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BONDING & BRIDGING SOCIAL CAPITAL IN FAMILY & SCHOOL RELATIONSHIPS

by

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ABSTRACT
BONDING & BRIDGING SOCIAL CAPITAL IN FAMILY & SCHOOL RELATIONSHIPS

by

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The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2017
Under the Supervision of Professors Aaron Schutz and Rajeswari Swaminathan

Developing successful family & school relationships has long been a challenge for urban schools. This qualitative case study investigated a parent engagement program that took place at one school in a Midwestern city. This program is based on a program in Chicago featured in Soo Hong's book *A Cord of Three Stands* that pairs parents with teachers in the classroom while also creating a space for parent-to-parent relationships. This research analyzes the program through the theoretical lens of social capital in an attempt to understand how strategic relationships in inorganic settings can impact the relationships between schools and families. Additionally, this research segregates the investigation into parent-to-parent relationships, bonding social capital, and parent-to-teacher relationships, bridging social capital. The research then rejoins these two theories of social capital accumulation to investigate how both impact power relations in the school setting. While there is literature that attempts to understand the bonding and bridging of social capital between families and schools, few provide empirical research or a clear vision on using these two theories in tandem in school settings.

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Bonding & Bridging Social Capital in Family & School Relationships

Chapter I: Introduction

Problem Statement

There is a historical tension between school personnel and low-income parents whose children attend urban schools (Lareau, 2001; Valencia, 1997). Across the nation, school districts attempt to ameliorate this tension through the implementation of traditional forms of parent involvement, which are typically school-centered events or activities focused on individuals and further promote social isolation (Warren et al., 2009; Hong, 2011). Research suggests that the building of relationships among parents, bonding social capital, may be an effective strategy to bridge relationships between schools and families (Coleman, 1988; Carbonaro, 1998; Noguera, 2001; Putnam and Helliwell, 2004; Warren et al., 2009; Warren, 2014). Despite this suggestion, there are few studies that explore how the building of relationships among parents may influence the relationship between schools and families.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to examine the experience of a group of teachers and parents participating in a pilot parent engagement program using the theoretical lens of social and cultural capital. My overarching Research Question will guide this study. *What role does social capital and cultural capital play in a program that attempts to build relationships between schools and families?* This Research Question is supplemented with questions that dig deeper into examining the parent-to-parent relationship formation, bonding social capital, and the parent-to-teacher relationship formation, bridging social capital.

Program to be studied

      Parent Engagement Program (PEP) is a pilot parent engagement program modeled after Logan Square Neighborhood Association's (LSNA) [Parent Mentor Program](#) in Chicago. The Parent Mentor program was started in 1995 by the Logan Square Neighborhood Association and has graduated over fifteen hundred parents (Warren, 2015). The program has been highlighted and praised by noteworthy scholars such as Karen Mapp, Mark Warren, Soo Hong and Jean Anyon. The goal of the Parent Mentor program is to "address the disconnection between schools and families and to build parent participation and leadership primarily in the schools but also in the community as well" (Warren, 2015, p. 172-173). This is accomplished through a variety of strategies that train and support Parent Mentors as a group of leaders combined with each parent partnering with a teacher in the classroom to support student learning. Research suggests this model has shown benefits to all parties involved. Teachers are able to build upon the parents' experience and bridge a historically deep divide between teachers and their students while having additional support in the classroom and building trusting relationships between families and schools (Hong, 2011). Parents involved in the program build social capital by developing relationships with fellow parents and school staff while building a variety of skills that can translate into career knowledge and personal empowerment (Hong, 2011; Warren & Mapp, 2011; Warren 2014). According to Joanna Brown, an organizer for LSNA's Parent Mentor program, schools that participate in the program have become more welcoming and positives spaces, which has resulted in a dramatically positive impact on student test scores (Brown, 2010).

In April of 2014, I shared information about the LSNA Parent Mentor program, an initiative I had been studying through graduate school, with the lead parent organizer at a 501c3 organization. He decided to try to implement the program locally and asked for my assistance. In partnership with LSNA, the lead parent organizer and myself visited Parent Mentor schools in Chicago, participated in Parent Mentor trainings and were provided a variety of resources and consultation support from LSNA to get the program underway.

PEP was piloted during the 2014-15 school year at two public schools in a Midwestern city. The two Public Schools were chosen based on the initial recommendation from a funding partner that never materialized. The potential funder was supporting a collective impact model in the local community and thought that the program could support their efforts. When the funding didn't materialize, the organizers had already been in contact with the school sites and decided to pursue with the current funding in place. Most of the funding for the program came from a national foundation to support parent engagement in schools. According to the state report card both schools have a population of students that are mostly African American and nearly all students are classified as economically disadvantage. Because this program was studied during its first year of implementation, this study presents limitations to understanding the long-term impact of such a program but provides key lessons into the successes and challenges of starting a new parent engagement initiative.

While supporting student success was an important goal of this initiative, the program clearly focused on building the leadership skills of parents to act with power in their child's school. In contrast to the traditional service-based approach of parent involvement that focuses on family deficits (Hong, 2011), the Parent Mentor model of

parent engagement claims to take an investment approach (Hong, 2011) or a development approach (Department of Education, 2014), which engages parents as mutual partners in education and leaders in their community. Research suggests that trusting relationships between schools and families are a key ingredient in building successful schools with high academic achievement, yet research shows that teachers at schools with a higher percentage of low-income students have lower rates of trust when controlling for other variables (Goddard, Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Due to the relationship between trust and family income, the PEP program model puts a strong emphasis on intentional parent-to-parent and parent-to-teacher relationship building. One of the unique elements of this model is the intentional building of relationships among parents that serve as a system of support and encouragement. Studies show that parents in middle-class schools have strong parent-to-parent relationships, which translates into the power to have a strong voice in their child's education (Horvat et al., 2003). In contrast, parents in low-income schools have been shown to lack those social networks and when an issue arises at school they tend to act independently and unsuccessfully (Horvat et al., 2003). Parents in middle class communities also have their cultural capital recognized which allows for them to comply with dominant standards in the educational system and to interact with teachers as peers (Horvat & Lareau, 1999).

According to program materials PEP has three key program goals:

- o **Engage as Leaders** Parent Leaders are recruited and interviewed, once selected they participate in a leadership training process. Parent Leaders become deeply invested in the school and participate in school decision-making.

- o **Bridge Relationships** Parent Leaders are paired with classroom teachers who

benefit from having additional support in the classroom and building bridges to

their students through authentic relationships with families; families benefit by

gaining access to classroom-based resources in their shared goals of student

success.

- o **Build Community-**Parent Leaders work together to identify the assets and needs

  unique to each school community and work collaboratively to address through a

  community or school project

(Program Brochure, 2014)

In October of 2014 the first cohort of parents submitted applications solicited by

each school's Parent Engagement Coordinator, a new position in the school district. PEP

organizers and parent engagement coordinators (one of whom was herself a parent at the

school) conducted brief interviews with parents to gauge their interest in the program.

Once selected, eleven parents from two schools participated in a five-day training (17

hours) on shared leadership, community organizing, navigating the school system and

restorative practices. PEP organizers infused LSNA's leadership training outline into the

local context by discussing the local power structures in education and touring a local

community organization.

Similar to participating parents, teachers were chosen based on an application

process and recommendations from school administration and staff. Following the

guidelines from LSNA, teachers were only recruited in the early grades (K-3rd) to

encourage a focus on academic support instead of classroom management often found in

older grades. Additionally, parents couldn't be paired with a classroom that had their

children to avoid becoming a watchful eye and investing in all children. Finally, it was made

clear to both parents and teachers that parent leaders should be actively supporting learning the classroom and not grading papers or running errands (Warren, 2015). Parents and teachers were paired based on the comfort level of each parent to work in a certain grade level or specialty, any specific skill matching between the parent and classroom needs, and any recommendations either from the teacher or parent. While program organizers met with participating teachers multiple times to share program expectations, there was no formal training conducted for teachers, a clear limitation in the program's implementation.

In addition to supporting classroom learning, parent leaders came together every Friday morning throughout the school year. During a typical week, parents may spend four to six hours in the classroom (often in two hour shifts scheduled between the teacher and parent) and three to four hours in Friday morning meetings. Friday morning sessions were reserved for parent leaders from the two participating schools and usually rotated between the two schools as meeting sites. Program organizers made it clear that Friday morning sessions were a "safe space" to ask questions, gain support or voice concerns. Parents took a leadership role in many aspects of the session including developing shared agreements for their "safe space," using restorative practices and shared leadership to guide dialogue, and identifying future agenda items. These meetings typically focused on three main areas: 1) reflection on their week in the classroom and group support or suggestions, 2) workshops on personal or professional development based on ideas and requests from the parent group, and 3) organizing around issues identified by parents. The personal and professional development workshops included; restorative practices training, mindfulness training, visits from parent leaders from Chicago and New Orleans, and working with

students with disabilities, among others. The parent group also took a variety of field trips together including to a social justice education conference hosting by the Rainbow PUSH Coalition in Chicago, to a local technical college where parents were interested in enrolling, to hear a local legislative budget hearing concerning education, and to a community event featuring speaker Jitu Brown – a Chicago parent and education activist. The organizing portion of Friday sessions included community organizing training provided by Chicago-based Southwest Organizing Project (SWOP), a partner in the Parent Mentor program. Parents learned to cut an issue, advocate around shared goals and developed leadership skills for both inside an outside the school. Parents used this time to work together and develop a campaign around an issue they felt would improve their school or community.

Following the model set by the Parent Mentor program, if a parent leader spent 100 or more hours volunteering in a semester they received a $500 stipend, and could receive up to two stipends in one school year. Hong (2011) describes the reason for the stipend. "…it counters the notion that the parents are merely serving the school, it encourages consistent participation, and it develops a sense of respect and recognition for their work" (p.42).

In addition to being a researcher, I also served as an assistant organizer of this new pilot initiative. My time was spent:

- working with the principal and parent engagement coordinator to recruit and interview parents
- assisting with program logistics; schedules, timesheets, coordinating personal development workshops based on requests from parent group
- communicating with teacher pairings to ensure successful partnerships

- co-facilitating weekly parent group trainings and organizing sessions

(See methodology section for positionality of researcher)

Chapter II: Literature Review

This literature review is broken into two sections. The family and school relationships section explores the research literature to provide both an empirical and a theoretical context for the research. The social and cultural capital section explores the role of both social and cultural capital in family and school relationships to provide a theoretical lens for this research.

Family/School Relationships

Introduction.

Schools are inseparable from the communities in which they exist; therefore it has become increasingly common for schools to search for ways to build networks that extend into the communities they serve (Swaminathan, 2005). Parents are key linkages between schools and communities especially in schools located in low-income school neighborhoods where teaching staff typically doesn't live (Comer & Haynes, 1991). Yet, it is the low-income schools that struggle the most to engage parents in deep and meaningful ways (Warren, Hong, Rubin & Uy, 2009). Through a meta-analysis of research on parent involvement, Joyce Epstein (2001) concluded that teachers, parents and students all agree on the importance of parent involvement in school, yet the manifestations of this desire for involvement are inconsistent. Without a conceptual framework to understand parent involvement, it becomes an abstract platitude that schools can't be held accountable to

implement (Adams, Forsyth & Mitchell, 2009). While this research project is positioned

within a social and cultural capital theoretical framework it is imperative to understand the

social and cultural context in which family and school relationships exist. This research

focused on a parent engagement program in a Midwestern city adapted from a model in

Chicago highlighted in Soo Hong's (2011) book *A Cord of Three Strands*. Through her

research of the Logan Square Neighborhood Association's Parent Mentor program, Hong

provides a framework for Ecological Parent Engagement.

Traditional Parent Involvement vs. Ecological Parent Engagement.

Despite the ubiquitous parent involvement rhetoric, the implementation strategies

often take the form of what some scholars call "traditional" (Hong, 2011), "conventional"

(Lawson, 2003) or "deficit-based" (Cooper, 2009) parent involvement and are often limited

to invitations to attend a family-night event at the school or an open house with a raffle and

baked goods (Hong, 2011). These traditional parent involvement programs are often

school-centered, event-based or an attempt to teach parenting skills (Hong, 2011; Warren

et al., 2009). In contrast to the model of traditional parent involvement, ecological parent

engagement views parents as authentic and valued partners in the educational success of

their children across multiple spaces (Comer & Haynes, 1991; Hong, 2011). "Parental

engagement, therefore, is more than an object or an outcome. Engagement is a set of

relationships and actions that cut across individuals, circumstances, and events that are

produced and bounded by the context in which that engagement takes place" (Barton,

Drake, Perez, St. Louis & George, 2004, p.11).

In the ecological approach, the term engagement replaces involvement to emphasize

the more active and powerful role parents can play in schools. "Parent *involvement*—as

practiced in most schools and reflected in the research literature—avoids issues of power and assigns parents a passive role in the maintenance of school culture. Parental *engagement* designates parents as citizens in the fullest sense—change agents who can transform urban schools and neighborhoods" (Shirley, 1997, p.73, cites Cortes, 1994).

 In *A Cord of Three Strands*, Hong (2011) contrasts traditional parent involvement against ecological parent engagement using five key differences. The following literature review uses those five key differences as a framework to explore the literature of family and school relationships. While Hong provides a powerful and concise framework for ecological parent engagement, there are a few disagreements in the literature as well as inconsistencies between her framework and her research.

1. Centers on schools vs. Centers on parents.

The first element Hong (2011) uses to describe traditional forms of parent involvement is that is uses a school-centered approach in which schools focus on the desires of the school and work to get parents involved with an event or strategy that was developed by school staff. In the traditional model, parent involvement is often defined by schools with the goal of conforming parents to the school's culture (Lawson, 2003). Lawson (2003) found that the school often operationalizes the term parent involvement. When he asked teachers about defining parent involvement they responded with activities that cooperated with the school and its mission. When he asked parents what parent involvement meant to them they often immediately responded in school-centric ways such as helping out in the classroom, but after further exploration, he found that a much deeper meaning arose that was rooted in a constant battle for the success of their children.

Barton et al. (2004) discuss the concepts of parent-authored space, where parents are able to frame their role in the school versus school-authored space, where parents receive direction from the staff about their role in the school. In school-authored space it is the institution that has the power to create an experience for the parent. In contrast, the parent-authored space is created by moving beyond a list of tasks parents can accomplish in the school towards an understanding of why parents want to be engaged and how they can create a school in line with their hopes for their children.

The school-centered approach can be culturally biased. Schools are traditionally Eurocentric institutions and penalize families for not conforming to white, middle-class values embedded in educational institutions (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Schools may be seen as paternalistic when they try to take on a role beyond that of partners in education and promote acculturation or a diminishing the family's role in youth development (Lightfoot, 1978). Delgado-Gaitin (1991) describes conventional parent involvement as an attempt by the school to retain power by ignoring the voices of parents whereas nonconventional parent involvement views involving parents more as a process of authentic engagement than the product of an event. In a parent-centered approach to parent engagement, families are engaged in the planning process as equal partners to create opportunities for families and staff to transform the relationship between the school and the community by drawing on parents' knowledge and experiences (Hong, 2011). This perspective changes the narrative from one of parents being "perceived as hard to reach or lacking interest in school-based involvement when, in reality, schools may be the ones that are hard to reach" (Hong, 2001, p. 115; Mapp & Hong, 2010).

Although programs such as the one described in Hong's book may strive to be parent-centered, they ultimately need to be approved by school administration to operate within its jurisdiction. Parent-centered programs may provide openings for parents to participate in new ways and develop a newfound voice but it may be limited within the space authored by the school. The PEP program is confined to these conflicting parameters. While one of the goals of PEP is to engage parents to have a voice in the school, the program requires approval from school administration to operate and may limit the scope of activities pursued by participating parents. The research will be explicit about the school's struggle to share power with parents.

2. Promotes activities vs. Promotes engagement.

Traditional parent involvement views parent involvement as the product of a well-executed plan instead of an ongoing process of relationship building. Traditional family activities are typically designed by school staff and allow parents to experience the school culture solely through the lens chosen by the school (Hong, 2011). School-centered events and activities typically focus on the culturally biased norms of the institution and fail to involve parents in the planning of culturally relevant experiences (Delgado-Gaitin, 1991). When parents are left out of the planning and decision-making process schools may not fully understand why parents either do not want to attend school events or aren't able make the predefined times set by the school (Amatea, Cholewa & Mixon, 2012). When parents aren't able to attend school events and activities, they are perceived as uncaring or detached (Lee & Bowen, 2006). School events often contribute to a cycle of negative relationships between school staff and families when schools plan school-centered activities then blame parents for not showing up.

Schools often believe in the need to give away food or prizes as their perceived last-ditch effort to get parents to attend events planned by school staff. Lawson (2003) calls these forms of engagement "bribery tactics" that stem from a school's deficit view of parents as not valuing education (p.110). Barton et al. (2004) expand on the role schools play in perpetuating deficit views of families:

> Either parents participate in school-sanctioned ways (i.e., Family Science Night) or their children's educational growth may suffer. Few studies report on initiatives that have included parents as equal partners and decision makers. Deficit models for understanding parents and education position parents as subjects to be manipulated or without power to position themselves in ways they see fit (i.e., here are the things that successful parents do). (p.4)

Hong (2011) believes that ecological parent engagement attempts to see parent engagement beyond a series of individual activities and towards a comprehensive understanding of the reasons parents want to become involved in their child's education.

3. Views parents as deficits vs. Views parents as assets.

Viewing parents as deficits that need to be overcome instead of partners in the education of their children is not only a contrasting element of the ecological framework, but is a theoretical underpinning that runs throughout this literature review. Research suggests that school staff in low-income school communities often hold deficit views of families that blame parents for students' not succeeding academically in the classroom (Lawson, 2003; Schutz, 2006).

Deficit-based orientations stem in part from "long-standing legacies of racism" that breed distrust between educational institutions and people of color (Hong, 2011, p. 19).

Lightfoot (2003) describes distrust and alienation as a product of "generational echoes" or personal experiences that reverberate throughout one's life (p.3). "The adults come together prepared to focus on the present and the future of the child, but instead they feel themselves drawn back into their own pasts, visited by the ghosts of their parents, grandparents, siblings, and former teachers, haunted by ancient childhood dramas" (Lightfoot, 2003, p. 4).

Deficit thinking has dominated the educational landscape in low-income communities for generations in an attempt to rationalize school failure (Valencia, 1999). Over the last half century, the race-based deficit perspective has shifted from a biological deficient perspective to a cultural deficient perspective held by the dominant class (Solorzano & Yasso, 2002). Valenzuela (1999) describes this phenomena among Mexican American youth as "subtractive schooling" in which the school systematically invalidates students' and families' cultural resources leaving them prone to social and academic failure. This concept of validating or recognizing one's cultural resources will be further explored later through the theory of cultural capital.

White, middle-class mothers have become the "standard" of parent involvement in schools and schools have developed their strategies and expectations based on this privileged perspective, so when African American parents are unable or feel uncomfortable participating they are placed into the stereotype of the uncaring or disinterested parent (Cooper 2009). In schools, low-income families are often blamed for not being middle class or reflecting the dominant values of the school institution (Lareau, 2001). This deficit perspective ranges from an outwardly negative relationship between schools and families towards a paternalistic perspective where schools try to teach parents to become "better

parents" without school staff openly learning from parents how to better reach their children (Warren et al., 2009, p.2243). This "remediation paradigm" views teachers as the experts whose job it is to teach families how to help their own children (Amatea et al., 2012, p.808; Lawson, 2003). Lightfoot (1978) observes;

> When schooling serves to accentuate and reinforce the inequalities in society, then it is not providing a viable and productive alternative for children. The message of ethnocentrism is conveyed to parents and children when socialization, acculturation, and learning within schools are defined in the narrow, traditional terms of the dominant culture. The negative and paternalistic messages are also communicated when schools begin to take on the total range of familial functions – not just the responsibilities for intellectual and social learning adaptive to a changing society but also the dimensions of primary socializations usually found within the family domain. (p.42)

The deficit-based perspective can have serious implications beyond the teacher and parent relationship. When teachers believe that parents aren't invested or do not care about the education of their child they tend to care less about the success of that child and lower expectations in the classroom (Cooper, 2009).

Ecological parent engagement views parents as assets in their community and partners in the educational of their child (Hong, 2011). Ecological parental engagement builds from a variety of other theories that work to reframe how outsiders work with and view communities, particularly low-income communities of color. In Kretzman and McKnight's (1993) book *Building Communities from the Inside Out*, they argue for an asset-based approach that views individuals for their skills instead of the traditional needs

perspective that views people and communities in terms of their deficiencies. This asset-based approach encourages communities to identify and mobilize their individual and institutional assets instead of being barricaded behind a "wall of needs" (Kretzman & McKnight, 1993, p.2). Moll (1992) and Greenberg (1989) describe a similar theory called Funds of Knowledge as "the essential cultural practices and bodies of knowledge and information that households use to survive, to get ahead, or to thrive" (found in Moll, 1992, p. 321). When schools integrate the lives of children outside the building, the local histories and cultural knowledge, into educational plans and cultural practices inside the building they can effectively reach children. Funds of Knowledge "...is based on a simple premise: People are competent, they have knowledge, and their life experiences have given them that knowledge" (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 2013, p. ix-x). Yosso (2005) defines Cultural Wealth as "an array of knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed and utilized by Communities of Color to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression" (p.77). Asset-Based Community Development, Funds of Knowledge and Cultural Wealth may each have distinguishing features but they all share a new lens to view families as knowledgeable partners in school and community success.

When schools acknowledge and validate the social and cultural experiences of low-income families, they are more likely to feel connected to the school and work with staff in a collaborative, power-sharing fashion (Cooper, 2009). "Educators and researchers often view minority families and families of educationally disadvantaged students in terms of their deficiencies. Often, however, the deficiencies lie in the schools' programs" (Epstein, 2001, p. 149).

4. Limits participation vs. Broadens participation (power & decision-making).

Parents want to be involved in their child's education (Lawson, 2003), yet, traditional parent involvement embedded with deficit-perspectives only allows parents to participate in a narrow school-sanctioned scope of appropriate activities. Many educators practice parent involvement in a reactive fashion instead of developing relationships, sharing power and decentralizing decision-making (Cooper, 2009). Most limiting forms of parent involvement focus on individual parents and their support of the school.

It is hard for educators to talk about power let alone share power in schools because most feel they lack adequate power to make change in their own classroom (Warren & Mapp, 2011). While individual urban educators often have an "essentially activist nature" when they aren't provided necessary systemic supports their pursuit of social justice can become secondary (Cosier, 2012, p.44). Without addressing institutional issues of power in school and family relationships schools are doomed to create cycles of frustration, blame and division (Fine, 1993) and neglect the history of racism and social inequality that produce such relationships (Hong, 2011). "The presumption of equality between parents and schools, and the refusal to address power struggles, has systematically undermined real educational transformation, and has set up parents as well as educators involved with reform" (Fine, 1993, p. 684).

In order to build more collaborative relationships between schools and families it is necessary to address the inequality of power and resources that exist in low-income schools (Warren et al., 2009). Many school reformers have glossed over the need to address the redistribution of power and resources in school and community relationships (Oakes & Lipton, 2002). When parents lack power to have voice in their child's education, their only recourse may be to become confrontational or to distance themselves from the

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school (Lawson, 2003). Parents that are actively involved in decision-making and planning across various dimensions of the school environment can have what Hong (2011) calls a "perspective-opening experience" or a realization of power and ownership in the school culture (p. 26). When parents are engaged as leaders they have an opportunity to set agendas instead of being recipients of agendas (Warren et al. 2009). This role change can have transformative impact, particularly in low-income schools that may not have an active PTO or organized body of parents. Although, the state sometimes uses site-based management or the decentralization of power to excuse their responsibility of funding low-income schools (Anderson, 1998). "When school districts have to cut back their budgets, they can diffuse conflict in the local school sites by allowing individual schools to decide where to cut. Under the guise of participation, the central office gains democratic legitimacy and diffuses criticism for massive cutbacks" (Anderson, 1998, p.578). Fine (1998) provides a concise description of this scenario: "School-based councils feel 'empowered' only to determine who or what will be cut" (p.696).

Schools can preach the rhetoric of parent empowerment but then when it comes time to share power school leaders often undermine the very goals they have set forth (Shirley, 1997). This resistance can be subconscious due to the unfamiliar nature of schools sharing power or it can be deliberate on behalf of a school administrator knowing an organized group of parents can threaten his or her job security (Shirley, 1997). When parents are informed and have relationships rooted in the school, they may disagree with how things are being done and have the voice to create tension (Delgado-Gaitain, 1991). Schools may resist sharing power because of the potential for conflict. Lightfoot (1978)

calls this "creative conflict" as not only necessary for power-sharing experiences and productive family and school relationships but ultimately healthy for the child (p.42).

