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# Reimagining a framework for parent involvement in South Africa: Preparing preservice teachers

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**Background:** School-family engagement significantly influences educational outcomes, yet South African teachers notice limited involvement from parents, particularly in impoverished communities. Teacher education can play a significant role in preparing teachers to work with parents and communities.

**Aim:** This article promotes Community Cultural Wealth theory as a community-based approach to educational support that contrasts with the conventional view of parent involvement, which often overlooks collectivist African cultures.

**Setting:** Teacher education in South African tertiary institutions.

**Methods:** Drawing from a decade of literature, this conceptual study utilised EBSCOhost, and Google Scholar databases, as well as reference mining to select peer-reviewed English articles relevant to teacher preparation for school -family partnerships.

**Results:** The analysis highlights how the concept of parent involvement should be decolonised and reimagined through the lens of Community Cultural Wealth and offers examples from the Global South and pedagogical tools for teacher education.

**Conclusion:** This article makes the assertion that as long as poverty remains unaddressed, the perception of the uninvolved parent will endure as a consequence of systemic economic challenges. However, by embracing the framework suggested in this article, teacher educators can equip preservice teachers with the skills and perspectives necessary to foster meaningful collaboration with families and communities. The article concludes by highlighting the transformative potential of Community Cultural Wealth theory in promoting equitable and inclusive educational practices.

**Contribution:** This study underscores the importance of cultivating a holistic understanding of family engagement among preservice teachers and challenges the classification of impoverished families as 'uninvolved,' advocating for a broader examination of their assets beyond traditional metrics.

**Keywords:** preservice teachers; parent involvement; community cultural wealth theory; community model of educational support; family engagement.

## Introduction

Parent involvement has long been upheld as a critical component of children's educational success (Epstein 2018; Howard et al. 2023; Jeynes 2007; Kaplan Toren 2013; Park & Holloway 2017; Seginer, 2006; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil 2014; Willemse et al. 2018). However, the way parental involvement has been conceptualised often fails to account for collectivist cultures that characterise much of the African context. The South African context for one, involves complex kinship systems and family structures that extend beyond narrow biological ties. Given high rates of parental absence, unemployment, and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and/or acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) impacts, grandparents, relatives, siblings, and child-headed households often share caregiving duties (Bojuwoye & Sylvester 2014; Myende & Nhlumayo 2020). Redefining parent involvement thus requires embracing this 'social parenthood' within communities and acknowledging the funds of care, knowledge, and aspirations pooled within these intricate support networks (Kruger 2022; Mbhiza & Nkambule 2023). Applying notions of parental involvement rooted in individualistic Western norms can be problematic in African settings as it often measures involvement against white middle-class ideals of engagement such as volunteering in class, attending school meetings, and helping with homework (Latunde 2017). This potentially pathologises African modes of community and family support, which manifest differently but are no less meaningful or valuable.

**Note:** Special Collection: Interrogating Coloniality in South African Primary Schools.

Discourse on parent involvement in South Africa seems to perpetuate certain assumptions and power imbalances between teachers and parents, whereby teachers are positioned as empowering deficient parents (Bayat & Madyibi 2022; Segoe & Bisschoff, 2019). Therefore, the need is particularly acute to disrupt white colonial legacies that still permeate much educational policy and practice (Hayes, Lomer & Taha 2024; Mbhiza & Nkambule 2023). In order to decolonise conceptions of parental participation in the African context, it is important to critically analyse and reimagine notions of involvement through a lens that honours indigenous communal assets, knowledge systems and child-rearing practices. In this article, Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) theory is discussed as one such lens.

Therefore, there is a call for higher education institutions to make more deliberate attempts at preparing teachers to form and sustain home, school and community partnerships (Epstein 2018; Nathans et al. 2022; Walker 2019). Teacher training can facilitate critical reflection on attitudes and beliefs about families and better equip preservice teachers to collaborate across lines of cultural difference (Freed, Benavides & Huffling 2019; Paz-Albo, Jor'Dan & Hervás-Escobar, 2023; Smith & Sheridan 2019). One of the main goals of teacher education is to facilitate transformational learning that brings into awareness bias, misunderstanding and stereotypes that may hinder culturally competent interaction with families (Freed et al. 2019), and to prepare teachers to work with families as collaborators in education (Walton & Engelbrecht 2022). However, some argue that preservice teachers are not adequately trained for family engagement in schooling (Epstein 2018; Walker 2019). Nathans et al. (2022) likewise noted that building partnerships with parents and communities is not routinely included in teacher education. New teachers have also reported that they do not feel prepared to engage with families (D'Haem & Griswold 2017; Meehan & Meehan 2018; Tinajero, An & Tinajero 2023), especially with families from marginalised, poor communities (Auerbach 2011). However, the situation in South Africa is unclear. A review of the literature has revealed scant evidence of coursework on engaging with parents, even though parent involvement is consistently reported as a problem in education (Botha, De Jager & Evans, 2023; Mbhiza & Nkambule 2023).

