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Pepperdine University

Graduate School of Education and Psychology

PARENT ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZING WITH LATINOS:

A QUALITATIVE GROUNDED THEORY STUDY OF AN URBAN COMMUNITY

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Christopher B. Arellano

March, 2017

Reyna Garcia Ramos, Ph.D., – Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

Christopher B. Arellano

under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother,

Teodora (Joy) Romero Stokes,

for her love and support and for instilling in me the belief to dream big and that one can

accomplish anything they desire with hard work and tenacity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

VITA

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ABSTRACT

This explored parent engagement and community organizing in a Southern California community. The purpose of this exploration was to examine participants' awareness of how community engagement and school committees affect Latino students in urban schools. Latino students in urban high schools with highly involved parents are more likely to achieve academic success and retention over the long term. This grounded theory methodological study examined participation and engagement, as well as what resources or changes could lead to further engagement. The focus group interviews took place in which community members participated in an open-ended interview. Twenty-six participants contributed to the data over the 2 focus groups. Eleven participants identified themselves as parents and 14 identified themselves as community members. A 3rd focus group was conducted for a member check, to present the themes to participants, and to ask for additional input. The final selective coding categories were time, policies and procedures, healthy schools, civic engagement, and gentrification. All participants felt bureaucracy and the school district's rules and regulations were a roadblock for parents and community members. Time was an important issue for parents and community members. Participants noted that they wanted a healthy environment where their kids would be encouraged, loved, and respected. Many of the participants spoke about the need for more civic engagement and empowerment. Participants also saw gentrification as disrupting the fabric of the existing community. Six conclusions emerged from the analysis of the focus groups and the final selective coding categories. The conclusions were as follows: a connection exists between parent engagement and community organizing, Latino parents and community want to be active in children's lives, school district rules and regulations can hinder parent and community engagement, parents want authentic communication and proper notice, community-based

organizations are not working together in the community, and gentrification is a concern for community residents.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Parent engagement is a critical element of student success, particularly for students of color. Research has shown that parent engagement has a positive effect on a wide spectrum of student outcomes, including standardized achievement scores, social skills, and behavior (Delgado, 2000; Griffin & Steen, 2010; Weiss, Lopez, & Rosenberg, 2010). Federal and state budget cuts in education have left schools without many needed resources. Schools have had to eliminate librarians, counselors, psychologists, and teaching positions; as a result, the challenges facing schools have increased (Henderson et al., 2007; Mediratta, Shah, & McAlister, 2009). Latino students in urban areas with highly involved parents are more likely to achieve academic success and retention over the long term. Parent engagement has increasingly become a top priority in urban school districts across the country. In fulfilling their responsibilities under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, school district leaders have developed a significant number of parent engagement models to meet the diverse needs of parents and communities. Although the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 mandated that schools create channels for meaningful engagement and programs to build parent capacity, parent engagement is still lacking in many urban schools (Auerbach, 2010).

Educators, parents, and community members are looking for remedies and resources to help schools and students succeed. One successful remedy is parent engagement. Research has shown that when parents and community are involved in their local schools, students and schools fare better than when these conditions do not exist. Holcomb-McCoy noted, "Developing school-family-community partnerships has been shown to be an effective avenue that school personnel can take to mitigate these academic deficits that currently exist" (as cited in Griffin & Steen, 2010, p. 218).

In addition to parent engagement, community organizing is another opportunity to bring attention to urban areas in the United States to bring about school reform. Community organizing provides opportunities to connect parents with community members, to bring about community development, and to take action for better conditions in neighborhoods. Community organizing has been used to help communities build relationships, increase the power of historically marginalized communities, transform public institutions, and implement broad educational reforms (Mediratta et al., 2009; Rivera & Erlich, 1998; Warren & Mapp, 2011).

McKnight and Block (2010) noted the importance of having a relationship with schools and the larger community and indicated that when schools and communities work together, students have the ability to engage with the civic participants in the community. In the past, youth were more connected with their communities, which resulted in the transmission of valuable skills and traditions. McKnight and Block reported, "Where there is a thick community connection, both child development and school performance improve" (p. 21).

In poor urban communities, parents, teachers, and students are working together to find new ways to improve public education (Warren & Mapp, 2011). The current drop-out rate for students in California is 13.2%. The drop-out rates for African Americans and Latinos are 16.2% and 27.2%, respectively (Jones, 2013). Although there have been improvements, the drop-out rate for California is still higher than the national average of 7% (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2014).

Although many researchers have focused on students, Warren and Mapp (2011) looked at parents, community, and schools working together to help keep students in school and help them succeed (Warren & Mapp, 2011). Parent engagement and community organizing give parents more power to bring about change at their schools and in their community. This engagement has led to adults and young activists gaining new skills as they learn how to be advocates that will

help them as they become agents for creating quality schools and healthy neighborhoods (Oakes, Rogers, & Lipton, 2006).

Researchers at the Pew Research Center analyzed generational differences among Latinos in the United States by dividing Latinos into three groups: first generation (63%), second generation (19%), and third generation (17%). The three groups share many commonalities but also have distinct differences (Pew Research Center, 2004). The study indicated that the largest differences were between first-generation and second-generation Latinos. Nearly six in 10 (57%) first-generation Latinos reported annual household incomes of less than $30,000, compared to four in 10 (40%) second-generation Latinos. In terms of identity, 6% of first-generation Latinos reported using the term *American* to identify themselves, compared to 35% of second-generation Latinos (Pew Research Center, 2004). The report also indicated that second-generation Latinos "appear to be better off than their first-generation counterparts. Nearly twice as many second-generation Latinos report having been able to save money for the future as compared to first-generation Latinos (48% vs. 27%)" (Pew Research Center, 2004, p. 2). Lastly, the report concluded that although generational differences are important among Latinos, factors such as primary language also explained differences in attitudes. Hispanics comprise 22% of all children under the age of 18 in the United States. Fifty-two percent of the nation's 16 million Hispanic children are second generation, and nearly three in 10 children will be of Latino ancestry by 2025 (Fry & Passel, 2009).

These statistics show that although Latinos share many commonalities, there are distinct differences in generations, mostly regarding language, education, socioeconomic status, and attitudes. In this study, the researcher asked U.S.-born or U.S.-educated Latinos who had a K-6 education or above to participate in the study. The population could include first-generation

Latinos who had at least K-6 schooling in the United States and second- and third-generation Latinos living in the United States.

Latinos prefer to be called one ethnic label over another. Padilla (1995) found, "Among younger U.S. born, university educated individuals, the term Chicano(a) is preferred over Mexican-American or Hispanic. On the other hand, the self-designated ethnic label of Latino(a) is preferred by others of Mexican heritage or other Latin background" (p. xv). The term Hispanic is often looked at as more European and does not account for the indigenous heritage of people living in the United States (Valencia, 1991). In this study, the ethnic labels Chicano, Latino, and Hispanic were used when citing the literature, but the researcher used the term Latino.

Background and Recent History

Researchers have conducted several studies on parent and community engagement at schools, and there is a positive correlation between parent engagement at schools and higher academic successes with their students (Delgado, 2000; Griffin & Steen, 2010; Weiss et al., 2010). West-Burnham (2003) indicated that priorities have shifted and offered several reasons that parents and community are not as active in their children's lives:

- Most adults no longer consider it their responsibility to play a role in the lives of children outside their family.

- Parents are less available for their children because of demands outside the home. . . .

- Adults and institutions have become more uncomfortable articulating values. . . .

- Society has become more and more age segregated. . . .

- Socializing systems (e.g., families, schools, congregations, etc.) have become more isolated, competitive, and suspicious of each other. . . .

- As problems—and solutions—have become more complex, more of the responsibility for young people has been turned over to professionals. (p. 4)

Many ideas have been proposed as possible solutions, including eliminating ineffective teachers, developing better teacher evaluations, ending teacher seniority, lowering class sizes, increasing charter schools and school vouchers, and increasing standardized testing (Auerbach, 2010; Henderson et al., 2007). M. Johnson (2011) noted, "One model fix can't fix them all" (p. 4), as the best way to improve public education is through parent engagement.

Meaningfully engaging parents and community members in children's lives and in their community can lead to improvements in students' academic performance and can create social capital in their lives. Such change can be accomplished by people organizing in their community and by engaging parents to become more involved in their local high school and communities (Henderson et al., 2007).

In a study conducted with high-performing Hispanic schools, there were three successful key practices to consider when working with Hispanic families (Henderson et al., 2007):

1. Understanding cultural values. Hispanic families see their involvement as a way to support their children's well-being. Informal activities at home tend to be more important to Hispanic parents than meetings, workshops, and committees at school.

2. Building on the strength of the extended family. Parents like being treated as members of the school family. Hispanic mothers tend to view all children in their neighborhood as their own and often invite trusted teachers to family celebrations.

3. Making a personal commitment to learn about Hispanic culture. These schools invited families to share their cultural values, stories, and traditions with teachers and in class. They hired bilingual school staff, learned Spanish, and extended invitations to families in Spanish. They also set up a family center where families could meet and talk in their language. (p. 116)

Administrators, teachers, and school staff can help make Latino parents feel more welcome by using these three key practices. Administrators can obtain more information about the different cultures in their school by asking for this information from their local school district office and by having appropriate cultural activities at the school.

Statement of the Problem

Given the above context about the urgent need for parents to work alongside community members to affect urban high school students and their schools favorably, this study involved an attempt to understand what happens when parents and community members come together and organize. Research has shown that when these characteristics exist in the community, the outcomes are more favorable with the youth in urban high schools, which allows them to succeed as healthy citizens. Drop-out rates are particularly high across urban school districts in Southern California, and Latinos and African American students suffer the most. Henderson et al. (2007) found, "In predominantly black and Latino urban districts the high school graduation rates are well under 50 percent" (p. 7). This is why the scope of this research study was timely and appropriate.

Rumberger (1991) major categories influence dropouts' behavior: family background, schools, community, and personal characteristics.

Family background: A family with low socioeconomic status (SES) is three times higher than for families with higher SES. Students coming from a single-parent household are more likely to drop out than students who have both parents present.

Schools: Latinos and other minorities attend inner-city schools that are generally considered poor and have drop-out rates as high as 50%. Achievement levels in large and segregated schools, in general, are much lower than in other school settings and appear to be attributable to poorer school climate and more staff and discipline problems.

Community: Community can exert a powerful influence on student achievement and drop-out behavior. Males in general and Hispanics in particular are more likely to report that they left school for economic reasons. Survey studies have confirmed that higher education aspirations of peers are associated with lower drop-out rates. Dropouts may be more susceptible to the influence of peers than other students because they are more likely to have problems at home or at school.

Personal characteristics: Low educational aspirations, discipline problems, drug use, and teenage pregnancy are associated with increased rates of dropping out of school. Higher educational aspirations are associated with lower drop-out rates for all ethnic groups. Even Chicanos who differ in immigration status show no difference in educational aspirations. Hispanics and Chicanos are more likely to come from low SES families, which are families where children are more likely to drop out of school regardless of ethnicity (p. 73).

These factors are strong attributes that contribute to Latino students dropping out of high school. The social and economic ramifications of dropping out of high school are severe. Latino dropouts have a hard time finding employment, are underemployed, and have a higher rate of drug abuse and health problems (Rumberger, 1991).

Research has shown that parent and community engagement helps students do better in school, but research does not provide enough strategies to help teachers, parents, and community members succeed in helping the students. Teachers receive little training regarding ways to reach out to parents. Likewise, few models help parents be more involved (Hiatt-Michael, 2006; M. Johnson, 2011).

As African American and Latino students were expected to become the majority in the United States before 2017 (Henderson et al., 2007), it is important to examine all ways to ensure

traditionally marginalized students will succeed (Henderson et al., 2007). Students represent the future of the United States, but the country can only prosper with a healthy and educated civil society. Sending students to school and assuming they will learn everything they need to succeed is no longer sufficient. The community and healthy civic engagement are necessary to bring about the needed change (Warren & Mapp, 2011). Teachers, parents, and community members must be fully engaged in students' lives. This research examined what happens when parents and communities collaborate to develop strategies to address the issues facing local high schools and therefore to give high school students a sense of support as they move through their high school experience toward success. This dissertation research study examined the nexus between parent engagement and community organizing and the ways that both may support their local public high school.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this research study was to use a grounded theory methodological approach to understand if the efforts to organize a mostly Latino urban community would also support efforts to get parents engaged in their local urban high school. Thus, the goal of this research was to examine the steps and resources needed to help a community come together with a specific focus on members who were also parents of students at a local high school. Henderson et al. (2007) noted, "When schools, families and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer and like school more" (p. 2).

A grounded theory approach for this study involved examining existing theories and modifying them to include strategies that could support parents and community members becoming involved and engaging in local urban high schools in Southern California. A grounded theory design was the preferred methodological approach because the researcher was able to generate and develop new strategies that may lead to the engagement and involvement of

community members and parents for a common goal. For the purposes of this research, the community is assigned a pseudonym of Sierra Vista, and the high school and school district in this community has a pseudonym of Sierra Vista High School and Sierra Vista School District.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study were as follows:

1. What is the level of parent engagement at Sierra Vista High School?

2. What is the level of community organizing in Sierra Vista, California?

3. How does parent engagement contribute to the well-being of students at Sierra Vista High School?

4. How does community organizing contribute to the well-being of students in Sierra Vista, California?

5. How can a collaboration of parents and community members provide support to students at Sierra Vista High School?

Hypotheses

Students feel more connected and fare better academically in schools with active and continuous community and parent engagement. When a community and parents become active partners with local urban high schools, the schools are better able to help their students succeed and become productive citizens. The researcher examined connections between community organizing and parent engagement as a way to improve school success.

Significance of Topic

Successful parent and community engagement practices are effective in helping students do better in school (Delgado, 2000; Family Resource Centers, 2000; Gelsthorpe & West-Burnham, 2003). Useful strategies improve community and parent engagement processes in schools. Four studies involved looking at parent engagement and community organizing with

Latino urban parents (Fabricant, 2011; Mediratta et al., 2009; Oakes et al., 2006; Warren &

Mapp, 2011). The researcher investigated this relationship, and this study adds to the body of

research on parent engagement and community organizing.

Key Definitions

  Activism. Efforts to promote, impede, or direct social, political, economic, or

environmental change or stasis with the desire to make improvements in society and to correct

social injustice (Rivera & Erlich, 1998; Mediratta et al., 2009; Warren & Mapp, 2011).

  Chicano. Among younger U.S.-born, university-educated individuals, the term

Chicano(a) is preferred over Mexican American or Hispanic (Padilla, 1993, p. xv).

  Community organizing. Community organizing is the process of building power

through involving a constituency to identify shared problems and the solutions to those problems

that they desire by identifying the people and structures that can make those solutions possible

(Warren & Mapp, 2011).

  Latino. An individual living in the United States who is of Mexican, Puerto Rican,

Cuban, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin. May also be described

using the term Hispanic. There are generational differences with Latinos depending on their age

when they immigrated to the United States and their generational status in the United States

(Gaiton, 2004; Pew Research Center, 2004).

  Parent engagement. Leading with parents' self-interests in an effort to develop a

genuine partnership (Ferlazzo, 2009).

  Parent involvement. Title I Part A of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 defined

parent involvement as follows: "Parents play an active role in their child's learning and . . .

parents are actively involved in their child's education at school" (California Department of

Education, 1994, p. 2).

School, family, and community partnerships. The concept of partnerships recognizes that parents, educators, and others in the community share responsibility for students' learning and development (Epstein et al., 2009).

Urban areas. Densely developed residential, commercial, and other nonresidential areas (U.S. Census, 2012).

Urban parents of color. Latino or Hispanic and African American parents living in an urban center in Southern California (Henderson et al., 2007).

Key Assumptions and Limitations

The key assumptions for this study were that there are successful schools that have an active parent and community population. Another assumption was that community members would have a positive attitude toward the concept of being engaged and would welcome this type of research as an approach to foster student success.

A limitation of the study was that parents and community members did not volunteer for the study in larger numbers. Limitations also included the accessibility of parents and community members in the community of Sierra Vista. The study took place in a regional area of a larger urban city in Southern California and might not mirror other urban communities. Although the target sample was 40 participants that included 20 parents and 20 community members, the actual target was 29 participants that included eleven parents and fourteen community members.

Summary

This dissertation research study examined the nexus between parent engagement and community organizing and the ways it can support Latino urban parents and their local public high school. Through focus group interviews and an interview guide, the researcher learned what strategies can support parents and community members become involved and engage in local urban high schools in Southern California. Researchers have shown that parent and community

engagement positively affect and support students to do better in school and in life. In this study, the researcher explored what strategies will support parents and community members to become involved and engaged in the academic lives of students in an urban high school in Southern California.

When schools work with community-based organizations that help organize low-income Latino communities, research shows that it leads to more parent engagement and community empowerment. Because few researchers have examined the connection between parent engagement and community organizing in the context of secondary school, this study examined the cross-section of this topic.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review encompasses an investigation into the research around parents'
collaborating with their communities to produce more favorable outcomes with the youth in
urban secondary settings**.** Figure 1 is an illustration of the relationship between parents and their
community with a focus on engaging Latino urban parents. This chapter examines (a) parent
engagement, (b) urban Latino parents, and (c) community organizing. The figure demonstrates
the connection between parent engagement, Latino urban parents, and community organizing
and the possible impact the connection can have on students in an urban high school.
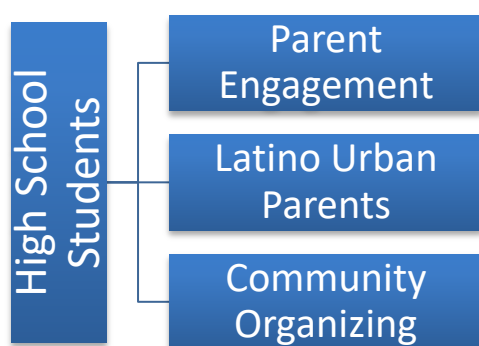
Figure 1. Study model that shows parent and community engagement as a collaborative effort.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework guiding this research proposal was linked to M. Johnson's
(2011) seven types of involvement and Mapp's (2010) family engagement capacity building
framework. Although Johnson's and Mapp's research on this topic used the terms *parent
involvement* and *parent engagement* synonymously, *engagement* was the preferred term in this
study because it denoted schools and parents collaborating to achieve the goal of improved
student performance. Furthermore, engagement provides a framework that allows families who

have traditionally been marginalized in traditional schooling to participate on their own terms. The group Parent U-Turn recasted Epstein's (2007) six types of involvement model and found additional ways to apply the theory that made it more applicable to urban parents of color. Johnson's and Mapp's frameworks informed the work in this dissertation study on the intersection of parent engagement, community organizing, and Latino urban parents.