It is important to note that African-American parents hold a strong legacy of fighting for and advancing great gains in education equality against many long-standing racial obstacles (Cooper, 2009). As Lightfoot notes, black families have been instrumental in the survival of black children

> The irony of the academic and sociopolitical assaults on black families lies in the fact that historically black families have been the central sustaining force of black culture; that black families have been productive educational environments, teaching children survival strategies and the ability to negotiate dissonant cultural spheres; and that the collaboration of black families and schools is the only hope for the successful schooling of black children" (Lightfoot, 1978, p.175).

When African American parents organize around oppressive educational systems and stand up for their children they are perceived as confrontational while white, middle-class parents are perceived as caring and involved (Cooper, 2009). This double-edged sword of power often prevents schools from sharing power and parents from taking it.

While Hong (2011) discusses power in theory, she rarely provides examples in her research in which participating parents negotiate power. In fact one of the LSNA staff members describes this dynamic: "The parents in the classrooms work for the teachers. Teachers choose to work with a mentor, and that power relationship is pretty clear" (Hong, 2011, p.123). This statement contradicts Hong's theory of creating shared power between teachers and parents. Hong prefers to use the term "relational power" which she describes as "the power to get things done collectively, rather than power over individuals" (p.31).

While relational power may be appropriate in a middle-class school setting where parents'

have the cultural capital to be recognized as peers with school staff, low-income

communities in which the family's cultural capital is in direct conflict with the institution,

having power "with" may only be accomplished by fighting "against" to gain power. Parents

in middle-class communities can relate to school staff due to their cultural and social

capital and can use their power to act on behalf of their children, whereas low-income

parents often aren't treated as equals with school staff (Horvat, Weininger & Lareau, 2003)

(Note: See social capital section for more about this). Since schools have historically

disrespected low-income families, they are limited in their ability to fight for their rights

(Noguera, 2001) and without social capital and parental networks they often act

independently and unsuccessfully (Noguera, 2001; Horvat et al., 2003).

While schools and classrooms may benefit from collaborative efforts between

parents and staff, Fine (1993) believes that unless parents are organized into a political

body that can negotiate power, then parent involvement strategies will naturally be

redirected into service-based crisis intervention and lack systemic impact. "Without

relentless attention to systemic power and critique, parental involvement projects may

simply surface the individual needs of families, which will become the vehicle to express,

and dilute, struggles of power. If unacknowledged, power may hide, cloaked in the "needs"

or "inadequacies" of disenfranchised mothers, and schools may persist unchallenged,

employing practices that damage" (Fine, 1993, 692). While negotiating power in schools

can lead to transformational experiences, "…recognizing and trying to change power

relationships, especially in complicated, traditional institutions, is among the most complex

tasks human beings can undertake" (Fine, 1993, p. 706). This research examines the role

power plays in family and teacher relationships. Will the school be willing to share power with participating parents? If so, what conditions led to this difficult task? If not, where are the barriers that prevent shared power?

5. Alters parenting practices vs. Transforms families, schools and communities.

Hong (2011) believes that the Ecological parent engagement framework goes beyond simply bringing parents into schools; it provides a structure to transform families, schools and communities. Ecological parent engagement understands the dependence that exists between schools, families and communities and the necessity to nurture their interconnectedness. Hong (2011) uses three phases to describe this transformational process. The first phase, induction, is the process of engaging parents in learning about the complexity of how schools function. During this phase, parents work to break down the fears associated with schools and schooling and gain the foundational knowledge necessary to be powerful actors. As previously stated, there are many historical and contemporary reasons why low-income parents may resist participating in schools and it is necessary to build intentional relationships to allow for trust formation. Often, when parents are put in the position to develop interpersonal relationships with one another, those anxieties tend to subside with the knowledge of shared experience.

The second phase, integration, is the process of parents being involved and seen in the school on a regular basis. By having a presence in the school community, parents begin to develop relationships with school staff and become integrated into the school culture beyond particular events or activities. "By integrating parents into the life and experience of the school, schools can no longer close themselves off to outside perspectives that may challenge and disrupt the institution's norms and values" (Hong, 2011, p. 185). As parents

become part of the fabric of a school community, their experiences can begin to shape the school culture. The third phase, investment, is the recognition by all stakeholders that parent engagement is an ongoing process that values what parents bring to the school and it is understood that investing in parent engagement is an investment in schools, families and communities.

Since traditional strategies often fail at accomplishing these three phases, community-based organizations have had to develop new strategies for reaching ecological parent engagement. "If educators, scholars, and policymakers are truly interested in improving school-community relations, then they will need to become more deeply informed about community forces and structures and more directly involved in efforts to strengthen community organizations" (Schutz, 2006, p. 691). Community organizing has become a key strategy community-based organizations use to empower parents and families in schools and communities. "With an explicit focus on power, community organizing intentionally builds parent power, unlike standard parent involvement approaches which typically avoid issues of power and cosign parents to support the status quo" (Hong, 2011, p.21).

Over the last twenty-five years, the number of groups doing community organizing around education issues has exploded across the country (Warren & Mapp, 2011). These efforts are often either initiated by parents or target parents as key leaders and participants. Parent organizing is regarded "as sustained campaigns that collectively challenge existing arrangements in order to bring about institutional change in education" (Quinn, 2013, p.2). In communities that lack financial resources, building relationships and leveraging social capital towards collective action can be a key resource for empowerment

and social change (Warren & Mapp, 2011) and schools can act as sites for social capital accumulation (Warren, 2014).

School reform efforts often elude the social and political realities that exist in urban communities and their impact on education, but community organizing works to mobilize local leaders to empower communities to change the systems that produce undesirable schools (Shirley, 1997). "Organizing groups do the patient, long-term work to build capacity and leadership of people to create change in their communities and schools" (Warren & Mapp, 2011, p. 6). The literature on school-based organizing describes a wide-spectrum of organizing theories. Traditional community organizing theory is often attributed to Saul Alinsky who founded the Industrial Areas Foundation in 1940. Alinsky was known for using the public-sphere as a tool to create the narrative of good versus evil (Schutz, 2006,). Alinsky's goal of organizing people was for them to gain political power in public sphere and use that power to leverage change (Shirley, 1997).

In contrast to traditional community organizing, school-based organizing doesn't always have an external enemy or target. In this case, power is said to be build "with" instead of "over" (Warren & Mapp, 2011). School-based organizing is often referred to as relational organizing, because of the need to collaborate with school staff in an attempt to make site-based change (Warren & Mapp, 2011; Warren et al., 2009). This form of organizing is described by Stall and Stoecker (1998) as women's style organizing. Women's style organizing typically begins in the private sphere through community building around personal issues, and then these relationships become the foundation for developing power. In women's style organizing, power is not necessarily the outcome of a public sphere

victory but from the relationships that have been built and can better a community (Stall & Stoecker, 1998).

Relational organizing has its limitations in producing change. Anderson (1998) worries that school-based participation is often coopted and rarely challenges the status quo. While Hong (2011) states that parent organizing can allow for parents to "become an independent base of leadership within the school" (p. 21), these type of activities often need be signed off by the school and accountable to a funding source. School-based organizing can show a modest impact but "…even when participation is carefully orchestrated, most often power and influence remain in the same hands" (Anderson, 1998, p.583). Although relational organizing may fit the needs of a particular environment, sometimes schools need to be pushed to change the ways they have done things for a really long time. As Warren (2014) says "This doesn't come from asking, it comes from organizing, and at the end of the day, it's about power" (p. 177).

Hong rarely describes the challenges of organizing for power in school settings. Hong (20111) states that "The 'threat' of parent presence that many teachers described before parents became active partners in the school transformed into a welcome attitude of partnership and collaboration for many teachers" (p.108). While this so-called transformation may seem like the shift towards positive working relationships, conflict can be a key element of parents building social capital in school communities (Shirley, 1998). The absence of conflict and positive relationships doesn't necessarily amount to a shift in power relations.

While Hong (2011) provides many instances of the personal transformation of participating parents in the Parent Mentor program, there is less description of how the

school transforms its culture in a manner that challenges the status quo. Because schools do not have experience navigating true democratic engagement, their attempts at authentic participation is often coopted or controlled enough to allow for the sense of legitimacy (Anderson, 1998). While Hong provides a strong theoretical framework for parent engagement, when discussing power her research doesn't always agree and occasionally contradicts her theory without clear acknowledgement. Therefore one of the limitations in Hong's ecological parent engagement framework is the failure to acknowledge its own limitations from a critical perspective in the single case study used as a model of the framework.

Trust between Schools and Families.

Schools and families depend on each other for the support and success of their children (Adams et al., 2009), hence developing trust between families and schools is a key ingredient in building successful schools (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Goddard, Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Trust acts as a social lubricant that fosters social interactions and the formation of productive relationships (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Although research shows trust is a key element in forming collaborative relationships between schools and communities, building trust between communities and schools is rarely a deliberate activity within schools (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Geller, Doykos, Craven, Bess, & Nation, 2014; Goodard et al., 2001). Goddard et al. (2001) found that the level of trust teachers had in students was directly related to the family's socioeconomic status. The more students in poverty in the school, the less trust teachers had in students. Research also shows that the level of trust teachers have in their students is reflected in their level of trust in the students' families (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999).

This lack of trust may be attributed to a variety of factors explored throughout this review including: incompatible cultural capital (Lareau, 2001), negative personal and cultural histories or what Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot (1978) calls "generational echoes," teaching practices that are inconsistent with the expectations of parenting practices (Bryk & Schneider, 2002), and asymmetrical power relations between parents and school staff (Fine, 1993) among other potential reasons. Due to the asymmetrical power structure of schools, it may be up to the school to initiate trust-building opportunities between staff and parents (Adams et al, 2009; Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

The formation of trusting relationship between families and schools can lead to the accumulation of social capital including shared information and resources in support of children (Hong, 2011). Shoji, Haskins, Rangel, & Sorensen (2014), found that having consistent responsive communication between schools and families could nurture trusting relationships. Bryk and Schneider (2002) set four key criteria for trust building in schools. The foundation for building trust is in having respect for each other in a manner that is reciprocated between participants. "In the context of schooling, respect involves recognition of the important role each person plays in a child's education and the mutual dependencies that exist among various parties involved in this activity" (p.23). A display of competence in job performance is important in developing mutual trust, notwithstanding the display of clear incompetence, teachers and parents may have different ideas and expectations of teacher's or parent's competence. The third discernment criteria for developing trusting relationships in schools is showing a personal regard for others or the extension of one's self beyond the typical duties of one's role. "When school community members sense being cared about, they experience a social affiliation of personal meaning

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and value" (p.25). The final key element for developing trust is integrity. Developing a sense of integrity is the combination of someone being perceived as having a strong moral foundation and showing "consistency between what they say and do" (p.25). Although these four criteria may be ambiguous in theory, they lay the foundation for what Bryk and Schneider (2002) believe to be an essential component of school success and without providing attention to all four "can be sufficient to undermine a discernment of trust for the overall relationship" (p.23).

The literature on trust in school communities provides a key insight into the impact of relationships on school success, but the literature often fails to see trust as the outcome of broader system of theories in an attempt to create a stand-alone theory. While providing insight into the conditions that allow for stronger school and family relationships (Adams et. al, 2009), the trust literature often leaves issues such as power, historical racism and cultural capital as ancillary. While Bryk and Schneider (2002) found negative trust levels in schools with predominately African American students, they do not provide a structural or historical analysis. There is a gap in the trust literature that explains the types of parent engagement strategies that provide sustained trust between school and families (Adams et. al, 2009). My research attempts to explore these gaps to provide insight on possible strategies and challenges in building trust between school staff and families. While providing key insights into the effects of distrust and trust, the causes and reproduction of distrusting relationships lacks analysis. This research will analyze trust as a component of social capital development among parents and between parents and school staff.

Conclusion on Parent Engagement.

This literature review of empirical research coupled with theoretical insights

provides a contextual understanding of family and school relationships, particularly in low-

income communities. Hong's (2011) ecology of parent engagement and its key

distinguishing elements from traditional parent involvement provide a powerful

framework to explore the literature on family and school relationships. Most of the

literature reviewed was easily nested under the five key elements of the ecological

framework and although "trust" could have been nested under a variety of the elements,

the high relevance to the research project as both an element of empirical research and a

component of social capital theory required additional space. Hong's work was used as an

outline for this review because the program to be researched is modeled from the Chicago-

based program highlighted in her book, which gave rise to the Ecological Parent

Engagement framework.

Despite a great deal of literature on family and school relationships, there are gaps

that exist and areas in need of further exploration. Due to the expanding Spanish-speaking

immigrant population in the United States, much of the contemporary literature on family

and school relationships explores the disparate worlds of Latino families and schools (e.g.

Hong, 2011, Shoji et al., 2014; Valenzuela, 1999; Warren, 2014). This may be due to more

blatant cultural and linguistic disparities, while other communities of color are seen less as

"outsiders" within the education system due to a longer history with American schooling

(Hong, 2011). Yet, the long and violent history of families of color in schools is precisely

why a deeper understanding of the structural barriers that exist between families and

schools is necessary. According to Cooper (2009), more research is needed to understand

the involvement of African American mothers in schools as they battle against the norms

set by the unemployed, middle-class, white mothers of the early to mid-twentieth century.

One of the elements of Hong's ecological framework that is prominent in the family

and school relationship literature is the dichotomy of asset-based vs. deficit-based

perspectives. The literature explores asset-based theories across multiple layers using

multiple theoretical frameworks but it is often distilled to the fact that until schools

acknowledge they can learn from families and see families as partners in education, then

schools will continue to hold deficit-based perspectives that manifest in cycles of distrust,

unequal power and divisiveness. This area is key as it relates to cultural capital and the

process of legitimation explored later in this literature review and will be a guiding

element in understanding how school staff view parents and vice versa.

Family and school relationships are an essential element of building successful

schools and the literature states that building trust is the foundation for successful

collaborations. The concept of trust is explored in both the social capital section and family-

school relationship section yet there is a greater need for research on strategies that

develop and sustain trust between schools and parents (Adams, 2009) and across various

levels of community (Geller et al., 2014). This research uses Hong's ecological framework

as context for an understanding of trust and social capital development among parents in a

school-based parent engagement program.

The literature affirms both the importance of parent engagement as well as a need

to further explore what forms or strategies of parent engagement are mutually agreed

upon by both parents and schools. Tensions in the literature exist primarily around issues

of power. Even Hong (2011), who discusses the necessity of creating spaces for shared

power, overlooks the role of power in her research. While parent and family relationships may improve, oppressive power structures often remain. Fine (1993) is concerned that when programs do not clearly acknowledge unequal power distribution family and school relationships neglect long histories of systemic racism and will continue to suffer from service or deficit-based approaches. Seminal parent engagement author Joyce Epstein rarely addresses issues of power in family and school relationships. While decision-making is one type of parent involvement Epstein discusses, she does so without addressing the legacies of racism, simply as a point on a spectrum. Issues of power are difficult to address in school-based programs because schools must approve the programs that operate within the building. School administrators fear sharing power knowing that an organized group of parents could threaten his or her job (Shirley, 1997). This fear often results in parents being engaged in more passive roles such as bake sales and running errands. Based on the literature, a key question explored through the research is - what are the limitations of school-based parent engagement programs in regards to shared power?

One of the biggest implications of the literature on this research is the understanding that schools typically view low-income parents through a deficit-based lens. Deficit-based perspectives of parents held by schools are an undercurrent implicitly and explicitly expressed throughout the literature. When parents are viewed as inferior to that of the teachers it provides a cracked foundation in which other key elements of successful parent engagement programs wobble. This often manifests in overt cycles of blame and distrust or in more subtle displays of paternalism and condescension. This research will attempt to understand if participating parents feel as though they are seen as respected partners who carry a wealth of knowledge or as inexperienced educators creating barriers

to student learning. How do teachers view parents? Has their perception changed since participating in the PEP program? If there is a change in perception, under what conditions did the change occur? These questions will be analyzed through the theoretical framework of cultural capital and the process of legitimatizing cultural capital.

This literature review on family and school relationships provides a key empirical and theoretical review of the context in which this research took place. While the literature is expansive, gaps exist that explore parent engagement from a dual lens of social and cultural capital. The following section will use the theoretical lens of social and cultural capital to further explore family and school relationships.

Social and Cultural Capital

Social capital disparities exist between low-income and more affluent communities resulting in a lack of school-based opportunities for children and families (Farmer-Hinton, 2008). Social capital theory will provide a conceptual framework to explain the interactions that exist and develop among parents and between parents and teachers participating in the PEP program. Social capital theory has become an incredibly diverse and accordingly ambiguous notion due to its plurality of usage in scholarship (Lareau, 2001; Lin, 1999; Portes, 1998).

The term social capital first emerged in writings by educator and social reformer L. Judson Hanifan while observing rural poverty in West Virginia (Saegert, Thompson & Warren, 2001; Putnam, 2000). Hanifan (1920) describes both the personal and communal functions of social capital accumulation. "If he [community member] comes into contact with his neighbors, there will be an accumulation of social capital, which may immediately satisfy his social needs and which may bear a social potentiality sufficient for the

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substantial improvement of life in the whole community" (p. 79). Hanifan describes social

capital accumulation as a tool for social action the same way a business needs financial

capital to open its doors. "In community building, as in business organization, there must

be an accumulation of capital before constructive work can be done" (p.79).

Hanifan's theory of social capital went largely unnoticed, yet remains in close

proximity to the term's most common usage in contemporary society as it has since

bloomed into one of social science's most fashionable theories. Interestingly, the theory of

social capital has been "independently rediscovered" by multiple people in a variety of

fields, sometimes either without knowledge of its previous conceptual frameworks or

without direct acknowledgement of theorists (Putnam, 2000, p.19). This literature review

will explore social capital through the lens of three of its most well-known authors; Pierre

Bourdieu, James Coleman and Robert Putnam. The bulk of the review will explore Bourdieu

due to his layered understanding of social capital as one part of an ecosystem of theories,

which will serve as a key guide for this research.

Pierre Bourdieu: Social and Cultural Capital.

Pierre Bourdieu (1986), one of the most widely cited authors of social capital

theory, defines social capital as a collection of resources embedded in social networks,

which can be tangible or intangible.

> Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked
>
> to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of
>
> mutual acquaintance and recognition—or in other words, to membership in a
>
> group—which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively

owned capital, a "credential" which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word. (p. 21)

Portes (1998) describes Bourdieu's definition of social capital as the "most theoretically refined among those that introduced the term in contemporary sociological discourse" (p. 3). Bourdieu often references social capital in the context of group membership and the benefits that accrue with that membership. He states "…the profits which accrue from membership in a group are the basis of the solidarity which makes them possible" (Bourdieu 1986, p. 22). The research to be conducted will look at various layers of membership within one-group of parents participating in a new parent engagement pilot program at two schools. The concepts of membership and solidarity will be key in researching the formation of relationships among parents.

The type of profit that may accrue from membership in a group of predominately lower-income individuals may look different than the profits of being a member of a group made up of more affluent (or middle-class) individuals. Membership in more affluent groups is often formed on the basis of concentrating and retaining capital and power (Bourdieu, 1986), while group membership among low-income individuals may serve other purposes such as economic security and the pursuit of social supports (Granovetter, 1983). An attempt to understand what membership means to each parent participating in this project and what he or she sees as benefits to that membership will be an element of this research study.

Bourdieu (1986) uses the concept of membership to introduce how social capital interacts with class and privilege often in the form of a familial pursuit of "institution rites" or the reproduction of relationships in order to secure capital (p.22). According to

Bourdieu (1986), the transmission of social capital and its continued accumulation is a cycle of privilege that prevents equal opportunities for those unable to attain membership into the groups of privilege. Bourdieu describes the social world as unlike a game of Roulette in which everyone has a fair and equal chance at success. Society allows for various forms of capital to be accumulated but the house (i.e. the dominant class) tends to win.

While Bourdieu is well known for his contributions to the theory of social capital, his writings on social capital are limited. For Bourdieu (1992), social capital (and other forms of capital) is just one component in a much larger yet interconnected sociology that he instructs readers not to study isolation. For the purposes of this review, a focused approach on Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital and the process of legitimation will provide key insights into the research.

Bourdieu: Cultural Capital.

Because much of Bourdieu's work highlights the definition and functions of cultural capital, and school and family relationships are largely influenced by this form of capital (Lareau, 2001), it is necessary to explain the relationship between cultural capital and social capital in Bourdieu's work. Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital is rooted in understanding class inequality. In an urban educational setting, social capital levels between school staff and families are the result of cultural and class division that exists between schools and families, which Bourdieu (1986) refers to as cultural capital. Bourdieu (1986) states that he unearthed the concept of cultural capital while trying to explain the educational achievement gap between students of different social classes. Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital breaks from human capital theories that make correlations

between academic success and "natural aptitudes" ... "because they fail to take systematic account of the structure of the differential chances of profit which the various markets offer these agents or classes..." (1986, p.17). This is in contrast to Coleman's theory of social capital that produces human capital without an understanding of the chances of profit within certain market forces. Cultural capital provides a lens that examines the value of one's capital in identified markets or what Bourdieu later calls fields and the chances of profitability or legitimation of one's capital within a certain field.

Bourdieu (1986) describes cultural capital as functioning in three states. The embodied state is what Bourdieu refers to as "culture" secured through the process of "inculcation and assimilation" (p.18). Bourdieu (1986) also refers to the embodied state as habitus or closely linked to the person is a way that is not easily transmittable. Embodied cultural capital has the ability to be passed from generation to generation but cannot function beyond the ability of the individual to appropriate and therefore, Bourdieu (1986) believes is a combination of inherited capital and gained capital. For Bourdieu, habitus is the result of how agents internalize their past experiences and analyze present conditions to make decisions (Maton, 2008). Habitus is Bourdieu's attempt to reframe the dichotomous relationship between the objective and subjective by developing a concept that addresses the relationship between independent actors operating within structures (Jenkins, 1992; Swartz, 1997).

The second state is what Bourdieu (1986) calls the objectified state or the material objects and "cultural goods" that hold value (p.20). This form of cultural capital is transmittable as material but acts relationally with the embodied state during the process

of "consuming" the objectified state such as viewing a painting or reading a book (p.19). "Thus cultural goods can be appropriated both materially—which presupposes economic capital—and symbolically—which presupposes cultural capital" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 20). While the objectified state is the only easily transmittable state of cultural capital, Bourdieu seems to use conflicting language in reference to capital, specifically cultural capital. Bourdieu (1986) toggles back and forth with terminology such as "acquired" (1986, p. 18) and "distribution" (1990, p.76) which are in conflict with "recognition" (1998, P. 44) and "legitimacy" (1998, p. 56), two terms often used by Bourdieu to describe the validation of cultural capital. Acquisition and distribution imply a good to be obtained while recognition and legitimation imply valuing a good already owned. While this distinction is somewhat clarified in his descriptions of the states of cultural capital, whether cultural capital is transmitted or legitimized seems to be used interchangeably and without reference to any particular state throughout his descriptions of cultural capital. This conflict may highlight a larger issue with using Bourdieu's intra-class analogies towards inter-class struggles.

Finally, the institutionalized state of cultural capital is the process through which institutions, such as schools, can "impose recognition" such as validating educational credentials (Bourdieu, 1986, p.21). This research will focus on understanding cultural capital in its institutionalized state or the process of capital recognition because in this state it is assumed that everyone possesses cultural capital, it is the institutions or fields that choose to recognize or misrecognize that capital. By developing an understanding of institutionalized cultural capital this research follows an asset-based philosophy that places focus not on whether an individual lacks certain traits but who validates those

particular traits and in what context. In contrast, researching the embodied cultural capital may focus too much on the need to understand if someone gained or lost a particular skill when that particular skill only exists due to the power of cultural capital in its institutionalized state validating its existence.

The literature on parent and family relationships is consistent in stating that schools are biased institutions that place value on middle-class families in a way that devalues low-income families. This provides another reason that this research will plan to focus attention to cultural capital in its institutionalized state. For example, in what ways do schools misrecognize parents' cultural capital? Are parents able to gain recognition of their cultural capital in the school field? Although Bourdieu (1986) believes cultural capital is something that is inherited, often through family, it is often regarded as earned and not seen as capital but simply "legitimate competence" (p. 18). This legitimation of cultural capital in the education system puts low-income families at an immediate disadvantage. According to Horvat & Lareau (1999), social class produces cultural capital when parents and teachers share middle-class standards such as "…sense of entitlement to interact with teachers as equals, time, transportation, and child care arrangements to attend school events during the school day" (p. 42). When low-income parents lack experience navigating the educational system combined with potentially negative personal experiences with schooling it often translates to a perception of uncaring or uninvolved families (Lee & Bowen, 2006). As Lee and Bowen (2006) state "…cultural capital is the advantage gained by middle-class, educated European American parents from knowing, preferring, and experiencing a lifestyle congruent with the culture that is dominant in most American schools" (p. 198). By better understanding how cultural capital functions in its

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institutionalized state, i.e. the school, this research provides insight into how cultural

capital is validated and strategies to disrupt or rework the validation process.