The argument posits that, until poverty is effectively addressed, the narrative of the uninvolved parent will persist as a by-product of systemic economic challenges. There is thus a compelling need to shift our focus towards recognising the hidden wealth within so-called marginalised, disadvantaged, and economically challenged communities. I firstly discuss how models of parent involvement often used in research may not be adequate for the South African context. The literature shows that addressing teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards engaging with parents is crucial to developing school-family partnerships (Mathwasa & Okeke 2016; Munje & Mncube 2018). Secondly, I argue that preservice teachers need to leave the academy with a broader understanding of what it means to engage with families, and that they should understand the framework of CCW as a tool to enhance school-family partnerships. While additional research and exploration are needed to develop detailed strategies for this shift, the primary objective of this article is to champion a transformation in mindset within the educational teacher training discourse.

## Decolonising parent involvement

Parent involvement, parental educational support, family engagement, and school-family partnerships appear to be synonymous in the literature. This article contends that the concept of parent involvement, while commonly used, perpetuates a narrow focus on parents, particularly problematic in South Africa's collectivist culture where such focus may reinforce deficit perspectives. Despite synonyms like parental educational support and family engagement, 'parent involvement' is predominantly used, though the broader concept of school-family involvement is endorsed. Epstein's framework, notably the six types of parent involvement, is widely referenced, outlining crucial components such as parenting, communication, volunteering, home learning, decision-making, and community collaboration (Yamauchi et al. 2017).

Parenting recognises the role of parents in providing a nurturing and supportive environment at home, which directly influences a child's academic and social development. Communication between educators and parents is crucial for sharing information about a child's progress, school events, and academic expectations. Open lines of communication facilitate collaboration and mutual understanding. Parental involvement through volunteering activities can enrich the school community by providing additional support in classrooms, extracurricular activities, and events. Home learning recognises that parents play a significant role in supporting their child's learning outside of the classroom. This component emphasises the importance of creating a conducive environment for learning at home, including helping with homework, engaging in educational activities, and fostering a love for learning. Parents should have opportunities to participate in decision-making processes within the school community, contributing their insights and perspectives to important educational decisions that affect their children and the broader school community. Finally, collaboration with the broader community, including local organisations, businesses, and other community members, enriches the educational experience and provides additional resources and support for students and families. According to this definition, community collaboration emphasises acquiring external resources to support schools. However, a broader perspective that encompasses all significant individuals in a child's family network is needed. This fosters a more comprehensive support system for education.

However, much research still evaluates parent involvement primarily based on visible actions like volunteering and attending meetings, reflecting a Westernised lens that prioritises cultural and economic capital, often overlooking

less tangible but equally valuable forms of support. For instance, volunteering's impact on educational outcomes is debated (Segoe & Bisschoff, 2019). Critics note that such involvement often mirrors middle-class norms (De la Vega 2007), overlooking differences in educational support values (Auerbach 2011; Jacobs 2023). Many learners struggle with a middle-class learning model, while marginalised families face barriers like income, transport, and literacy (Edwards 2010). Blaming parents who do not engage traditionally ignores contextual realities (Knowles & Holmström 2013; López, Scribner & Mahitivanichcha 2001; Munje & Mncube 2018), and these negative perceptions are often perpetuated by teachers (Mbhiza & Nkambule 2023; Munje & Mncube 2018; Segoe & Bisschoff 2019).