M. Johnson (2011), who is with the organization Parent U-Turn, reported, "Since the majority of schools in urban communities are underperforming, one model fix can't fix all of them" (p. 1). They used Epstein's six principles as a guide and added one extra step (Step 1), it includes principles and practices that parents of color felt were necessary to help students succeed. The seven types of involvement are as follows:

1. Access to information and data collection: Parents need to have access to timely and accurate information regarding their child's education to best support their children's academic success.

2. Parents in decision-making roles: Parents provide leadership in schools by being at the table with teachers and administrators.

3. Parents as student advocates: Parents need to know how to navigate and negotiate the school system. Schools need to support the creation of an environment where parents have access to information and support systems to be effective advocates by monitoring and directing the education of the children.

4. Parent leaders at home and in the school community: Parents need opportunities to build leadership and advocacy skills to enhance student–parent–community partnerships. Schools will serve the family and community needs for health and social services and provide resources and information for accessing those services.

5. Effective two-way communication: Communication must be translated in the languages parents speak in their home. Parent liaison roles include helping keep the lines of communication open between school and home and helping to create effective home–school relationships.

6. District-level support: Structures are provided to build parent capacity that is well-defined, meaningful participation where dialogue, empowerment, and action are critical components of educational reform. This mid-level structure will be fully funded and led by parent councils.

7. Friendly school atmosphere: Schools should post signs throughout the school in many languages. The staff at each school will provide mandatory customer service every year for the entire school. Parents will be asked to fill out a survey on services rendered.

M. Johnson (2011) noted, "This is the first time parents of urban students have written a document on engaging parents as equal partners in education with the goal of improving student achievement" (p. 1). The Parent U Turn model gives urban parents of color specific resources to engage with their school community successfully. Schools can use these models to find new ways to collaborate with urban parents of Color.

Additionally, Mapp (2010) adds to the theoretical framework by indicating that change is inevitable in order to move forward. According to Mapp, "When programs and initiatives focus on building trusting and respectful relationships among school staff, families, and community members, these programs are effective in creating and sustaining meaningful partnerships" (Mapp, 2010, "The keys to building," para. 1).

Mapp (2010) believes that in order to move forward--we need to change our paradigm of the way schools interact with parents and community. She explains that we have to move

forward in the way that we approach and implement parent engagement strategies. She describes the old paradigm as individual responsibility, deficit-based/adversarial, random acts, add-on, events driven, and compliance. To have more meaningful relationships with parents, we have to find new ways to have relationships, such as the new paradigm: Shared responsibility, strength-based and collaborative, systematic, integrated, learning outcomes driven, ownership and continuous improvement and sustained.

When parents and staff work together to support student learning, the research shows that students earn higher grades, enroll in higher level programs, are promoted more and earn more credits, adapt better to school and attend regularly, have better social skills and behavior, and graduate and go on to higher education (Mapp, 2010). Parent and community engagement creates a difference in the ways schools address students (Epstein, 2007; Mapp, 2010). Mapp's, and Johnson's theories are used in this research study because both theories involve changing the paradigm and getting parents, school staff, and community members engaged in the lives of students. Both researchers give practical frameworks on how to implement their theories. The frameworks of Johnson and Mapp inform the work under investigation on the intersection between parent engagement, community organizing, and Latino urban parents.

Historical Background of Parent Engagement

Thomas Jefferson is quoted as saying, "America's citizens require basic skills in order to function in a democratic society. These skills include reading, writing, and rhetoric" (as cited in Hiatt-Michael, 1994). The first schools established in the early colonial years of the United States were developed by religious leaders, and the schools represented the religious beliefs of the community. By 1860, the development of a national public school system had begun under the leadership of Horace Mann (Hiatt-Michael, 1994). In 1897, a group of concerned mothers formed a group called the National Congress of Mothers that held meetings with the school

teachers and signed petitions to voice their concern to principals. The National Congress of Mothers formed the foundation to the Parent Teacher Association.

In the 1960s, the U.S. government began implementing policies aimed at helping students succeed and parents become engaged. The first federally funded educational legislation in the United States was the Head Start program in 1964. This program was aimed at helping low-income disadvantaged children in urban cities (Hiatt-Michael, 1994). In addition, "the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 required that parents serve on school advisory boards and participate in classroom activities" (Hiatt-Michael, 1994, p. 255). In the 1990s, parent engagement increased in U.S. schools. Warren and Mapp (2011) noted, "In low-income communities across the country, parents, young people and educators are finding new ways to work together to improve quality and address equity in public education" (p. 3).

Research has shown that when parents and communities become involved in their local schools, students' performance improves (Delgado, 2000; Griffin & Steen, 2010; Weiss et al., 2010). Holcomb-McCoy indicated, "Developing school-family-community partnerships has shown to be an effective avenue that school personnel can take to mitigate these academic deficits that currently exist" (as cited in Griffin & Steen, 2010, p. 218). Mapp (2010) contended that the relationship between parent engagement and student achievement affects populations across all economic, ethnic, and educational social settings and that parent and community engagement is an essential factor for success.

According to a policy brief developed by the California State Board of Education (1994), "Schools that undertake and support strong comprehensive parental involvement efforts are more likely to produce students who perform better" (p. 1). The policy brief established seven important factors:

1. Families provide the primary educational environment.

2. Parent involvement in their children's education improves student achievement.

3. Parent involvement is most effective when it is comprehensive, supportive, long lasting and well planned.

4. The benefits of parent involvement are not limited to early childhood or the elementary level; there are continuing positive effects through high school.

5. Involving parents is supporting their children's education at home is not enough. To ensure the quality of schools as institutions serving the community, parents must be involved at all levels of the schools.

6. Children from low-income and culturally and racially diverse families have the most to gain when schools involve parents. The extent of parent involvement in a child's education is more important to the student success than family income or education.

7. We cannot look at the school and the home in isolation from one another; families and schools need to collaborate to help children adjust to the world of school. This is particularly critical for children from families with different cultural and language backgrounds. (California Department of Education, 1994, p. 1)

These seven factors serve as an outline on how to engage parents in meaningful and productive ways and as a result impact student's productivity. Henderson et al. (2007) noted, "Students whose families are involved in their learning earn better grades, enroll in higher-level programs, have higher graduation rates, and are more likely to enroll in postsecondary education" (p. 2).

In 2013, the U.S. Department of Education commissioned a strategic plan to outline parent and community framework for action entitled *Family Engagement Capacity Building Framework*. The plan requires a systematic implementation of techniques expected to increase parent and community engagement. Specifically, this plan embodies a challenge of policies and initiatives that encompasses conditions for success and outcomes. Due to the top level of

government involvement through the U.S. Department of Education, the plan was expected to be

executed effectively (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Some of the specific guidelines are outlined

below:

    a. Linked to Learning: Initiatives are aligned with school and district achievement goals,

        and connect families to the teaching and learning goals for the students.

    b. Relational: A major focus of the initiative is on building respectful and trusting

        relationships between home and school.

    c. Developmental: The initiatives focus on building intellectual, social, and human capital

        of stakeholders engaged in the program.

    d. Collective/Collaborative: Learning is conducted in group versus individual settings and is

        focused on building networks and learning communities.

    e. Interactive: Participants are given opportunities to test out and apply new skills. Skill

        mastery requires coaching and practice. (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013, p. 4)

The above framework was developed to give schools a guide and to utilize as a scaffolding tool

that would help create and sustain parent engagement. Mapp and Kuttner conducted this

comprehensive review of parent and community activities pertaining to interactions promoting

improvement in academic achievement among students. These policies are intended to facilitate

a *process* for principals and teachers and parents to collaborate together (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013).

In her monumental amount of research and field work with over 150 schools districts and 1,000

schools has created four components to parent engagement. They are as follows:

    1. Action team partnership

    2.   The six types of effective and sustainable involvement framework

    3. Actions plans that are linked to goals for student success

    4. Evaluation and ongoing improvement Epstein (2007)

Action Teams for Partnerships: Epstein (2007) describes the need for schools to create Action Teams for Partnerships where "teachers, administrators, parents, community partners and sometimes students serve as a committee or action team" (p. 19). These action teams create a plan of action for the school. The team is responsible for creating an improvement plan for the school, and creating connections between the school the community. The action team is responsible for creating a 1- to 3-year plan for the school that can be carried out by following Epstein's framework of six types of parental involvement. Epstein noted, "By writing a plan and implementing activities, the action team ensures that teachers will not be working alone to help students reach important results" (p. 19).

The six types of involvement that assist educators in creating a family–school partnership are parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. The theory includes six sample practices for parents to become more involved in their child's school life (Epstein, 2007). A description of the six types of involvement that Epstein recommended follows.

1. Parenting: Attending workshops to enhance parent knowledge concerning school curricula and how they can be useful innovators in their children educational development.

2. Communicating: Schools can implement a system of communication with parents that includes, but is not limited to, notices, memos, and other forms of information dissemination. Transmission of important information should follow a protocol.

3. Volunteering: Schools can design programs that facilitate parents' support. Volunteering in classrooms and parent centers could be beneficial to student involvement in community activities.

4. Learning at home: Home learning reflects the importance of parental support for children when they must complete assignments at home. According to Epstein (2007), "Homework means not only work done alone, but also interactive activities shared with others at home or in the community, linking schoolwork to real life" (p. 15).

5. Decision making: Parents as community members can serve on committees and councils to facilitate cooperation in the execution of programs. Parents who participate in these forums have the privilege of contributing toward designing school policies (Epstein, 2007). Parents and community members also get to know one another and share their experiences.

6. Collaborating with the community: Epstein (2007) made a significant link between parents and community involvement. The community can become involved by offering schools opportunities to participate in community activities. Subsequently, schools and the community collaborate in designing projects related to health, culture, recreation, and social support (Epstein, 2007).

Action plans that link goals for student success: This step requires a written plan developed by teachers and parents that will help students succeed. The plan must include specific goals for student learning and development.

Evaluation and ongoing improvement: School action plans and progress should be evaluated to see what is working and what needs to be improved. The evaluation should indicate what has been accomplished, what needs are not being addressed, and what methods the school can implement to improve school–community connections. Epstein (1995) noted, "It is important for educators, families, students, and the community to be aware of the progress it has made" (p. 711). Only through evaluations and a careful review of outcomes can schools monitor how the

programs are working. Epstein's four key components give teachers and administrators the tools and knowledge for that are essential for successful parent engagement.

Current Trends in Parent Engagement

Although the previous section provided some context for the work in this area, the current research about parent engagement has shifted since the 1980s (Hiatt-Michael, 1994). Auerbach (2010) contended that school systems and educational leaders ought to find ways that will make schools more accessible, open, and friendly to parents by allowing them to feel appreciated at the schools where they wish to contribute. Auerbach further emphasized that creating a parent-friendly environment would create more involvement by teachers and administrators. School Site Councils which is a policy-making body within the school system that implements programs and policies at the school site, is seen as a way in which parents and school personnel could collaborate on goals for schools. These programs and policies were developed to help improve parent engagement in schools and support parents' understanding of their children's progress. Shatkin and Gershberg (2007) noted that School Site Councils "also create a virtuous circle of improved school-community relations and community development" (p. 584). School Site councils can have a positive effect on parent and community engagement and community development (Shatkin & Gershberg, 2007). Because this is a federal mandate SSC's have promoted a parent presence in schools, and in this way minimally engaged parents (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

According to Henderson et al. (2007), teachers and educational leaders see a marked difference when the educational community, families, and community groups work together to support learning. In their research on family and community engagement, Henderson et al. found that children tend to do better in school, and stay in school longer, when there is family involvement at the school. Through the use of school councils or parent centers, schools can

develop a plan of action that will allow them to increase communication with all stakeholders (Henderson et al., 2007).

In their book, Beyond the Bake Sale, Henderson et al. (2007) delved into the many aspects of parent engagement and how to build effective family-school partnerships. Henderson et al. (2007) listed relevant ideas applicable to family–school partnerships. These resources equip teachers, parents, community members, and administrators with relevant skills in developing meaningful parent and community engagement. The ideas listed were as follows: community-focused programs; community organizing; current developments and news; government sources; key national networks; parent, teacher, and administrator associations; parent training and professional development; special needs information; system-wide reform; and tool kits and guidebooks as valuable applications. Henderson et al., (2007) assert "Positive results are not automatic. They are more likely to be achieved when schools, family, and community partnership programs are well planned and carefully executed" (p. 3). The authors conclude by offering a step by step guide with resources that can be adapted by schools that want to achieve effective family-school partnerships. Although there are many plans for effective parent engagement, Henderson et al, (2007) have outlined steps to begin this process.

Otterbourg (2001) advanced some specific goals for achieving maximum family involvement in education. Mutual responsibility at home, school, and throughout the community emerged as a factor that increases access to training and information. Effective, regular two-way communication between families and communities improved attendance and homework completion. Establishing cohesive partnerships between parents and communities facilitates before- and after-school learning (Otterbourg, 2001).

Molina (2013) discussed the need to develop more connections between parents and community. Molina noted that educators need to examine communities from a lens of strength

and not as a weakness. In training the next generation of educators, Molina suggested educators should incorporate parents and community programs into the curriculum, including field and course work for teacher candidates that help them prepare for working with parents as support providers in classrooms. The U.S. Department of Education instituted a program called Public School Choice that included a strategy toward improving parent and community engagement by giving them more choices at school sites (U.S. Department of Education: A Blueprint for reform., 2010). Under Public School Choice (PSC), schools can request and implement policies to empower parents and community members to be more engaged at schools. PSC schools "must carry out activities that provide students, parents and the community with information about how to identify, evaluate, and access high quality educational options" (U.S. Department of Education, 2010, p. 38). There are over 90 successful PSC schools operating in Southern California and have been able to incorporate parent and community engagement in their school plan. Parents can be encouraged toward political sensitization in their community-organizing strategies. Most adults no longer consider it their responsibility to play a role in the lives of children outside the family. Parent and community engagement must be reinforced and emphasized in the parent–community partnership (Auerbach, 2010; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Auerbach asserts that parent engagement can be reinforced by administrators developing community organizing programs that aim at getting parents involved at the school. This has been successfully accomplished with the Alliance Schools Principals Training with the Industrial Areas foundation (Auerbach, 2010).

Griffin and Steen (2010) noted, "Schools no longer feel connected to the community" (p. 218), which is why the community feels isolated from the schools and parents do not feel welcomed. Increasing the types of parent and community involvement, including parenting,

communicating, volunteering, learning, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating, can alleviate the feeling of disconnection (Griffin & Steen, 2010).

Research has shown that parent involvement, especially by fathers, dramatically increases students' participation in school as well as in community activities (O'Donnell, Kirkner, & Meyer-Adams, 2008). Hiatt-Michael (2006) confirmed this assumption through four recommendations for increasing parent and community involvement. The first two recommendations focus explicitly on incorporating family–community involvement knowledge, skills, and values into preservice teacher licensing programs. The third recommendation relates to researching the effects of family characteristics on students' educational outcomes. The fourth recommendation was to encourage research pertaining to the impact of community organizations on student performance (Hiatt-Michael, 2006). The research literature has shown that parent engagement strategies can be implemented at schools and in communities in many ways. These features summarize the review of literature pertaining to parent engagement to enhance student outcomes (Henderson et al., 2007). The next section includes the theoretical frameworks that will serve as a guide to parent engagement and is believed that they can also aide the community in establishing this connection to the local school as well.

Latino Urban Parents

The U.S. Census defines urban areas as "densely developed residential, commercial and other nonresidential uses, this accounts for 80.7 percent of the U.S. population" (U.S. Census, 2016, para 2). Urban centers in the United States increased by 12.1% from 2000 to 2010, which is outpacing the nation's overall growth. In Southern California, Los Angeles–Long Beach–Anaheim is the most densely populated urban areas (U.S. Census, 2016).

Latinos make up 38.6% of the population in California and 17.4% in the United States, and African Americans make up 6.5% of the population in California and 13.2% in the United

States (U.S. Census, 2016). Statistics from the U.S. Department of Education revealed that the drop-out rates for students are estimated at 7.4% overall but 5.1% for Whites, 8.0% for African Americans, 15.1% for Hispanics, 4.2% for Asian/Pacific Islanders, and 12.4% for American Indians (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014).

Castaneda (2006) writes that there are 3 subgroups that Latinos can be grouped into. They are the immigrant sub-group, the second generation sub-group, and the assimilated sub-group:

- The immigrant sub-group. Are all immigrants, and are born outside of the U.S and are labeled first-generation. They are overwhelmingly Spanish dominant. They share the same overall values about family, courtesy, pride festivity and world view.

- The second-generation group can be described as being born in the U.S., frequently limited bilinguals and they usually have low socio economic status. They face the internal issue that all children of immigrants have faced: the question of identity, where they belong, and where their loyalty lies. This group may never assimilate to the third group.

- The assimilated group. This group could be third-generation. This sub-group are well assimilated, the majority are English only speakers, and primarily middle class. Many are college graduates, have middle-income jobs and professions, and are mainstream in their values. (p. 4).