Bourdieu: Field.

For Bourdieu, cultural capital only exists in relation to the space in which capital

functions. Bourdieu (1992) encouraged readers to place the immediacy of research on

social space, what he refers to through his concept of field. Bourdieu (1992) describes the

field as "a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions" (p.97).

Fields are places of constant struggle and resistance between those in power and those

who pursue power, and according to Bourdieu (1992), the boundaries of a field only exist

as far as the field is able to impose influence. Fields are the spaces in which cultural capital

functions most apparently in its institutionalized state due to Bourdieu's description of the

role power relations play in shaping and maintaining the field.

Bourdieu (1992) states that in order to identify a field one must analyze the field of

power. According to Bourdieu, every field has positions of hierarchical dominance. While

Bourdieu often uses French aristocratic analogies, such as scholars, writers and artists, to

describe dense terms such as power and domination, and he is critiqued for not spending

enough time on inter-class social stratification (Swartz, 1997), parallels can be draw

between fields of power and social oppression within the education system. Schools can act

as fields of power with stratified agents struggling for dominance (Bourdieu, 1992). While

there may be a variety of power struggles in a school field (administration vs. staff, staff vs.

students) this research will focus on the role power relations play in family and school

partnerships. While fields are sites of constant resistance and struggle, they do so within

the force of reproduction and rarely break the cycle of duplication (Swartz, 1997). This is

consistent within the family and school relationship literature in regards to power.

The proximity of power in a social field is what can transform a resource into capital

(Swartz, 1997). Fields are constructed to legitimize certain capital and devalue other forms

of capital. According to Bourdieu (1992) "A capital does not exist and function except in

relation to a field." (p.101). Therefore the structure of the field dictates the value and

accumulation of capital and reproduces the hierarchy of who can make those

determinations. "Those who dominate in a given field are in a position to make it function

to their advantage" (1992, p.102). In the urban education system, which is dominated by

white, middle class individuals, the capital of minority, low-income families can be

delegitimized then criticized for not playing by the rules of a game developed by those in

power with the sole goal of retaining power. This research will observe one school as a

field and the struggles for power between school staff and parents through the process of

capital recognition.

Bourdieu: Fields, Symbolic Violence, Capital Recognition.

Bourdieu describes capital as "weapons" (1998, p.12) and says capital and power

"amounts to the same thing" (1986, p.84). Forms of capital are the weapons that are used to

gain and retain power, which is why those in power go to such lengths to legitimize their

own weapons. The process of legitimizing capital may be the most significant concept in

Bourdieu's theoretical system of habitus, capital and field because it is this process that

grants power to dominate a field, legitimize domination and reproduce social conditions

conducive for future domination. Symbolic capital, which includes all forms of capital,

comes into existence when capital is given value by "categories of perception" such as

"strong/weak, large/small, rich/poor" (Bourdieu, 1998, p.47). This legitimation or

misrecognition of capital is a form of symbolic violence inflicted through symbolic systems

of classifications (Bourdieu, 1985). Schubert (2008) states that this form of violence is an

"effective and efficient form of domination in that members of the dominant classes need to

exert little energy to maintain their dominance" (p.184). For Bourdieu (1998), symbolic

violence is exerted in both the objective structures of organization as well as in the

subjective mental structures, therefore the violence inflicted doesn't appear to be out of the

ordinary but natural. For Bourdieu, misrecognition is the active process of denying "the

economic and political interest present in a set of practices" (Swartz, 1997, p. 89).

Symbolic power is an accumulation of symbolic capital, providing the ability to exert

symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1989). "Every power to exert symbolic violence, i.e. every

power which manages to impose meanings and to impose them as legitimate by concealing

the power relations which are the basis of its force, adds its own specifically symbolic force

to those power relations" (Bourdieu, 1990, p.4). In urban education settings, symbolic

violence may be found in systems that reproduce or maintain the status quo, which

requires little effort on the part of those in power. This may be found in so-called objective

forms such as test scores or subjective social norms such as deficit views of families. Both

examples use symbolic violence to classify based on the power or ability of the school to

impose classifications.

While Bourdieu (1992) often seems pessimistic about breaking the cycle of social

reproduction, in a rare moment of acknowledging personal and collective agency in social

reproduction, Bourdieu states that in order to change the rules of the game, people must

devalue the dominant capital and legitimize their own. Bourdieu doesn't give clear

instructions or theoretical guideposts to this process, but provides a new angle through which to research capital legitimization and devaluation. This research attempts to better understand if participating parents are able to legitimize their own capital and if it is done through the delegimization of the dominant capital or via other strategies. Bourdieu (1998) states that schools, and other institutions, are banks of symbolic capital that can choose if they will recognize forms of capital presented by the dominated class. This research will explore the question of – while Bourdieu often states institutions may hold the power to validate cultural capital, is it possible that personal and collective agency can force capital recognition?

According to Bourdieu (1998), the education system acts as a predetermined filing cabinet that sorts those with inherited cultural capital from those without. This process of filing and legitimizing determines "birth in the name of merit and of what will later become called competence" (1998, p.23). "In any given social formation, legitimate culture, i.e. the culture endowed with the dominant legitimacy, is nothing other than the dominant cultural arbitrary insofar as it is misrecognized in its objective truth as a cultural arbitrary and as the dominant cultural arbitrary" (Bourdieu, 1990, p.23). By placing predominantly low-income parents and predominately middle-income teachers into partnership, the researched program can provide a case study in understanding the process of legitimizing and delegitimizing capital by challenging cultural arbitraries. One possible cultural arbitrary in the field of the school is the art of teaching. While urban educators went to school, received degrees and were validated as professionals through the dominant culture and legitimized institutionalized cultural capital, they may recognize that a parent has more authority or ability to connect to their students, therefore, beginning to recognize

their authority as a teacher as a cultural arbitrary. Examining the symbolic violence inflicted through the misrecognition of cultural capital in its institutionalized state may provide key understandings about the program's capability in pushing schools to legitimize parents' cultural capital.

The process of sorting in the educational system is an example of what Bourdieu (1998) calls "structuring structures," a process that unknowingly reproduces social conditions (p.26). Bourdieu seems conflicted on whether or not the dominant group is an active agent is the process of symbolic domination or simply unaware perpetrators. While Bourdieu (1992) is consistent in his analogy of field as a game in which players struggle for power, he claims that "a field is not the product of a deliberate act of creation..." (p.98) and that domination is an indirect effect of a complex field (i.e. schools) not always as a conscious action (Bourdieu, 1998). While Bourdieu clarifies that people aren't simply "particles" (1992, p.108) but active agents in fields that can manipulate capital distribution, he then states that capital may be used to "transform...the rules of the game" (1992, p.99). Bourdieu simultaneously provides a theory of structural and social reproduction through the deliberate process of legitimation and domination, and then warns us against assuming conspiracy, which "haunts critical thinking" (Bourdieu, 1998, p.26). This conundrum is explored by researching the process of how capital legitimation interacts with fields of power. Can the dominant class legitimize the capital of the dominated class without changing the rules of the game or the structure of the field? In other words, can a teacher recognize a parent's capital as legitimate but still, unknowingly, retain full power in the field of social reproduction?

Bourdieu: Social and Cultural Capital - A Joint Theory.

This research will seek to understand how the cultural capital of parents is legitimized or delegitimized in school settings and how social networks interact with the process of legitimization. For example, does the development of social capital among a group of parents, whose cultural capital isn't typically recognized in the particular field of schooling, influence the legitimation of their cultural capital in that field? Can social capital influence the structure of the field or change the rules? Is cultural capital something that is gained, legitimized or both? Can collective agency force cultural capital recognition?

The misrecognition of low-income families' cultural capital in American schooling prevents their accumulation of social capital or shared membership between families and schools because the amount of one's social capital is dependent on the amount of cultural capital that is recognized and vice versa. Social capital is a key management tool for the accumulation of other forms of capital through network consolidation (Bourdieu, 1998). For Bourdieu (1986), cultural capital (as well as economic and symbolic capital) is both a product of having social capital as well as a means with which to "back it up" (p. 17).

> ...although it is relatively irreducible to the economic and cultural capital possessed by a given agent, or even by the whole set of agents to whom he is connected, social capital is never completely independent of it because the exchanges instituting mutual acknowledgment presuppose the reacknowledgment of a minimum of objective homogeneity, and because it exerts a multiplier effect on the capital he possesses in his own right. (1986, p. 21)

The literature on school and family relationships is consistent in stating that schools are biased institutions that place value on middle-class families in a way that devalues low-income families. Examining the symbolic violence inflicted through the misrecognition of

cultural capital in its institutionalized state provide key understandings about the PEP program's capability in pushing schools to legitimize parents' cultural capital. The misrecognition of cultural capital is a strategy of the dominant class to prevent the formation of social capital. In other words, by having the power to define acceptable mainstream culture the dominant class automatically prevents group membership by creating exclusionary policies that reproduce class systems.

This research uses Bourdieu's theory of social capital in relation to the shared resources among parents and between parents and teachers and its relationship to the cultural capital in multiple fields or social spaces. Could the school's acknowledgment of parents' cultural capital result in social capital or the formation of trusting relationships between parents and teachers? What conditions allow for the recognition of cultural capital? Is the legitimation of cultural capital necessary to build social capital?

For Bourdieu, it is difficult to detach cultural capital from social capital. These two theories are interwoven with other forms of capital in a broader field that Bourdieu describes. This wide-angle lens can render Bourdieu's work difficult to decipher and can result is misinterpretations or co-optations (Horvat, Weininger & Lareau, 2003), but his theoretical contributions to social capital theory provide insight into how social and cultural capital function as reproducers of inequality, particularly in the education system. This research will use Bourdieu's concepts of cultural and social capital and look for ways to connect these two theories in ways that he didn't explicitly discuss. For example, by forming a strong group of parents who act collectively, will the school begin to recognize them as assets? The interrelationship between cultural and social capital isn't substantially

explored in the literature. This research explores these questions through the voice of participating parents and teaching staff.

Social Capital and Social Structures: James S. Coleman.

James Coleman (1988) admits to the ambiguity of social capital yet affirms its powerful ability to stimulate action. Coleman's theory of social capital is based on an individual's capacity for action and the resources available to facilitate that action.

> Social capital is defined by its function. It is not a single entity but a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors-whether persons or corporate actors-within the structure. Like other forms of capital, social capital is productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that in its absence would not be possible. (p.98)

Coleman defines social capital as the means to accomplish an end, what he calls human capital or the capacity to act. According to Coleman, human capital is "created by changes in persons that bring about skills and capabilities that make them able to act in new ways" (p.100). Coleman's human capital is similar to Bourdieu's cultural capital except Coleman's human capital is ahistoric whereas cultural capital is accumulated capital positioned within fields that determine their worth. By defining social capital by its function, Coleman values social capital only insofar as it produces human capital whereas Bourdieu looks at the institutions that validate capital. Coleman's research focuses on social capital in the education system and contends that social capital is as important as financial and human capital in determining educational outcomes.

Coleman (1988) describes social closure as a network of social relations that are interconnected and develop social capital in a way that fosters trust, creates norms and enforces collective sanctions. In order to develop effective norms for a community, Coleman's believes closed relationships can collectively enforce sanctions on behaviors. Coleman (1988) uses the analogy of parents who know their children's friend's parents and are afforded the ability to monitor the behavior of their child and other children in the neighborhood. According to Coleman (1988), this ability to rely on closed networks for information exchange as well as create external expectations via social closure is necessary in producing social capital. Similar to Coleman's analogy, this research will study the potential formation of a closed network of parents and their capacity for information exchange, among other potential unexpected benefits of social closure.

Much of Coleman's (1986) work looks at the functions of social structures within schools, families and other small group settings; he believes that large groups have lower degrees of closure. Coleman describes intergenerational closure as the relationships that create norms between children and adults. While researching the lower drop out rates among students attending Catholic schools compared to students attending public schools, despite the Catholic schools he researched spending less per pupil, Coleman (1988) identified intergenerational closure as a key factor for success in the Catholic school system. The linkage of parental networks to one another as well as to the greater community within the Catholic school, develop social capital through intergenerational closure which can enforce collective norms in both the school and the community (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987). The "...existence of intergenerational closure provides a quantity

of social capital available to each parent in raising his children-not only in matters related to school but in other matters as well" (Coleman, 1988, p.107).

Coleman believes that the closure of social networks facilitates "trustworthiness of social structures that allows the proliferation of obligations and expectations" (1988, p. 107). "If A does something for B and trusts B to reciprocate in the future, this establishes an expectation in A and an obligation on the part of B" (Coleman, 1988, p.102). Coleman's concept of social closure is based on the idea that an interconnected network of parents and teachers can create norms of shared accountability for the student's success instead of a norm of pointing fingers at one another (Burt, 2004). This closed structure creates a system in which a group can effectively sanction obligations, whereas in an open network a break from localized norms can go undetected. Coleman (1988) believes that individuals conduct costs and benefits analysis when deciding to trust others and trusting relationships are pursued only when one believes that his or her trust will be reciprocated. Groups that are built on trusting relationships are more productive at developing social capital (Coleman, p. 101). The literature tends to agree that when parents and teachers know and trust each other they can more effectively guide the behavior of their children and create share expectations and obligations for their children. While Coleman's concept of social closure provides insight into already structured social networks, he fails to sufficiently describe the forces that affect network formation and it's relation to cultural capital in the way that Bourdieu describes through fields of power. Coleman states that social capital can create systems of trust, yet the formation of social capital may require trust as a prerequisite. If one's cultural capital isn't recognized in a particular field, can trusting relationships form and can social capital emerge? For Coleman's theory of social

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capital, he starts with social capital which prevents an understanding of its formation and therefore of the theory itself.

Despite the missing link that cultural capital may play in social capital formation, Coleman provides a strong foundation for understanding social capital's function in social organization as well as the concept of closure, which can ignite the capacities of social capital. Coleman's introduction of this idea has provided a foundation to begin to analyze social capital as social networks embedded in social structures. The study to be researched will observe if an additional level of social closure between parents and teachers will result in the trusting relationships and shared expectations that have been shown to benefit the development of children. The research may also observe if network closure among parents (trust, norms and collective sanctions) develops and any potential beneficial or unfavorable outcomes from closure.

Social Capital and Civic Communities: Robert D. Putnam.

While James Coleman pushed the theory of social capital into academia, the book *Bowling Alone* by Robert D. Putnam (2000) brought the theory of social capital into the mainstream through its detailed thesis describing the breakdown in the sociability of Americans. Using the metaphor of the decline in bowling league membership toward the end of the twentieth century, Putnam (2000) argues that social relationships are what make communities "healthy, wealthy, and wise" and geographic areas that lack civic relationships are prone to civic and economic decline (p. 287).

While Bourdieu's theories of social capital are based in class struggle, Putnam's theories are more structuralist in an attempt to understand social integration and civic community. Putnam's social capital places importance on societal values and moral

obligations more than a systems analysis of society. Much of Putnam's theories are based in Coleman's work connected to social capital's functionality within social structures. Putnam agrees that "Frequent interaction among a diverse set of people tends to produce a norm of generalize reciprocity" (2000, p. 21), but lacks Bourdieu's ability to place this diversity in the context of power struggles. Similar to Coleman, Putnam places the core value of social capital in its ability to develop trusting relationships that create a social structure based on mutual obligations and norms of reciprocity but lacks Bourdieu's understanding of the forces within that create those structures or what he calls "structuring structures" (1998, p. 26).

From social membership in sports leagues to professional membership in labor unions, Putnam (1995) warns about the decline in civic engagement among Americans and the dire consequences of our continued isolationism. Putnam (1995) makes a basic argument that the fewer opportunities we have for social interaction, the less likely we will build trusting relationships, and continue to recede in our capacity for collective political and civic endeavors. Low-income parents in urban schools have fewer opportunities for social interaction due to a variety of reasons, including; lack of recreational activities provided by low-income schools and the cultural divide between school staff and families (Lareau, 2001). The isolationism that parents face in addition to the unequal power dynamics between families and school administration, often prevent the capacity for being powerful actors in their child's school (Nogeura, 2001). According to Putnam (2000), the lack of social capital that exists in poor communities prevents civic engagement and an organized approach for justice-based activities. In addition to studying the program's influence on relationships, this research focuses on the impact those relationships have on

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participants' sense of civic engagement in the school community. Putnam's work helps to inform the research in the context of social capital's relationship to civic engagement

Putnam's extensive writing and staging of social capital has led to an expansive analysis and critique of an important theory in American society. Putnam's work provides both a warning and a hopeful proposal for civic participation in a society that he believes is rapidly losing the social capital necessary for reviving a prosperous community.

A Critical Look: Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam.

Although Bourdieu discusses the relationship between privilege and capital and the endless advantageous pursuit by those in power, the paradox of his work is the neglect to tie the complexities of race into his theories. Because Bourdieu believes that social and cultural capital have the basic properties of economic capital such as investment and profit, he neglects to discuss the role of structural racism in social capital and its accumulation. Others have used Bourdieu's social and cultural capital framework to incorporate race and racism (Lareau, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999). Bourdieu goes on to compare this transmission of cultural capital in the embodied state to the building of muscle or getting a suntan. Although Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital provides powerful insight into privilege and inequity, his omission of the role of race in the accumulation and transmission of cultural capital occasionally positions it within an economic lens. If an investment is made a profit will be received. Although it is difficult to detach race from class and privilege, Bourdieu uses social and cultural capital to provide a structural analysis of dominant class reproduction (Lin, 1999).

On the surface, Coleman's description of human capital is closely aligned with Bourdieu's cultural capital and habitus, both are products of and catalysts for having social

capital, but a closer look shows Coleman's human capital is ahistoric and lacks an understanding of privilege or inherited cultural capital, what Bourdieu describes through the legitimization of cultural capital. Coleman's theory of social capital lacks a classist analysis and favors an economic-based investment and profit lens (Lareau, 2001). This can be seen in Coleman's (1988) well-known research documenting social capital available to Catholic private schools and public schools (Coleman, 1988). Without a structural analysis of inequity, Coleman posits the middle-class norms as superior without providing detailed research of why public schools may lack the type of middle-class social capital that Coleman favors. Bourdieu's concept of legitimation of capital provides key understandings of class, power and inequity that Coleman, and Putnam, are unable to articulate. Lareau (2001) sees Coleman's analysis as an assimilation proposal for "helping children comply with dominant standards" (p. 81). While Bourdieu's capital theories neglect race, Coleman seems to use euphemisms to skirt around a thorough analysis of the role race plays in social capital accumulation. Coleman (1988) describes urban communities as lacking social capital due to the "social disorganization" that plaque low-income communities (p.103). Coleman has been criticized for his neglect in addressing the systems in which social capital is created and isolated.

> Thus, a key problem with the work of Coleman, as well as many others studying the influence of family life on schooling, has been a failure to acknowledge sufficiently the role of structural inequality in shaping schooling as well as other life chances (Lareau, 2001, p. 82).

Despite a broad argument for the significance of social capital in modern society, Putnam's proposed causes and solutions for a growing deficit in social capital seem to be

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draped in nostalgia and platitudes that lack a structural analysis of inequity and shifting

demographics. This macro analysis redirects the blame and onerous on the faceless masses

instead of the structural failures and changes necessary for creating a more equitable

society. Shortly after *Bowling Alone*, perhaps due to what people criticized as a panacea for

a variety of complex issues (Portes, 1998), Putnam (2001) wrote "Social capital promises

no 'magic bullet' for solving problems of poverty and social injustice, for this theory is an

analytic lens, not a package of policies" (Putnam, 2001, xvi). This backtracks to when

Putnam (1993) quickly connected dots between poverty, violence and global warming;

social capital being presented as a central figure in his proposed solution.

> Working together is easier in a community blessed with a substantial stock of social
>
> capital. This insight turns out to have powerful practical implications for many
>
> issues on the American national agenda – for how we might overcome the poverty
>
> and violence of South Central Los Angeles, or revitalize industry in the Rust Belt, or
>
> nurture the fledgling democracies of the former Soviet empire and the erstwhile
>
> Third World. (p.250 – book)

Although social capital theory has been critiqued and expanded in directions that

reach far beyond these three authors, it is rare for them not to be cited within emerging

frameworks for their unique contributions to social capital theory. Glen Loury (1989) uses

Bourdieu's theoretical framework of privilege and social capital to include a racial analysis

of social capital and the transmission of inequality. Nan Lin (1999) analyzes measures of

social capital through the embedded resources that are often implied but not detailed in

the accumulation of social capital. Researchers are also closely observing the rapidly

emerging field of new forms of social capital in youth culture (Raffo & Reeves, 2000;

Sullivan, 1997) and an increasingly digital world (Wellman, Quan Haase, Witte, & Hampton, 2001; Blanchard & Horan, 1998).

As social capital theory continues to rise in popularity, so has a more detailed and thorough critique. What began as a benefit-heavy concept has since produced research and theories that analyze the negative side of social capital. Both the positive and negative affects of social capital are often identified through the concepts of bonding and bridging social capital.

Bonding and Bridging Social Capital.

The concepts of bonding and bridging social capital are key components in social capital theory because they provide an understanding of how social capital is formed and mobilized, both intentionally and unintentionally. Bonding and bridging social capital distinguishes between intergroup social capital and intragroup social capital formation and can provide key insights into how race, class and other social distinctions interact with social capital accumulation. These distinctions are important to this research due to the PEP program's intentionality of building relationships among parents (bonding social capital) and between parents and teaching staff (bridging social capital).

Putnam (2000) is the only of the three key authors in the literature review that explicitly discusses bonding and bridging. Putnam (2000) describes bonding social capital as "sociological superglue" and bridging social capital as "sociological WD-40" (p.23). Coleman doesn't distinguish between inter and intra group relationship in his theory of social closure and is critiqued for not taking class and dominant social norms into account (Lareau, 2001). Bourdieu frames social capital in the context of group membership by identifying the benefits to membership and the exclusionary measures used to prevent

membership, yet he doesn't seem to distinguish between intergroup and intragroup membership in language that parallels bonding and bridging social capital.

The bonding of social capital is the most common type of social capital creation and refers to the creation of in-network relationships among people that share commonalities such as sororities, fraternities, Veteran's of Foreign Wars, labor unions and tennis clubs - most people are recruited to groups based on shared similarities with other group members (Putnam, 2000). Bonding social capital is used to build community, provide psychological and social systems of support (Putnam, 2000), and increase solidarity and execute civic action (Son & Lin, 2007). Bonding social capital is positively associated with home ownership and civic participation (Brisson & Usher, 2005). Through the bonding of social capital "people can find mutual support among people who have similar experiences and face similar challenges…build confidence necessary to enter the public arena as powerful actors" (Mapp & Warren, 2011, p. 25). Labor unions have used the power of bonding social capital among members to negotiate with those in power (Putnam, 2000). Bonding patterns in black communities have been used as a tool to overcome oppressive environments for centuries (Lightfoot, 1978).

Although bonding social capital within a group may have many positive benefits there is a dark side to this form of social capital accumulation. According to Putnam (2001), "creating in-group loyalty, may also create strong out-group antagonism…" (p. 23). In the book *Black Social Capital*, Marion Orr (1999) accuses the black community in Baltimore of creating excessive in-group solidarity that has prevented necessary alliance building to business and political networks. Excessively bonded social capital can create a level of insularity among a group of people and can prevent new channels of information, the

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formation of needed alliances and lead to redundant information or reinforcing incorrect information (Burt, 2001).

The literature suggests the benefits of bonding social capital are often tied to socioeconomic status. Among the privileged class, bonding of social capital has the capacity to offer more human and financial resources than one already has, while bonding social capital for low-income communities doesn't offer the same luxury (Lin, 1999). Often, low-income communities bond social capital as a way to "get by" or cope with a pursuit of basic needs while more affluent groups bond social capital to "get ahead" or expand one's economic opportunities (Souza Briggs, 1998). Fasang, Mangino, & Bruckner (2014) argue that social closure reinforces the status quo, which for middle-class communities can be a desirable outcome, but in low-income communities can lead to the reproduction of inequality.

As a site for social interaction between parents, teachers and students - schools in urban communities have great potential to build social capital (Noguera, 2001; Warren, 2014), but low-income parents are less likely than middle-class parents to have bonding relationships with other parents (Bolivar & Chrispeels, 2011; Horvat et al., 2003; Laurea, 2002; Ream & Palardy, 2008) which often results in parents addressing school issues in isolation and lacking the power to have their voices heard (Horvat et al., 2003; Noguera, 2001). While the reasoning behind the lack of bonding relationships among low-income parents in schools is rarely identified, it may be due to the tight knit, insular family commonly used as a survival strategy combined with the school as a social space of constant struggle for the legitimation of low-income families' cultural capital. This may affect the way parents form relationships with each other and the way they form

relationships with classroom teachers. Will parents form strong ties among other parents in a way that resists relationships with classroom teachers? In what ways will the complexities of these relationships challenge or maintain power relations in the school field?