Teacher education can play a significant role in preparing teachers to engage with families and communities, focussing on building and sustaining equitable relations with families as communities and not on the 'uninvolved parent' alone. Research has indicated that teachers who have been trained effectively in family engagement report improved attitudes, knowledge, and practices (Smith & Sheridan 2019). Therefore, globally there have been systemic efforts to prepare teachers more effectively. According to Ferrara (2017), 40 states in the United States (US) have policies that require teachers to do a course in parent involvement before they can obtain their teaching licence. These courses have been shown to have a significant improvement on teachers' family involvement practices (Ferrara 2017). An important aspect of the course was that it went beyond Epstein's six types of involvement. It was also important for students to learn about Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model and Moll's theory of family funds of knowledge. Also in the US, Epstein and Sanders (2006) found that 92% of preservice teachers indicated that the topic of parent involvement was briefly covered during their programme. In Europe, Thompson et al. (2018) explored parent involvement curricula for teachers in seven countries. A common finding was that every country emphasised the importance of preparing teachers for family engagement, but only Norway had a clear framework on how it was done. However, even though attempts are being made, many teachers still do not feel competent to work with families (Alaçam & Olgan 2019; Epstein & Sanders 2006). In addition, research in the Global South appears limited.

In South Africa, there is a predominant focus on preparing teachers for inclusive education, while comparatively less attention is given to equipping them for meaningful parent engagement. However, it can be argued that family-school partnerships are integral to inclusive education. Eleanor Lemmer's (2011) study, using a grounded theory approach, developed a framework to prepare teachers for effective family engagement. Her research, centred on in-service teachers, revealed key components emphasising collaborative, ongoing interaction with parents in relevant environments. Lemmer (2011) suggested that in-service teachers, with sustained engagement opportunities, are better suited for this role than preservice teachers who have limited time in host schools. This study proved transformative, challenging teachers' anecdotal knowledge and dispelling professional myths about 'difficult' parents. Given the significance of transforming perceptions and addressing bias in authentic family engagement (Freed et al. 2019), initiating this process during preservice training could be pivotal in enhancing teachers' readiness to work with families. Despite notable contributions from Van Wyk (2001) and Lemmer (2011), there appears to be limited further research on preparing South African teachers for more effective parental engagement in their students' learning.

In the following section, I highlight a notable shift in research on parent involvement, moving away from traditional perspectives towards a more comprehensive approach. This newer paradigm emphasises culturally responsive engagement with families and the recognition of their diverse funds of knowledge. Such asset-based approaches challenge the assumption of parental deficiency and aim to empower historically marginalised learners and families in educational settings (McQueen & Hobbs 2014). I advocate for preservice teachers to adopt a broader perspective on parent involvement, one that embraces a community model of educational support and integrates an understanding of CCW theory.

## A community model of educational support

Embracing a community-based model of educational support necessitates a paradigm shift away from entrenched heterosexist and patriarchal ideologies, which traditionally uphold the notion of a functional and successful family as comprising a mother, father, and child(ren), a prevailing societal norm (Ratele & Nduna 2018). It is apparent that family research has predominantly been influenced by Western constructs of family dynamics, often accentuating the significance of the paternal role while marginalising the contributions of other family members (Madhavan, Townsend & Garey 2008). Recent research conducted by Mncanca, Ramsaroop and Petersen (2021) has shown that teachers still harbour deeply conventional beliefs about the roles of mothers and fathers, especially in terms of educational engagement. Interestingly, there is compelling evidence to suggest that males, frequently acting as 'social fathers' rather than biological fathers, can play a pivotal role in supporting students' educational endeavours (Ratele, Shefer & Clowes 2012; Richter & Morrell 2006; Van den Berg & Makusha 2018).

In contrast, modern families can take on a multitude of diverse forms, as articulated by Davin (2016). These diverse family structures encompass the mobile family, characterised by frequent relocations and a flexible concept of home, as well as scenarios where grandparents, foster parents, and adoptive parents assume primary caregiving roles. Additionally, cross-cultural, multi-religious, or same-sex families are increasingly recognised, along with extended families that incorporate aunts, uncles, and cousins as integral components of the family unit. Reconstructed families emerge from remarriage and the inclusion of new

siblings, while in South Africa, child-headed households exist, with older siblings caring for younger ones in the absence or loss of parents. Furthermore, single-parent households, whether headed by a single mother or a single father, contribute to the diverse landscape of family structures, with single mothers being more prevalent as sole parental figures in the South African context, as noted by Bojuwoye and Sylvester (2014). The diversity of family structures in contemporary society emphasises the importance of acknowledging and appreciating the range of family experiences.