Although these three sub-groups share a Latino culture, Castaneda (2006) points out that "these groups are socio-culturally and linguistically different, as a whole that are largely maintain food preferences based on nation of origin as well as profound similarities based on religious traditions and strong family connections" (p. 4).

The educational attainment of Latinos varies depending on their generational status in the United States. The Hispanic Center analysis of the U.S. Census data finds that:

- 43% of first-generation Latino children, 21% of those in the second-generation and 55% in the third-generation or higher are not fluent in English.

- 47% of first generation Latino children have parents who have less than a high school education, compared with 40% of second-generation children and 16% of Latino children in the third generation or higher.

- 34% of first-generation Latino children live in poverty, compared with 26% of those in the second generation and 24% in the third generation or higher.

- 69% of first generation Latino children live in married-couple families, compared with 73% of second-generation children and just 52% in the third generation (Pew Research Center, 2004, p. 1).

The literature on generational differences of Latinos shows that depending on if a Latino is U.S. born or immigrated to the U.S. will have a different linguistic, educational and cultural experience. These experiences affect how Latinos navigate through their educational and adult lives.

Valencia (1991) stated that Chicanos "are prime examples of pupils affected by the pernicious ideologies, institutional mechanisms, and outcomes of educational inequality" (p. 3). Latino students also experience poorer academic performances and have higher rates of psychological distress when compared to their white peers. Romo and Falbo (1996) indicated, "The research literature on Hispanic educational inequality shows that the educational level of parents is clearly linked to the occupational outcomes of their children" (p. 14). In addition, Romo and Falbo found that Hispanic parents do value education, the parents they interviewed did their best to help their children in school, but also discovered that schools discourage Hispanic students from staying in school and graduating (Romo & Falbo, 1996, p. 14).

There is an underrepresentation of urban parents of Color in urban schools. Ackerman (2011) noted, "Urban schools can play a major role in transforming reality for urban parents by offering them parent-centered opportunities as a critical step" (para. 5). Schools and educational leaders can make schools more open and friendly to urban parents of color by providing them with positive experiences that motivate and enlighten them (Ackerman, 2011). Parent involvement is important for families of all ethnicities. Research has shown that European Americans and parents with a higher socioeconomic status have a higher amount of parent engagement than their Latino and African American counterparts (Bailey & Bradbury-Bailey, 2010; Hayes, 2011; Warren & Mapp, 2011).

Poverty. Poverty is also a major factor that contributes to how involved parents can be at schools and in the community. Students are also affected by poverty, as 45% of children born in the United States live in poverty (National Center for Children in Poverty, 2016). Poverty can affect families in many ways. In many of the homes of families with low socioeconomic status, the parents and caretakers often have more than one job to provide for their family, which affects their ability to be with their children and the amount of time that they have to spend with them at school. In addition to poverty, homelessness and affordable housing are a big concern for low-income families. Family patterns are also changing, as more children are living with grandparents and other family members. These factors affect parents' ability to be able to have meaningful engagement at the schools (Henderson et al., 2007).

Fabricant (2011) reported, "Across whole societies (not just among the poor) income inequality is related to an array of social problems, including poor health, more stress, higher crime and lower academic achievement" (p. 38). Fabricant also indicated a need for "local and national campaigns to advance a new agenda for public schooling" (p. 38). Bailey and Bradbury-Bailey (2010) noted,

Many low-income parents might not be involved because they feel intimidated by the

schools, cannot get past their own negative experience in schools, may not understand the

importance of being involved in their education, or find it hard to fit parent involvement

into an already overwhelming schedule. (p. 66)

In addition, parents of Color face unique challenges because of their family composition,

size, leadership, and employment schedules. Families are working more hours per week,

sometimes more than 100 hours a week (Hiatt-Michael, 2006). Guerra and Valverde (2008)

indicated, "Schools with populations that are mostly, if not entirely, composed of students of

Color are usually in need of more human capital than the state funding can provide" (p. 4).

Jeter-Twilley, Legum, and Norton, (2007) conducted a study that investigated the

socioeconomic status conditions that influence parents' involvement in community activities that

would improve their children's academic performance. Low socioeconomic factors significantly

related to parent involvement found that low socioeconomic status was a factor. School

alternatives such as nontraditional methods ought to be reviewed to initiate parent–community

involvement (Jeter-Twilley et al., 2007).

Hayes (2011) noted, "Schools need to make a concerted effort to reach out to parents

whom have been traditionally disengaged in the schooling process primarily due to their

background" (p. 164). Hayes indicated this can be done by providing training to school staff to

be culturally sensitive and use appropriate practices when working with all parents.

In many poor communities of Color, neighborhoods are looked at as being asset poor or

in a deficit mode (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). This outlook hurts the relationship between

the school, the parents, and the community. To improve this view, concerned community

members could perform asset mapping and community organizing to show schools the assets the

communities have and ways they can work together to build upon their strengths (Guerra &

Valverde, 2008; Kretzmann & McKnight 1993). It is possible for schools to change and be more inviting to parents and community members. When schools change their culture to adapt to the needs of the community, they can be successful in their work with parents and the community. By empowering parents through knowledge, education, and training, schools can look at training programs that help give parents and community members the opportunity to learn about schools and education (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Active parent volunteers can reach out to parents through parent centers. These types of activities have empowered parents and have given them the opportunity to get more involved. Some of these questions and more will be explored in this grounded theory research.

In a study of poor Latinos who attended Ivy League colleges, Ceballo (2004) found that Latinos have different parenting styles, they are not as comfortable in assisting their children at school as their European American counterparts, and some principals and teachers have negative stereotypes about poor Latino parents. Ceballo concluded by presenting the four common factors that facilitate Latinos' college-bound trajectories:

1. Parental commitment to the importance of education.

2. Parental support of adolescent autonomy.

3. Nonverbal parental expressions of support for educational goals.

4. The presence of faculty mentors in the students' lives (p. 183).

Ceballo's (2004) study shows Latino parents do have high expectations of their children, and that Latino parents encourage their children to do well by verbally encouraging and praising them. This study was important because it highlights the strength of Latino students from poor families, and that they can attain educational achievement with support from their parents and mentors.

McDermott and Rothenberg (2000) conducted a study on the perceptions of teachers and parents about family involvement in urban schools. They found "urban families are often marginalized from everyday school life by poverty, racism, language and cultural differences" (p. 2). McDermott and Rothenberg concluded their study by offering suggestions that would help teachers collaborate with urban parents of color.

1. Developing good communication skills.

2. Building good social relationships with parents.

3. Establishing teacher education programs that prepare new teachers to work effectively with parents.

4. Constructing strong, trusting relationships with families and children.

5. Transforming schools so they celebrate cultural and ethnic diversity throughout the school year (p. 11).

From their study, McDermott and Rothenberg (2000) found that it is important to create strong and trusting relationships with parents and that meaningful relationships between parents and teachers is imperative in building parent engagement in inner-city schools.
It is the responsibility of the educational community to develop and nurture the academic potential of all students, including African American and Latino students. Bailey and Bradbury-Bailey (2010) contended, "We need to understand the factors that affect parents, both positively and negatively, especially for African American parents" (p. 65).

Language barriers. English language learners (ELLs) and their parents face additional language barriers when communicating with their schools. Guerra and Valverde (2008) worked with Spanish-speaking parents and implemented special outreach strategies to communicate with them better. Ramirez (2003) found that "by providing professionals or volunteers to assist language minority families, many of the problems that do exist within the school-home

relationship may subside" (p. 105). Morales-Thomas (2015) found, "Schools that have a high percentage of ELLs have a hard time communicating with ELL parents. Many of the parents have low literacy skills in their native language and speak or read little English or no English at all" (p. 4). This makes it very difficult for parents to communicate effectively with the school staff.

One of the largest school districts in Southern California has a total of 640, 000 students of those 165,453 are ELL students for the 2015-2016 academic year (California Department of Education, 2015). In this district alone 30% of students are English learners, a challenge for students and parents alike as they navigate school systems (California Department of Education, 2015).

In many areas of cities that are predominantly Latino or African American, resources are scarce. These communities need more resources than are currently available (Guerra & Valverde, 2008). When professionals work with Spanish-speaking parents, offer them translation services, and try to speak to them in their language, they will be more successful with them. Educational leaders have seen students be more successful when their Latino parents have been active and involved at the school.

Community Organizing

What is community organizing? Community organizing has been used to help communities build relationships, increase the power of historically marginalized communities, transform public institutions, and implement broad educational reforms (Mediratta et al., 2009; Rivera & Erlich, 1998; Warren & Mapp, 2011). Community organizing began in the industrial era when employees worked with settlement houses in the 1800s and the labor of the Congress of Industrial Organizations. Community organizing theory "maintains that members of disenfranchised communities have enough self-interest to build neighborhood-based

organizations that can confront inequities that negatively affect neighborhood life" (Mediratta &

Smith, 2001, p. 1). Community organizing is being utilized in this study as way to connect

community members with parents in order to increase engagement at schools and in the

community.

Figure 2 shows the intersection between parent engagement and community organizing.

By working together, these two distinct populations can organize and develop policy ideas for

educational policy, school reform and community improvement.

PARENT
ENGAGEMENT

COMMUNITY
ORGANIZING

- EDUCATIONAL POLICY

- SCHOOL SUCCESS

- COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT
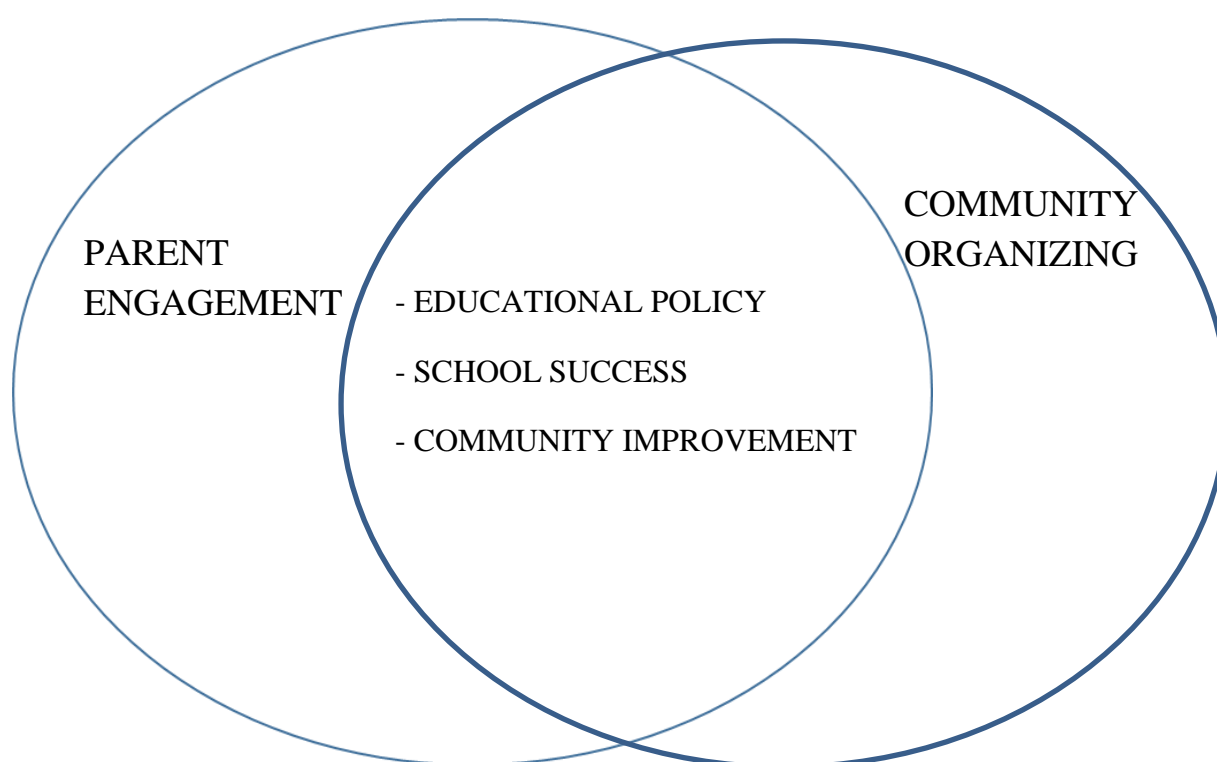
*Figure 2*. Intersection of parent engagement and community organizing.

Organizing means building relationships and power (Lindquist et al., 2008). Kretzmann

and McKnight (1993) noted that skilled community organizers recognize the importance of

relationship building. "Organizing groups . . . concentrate on building active participation and

leadership at the ground level" (p. 9).

Community organizers seek to

give a voice to the voiceless, build the participation of local people, increase the power of

historically marginalized communities, expand citizenship and democracy, address

profound inequalities of American society, and work to transform our public institutions

to make them responsive and accountable to poor and working families. (Rivera &

Erlich, 1998, p. 19)

As they organize, "people may collaborate with professional and policy advocates to lobby for

their issues and agenda, but the core work of organizing groups rests in building capacity of

community members to create institutional and policy change on their own behalf" (Warren &

Mapp, 2011, p. 7) Skerry described organizing as transferring "informal, primary groups

between friends and neighbors into the instrumental ties binding members of a formal

organization" (as cited in Rivera & Erlich, 1998, p. 59).

Warren and Mapp (2011) found that the various community-based organization's

engaging in organizing for education reform are able to bridge the common ties that parents,

youth, and community leaders have with educational leaders. This brings all the stakeholders

together to work toward the reform needed in their schools. Some community-based

organizations believe that the purpose of organizing is to empower parents as community

members to be more articulate in monitoring officials' behavior toward policy enforcement and

complying with shared objectives. Community organizations can bring needed resources into

low-income communities and public schools. These strategies facilitate parent–community

empowerment in the struggle for social justice and the reduction of structural inequality in the

United States. The process starts with listening and conversing between the organizers and the

families. This organizing process involves many stakeholders and requires broad participation.

The individuals then become public leaders in their community and powerful change agents

(Warren & Mapp, 2011).

How is it used? The organizing model that will be used as a framework in the study is called organizing for power (see Figure 3; Lindquist et al., 2008). The model has been commonly used in California to work with teachers, parents, and community members to organize around school and community issues. The organizing model will be used for the study because it serves as an organizing model that teachers, parents, and community members can use to organize around school and community issues. Lindquist et al. (2008) noted, "Through organizing, people band together and build power to achieve their mutual interests. Organizing can be extremely powerful tool for change" (p. 1).
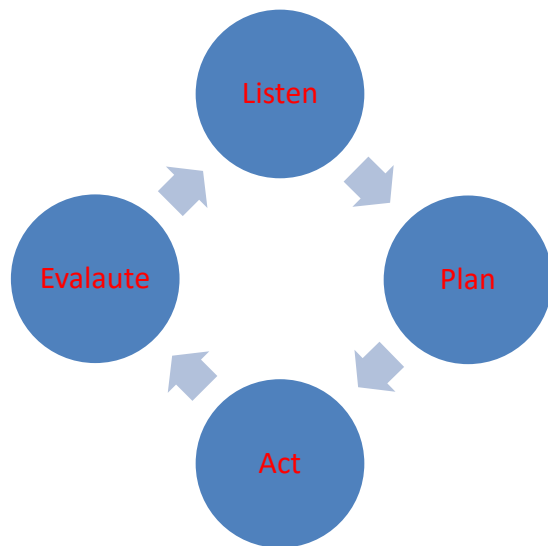
Figure 3. Organizing for power. The data in this figure are from *Organizing for Power* from R. Lindquist, J. Walquist, M. Horner, and J. Beck, 2008, paper presented at Organizing for Power, Austin, TX. Copyright 2008 by R. Lindquist, J. Walquist, M. Horner, and J. Beck.

The steps of the organizing for power model are listen, plan, act, and evaluate. The listen steps are as follows:

- Exchanging stories.
- Learn and develop the common story.
- Share values, interests, and desired futures.

- Organizers lead through directed active listening and sharing the person's story.

- One-on-one conversations.

- Provide feedback on the community members' interests.

- Build public relationships between parents and teachers.

   The plan steps are as follows:

- Identify the goals of the community members.

- Formulate measurable objectives.

- Develop strategies to achieve those objectives.

- Select tactics to implement the strategies.

   The act step is as follows:

- "With an organization purpose, 'our people' collectively focus on a particular issue by engaging a specific person [the target] to produce a desired reaction" (p. 3).

   The evaluate steps are as follows:

- Ongoing, consistent, and systematic assessment of union actions.

- Adaptation to ensure the strategies communities deploy and the tactics they employ actually produce progress.

By following these four steps, participants listen for what the issue is, plan a course of action, and act on stated actions to achieve their goals (Lindquist et al., 2008). Lastly, they evaluate how they did and decide what they could do better next time to achieve their stated goals. The organizing for power model is suitable for this study because it is a model that lends itself to a population that may not have had these types of experiences in the past. The organizing for power model is a resource that can be shared in communities that want to organize.

   Community organizing can help set the agenda for policy formulation for elected officials on the city, county, state and national level (see Table 1). This can be done be by listening to the

needs of the community, continue the organizing in the community, and further build support for their issue. The community can then lobby their elected officials for support on the issue. Peters (2007) noted that in the pluralistic approach to agenda setting, there is a "marketplace of ideas" (p.54) that allows different constituencies to lobby and/or demand for certain policy initiatives. Peters asserted, "Any and all interested groups, as a whole or within a particular public institution, should have the opportunity to influence the agenda" (p. 54). Community organizing can give ordinary citizens the knowledge and power to demand change by setting the agenda, creating policy, enacting the policy legislation and producing better public policy as a means to improve their community and public schools.