The school as a space of constant power struggles can create barriers for family engagement, which reproduces itself through the lack of opportunities to form parent-to-parent relationships. It is important for low-income parents to be able to find "faces in the crowd" that allow for a level of comfort in a foreign environment (Lightfoot, 1978, p.203). Research suggests that parents who have bonded social capital may be more likely to feel comfortable participating in the school and acting collectively (Bolivar & Chrispeels, 2010; Hong, 2011; Warren 2014).

The goal of bridging social capital is to extend networks across groups of certain demographics thus creating greater access to opportunities and information (Putnam, 1993; Warren, Thompsen & Saegert, 2001). Bridging social capital can also extend trusting relationships between otherwise isolated networks (Paxton, 2002). Bridging social capital is often more intentional than bonding social capital because of the effort it takes to cross whatever boundary separates groups of people. According to Larsen et al., 2004;

> Bridging social capital occurs when members of one group connect with members of other groups to seek access or support or to gain information…In our work, bridging social capital is defined as residents' efforts to extend contact beyond the members of the neighborhood, and collective action is the product of bridging social capital.

While underexplored in the literature, cultural capital may provide a powerful tool to better understand the bridging of social capital, or lack of, among diverse groups. As

Bourdieu (1998) states, the legitimation of cultural capital by the dominant class is a tool

used to maintain societal structures. In low-income schools, these structures are

manifested in class-barriers between families the school institution. For parents in low-

income communities and teachers that teach in low-income schools, it can be extremely

difficult to build a bridge that reaches across such an expansive historical divide. The

misrecognition of low-income families' cultural capital in the institutionalize state of

schools may create deep barriers to the successful bridging of social capital between

parents and school staff.

The concept of bridging social capital is further articulated by Mark Granovetter

(1983) through his theory of the "strength of weak ties." Granovetter describes this

phenomenon when members of two tightly knit groups become acquaintances; these

"weak ties" provide access to information, a job opening for example, that each group or

individual wouldn't have obtained if it were not without the weak tie. Weak ties are also

less formal or structured relationships, which allow agents of weak ties to move more

fluidly between subgroups (Granovetter, 1983). These weak ties are necessary to tap into a

multitude of dense networks for organizing large groups of people around specific issues.

Although Granovetter acknowledges that weak ties do not always serve as bridges between

groups, he lacks analysis about the types of weak ties that may be more adaptive to build

bridges than others. Granovetter (1983) dichotomizes strong ties, bonding social capital,

and weak ties, bridging social capital, through an analysis that favors weak ties as tools for

social action. However, Granovetter (1983) found that weak ties were more beneficial for

those with higher income levels and actually led to the reduction of income among those

with less education. "I suggest that in lower socioeconomic groups, weak ties are often not

bridges but rather represent friends' or relatives' acquaintances; the information they provide would then not constitute a real broadening of opportunity-reflected in the fact that the net effect of using such ties on income is actually negative" (208-9). While there are many similarities between bridging social capital and Granovetter's theory of weak ties, a key difference is that weak ties aren't necessarily connectors between incredibly diverse groups, simply social networks, whereas the concept of bridging social capital is often used in the context of connecting socially diverse networks. Because most participants in the PEP program didn't know each other prior, this research focuses more closely on the bonding among and bridging across program participants instead of studying various subgroups.

Ronald Burt's work on social capital focuses on the location of social capital and its potential for bridging across what he calls "structural holes." Structural holes are the weak ties that span across networks and create a peripheral understanding of diverse networks. "Holes are buffers, like an insulator in an electric circuit. People on either side of a structural hole circulate in different flows of information. Structural holes are thus an opportunity to broker the flow of information between people, and control the projects that bring together people from opposite sides of the hole" (Burt, 2000, p.353). Structural holes are the gaps between non-redundant information. Creating dense networks through the bonding of social capital can create an overlap of information and even reinforce incorrect information, while structural holes provide for greater access to new and diverse information. One of the goals of PEP is to develop structural holes that allow for information and resources to be shared across groups of parents and school staff.

Despite the neat categories that bonding and bridging social capital are often placed within, there are gray areas in which these two functions can happen either simultaneously or when the demographics of race, class, gender, sexuality, and education-levels intersect in a way that doesn't allow social scientists to easily categorize the flow of capital. Analyzing the bonding and bridging of social capital is a somewhat linear process when measuring social capital across income levels, but these theories have their limitations when the resources attached to one group's social capital may be more abstract (Coffé & Geys, 2006). For the purposes of this research, the PEP parents and participating classroom teachers will be considered a two distinct groups as identified by their role within the school building.

.   In the literature, groups are often categorize as either bonding or bridging organizations (Coffé & Geys, 2006). The PEP program attempts to do both bonding among parents and bridging between parents and staff and provides a unique insight into the intersection between intragroup solidarity and intergroup partnership. According to Warren (2014), who studied the Parent Mentor program which the PEP program is modeled after, the bonding of social capital among parent mentors allowed for a supportive structure to bridge relationships between families and schools. "Rather than face a college-educated teacher on her own, a low-income parent can do so with the support and encouragement of other parents, as well as the knowledge and skills she gathers from leadership development processes" (Warren, 2014, p.170).

While bridging social capital maybe be a powerful form of economic mobility (Narayan, 1999) and is often proposed as the more powerful form of social capital formation, most research on the bonding and bridging of social capital view these two acts

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in isolation from each other and therefore rarely examine the potential for interaction. However, emerging research suggests that the bonding of social capital among certain groups may be a powerful strategy to begin the process of bridging social capital across groups (Ferguson & Dickens, 1999; Larsen et al., 2004; Warren, Thompsen & Saegert, 2001; Warren, 2014; Warren & Mapp, 2011). Despite suggestions in the literature, the interplay between these two concepts lack well-documented research in the field. Woolcock & Narayan (2000) provide a concise argument for the need to continue research in the field of bonding and bridging social capital.

> The clear challenge to social capital theory, research, and policy from the networks perspective is thus to identify the conditions under which the many positive aspects of "bonding" social capital in poor communities can be harnessed and its integrity retained (and, if necessary, its negative aspects dissipated), while simultaneously helping the poor gain access to formal institutions and a more diverse stock of "bridging" social capital. (p. 10*)*

Injecting bonding and bridging social capital into this research provides a lens to better understand how capital forms in schools. The literature often discusses cultural and social capital in isolation due to their distinct definitions and properties but because the bonding and bridging of social capital is so closely tied to groups and the distinctions of groups, placing these two theories in concert may provide a unique look at social and cultural capital interaction in schools. While bonding and bridging social capital has a theoretical footprint the literature the empirical research in this area is underdeveloped (Coffé & Geys, 2006).

Social Capital Literature Review Conclusion.

The PEP program states that it works to strengthen relationships as the foundation for developing school and family partnerships. It is with this goal in mind that social capital theory provides a powerful theoretical lens to position this research. As a site for social interaction between parents, teachers and students - schools in urban communities have great potential to build social capital (Noguera, 2001; Warren, 2014). Despite this understanding, school and family relationships in low-income communities are incredibly difficult to foster. Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital and the process of cultural capital recognition in its institutionalized state provide key insights into this struggle.

It is Pierre Bourdieu that provides the most comprehensive vision of social capital through his theoretical system of field, habitus and capital. Yet, Bourdieu spends more time examining cultural capital as a contributor to inequitable social reproduction. Similar to social capital, cultural capital is a theory that has an extensive reach in the theoretical world. Despite the prevalence of these two theories in the literature, there is little research that explores them in concert.

The importance of examining the linkage of social and cultural capital become clear when exploring the literature on bonding and bridging social capital. Bonding and bridging social capital focus on group identification, and provides an underexplored lens in which to examine these phenomena, particularly the barriers to bridging social capital. The misrecognition of low-income families' cultural capital in the institutionalize state of schools may create deep barriers to the successful bridging of social capital between parents and school staff. Because the PEP program explicitly works to build relationships among parents (bonding social capital) and between parents and teachers (bridging social

capital) this research provides a unique vantage point to explore the intersection of these two strategies in social capital accumulation.

Literature Review Conclusion

This literature review, while broken into two distinct sections, provides a reflective understanding of family and school relationships through the lens of social and cultural capital that serves as a foundation for this research. Hong's (2011) Ecology of Family Engagement framework provides an empirical structure for family engagement in practice, while social and cultural capital provide a theoretical lens to better understand the social and cultural context of this structure.

By placing parents and teachers into an ongoing partnership, the program under research is a unique study in family and school relationships. Due to the historical and challenging relationships between schools and low-income families, this program strives to strategically bridge those relationships as well as bond relationships among parents, another challenging scenario in urban education. Because the program under research is modeled after a parent engagement model initiated in Chicago by the Logan Square Neighborhood Association more than 20 years ago, research on this type of program, including Hong's (2011) book, does exist. Despite pockets of pre-existing research, few provide empirical evidence exploring the formation and interaction of bonding and bridging social capital in tandem.

The literature shows that family and school relationships in low-income communities are challenging due to a variety of historic and contemporary reasons, many of which are related to race and class. These institutional challenges often result in the dominant culture blaming those outside of the dominant culture for not complying with

their class-based standards, which in turn, results in cycles of frustration, distrust and the reproduction of asymmetrical power relations. This is often referred to through the language of deficit-based perspectives, which can stem from "long-standing legacies of racism" that breed distrust between educational institutions and people of color (Hong, 2011, p. 19). Asset-Based Community Development (Kretzman and McKnight's, 1993) Funds of Knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 2013) and Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005) provide alternative lenses that see families as critical and equal partners in education. This research examines how the school views parents and any shifts in perspective that development throughout the program.

Schools have been shown to be sites for the accumulation of social capital and resource sharing yet it is less known how bonding and bridging social capital develop to form these social networks. Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital and symbolic violence provide a tool through which we can examine the process of capital misrecognition and the reproduction of asymmetrical power. Bourdieu emphasized the importance of the role social space plays in social reproduction through his concept of field. According to Bourdieu, fields are places of constant struggle and resistance between those in power and those who pursue power and a key agent in cultural capital legitimation. This research examines the school as a field and the potential interactions with other fields such as family and community.

Bridging and bonding social capital provide a unique lens to observe social capital mobilization. It is unclear how bridging and bonding social capital and the recognition or misrecognition of cultural capital work together in school-settings. Despite the potential for bridging social capital, the literature states that it is rare for schools to willingly share

power with families. While social capital may be more actively distributed in a school that bridges social capital and partners with programs that recognize families' cultural capital, the field may retain the same dominant vs. outsider power structure. By exploring the interaction of bonding and bridging social capital with the recognition of cultural capital, this research may provide key insight into the process of developing family and school partnerships through the lens of social and cultural capital. The concept of power will be explored by examining the potential for forced cultural capital recognition through the bonding of parents' social capital. Can an organized group of parents use their collective power to gain cultural capital recognition or will the parents be seen by the school as disruptive and further the divide between the school and families? Even if a school can become a setting for bonding and bridging social capital and the recognition of cultural capital of families, how does this affect the power dynamics between staff and parents?

While family and school relationships are a key indicator of successful schools, schools often struggle to develop meaningful partnerships with the parents of their students. This research explores one program at one school that works to build relationships among parents through organized group meetings, and build relationships between teachers and parents through classroom partnerships. The parent-to-parent relationships will be explored through the lens of bonding social capital and the parent-to-teacher relationships will be explored through the lens of bridging social capital. While bonding and bridging social capital provides insight into any potential benefits that accrue from relationship formation, in order to better understand the institutionalized relationship between schools and families in low-income neighborhoods, Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital legitimation will provide the research in a historical context of inequality.

By examining the intersection of bonding and bridging social capital in school and family partnerships this research provides a new perspective missing from the literature.

Chapter III: Methodology

Research Questions

Overarching Research Question.

o What role does social capital and cultural capital play in a program that attempts to build relationships between schools and families?

Sub Research Questions.

o What are parents' perceptions of how their relationships with other parents change during their participation in the program? (Bonding Social Capital)

o What are parents' perceptions of how their relationships with teachers change during their participation in the program? (Bridging Social Capital, Cultural Capital Recognition)

o What are teachers' perceptions of how their relationship with parents change during their participation in the program? (Bridging Social Capital, Cultural Capital Recognition)

o In what ways do social networks interact with the recognition of cultural capital?

Research Design and Rationale: Qualitative Case Study

The education system is overflowing with quantitative metrics, and although these metrics are often necessary to measure the functionality of pieces of the system, too often the narratives of those within the system go unheard. Qualitative research seeks to find those narratives and help position them within a larger story (Glesne, 2006). A qualitative

research design provided open-ended tools to examine the intricacies of social capital development while allowing for unexpected outcomes during in-depth interviews. The research methodology used a social and cultural capital theoretical framework while maintaining interview protocols that allow for the emergence of new theories through inquiry (Glesne, 2006).

A qualitative interview design was chosen for this research because it allows for observing, analyzing and interpreting the experiences of a group of individuals, their shared actions and beliefs (Creswell, 2008). The contextual interview case study allowed for an in-depth exploration of a culture-sharing group operating within a bounded system, in this case, parents and teachers from one school participating in the new parent engagement program.

Sample

The research took place at one of the two K-8th grade public schools in a Midwestern city that is piloting this new program. Each school engaged six to eight parents and six to eight teachers for a total of 10-14 parents and 10-14 teachers – the numbers fluctuated slightly throughout the program. The two schools were chosen by the program organizers based on the each school's commitment to the program model and by encouragement from a funding partner that never materialized. In this case study, focusing on a single group of parents and teachers from one school allowed for the in-depth understanding of the experience of those parents and teachers in the program. At School #2, three participating teachers were Black and five were White. In the teacher focus group, only six teachers participated; five were White and only one was Black. All of the participating parents in the interviews and focus groups were Black. This represents the education demographics in a

city with a predominately White teaching force serving a student population that is predominately students and families of color.

Sampling Methods

Purposeful sampling: Purposeful sampling was used to select information rich settings that can help highlight a central theme (Creswell, 2008). The parents and teachers participating in this program submitted an application, underwent an interview process, and were selected by a committee consisting of program organizers, another parent (who serves as the school's Parent Engagement Coordinator) and school staff. One group of parents and one group of teachers at one participating school agreed to participate in this study. For the 2014-15 school year the public school district has required every school to hire a Parent Engagement Coordinator (PEC), a new position within the district. The PECs at the two pilot schools have agreed to play a key role in this new parent engagement program by recruiting and interviewing parents, and providing overall program support. The school chosen for the case study has a strong PEC, who is a parent at the school herself, with a dynamic personality and deep relationships with the parent community. The school not chosen has a PEC is new to the city and lacks the types of previously developed relationships that serve as a key bridge between schools and families. This resulted in the chosen school having a large and dedicated group of parents participating in the program while the other school has a small group that has been inconsistent in initial program meetings. This research focused on parents involved in the school with the more experienced PEC in hopes of having a more consistent and dedicated group of research participants throughout the study. Only one school site was chosen to be researched in this qualitative case study to honor the complexity of that school community and to provide an

in-depth analysis of one group's journey through the program (Creswell, 2007). The small sample of parent and teacher participants provides a depth of understanding experience as opposed to wide breadth of program experiences (Glesne, 2006). One-on-one interviews were conducted with six participating parents, two focus groups with parent leaders were conducted and one focus group with teacher participants. I had originally hoped to collect more data from teachers, but had difficultly scheduling interviews based on their limited availability.

Limitations in sampling method: The purposeful sampling method presents clear limitations due to the self-selection of program participants. Both the teachers and parents involved in this program have already shown a positive relationship to the school and certain dedication to the school community by submitting an application to participate. While the interviews took place during the second school semester, most participants had participated in the program during the first school semester, which may have influenced their ability to reflect on feelings or perceptions prior to their participation.

Data Collection Methods

I used one-on-one interviews and focus groups as my main methods of data collection. This section will describe why I chose those methods of data collection and how they varied from each other.

Interviews: In-depth interviews provide access to one's personal experience that may otherwise be unknown to the researcher through participant observation (Weiss, 1994). Interviews can also be cathartic for the interviewee as an opportunity to share their experiences in ways daily life may not allow (Guest et al, 2005). During in-depth

interviews, the interviewee is the expert and the interviewer works to gain an understanding of their knowledge and experience (Guest et al, 2005).

I conducted an in-depth interview with six parent leaders at one school. One interviewee required two separate interview sessions. Interview questions were followed by probes to allow for a deeper look at the complexity of potential answers (Glesne, 2006). The probes ranged from moments of silence to "Did I understand this correctly" and "Please tell me more about...." to "Can you please provide an example"? I developed interview protocols based on a few main ideas related to my research questions and theoretical framework that allowed for new concepts to emerge. For the parent interview protocol I attempted to understand the following concepts.

- Why parents were involved in the program.
    - Sample Question: Can you tell me why you wanted to get involved in the PEP program?
- How parents' relationships with other parents may or may not have developed. (bonding social capital)
    - Sample question: How would you now describe your experience interacting with other parents in the PEP program? Do you feel you know them better?
- How parents' relationships with teachers may or may not have developed. (bridging social capital/cultural capital)
    - Sample question: Do you think PEP parents trust teachers at this school? If so, what are some examples? If not, what are some reasons you think parents don't trust teachers at your child's school?
- How parents perceived the context of parent engagement in their school.

- o Sample question: Other than PEP, what are some ways that the school encourages parent involvement?
- o How parents viewed their relationship with the program.
    - o Sample question: If you could change anything about the program, what would it be? Why?

The one-on-one interviews provided the most amount of data and were key to my understanding of participants' experiences.

Focus Groups: I chose to conduct focus groups with both teachers and parents because focus groups can be used to develop a shared understanding among a group that is undergoing a similar experience (Creswell, 2007). Conducting focus groups was an important piece of the data collection process since a key theme in the research is to understand the development of relationships within groups. Focus groups provided multiple perspectives of program experiences and helped "member check" themes that emerged from individual interviews (Glesne, 2006, p.104).

The focus group protocol for parents concentrated on very similar themes highlighted in the one-on-one interview protocol but the questions were less direct. For example, in the one-on-one interviews with parents I would ask explicitly "Do you have trust in other PEP parents? If so, what are some examples? If not, what are some reasons you don't trust other parents?" Asking this question in a one-on-one scenario allowed parents to answer in a candid fashion that may have been restrained in a group setting. In the focus group setting I asked about the participants' experience related to trust. For example, "Does your relationship with any other parents extend outside of the school? If so, can you share an example?" This created a space for group discussion and storytelling. One

focus group consisted of three parents. All three were from the school #2 but one of the three didn't participated in a one-on-one interview due to scheduling conflicts. She provided a lot of data in this small focus group that was directly used in this research. The second focus group consisted of seven parents. Six of the seven parents were from school #2 and all participated in one-on-one interviews, but one parent from school #1 participated in this focus group. This parent participated because the focus group was conducted during a Friday morning session with a high turnout of parents from school #2 and instead of asking this one parent to step out I asked if she wanted to be included in the process. This was the only parent or teacher that was a part of the data collection process not from school #2. The parent from school #1 was fairly quiet during the session, and although the data she provided wasn't used directly in the research, it did influence the collection process. For example, when asked about parents' relationships outside of the school building, one parent referenced her and this parent's relationship, which may or may not have happen if the parent from school #1 was part of the focus group.

The teacher focus group included six participating teachers from one school. The teacher focus group protocol used open-ended questions but was a bit narrower in the number of themes covered. This varied from the parent focus group protocol because I wasn't researching the teacher-to-teacher relationship, which allowed more time to focus closely on the teacher-to-parent relationship from the teacher's perspective. I focused on the following themes:

- o Why teachers were involved in the program.
    - o Sample question: What made you want to get involved in the PEP program?
- o How teachers' relationships with parents may or may not have developed.

      ○   Sample question: Can you provide a specific example of an interaction you

have had with a PEP parent during this last year?

Unlike the parent focus groups, which partially focused on their relationships with other

parents in the room, teachers were able to be candid about their relationships with parents

who weren't in the room. As previously mentioned, a limitation in the program was the

amount of time teachers were brought together for development or to engage in discussion

throughout the program. While this was a program limitation, it gave the teacher focus

group an organic space for teachers to engage with peers about their experiences in the

program, some for the first time.

Data Collection Chart

Data Collection Method	Sample Population	Sample Quantity	Sampling Method	Frequency	Collection Tools	Data Analysis
One-on-one Interviews	Parents from School #2 participating in PEP program	6	Purposeful	An interview with each participant; two interviews with one participant	Audio Recording/Note-taking	Transcribe, code for reoccurring themes
Focus Groups	Parents from School #2 and School #1 (one parent from school #1) participating in PEP program	3 parents in one session and 7 parents in another session	Purposeful	Two focus group sessions	Audio Recording/Note-taking	Transcribe, code for reoccurring themes
Focus Group	Teachers from School #2 participating in PEP program	6	Purposeful	One focus group sessions held with same group	Audio Recording/Note-taking	Transcribe, code for reoccurring themes

Data Analysis

      The audio recordings from interviews and focus groups were transcribed and

uploaded into Nvivo. I read through each transcription multiple times before beginning the

coding process to become familiar with the data. The data was analyzed and coded within a framework while using an iterative process allowing for the emergence of new codes. My initial coding process focused on three major codes within my theoretical framework. After an initial coding process that coded data with the three major codes, another round of analysis resulted in the following sub-codes. The evolution of the coding process is described within the coding dictionary below.

- *Bonding Social Capital*: The development of connections among individuals with a shared identity along with the trust and norms of reciprocity that come from such a network (Putnam, 2000). This initial code included all negative and positive references to relationships between participating parents. After the initial analysis the following sub-codes emerged.
    - Bonding struggles: any challenges parents encountered building relationships with other parents
    - Previous relationships: any reference to parents' previous relationship to parents at their school
    - Social bonding: any reference to casual relationships among parents, mostly focused in the school setting supporting each other around their work in the classroom
    - Strong bonding: any reference to more personal relationships that extended outside of school or provided emotional support
    - Voice and power: any reference to parents working together or supporting one another to voice concerns or take action in the school setting (this sub

code eventually became a it's own code related to leveraging networks for action)

- o *Bridging Social Capital*: The development of connections between individuals of diverse social identities along with the trust and norms of reciprocity that come from such a network (Putnam, 2000). This initial code included all negative and positive references to relationships between parents and teachers. In contrast to the Cultural Capital code, which focused on how teachers and parents recognized their professional contributions to the school, this code focused more closely on references to how parents or teachers viewed their personal interactions with each other. After the initial analysis the following sub-codes emerged.
  - o General bridging: any reference to positive or negative relationships between teachers and parents such as developing empathy or working together (the working together portion of this sub-code eventually became a it's own code related to leveraging networks for action)
  - o Bridging struggles: any reference the challenges in developing personal relationships (this sub-code resulted in overlap with the misrecognition of cultural capital code)
  - o Previous relationships: any reference to previous relationships between participating teachers and parents
- o *Misrecognition/Recognition of Cultural Capital*: "Every power to exert symbolic violence, i.e. every power which manages to impose meanings and to impose them as legitimate by concealing the power relations which are the basis of its force, adds its own specifically symbolic force to those power relations" (Bourdieu, year, p. 4).

In this context, I analyzed how parents and teachers viewed their own and each other's contributions to the school. After an initial analysis the following sub-codes emerged.

- o Bridge to community: any reference to parents acting as a positive link to the local community

- o Bridge to other parents: any reference to parents acting as a link to other parents in the school

- o Dedication to school: any reference to either parents or teachers having a dedication to the school or students

- o Helping students: any reference to parents directly helping students in the classroom

- o Trusting and dependable: any reference to parents or teachers being someone that could be depended on or trusted in a professional setting

After further analysis of the cultural capital sub-codes, the data was closely related to how parents and teachers formed their overall relationships and therefore made sense to be nested as a component of bridging social capital.

Additional codes were contextual and included such sub-codes as reasons parents and teachers joined the program. Coding was an iterative process that rotated between data collection and analysis. All of the data was triangulated for reoccurring themes in an attempt to answer the initial research questions or new questions that developed throughout the process.

Positionality of Researcher

There were multiple factors that affected my positionality as a researcher. The dual role of assistant organizer and researcher impacted my objectivity of data collection and analysis due to the possible skewing of results to show positive developments in the program. I worked closely with my dissertation committee to strive towards objectivity in data collection and analysis throughout multiple iterations of my findings. While an active participant in the program, I am not a parent with children at the school or a teacher at the school and therefore an "outsider" as both an organizer and qualitative researcher (Guest et al., 2005). Despite the subjective realities to this research, my proximity to participants may have proved beneficial by developing consistent and trusting relationships. Similarly, my dual role may have prevented interviewees from sharing certain information that may have made shed negative light on the program.