Recent research underscores the benefits of involving extended family members in children's education, particularly in African contexts. For example, in Nigeria, the Yoruba people uphold a strong tradition of communal education, where elders and extended family members actively contribute to the upbringing and education of children (Ogunola, 2018). Similarly, among the Baganda people in Uganda, extended family networks called *obuntubulamu* are instrumental in children's upbringing and education, reinforcing the significance of the extended family in African educational contexts (Kagoda 2010). These examples highlight the rich tapestry of family involvement in education across diverse African cultures. Furthermore, it is essential to acknowledge that contemporary models of parent involvement often originate from Western assumptions about the nuclear family, potentially leading to the unfair categorisation of various family structures as dysfunctional. The African concept of family is more intricate, with the involvement of extended family members like grandparents and siblings being crucial (Baquedano-López, Alexander & Hernandez 2013). Although extended family members are important, some have highlighted that they are seldom involved in research on parent involvement (Howard et al. 2023). To cultivate a more inclusive and culturally sensitive approach, it is imperative to avoid narrow perspectives when assessing parents or families and to consider the unique context of African communities. Embracing a community-oriented approach to educational support can better accommodate the diverse family structures and enhance educational outcomes for children in these settings.

## Community cultural wealth as an asset-based approach to advance a community model of educational support

The concepts of funds of knowledge and CCW emerged as asset-based approaches that build on Pierre Bourdieu's (Bourdieu & Passeron 1977) conceptualisation of social and cultural capital. Bourdieu's framework emphasised the cultural advantages possessed by individuals based on their social class, but it often overlooked the rich cultural resources present in marginalised communities (Yosso 2005). In contrast, the concept of funds of knowledge, initially developed by researchers like Luis Moll and Norma González (González, Moll & Amanti 2005; Moll et al. 1992), aimed to acknowledge and celebrate the diverse skills, knowledge, and expertise that families, particularly those from underprivileged backgrounds, bring to their children's education. Yosso (2005) proposed the concept of CCW, which included funds of knowledge, to criticise and re-articulate Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital in ways that are more inclusive of the cultural experiences of 'communities of colour'. Yosso's (2005) theory expanded upon these ideas by recognising the various forms of cultural capital that exist within communities of colour, such as social networks, resilience, and unique forms of knowledge. Both concepts challenged the limitations of traditional social and cultural capital frameworks, offering a more inclusive and holistic perspective on the strengths and assets present in families and communities facing economic adversity.

Although the family funds of knowledge theory has made significant strides in prompting a re-conceptualisation of parental involvement in their children's education, some contend that this theory may not consistently acknowledge the influence of power dynamics within educational environments like classrooms and schools, as highlighted by Rios-Aguilar et al. (2011). Others have argued that this theory places teachers in a position of authority, as it makes it necessary for teachers to empower parents (Baquedano-Lopez et al. 2013). Community cultural wealth theory offers a potential avenue for addressing this power imbalance by recognising the valuable resources within households often perceived as lacking and deficient. In this way, CCW theory acknowledges and values the multifaceted strengths that families bring to the educational landscape. Yosso (2005:77) maintains that the 'various forms of capital are not mutually exclusive or static, but rather are dynamic processes that build on one another as part of community cultural wealth'.

Community cultural wealth offers a broader perspective on the inherent value of families, with its greatest applicability observed in marginalised, disadvantaged, and under-resourced communities. Originally rooted in research involving Latino families, CCW seeks to inclusively embrace the cultural experiences of people of colour (Rios-Aguilar et al. 2011). Building upon other asset-based approaches like family funds of knowledge, CCW theory has been instrumental in redirecting empirical efforts away from pathologising marginalised children and their families. Instead, it emphasises the wealth of resources embedded within learners, families, and communities. These resources often stem from cultural norms and values that may remain hidden to educators unless explicitly explored. This perspective underscores the importance of recognising and harnessing the cultural assets present within diverse family and community settings. Community cultural wealth theory encompasses various forms of capital found within families, including aspirational, familial, social, linguistic, navigational, cultural, and resistant capital. Hereafter, I

explore each form of capital and suggest pedagogical tools that can be used by teacher educators.