Table 1

Illustration Showing How Organizing Can Formulate Public Policy

Organizing for Power	Policy Procedures
Listen: what are the issues and problems? What are the solutions?	Agenda setting: What needs to be on the agenda, what problems need to be considered?
Plan: What laws are needed to change the problem?	Policy formulation: elected draft proposals.
Action: Meet with elected and lobby the legislature.	Legislation is passed by the governing body.
Evaluation: How did our organizing accomplish our goals?	How is the policy working? Is it effective and is it solving the problem? (Peters, 2007, p. 54)

Community organizing can give people tools to help improve their community and to have more resources. Rivera and Erlich (1998) asserted, "The different racial and cultural characteristics present in oppressed and disadvantaged communities represent an unprecedented challenge to 'community' organizers" (p. 8). Warren and Mapp (2011) contended that community organizing can be a powerful change-agent that will help communities build their capacity to bring about positive change. In addition, community-based organizations can help foster educational reform initiatives when working with parents and community. This is especially important when working with working class families and communities. Community-

based organizations can pay particular attention to parents who would like help in connecting with their child's school. They do this by having one-on-one conversations, sharing stories, and finding out what is important to them. The next step for the organizer is to take these issues and concerns and turn them into actionable items that they can organize around to bring about the desired change in the school (Warren & Mapp, 2011).

Mediratta et al. (2009) noted that community organizing can be used to help low-income people of Color fight for better schools and more resources for their children. Mediratta et al. conducted a comprehensive study and found that (a) community organizing increased district officials' responsiveness to low-income parents of Color; (b) once the organizing campaigns were in full swing, district allocations began to reflect the campaigns' call to preserve or expand equity; (c) over time, new district initiatives were increasingly consistent with the community groups' proposal.

Why explore it here? Community organizing has been used to strengthen and empower communities, improve neighborhood health, and improve school conditions (McKnight & Block, 2010; Oakes et al., 2006; Warren & Mapp, 2011) McKnight and Block (2010) found, "Where there is 'thick' community connections, both child development and school performance improve" (p. 20). Community organizing will be explored in this research to see if there is a nexus between parent engagement and community organizing with urban Latino parents. This research study will look at the community of Sierra Vista and ask if community organizing is happening, what is the current level of community organizing, and how community organizing affects parents' engagement at the secondary level. The researcher is investigating if a connection exists in the community with parent engagement and community organizing with Latino urban parents.

The practice of community organizing. Fellin (2001) noted,

Local schools are major community and neighborhood-based organizations that interact

with families and community organizations. . . . In keeping with our systems perspective

of local communities, the educational system in a community operates in a context of

interdependence with economic, political, and health and social welfare system . . . [and]

schools within the local educational system provide linkages between families and the

community at large. (p. 205)

Community building has been described as "the practice of building connections among

residents, and establishing positive patterns of individual and community behavior based on

mutual responsibility and ownership" (Mattessich & Monsey, 2008, p. 5). When communities

are working together as a cohesive group, they are better able to use their collective agency and

power to obtain more resources. In addition, schools can strengthen the network among

community organizations to expand services for students and their families. Health and human

services personnel working in the school system can help connect families to organizations that

provide social services. Using a bio-psycho-social model, schools and organizations can assess

and help families who are in need and help to alleviate deficient areas in their lives that are

hindering human and academic advancement (Delgado, 2000).

Delgado (2000) noted that community assessment is probably the most important phase

in any form of intervention. This is the initial phase in which practitioners are able to learn more

about a client or community. The elements that contribute to strong parent and community ties

are as follows:

- School efforts to reach out to parents to engage them directly in the processes of

  strengthening student learning.

- Teacher efforts to become knowledgeable about student culture and the local community and to draw on this awareness in their lessons.

- Hiatt-Michael (2006) noted, "Teachers in urban areas are more concerned that parents are not as involved in their education or responsive to their children's school-related challenges" (p. 11). She also indicated that beginning teachers face increased challenges in working with families of diverse cultures. Other studies have revealed, "Involvement of urban consumers (parents) may be highly dependent upon personal outreach efforts and relationship building" (O'Donnell et al., 2008, p. 158).

This work exemplifies the need for community, schools, and parents to organize to address the community needs.

Vogel, Goldring, and Smreker (2010) indicated, "School-community relationships have emerged as a principal focus on schooling" (p. 51). In their research, they looked at how schools are doing in relationship to students' health, neighborhood health, community assets, and crime data. Healthy neighborhoods have a mechanism for planning, priority setting, and problem solving. High-risk neighborhoods do not have these resources and are therefore affecting the educational outcomes of the students who live there. Further, their research showed that neighborhoods that have a high amount of community organizations and community assets will help in the production of social capital. This is essential for building and enhancing communication, trust, and a sense of community. Vogel et al. reported that some low-income or schools at risk should work with the community redevelopment efforts to develop the types of resources needed to help these communities and schools (p. 54).

Kegler et al. (2005) noted the following assets affect student outcomes: nonparental adult role models, peer role models, use of time (groups and sports), and use of time (religion and community involvement). They were interested in how neighborhoods and other environments

may influence youth assets. Sense of community, characterized belonging, influence, fulfillment of needs, and shared connections are related to self-reported general health, mental health, and well-being. In the final analysis, Kegler et al. found that environmental factors, in the form of safety, social control, institutions, and services, may have a role in the development of certain youth assets. These factors are essential in helping students do better in school.

Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) described asset-based community development. They indicated that "community development strategy starts with what is present (assets) in the community, the capabilities of its residents and workers. . . . [T]he strategy concentrates first upon the agenda building and problem-solving capabilities of local residents, local associations, and local institutions (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993, p. 9).

According to Mediratta, Fruchter, and Lewis (2002), community capacity enhancement will have a ripple effect. Organizing can take on many different faces in society. For example, people can organize around a common cause to bring about a social or organizational change. Parent and community organizing can take place in schools and in the community. These researchers discussed the methods, challenges, and successes of community groups organizing for school reform. These community-based organizations are working to improve their communities by building relationships, skills, and organizing power. The organizations are independent of the school and the school system (Mediratta et al., 2002). These groups are organized to help at-risk schools get the resources that they need to succeed. Mediratta et al. showed that community organizing can help bridge gaps between parents and community as well as the educational system (Mediratta et al., 2002).

Peterson et al. (2008) conducted a study on the effects of community organizations on citizens' sense of community. Sense of community is described as a sense of belonging to the group or the organization. They reviewed connections between people and the larger community.

The Community Organization Sense of Community (COSAC) framework that was applied consisted of concepts such as relationship to the organization; organization as a mediator; influence of the organization; and bond to the community. Peterson et al. concluded that sense of community was evident and important to the relationship with community organizations.

Warren and Mapp (2011) conducted a nationwide research project that included 15 Harvard graduate students. They located community-based organizations that were engaged in community organizing and expected to bring positive changes in the educational systems. They looked at how community organizing groups worked to bring students, families, and communities together. Their study included New York City, Chicago, the Mississippi Delta, Denver, Los Angeles, and San Jose, California. Concerns and ideas emerging from the research were as follows:

- The need to develop leadership training program.

- To address social justice issues, racism, poverty, and inequality

- To build powerful forms of family and community engagement in schools

- To address The disempowerment of low-income communities

- To build power in marginalized communities

- Community organizing involves doing the patient, long-term work to build capacity and leadership of people to create change in the community.

- People need the skills, knowledge, to bring residents together, to identify concerns, research those issues to develop an agenda for action, build alliances with other groups, negotiate with public officials, and collaborate with educators and other institutional agents to create change and implement new policies and practices.

The extensive research that Warren Mapp and conducted revealed that community organizing can be a powerful and effective endeavor to help parents, and students gain the skills

they need to overcome systematic barriers to achieving quality public education. In order to be successful in community organizing, more collaboration needs to happen between schools, parents and community-based organizations (Warren & Mapp, 2011).

Impact on parent engagement. This section of this literature examines how community organizing can work in tandem with efforts for parent engagement in local schools. The following work by Simon (2001) relies on Epstein's work (2007). Simon's work exemplifies how Epstein's foundational research continues to lay down the framework for current studies in this field, and demonstrates the relationship of parent engagement and community organizing.

Simon (2001) conducted a study with over 11,000 parents and 1,000 principles. They used Epstein's (2007) framework of six types of family and community engagement as a conceptual tool for the research study. The perceptions were as follows:

Parenting: They found that parents appreciate and participate in workshops on drug and alcohol abuse and college and financial planning.

Communicating: They found that staff and teachers rarely communicated with parents. They found two out of three were never contacted about their child's attendance. One third of the principals they asked said they did not use parent–teacher conferences.

Volunteering: They found that fewer parents participated in volunteering activities at the school. For volunteering to be successful, the school would need to implement a parent volunteer program.

Learning at home: Three parents out of four shared that school staff never contacted them concerning homework or school projects. Less than one fourth asked school staff about their child's homework and projects.

Decision making: Principals reported that their schools did not have a Parent Teacher Association and had very little parent input in school site issues. Allowing parents to be a part of

the decision-making body leads to increased input regarding how parents and community can assist in the schools. Not having this interaction can leave them feeling more distant from the schools.

Collaborating with the community: The study learned that local businesses had contacted schools to see if students were interested in employment with the company. Fewer than half of the principals stated that they did not have a community-service program. The study showed that when families participated in more school activities with their child, grades, course credits, attendance, behavior, and school preparedness were more positive. Collaborating with the community clearly had beneficial outcomes (Epstein, 2007).

Simon's (2001) study found that "when parents were involved in various ways, teenagers earned grades in English and math, completed more course credits had better attendance and behavior and came to class more prepared to learn" (p. 12). In addition, her study showed how instrumental school principals can be in finding new ways to engage parents. High school outreach practices can make a big difference on the type of parent involvement that exists at high schools.

Epstein (2007) strongly suggested that there is a missing link, and more college courses are necessary to teach future teachers the skills they need to reach out to parents and be able to have better parent and community engagement. The current model is that educators and principals expect the parent to contact the school when they have an issue. Epstein noted, "The missing link means that most educators enter elementary, middle, and high schools without the skills needed to communicate effectively with all students' families and without an expectation of working with others to develop school-based partnership programs" (p. 135). Thus, the importance of developing these skills in pre-service teacher programs.

Ziegler (2001) looked at what Pottstown High School in Pennsylvania did to help foster community engagement. The I'm Pottstown Action Community Team (I'MPACT) was cited as a useful example of a parent–community partnership. This group focused on cultivating relationships with parents and citizens to improve students' performance. I'MPACT consists of teachers, administrators, board directors, community members, teacher aides, and the school resource officer. I'MPACT has been successful in connecting parents, businesses, institutions of higher education, senior citizens, social services, community organizations, and law enforcement. These relationships have been essential in getting families and students connected with their local high school. Ziegler noted, "We educators cannot complete our educational mission as islands, schools are part of communities from which we can draw support so all students can achieve" (p. 70).

Impact on Latino urban parents. Arriaza (2004) contended that school reform initiatives have a better chance of being institutionalized when the community actively participates as an empowered agent. He also noted that the community can play an important and long-lasting role in school reform. In a study conducted in Salinas, California, concerning the plight of Mexican Americans students battling racism, Arriaza found that organized, empowered parents and students could help to gain the support of the school district. They won their fight in getting more resources for Mexican American educators and administrators within their school district. The entire community has something to offer and something to receive when working with students and schools.

In a study of Latino immigrant parents in a Northern California middle school, Jasis (2013) chronicled parents organizing at the local level in their struggle for equity and excellence in education. In particular, Jasis noted, "The factors that affect and mobilize parent activism among communities with lower socioeconomic and educational indicators necessarily involve an

examination of schooling in the context of social equality, poverty" (p. 114). Jasis indicated that "over time and through a committed effort, these families and their children increased their visibility in the school community, gained access to more challenging instruction and generally improved their school experiences" (p. 112).

Engagement at the High School Level

The research states that high schools seem to have less parental and community involvement than at other school levels. The researcher further contended that size, structure, and faculty orientation may be responsible for this difference (Sanders & Lewis, 2005). Sanders and Lewis (2005) conducted a study with three high schools that focused on (a) improving student academic success, (b) enhancing school quality, and (c) supporting community development. Specifically, they focused on community connections with high schools. Sanders and Lewis asked participants the following questions:

1. Why do high schools implement community partnerships programs?

2. When developing community partnership programs, what types of community partnerships and activities do high schools select (p. 2)?

Sanders and Lewis (2005) investigated three high schools exploring size and location variables. Although the schools varied in size and structure. reasons for desiring to establish partnerships were similar. Three desires were prominent: (a) improving student academic success, (b) enhancing school quality, and (c) supporting community development. The school principals expressed that parent and community support is one of the most important features in a student's success (Sanders & Lewis, 2005).

The authors also found that community development has been practiced in these schools; the school principals have set up programs where the students can volunteer at local neighborhood organizations. The students graduate from these high schools and colleges and

return to the neighborhood to give back to their community. These schools have partnered with local organizations and businesses, cultural institutions, volunteer organizations, and colleges and universities. They had student-focused programs that included scholarships, awards, tutoring, and job shadowing (Sanders & Lewis, 2005).

In addition, the schools held family-focused events that included family workshops and awards, as well as community-focused events that included community health fairs, cultural events, and other volunteer activities (Sanders & Lewis, 2005). Lastly, they offered the following guide to help schools that would like to implement more community involvement and development: prioritize process, permit time, and promote community ownership (Sanders & Lewis, 2005). Partnerships such as these show that there can be successful links between the schools and the community that have a positive effect on students.

Henderson et al. (2007) found that children do best if parents can play a variety of roles in their learning, such as volunteering at school, planning their children's future, and taking part in key decisions about school. Middle and high school students whose families remain involved in these ways make better transitions, maintain the quality of their work, develop realistic plans for the future, and are less likely to drop out. Children from diverse backgrounds tend to do better when families and school staff join forces to bridge the gap between home and school cultures and improved achievement (Henderson et al., 2007). Thus, parent engagement with Latino communities will improve communication between parents and schools, but will also change secondary students' long-term view about schools.

Programs and Resources That Foster Parent and Community Engagement

Parent centers. One of the goals of the educational community could be to establish a vibrant and active parent center at every school. Parent centers can serve as the hub of parent and community development. The community can have a working relationship with the school

principal and the local district director to ensure the success of the program. The California Department of Social Services is successful in its work with parent engagement and parent centers. The department offers core and comprehensive services described as the essential component for an effective parent center or community center (Family Resource Centers, 2000).

Core services are the basic services that centers should have to be effective, which are parent education, child development activities, resources and referrals, drop-in availability, peer-to-peer support, and life skills advocacy. Comprehensive services are case management, child abuse or neglect treatment, family health and wellness, family economics and self-sufficiency, family literacy and education support, substance abuse treatment, youth development, and community development activities. These resources have been very effective and beneficial to families (Family Resource Centers, 2000).

Project INSPIRE. The California Association of Bilingual Educators' (CABE's) Project INSPIRE's Parent Leadership Development Program was examined as an example of a model program for low-income parents of color. The program has four goals: (a) reducing the achievement gap for at risk youth; (b) developing parent knowledge, leadership skills, and educational engagement to raise achievement levels of their children; (c) increasing the capacity of schools and districts to maintain high-quality engagement and leadership programs focused on student achievement; and (d) developing parent leadership skills (Quezada, 2010). In the California Association of Bilingual Educators study, Quezada (2010) documented a positive and convincing relationship between parent engagement and improved academic achievement. Quezada noted that parents should be the primary teachers of their children, and they should be engaged at their schools. This type of engagement leads to a sense of community at the school site (Quezada, 2010).

Community centers. In a study of parent and community centers, V. Johnson (2000)

highlighted eight criteria for successful parent and community engagement, which are to

identify, initiate, function with purpose, participate in activities, design time by hours, organize

funding, provide adequate staffing and appropriateness of spacing. V. Johnson also referenced a

five-point plan: adult literacy, English as a second language, job skills, parent education, and

cultural awareness. When schools partner with community-based organizations, families are able

to get their basic needs met and parents are better able to help their children (Henderson et al.,

2007).

Further research and expert opinions tendered by Delgado (2000), Family Resource Centers,

2000; Gelsthorpe & West-Burnham, 2003) showed that parent and community workshops and

trainings are effective. Parents have benefited from classes on healthy cooking, financial

management, family health and fitness, and other areas of interest. Table 2 shows workshops that

have helped parents and community members become engaged (Family Resource Centers, 2000;

Gelsthorpe & West-Burnham, 2003).

Table 2

Workshops Shown to Be Effective

Positive strategies for parents	Domestic violence training	Technology tools and resources	Parental resilience	Health and safety & crisis intervention	Community organizing and development
Establishing personal goals and self-confidence	English as a second language classes for adults	Father engagement	Anger management	Social connections	Civic participation and engagement

Educational leader roles. According to Henderson et al. (2007), as the leaders of

schools, principals should educate themselves about the dynamic of parent and community

activism. The theory and actions of parental involvement should be explored. Principals should

find ways to alleviate the disconnect between parents and schools. The schools could look for

certain actions and initiatives that would increase parent participation and reduce distrust (Henderson et al., 2007). Henderson et al. found that some schools implemented programs aimed at increasing parent involvement. They started out with surveying how parents and community members felt regarding overall openness of the school environment. Needs of the families were identified, and openness seemed to be a matter of concern (Henderson et al., 2007).

Warren and Mapp (2011) have further emphasized that school principals ought to enforce adaptive and distributive leadership approaches to resolve issues or concerns through a democratic process. This approach allows the principal and staff to work together in solving school issues and discussing teaching practices. In addition, the approach builds trust and commitment between principals and school staff. A principal at an elementary school in Southern California asked staff to be honest and open about issues and concerns that teachers had. He conducted one-on-one conversations with the staff. His approach was to be open and honest and to understand the concerns of the teachers. After this, they would work together to solve the problem. This approach is collaborative and relational; the principal modeled authentic collaborative leadership approaches (Warren & Mapp, 2011).