White-male subjectivity has dominated sociological interpretations of our worldview and often left the perspective of others in the margins (Collins, 1986). As a white male, conducting research with teachers who were predominately White and parents who were predominately Black presents a clear risk of cultural biases and privileging the dominant narrative represented by the White teachers. I attempted to be open about these possibilities throughout the process by using a methodology within a critical race framework that positions counter narratives to disrupt voices from the dominant group (Milner, 2007) and create open pathways for dialogue with both the participants and my dissertation committee. This case study was conducted within a critical methodological perspective, in which I tried to reflect on my own biases, challenge deficit-oriented research, examine issues of power and privilege in the researcher/participant relationship,

create open and clear dialogue between the researcher and participants (Creswell, 2008), promote counter-narratives (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002), and use theoretical constructs such as asset-based community development (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993), funds of knowledge (Amanti et al., 1993) and cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) in both data collection and analysis. I actively used a culturally sensitive research approach that included qualitative methods to generate practical knowledge, participated in action alongside participants to build power (Tillman, 2002) and worked to challenge the deficit narratives that position dominant culture as neutral or "normal" (Milner, 2007, p. 389; Tillman, 2002).

Despite my intent to lift the narratives of others to challenge the dominant discourse, it is inescapable that my findings were filtered through what DiAngelo (2016) calls our "cultural glasses" or the social group that has socialized our worldview (p. 37). As a white male, my cultural glasses can reinforce the dominant culture and must be critically questioned.

Chapter IV: Findings

I. Introduction

This chapter will describe my findings within the framework of social capital, specifically bonding and bridging social capital. Bonding and bridging social capital are often described in very general terms such as "exclusive" for bonding patterns among individuals with common characteristics and "inclusive" for bridging patterns between people with diverse characteristics (Putnam, 2000, p.22). The lack of a detailed definition limits a comprehensive framework for me to position my work within, yet provides an opportunity to contribute to the formation of a more complete understanding of bonding and bridging social capital. For the purpose of this research I will reference parent-to-

parent relationships as bonding social capital using the fact that they all share the common

characteristic of having children who attend the same school. Additionally, I will reference

parent-to-teacher relationships as bridging social capital using the distinguishing feature

that participating teachers did not have children that attend the school in which they teach.

I have decided to present this chapter in three distinct sections in correlation with

my research questions. The first section will present my findings related to parent-to-

parent relationships or the bonding of social capital that formed throughout the program.

The second section will present my findings related to parent-to-teacher relationships or

bridging of social capital that formed throughout the program. The third section will

present my findings related to how these two forms of capital accumulation were used by

parents to act with power in the school. I will also share instances where bonding and

bridging capital interact with each other, another missing piece in the social capital

literature.

II. Bonding Social Capital: Parent-to-Parent Relationships

"I do not consider y'all as like parents that I work with, it's more like family.

I think this group is like a family function…" –PEP Parent

I found that parents bonded social capital by forming relationships with other

parents and exchanging two main forms of capital; tangible resources and intangible

emotional support. The exchange of emotional support created trustworthiness among

parents that facilitated the exchange of tangible resources and a community of reciprocity.

Both reciprocity and trustworthiness are common indicators of social capital. The

literature states that parents in low-income communities of color often aren't given the

opportunity to develop bonding relationships with one another due to lack of resources

and opportunities in the school, the school's deficit view of families, and the school's fear that parents may gain too much power. I found this consistent in that participating parents lacked previous relationships with other parents in the school but within a few months in the program formed strong and trusting relationships with other parents. This section will describe the depth and nuances of the relationships among parents in order to better understand this network. This section will also serve as a foundation for the section on "*identity, power and action,*" which will describe how parents used their relationships with each other to act with power in the school. This point will be exemplified through Jean's story, which will be visited in this section then revisited in the section on "*identity, power and action.*"

I also found that while parents without previous volunteer experience relied heavily on each other and formed strong relationships with other parents, parents with a strong history of volunteering didn't develop the same trusting relationships common among the group. The literature often discusses how excessive bonding among groups may prevent beneficial bridging by creating isolated networks fueled by outward animosity. Yet, my research found examples of bridging relationships between parents and teachers as a barrier for bonding social capital among parents. This finding presents a new lens through which to understand bonding and bridging social capital.

Trustworthiness: Emotional Support.

I found that PEP parents provided each other various levels of emotional support resulting in trusting relationships. This exchange of intangible resources ranged from cheering up a parent who is having a bad day to acting as group therapy for one parent. Trust became a key factor in developing a network of emotional support. Debbie describes

her initial skepticism about the group's potential to bond, but how her perception changed

from one of hesitation to one of trust.

> Women for some reason do not click. So all of these little women in this program,
>
> moms, I would just say it ain't gonna work. This ain't gonna work. And thankful to
>
> the PEP Program that that's not true because it is women that you can trust. There's
>
> something about us that you just do not trust about other women and that's not
>
> always the case.

> Sam describes her ability to confide in this group in ways that go beyond what she

would share with a professional therapist because the parents in the program share similar

life experiences.

> PEP is beautiful. I love it. I do not even go to my therapist anymore because I had a
>
> harder time talking to her because she didn't live any of the real life scenarios that I
>
> live. The people in PEP, we're in the same community, our kids are in the same
>
> school, some of our kids are doing the same things...

This ability to share "real life scenarios" provided Sam with a sense of community that

allowed her to share personal information and listen to the concerns of others. The

literature describes that through the bonding of social capital "people can find mutual

support among people who have similar experiences and face similar challenges..." (Mapp

& Warren, 2011, p. 25). Sam describes a situation in which one parent asked for her advice

about how to talk to her child about a sensitive subject.

> ...we can get a little personal when it comes to dealing with and talking about our
>
> children and we try to assist one another with suggestions and things like that on
>
> how to deal with certain scenarios with the children...One parent wanted to know

how to explain to her child about a guy she was dating because it was a while since

she had been dating, and I was just letting her know that when it comes to your

children, you have to be as honest as possible, you can't let them think that he's one

thing or make them think that he's an uncle and he's waking up with you and things

like that. Just be real honest with your children in the beginning, that way they do

not feel like you failed them as a parent.

Parents trusted each other enough to share personal information that resulted in the

exchange of emotional support and personal advice. Sam credits the creation of this

community of emotional support with the shared experiences of participating parents,

which is consistent to the literature on bonding social capital.

Jean – Trustworthiness: Emotional Support.

One parent in particular, Jean, described many instances of this supportive network

of parents wrapping themselves around her and how she relied on them for advice,

encouragement and emotional support. Jean had very little previous experience

volunteering in the school and was able to develop strong relationships with parents

undergoing the same new experience. She states that she trusted this group of parents

enough to share her personal challenges and opinions and not feel like she was being

judged or ridiculed.

I had one intercession of one morning I wasn't feeling too good and I felt kind of

down and out and it's a couple of main ones that came to me and said do not worry

about it, you'll be okay, and we all sat and we talked about it, we laughed, we joked

about it or whatever, but when push came to shove, I knew I could actually voice my

opinion and no one would talk about it or they would smile or grin about it whatever, make fun or jokes.

Jean feels that she is able to be herself among this group of parents. She views this parent network as trustworthy and if she tells them something they will keep it to themselves or within the network.

Sometimes we talk about personal things, personal life adventures and they tell me to just give it to God basically, and I tell them the same, give it to God. I come in here and I smile and I do not put on a front. I smile because I really be feeling good and then somebody might say something to me that might try to tear down my spirits, but as soon as I walk through the doors at the school and see all of my family, I get happy, I get real happy, and they might say you had a look on your face, you didn't look too good a couple of seconds ago, but when I see different ones and they interact with me and I interact with them, it's just whatever I was thinking about, I left it outside somewhere because I can actually go to them and talk and you know it won't get out. Most people you can talk to about something and it's like before you tell them good, it's heard everywhere else, but my PEP family's not like that, none of them.

While most parents use the term "family" or "sister" in reference to other parents in the group, Jean used those terms or was described in those terms more times than the rest of the group combined. In one interview Jean references the other PEP parents as "family" on 15 separate occasions. Here is an excerpt that highlights how Jean feels supported by and connected to this group of parents.

I have a saying, my PEP family is more of just someone you generally talk to about different things. I might be feeling down and out or whatever and they come to me and say lift your head up, do not feel bad about this or that, and it's like this family, since I've been in this PEP family, I'm just drawn because everybody shows so much love and so much compassion about what they're doing or how we're doing this different process, but everyone in there is more like my sisters and my brothers. We're bonded. This program hasn't been open that long, but this program it would really take off and it would really make it somewhere if we all would just stay on one accord like we've been on and keep pulling in more people. I ain't saying they're going to be my family now, I got my family already. I have so much to really say about the PEP family. The only thing I can say is they made me feel like I'm a superstar. I just like working with them because they always let me know basically how to do different things and which way to take, and I love that in my new family.

Jean clearly relies on this group for emotional support, to lift her spirits, and sharing practical knowledge of working in the school. Sam says "…[Jean] calls herself my big sister, my big little sister…" Jean confirms that sentiment says that Sam does things for her that a sister might do such as taking her children home with her when one of her children was sick.

Going back to the situation from my baby getting sick. Sam showed me a lot of love, the whole program showed me a lot of love. Sam did things that I would normally have my sister do. She took my babies home with her and she wouldn't try to give them back though, but it's like Sam loves throughout not only within this school

building, it's like in the neighborhood, and then me staying in contact with Debbie, because she will call and show you love in some ways.

Jean identified the program's role in bringing parents together to not only support students in the classroom but to support each other as parents.

The program has really brought me out a lot because being in this program, I have brothers and sisters through everybody, because everybody shows me good love and that's why I say the program really helped open up for a lot of things, not just teaching the kids or being here with the kids, we all show each other love and we all show each other compassion and we're more like a family, not peers, all of us.

For Jean, the program "helped to open up" a network of parents that showed her love and support in ways that she parallels to a family. Jean describes her closest relationship with one PEP parent, Debbie.

…one of the PEP parent leaders. We have a good time. We be having so much fun. We be eating snacks and I'm trying to catch up them and they just leaving me by myself. We maybe watch a movie or something and eat snacks. Then it be time for me to go and pick up the kids by the time we get ready to go back, and I just sit back and she helps me with different situations, like I might have something over my head that I need to talk to somebody about, and whatever I talk to her about, nobody else knows, and whatever she talks to me about, nobody ever knows. We give each other advice and we can sit and talk for an hour, hour and a half maybe, and we'll just sit there and make each other's day. I might be feeling like crap and she might come in and say, well Jean do not worry about it, just pray baby, just pray baby girl. We sit there sometime, we get into the Bible and start reading and read different

scriptures and praying and stuff like that. She said well you know what, that's one

thing I notice about you, you a quiet-type person when you in the school, but when

you get home, you loud little woman. I'm supposed to be more professional when

I'm at that school, other than just being loud and obnoxious all the time. I can't be no

class clown, I'm sorry, I have to be me. We sit up and we talk about different things.

We talk about the program and stuff like that. Whenever we go walking and we see a

parent with a child, we'll tell them about the school and the PEP Program and we tell

them about all that. She said, we're running off at the mouth like we're trying to hire

folks, and I said we're supposed to make our school look good. We're going to get as

many parents as we can up in there. We're going to try to push this issue. We're

going to try to do this and that. We try to do a little campaigning for PEP and for the

school.

Jean describes a very personal relationship that she develops with Debbie that involves

spending time together outside of the school with recreational activities, the exchange of

emotional support and even working together to try to recruit others parents into the

program. Again, Jean places importance on the fact that her and Debbie share information

that "nobody ever knows." For Jean, trusting others with personal information is a key

element of the family-type relationships she developed. Debbie seems to reciprocate the

personal relationship and refers to Jean as her "little sister."

Yeah. We talk about personal stuff. For instance, I'm going to use Miss Jean, I

adopted her as a little sister, my sister's name is Jean, I haven't seen her in 17 years.

I like at her more than just a PEP parent and her grandson is in the class that I'm in,

so we really got close. We talk like sisters, so I adopted her as my little sister. So I

really feel like that, because when she's going through something, she talks to me like she's known me for years. I just met her this year, but you wouldn't be able to tell. We getting to know each other, but like I said, her name is the same as my sister's, so that really drew me closer to her than anybody else.

The relationship described between Jean and Debbie transcends the exchange of resources or emotional support referenced by others and has become one of a deep and close friendship. Jean continues to describe how the program brought parents together as a family.

...this program, it helped bring out a lot in me and I'm pretty sure it brought out a lot out in everyone that is participating, but it helped bring a lot out in me because now I can really safely say, since I've been in the school program or the PEP Program, I have another family now. It's like everybody is my bonded family, we all are one, and a lot of people do not see that but I do.

Jean describes a strong and close network of parents, yet this tight knit group wasn't without conflict. Sam references a few disagreements among parents without going into detail. When asked if other parents trust each other she says that while she trusts others, she is unsure if everyone else trusts each other.

A few. It depends on what you bring to the table, because I believe that I trust everybody in the group because I haven't been considered played by anyone yet, but as far as I know. I can't speak for anyone else, but I have this trust for the PEP members.

Sam describes a scenario where she was asked to mediate a discussion between two parents in conflict.

Even if it's two people and both of you guys are wrong, I'm going to let you know

where you're wrong and I'm going to let you know where you're wrong. In

actuality, I got a phone call at 8:00 last Saturday morning, because we do have two

parents that are in the scenario, and she called me and asked me to invite the other

parent to my house and she was going to come to my house and she wanted to talk

about the scenario. But I didn't feel that I wanted to do that because you two have

opportunities to talk all of the time. Be an adult about it, get to the bottom of it,

work it out and then let it go.

The two parents who are in a conflict approached Sam to try to mediate their dispute. This

shows that even while some personal disagreements arose, the parent network was seen as

a place for resolution and support. Coleman (1988) describes this through his theory of

social closure in which norms arise among a group that allows for internal sanctioning or

mediation within a network of social capital.

Debbie describes a scenario where one PEP parent left the group abruptly due to

some personal issues. The group took her departure hard, as she was a vocal leader in the

group.

Trust, that became an issue through the PEP experience. I ain't gonna name no

name. We missing one of our PEP parents due to whatever that parent is going

through, I'm not going to name her name, but I pray for her. I pray that she find

herself. I'm not mad at that parent.

While Debbie identifies that this situation could have created some distrust among the

group, she stands up for this parent and advocates for her name to be on the end of year

flier created by program organizers.

The fliers we get, I'm just going to have to say this, her name ain't on there…And

seeing all of our names in spite of what this parent is going through, because she

was one of the parents that spoke out in the PEP Program, and forgiveness, and

knowing that what she going through is a disease that can be cured.

The network of PEP parents relied on each other for a range emotional support.

Even when conflict arose they saw other parents in their network as resources that could

assist in mediation or identified with their personal situation and hoped for forgiveness.

Parents found that their shared experiences as parents in the community allowed them to

share personal information and develop a network of trust. This network of trust and

emotional support was most visible through Jean's descriptions of other PEP parents as

family.

Reciprocity: Resource Exchange.

PEP Parents developed strong relationships with each other and created a social

network that exchanged a variety of resources and support. Parents described not having

relationships with other parents at their child's school prior to participating in PEP. When

asked about previous communication with other parents one PEP parent says, "Other

parents, we didn't really talk…" Another parent describes how she didn't really see a point

in developing relationships with other parents. "I didn't feel like I had a relationship with

the parents because I felt - like why?" I found that this lack of a previously established

parent network was common among participating parents and consistent with the

literature.

The relationships among PEP parents began to take shape inside of the school either during Friday morning sessions or after parents finished their classroom hours and spent time in the parent center. As one parent, Mandy, put it:

Like your hours are done but then I find myself sitting in the parents center all of the way until about 3:00 or 3:30 and school let out at 2:30. We just sit and talk and lose track of time. It's like you do not want to leave because that bond is so strong.

These relationships quickly extended beyond the school walls. Every parent except one describes spending time together outside of the program or school. The social network created by PEP Parents was often referred to as a family. Mandy describes this family as a group she can "open up" to and spend time with outside of the program.

I do not consider y'all as like parents that I work with, it's more like family. I think this group is like a family function, we can open up every week, because Lord knows, like the parents that we sit around and talk about our day and all that kind of stuff, we actually bond outside of this group.

Mandy continues by describing the multiple points of contact she has with other participating parents outside of the school setting.

Amy, she came to church, and she helped me feed about 250 people. My children they go over to her house all the time. Sam and her children come over to my house all of the time. I see Stacey at church. I do not get a chance to see you all the time, Jean, but at the end of the day, you work with my daughter and she speaks about you all of the time, so it doesn't stop with our meetings here. It's always someone or one of y'all, you know your name is being brought up in something and it's always something positive or I'm always seeing you guys outside. It's a good feeling because

I have a huge family but I do not talk to anyone other than my twin sister, so when I

see you guys, it's always like a breath of fresh air.

I found this network of parents bonded social capital through the reciprocity of resource

sharing such as tangible items, information and favors. Parents found value in their

network through what Putnam called "generalized reciprocity" or the expectation of "I'll do

this for you without expecting anything specific back from you, in the confident expectation

that someone else will do something for me down the road" (Putnam, 2000, 21).

Stacey, a PEP parent, describes how in a moment of panic she called another PEP

Parent, Sam, who picked up her daughter who was in distress.

My daughter, she called me and said that she was sick and she was about to

faint...when I tried to call everybody and I called Sam and she was the only one that

responded and she said I'll be there to go get her, and she went and got her and it

was snowing that day. I was really thankful, and then she brought her home.

Stacey seemed surprised at Sam's willingness to help her out but trusted her enough

to ask for this personal favor. "...My first thought was huh, like, you're really going to do it,

and she did, and I wasn't expecting it. ... "Another parent, Michelle, describes how the

program opened up lines of communication and she was able to provide Stacey and her

daughter a ride to a basketball game.

...so she would call me like, well you're going to the basketball game, do you think

you can pick me and my daughter up? I'm like yeah, I can pick you up, I got a car.

She do not drive. I'm like girl, you know I'm driving, you do not have to walk from

your house to the school, I'm willing to pick you up and take you back, that's not

problem. We're in the same vicinity, the same community, so it's not going out of

my way to take you five blocks away from my house. That was a line of communication before that we didn't have, she didn't have it and I didn't have it.

Despite close geographical proximity in the community, Michelle and Stacey hadn't spent time outside of the school until participating in PEP. Michelle's lack of hesitation to provide Stacey and her daughter a ride to a school basketball implies a level of exchange where intentions aren't questioned.

Mandy, a PEP parent who is involved with a local church near the school, connected multiple PEP Parents' children to a paid internship program through her church. One parent, Debbie, describes how after Mandy shared this opportunity with her she started to recruit additional parents who could benefit from the program.

She's a PEP parent and was introducing and was going on with that, because I know that church is affiliated with Hopkins Lloyd School, so they were sharing worship ministry with the other PEP parents. So I'm like, yeah, he could use the help in not just that. I'm not a member of that church, and I go with him and support him in that ministry... Then like I said, I'm talking to other parents, not just PEP parents, parents I know with little kids that can use the help that the church is willing to do for this little kids, they get paid, they work, they volunteer, they're going to be getting paid, back to school gift cards, so ain't nothing wrong with volunteer, but at the end of the summer, they'll be getting paid.

In addition to favors and beneficial information, PEP parents exchanged goods. The PEP Parent who provided Stacey's daughter a ride, Sam, describes how a fellow PEP Parent lent her daughter's birthday supplies to avoid having to purchase her own expensive party decorations.

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I had this elaborate birthday party I wanted to throw for my daughter and the stuff

was expensive, the stuff that we needed for the party, and Amy came through with

so much stuff, and then I said how much you want for it, and she was like how much

you got, whatever you can do... The stuff I got from Amy, I had so much stuff and I

used so much stuff that I was able to give it to the February, they were all Frozen

parties, everybody was doing Frozen this year, so I was able to give it to somebody

else who needed it, and then she was like how much do you want for it, and I'm like

you know what, I'm not going to go through this again, just come and get it, because

I was really blessed with the stuff that Amy came through with, it was so much stuff

and I appreciate that from Amy.

Sam describes a community of reciprocity in which she re-shared resources that another

parents shared with her. Sam describes other items shared by parents that included clothes

and dishes.

If we hear something, we always try to keep each other informed. One young lady,

she needed some items for her children and because my boys are a little bit bigger, I

was able to assist her with that and she was really happy about that. It makes me

feel good to be able to help when I can…clothes, dishes, whatever.

This reciprocity of resources is reflective of the social capital formed among parents

and their ability to leverage their individual resources to support each other through the

exchange of items, favors and information.

Bridging as Barrier to Bonding: Previous Volunteers.

Parents developed a strong social network particularly among parents who, like

Jean, hadn't previously volunteered in the school on an ongoing basis. The two parents that

didn't describe more personal trusting relationships with other PEP parents, and didn't describe the group in the context of "family," had previously volunteered in the school on an ongoing basis and used those social networks already established for support. The literature often references bonding social capital as a barrier for bridging social capital, but I found that the relationships previously established between parents and teachers, bridging social capital, may have presented a barrier for those parents to develop strong relationships with other parents, bonding social capital. Their ability to have their cultural capital recognized or feel connected to the school as individuals prevented their need to build a network that could support each other through such a process. This presents a new finding for the social capital literature.

Stacey had been volunteering in the school for years but saw PEP as an opportunity to expand her role and learn new skills.

> …I had already been a parent volunteer, so putting the name PEP in front of it, it gave it better, bigger opportunity for me, to learn new things and getting a chance to really work with the teacher.

Stacey and her teacher partner had a personal relationship that they were able to build on throughout the program. This relationship served as Stacey's main support structure. Stacey describes how her teacher partner encourages her to stand up for herself.

> Miss Porter, she used to get on me all the time, "you have to learn." She always got in my face, and I mean like right there, really close, you gotta start talking to people, you gotta start telling them how you feel. So she really helped me a lot with that.

Due to Stacey's previous volunteer experience and relationships with school staff, she has a certain level of comfort working in the school building and in the classroom.

I feel good when I come here around the teachers, I feel like I have a lot of support

and a lot of the kids know me.

Stacey's comfort level in the school may be a reason that Stacey didn't feel compelled to

develop the types of strong relationships that other parents developed in order to support

each other in a new endeavor. The relationship between Stacey and her teacher partner

will be further explored in the PEP Parent and Teacher Relationship section.

The other parent that didn't develop trusting relationships with other parents, Mike,

had also previously volunteered in the school prior to PEP and had developed a

relationship with teachers.

I always had a relationship with these teachers. Like I said, I've been here 10 years

and teachers are always fine with me and I help them if I can and if they do not need

my help I just hi and bye and have a great day and see you tomorrow. But the

teachers are great.

When asked if parents trust other parents, both Mike and Stacey were hesitant to

say trusting relationships were formed. When asked if PEP parents trust each other Stacey

said:

That's kind of hard to say. Probably not all the time because no one really knows

anyone that well, but we talk but at the same time it's not at that level yet.

While other parents expressed some hesitations to say that the group fully trusted

each other, Stacey references her distrust of the group multiple times. Both Stacey and

Mike had previously volunteered in the school on fairly consistent basis and this created a

source of tension towards other parents or a feeling that they had already created their

own space in the school based in years of volunteering. When asked if she trusts other PEP

parents, Stacey says: "A lot of them do not want to go over and beyond, so that makes them different from me. I feel like I'm being looked down upon because I'm doing more and they're telling me I shouldn't be..." When Mike was asked if he believed that PEP parents trust each other he responded by saying "I do not feel like they attending" in reference to them not showing up for their scheduled classroom shifts. These two parents who had previously volunteered felt disconnected from this group due to their previous experience and showed some animosity towards parents who they believe weren't following through on their commitment.

The frustration Mike and Stacey developed towards the group prevented them from sharing personal information with other parents. Both parents described their hesitations to share their personal life with the parent network. Stacey describes her challenges with bonding with parents and how sometimes she prefers to keep her relationships with other parents on a professional level.

> Everybody has their own character. I'm glad that everybody decided to be in the program. Either you're going to bond or you're not. Some of them is kind of hard to bond with, so it's been more of on a professional level and then some I can be able to talk to and some you have to leave it at the professional level so you do not step on anyone's toes.

While some parents describe Friday morning sessions with other parents as essential and therapeutic, when Stacey was asked if she could change anything about the program she said:

That four hours on Friday. That Friday does something to me. Maybe the Fridays, the long hours on Friday. I feel like they should be divided. There should be more time in the classroom and less time on Friday.

Stacey has more interest working in the classroom with the teacher or helping students directly than developing personal relationships with other parents. When Stacey was asked if parents trust each other she seems to distinguish between trust and dependence. "I would say we more depend on each other. Whether we trust each other or not, it's more of depending on one another." Stacey views other parents as a professional network that depend on each other but is hesitant to describe the group as one with personal trusting relationships. Similarly, Mike felt as though the personal stuff should stay outside of the school during their Friday morning meetings and the group should focus more on the professional side of working in the classroom.