## Aspirational capital

Families from disadvantaged communities in South Africa face many forms of adversity. Swain, Pillay and Kliewer (2017) found that 58% of children in rural areas witnessed violence, 14% experienced physical assault by family members, 14% experienced sexual assault, and 22.2% met the criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Research with single mother families (see Jacobs 2019) found that the participants shared many of these adverse experiences, as well as limited access to resources. However, despite their multiple experiences of adversity, the single mothers used their own stories of struggle to motivate their children to succeed. Research with adolescents navigating university spaces has also reported that they ascribe their being in university to the encouragement, motivation and role-modelling of their parents (Norodien-Fataar 2016; Walker & Mathebula 2020). This powerful force of motivation and resilience to strive for better opportunities and outcomes, despite the challenges, is called aspirational capital. According to Yosso (2005), aspirational capital specifically refers to:

> [*T*]he ability of students to maintain hopes and dreams for the future even in the face of real and perceived barriers, by dreaming and nurturing a culture of possibility beyond their present circumstances. (p. 77)

It is often taken for granted that parents should provide encouragement and motivation to their children. However, in the context of poverty and marginalisation, these actions become even more significant for a child who faces a high risk of involvement in criminal activities or of dropping out of school. A parent with limited financial resources, who may appear uninvolved because they cannot meet the school's conventional expectations, may, in fact, be investing their most precious form of capital: inspiring and motivating their child to achieve success.

Teacher educators need to create opportunities for students to become aware of their own aspirational capital so that in turn they can value this type of capital in their learners. Pedagogical tools can include having students create vision boards or hope collages to visualise their dreams and goals and reflect on the hopes all people carry. Another tool could be to assign students to interview family and community members about how they persist through challenges and what wisdom they can share about overcoming barriers. Research has emphasised that repeated opportunities in engaging with real families who are economically, racially, and ethnically diverse are essential (Howard et al. 2023; Tinanjero et al., 2023). Students can share these stories of resilience with the class. Teacher educators could also have preservice teachers conduct community mapping projects to uncover these resources. Finally, fostering critical discussions that unpack societal messages that stereotype groups as destined for lower achievements, may serve to break these stereotypes and reclaim counter narratives. Teacher educators need to promote critical consciousness around biases, privilege and marginalisation that potentially hinder learner aspirations.

## Familial capital

In South Africa, the celebration of ubuntu, an African philosophy emphasising care and the understanding that one's existence is intertwined with that of others (Okeke, Van Wyk & Phasha 2014), is deeply rooted in the belief that 'we as human beings are born dependent on others and are from the start in some kind of relationship with other human beings' (Jordaan & Rens 2016:57). In this context, family capital assumes a significant role, encompassing the cultural knowledge cultivated within families that carries the weight of community history, memory, and cultural intuition (Yosso 2005:79). For preservice teachers, comprehending the principles of ubuntu and the bioecological model (Bronfenbrenner 1986) becomes essential. The bioecological model posits that a child's development is intricately shaped by interdependent, nested systems of influence, underlining the interconnectedness of individuals within a broader socio-cultural context.

The well-known saying, 'It takes a village to raise a child', emphasises the importance of the bioecological model and one's recognition of the various microsystems within a child's life. This illustrates that the concept of parental involvement is too limiting. To better align with the bioecological model, one should involve any significant individual in the child's life. Teachers should take the initiative to truly understand their students, including their living arrangements, siblings, and grandparents. If there is an older sibling, one should explore ways to empower them to support their younger brother or sister. It is crucial to shift one's focus away from categorising parents as uninvolved and adopt a broader perspective that is more in line with the concept of ubuntu, especially as the involvement of the extended family is more present in families from poor circumstances (Jæger 2012).

Munje and Mncube (2018:85) found that the majority of grandparents were not highly engaged in their grandchildren's education because of their own limited educational backgrounds or lack of formal schooling. The study concluded that grandparents were perceived as unsupportive because they could not assist with homework. However, it is important to recognise that grandparents often pass down cultural values, beliefs, and practices that can be assets in navigating society and educational systems. Family capital can help individuals feel a sense of belonging and confidence in their identity. Families can also offer emotional support, encouragement, and a sense of belonging that can boost an individual's confidence and motivation to pursue their goals.

Seeking to know students holistically enables identifying untapped familial capital and tailoring instruction accordingly. Teacher preparation plays a pivotal role in

shaping preservice educator worldviews around what constitutes family and pathways for engagement. Teacher educators could incorporate genogram activities analysing preservice teachers' own familial capital and support systems. Class assignments could include family interview projects for students to document wisdom, cultural practices, stories, or skills imparted from grandparents, aunts, uncles, and older siblings. Teacher education could also facilitate critical reflection on how certain nuclear family norms are prioritised over varied cultural realities. Foster oral storytelling opportunities for children to convey lived experiences, including caregiving roles siblings might play. Preservice teachers can also be prompted to consider flexible assignment timelines and/or formats accounting for family care duties, and to maintain an open-door policy for caregivers beyond just parents. Myende and Nhlumayo (2022) in their research highlight the importance of collaborating with traditional healers and chiefs in rural communities.