Additionally, Henderson et al. (2007) noted that principals are school leaders and should design strategies to engage parents. This model requires extensive parent involvement and involves addressing issues such as social justice, democratic participation, and cultural responsiveness. Henderson et al. indicated this model will involve much more attention from the educational community, but indicated the investment is worthwhile.

Ziegler (2001) contended that principals can also play an important role in the community with the local businesses. School leaders can invite community leaders to speak at schools and invite them to career week. This helps students be able to broaden their horizon and think about future endeavors that might be of interest (Ziegler, 2001). Hiatt-Michael (2006)

recommended that researchers and teachers develop programs that will enhance parent and community involvement. Programs like this will help set the tone for new teachers to start teaching with the right attitude and be more open to working with parents (Hiatt-Michael, 2006). Establishing a preservice teaching program may address these important issues (Hiatt-Michael, 2006). One of the hypotheses of the proposed study is to investigate if a link exists between community organizing and community engagement.

Community schools. O'Donnell et al. (2008) contended, "Community schools are defined as a restructured academic programs that emphasize community involvement and provide for a wide array of services for the parents and the students" (p. 148). These schools work with the entire community to enhance student learning. Using a multipronged approach to community outreach would be beneficial in working with low-income and diverse families (O'Donnell et al., 2008).

O'Donnell et al. found that community schools have a unique way of approaching parent outreach. These schools know that outreach is important and look for strategies to get parents to the school. They participate in activities such as having welcoming school climate; bringing a friend to class; and personal, small group, face-to-face community outreach strategies (O'Donnell et al, 2008).

Hiatt-Michael (2006) found that community schools can have four important outcomes: student learning, family engagement, school effectiveness, and community vitality. In addition, community school collaboration encourages resource management within the school community. Groups such as businesses, faith-based institutions, social services, security agencies, cultural organizations, legal and health services, and institutions of higher education are valuable examples (Hiatt-Michael, 2006). Community schools could be a viable alternative in

communities whose population has veracious needs as the ones explored in this literature review which includes low socioeconomic status and language barriers among others.

Public libraries as a community-based resource. The educational community, parents, and community members can form a relationship with local libraries to help educate and teach participants to use library functions and Internet technology. The Los Angeles Public Library system provides many different types of training for students, parents, and community members. (Los Angeles Public Library, 2016). School staff can ask librarians to set up trainings for school groups. These trainings will help give the participants the tools they need to participate in a program and to be successful. Kranich (2005) described a new civic engagement that is under way that allows libraries to fulfill their traditional role of promoting civic literacy and ensuring an informed citizenry. Local libraries facilitate local dialogue, disseminate data, conduct public programs, and boost civic literacy by building lasting community partnerships. When libraries are able to accomplish their goals, they help build up the community and foster civic engagement. They believe that teachers have an important role to help rekindle civil society in schools. They can do this by incorporating civic engagement content into the curricula. By providing the local residents an open and inviting place to be together, libraries are helping to build social capital and encouraging civic engagement (Kranich, 2005).

Torrise (2010) found that librarians can play an instrumental role in the community to determine needs and then work to come up with organic solutions in the community. Torrise conducted a field study in which she was also a participant. She worked with a local high school on Chicago's west side. Community informatics is the study and practice (library science) of working within communities to identify community-based information and technology. The librarian's work is designed to go into the community and work with them to discover needs and solutions together (Torrise, 2010).

Weiss et al. (2010) found that some of these initiatives would include identifying critical resources, engaging disconnected youth through community-based learning, designing opportunities for inquiry-based learning, teaching 21st-century skills, and developing opportunities for authentic assessment. More important, community-based organizations can also play an important role in partnering with schools and families to support student learning. These organizations can connect families to resources that may be needed to help the family and the child, and they can serve as a valuable support system for the families and the community (Weiss et al., 2010).

Other researchers recommended that schools should collaborate with community-based nonprofit organizations to establish more coordinated services. These services include Head Start, nonemergency health care services, breakfast programs, and others (Vogel et al., 2010).

Five goals for parent engagement. The school district has a District Title I Parent Involvement Policy. The policy was developed by Title I parents and school district staff. The following are the five goals the school district instituted to follow and implement: provide a welcoming environment for families and invite them to participate as equal partners in the education of their children; provide parents opportunities to acquire necessary information; knowledge, and skills to support their children's education at home and at school; engage parents in the school's volunteer program so they can participate in supporting school-wide, classroom, and parent involvement activities; respond to parent concerns and/or complaints to ensure child's educational needs are met; and comply with all school district, State, and Federal requirements regarding parent involvement. Each of the goals has specific objectives.

Provide a welcoming environment for families and invite them to participate as equal partners in the education of their children. This goal ensures that all parents and community members feel welcomed at the school and feel that their participation is valuable.

Provide parents opportunities to acquire necessary information, knowledge, and skills to support their children's education at home and at school. This goal also has a specific step for developing a school Partnership Action Team (PAT). This goal would ensure that the school has a plan to implement outreach strategies to the parents and the community.

- A school Partnership Action Team (PAT) guides all efforts to implement an effective plan for family engagement, including the home- school compact
- Parent center staff and members of the PAT receive training and support to carry out their roles

Engage parents in the school's volunteer program so they can participate in supporting school-wide, classroom, and parent involvement activities. The major points of this goal are as follows:

- A staff person is designated to oversee the school volunteer program
- All parents are invited to join and participate in the school volunteer program
- Training is provided for volunteers based on their assignment and need
- Volunteer support teachers in the classroom as well as school-wide activities
- The school annually assesses the impact of the volunteer program on school operations, school climate, and student performance

Respond to parent concerns and/or complaints to ensure child's educational needs are met. This goal would allow the parents and volunteers a mechanism for making sure that their voices are heard. In the event that they have an issue or concern, they will be given the proper channel to voice their concern:

- Rights of parents and children are respected and communicated to promote trust
- Staff is respectful and informative in interactions with parents

Comply with all school district, state, and federal requirements regarding parent

involvement. It is important that parents and community members know their rights under the

law. By knowing the law, they can demand action from the school principal or the district. If the

district does not comply, parents and community members can file a Uniform Complaint (UCP).

Them the allegation is investigated by a compliance team with the school district:

- o School staff and parents know the requirements and mandates of the following:

- o NCLB, including Title I Policy and School-Parent Compact

- o CDE requirements for operation of SSCs and school-level advisory committees

- o School district parents as equal partners resolution and task force recommendations,
  including development of school action teams, partnerships for wrap around
  services in parent centers, and a plan for parent involvement

- o Parents/staff know their rights under the Uniform Complaint Procedure (UCP)

By following the five goals above, the majority of the issues that the parents and community

members had concerning the schools would be alleviated. In addition, the schools would have a

robust parent and volunteer program.

Table 3

Illustration Showing Programs and Resources That Foster Parent and Community Engagement

Program	Emphasis
Parent centers	Provides space and resources at schools for parents
Educational leader roles	Educational leaders set the pace and tone for parent engagement
Project INSPIRE	A model program for Parent Leadership Training
Community schools	A model school program that emphasizes parent and community engagement
Libraries as a community-based resource	Provides training for parents, student and community members
Five goals for parent engagement	A five goal plan to increase parent engagement

Summary

The exploration undertaken in this literature review examined the concept of parent engagement and community organizing in fostering better student outcomes within the context of urban communities. Although some content related to the various themes, there is still limited information pertaining to the specifics of parent engagement and community organizing regarding details of implementation and impact. More research pertaining to parent and community engagement at the secondary level needs to be conducted.

Student achievement and higher outcomes for students is the reason there is a push to see and encourage more parent and community involvement. Brooks (2010) noted,

> The elevation of family engagement as a key strategy for improving schools is grounded in two decades of research that have demonstrated benefits that are strongly correlated with effective family engagement—higher attendance rates, fewer discipline incidents, and improved achievement. (p. 160)

Students whose families are involved in their learning earn better grades, enroll in higher level programs, have higher graduation rates, and are more likely to enroll in postsecondary education (Henderson et al., 2007).

This literature review involved examining what happens when parents and community members are engaged in school activities, which is that student outcomes improve. Although the current literature in this area is beginning to differentiate between the concepts of involvement and engagement, researchers still need to frame the ideas within the context of urban communities that are unique in language, culture, and experiences.

Lastly, when schools work with community-based organizations that help organize low-income Latino communities, the research showed that it leads to more community empowerment and more parent and community engagement. As few studies have examined the connection

between community organizing and its impact on urban parents' engagement in secondary school, this study examined the cross-section of this topic. The following section includes the methodology selected for this dissertation study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Overview

This chapter is organized to explain the design of this dissertation research study as well as the methodology used to answer the research questions. In addition, this chapter sets the context of the study by describing the research site and its unique characteristics. This chapter also includes specific details about data sources, data collection, and data analysis. This qualitative dissertation study was based on a grounded theory design. The grounded theory study was supported using focus groups interviews and an interview guide to collect data. The study was set in an urban community in Southern California. For the purposes of this research, the community is assigned a pseudonym of Sierra Vista, and the high school and school district in this community has a pseudonym of Sierra Vista High School and Sierra Vista School District.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this dissertation research study was to use a grounded theory methodological approach to understand whether the efforts to organize a mostly Latino urban community would also support efforts to get parents engaged in their local urban high school. Thus, the goal of this research was to examine the steps and resources needed to help a community come together with a specific focus on the members who were also parents of students at the local high school. The following were the research questions for this study:

Research Questions

The research questions for this study were as follows:

1. What is the level of parent engagement at Sierra Vista High School?

2. What is the level of community organizing in Sierra Vista, California?

3. How does parent engagement contribute to the well-being of students at Sierra Vista High School?

4. How does community organizing contribute to the well-being of students in Sierra Vista, California?

5. How can a collaboration of parents and community members provide support to students at Sierra Vista High School?

Research Approach and Design

This study included a grounded theory research design. According to Creswell (2007), "Qualitative research is an inquiry process for understanding . . . [in which] the researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants and conducts the study in a natural setting" (p. 15). In the qualitative grounded theory study, the goal was to understand the current level of parent engagement and community organizing in Sierra Vista. In addition, the researcher investigated what strategies parents and community members might use to affect their local high school positively.

Grounded theory methods consist of "systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting data and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories form the data themselves" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 1). Researchers use grounded theory to collect rich data through interviews, one-on-one conversations, and questionnaires. In addition, researchers can return to the data at any time to reexamine the documents and data collected throughout the study. Qualitative researchers have an advantage over their quantitative colleagues, as qualitative researchers can "add new pieces to the research puzzle or conjure entire new puzzles while we gather data, and that can even occur late in the analysis" (p. 25).

The grounded theory qualitative method used in this dissertation research study included the following aspects (Creswell, 2007, p. 63):

- Focusing on a *process* or an *action* that has distinct steps or phases that occur over time.

- Searching to develop a *theory* of this process or action.

- *Memoing* as part of the development of a theory.

- Using questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups as the primary forms of data collection.

- Structuring and presenting *data analysis* as a diagram, as propositions or hypotheses, or as a discussion.

- Collecting data from a sample consisting of one community in Southern California.

- Coding interviews and observations from notes and documents during data collection.

McKenna and Millan (2013) conducted a grounded theory study with a sample of parents involved in a local parent group. They wanted to understand parent engagement through detailed descriptions of conversations and writing by participants in focus groups and interviews. With the data, they presented new models of parent voice and presence. Data analysis was an ongoing process throughout McKenna and Millan's study, and they used the qualitative grounded theory model to hypothesize new models of parent voice and presence and their impact on the parent involvement landscape.

Ball and Nicolle (2015) used a grounded theory study to avoid preconceived frameworks of categories and properties in their data. They felt that by using a grounded theory design, they could get the data firsthand from the participants, and they wanted the interviewees to be able to speak openly and freely during the interviews. Ball and Nicolle noted, "Categories and their properties are derived directly from the data" (p. 292).

The researcher conducted a grounded theory research because this allowed him to hear what the participants were experiencing. In addition, the open-ended questions in the interview guide allowed for follow-up questions that were clarified in the focus groups. Creswell (2007) reported, "Grounded theory is a qualitative research design in which theory should be 'grounded' in data from the field, especially in the actions, interactions, and social processes of people" (p.

63). Thus, a grounded theory approach in this study allowed the researcher to gather valuable firsthand knowledge from participants through focus groups.

Research Site

The population for this study was parents and community members who lived within the target area of Sierra Vista High School. The school community of Sierra Vista is in Southern California. Sierra Vista is one of the oldest suburbs in this area of Southern California. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, there were 26,616 persons living in a 2.51-square-mile neighborhood. The median income in 2008 was $30,579, which is low for the area. Renters occupied 75.9% of the housing stock (U.S. Census, 2016).

The neighborhood is not especially diverse ethnically within this area of Southern California and had a relatively high percentage of both Asians and Latinos. The breakdown was 70.7% Latinos, 25.2% Asians, 2.7% Whites, 0.4% Blacks, and 1.0% others. Only 5.5% of Sierra Vista's population aged 25 and above in 2000 had earned a 4-year degree. It has nine public and four private K-12 schools and several historic or notable landmarks (U.S. Census, 2016).

The school district of Sierra Vista has a parent and community services branch located in each of its smaller local districts. Sierra Vista had a parent and community services branch located in the research site of this dissertation study. The researcher looked at the school district website and viewed Sierra Vista's school report card. Although a majority of parents and teachers did not take the survey for the report card, the results on the report card gave a glimpse into the high school and current parent–teacher relationships.

Every school in the district has a school report card that gives pertinent information about the schools. The high school report card shows the following information for the learning environment (Greatschools.org, 2016):

Students:

- Number (percent) responding: 48%

- What we are learning takes a lot of thinking: 77%

- Adults at this school know my name: 51%

- My school is clean: 53%

- I feel safe on school grounds: 64%

Parents:

- Number (percent) responding: 18%

- I feel welcome to participate at this school: 67%

- This school encourages me to participate in organized parent groups: 58%

- My child's teachers inform me about my child's academic progress: 40%

- My child is safe on school grounds: 63%

Staff:

- Number (percent) responding: 41%

- I get the help I need to communicate with parents: 71%

- I am proud of this school: 90%

- My school is clean: 75%

- I feel safe on school grounds: 93%

While the report is taken every year and provides a glimpse of the campus climate, the data above showed very low participation from students, parents, and school staff.

The Sierra Vista High School population includes 73% Latino and 24% Asian Americans. In 2014-2015, 41% of the students who were on track to pass all the A-G course requirements to graduate high school. Sixty-two percent of students were classified as being from socioeconomically disadvantaged families, 17% were ELLs, and 24% were gifted or

talented (Greatschools.org, 2016). Sierra Vista is home to many community-based organizations. It has a Boys and Girls Club chapter, the Sierra Vista Neighborhood Council, the local chamber of commerce, a tenant rights legal center, an active city-owned recreation and senior citizens center, and other community-based organizations.

Procedures Consent

The researcher was looking for a sample size of no more than 40 participants that included 20 parents and 20 community members that represented each of these populations. The relationships between a parent and community member in Sierra Vista could vary. For example, a parent who was also a community member and worked in the area would be listed as a parent. A community member who was a grandmother of a student in the high school and would be listed as a community member. Thus, the concept of *community* encompasses all the relationships that the volunteers share (Block, 2009), which meant that they lived, worked, or were a parent in Sierra Vista community and that they all benefited from the successful outcomes of students and the improvement of the Sierra Vista community as a whole. For the purposes of this study, the researcher asked U.S.-born or U.S.-educated Latinos who had at least a K-6 education to participate in the study. This could have included first-generation Latinos who at least attended K-6 in the United States, as well as second- and third-generation Latinos living in the United States.

The researcher developed a recruitment flier (see Appendix A) asking parents and community members who had at least a K-6 education in the United States to participate in the study and invited participants to attend two focus group interview sessions. The flier was given to parents and community members who lived and worked in the research area and included a detailed description of the focus group and what would be involved; information on how the focus group may be beneficial to parents and community members; requirements of the study;

and contact information for interested participants to reach the researcher. The researcher attended community meetings; passed out the fliers at the neighborhood council, chamber of commerce, and community-based organizations; and recruited at Sierra Vista high school after school hours.

The researcher developed a Parent and Community Outreach Sign-up List (see Appendix B), asked participants if they planned to attend the focus group, and asked them to sign up for the focus group interview. After the researcher determined they were eligible for participation, they were called or e-mailed to notify them of the time and date of the focus group. When parents and community members arrived at the focus group, they were asked to fill out the Parent and Community Sign-in Sheet (see Appendix C) and received a number that identified them for the study. The sign-in sheet also asked for some demographic information of the participants, such as age, gender, and occupation. At the focus group meetings, the researcher announced the research plan and asked for volunteers to be part of the research and to participate in a focus group interview. The two focus groups took place at the local senior citizens center. The sample was selected using nonrandom purposive sampling. A third focus group was conducted to member-check data, to share the findings of the two focus groups, and to have a discussion on the data and findings. At the third focus group, attendees generated additional ideas and feedback.

Human Subjects Considerations

The study was conducted in accordance with regulations and guidelines established by Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Given the context of the participants of this study, the researcher read the informed consent document aloud to all parents and community members selected to participate in the study. The study involved minimal risk to

participants. Participants signed the consent form (see Appendix D), which included important information regarding the study.

The informed consent document included the purpose of the research, procedures involved, alternatives to participation, notice of foreseeable risks and discomfort to subjects, benefits of the study to society and to participants, expected length of time to complete questionnaire, request for a person to contact in case of emergency, and a statement that participation is voluntary. Participants were asked if they understood the content of the form and were offered clarification as requested. Signed forms were collected.

Each participant received a number to replace his or her name throughout the study to ensure anonymity. Risks to subjects were no greater than those encountered daily. All surveys will be kept under lock and key for a period not to exceed 5 years. Written notes and audiotapes from each session were collected, labeled, and stored in boxes. The boxes will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's office.