I just rather it stay like it is…it's a meeting, you talk about what is happening in your classroom you talk what your problem is…that is something I do not talk about…because I'm dipping in their business and I do not want to be you know. I do not want anyone dipping in my business…Personal stuff alone.

Mike describes multiple reasons for not bonding with the rest of the parents. He was the only male parent participating and when he was asked about trust between teachers and other parents in the group he states "ladies trust ladies." While this was in reference to the parent-teacher relationship, this may be another barrier he faced in developing trust among other parents. Additionally, his child was older than most of the other parents' children.

In addition to their relationships with other teachers at the school, these two parents had previously bonded with each other as parent volunteers; another reason they may have not wanted or needed to develop personal relationships with other parents. Stacey and Mike may not have bonded on a group level but they used their relationships with each other to support one another while volunteering in the school.

The social capital literature often cautions against excessive bonding social capital as a barrier to developing bridging relationships, yet Stacey and Mike appear to have generated some distrust of other parents due to their previous relationships formed with teachers. The next section describes how most participating parents developed empathy for teachers. While most parents developed empathy for teachers in conjunction with bonding social capital, Mike and Stacey's previously established empathy for teachers prevented them from bonding social capital.

Previous Volunteers: Personal Growth.

Even though Stacey and Mike didn't developed the types of trusting relationships common among other parents they benefited in other ways. Stacey describes how she encouraged Mike to participate in PEP, and how she has notice a positive change since he began the program.

> There's a lot of joking with one of the parents here, we always joke. They'd be good times and bad times, but me and him have always helped each other out... so we always had a connection. But he is the really only other parent, but he wasn't thinking of being in the program, but I kind of talked him into it because I thought I really want to see him in the classroom, so I was glad that he decided to do it. I think it changed him, I can tell, and I like to see that. But he was the one that I always had

a connection with and then being able to express yourself without being looked down on or I could tell him you hurt my feelings, and before I couldn't do that with another parent because they might take it the wrong way, but when you have someone that is actually listening, it makes a different, but he was the only one...

Most parents describe the program benefits through an expanded social network and the subsequent support or resources, yet Stacey is often referenced as having personal growth. Fellow parents, her teacher partner and Stacey herself all recognize Stacey's personal development throughout the program as someone who went from shy and timid to outspoken and confident. Stacey's teacher partner describes Stacey's personal growth in her ability to stand up for herself.

> I think there has been a growth in confidence in their abilities or their self-esteem. I see a lot more, I do not know if taking ownership, but just feeling more confident in herself and feeling comfortable saying no. Not to me. Instead of being taking advantage of. If it was something she didn't feel comfortable doing or wasn't her job and she's being expected to do too much, saying no, and in a very nice way, but just standing up for herself, "I do not like how you talk to me, I do not think that was an appropriate thing for you to say to me." That's huge, but I just think that growth in confidence and standing up for herself.

Stacey's teacher partner acknowledges her growth in standing up to school staff but quips "Not to me." This power imbalance will be explored later. Stacey herself acknowledges the growth in her social skills and confidence.

> I've gotten better since we've been in this group, my people skills, I can hold a conversation now with parents, and not be scared, like one of the parents saying

eww, what're talking to me for. They actually talk now and listen. Some of them even stay a little bit. That's nice.

Multiple PEP parents described Stacey's transformation. Michelle observes:

...she is such a shy timid parent, and she has just opened up so much since we've been in this program. Before you, you would never know this person could actually be this outspoken when she was just so timid and so shy...

Mandy also notices Stacey's growth in personal confidence.

It went from day one your head was in your lap and you're not saying too much, and you're like I'm shy, I do not know what to say, I'll pass, to now you're the very first person to speak and you speak up, you're able to voice your opinion and you do not have to feel like you regret what you say.

The previous two parents describe how they have observed Stacey's growth, but Jean describes an active role that PEP parents played in her transformation. Jean describes how the parent group supported Stacey during a period when she was facing some challenges.

It's like when she was being tormented, she came out and started letting us as parents and friends what was going on in her life and we kind of felt it a little bit, so we started giving her good advice, how to take care of it, how to take care of herself and keep her head up and keep herself strong at all times.

Sam also describes how she supported and coached Stacey to stand up for herself.

I love the fact that PEP has really opened a door for her where she uses her voice. I always tell her, sometimes she comes and whispers something to me, I tell her hey, open your mouth, let people know how you feel because if you do not they're going to keep walking over you.

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Stacey credits the program's structure for her personal growth but Stacey hesitates to credit the group or relationships with other parents as a catalyst for her development. In contrast, other parents describe the roles in which they or the group played in Stacey's personal transformation. Stacey's hesitation to credit other parents for her development highlights her distrust among the parents even while admitting to reaping benefits from the group.

Summary.

Most parents participating in the PEP program developed a strong network of support. This group was often referred to as "family" and developed a community of reciprocity through the exchange of tangible resources and emotional support. While this network wasn't without conflict, they were able to use their network to their advantage as a space for mediation and support. The two parents with extensive volunteering experience didn't developed the types of trusting relationships more common among the group but benefitted in other ways. The social capital literature often references the dangers of excessive bonding social capital as a potential barrier to bridging social capital, yet I found that parents with previously established relationships with teachers struggled to develop bonding relationships with other parents.

II. Bridging Social Capital: Parent-to-Teacher Relationships

I always have trusted the teachers. I just wanted to be there to see how they really handle

problems in the classroom, and now that I see how it was being done,

I'm satisfied with it because some of them can't do no more than that.

-PEP Parent

I think it's invaluable what we can learn from our parents. They're in the neighborhood.

They know the families and they know some of the dynamics.

-PEP Teacher

Each participating parent was paired with a classroom teacher and spent time in their classroom providing instructional and small group support. The following section will describe my key findings when researching the bridging of social capital between parents and teachers; parents demonstrating classroom support and decision-making, parents developing empathy for teachers, the dangers of empathic relationships, teachers having mixed feedback on recognizing parents' cultural capital, and the development of personal relationships between parents and teachers.

In the previous section I discussed the strong bonding relationships developed among participating parents. The literature often describes bonding social capital in a very cautious way noting that the development of strong intragroup relationships could create barriers to bridging intergroup partnerships. This strong parent network could have formed outward animosity towards teachers, yet I found that parents developed a strong sense of empathy for teachers by spending time in a classroom partnership. By working in the classroom, parents developed a sense of empathy for being a teacher and tended to praise teachers at the school for trying their best in difficult situations. Parents were able to leverage these relationships to make a positive impact in the classroom through policy suggestions, curriculum development and introducing Restorative Practices to the classroom. While parents developed strong and mostly positive relationships with teachers, I question whether the program's intent on bridging social capital may have

resulted in an occasional barrier for parents to critically challenge unfair school policies and practices.

I found that while most parents viewed their teacher partners in a positive light, teachers provided mixed feedback about their parent partners. Some teachers described the experience of having a PEP parent in their classroom as unpredictable and the parents as unreliable, while others recognized the unique benefits that parents brought to their work. In some cases teachers viewed parents as experts. One teacher even describes a parent's ability to connect with students as superior to her own. The cultural capital of families in school settings is often misrecognized through what Bourdieu (1977) calls symbolic violence, yet I found multiple examples of recognized cultural capital, something lacking in the empirical literature. I found other instances more consistent with the literature showing teachers preferring a more traditional parent and teacher relationship as well as challenges in the program's logistics that may have impacted the recognition process.

In addition to the professional recognition between parents and teachers related to their work in the classroom, parents and teachers formed multiple personal relationships. Similar to the bonding relationships between parents, these bridging relationships exchanged resources, information and emotional support; some even extended beyond the walls of the school. This section highlights Stacey and her teacher partner as a case study for bridging social capital. While Stacey and her teacher partner formed a strong relationship, I found unequal power dynamics embedded in this relationship. Stacey's story will also be revisited in the "*identity, power and action*" section to highlight the findings between bridging social capital and relational power.

Parents as Classroom Leaders.

While parents empathized with teachers, they didn't simply act as passive

bystanders in the classroom. Parents played active roles in educating students, giving

policy advice and providing teachers new ideas for curriculum. This is important because it

shows that even though parents developed empathy for the hard work of teaching, they

didn't always accept the status quo.

During one of the initial Friday morning sessions, organizers brought in a

Restorative Practices trainer to identify shared leadership strategies to facilitate future

Friday meetings, and to explore as an alternative to strictly punitive classroom discipline.

This training expanded on an introduction to Restorative Practices provided during the

leadership training. Sam found a lot of benefit in this experience and introduced

Restorative Practices to the teacher and students in her classroom.

> I always think back to our meetings and sometimes the information we get, how we
>
> bring it and the scenarios that we come up with, we bring it into the classrooms and
>
> we try to use those and share it with the teachers or staff. Like I really love the circle
>
> conversations…That really works.

Sam was able to take her experience from a leadership session and translate it to building a

more inclusive classroom.

Parents also felt empowered to make their voice heard when they felt something

was done unfairly or improperly. Jean expressed her frustration with students being

unnecessarily suspended.

> I started letting the administrator and everyone know that they can solve problems
>
> with not just suspending the children from school, they can take different activities

away from these children too to make them behave, and it got to the point where I had one special activity that we would do with them.

This is an example of a parent intervening with school policies and providing concrete alternatives through suggestion and modeling. Jean felt comfortable to approach and engage school staff in a discussion about how they were managing school behavior.

In addition to providing input on restorative classrooms and policy changes, parents provided input on curriculum. Michelle, who has a child with special needs, provided a teacher with an activity focused on differentiated instruction.

One teacher, she teaches middle school, and I don't have a middle schooler, but I seen her doing something, and I was like you know, I like this and I was like I did something like this. She was like what you did that? Will you help me out? Will you show me or give me an example or some different things of how to do this for the kids? I was like oh sure, we can do it like this, I was like but we're going to keep your way this way but we're going to keep this as a backup just in case some kids cannot figure this part out, then we'll just throw this part in and that will give them different clues. She was like oh yeah, that makes a lot of sense. Instead, you don't have to give them answers, you give them clues, they can figure out the clues to the answer, and I was like yeah, that was easy for me to learn. She was like yeah, okay, that's good. She was like I'm going to take that and I'm going to note that down. She was like will you draft me out? So I drafted her own the little sheet or whatever and she used it.

Michelle felt comfortable approaching staff and providing input on how to improve a classroom activity that would better serve all students. Her perspective as a parent with a

special needs student gave her a unique authority in the scenario. Michelle describes the role the program played in this interaction.

> ... before, I would have never, that ain't got nothing to do with me. Who am I to suggest something to a teacher? I'm not a teacher. But it was like you're here every day, you know the kids, so we deal with different kids and you deal with these kids every day so you know, so she was like just help me out. Everything is helpful. We all learn from each other.

Since Michelle spends more time in the school, she starts to view herself and the teacher as peers who learn from each other. The teacher recognized the cultural capital that Michelle brought to this scenario as they worked together to develop curriculum in collaboration.

In addition to their impact on classroom policies and structure, parents consistently described the direct impact they made in supporting student learning. Jean describes how her participation in the program has impacted student success.

> The PEP Program, just being in the program or being in the school, has really lifted my spirits a whole lot because now I'm able to get up and interact more with children, even if they're not my own and it makes me feel blessed, because now a lot of them, their grades have went up, they was at a low grade level, now they're grades have went up and a lot of them have started coming to school more often...you see less behavior problems now.

Jean describes an increase in students' academic achievement, attendance and behavior as a result of her participation in the program. Jean provides a scenario describing her interaction supporting a student who is learning math.

So I might have them sit here doing a fraction, "I don't know how to do it." I said if

you would have been paying attention, you'd know how to do it. Now, I'm going to

show you how to do this fraction and I'm going to show you how to put it in lowest

terms or whatever, and then I'm going to show you how to check it. "That ain't

right." Okay, how do you know when you ain't even paying attention. I'm going to

show you how I know that it's right in the paperwork that I use. I don't tell them no

answers. I let them see how much they know before I try to go over it again.

Jean demonstrates the ability to challenge this student's behavior in class while

simultaneously providing patient coaching and support that encourages the student to find

the answer him or herself. Jean demonstrates empathy for this student common among

participating parents. After a student yelled at Mandy, a PEP parent leader, another parent

approached her and asked about her will to stay in the program.

That one parent said to me, girl I don't see how you do it, and I said well just

patience. Patience, that's exactly what it is. Love and patience. You have to have a

passion to stay.

Stacey describes her philosophy of working with challenging students.

I think the ones that are challenging are the ones that's kind of teaching us. That's

why I think our teaching skills is coming from the kids who have the most problems,

them's the ones that's teaching us. Because it's teaching us how to deal with them.

This asset-based approach allows Stacey to relate and support students without judgment.

Stacey later describes her ability to display empathy for other parents and recognize their

challenges of interacting with the school.

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Participating parents provided a wide range of direct support to the classroom from advocating for policy changes to co-creating more inclusive curriculum. Parents working alongside teachers as peers gave them the confidence and authority to help shape the school and classroom culture.

Parents Develop Empathy for Teachers.

Parents gained insight into the daily life of a teacher by spending time working in a classroom with a teacher partner. The literature often references excessive bonding social capital as dangerous because it can limit information flow and develop barriers to bridging social capital. I found that while parents were able to develop strong bonding relationships with each other, it didn't prevent their ability to empathize with teachers. In fact, bonding social capital may have provided parents the support necessary to interact with teachers as peers, something further explored in the next section. The literature explores the notion of bonding as a step towards bridging but is lacking in empirical evidence (Bolivar & Chrispeels, 2010; Hong, 2011; Warren 2014).

Multiple PEP parents referenced the possibility of perceiving teachers, or certain situations that happen in the school in a negative light. Jean describes observing some behavioral issues in her classroom.

...there are a lot of things that happen in the classroom and that's the reason I'm kind of glad I'm in the program because now I can sit as a parent and actually watch what actually goes on in the class. I can actually sit and watch what actually goes on, like different incidents, like maybe a child is acting out and the teacher is telling them to stop acting out or stop doing different things, sit at their desk and listen, and sometimes you can be sitting there and the teacher will be discussing the plan for

the day, the kids will be crawling around on the floor and playing with paper or

drawing, they're not actually watching her…and the teacher is trying to teach you so

you can be able to learn different things, if she's telling you to stop doing things that

are erratic that you shouldn't be doing, then the only thing you should be able to do

is just get up and get it back in your desk.

Jean wanted to see firsthand how teachers dealt with behavioral issues in the classroom

and affirms her approval on the way they handle situations. She identifies with the

challenges teachers face in managing the behavior their classroom. While Jean says she has

always trusted teachers she wanted to see firsthand if more could be done to deal with

issues in the classroom.

I always have trusted the teachers, I just wanted to be there to see how they really

handle problems in the classroom, and now that I see how it was being done, I'm

satisfied with it because some of them can't do no more than that. (BW)

PEP Parents continue to praise and defend teachers in the school for their

dedication to their students. Debbie describes her admiration for teachers who take the

time to educate other's children. "I admire these teachers. They step out of their houses

and teach other kids and their own." Jean praises the teachers and their ability to use PEP

parents as additional support for students.

…a lot of our teachers are very strong, they are very strong minded in their teaching

skills and everything else. We have a lot of teachers that are basically there to push

these children to become something in life. They're not just, oh here, take this, go do

it. No, you have teachers that really sit down and really make sure these children

know. If they are still having problems in class where they still do not understand,

they'll say, well okay Jean, you can come work with this person or you can work

with that person, and then the children are more likely to learn more based on you

being there to actually give them one on one help. So the teachers love that. They

love the PEP Program. This is a program for us as a whole.

Jean believes that teachers are not only good at their job but that they are in it for the right

reasons to support the personal development of each student. Stacey believes teachers see

the students as "their kids."

They're able to tell me things and let me know how my kids are doing, so I think that

is really good to have that relationship. I wish everybody could do that and they

could see that we have nice teachers here. Because all of the teachers, these are their

kids, they know all of them.

By stating that she wishes everyone could "see that we have nice teachers here," Stacey

implies that there may be negative perceptions of teachers that she thinks could be

overcome if parents spend more time in the classroom

While the literature cautions that bonding social capital can act as a potential

barrier to bridging social capital, parents were able to both develop a strong network of

parents as well as develop empathy for teachers through classroom partnerships.

Additionally, I found that parents were able to empathize with the challenges faced by

teachers while simultaneously understand why another parent may perceive teachers as

taking the wrong course of action. This dual-empathy served as key for relationship

building, and will be revisited in the section on *Identity, Action and Power,* but may have

occasionally prevented the questioning of potentially oppressive school policies and

practices, which emerge later in the research.

Dangers of Empathy.

While participating parents were organized as leaders who could negotiate power, parents were also in partnership with power in the classroom. Parents, particularly parents of color, are often forced into the dichotomous relationship with the school where they either service the school or are perceived by the school as uncaring. When parents of color organize around an oppressive education system, they are perceived as confrontational (Lightfoot, 1978). PEP parents consistently negotiated this line of supporting student learning in the classroom and actively questioning school practices. The participating parents' ability to empathize with teachers, students and other parents alike made them incredible assets to the school that had a positive impact in many ways. While the empathy parents displayed often resulted in positive interactions, when the interests of the groups they empathized were in conflict with each other, they occasionally struggled to prioritize their allegiance. Jean describes such a scenario.

> When there's a problem where safety is trying to subdue or trying to do something with a child, if one of us team leaders is there, we're watching what they're doing and how they're doing, but if we feel that we can talk these children into acting the right way, then maybe if we voice our opinions and let them know, you know it's not right and not nice to act like that, some children will subside to where you are and say well okay Miss Jean, well I'm upset because of this or because of that, but the safety don't have to put her hands on me or his hands on me.

Jean describes a scenario where parents are closely watching the actions of safety, but the action she takes isn't to question the tactics of safety and why they feel they need to "subdue" a child, but to engage the student in dialogue about avoiding similar situations.

Later Jean questions behavior policies and provides alternatives but in this case she seems to only question the student's behavior. Later, in a similar example, Jean diffuses a tense situation with a parent, but doesn't actively question the school's reaction to the situation.

I found a couple scenarios where the program's simultaneous focus on partnership and power may have created barriers to actively question school policies and teacher practices. Sam references other PEP parents as having concerns about teachers. While the details of these concerns do not emerge in the data, Sam defends the teachers when they are accused of something.

A lot of the PEP parents have certain issues, but I let them know when they bring it to my attention, I always let them know because I'm not a person to take sides, I look at the whole circle. You can't say the teacher, the teacher, the teacher, you send your child to school, so you've got to know your child, you're the parent, you should know who you are, so you can't say the teacher lying or the principal lying because sometimes kids lie. You can't put everything on the lap of the teachers or the staff.

Sam's defense of teachers shows her ability to empathize with teachers even when faced with concerns from other PEP parents, yet Sam's statement favors the teacher's perspective over the parents' concerns. The development of empathic relationships between teachers and parents are often seen as positive, while also balanced with the "creative tension" necessary for each group to discuss opposing views outside of the school's dominant culture (Lightfoot, 1978, p. 41).

Michelle states that she empathizes with parents who may have a negative perspective of the school because they only get a glimpse into the complex environment of

the school. Michelle found that when you spend more time at the school you develop an understanding of why staff may use certain strategies.

> Yeah, by being here more often, I can see, when you're not here daily or you're not here often, you might come in and you may see a certain situation and be like well why is this happening? But when you're here more often, you can see why the staff or administration is taking the steps or the procedures they're taking because they're here and they're dealing with the children every day. They know more than the parent because they deal with the children more than the parents deal with the children...I've come in before and I've seen one of the staff members reprimanding the kid like this is wrong and I'm looking like, well what did they do that was so wrong that they're pulled to the side, but I can see, being in school more often, you have to pull some of the kids to the side because that makes a distraction to the other children and would take them off focus and off task and if you get multiple children off focus, off task, that throws the teacher's whole program off and that's not what they're for. They're not a babysitter, they're here to provide education for our children which that's what we're sending our kids here for, for the education not to be a babysitter.

Michelle identifies with the challenges of being a teacher and describes a situation where she questioned a teacher's strategy, but after spending more time in the school she feels she understands why a teacher might have to take certain steps. Michelle's empathy for teachers turns into frustration directed towards other parents. She states that teachers know their students better than parents know their own children and that teachers

shouldn't have to babysit. Michelle identifies how other parents might perceive a negative situation; but in this scenario she seems to favor the perspective of the teachers and school.

Throughout my research there are multiple examples of parents teetering back and forth between actively challenging school policies and practices, and providing direct intervention on behalf of the school. Throughout the program parents were engaged as leaders who have the power to question policies and organize around change, but they were also actively partnering with teachers in the classroom and developed relationships with staff in order to support students. In some cases parents used their bridging social capital with teachers to take action and make change in the school, but in other cases their bridging social capital and empathizing with teachers may have prevented the questioning of school policies in favor of a more diplomatic route. The program's ability to build strong relationships between families and school staff was at times a strength that could be leveraged for power but occasionally a weakness and should be more clearly articulated in parent leadership trainings.

Recognition & Misrecognition of Cultural Capital.

I found that nearly every parent developed empathy for teachers or at least respect for the work they do everyday, yet teachers showed mixed results in developing respect for what their parent partner brought to the classroom. Some teachers described their parent as unreliable while others described their parent partner as transforming their classroom into a more effective and inclusive space. According to the literature, the cultural capital of parents is often misrecognized in school settings, yet this research provides some specific examples of cultural capital recognition. This section will provide examples of how teachers recognized the cultural capital of parents through their classroom partnership or

bridging social capital. While Cultural Capital recognition may be seen as positive, the ability to define and validate often remained in the hands of the school. Patricia Hill-Collins (1986) discusses how Black Feminist Thought works to not question the "accuracy of an image" but to question the process through which the image is defined (p. 17). The next section on *Identity, Action & Power* will provide examples of how parents used their collective power to force cultural capital recognition through the bonding of social capital. Additionally, this section will highlight challenges faced by teachers to recognize the cultural capital of parents. A limitation I found in this program was that while parents underwent ongoing training and support, teachers didn't have the same network or development opportunities due to the inflexibility of their predetermined schedules. This lack of a teacher-bonding network may have impacted their ability to feel comfortable bridging relationships with parents.

Sam's teacher partner describes Sam's ability to connect with students in her classroom in ways that she has never been able to as a teacher.

The connections that she made with the kids just made me stand back in awe, because people relate to each other in different ways, and we all bring different things to the table, and it's just really neat how she counseled the kids and reasoned with the kids and said things that I've said a thousand times, but they listen to her, it happened over and over again. So I'm really thankful that she took it upon herself to interact and to help the kids problem solve. That affected me greatly in the sense that it made me feel really proud of her and it made me feel really great for the kids, that they were being listened to.

This teacher recognizes Sam's ability to connect with students in ways that she feels unequipped to do as a classroom teacher. This is a powerful moment as it questions the power structures in the school as arbitrary and symbolic. According to Bourdieu (1977) "In any given social formation…the different PAs [pedagogic authorities]…tend to reproduce the system of cultural arbitraries characteristic of that social formation, thereby contributing to the reproduction of the power relations which put that cultural arbitrary into the dominant position" (p. 10). The teacher's recognition of Sam's authority as an educator may point to a crack in the social formation and power relations between parents and teachers. Sam may be delegitimizing the dominant capital possessed by the classroom teacher and legitimizing her capital as a community parent. The challenge with this example is that while Sam's capital is recognized, it is done through bridging social capital where the power to "recognize" capital still lies with the teacher.

Mike's teacher partner discusses the role that he and PEP parents played in developing her understanding of the socio-cultural elements of the local community and its impact on her teaching ability. She describes her interactions with parents as a glimpse into the community in which students live and that they as teachers only pretend to understand.

A big part of it is just getting that insight into a life I pretend to know about but I really do not know what a lot of our children live in and just having it shared and they have a better understanding than I do and more realistic understanding, and just sharing some of those information from the neighborhood gives me a better perspective and better way and better knowing of what the kids do so that I know how to react to them better. I think it's invaluable what we can learn from our

parents. They're in the neighborhood. They know the families and they know some

of the dynamics.

Mike's teacher partner recognizes his cultural capital and views him as an expert who can

teach her about her students, again, questioning her own pedagogic authority and social

formation. Mike's ability to connect with teachers and bridge capital may have been

impacted by his previous experience as a school volunteer.

Stacey's teacher describes their partnership as improving her ability to run a more

effective and efficient classroom.