## Social capital

Yosso (2005) highlights the importance of social capital, emphasising that disadvantaged families possess multiple valuable assets that warrant acknowledgment. To delve more deeply into this concept, social capital refers to the relationships and networks that individuals or families maintain within their community. These connections can serve as a wellspring of support, information, and opportunities. For example, a single mother in a low-income neighbourhood may have a network of friends and neighbours who help care for her children while she is at work, demonstrating the supportive and resourceful aspect of social capital. In my research with single-mother families, the single-mother participants shared how they received support from a neighbour, a work colleague and often fellow churchgoers (Jacobs 2019). Sometimes a neighbour would allow their child to use their computer to finish an assignment, or print copies at their place of work, or do research for their child's school task. This demonstrates how social capital can include instrumental support from one's social network. This support can be critical in times of need and can contribute to an individual's well-being and resilience. Mncanca et al. (2021:5) share the following quote from their research:

> 'You find that there is a yard with seven rooms. So, this child stays with the mother in one of the rooms, the child's siblings [*not biological siblings*] are children of neighbours who rent other rooms in the same yard. So, you might find one mother in that yard coming to school to collect five reports, because she collects for the neighbours as well.' (Teacher, school B, participant number 2)

This quote is used to illustrate the perceived lack of involvement among parents, placing the burden of responsibility on a single mother for children who are not her own. However, when viewed from a different perspective, one can observe the role of social capital in action. In South Africa, many parents may indeed be found in local shebeens, seemingly disengaged from actively supporting their children's education. However, amid such circumstances, there are also instances like the one described here, where individuals willingly contribute their resources and time to assist multiple children. Instead of fixating on what may appear to be absent, teachers have the opportunity to proactively identify and cultivate relationships with these proactive community members.

One can therefore agree with Mncanca et al. (2021:7) that it is 'important for teachers to not work with previous patterns or assumptions but to gather accurate information of who their learners are, their backgrounds and their primary caregivers'. An effective way to get to know learners is through visiting their homes or becoming familiar with the community they live in. Matshe (2014) suggests that this is an opportunity for teachers to identify significant people.

Centring student voices and direct community connections can illuminate abundant social capital and uncover possibilities for culturally sustaining pedagogies leveraging these assets. Teacher training plays a pivotal role in shaping capacities of preservice educators to perceive and mobilise this CCW. Teacher education programmes could incorporate community mapping projects, protocols for partnering with communities and critical discussions aimed at understanding life challenges many families face. Finally, teacher education needs to foster dialogue that validates the diversity in family structures, living arrangements and care giving roles that exist in South African communities.

## Linguistic capital

In South Africa, language and culture are inextricably linked, and within post-apartheid South Africa, the legacy of structural injustice of apartheid persists (Adedeji et al. 2022). Researchers have stated that the English language is sometimes aligned with 'whiteness' and carries more socio-cultural value (Adedeji et al. 2022). The English language is therefore highly valued by many parents, who perceive it to be linked to success and opportunities (Wilke 2022). Consequently, many parents may be motivated to enrol their children in schools where they need to learn in a second, third and sometimes fourth language.

Proficiency in one or more languages is a central aspect of linguistic capital. This includes not only fluency but also the ability to use language effectively in different contexts, such as formal, informal, academic, and professional settings. It recognises that individuals from diverse linguistic backgrounds may possess unique linguistic assets. Linguistic capital also includes an understanding of the conventions, registers, and discourses of various contexts, including academic, professional, and cultural. This knowledge allows individuals to adapt their language use to specific situations. For some individuals and communities, their language is not only a means of communication but also a crucial aspect of cultural identity. Maintaining and preserving their linguistic heritage can be seen as a form of linguistic capital. Linguistic capital recognises the importance of language and communication skills as valuable assets that can influence an individual's access to educational

and social resources. It acknowledges that language proficiency and the ability to navigate different linguistic contexts can provide advantages in various aspects of life, especially educational and career opportunities.