Instrumentation

The methods selected to collect data were focus groups interviews and the interview guide (Kumar, 2011). The researcher used digital devices to record the focus group interviews. The researcher interviewed parents and community members to record their perceptions and feelings toward parent engagement and community organizing.

The interviews were unstructured, which allowed the participants to share information they wanted to share that may not have been on the interview guide. The researcher used the interview guide (see Appendix E) to elicit responses to the topic in question. Kumar (2011) noted, "It is important to develop an interview guide to ensure desired coverage of the areas of inquiry and comparability of information across respondents" (p. 163). The focus group interview guide included the same open-ended questions for all participants.

The researcher works as an area representative for public education for a teachers union in Southern California. Therefore, he was able to recruit participants based on his relationship with parents and community members who were willing to share the information needed for the study. Charmaz (2014) noted the following about researchers of grounded theory studies: "We are a part of the world we study, the data we collect, and the analysis we produce. We construct our grounded theories through our past and present involvement and interactions with people, perspectives, and research practices" (p. 17). The researcher's goal was to uncover what parents and community members can do to help students do better academically and become thriving civil servants.

Data Collection and Procedures

The study involved collecting qualitative data through focus group interviews and field notes/memoing.

Focus group interview. The researcher held focus groups for parents and community members. The focus groups were 2 hours long and were audio recorded. When participants arrived at the focus group interview session, the researcher read a script that explained the study (see Appendix F). Data collected through audio recording were transcribed into hard copy. The transcriptions were saved to a hard drive and onto a flash drive. The researcher designed an interview guide protocol with questions to answer the research questions. The researcher asked the participants to break into small groups of three to five people per group to discuss the focus group interview guide questions.

Field notes/memoing. The researcher took field notes immediately after the interviews and forums to document what he saw and felt during the interviews and forums. The field notes were kept in a journal from the beginning to the end of the data collection period.

Recruitment for the Study

      Parents. After IRB approval was received, the researcher passed out the recruitment flier to parents. A parent was someone who had a child currently enrolled in Sierra Vista High School. Individuals who previously had a student in the high school and wanted to participate in the study would be listed as a community member. The researcher visited the school gate three times a week at dismissal time to pass out recruitment fliers to parents. The researcher also dropped off recruitment fliers at neighborhood homes.

      Community members. After receiving IRB approval (see Appendix G), the researcher also passed out the recruitment flier to community members. A community member was someone who lived or worked in Sierra Vista. The researcher also posted the recruitment flier on the neighborhood council website and visited their meetings. The neighborhood council is an elected group of community members who meet to develop goals and strategies to improve their community. They meet on the fourth Thursday of every month. In addition, all community members were asked to participate. Community members were asked if they belonged to one or more community-based organizations in Sierra Vista. Outreach also included visiting neighborhood businesses, community-based organizations, and the chamber of commerce.

Data Analysis

      In a grounded theory study, researchers focus on interpreting data using open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Creswell, 2007). The researcher conducted continuous data analysis throughout the transcription, coding, and writing process. After the data collection was complete, the data was sorted into thematic units and were subject to axial coding while looking for additional categories and grouping (Creswell, 2007). Open coding was used for themes based on both frequency and depth discussion of the issues. Selective coding allows researchers to formulate a theory or proposition to use as a study finding (Charmaz, 2014; Creswell, 2007). The

researcher first examined and coded the data from Focus Group 1 and then examined and coded the data from Focus Group 2. Next, the data were examined across both Focus Group 1 and 2 for similarities and differences. Lastly, a third focus group was conducted to share the findings of the two focus groups and to discuss the data and findings. At the third focus group, additional ideas and feedback were generated from the attendees. Attention was given to the uniqueness of the participants based on the sign-in sheet. The sign-in sheet (see Appendix C) captured pertinent demographic information from the participants, such as name, address, e-mail, gender, age, occupation, parent or community member status, and level of education in the United States. This demographic information is shared in Chapter 4 in the discussion of key findings.

Open coding. After data collection was complete, the researcher examined texts looking for salient categories and for themes or categories that would characterize the grounded theory study. The information gathered was called the central phenomenon and served as the central feature of the theory (Creswell, 2007).

Axial coding. The researcher then returned to his database for more information and understanding and looked at interconnecting the categories and discovering causal conditions. New data could have been collected if necessary (Creswell, 2007).

Selective coding. The theory generated from the axial coding was used to generate or select a proposition or statement that interrelated with the categories in the coding program. The coding system involved the researcher searching for commonly used words or phrases, searching for patterns or behaviors used by each participant as a means of identifying and interpreting their experience of working with schools, and coding the data. Figure 4 shows the grounded theory matrix.

Open Coding	• develop categories of information • saturate the categories • create subcategories called "properties" • reduce the database to a smalls set of themes • identify a single category from the open coding list as the central phenomenon
Axial Coding	• interconnect the categories • discover causal conditions • review database again or collect new data • discover context or intervening conditions that shape the strategies
Selective Coding	• build a story line • view consequences • information is then organized into a figure • theoretical model is developed • theory is built • proposition or hypotheses is developed

Figure 4. Grounded theory matrix. The data in this figure are from *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, by J. W. Creswell, 2007, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Copyright 2007 by Sage.

Validity

According to Kumar (2011), "Validity is defined as the degree to which the researcher has measured what he or she set out to measure" (p. 178). The questions had a logical link with the objectives (Kumar, 2011). For example, to measure how involved parents and community are at a school site, suitable questions might include the following: How often are you at the school site? How comfortable are you talking with the school principal or teachers? The researcher worked to ensure the research tools were reliable and consistent to obtain predictable and accurate information from the sample (Kumar, 2011).

The researcher followed several processes to ensure validity and reliability in qualitative research. The researcher also used the criteria proposed by Trochim and Donnelly (as cited in Kumar, 2011).

- Credibility: Taking the research conducted and asking for feedback from the participants. Each participant was asked the same questions in the interview guide. The information collected was shared with the participant for feedback.

- Transferability: The information gathered could be transferred to other settings. The study was documented so future researchers could follow how it was conducted and completed.

- Dependability: It may be difficult to obtain the same results as obtained in this qualitative grounded theory study due to the geographic location and the limited sample. The study was documented so that future researchers can follow how it was conducted and completed.

- Confirmability: Other researchers can attain similar results if they follow the same process (Kumar, 2011).

The researcher encouraged the participants to share other ideas or concerns that they had regarding the study model.

Limitations of the Study

A limitation of the study was that parents and community members did not volunteer for the study. Limitations also included the accessibility of parents and community members. Many parents are hard to reach, are not very accessible, or have very strict schedules. The study was conducted in a small urban area in Southern California and may not necessarily mirror the larger urban population. The sample sought was 40 participants.

Positionality

The researcher was working as a school and community organizer in Southern California and knew firsthand how difficult it is to get parents and community members active and involved. After completing the preliminary oral exam, the researcher realized he was writing about a population that mirrored his life story. He was a second-generation Latino raised with a single mother and was a high school dropout. He knew how hard it is to survive without a high school education. He eventually went to junior college and proceeded to graduate school to get a double master's degree. He deeply cared about parent engagement and wanted to do his part in helping students succeed. He saw students grappling with problems at home and at school. Given the drop-out rate and the low percentage of these students who go on to college, something must be done to help them do better. The researcher had seen parent outreach programs in schools work and knew that they could be effective in neighborhoods that had urban and low-income Latino families at their core.

For example, the researcher had seen parents and community members come together around issues of school safety. Parents and community members held community meetings and brainstormed goals and remedies that could improve school–community relations. They agreed to meet weekly to come up with strategies that would help the school. The parents, teachers, and community members worked diligently to come up with concrete strategies that would improve school relations. The researcher chose to focus the study on parent engagement and community organizing because he knew that parents and community members could do better for the students. Parent engagement and community organizing can be powerful tools that school and community leaders can use to help give students the resources they need to graduate from high school and go to a 4-year college. The searcher had seen parent and community organizing make

a difference, and he studied how it could be more successful; the knowledge gained could foster this engagement throughout the city.

Summary

Chapter 3 detailed the qualitative design of this grounded theory dissertation study as well as the demographic data of the participants. The design of the study was crafted to take into consideration the context of urban Latino communities. Thus, a grounded theory approach was suitable to examine the connection between community organizing and its impact on urban parents' engagement in secondary schools. The researcher sought to examine the cross-section of this topic. In addition, the chapter included a discussion of data sources and procedures used for data analysis.

Chapter 4: Overview

This chapter includes the findings of the data analysis in the context of the themes that emerged. Included in this chapter are the presentation of the coded themes and the final selective coding. The chapter concludes with a summary of findings and a discussion of how they address the research questions. The goal of this chapter is to analyze the group interview data to address the following research questions:

1. What is the level of parent engagement at Sierra Vista High School?

2. What is the level of community organizing in Sierra Vista, California?

3. How does parent engagement contribute to the well-being of students at Sierra Vista High School?

4. How does community organizing contribute to the well-being of students in Sierra Vista, California?

5. How can a collaboration of parents and community members provide support to students at Sierra Vista High School?

Data Collection Procedures

This research study included a grounded theory methodological approach to understand if the efforts to organize a mostly Latino urban community would also support efforts to increase parent engagement in their local urban high school. To achieve the purpose of this study, data were collected from three focus groups held in the study area of Sierra Vista, California.

Parents. After IRB approval was received, the researcher will passed out the recruitment flier to parents. The researcher visited the school after dismissal time to pass out recruitment fliers to parents. The researcher also dropped off recruitment fliers at the neighborhood homes.

Community members. After IRB approval was received, the researcher passed out the recruitment flier to community members. A community member is defined as someone who

lives, and/or works in Sierra Vista. The researcher will also post the recruitment flier on the neighborhood council website and visit their meetings. The researcher email and invited the neighborhood council community members. In addition, all community members will be asked to participate. Outreach also included visiting neighborhood businesses, community-based organizations, the chamber of commerce and churches.

The three focus groups took place in August and September 2016. Two were held on a Saturday from 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m., and the third focus group for member check was held on a Tuesday from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. The data collected through audio recording were transcribed into hard copy.

Data Coding and Analysis

The training and coding process was completed within a two day period with a colleague and the researcher together. The researcher enlisted the help of an experienced coder and colleague to assist in coding the data. The colleague has an Ed.D in educational leadership and works as a licensed clinical social worker with a school district in Southern California. The colleague and the researcher used highlighters and a Word table organized by each interview question to chart the data. The professional colleague was provided with instructions on how to sort, code, and organize the data collected from focus groups sessions. The coders listened to the audio recordings and verified the transcription made by the researcher. The coders then proceeded to chart words, phrases, and patterns onto Word tables followed by highlighting commonly used words, phrases or patterns. This format assisted the coders and the researcher in developing coding categories from the data collected. The researcher and coder narrowed down common themes and agreed on the themes and the final selective coding as evidenced from the data collected and analyzed.

In a grounded theory study, the researcher focuses on interpreting the data using open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Creswell, 2007). The researcher conducted continuous data analysis throughout the transcription, coding, and writing process. After data collection was complete, the researcher conducted open coding, in which the coders examined texts looking for salient categories and a small set of themes or categories that would characterize the grounded theory study. The information a researcher gathers relates to the central phenomenon, which is the central feature of a proposition or theory (Creswell, 2007). Next, the coders conducted axial coding. The researcher returned to his database for more information and understanding. Lastly, the coders conducted selective coding. The theory generated from the axial coding was used to generate statements that interrelated with the categories in the coding program. The coding system involved the researcher searching for commonly used words or phrases and searching for patterns or behaviors used by each participant as a means of identifying and interpreting his or her experiences. After Focus group one, two and three were complete, the coders met again to make the final selective coding. This format assisted the coders and the researcher in developing coding categories from the data collected. The researcher and coder narrowed down common themes and agreed on the final selective coding themes as evidenced from the data collected and analyzed. The themes from Focus Groups 1 and 2 are presented first. Focus Group 3 was held for a member check that allowed for the participants to review and verify the themes from Focus Groups 1 and 2. Then the final selective coding is presented for all three focus groups. Figure 5 demonstrates the process of open coding.
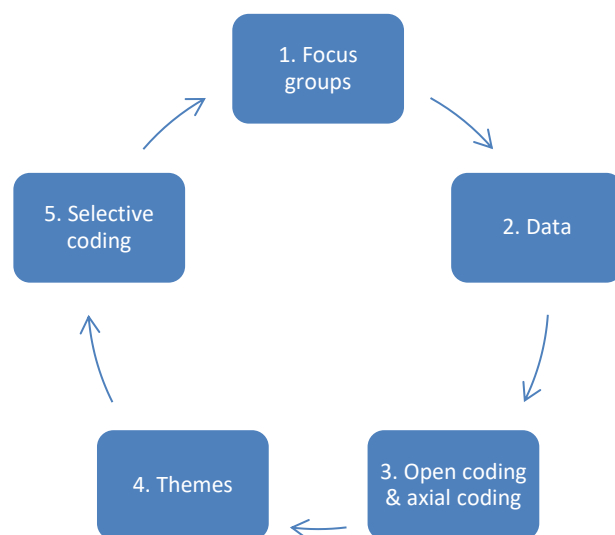
Figure 5. General processes of coding.

Focus Group 1

Focus Group 1 had 12 participants. Five participants were parents and six were

community members, and 11 were female and one was male. Their age ranged from 37 to 85

years old. Seven owned their home, two rented, and two did not state. Eight participants stated

they had sixth-grade or above in education, and two did not state their education. See Table 4 for

a description of the participants.

Table 4

Profile of Participants in Focus Group 1

Participant	Parent	Community member	Gender	Age	Occupation	No. of children	Own or rent	K-6 education
1	Yes		Female	49	Housewife	3	Rent	Yes
2		Yes	Female	64	Teacher	2	Own	Yes
3	Yes		Female	48	Organizer	2	Rent	Yes
4	Yes		Female	50	Housewife	2	Own	Yes
5	Yes		Female	46	Housewife	1	Own	Yes
6		Yes	Female	37	Disabled	0	Own	Yes
7		Yes	Female	56	N/A	0	Own	Yes
8		Yes	Male	85	Retired	N/A	Own	N/A
9		Yes	Female	68	Secretary		Own	Yes
10	Yes		Female	45	N/A		N/A	N/A
11		Yes	Female	60	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
12	Yes		Female	N/A	Office tech	1	N/A	Yes

Themes from Focus Group 1 parent engagement questions appear in Figure 6.
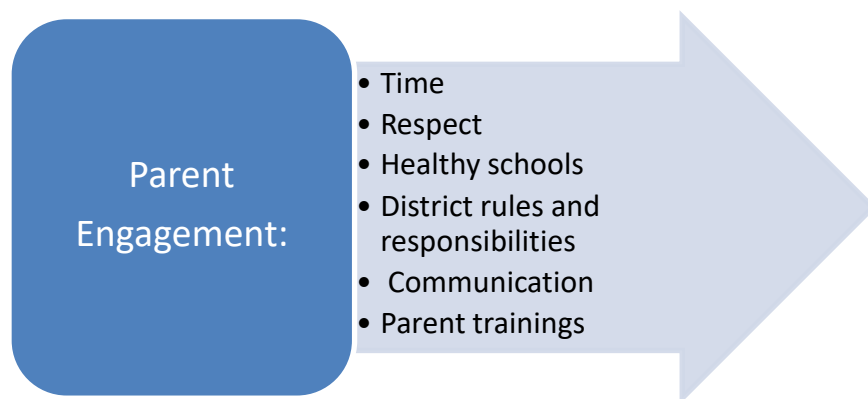
Figure 6. Themes from parent engagement questions in Focus Group 1.

Parent engagement questions.

Time. The first theme was time. Five of the participants expressed that because of work schedules and family obligations, it was difficult to attend to school meetings. In addition, the participants felt that holding school district meetings later than 2:30 p.m. would allow more parents to attend. Participant 1 stated her experiences with the school system,

> I found it very disappointing when you would find out that your child goes to this school, and all the meetings are during the day. All the meetings are right after school. Even as a parent, as you care a lot, you cannot afford to take that time off of work because (1) you're not allowed, (2) you have to take vacation days. There's so many obstacles. And to get more participation for those parents that want to get more involved, can the meeting just be at 6 versus 3 [o'clock]? Can the meeting [be] on a Saturday versus a Tuesday at 1 o'clock? I mean, parents do care, but there has to be some flexibility on the school's part.

Similarly, Participant 11, who was a grandmother, stated, "We're not given enough time."

Respect. The second theme was respect. Six of the participants discussed the issue of respect at schools. Participants stated that there is a lack of respect for parents. They felt that

when they do get involved, there is some push back from the administrators and from teachers and staff. Some believed that schools say they want parent involvement but do not really want it or value it. Participant 12 stated,

I'm just going to add to this: You do have to have the resources for the families coming in, the parents, in order to engage in their child's education. You have to have the resources and you also have to have that open-door policy for all parents. The parents are welcome to the school at all times. It shouldn't have appointments, and what I'm hearing a lot a now, if they don't have an appointment, they don't see a parent. Here I can have an open-door policy, they should be welcome at all times of the day, and someone should be there to always assist them and help them. So resources are very important and [an] open-door policy always should be at the school.

Healthy schools. The third theme was healthy schools. Five of the participants shared their feelings on wanting healthy schools. Participants expressed the need for the schools to have a positive and heathy environment. They stated that the atmosphere of the schools matters. The principal, teachers, and staff set the tone for having a healthy environment and healthy school. Participant 1 shared her sentiment on a healthy school environment,

How a family or a guardian that participates in the interest of the child's education in a format of volunteering or being around the school and helping out . . . I think the child's self-esteem increases. I don't have statistics, but I just believe that probably better performance in school and that equals to a better environment in the community where you have children with good self-esteem, thinking positive, not getting in trouble, and focusing more on education. It creates a healthier environment.