For me, it was incredible. I think it helped keep me a little calmer, a little saner,

because I knew I was going to have somebody that was going to help me with

something if I had a project or if I just wanted to do something extra with my kids, I

knew I had somebody that I could count on to help with that project, or she could

just take small groups of kids out and do the project, and I could still do something

else. So sometimes I was getting double the amount of stuff done because my PEP

parent was doing an activity and I could do an activity instead of I have to do this

and now I have to do this. It helped keep me sane a lot of days. I knew I had

somebody I could count on.

This teacher viewed Stacey as someone she could trust and count on to assist when needed.

For some teachers, they didn't always feel like their parent partner was trustworthy. Jean's

teacher partner agrees with Stacey's teacher partner that she was someone she could count

on to support her in the classroom until she became frustrated with the program.

Michelle's teacher partner describes the ups and downs of having a parent in her

classroom.

When my parents was there it was good, but I didn't know when she was coming, if

she was coming, I didn't know when she stopped, I didn't know if she was coming

back. There was such a huge breakdown that it became very frustrating and I

stopped planning, and I stopped do anything on the day she said she was going to be

coming in, because she would come in sometimes or she would come in on a

different day and it became very frustrating for the kids…

Scheduling challenges became a reoccurring issue. Teachers acknowledged that having a

parent in their classroom was positive, but the scheduling and consistency became an issue

and started to erode their trust. The logistics of scheduling was a flaw in the program's

ability to bridge relationships.

I would say there are pros and cons. Most of the time when she was there she did a

nice job, and then there were things that bothered me, like when she looked me in

the eye and said I will definitely be there are 9:00, and then she never came…

Two teachers had their PEP parent partner's child in their classroom in previous

years. Interestingly, they describe their relationship with their parent partner as more

productive and positive in the traditional teacher and parent roles.

I know in my class, my parent last year, she was always right there. Whenever there

was an issue with her child, positive or negative, mom was right there and she

actually came to school a couple of times, poking her head in the door just to double

check. That's why I was kind of excited having her come. We did better in that role

than we did in this role.

I feel the same way. I had a really good rapport with my PEP when she was an

actual parent of a student, she was there for all of the IEP meetings, she was very

interactive, when it was her child. Of course when it's your own child you're more

invested, I understand that.

The previous relationships between parents and teachers may have created a barrier for a

classroom partnership because the teachers had a different set of expectations for their

parent partner in this role than that of a traditional parent and teacher role.

Stacey provides insight into some of the struggles teachers may face with parent

volunteers. Her extensive experience as a parent volunteer gives a unique perspective.

Like a teacher maybe looking forward for you to come and then you do not come.

That can make you lose trust, and it kind of messes up their day, because it ain't

what they were expecting. The example was the fieldtrip. We were going to the fire

department and we had to walk all of the kids across the street. That was not a good

day and we were relying on another parent to help us and she didn't come, because

we really needed a lot of assistance crossing that street and it was a pretty busy

street, so it was really hard. That's when they usually get to the point of if I see you,

I see you, if I do not, I do not. I do not want that to be the case, but I think that would

really make a teacher lose trust because they feel like they can't depend on that

person anymore.

Stacey describes a scenario where both she and the teacher may have lost some trust in a

parent because she didn't show up to a field trip. Stacey identifies more with the teacher in

this scenario, which may be another barrier preventing her from forming positive

relationships with other parents.

In the previous section, parents identified with teachers, were able see past their

preconceptions and develop empathetic relationships. I found that some teachers struggled

to develop the same empathy for parents. There isn't enough data to further analyze the expectations teachers had for the partnership or to provide a connection between the frustrations teachers expressed and the misrecognition of the parents' cultural capital.

Overall, teachers described a mixed experience participating in the program. Some teachers recognized parents' cultural capital and described their parent partner as invaluable and providing insight into the daily lives of her students. Other teachers describe parents as unreliable and as having a better relationship when they were in a more traditional parents-teacher role. The logistics and scheduling created some fissures in trusting relationships between parents and teachers, yet most teachers stated that when their parent partner was present it was a positive experience. The structured volunteer schedules may have work for some PEP parents, but others may have benefitted from a more flexible format and presented a flaw in the program's design.

Personal Relationships.

Despite some logistical challenges in the parent-teacher partnership, most of the relationships showed moments of personal connection. Similar to the bonding of social capital among parents, much of the bridging of social capital between parents and teachers involved the exchange of resources and emotional support. Some relationships even extended beyond the walls of the school.

Michelle describes how her participation in the program has changed her relationship with staff by making them more accessible and approachable.

Before the PEP Program I would just intermingle with the administration and secretary or staff and my child's teacher. Now, I intermingle with all of the staff, all of the teachers, they know me, I know them. Sometimes we may have lunch

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together, which never happened to me before. You're more approachable, you just

sit down with them and speak to them. You have a conversation when before you

would never just stop somebody on their lunch and be like hey, how're you doing, or

sit down with them. It's a totally different experience. The PEP Program has

opened up doors. Doors of experience that some of us parents never had before that

now we have.

Being able to access teachers and have personal conversations with them during lunch was

something Michelle hadn't experienced in the past.

Both parents and teachers exchanged emotional support. Jean describes one

situation in which a teacher confided personal information to her about a conflict she was

having with another teacher.

A situation came up with [a teacher] the week before this past week and I was able

to interact with her. She was having a situation with another peer and she came in

and she was very distraught and crying and upset, so I pulled her to the side and I

asked what was wrong and she told me what was going on, and I felt that I hadn't

really interacted with her before, and I talked to her for a good hour, trying to calm

her down because she was crying and upset and stuff, and I told her just leave it

alone, and then she was like, well I do not understand why we have these problems

all of a sudden today, and it was just like a little verbal disagreement that her and

another peer had, and I told her just give it to God and leave it alone. She said Jean, I

never talked to you like this, she said I do not even really know you, but I do see you

in the building all the time, she said, and you really helped me a lot, and when I

started talking to her and we started to her and we started actually interacting, she

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started to just clear up and just started smiling and we stood there and we talked for

a little bit more and then all of a sudden she had to go back to class. I felt that we

both interacted by hugging each other and letting each other know that everything

is going to be okay.

This teacher shared a very personal moment with Jean who provided her with emotional

support. This level of trustworthiness is comparable to the exchange of emotional support

among the bonding network of parents. Jean uses similar language such as "give it to God"

when she describe how she provides emotional support to both teachers and parents. Her

ability to relate to both teachers and parents on such personal levels furthers my assertion

in the previous section about the parents' ability to simultaneous bond and bridge social

capital.

Debbie describes her ability to talk about her sick relative with a teacher. The

teacher even offered her and her children a ride.

She trusted me and my kids enough to put us in her car and take us to Chicago...I

was able to talk to her about when my auntie got sick, and she was somebody I

could go to and talk to, and she asked me did I need help, do I need a way to go to

Chicago? She was even willing to take me even when she wasn't going, but she was

willing to take me.

Debbie felt as though she could count on this teacher for emotional support through a

personal challenge. Again, this exchange of emotional support is comparable to Debbie's

relationship with parents in the program.

Jean's teacher partner describes some personal conversations they had about

moving to a new house.

My parent got personal. She was telling me the good news about her moving and how she had to wait...she is so happy because all of the children and her grandson, they will be able to each have their own room, so she was just very excited about that. They're being able to basically upgrade her lifestyle and everything. I was like, oh that is just so great, because she knew that I, I'm looking to buy my house, but she was like oh yes, and I'm going to get this new furniture and I'm going here. So it was more of a personal conversation versus us being in the classroom talking just about the students and everything. So that was something personal, but we talk.

One teacher describes a situation in which Mike, the shy PEP father, was dancing in her classroom with students. Another teacher chimes in by describing the trust, friendship and even family-type relationship that was fostered to allow this parent to open up.

He trusts you with little pieces at a time and then once he sees that you're accepting of him, the whole, everything at its face value becomes like wow, okay. That's where he had the connection where I consider [teacher] not only a teacher, my mentor/teacher, but then you become that level of he's opened it up to friendship, because when you're dancing with somebody, smiling, it's that family connection that you're talking about.

In addition to sharing personal information, Jean saw her teacher partner as someone she could trust to act with. Jean's teacher partner describes a situation in which Jean brought her some sensitive information about the school she felt was important.

...she would say something to me that other parents may have told me...and she was like what should we do, and it's not the we, but I guess I want to be a help to her and I do not want her to think well you just bring it to me and it'll go out my ear, so I

wanted to help her because she thought what she was telling me was very serious, and it was....That's the kind of ownership that I'm talking about. Bringing that critical information.

Jean trusted her teacher partner to act in partnership with her in addressing this concern and the teacher felt that by sharing this information she showed personal ownership of the school.

Some personal connections occurred in the classroom, while others extended into the community. Michelle describes being invited to a staff birthday party at a local restaurant.

We went to a birthday party for one of the teachers and it was just an out of work experience. We went and had drinks and had dinner and it was nice. We just didn't talk about work. Everybody had their significant other or friend, it was a fun environment without the kids.

Stacey also joined this parent in attending the staff birthday party and describes meeting the children and significant others of teaching staff.

I was surprised I got invited to a birthday party and all of the teachers was going. I do not know if I should say where we went. I got invited by one of the teachers to a birthday party, and all of them were shocked to see me there. Stacey you made it. It was nice just sitting around. All the teachers and just talking. And I had never did that before like that...It was like they were talking about stuff, like some school, some having fun talking about anything. But some of them brought their husband or girlfriend or something like that and they were introducing themselves. One of the teachers brought her kids. That was nice.

For most parents these personal relationships with teachers were new. In nearly every pairing, either the teacher or parent describes some form of personal connection that didn't previously exist. Similar to the bonding social capital section, parents and teachers exchanged resources that demonstrated the formation of trusting relationships and the bridging of social capital.

Stacey – Personal Relationships.

Stacey and her teacher partner used the program to build on a previous relationship and developed a unique and strong bond. This is in contrast to the more distrustful relationships Stacey developed with fellow parents. Stacey describes the personal and casual relationship she has with her teacher partner.

> …she makes me laugh… there is a lot of interaction with her, because she surprises me a lot and we have a really good connection. We eat cheese fries together and chicken. It's just fun.

Stacey's teacher partner describes how their personal connection has grown this year and how she is advocating for Stacey to go back to school.

> We talk all the time. I know what's going on in her kids' lives and what's going on in her life and her church events and some of the friends that she has. But that has also grown over a lot of years, not necessarily just this year, but a lot more this year because she was in my room a lot more than usual….I'm trying to get her to go back to school.

This personal relationship is in contrast to the professional relationships Stacey describes forming with other parents. Stacey describes her relationship with other parents as "professional" and her relationship with her teacher partner as "fun." Stacey describes her

teacher partner offering her a ride and visiting her home when Stacey was sick to deliver a blanket and soup.

> There were two things that surprised me, because one day I was going somewhere, and she said do you need a ride, and I said you stay way over there, and she took me where I wanted to go. Then I said you sure? Then when I had the flu, and she came over with a blanket and some soup.

Stacey was the only parent that described exchanging tangible resources with teachers. Stacey's teacher partner serves as a main source of support and advocacy for Stacey in the school building. Stacey describes how her teacher partner encouraged her to stand up for herself and not be afraid to ask for help.

> Because I didn't used to do that, being able to approach the teacher and say I'm having a problem with my child, can you help me. I did not ever do that, but now I'm able to do that and ask for the help…[teacher], she used to get on me all the time, "you have to learn." She always got in my face, and I mean like right there, really close, you gotta start talking to people, you gotta start telling them how you feel. So she really helped me a lot with that. I just started doing it. I felt like I had more and more confidence and learning how to accept criticism. I did not like to hear rejection. So a lot of times that would hold me back from asking for help, and I just started doing it. It felt good and I want other parents to be able to do the same thing.

Stacey gives a detailed description of how her teacher partner advocated for her to stand up for herself, but when other parents provide examples in the previous section she doesn't reference their support at all. Again, Stacey's previous relationship with a teacher seemed to prevent her ability to bond with parents.

Stacey's teacher describes their relationship as a trusting and reciprocal friendship that extends outside of school.

> For me, it's really nice feeling like we're not just working together, we're actually friends. I like having someone that I can count on, somebody that I can text her at the drop of a hat and say, oh, can you come a little early or oh, we're doing this, can you be ready for this, can you come on a fieldtrip. Just knowing I have that relationship, and I do not think I would have that with somebody else, but I think because I've known this parent for so long because I've had three of her kids, I think that has kind of helped build that relationship. But it's almost like being a friend. Just knowing that I can count on her and she knows that she can count on me. She thinks of me as her mother. She comes to me for advice, but it just is really nice that we're not just working together. She's not just an assistant. We have a relationship outside of school sort of.

While the personal relationship between Stacey and her teacher partner extends beyond the walls of the school, there are clearly unequal power dynamics embedded in this relationship as highlighted by the teacher describing herself as a mother figure. Her teacher partner may have recognized Stacey's cultural capital, but the power dynamics that authorize capital recognition have been maintained. This relationship will be further explored in the context of power structures in the next section. Stacey was able to build on a previously established relationship with a teacher to create a close and personal friendship. While described as positive, this relationship may have created a barrier to developing bonding relationships with other parents.

Summary.

Although parents developed strong bonding relationships with other parents, they also developed a strong sense of empathy for teachers. This idea counters a common notion in the literature that positions bonding social capital as a possible barrier to bridging social capital. Parents used their partnership with staff to question school policies, developed curriculum and introducing Restorative Practices. PEP actively engages parents as leaders who can negotiate power and parents provided multiple examples of leading change efforts, but the combination of bridging relationships with teachers may be a barrier in the program's design if shifting power is an ultimate goal.

Teachers provided mixed results in recognizing the cultural capital of parents. Some teachers highlighted the unique and powerful benefits parents brought to the classroom, while other teachers were challenged by the unpredictability of when their parent partner would visit their classroom. While parents and teachers set their own volunteer schedules, the logistics of the program presented barriers to the bridging relationships and may have benefited from a more flexible format. The data collected from teachers was limited and prevented a more nuanced understanding of how cultural capital was recognized or misrecognized in the school setting.

Multiple personal relationships developed between teachers and parents that resulted in sharing personal information, emotional support, spending time outside of school and personal advocacy. Stacey was able to develop a deep and personal relationship with her teacher partner, which, as referenced in the previous section, may have prevented her from participating in the parent network. While most parent and teacher relationships

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were described in a positive context, there were some unequal power dynamics embedded in those relationships.

III. Bonding and Bridging for Identity, Action and Power

...once I got into the program, it seemed like you sure got a lot of authority.

They [staff] come to you and say well I'm sorry, this and that, it won't happen again,

they're going to try to show you more support or respect.

-PEP Parent

In this section I will share how parents used their bonding and bridging relationships to build a group identity, act collectively and gain power in the school. PEP actively worked to develop leadership and organizing skills that gave parents tools to act with power, but I found that their relationships with each other became their strongest weapon. I found that participating parents became strong bridges to parents not participating in the program. The combination of having positive relationships with teachers (bridging) and a strong group identity (bonding) allowed PEP parents to work together to promote the school and build positive bridges to other parents. While parents developed empathy and mostly positive relationships with teachers, they were still able to identify with the experience of other parents and act as a positive bridge between the school and community without taking on a deficit perspective of families common among urban educators. Hong (2011) found similar results in the Parent Mentor program. "...parent mentors become the bridge that is desperately needed to close the distance between families and schools" (p. 130). This research provides a new lens to view the combination of bonding and bridging social capital as a tool for positive parent outreach.

I found that parents were able to use their bonded social capital as a tool for collective action and for gaining power in the school. This finding was consistent with the literature that describes the power of parent organizing and bonding social capital in a school setting. In this section I highlight Jean who developed a pronounce sense of power in the school through her relationship with other parents and the organization.

Like Jean, some parents felt like their power and voice was based in the collective power of a parent organization, while other parents felt powerful by having a positive relationship with teachers. I found that power based in bridging social capital was mostly positive but in Stacey's case resulted in unequal power dynamics in the relationship with her teacher partner and may have created a barrier to developing bonding relationships with other parents.

Bonding & Bridging: Outreach to Other Parents.

Through a combination of bonding social capital and group membership paired with bridging social capital and developing empathy for teachers, PEP parents were able to act as positive bridges to other parents in the school community. Through their bonding of social capital, parents developed a group identity in the school community tied to their membership in PEP. Despite not forming personal relationships with parents, Stacey found a benefit in being a part of an organization. Even though she has volunteered at the school for years, being a part of the program gave Stacey an opportunity to be formally recognized for her work. "It's almost like it's more official. I'm an official volunteer. But it does make me feel important. It's a feeling, like I mean something to the school. I feel good."

The feeling of being a part of something bigger in contrast to a traditional parent volunteer emerged across multiple interviews. Sam expressed the benefits of being a part

of an "organization" that gave legitimacy to their work and could stand with them in solidarity if they needed support.

> When we say PEP, it lets people know that we're part of a group or organization. It's not just we're coming up here and we're going to make points and we do not have anyone to back us up.

The ability to have someone to "back us up" provided Sam the ability to transform how she viewed herself in the school beyond just a parent but as a part of an organization with a platform. Sam continues to describe how her role as a parent in the school was transformed through group membership. "So up until this year, I can say that I just got three kids here, but now when they ask who we are, we go into detail about telling them we are PEP and we stand for this." This sense of ownership is a shift in Sam's relationships with other parents before participating in PEP, which she describes as either non-existent or very casual.

> I didn't feel like I had a relationship with the parents because I felt like why. And if I did have relationship with parents it's because they're in the community. So if they're in the community and I happen to bump into someone at the school, I was like girl, what you here for, well my child is this and that, and then what you here for, well, same thing or whatever. But to have a relationship with the parents. No.

One of the most common ways parents used their new association with the group was to reach out to other parents in the school community. Because parents developed empathy for teachers through their experience working in the classroom, they were positive advocates for the school. These interactions were often inspired by PEP parents feeling a sense of school ownership and membership in PEP that they hoped to share with

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other parents. PEP parents felt deeply connected to the school and developed empathy for teachers, yet they didn't take on a deficit-perspective of other parents common in urban schools. Sam describes PEP parents assisting other parent in the parents' center after they finish their hours in the classroom.

> But being here after we do our time in the classroom or however, when we get in that parent center and parents come in and they have real life problems, they come in, they need assistance, like some of them have no computer skills. We have to show them how to get on these computers sometimes. Sometimes they just want stuff copied because they got business to handle, and then we tell them who we are and what we do, and they're like y'all got kids here, y'all work here, they want to know who we are.

Sam's association with PEP and connection to the school allowed her to reach out to other parents and to provide emotional and skill-based support.

Multiple PEP parents describe how they reached out to other parents specifically about getting involved in PEP. Sam describes how she advocates for other parents to get involved by meeting them where they are.

> I always let the parents know get involved now because in the future PEP is growing and we're going to be looking for new parents, so we have to spread our wings and open doors for you guys, so we do not want to just see you once a month or once a year when you bring your children and then we do not see you no more and you wonder how we got where we are, because you can take these same baby steps to get here, it's not hard.

Debbie describes how she reaches out to other parents and even takes down their names in hopes of expanding the program to other schools throughout the city.

> I do not know about nobody else, but I talk to parents about this program, and they never heard about it, but I'm one of those parents that share information period…So I'm even doing that and I'm going to be taking parents' names and their kids' names and see how when we come back in September we can reach out and touch other parents of other students.

Jean also describes her outreach to other parents as campaigning for PEP and the school.

> Whenever we go walking and we see a parent with a child, we'll tell them about the school and the PEP Program and we tell them about all that. She said, we're running off at the mouth like we're trying to hire folks, and I said we're supposed to make our school look good. We're going to get as many parents as we can up in there. We're going to try to push this issue. We're going to try to do this and that. We try to do a little campaigning for PEP and for the school.

I found that parents didn't use their association with the group to distance themselves from other parents in the school who didn't volunteer. Instead, PEP parents recognized their growing power in the school community through group membership and wanted to actively grow their network. This was reinforced by the fact that it was the parents new to volunteering who developed bonding networks, developed a stronger sense of power, and actively tried to grow their network. The two previous volunteers didn't mention recruiting other parents to participate, presumably because they didn't see the benefit or need such a network due to their insider status in the school.

PEP parents provided a unique bridge between families and the school. Due to their partnership in the classroom they developed a sense of empathy for teachers, but they were also able to use their experience as a parent to relate to the challenges parents may face engaging with the school. Stacey provides two examples of interacting with parents who anticipated hearing something negative about their child, presumably due to previous negative interactions with the school, but Stacey responds with positivity and empathy.

> One parent, she said how you know my baby? I said I work with him, and I said that's my buddy. She said, she giving you problems isn't she? I said no, she actually keep me alert, she's always bouncing. Because she was expecting me to say something bad, like she thought I was going to say something bad about her, because her other son had a lot of problems, but she had problems too, but we know how to go around it. She thought I was going to say something bad and I didn't. I couldn't say nothing bad because she's just a baby, just trying to learn new things.

This parent anticipated hearing something negative about her child but Stacey instead describes him in positive terms as keeping her "alert." Stacey recognizes this parent's child is "just a baby…trying to learn new things." Stacey describes a similar interaction with a parent who expected bad news about her child.

> One time I was at the gas station and one of the parents, she had Newbie and the favorite little boy that always get in trouble, I saw him the gas station, she said he getting on your nerves too huh? And I looked at her, and I said no, I said he did cuss me out, but no. Just the way she said it, I was kind of real sad because I didn't want her to feel like that. I really do not see her in this building, only when he's in trouble and they want her to come get him.

Stacey ability to identify with the parent's experience is in contrast to how a teacher might reach out to a parent. Stacey describes how she identifies with these parents because she has been in those situations.

> I understand where they're coming from because I have been through it. I'm not even on the outside looking in, I'm in. I know, that's not a good feeling at all, and when they're coming up the stairs, they already just right up there, ready to cuss somebody out. So I be thinking, they be laughing, I try to catch them and say a little joke or something, when they look like they're mad, because I do not want them to be mad. That one lady, I was just playing with her, but she started laughing. Then that one man, he said, you always be happy, every time I come, you always be happy. I said because I feel good and I told him I like being here with the kids. That's what we should do, we could do an ice breaker with them. Then they will start thinking more positive, they will want to be up here more. Because most of the time they're just sitting around the house, they can come up here, but they just do not want to because they do not know what the outcome might be.

Stacey describes being on the inside looking in as a parent who has had negative interactions with the school and understands the hesitancy of other parents who may only be called to the school when their child is in trouble. She describes how she breaks the tension with those parents by telling a joke. Stacey's ability to identify with the experience of other parents as well as with the challenges teachers face in the classroom allows her to act as a positive bridge between parents and the school. Yet, her insider status prevents her from developing bonding networks with other PEP parents.

Jean describes a scenario where she had to step in when a parent entered the school upset about her child getting into trouble in class. Jean and other PEP parents were able to pull her to the side and talk with her about the situation.

Right after I pulled her to the side and told her do not do that again because myself and a couple of parents were talking to her, I think what I said to her must have really gotten to her because she came back and she said I sure thank you because anybody else probably would have called the police on me or called and got me in trouble, but I'm glad you talked to me. She calmed all of the way down, and she looked at me, she said you know what, you're more like my guardian angel, because a voice I guess was going over in her head telling her to do this, and I told her that was that ugly man, that was Satan telling you to do something that you would probably regret in the long run. But after I got through talking to her, she smiled and the baby smiled, he hugged me, she hugged me, and they walked on out of the building. Then [the principal] said we need you up here at this school, and I told her I'm not coming back, and I was just only joking with her, and she was like why do you want to stay at home, we need more people like you. She said you didn't even have to get loud or anything, you just pulled her to the side. It's just in me, I can't sit here and let nobody get hurt for no obscene reason knowing that I could have prevented it from happening.

This parent appreciated Jean for approaching her with honesty and empathy instead of responding by calling the police. The school principal also recognized Jean's ability to intervene and deescalate the situation. Jean acted as an effective bridge between this parent and the school because she developed empathy for teachers working the classroom

and used her experience as a parent to understand the concerns other parents may have. While Jean was able to diffuse this situation, she hesitates to question the school policies and injustice of the school possibly calling the police because one mother was upset. This is another example of the program's dilemma between school partnership, bridging social capital, and building parent power through bonding social capital. This highlights the need to be explicit about the challenge of partnership versus power in the program's parent leadership training.

PEP parents were able to use their positive connection to teachers, their sense of group membership, and their shared experience of being a parent to reach out to other parents in a variety of positive ways. This combination of bonding and bridging social capital allowed PEP parents to reach out to other parents without taking on a deficit view of families common in urban schools.

Bonding Social Capital: Action & Power.

In addition to parents acting together as a bridge to other parents, parents were able to use their relationships with other PEP parents or association to the program to approach school staff. Stacey describes a situation in which she is able to connect with another PEP parent to take collective action about a shared concern.