The key is taking an asset-based view towards linguistic diversity. Preservice teachers need to be encouraged to explicitly value the languages students bring to school. Teacher educators can prepare preservice teachers to do this by assigning readings on the assets of linguistic diversity and culturally sustaining pedagogies; providing models and examples of effective translanguaging instruction; have preservice teachers conduct home language surveys and reflections; facilitating preservice teacher collaboration with multilingual students; and encourage them to advocate for equitable language policies. Other pedagogical tools include the use of storytelling (Yosso 2005) and using code switching effectively (Martin & Newton 2016).

## Navigational capital

Navigational capital, as elucidated by Yosso (2005), encompasses the skills required to adeptly navigate various social institutions. This form of capital recognises the agency of individuals, especially those who are marginalised. These social institutions can encompass a wide range of contexts, including schools, religious institutions, and communities. For instance, in Fataar's (2016) research with disadvantaged students, participants had to navigate the challenging aspects of their communities, such as crime, unemployment, and peer pressure. Similarly, in my research involving single-mother families, mothers frequently emphasised conversations with their children centred on safety and the avoidance of negative peer influences (Jacobs 2019). Furthermore, additional studies exploring the experiences of university students from disadvantaged backgrounds revealed the pivotal role of support from significant individuals in their lives when it came to successfully navigating and persevering through higher education (Fataar 2016; Walker & Mathebula 2020).

To value and acknowledge the navigational capital that learners bring to school, teachers can actively recognise the life skills and coping mechanisms students have developed to navigate social institutions effectively. This may involve fostering open communication with students to understand their unique experiences and challenges, allowing for a more supportive and empathetic educational environment. Teacher educators can help prepare preservice teachers to leverage navigational capital by facilitating self-reflections on their own privilege and deficits-based assumptions; providing case studies for analysis of situations requiring navigational capital or have student teachers interview individuals about how they successfully navigate institutions. Researchers have identified case studies and simulations of active listening and relationship building skills as effective for teacher preparation (Paz-Albo et al. 2023; Smith & Sheridan 2019; Walker et al. 2019). Ultimately teachers need to foster a classroom and/or school culture that shows learners their skills are valued.

## Cultural capital

Culture, defined as the learned behaviours and shared values of a specific group, is expressed in both material and non-material aspects of life (Yosso 2005). It encompasses the knowledge, practices, and resources individuals acquire from their cultural backgrounds and experiences. Embracing this viewpoint recognises the potential for diverse cultural and social expressions to emerge and be celebrated. Cultural practices, traditions, and values are often passed down through families and communities, contributing to an individual's cultural capital. This includes familiarity with customs, rituals, and social norms within a particular culture. Cultural capital can shape one's sense of identity, self-esteem, and belonging within their cultural community, influencing both self-perception and how they are perceived by others.

Yosso (2005) elaborates that individuals who are often considered disadvantaged by society accrue various forms of capital over time, including skills, abilities, resources, and knowledge through their network of relationships. Cultural resources, such as family and community members, can be harnessed to access opportunities, including education. In a poignant example shared by Daniels (2020) during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, she recounts her engagement with three nieces who were experiencing homelessness, living in a car with their parents and siblings. She describes taking them into her home for 3 weeks during the lockdown and engaging them in informal life skills learning. One notable example involves teaching the girls to 'accumulate tangible capital' (Daniels 2020:140) by selecting valuable items each evening to place in a container. This demonstrates how individuals beyond parents can invest in and transmit cultural capital to children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

To value and acknowledge the cultural capital that learners from impoverished backgrounds bring to the classroom, teachers can foster an inclusive environment that celebrates diverse cultural perspectives. This can involve incorporating students' cultural knowledge and experiences into the curriculum, actively listening to their stories and traditions, and acknowledging the richness that cultural diversity adds to the learning experience. Teachers can also collaborate with families and community members to tap into the cultural resources available to enhance educational opportunities and promote a sense of belonging. The key for teachers is to know their students deeply through their culture thereby validating cultural wealth. Teacher educators can therefore prepare preservice teachers through assignments where they need to design culturally relevant projects, provide case studies to analyse for missed cultural assets and strengths, facilitate self-reflections on their own cultural experiences and privilege and advocate for culturally responsive school-wide teacher training.

## Resistant capital

Resistant capital refers to the skills and knowledge developed through challenging inequality or the status quo (Yosso 2005). It encompasses the strategies, behaviours, and forms

of resistance that individuals and communities develop in response to various forms of inequality and injustice. It involves strategies to challenge and resist stereotypes, biases, and stigmas that are directed towards marginalised groups. In addition, it recognises that individuals and communities facing oppression often develop forms of resistance and resilience to combat the effects of inequality. It emphasises the agency and strength of marginalised groups in challenging and changing the systems that perpetuate social and educational injustices.