District rules and responsibilities. The fourth theme was district rules and responsibilities. All 12 participants shared stories concerning their experiences with the school

districts rules and responsibilities. Participants stated that the school district should be responsible for creating and implementing school policy. Many times parents feel the district leaders do not respect, listen to, or hear what parents are asking for.

Participant 10 said the following and many participants voiced their agreement:

I believe that administration should be more friendly with the parents. Because I know that a lot of parents, they just try to avoid even going to the office or even talking to the principal or even if they need help with anything, they don't, like, once you tell them oh you have to go into the office and talk to such and such, they're like oh they're not going to help me and they just leave. They don't even try.

Participant 5 expressed her negative experiences with school counselors,

I wish I got more involved in helping the kids that didn't have good counselors, because some of the counselors used to make them feel like they didn't deserve to continue their education. And I mean, they were not, they were not nice. And I mean, but they had . . . and I knew about three kids that could have done better if they had better counselors. And those counselors, even if you told the principal, nothing was done. And so I feel, I feel, oh my God, if they had had a better counselor, they could have been, you know, doing something better for the life now, not just working, just, they were smart enough.

Communication. The fifth theme was communication. Six of the participants discussed their concern with the communication issues that they had with the school. The participants felt that they wanted better and more frequent communication, and they felt that the school district should find ways to communicate better in more consistent ways. Participant 11 reported,

They tell us, like, the day before or even 2 or 3 days before. It's still not enough. Or they give it to you in a packet of papers, I don't know if you guys ever have this issue where

it's like a big stack of like 15 papers, of flyers, of what is it, like mosquito spraying and

food and all this other information that it just gets lost within that.

Participant 10 replied,

If the schools can give a summary of whatever happened during the meeting, and then

communicate that information to parents because parents know of when a meeting is

happening but they don't get any feedback as to what took place during the meeting and

ways in which they can also help with the school achieving their goals from that meeting.

Parent trainings and resources. All of the five parents in the focus group expressed the

need for more parent trainings and resources. The sixth theme was parent trainings and

resources. Participants stated that they could benefit from a variety of trainings that could help

them be more involved at the school and how to help them help their children. Participant 7

expressed the need for trainings for college readiness,

I've been trying to get them to implement since now they have a college counselor that is

working with K-12, and so there's going to be parent workshops with kids trying to get

them—what study habits should you have in order to succeed in college. And they're

going to have workshops where they're going to take some of our parents to college

campuses so they can see, What is a college campus? What is college life? Because

another issue that we've had is we've had high school seniors that get accepted to

college, you know, away from home in another state and their parents just do not let them

go, and that's just kind of sad. And so they're trying to break that mold just so they won't

have that fear. So if we start now from elementary school, from primary school, they'll be

prepared for when their child is ready to go off to college. Those are the workshops I've

been trying to push and they're finally going to happen.

Community organizing questions. The next set of themes pertained to the community

organizing questions. Parent engagement and community organizing had the themes of time and

district rules and regulations in common within the first focus group. The community organizing

questions added the themes sense of belonging, respect, and gentrification. Themes from Focus

Group 1 community organizing questions appear in Figure 7.

Figure 7. Themes from community organizing questions in Focus Group 1.

District rules and responsibilities. All 12 participants shared stories concerning their

experiences with the school districts rules and responsibilities Participants felt that when they

wanted or needed action on behalf of the principal or superintendent, their needs were not being

met and their voices not being heard. Several participants organized activities and actions at the

school board to make their demands heard. Participant 11 stated her concerns with the school

district,

> So yes, I've done community organizing in relations to schools. It, that one, was a big
>
> one, the one where we were protesting. It was not only protesting getting, or not even
>
> protesting but gathering parents because that school and its [redacted for privacy] here in
>
> Highland Park, didn't have a PTA, didn't have an organization in the school of active
>
> parents, so basically that school had a high turnover of principals. So every 6 months,

they would change principals and the teachers, they just, they did all kinds of decisions so

we, so that was a big community effort to organize and to get them moving. At [redacted

for privacy], the museum magnet, we also mobilized some parents to get a better quality

principal, which didn't happen.

Sense of belonging. The seventh theme was sense of belonging. Six of the participants

shared the need for a sense of belonging. Participants felt that organizing and connecting with

people brought about a sense of belonging with the community. They expressed that community

meant being there for one another. Participant 11 shared her experience in organizing community

events:

So I did some community organizing around civic participation, holding community

workshops on what it is to be civically participant, where people can learn about their

voting rights, and if they didn't have immigration status, where do they find that help?

Where would be safe for them to do that? That was one community organizing project I

did. And then I also worked with Goodwill doing more community outreach in helping

people find jobs that were felons and the community outreach program of that aspect was

to get employers to take a chance on these people. Not only felons, but people with

disabilities, the seniors, the other groups that have a hard time getting employment. And

I've done community organizing through labor unions, working with unions, working

with nurses, and with retail workers.

Participant 2 stated, "I value that I can rely on my community if I need something and I can trust

them to also rely on me." Participant 10 noted, "I value the commonality of being able to work

and live together and be safe."

Respect for neighbors. The eighth theme was respect for neighbors. Eight of the

participants spoke of the need for respect amongst neighbors. The theme of respect was heard

throughout all three focus groups. Participants felt that there was a lack of respect from staff at the schools and in the community. They stated that the neighborhood council members and elected officials should be more involved in the community and that they should let the community know about the various activities taking place in their neighborhood. Participant 1 replied,

> I feel very strongly that people should somehow learn along the way how to respect each other, regardless of who each one is. Like respect, if you start conversation with respect in the community, a meeting with respect, it can be much more civil instead of what you see sometimes at meetings, where it can be more cohesive instead of a fight. And you get more done, more productive. I think respect on all levels.

Participant 7 responded,

> I think also something simple is just within your street, getting to know your neighbors, greeting your neighbors. There's a lot of times when I've seen something happen and I'll approach a neighbor but they're very standoffish. I've seen that a lot and I don't know, I just don't think it's good, especially if you're trying to keep the street safe. I think we should try to be nice to each other, you know, just a little bit respectful, like somebody else said. So just something as knowing your neighbors.

> *Gentrification.* The ninth theme was gentrification. All 12 participants shared their views and opinions on gentrification. The theme of gentrification was raised several times in all three focus groups. Sierra Vista is one of the oldest suburbs in this area of Southern California. In 2000 U.S. Census, there were 26,616 persons living in a 2.51-square-mile neighborhood. The median income in 2008 was $30,579 which is low for the area. Renters occupied 75.9% of the housing stock (U.S. Census, 2016). There was a robust conversation about gentrification in Sierra Park and shared their experiences and sentiments about gentrification. Participants felt that

many families in the area have been forced out due to gentrification. Entire buildings have been bought and the working class Latino families evicted. This has financial and cultural consequences. Latino families have had to move out of the area, but still want their children to attend the same school. It adds a tremendous amount of burden as families try to make it work. In addition, participants felt that some of the new residents are rude and not very friendly. Participant 5 shared her heartfelt experiences with gentrification:

> People in my communities. Especially the old timers. Not the newcomers. The newcomers are not nice. They try to take over and then throw us off. They want to buy the houses but the, my neighbors on the block where I've lived for 20 years, we lost like seven good people and I mean, the people there, they're old timers, they're wonderful. You learn so much from the community, you know, listening to their stories. Like, this is the first house that was built, the one across the street from my house. As a matter of fact, they even have pictures, black and white. It's the only house standing, and my alley was the street. I mean stories from them, it's like, they're very interesting, so people, old timers.

Participant 11 stated,

> Not to harsh on the grumpy side, but yeah, Number 11, I'm sorry, I am Number 11, and it's really sad and annoying when you go to a new cafe and you're like yay we have a new cafe, and the people in there are super grumpy like, "Ew, what are you doing here?" And I'm like, "Excuse me, I live here." I guess the problem is gentrification. I enjoy coffee.

Lastly, Participant 1 stated,

> So on that in terms of respect in the community, respect in for each other, there are a lot of gentrification, or just migration of whatever type, because there's cycles in our

generations of different ethnic groups and so forth. It just does change the community. So

how to keep up with respecting new groups, existing groups, and the community. It's

different when folks do come from different states, they want to acclimate, but it's a

struggle for both I believe. So it's hard to get, to me, realistically, the dream world would

be yes that everyone unites in one voice, but reality is how do you get to even that voice

in the community if everyone's at a different page.

Focus Group 2

Focus Group 2 had 14 participants. Six participants were parents and eight were

community members, and out of the 14 participants, nine were female and five were male. Their

age ranged from 22 to 70 years old. Four owned their home, and 10 rented. All participants

stated they had a sixth-grade or above in education in the United States. See Table 5 for a

description of the participants.

Table 5

Profile of Participants for Focus Group 2

Participant	Parent	Community member	Gender	Age	Occupation	No. of children	Own or rent	K-6 education
13	Yes		Female	35	Housewife	3	Rent	Yes
14	Yes		Female	37	Teacher	3	Rent	Yes
15		Yes	Female	23	Student	0	Rent	Yes
16		Yes	Female	22	Student	0	Rent	Yes
17		Yes	Female	56	Retired	0	Own	Yes
18	Yes		Male	47	N/A	1	Rent	Yes
19	Yes		Male	37	Analyst	1	Own	Yes
20		Yes	Male	49	Teacher	0	Own	Yes
21	Yes		Female	n/a	Organizer	3	Own	Yes
22		Yes	Male	68	Political	0	Rent	Yes
23		Yes	Male	44	Teacher	0	Rent	Yes
24		Yes	Female	27	Unemployed	0	Rent	Yes
25	Yes		Female	44	Housewife	n/a	Rent	Yes
26		Yes	Female	70	Retired	0	Rent	Yes

Parent engagement questions. The responses to the parent engagement questions from Focus Group 2 included three additional themes. The three themes were safety, teenager transition, and staff and teacher roles. Figure 8 demonstrates the themes from Focus Group 2.


Parent Engagement:

- Time
- Communication
- District rules & regulations
- Safety
- Teenager transition
- Staff and teacher roles
- Parent trainings & resources
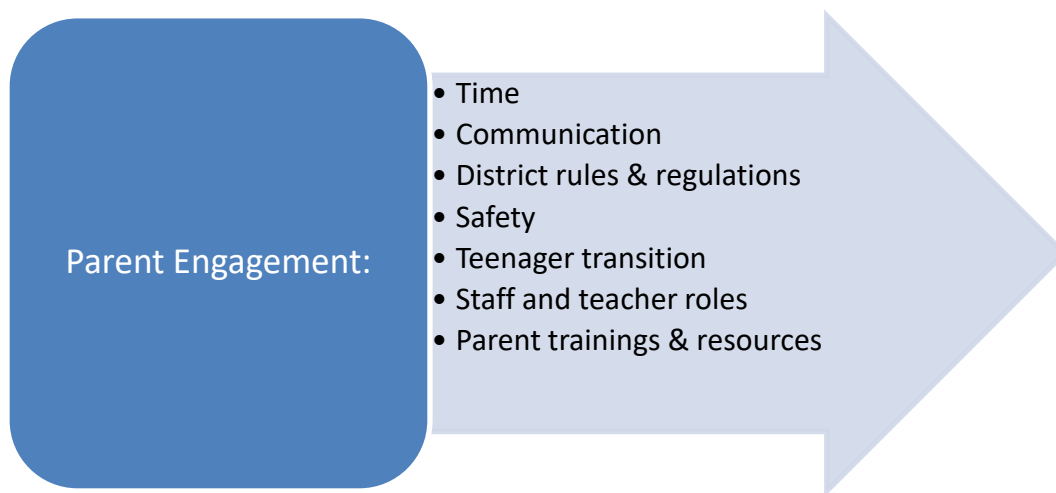
Figure 8. Themes from Focus Group 2.

Time. The first theme was time. Five of the participants expressed that because of work schedules and family obligations, it was difficult to attend to school meetings.

Communication. The second theme was communication. Six of the participants discussed their concern with the communication issues that they had with the school.

District rules and responsibilities. The third theme was district rules and regulations. All of the participants shared stories concerning their experiences with the school districts rules and responsibilities Participants felt that when they wanted or needed action on behalf of the principal or superintendent, their needs were not being met and their voices not being heard.

Safety. The fourth theme was safety. Five of the participants expressed their concern for safety. Participants expressed their need for safety and security. Participant 17, who was also a teacher, shared with the group a program that existed at one of his former schools. It was a schoolwide program with wraparound services. The program offered after-school tutoring and had a social service agency to help families with health and human service needs. He reiterated

that the program allowed parents to feel more secure and safe. Participant 27 reiterated the importance of having community based services at the school,

> It's very important, when you say one school, I specifically identify low-performing schools, because low-performing schools, you have all these factors, parents working, health care, and all that other stuff that needs to be provided to these parents.

> Researcher: So I'm sorry, just trying to understand—so by having the wellness center, it attracts the parents?

> Well, it's going to attract the parent because you're providing services to the parents and families, you're also providing safe space where you have after-school programs from 2 or 3 o'clock and the kids feel safe, and the parents can then after work come pick up their children.

Teenager transition. The fifth theme was teenager transition. All of the six parents present discussed teenager transition. The issue of teenager transition or articulation was introduced as major issue for the parents. Teenager transition in this discussion was concerned about the transition from elementary school to middle school. Parents felt that the school district should not mix seventh and eighth graders with the upper grades, which they do in this area of the school district. They felt that it puts more burden on the younger students and added peer pressure. Participant 22 shared her story as a mother of teenagers,

> I'm a volunteer. My experience has been, I have children in eighth and seventh grade. I am going to the school and being actively trying to get involved in the school and in the city. Sometimes it's us as parents that actually pull back because in elementary we take them, we pick them up, and in middle school it's more like the children telling us, "Mommy I want to go on my own." But this is a time we need to be there more than anything. I've had great experiences but we need to be there more because we got to see

the company of who they're with, be careful with the issue of drugs, if we're not there

then who will? There's a small number that goes to the universities, and it may not be my

own but we have to find the road for our students to want to go to a university [or]

college.

Staff and teacher roles. The sixth theme was staff and teacher roles. Five of the

participants shared their experiences with school staff and teachers. Parents and community

members expressed their disappointment with staff members at the school, which included front

office staff, teachers, and the school administrator. Participant 21 had personally seen negative

interactions at the school. She stated,

Yeah, I believe that administration [should] be more friendly with the parents. Because I

know that a lot of parents, they just try to avoid even going to the office or even talking to

the principal or even if they need help with anything, they don't, like, once you tell them,

"Oh, you have to go into the office and talk to such and such," they're like, "Oh, they're

not going to help me," and they just leave. They don't even try.

Parent trainings & resources. The seventh theme was parent trainings and resources.

All of the six parents in the focus group expressed the need for more parent trainings and

resources. Participants stated that they could benefit from a variety of trainings that could help

them be more involved at the school and how to help them help their children.

Community organizing questions. The next set of themes pertains to the community

organizing questions. Focus Group 1 and Focus Group 2 shared the themes respect for neighbors

and gentrification. In addition, organized actions at the school board, civic participation, clean

and open communities, and youth opportunities also emerged as themes. Figure 9 demonstrates

the themes community organizing questions from Focus Group 2.

Figure 9. Themes from community organizing questions in Focus Group 2.

    Actions at the school board. The eighth theme was organizing actions at the school board. Five of the participants shared their experience with organizing activities. Both parents and community members shared with the group that when they felt they needed to advocate for a certain issue, they would organize a rally or go and speak at the school board. The issues ranged from asking the school board to keep a good principal at the school to advocating for their school. Participant 25 stated, "So when they ask us to go, we'll go picket at [redacted for privacy] headquarters or sometimes I'll give interviews on behalf of schools in general, this is why I like that movement." Participant 26 shared her experience at organizing at the school board:

        We had several issues with principals that were absolute nightmares and we went--one

        was with the principal that was just not doing her job, and we went to the school board

        and she remained. Another one was, when we found out that a teacher was removed, we

        found out the day before they were to be removed and the shuffling of classes were going

        to happen. And we as a community had absolutely no input. We had, even though at that

        point we organized quickly because we had literally 24 hours and we did a phone

        banking to the school board, to our schoolboard member who never returned our calls, to

        the school board office, and only to be told, we did get a bunch of the school board

people, not school people, that guy I don't think he ever showed up, but all the school people like, I think it was [redacted] at the time, when he was the superintendent, they came to the school just to tell us that we were out of luck, basically.

Civic participation. The ninth theme was civic participation. All 14 participants spoke of community involvement and civic participation. The theme civic participation was the overarching issue. Parent and community members stated that parents and community members should be involved at all levels. They felt that having more active and involved people would lead to improvement for the students and for the community. The group indicated that by having solidarity and by working together, the community can achieve more. Participant 21 shared the importance of being involved at the local level,

Well you're educated when you get involved in your community in chambers, neighborhood councils, your school advisories. You get information on what's going on in our city, our county. You know, the rules, the regulations, the bills that are being passed. You get to know how to maybe make [redacted for privacy] a better place to live in, so you become involved in city problems, city situations, sidewalk repairs. You're educated when you get involved. That education you pass onto your children, and now we're a better community because we are well aware, we know what's going on, and also where to go if we have a problem, you know, finding solutions for our neighborhood.

Youth opportunities and open space. The 10th theme was youth opportunities and open space. Ten of the participants expressed the need for more youth opportunities and open space. The theme of youth opportunities emerged as participants stated that youth needed to have more activities in their neighborhood. They felt that parents and community members could advocate for more activities and recreation for youth. They stated that the community could use more

youth and intervention programs, art programs, and outdoor space dedicated to youth. Participant 15 spoke of his experience bringing up his three sons,

I grew up in [redacted for privacy], and so the Boys and Girls Club was that safe space from [redacted for privacy], and so for me to bring my sons, three boys, I had to pay at the park to be involved in basketball and baseball, and so you could tell that people who really needed couldn't be involved because it costs money. So being able to have more activities, both for seniors and young students, that wasn't always going to ask for money. That there would be these spaces as our schools are losing the arts, theater, music, sports, activity, that who is picking up that? It's the parks. And yet at the same time, it's like you have to pay to play.