> ...she [PEP parent] had a scenario or somebody was bullying her child and then I had a scenario where somebody was bullying my child, but we were kind of at a standstill because me and her were both kind of hurt because we thought it wouldn't happen to our kids, but we just said we have to go and let the principal know what is going on because we do not want our child not to want to come to

school because of that, so we had to kind of hurry up and make something better for them, so we spoke to [the principal] and let her know what was going on.

Even though Stacey didn't develop personal relationships with other parents, she was able to leverage her association with the group to act with power.

PEP brought community organizers from Chicago to provide training to parents on cutting an issue. Sam describes how that experience helped her to think about approaching teachers with a concern.

...in the beginning at PEP, we learned about problems and issues and that stuck with me with not just PEP but even in my everyday life, problems and issues. You have to know how to determine which is which and how to approach the teachers with the scenario as far as that goes so that's not a problem for me.

Sam continues to describe how the PEP program builds an awareness of the power that parents hold.

I think that the program is beneficial for the parents to make them aware that they matter within the building, not just as a parent sending their child to school. We can come in here and we can talk to administration and let them know how we truly feel about any type of scenario, be it with our child or any other child.

Sam credits her experience in the program to an awareness that "we" as parents have power and can act together to let administration know how they "truly feel." I found that parents credited their association with the program to realize their own power as parents.

In addition to parents partnering with classroom teachers to support student learning, the program organizers encouraged parents to identify school or community issues they felt were important. Once identified, using a process parents learned from

community organizers visiting from Chicago's Southwest Organizing Project (SWOP), the parents put together an action plan. After multiple organizing sessions that included discussions that ranged from violence outside of the school to increasing student enrollment, parents felt most connected to the issue of bullying in the school. This issue impacted the students in the classrooms in which they worked, but it also impacted their own children, which became a driving force behind the campaign. Parents chose to develop a campaign to address bullying in their school, specifically bullying that happened during the lunch period, a time they felt bullying was heightened. Michelle discusses the origins of this project.

> First of all it was the lunchroom pilot. We had gripes about things that we didn't like in the lunchroom. Instead of let's just explain what we didn't like, we went down and explained to the staff in the lunchroom and we were willing to help them out.

While doing observational research on the lunch period, parents identified multiple logistical improvements they felt would create a safer lunch for students. Their suggested improvements ranged from how classrooms enter the cafeteria to the need for staff to intervene when a fight breaks out immediately and the banning of "quiet lunches" that parents felt were unjust and only escalated behavior issues. Parents did multiple observations during the lunch period, spoke with students, interviewed and surveyed parents and teachers. Parents met during a Friday morning session to discuss their suggested improvements, the story of why they felt this issue needed to be addressed, and assigned speaking roles. Instead of parents taking their concerns directly to the principal, they decided to take their proposal to the school's local governance council, a body of staff, parents and community partners that assist in decision-making at the school.

The school governance council was generally receptive to the parents' suggestions. Some suggestions were dismissed as policy standards by the principal such as students having to put in their ID number as a state education department requirement, while others were received with openness and a commitment to adopt. Major changes that were agree upon included more staff members eating with students to model positive behavior and allowing students to socialize during lunch instead of having "quiet lunches," which parents felt created more problems. The parents felt like their proposal was successful and supported their goals of decreasing bullying during the lunch period. According to a parent, the principal later asked the group about their opinion on changing the timing of lunch periods. The parents felt this was a good move and supportive of their goals, which resulted in a major change by switching the number of lunch periods from three to two and provided students with more activity time in an effort to decrease lunchroom bullying.

Through their participation in PEP, parents starting getting more involved in the school's governance council to be more active in school decision-making. Sam describes the school governance council as a place where "we really get to advocate our voices." Parents started to command respect from the school through their participation in PEP. Michelle describes a shift in how she is treated in the school.

Before the PEP Program, I said I would have never just talked to another teacher besides my child's teacher about any experiences I may have or any concerns I might have. But now, when you're coming to school, all of the teachers are open and welcome you, like hey how are you doing and whatever, so you can go and say well I seen such and such doing such and such. Okay, I'm going to get on top of that because I didn't see that and I'm glad that you brought that to my attention, so there

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are a lot of things before that we may have seen and not took action on, but now it's

like take action on it. Take it to the teacher's attention, bring it to their attention.

And by you having that relationship with the teacher, they're like okay yeah, I'm

going to look into that. They are more responsive for that. They look for that I

think.

When she used to bring something to the school's attention she was ignored, but now

school staff are more responsive to her concerns since her participation in the program.

Michelle describes leveraging the combination of her bonding social capital when as a

group they "take action" on an issue and her bridging relationships with teachers who are

willing to listen because of an established relationship. PEP parents found common issues

that were important to them and took action together. This may provide insight into the

role a formal organizational partnership may play in parents developing their power in the

school.

Jean – Bonding & Power.

Multiple parents referenced PEP parents working collectively towards a shared goal,

but Jean developed a heightened sense of group membership and power. It was important

to Jean to be recognized as a part of an organization instead of an individual parent

volunteer, as she believed it influenced how school staff viewed her. "...now they see well

okay, this is an organization they're in here to help..." Jean describes bonding social capital

as a way to challenge power and force capital recognition, which provides a new

perspective to the research on cultural and social capital.

Jean describes some of the benefits of being a part of the organization, including

how school staff had begun to treat her different since her participation in the program.

...once I got into the program, it seemed like you sure got a lot of authority. They

[staff] come to you and say well I'm sorry, this and that, it won't happen again,

they're going to try to show you more support or respect.

Being a part of the program resulted in Jean feeling she had more authority in the school

and gained respect from school staff. Even something as simple as wearing a t-shirt that

represented the organization changed how school staff treated Jean.

Before actually having a t-shirt and a little pegboard to say that I work with PEP,

when I was going to school, it was just like, okay you're just a regular parent, you

just stand there, we [school staff] get to you when we get to you. Now when I walk

in there and I got me pretty blue shirt on, they're 'yes ma'am.'

Jean's association with PEP transformed her interactions with school staff from one of

being ignored to one of acknowledgement and respect. Being a part of a group allowed

parents to connect with other parents when an issue arose, collaborate on solutions or

approach staff as a united front instead of trying to address an issue in isolation. Jean

describes how being a part of a group has changed her ability to approach staff with an

issue and how this new strategy impacted how seriously staff took her concerns.

...before this PEP Program, I wouldn't too much speak or say anything. I would pull

them to the side and say what I have to say or whatever, but it was just him and me,

but since I've been in the program, I feel that I can voice my opinion, like to say

whatever needs to be said or talk with the crew, all of us and be able to get great

results, because at first it was like whatever I say, it just go.

This ability to "talk with the crew" of other parents and "get great results" appeared to be a

shift in how Jean would deal with a situation in the past. In the one-on-one scenario ("him

and me") of interacting with a staff member her voice was discounted, but now as a member of a group of parents who can stand in her corner, she can make her voice heard and expect results. The literature affirms that this collective effort is more likely to get positive results than a parent approaching administration as an individual (Noguera, 2001).

Jean tells a story about her child being bullied and after repeatedly bringing this issue to staff and even requesting a conference call with other parents in her child's classroom and school staff, she felt like the issue was being ignored. Jean then started to talk with other parents about this issue and things started to change.

> ...then it got to the point where I had a lot of other parents that were concerned too. Well what about when this happened or that happened, what's going to happen then? Then it was like more parents started to step in and let them know it's not supposed to be like this and this is the way it's supposed to be, then when they started saying to keep from calling in the school board for help or whatever, then everybody wanted to get on one accord now.

Jean's ability to access and connect with other concerned parents helped her make her voice heard and push the school staff to address an issue important to the parent group. This show of power from the PEP parents wasn't related to an issue they saw in their classroom but with their own children. This is an example of a parents taking the power from the program and translating it to act together outside of the program boundaries. Jean says that their threat to call the school board seemed to push school staff to take action and work with the parents. Jean describes the power this group has discovered. "...we all have a voice and we had a voice from the beginning, we just never showed it at all." Again, the

"we" shows the bonding of social capital among parents as a strong factor in understanding and recognizing their own power in the school. Jean recognized this power through her identity as a part of an organization and developing strong bonding relationships with other parents.

Jean's teacher partner recognized Jean's ability to use her relationships with other parents as a source of power in the school.

I would say that my parent provides the insight that they're watching everything about us. Every little thing. There is a community of them talking amongst themselves about us and how the other parents feel about you...having that parent, she brings information to me that I never thought that I would be privy to...They're literally watching us... So the parents, they're taking note about us. It's just like we sit around and we're at this table right now, they're sitting at their table talking about us, which classroom doesn't have any order, did you see how so and so let that student just hide up in that closet or in the hallway, they're critiquing everything about us. They critique our principal. They have the insight and knowledge and how they critique our assistant principal...They know which teachers they can go to for help, for different situations as far as like if you need clothing, they know someone, if they need prayer, if they need food, they have found out who the resources are in the school that we do not even know about. I had a child that was recently homeless, well you need to go ask so and so for this right here [teacher], they can help them out. That's the kind of insight that I've learned that sometimes are the most valuable in learning about community resources and

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everything is our parents. They know everything that is happening in our school

and in our community.

Jean's teacher partner describes PEP parents as a strong network that can access valuable

resources, analyze staff dynamics and has the power to critique school leadership. Jean's

ability to use her social network to take action and gain respect provide an understanding

of how bonding social capital may influenced capital recognition in schools that often

misrecognize the capital of families of color.

Bridging Social Capital: Relational Power.

Similar to Jean, Stacey recognizes the power that parents hold in the school. Jean

describes parent power as something they "never showed" while Stacey describes it as

something parents "do not know." Jean implies that power is something parents are now

showing while Stacey implies that power is something parents still may not understand.

Stacey's insider experience gave her the understanding of the power parents could have if

they chose.

> We're the parents. The school, the parents and the community. To me, we're really
>
> the most important part...we have really the voice, because we can choose where we
>
> want our kids to be and where to go, because we can say no to this and no to that.
>
> We do not have to do anything really. We can keep our kids home if we want to, but
>
> we choose to be right here in the middle, so we are the bridge to everything. We
>
> have a lot of control, we just do not know it.

While Jean views her power though her association with an organization and

relationship with other parents, Stacey references the source of her own power and voice

as the one-on-one relationship her child's teacher.

At first I didn't feel like I had a voice I guess because I was too shy to say something

to my kid's teacher, but now that we've been here a while and I've got to know them

and they've got to know me, it seems like I am able to feel comfortable and tell them

if there is something I do not like or it's just something that they can help me with

my kids…My teacher, she helped me a lot. She's the one that started getting on me

about being able to say no, being able to tell people what's wrong and then it just

kept going and then I'll tell her what I did and she'd be proud of me. Now I can go to

anybody, not just my kids' teacher. Like they might be doing something and I just

walk up to them and tell them how I'm feeling.

Two additional parents referenced their ability to be heard in the school through their

relationship with teachers. Mandy, like Stacey credits her increase in power in the school

through the program's ability to create a stronger relationship with teachers.

I feel like I do have a voice here and I think mainly because I have a relationship

with my kids' teachers and staff members. If I ask them a question they are able to

understand me. They are able to get results done…I guess the point of being on one

page with each other, the same page.

 Mike was the only parent that explicitly stated he didn't feel like he had a voice in

the school and also seemed to be the most distrustful of other parents. Mike describes how

he feels like he doesn't have a voice in the school setting. "…naw, I do not have a voice, I'm

just here…I think the school board has the power to change, besides the school board, all

you can do is recommend but you cannot change it." Mike's inability to bond social capital

with other parents may have played a factor in feeling he didn't have a voice.

While both Stacey and Jean developed positive and personal relationships with their teacher partner, Stacey's relationship with her teacher partner was deep and personal but occasionally matriarchal. Stacey's teacher partner referenced that Stacey thought of her as her mother and when she praised her growth in standing up for herself and saying "no" to teachers who take advantage of her she quipped, well "not to me." This highlights uneven power dynamics and could be a problematic relationship. In contrast, Jean personal relationship with her teacher partner was more as peers. There may be multiple reasons for this, including Jean's teacher partner explaining her very parent-centered philosophy towards education. Another possible reason for a more peer-like relationship between Jean and her teacher partner could be attributed to Jean's deep sense of group membership and a supportive personal network of parents as acknowledged by her teacher partner. Stacey lacked the same sense of personal bonding with parents and identified more with teachers which may have prevented her ability stand up to them.

Summary.

Parents were able combine their bridging social capital and empathy for teachers, and their bonding social capital and group membership to act as positive advocates for the school to other parents. Parents actively recognized their growing base of power in the school through the bonding network of parents and used their group membership to actively increase their base.

Parents demonstrated their ability to gain power and advocate for change in the school. In addition to supporting students in the classroom, PEP organizers worked with parents to identify a key issue they felt they wanted to address. Parents were able to

leverage their bonding network to organize a campaign and work collectively to build power and advocate successfully for changes in school lunchroom policies.

Jean, who developed the strongest relationships with other parents, identified a more pronounced sense of power in the school. Jean provides a new lens to understand how parents can use their bonded social capital to build power and capital recognition in the school setting. The participating father, Mike, who had the hardest time developing trusting relationships with other parents, felt like he didn't have any voice in his child's school. In between these two polarized examples, Stacey, who didn't develop the type of trusting relationships common among parents, felt like she had a voice in her child's school but felt her voice was supported through her relationship with her child's teacher. I found that the power based in Stacey's bridging relationship with her teacher was unequally distributed and occasionally matriarchal, while Jean's relationship with her teacher partner was more as peers. Stacey's lack of bonding social capital may have prevented her from having a more power neutral relationship with teachers.

Conclusion.

I found most participating parents developed strong and interdependent relationships with each other. This network developed a community of reciprocity that exchanged resources and trusted each other to provide emotional support. The two parents that didn't develop strong relationships with other parents had previously volunteered in the school. While the literature often cautions against excessive bonding social capital, I found that the bridging of social capital between previous parent volunteers and teachers prevented bonding social capital with other parents.

Parents describe the many ways that they supported students in the classroom from curriculum input to introducing Restorative Practices. Parents working alongside teachers allowed them to interact as peers and assist in shaping the school's culture. Parents also developed a strong sense of empathy for school staff by spending time alongside them in the classroom. Most parents identified with school staff and spoke about them in positive terms. Again, this is in contrast to the literature, which describes bonding social capital as a potential barrier to bridging social capital. Participating parents were able to both bond and bridge social capital simultaneously. This was accomplished by creating a space that allowed for parents to connect with each other on a personal level combined with intentional classroom partnership between teachers and parents. While parents developed a strong sense of empathy for teachers, this bridging social capital occasionally challenged the program's ability to question unfair policies and prioritize allegiances.

Some teachers recognized the cultural capital of parents and identified the unique and positive benefits that parents brought to their classroom while other teachers described their parent partner to be unreliable. The data collected from teachers was limited and prevented a more nuance analysis of how the cultural capital of parents was recognized or misrecognized. Despite the logistical challenges parents and teachers faced in their classroom partnership, multiple personal relationships developed. These relationships mirrored the resource exchange and emotional support found in the bonding relationships among parents. Some teacher and parent relationships extended beyond the walls of the school into the home and community.

PEP parents were positive advocates to other parents in the school community because they developed empathy and bridging relationships with staff, and felt a strong

association to the program through their bonding relationships with other parents. Parents

used their group membership to recruit parents and continuing building their base. The

combination of bonding and bridging social capital as a tool for parental outreach provides

a new understanding of the intersection between social capital and family engagement.

Parents were able to use their bonding relationships to act with power in the school.

Parents demonstrated their ability to organized around an issue they felt was significant,

develop a campaign and make changes to school policy. Parents used their bonding

network and group membership to advocate for their concerns on multiple occasions and

become more involved in decision-making bodies throughout the program. Jean provides

multiple examples of how she uses her relationships with other parents and association

with PEP to disrupt the capital recognition process and gain authority in the school. Other

parents felt that their power was tied to their relationship with teachers. While Stacey's

relationship with her teacher was mostly positive, there were some unequal power

dynamics embedded.

Chapter V: Discussion Outline

Summary

My overarching research question: "What role does social capital and cultural

capital play in a program that attempts to build relationships between schools and

families?" has guided my dissertation. After researching the formation of relationships

within a school based parent engagement program, I found unique forms of social capital

development both among participating parents as well as between parents and school staff.

Parents were able to develop strong bonding relationships with other parents that created

a network defined by the exchange of resources and emotional support. Parents were also able to simultaneously develop bridging relationships with school staff that was defined through the development of empathy, emotional support and resource exchange. Parents were able to leverage these various forms of social capital to act with power in the school building.

Conclusions

My first sub-research question focused on the bonding relationships among parents: *What are parents' perceptions of how their relationships with other parents change during their participation in the program?* I found that parents lacked previous relationships with other parents at their child's school, which was consistent with the literature (Bolivar & Chrispeels, 2011; Horvat et al., 2003; Laurea, 2002; Ream & Palardy, 2008). Within a few short months, the group of participating parents developed a strong network that often considered itself a "family." This network developed norms of reciprocity through the exchange of resources and provided each other emotional support that resulted in trustworthiness. These two indicators are common elements that define social capital accumulation (Putnam, 2000). This network also developed elements similar to Coleman's (1988) theory of social closure such as their ability to mediate conflict within network.

This network of support was important for parents without previous volunteer experience in the school. The two participating parents that didn't develop the type of trusting relationships more common among the group had a history of extensive volunteering in the school. The social capital literature often cautions that excessive bonding social capital can become a barrier to successful bridging social capital (Orr, 1999;

Putnam, 2001), yet I found that the previous parent volunteers' bridging relationships with teachers created a barrier for their ability to bond with other parents.

My second sub-research question focused on how parents viewed their relationships with teachers change over the course of the program: *What are parents' perceptions of how their relationships with teachers change during their participation in the program?* As previously mentioned, the literature occasionally refers to bonding social capital as the dark side of social capital because of the ability to reinforce incorrect or redundant information (Burt, 2001) and to create outward animosity (Putnam, 2001). Yet, I found that while parents developed strong bonding relationships with each other, they formed positive bridging relationships with teachers. Parents provided direct input on classroom policies and curriculum and were able to interact with teachers as peers. By spending time side by side with teachers in the classroom parents develop a strong sense of empathy for teachers. This was consistent in the literature where Shoji, Haskins, Rangel, & Sorensen (2014) found that having consistent responsive communication between schools and families could nurture trusting relationships. Multiple personal relationships were formed between parents and teachers, some of which extended beyond the school. Similar to the bonding relationships, these bridging relationships were defined by emotional support, trustworthiness, and the exchange of information and resources. While these relationships were positive, I questioned the need for the program to be more explicit about negotiating partnership and power in cases that involved unfair policies and practices.

My third sub-research question focused on how teachers viewed their relationships with parents: *What are teachers' perceptions of how their relationship with parents change*

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during their participation in the program? While parents described mostly positive

relationships with teachers, teachers described mixed feedback about their parent partner.

Some teachers recognized the cultural capital of parents and the unique benefits they

brought to the classroom. This finding provides a missing perspective in the literature that

can provide examples of teachers identifying the cultural capital of parents and as leaders

in the school community. Other teachers described their parent partner relationship as

unreliable and preferred the more traditional parent and teacher role. I found that while

parents develop a strong sense of empathy for teachers, teachers didn't always reciprocate

the same empathy for parents. In some cases, the logistics of the classroom partnership

fueled teachers' distrust of parents.

My final sub-research question looked at how the bonding and bridging social

networks interacted with each other: *In what ways do social networks interact with the*

recognition of cultural capital? The literature states clear benefits to bonding social capital,

yet excessive in-group bonding can lead towards outward animosity and further increase a

divide between two groups. While the strong bonds created among parents provided a

network of support, it may have created a further divide between parents and teachers

without an intentional partnership in the classroom. This idea is also rooted in the family

engagement literature that overwhelming states schools have deficit-based attitudes

towards low-income families. With this in mind, developing a network of parents without

an opportunity for parents and teachers to partner in the classroom may have further

perpetuated these attitudes. Additionally, due to the deficit-based attitudes schools often

take on low-income families, if parents were only paired with teachers in the classroom

without the development of a supportive network of other parents, they could have

developed a sense of frustration and lack of support. Due to the limited amount of data

collected from teachers, I focused less on how teachers recognized the cultural capital of

parents and more on how parents used their relationships for identity, action and power.

I found that parents were able to simultaneously leverage their bonding networks

and bridging networks as effective outreach to other parents. Bourdieu (1986) describes

social capital as membership in a group and the benefits that accrue. Parents developed a

strong sense of group membership and felt their association with the group gave them a

sense of ownership and power in the school. Parents were able to use their bonded social

capital and group membership, combined with their bridging social capital and empathy

for teachers to feel like they had a reason to reach out and recruit parents to a school they

respected. The literature references the potential for the interaction between bonding and

bridging networks (Putnam, 2000) but rarely describes empirical evidence. While parents

developed empathy and mostly positive relationships with teachers, they were still able to

identify with the experience of other parents and act as a positive bridge between the

school and community without taking on a deficit perspective of families common among

urban educators.

Additionally, I found that parents were able use their bonding network as a tool for

collective action and empowerment. Parents provide multiple examples of their voice being

ignored prior to the program compared to having a strong network of parents that can act

together. This was confirmed in the literature that found parents were more successful

when they approached staff with a concern as a group as opposed to an individual

(Noguera, 2001; Horvat et al., 2003). Parents learned organizing strategies that they put

into action to change school policies around an issue they felt was significant. Parents were

able to gain recognition of their cultural capital by creating a base of parents that could back each other up, act collectively and make their voice heard. Bourdieu (1992) often discusses the systems of capital reproduction but only briefly mentions devaluing the dominant capital and legitimizing one's own capital as a way to break cycles of reproduction. Through bonding social capital, parents were able to disrupt the capital recognition process and gain power in the school community. Some parents described using their network of parents to approach staff collectively when an issue arose while other parents felt that their relationship with teachers allowed them to voice their concerns and be heard. Throughout the program, participating parents started to take a greater role in decision-making bodies at the school and advocate for their voices to be heard.

Limitations

While I discovered many potentially important findings in my research, the limitations of this research must be considered. The majority of the interviews conducted were with parents, therefore a limitation in the data is that while it attempts to understand relationships between parents and teachers, it leans more heavily on the parents' perspective of this relationship. Additionally, as a case study the amount of data collected was limited. This case study included a small group of parents and teachers at one school whose self-selection to participate in a program already displayed some sort of positive connection to school. Also, studying a program in its first year of implementation provides the opportunity to engage with teachers and parents undergoing a brand new experience, yet it was difficult to analyze the impact and limitations of such a new and evolving program.

Finally, as a supportive organizer of the initiative, my ability to be objective was consistently challenged. As an organizer I hoped to see positive results from the program and this hindered by objectivity as a researcher. This was evidenced through the multiple iterations of my findings section, though with the support from my committee each became more nuanced and objective.

Recommendations for Further Research

While this research provides a new lens to understand the intersection of bonding social capital, bridging social capital and family engagement, it also raised many more questions. I hope that this research can encourage new and powerful ideas related to transformational parent engagement.

While I present the new idea of bridging as a barrier to bonding social capital, further research could be conducted on the sequencing of bonding and bridging. I found that the two parents that had previously bridged social capital with teachers weren't able to bond social capital with parents, yet the parents who bonded social capital seemed to also bridge relationships with teachers. Further research could be conducted on if it matters if bonding or bridging happens first and what are the barriers and benefits to each sequence.

I found that parents identified with teachers, were able see past their preconceptions and develop empathetic relationships. I also found that some teachers struggled to develop the same empathy for parents. There isn't enough data to further analyze the expectations teachers had for the partnership or to provide a connection between the frustrations teachers expressed and the misrecognition of the parents' cultural capital. Further research could be conducted to understand the capacity of empathy in

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parent-teacher relationships and how this interacts with Bourdieu's (1986) notion of institutional cultural capital within the school setting. Additionally, this body of work could benefit from further research on the potential challenges of empathy in programs that build both power and partnership.

Participating parents developed a strong network of support and relationships that extended beyond the school walls. For parents without previous volunteer experience it was beneficial to develop a network of other parents who provided support and guidance during this new experience. Further research could be conducted on how parent-to-parent support networks encourage family engagement and power building in schools. Further, understanding parents as bridge to other parents wasn't an initial intention in this research but became a key function of participating parents. Further research could be conducted on parent leaders as bridges through a more expansive methodology that includes interviewing non-participating parents.

This research recommends that schools or community-based organizations that want to bridge relationships between school staff and families, particularly in schools without a strong history of parental involvement, may benefit from strategies that connect parents with each other as well as develop opportunities for intentional classroom partnerships between teacher and parents. This combination of bonding and bridging social capital may provide opportunities for parents to act with power in the school. While a clear limitation of this recommendation is the amount of time and resources required, there may be opportunities for schools to pursue these strategies in a less intensive setting to accommodate working parents with limited time.

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