently limited. A liberatory, decolonized research approach deconstructs the hierarchy of knowledge production by requiring that community organizations and research participants act as

collaborators and partners. As the Zapotec intellectual Odilia Romero explained, "*Bene shtill shla gune ratgr gushalgshu disha chego concha bi gat disha checho da bguan bene gurase checho, le kate gat disha cha, ka na gat neda*." White people have to open the path and talk to us so that our word will not die, because when my word dies, I will die too.

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[1] In the tradition of structural humility, we use main headings to (a) differentiate between sections and (b) illustrate the nuance of translating from English to Spanish to an Indigenous language. "En el Principio | Aa yee nii?" translates to "In the Beginning | Are you alive in your house?." The latter is a formal Mixtec phrase from San Juan Mixtepec, Oaxaca, Mexico, used to greet people when visiting their home. This question can be interpreted as "*¿Está vivo?*" or "Are you alive? Do you exist?) "Yee nii" also implies that you know the owner of the home and that you are recognizing that you know they are at home so the best literal approximation for that is "are you are alive?" (*¿usted está vivo?*). The translation here denotes that we acknowledge each other's existence without a colonized lens, and we greet each other in an Indigenous tradition from the beginning. As explained by Claudio Hernández, Mixtec graduate student from San Juan Mixtepec, Oaxaca, Mexico, residing in Los Angeles, with contributions by Celerina Patricia Sánchez Santiago (Mesón de Guadalupe, Oaxaca) and Israel Vásquez-Nicolas (Santa Maria Yucunicoco, Oaxaca).

[2] Farmworkers earn on average between $12,500 and $14,999 a year; farmworker families average $17,500 to $19,999 (Hernandez and Gabbard 2019).

[3] "En el fil" (in the fields) is a colloquial phrase in Spanish referring to both the location and nature of farm work.

[4] The LWDA is an executive branch agency, and the secretary is a member of the governor's cabinet. This agency oversees seven major departments, boards, and panels that serve California businesses and workers, including the Agricultural Labor Relations Board, Department of Industrial Relations, Employment Development Department, California Workforce Development Board, Public Employment Relations Board, Unemployment Insurance Appeals Board, and Employment Training Panel.

[5] "Sin Colonizar | Chala gunebia gio?" translates to "Without Colonizing | Why do they have to boss us around?." The latter is part of the longer Zapoteco phrase from Oaxaca, Mexico: *Shala gun'chu Shabab bichen bene shtill shakde chala gunebia gio; bia shala gun'chu chabab bichen shagkde nakesh bene que'chio* (*Tenemos que pensar porque las personas blancas creen que nos tienen que mandar. Tenemos que pensar porque ellos piensa que son superiores a nosotros*. We have to wonder why white people think they can boss us around and why they think they are superior to us.) This translation establishes that in order to listen and understand, non-Indigenous people have to decolonize their minds and interrogate the power structures that separate us. As explained by Odilia Romero, Zapotec interpreter from San Bartolome Zoogocho, Oaxaca, residing in Los Angeles.

[6] "Los Académicos Dicen | Ki-niah sa-ré" translates to "The Academics Say | Be very observant." The latter is a Triqui phrase from Oaxaca, Mexico. This translation suggests that, as we review scholarship, we observe how knowledge has been constructed to center the experiences of Indigenous farmworkers. As explained by Norma Trinidad, Triqui interpreter from San Martin Ituyoso, Oaxaca, residing in Fresno, California.

[7] These best practices were also shared in a community workshop, "Cultural Sensitivity: Capacity to Understand, Respect, and Value Other Cultures," conducted by Leoncio Vasquez for the Pajaro Valley Unified School District in Watsonville, California, in 2017.

[8] "Nuestra Habilidad | Ni-thad sí a-mí stah- chuu" translates to "Our Ability | I Don't Speak Triqui." The latter Triqui phrase means literally "I don't speak the words of the people of the town" (*No hablo la palabra de la gente del pueblo*). This translation acknowledges that our methodology is limited because we have minimal Indigenous language abilities. As explained by Norma Trinidad, Triqui interpreter from San Martin Ituyoso, Oaxaca, residing in Fresno, California.

[9] In particular, Jennifer Hernandez, the past associate secretary for farmworker and immigrant services at the LWDA, is an advocate for advancing equitable services for immigrant and indigenous populations.

[10] The research team was comprised of a principal investigator, two authors, a postdoctoral fellow, a research coordinator, and two undergraduate research assistants. The authors are labor scholars who espouse emancipatory perspectives and have extensive experience working with immigrant populations, including Indigenous Peoples.

[11] The LWDA and state labor agency focus groups took place on 10 May 2018. Nineteen participants represented the following state labor agencies: Department of Industrial Relations, Agricultural Labor Relations Board, and the Employment Development Department. Two focus groups were conducted with partner organizations on 12 May 2018 and 18 May 2018. Fifteen participants represented the following partner organizations: Mixteco/Indígena Community Organizing Project, Puente, Centro Binacional para el Desarrollo Indígena Oaxaqueño, California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation, and the Red de Justicia Ambiental. A total of nineteen farmworkers participated in these focus groups; nine spoke an indigenous language.

[12] "El Proceso de Descolonizar | K'exoj le tzij" translates to "The Process of Decolonizing | Replace that word." The latter is a Mayan K'iche' phrase that embodies the message of change (*K'exoj*) from the Central Highlands of

Guatemala. This translation suggests that in order to realize structural humility, service providers need to decolonize their communication systems and processes to realize change for the Indigenous community. As explained by Policarpo Chaj, K'iche' interpreter from Guatemala residing in Los Angeles.

[13] "Resistir Las Jerarquías | Le kate gat disha cha, ka na gat neda" translates to "Resist Hierarchies | When my word dies, I will die too." The latter is part of a longer Zapoteco phrase, *Bene shtill shla gune ratgr gushalgshu disha chego concha bi gat disha checho da bguan bene gurase checho, le kate gat disha cha, ka na gat neda* (*La gente blanca tiene que abrir el camino para platicar con nosotros y nuestra palabra no muera, la palabra que nos dejaron los antepasados. Porque cuando se muera mi palabra entonces moriré yo*. White people have to open the path and talk to us so that our word will not die, because when my word dies, I will die too). This translation states that in order to move forward with Indigenous populations non-Indigenous people need to stop using communication systems and processes that reinforce racial and social hierarchies. To use Indigenous languages and modes of communication is to actively resist conquest. As explained by Odilia Romero, Zapotec interpreter from San Bartolome Zoogocho, Oaxaca residing in Los Angeles.