While South Africa has made significant strides towards democracy, the enduring impact of past structural injustices, particularly on economically disadvantaged individuals, remains palpable. Defying stereotypes, especially those rooted in racial bias and striving to gain recognition and worth in society, can be construed as a manifestation of resistant capital. Additionally, acts of oppositional behaviour aimed at confronting and dismantling inequality can also be regarded as expressions of resistant capital. For example, consider a student from an underprivileged background who defies societal expectations by excelling academically, despite facing economic and social challenges. This student's determination to transcend stereotypes and achieve recognition demonstrates resistant capital in action. In my research with single-mother families, the mothers firmly held the belief that their children deserved good lives, irrespective of societal norms that may have stigmatised their family structures as inadequate or failed to acknowledge the numerous ways in which these mothers cared for their children (Jacobs 2019).

To value and acknowledge the resistant capital of learners, teachers can create an inclusive classroom environment that fosters critical thinking and open dialogue. This involves encouraging students to explore and discuss societal issues, promoting respectful debates on topics related to discrimination and injustice. By recognising and applauding students who challenge inequality in various ways, educators can empower them to harness their resistant capital effectively and make a positive impact on their communities and society as a whole. Teacher educators can promote preservice teachers to recognise resistance capital by assigning scholarly readings highlighting resistance capital and agency; providing case analyses of marginalised student resistance in schools; ensuring teacher candidates recognise and validate student resistance; facilitate perspective-taking self-reflections of teacher candidates' own privilege; or require teacher candidates to lead participatory action research projects confronting systemic inequality at schools. The key is shifting deficit mindsets to see resistance as an asset and see the power, promise, and justice-oriented skills already present within marginalised students and communities.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, while parent involvement has been consistently proven to significantly impact children's educational success, the situation in South Africa presents a challenging landscape, as parent involvement, especially in disadvantaged contexts, is reportedly severely lacking (Botha et al., 2023; Mbhiza & Nkambule 2023). Researchers have posited that this predicament may, in part, stem from teachers being ill prepared for parent involvement, especially in their training (Epstein 2018; Lemmer 2011; Munje & Mncube 2018).

What compounds this issue is the persistence of colonial ideas and values embedded within prevailing notions of parent involvement, perpetuating an unconstructive power dynamic between parents and teachers (Mbhiza & Nkambule 2023). In response, this article argues that preservice teachers must leave the academic setting equipped with a broader comprehension of how to engage with communities, not only parents. They should also embrace the framework of CCW as a valuable tool to enhance school-family partnerships.

The notion of capital often centres around resources that parents possess to support their child's education, including books, educational toys, apps, time, and financial means. However, this perspective becomes problematic when applied to families in impoverished environments. In such circumstances, the daily struggle revolves around meeting basic needs like putting food on the table, leaving little room for these educational resources. The danger lies in perpetuating the label of 'uninvolved' for families grappling with poverty. The CCW theory advocates for a more nuanced understanding, prompting us to explore a family's resources beyond the traditional parameters. It encourages recognition of parents who, despite facing challenges, inspire and support their children. Additionally, it urges acknowledgment of other community members making concerted efforts to contribute positively.

However, the feasibility of implementing a community model of support in South Africa hinges on various factors. Not all communities have the necessary resources, expertise, or capacity to effectively support education. Limited access to trained educators or educational materials may also hinder implementation. In addition, traditional attitudes and resistance to new approaches may hinder the adoption of a community model of educational support. It is probable that these ideas may not be welcomed in schools and be perceived as 'more work'. Yet, by involving various community stakeholders, such as parents, extended family members, and local organisations, a community model can address not just academic needs but also social, emotional, and cultural aspects of education.

While the detailed strategies to achieve this shift require further research and exploration, the primary goal of this article is to advocate for a change in mindset within the educational discourse. By highlighting the untapped potential and resilience within these communities, we pave the way for a more inclusive approach. The emphasis is not on how we will achieve this transformation, but rather on fostering an awareness that the hidden wealth within these communities deserves recognition and forms a foundation for building more meaningful educational partnerships. In

doing so, we pave the way for future research endeavours to explore and implement effective strategies that align with this transformative perspective.


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C.J. is the sole author of this research article.

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