Participant 27 stated,

I just think we need more of the space, public open space, that will allow different members of the community, whether it be, I'm getting older too and I tell my friends all the time, we are going to become seniors, and I say, "Oh, we need to set up a little plaza so we can have some salsa and stuff in open space." So that's what I'm talking about, because, and we have the skate park but there should be a space for seniors and youth. It can be in front of the church. It doesn't bother me. I think it's great, but the skate—we have the skate park that just opened in [redacted for privacy] and the thing about skate parks there is it integrates different cultures: Blacks and Latinos.

Clean communities. The 11th theme was clean communities. Five of the participants discussed the concept of clean communities. Participants expressed that they wanted clean and open communities. Some stated that the area is not kept clean by residents and that some just don't care about their community. Participants stated that neighbors either throw their trash on the sidewalk or don't pick up after their pets. Participant 25 replied,

It is important to get involved especially nowadays, where there's so many owners of the

massage parlors that want to open. You know they're businesses in our community and

also quite a few sex shops that are not good, and that doesn't happen in other

neighborhoods. I mean these businesses come to our neighborhoods because they know

that we are not going to find out about it until it's a done deal. So it is important to get

involved, to go to meetings, to participate, that way these businesses won't come into

your neighborhood. I mean you able to stop them. Also, we don't need more liquor

stores. We don't need places that sell alcohol. We need a healthy environment for our

children.

Analysis of focus group one and two.

There were a total of 26 participants across both focus groups. Eleven of them were

parents and 14 of them were community members. Twenty of the participants were female and

six were male, and their ages ranged from 22 to 85. The participants had a combined total of 22

children. Eleven of them stated that they owned a home and 12 of them stated that they rented a

home. Twenty-three participants stated that they had above a sixth-grade education, and three of

them declined to state. Table 6 shows the demographic information for Focus Groups 1 and 2.

The researcher felt that the participants captured a representative sample from the community of

Sierra Vista. The researcher was able to conduct ample outreach to the neighborhood council, the

high school, local churches and community events. The sample size for male participants was six

and was lower than the female sample size of 20.

The responses to the parent engagement questions from Focus Group 2 included three

additional themes. The three additional themes were safety, teenager transition, and staff and

teacher roles. Under the community organizing questions, Focus Group 1 and Focus Group 2

shared the themes respect for neighbors and gentrification. In addition, organized actions at the

school board, civic participation, clean and open communities, and youth opportunities also emerged as themes.

Table 6

Profile of Participants for Focus Group 1 and 2

Participants	Parent	Community member	Female	Male	Age range	No. of children	Own	Rent	K6	K-6 N/A
26	12	14	20	6	22-85	22	11	12	23	3

Focus Group 3, Member Check.

Focus Group 3 had three participants. It was conducted to offer a member check and to review and verification of themes, and transcript review. The researcher offered participants the opportunity to review the themes, which allowed for them to make corrections, add new information, verify findings, and critique specific questions if they did not think that the questions were appropriate (Creswell, 2007).

All three participants were parents. One was female and two were male. Their ages ranged from 37 to 49 years old. One owned a home, and two rented. All the participants stated they had a sixth-grade education or above. In Focus Group 3, participants were given the themes presented in Focus Group 1 and 2. They were asked if they agreed with the themes and if they would add or edit the themes. They agreed with the themes and felt that they captured the interviews. They reiterated the themes of time, resources, and respect. See Table 7 for the profile of Focus Group 3.

Table 7

Profile of Participants for Focus Group 3 Member Check

Participant	Parent	Community member	Gender	Age	Occupation	No. of children	Own or rent	K-6 education
28	Yes		Female	49	Housewife	3	Rent	Yes
29	Yes		Male	47	Teacher	1	Rent	Yes
30	Yes		Male	37	Analyst	1	Own	Yes

Time. The three participants felt that whether one is working with schools or in the community, time is important and should be valued by those asking them to do certain activities. Participant 28 stated, "This captures it. Parents feel alienated by school staff and admin."

Resources. The theme resources surfaced again, as the three participants reiterated the need for the school district administration to work more collaboratively with parents and community members. Participant 28 stated, "We need a program to do more outreach to our community and kids. The admin can create an outreach team." Participant 30 noted, "We really do want our kids and community to be safe. Parents need to work together for our kids."

Respect. The participants expressed their discontent on how they have been treated by the staff at schools. They stated that they want parents to get involved but they don't treat them with respect when they arrive at the school. Participant 30 stated, "Time is always an issue, if people are going to give time they need to be respected. We are being asked to do more and more as parents." Participant 26 also stated, "We should have a clear relationship with schools and how they work with community organizations." Finally, Participant 29 noted, "I feel it fall[s] under civility and ethics. Being a good school, community member and a parent member."

Selective Coding and Key Findings

Selective coding is the process in which the researcher examines the data and themes from the open and axial coding, looks for categories and patterns, and attempts to interpret the experience of the participants in the form of a proposition or statement (Charmaz, 2014). After Focus Group 1, 2, and 3 were complete, the coders met again to make the final selective coding. This format assisted the coders and the researcher in developing coding categories from the data collected. The researcher and coder narrowed down common themes from Focus Group one, and two, and agreed on the final selective coding themes as evidenced from the data collected and analyzed.

Figure 10 shows the selective coding process. The selective coding process revealed the final five propositions.
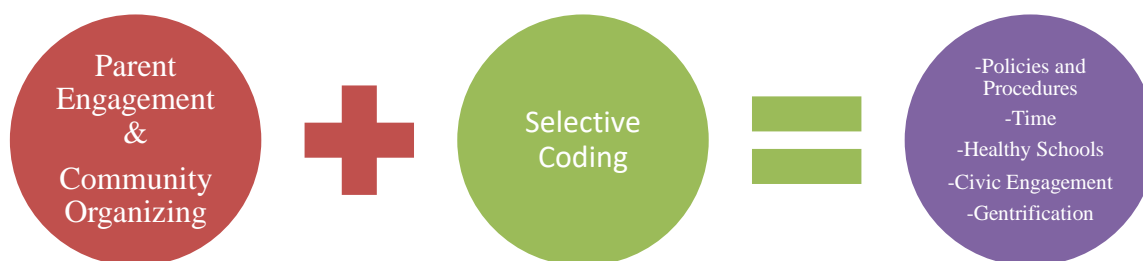
Figure 10. Selective coding.

Policies and procedures. All the participants felt bureaucracy and the school district's rules and regulations were a roadblock for parents and community members. These issues fell under the school district's policies and procedures.

Time. Time was an issue for parents and community members. Participants stated that their work schedule prevented them from getting more involved at the school and in the community. In addition, the time that the school or a community-based organization holds a meeting affected the ability for participants to attend. Participants stressed the need for meeting times to be more amenable to parents and community members.

Healthy schools. Participants noted that they wanted a healthy environment where their kids would be encouraged, loved, and respected.

Civic engagement. Many of the participants spoke about civic engagement and empowerment. They felt that they wanted more neighbors to be active and involved at schools and in the community. For example, they wanted to see more voter registration, community outreach, and social services for youth and seniors.

Gentrification. Participants saw gentrification as disrupting the fabric of the existing

community. They felt gentrification was pushing more Latino families out of Sierra Vista, which

makes it much harder for parents to have a connection with the existing community. Lastly,

participants did not feel respected by the new residents moving into the community.

Table 8 demonstrates the themes from Focus Groups 1, 2, and 3 and the final selective

coding. The final selective coding categories were time, policies and procedures, healthy schools,

civic engagement, and gentrification.

Table 8

Themes From Each Step in Data Analysis

Focus Group 1 themes	Focus Group 2 themes	Focus Group 3 themes	Final selective coding
Parent engagement questions	Parent engagement questions	Member check	
Time	Time	Time	Time
Respect	District rules and regulations	Resources	Policies and procedures
Healthy schools	Teenager transition	Respect	Healthy schools
District rules and regulations	Safety		Civic engagement
Communication	Communication		Gentrification
Parent trainings	Staff and teacher roles		
	Parent trainings & resources		
Community Organizing Questions	Community Organizing Questions		
Sense of belonging			
Respect for neighbors	Parent resources		
Gentrification	Actions at the school board		
	Civic participation		
	Gentrification		
	Respect for neighbors		
	Youth opportunities & open space		
	Clean communities		

Summary

   The findings of this grounded theory methodological study were based on qualitative data. This chapter included an overview of the participants' responses for Focus Groups 1, 2, and 3. The chapter also included data analysis and findings for the open, axial, and selective coding process. A discussion of the implications of the findings will be presented in Chapter 5, along with conclusions and recommendations for further research.

Chapter 5: Summary

Chapter 5 provides statements of the problem and the purpose, as well as the methodology of the study and a summary of the findings. The chapter also includes the conclusions based on the findings of the data and recommendations generated from the conclusions.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to understand what happens when parents and community members actually come together and organize. The research indicated that when this occurs in the community, the outcomes with the youth in urban high schools are more favorable and the youth become healthy citizens. Drop-out rates are particularly high across urban school districts in Southern California. Latinos and African American students suffer the most from these dismal statistics.

Research has shown that parent and community engagement helps students do better in school, but research does not provide enough strategies to help teachers, parents, and community members succeed in helping the students. Teachers receive little training in ways to reach out to parents. Likewise, there are few models that help parents be involved (Hiatt-Michael, 2006; M. Johnson, 2011).

The researcher embarked on an inquiry to examine what happens when parents and communities collaborate to develop strategies to address the issues facing a local high school and therefore provide high school students a sense of support as they move through their high school experience. This dissertation research study involved examining the nexus between parent engagement and community organizing and the ways both may support each others' efforts.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study were as follows:

1. What is the level of parent engagement at Sierra Vista High School?

2. What is the level of community organizing in Sierra Vista, California?

3. How does parent engagement contribute to the well-being of students at Sierra Vista High School?

4. How does community organizing contribute to the well-being of students in Sierra Vista, California?

5. How can a collaboration of parents and community members provide support to students at Sierra Vista High School?

Discussion of Significant Findings by Research Question

Research Question 1 was as follows: What is the level of parent engagement at Sierra Vista High School? There were 28 participants for Focus Groups 1 and 2. Twelve participants were parents. The parents stated that they were active at their schools. The current level of parent engagement of the parents who attended seemed to be high. Parents' work schedules were a factor for them being able to attend.

Participant 7 demonstrated her involvement by stating: "I was involved in developing a PTA. I attend all board meetings. I try to attend all the coffee with the principals. It's important that I be involved, I helped develop school site councils." One parent was very active and volunteered at the school. Participant 4 stated, "I was involved a lot. I was in charge of the cafeteria, and helped clean the school. I attend meetings, football meetings."

School site councils were discussed in the literature review as a way for parents and community members to be involved at their local high school. Parents and community members stated that they thought that this was a positive way for them to be active and engaged at the school. Participant 15 stated that the school district could expand the school site councils to allow for more community members:

On our school councils, there's only one slot for a community person who are not a

parent. I think if that is expanded, could allow more community members to be involved

because when we look at the schools or the high school in our area, we are affected by

either as a renter or an owner because that is a community. It's not some separate entity. I

do believe that if there were more slots for community involved, that could be helpful.

Participant 5 stated the following:

I was very involved in middle and high school. I was a sports mom, football or baseball. I

was a friend to all the kids. They talked to me about their problems, stuff they would not

tell their mom. It was nice. I miss the kids.

Ten of the participants stated that time was a concern for them. Meetings take place early in the

morning or right after school. They felt the schools should find ways to have meetings at

different times and on Saturdays. Participant 1 responded, "I helped very limited because of

work. I did set up and clean up tutoring and etcetera. I tutored evenings and one day a week and

on weekends, I was usually at work all day."

Henderson et al. (2007) found that children tend to do better in school, and stay in school

longer, when there is family involvement at the school. Through school councils or parent

centers, schools can develop a plan of action through which they can increase communication

with all stakeholders. According to the respondents' discussion in the focus groups, parents used

their school site councils as a way to be involved at the school and to be a part of the decision-

making process at their schools. The school site councils appear to be a positive and effective

tool to increase parent and community member engagement at the school. The themes time,

respect, and district rules and regulations and communication were present across Focus Groups

relating to Research Question 1.

Research Question 2 was as follows: What is the level of community organizing in Sierra Vista, California? Twelve of the 26 participants shared that they had been part of some type of organizing project. Some of their stories involved organizing actions at the school board and some involved working on community projects in the community. Participant 2 shared her organizing endeavors in Sierra Park by stating:

> I've done a lot of community organizing. My very first community organizing that I did was when I was 14 was when it started and it continued for about 20 years. It started with graffiti removal in the neighborhood. I've gone to the capitol to picket for different causes. We rallied at the same school as [Participant] Number 4 to try to have the principal leave the school which unfortunately, the school is now closed but it did eventually become successful after a lot of controversial things happened there. Another major item that I worked on was to get the crosswalk installed on North Broadway and Citrus Street, which my mother owned the store on the corner, the dry cleaners, for over 40 years and she dozens and dozens, I saw dozens and dozens of people just be hit by cars and it took 20, and not until somebody died, it took 20 years for us to get that crosswalk installed so I am [involved in] all kinds of movements. I've worked for campaigns for elected officials to get them elected. A lot of things.

The respondents' actions and input supported Warren and Mapp's (2011) findings that the community and healthy civic engagement are necessary to bring about needed change. Participant 26 stated,

> I think it's known for being a community that's generational. Generational—it sticks around. But I can't say that for a lot of communities. People move, jobs, and all that. When I think of community, sometimes I think of the good old days, but it's the reality now, whether it's Internet or anything, how do you create community because everybody

is just going, running, and just knowing who's your neighbor, watching out for the children as the good days, again, where you have the neighbors and every watch— keeping an eye on your kids, and say, "Hey, I'm going to tell your dad or your mom or so and so," but nowadays it seems like you don't hear that much because everybody's busy, and to stay in the community not just because you got a better job or something, those are the realities.

Participant 26 felt that it takes the community to be able to care for its own neighbors and for the students. Respondent 28 shared the following:

Community to me is just a collection of people. It can be geographic, it can be based on ethnicity, it could be because everybody is going to the same school, so just a collection of people, and then ideally, people feel welcomed in that community and take pride in that community, everyone will contribute to that community.

Rumberger's (1991) research found that there are four major categories that influence drop-out behavior: family background, schools, community, and personal characteristics. Rumberger's theory on community resonates with the findings for Research Question 2. Rumberger stated,

Community can exert powerful influence on student achievement and dropout behavior. Males in general and Hispanics in particular are more likely to report that they left school for economic reasons. Survey studies have confirmed that higher education aspirations of peers are associated with lower dropout rates. Dropouts may be more susceptible to the influence of peers than other students because they are more likely to have problems at home or at school. (p. 73)

Participant 2 reinforced Rumberger's theory by stating that her involvement with students in after-school programs helped kids do better in school and she saw their self-esteem increase:

I am not necessarily the parent, but I did participate in parental activities at the school

because of course my sister's mother wasn't really able to because of time constraints, so

I did fulfill that role. But for what I saw in the kids that I transported, the kids that were at

the meetings with the parents, the kids that maybe weren't necessarily at the meetings

with the parents but couldn't go home early enough so were still on campuses . . .

because they see you a lot. They see you active. They see you present. There's a sense of

accountability on their part in their behavior. There's a certain behavior that maybe from

their point of view is expected when they see you. They're better behaved. They're more

polite. Even now when I see those kids that I transported or when I was at these activities

or meetings, when I see them, they're very polite and I don't know if that, I can't say that

it affects their grades but I know that it definitely affects their temperament and how they

behave or interact with even other kids when you're present.

The themes time, respect, district rules and regulations and communication, sense of belonging,

and respect were present across the focus groups relating to Research Question 2.

Research Question 3 was as follows: How does parent engagement contribute to the well-

being of students at Sierra Vista High School? The consensus was that parent engagement does

contribute to the well-being of students. The parents stressed the importance of parent

involvement at the school. The parents felt they could see their child behaving better and their

self-esteem increased when they were present. They also noted the teachers liked them being in

the class because the student behaved better when the parent was present. Participant 1 stated,

How a family or a guardian that participates in the interest of the child's education in a

format of volunteering or being around the school and helping out . . . I think the child's

self-esteem increases. I don't have statistics, but I just believe that. Probably better

performance in school, and that equals to a better environment in the community where

you have children with good self-esteem, thinking positive, not getting in trouble, and

focusing more on education.

Participant 2 responded,

I am not necessarily, the parent but I did participate in parental activities at the school

because of course my sister's mother wasn't really able to because of time constraints, so

I did fulfill that role. But for what I saw in the kids that I transported, the kids that were at

the meetings with the parents, the kids that maybe weren't necessarily at the meetings

with the parents but couldn't go home early enough so were still on campuses . . .

because they see you a lot. They see you active. They see you present. There's a sense of

accountability on their part in their behavior. There's a certain behavior that maybe from

their point of view is expected when they see you. They're better behaved. They're more

polite. Even now when I see those kids that I transported or that when I was at these

activities or meetings, when I see them, they're very polite and I don't know if that, I

can't say that it affects their grades, but I know that it definitely affects their temperament

and how they behave or interact with even other kids when you're present and when you

encounter them after they've already left the school.

These results were aligned with the theoretical framework of M. Johnson's (2011) theory that

used the seven types of involvement:

- Access to information and data collection

- Parents in decision-making roles

- Parents as student advocates

- Parent leaders at home and in the school

- Effective two-way communication

- District-level support

- Friendly school atmosphere

Access to information and data collection. Parents need to have access to timely and accurate information regarding their child's education to best support their child's academic success. The participants repeatedly noted that they wanted timely and quality information. Participant 11 stated following:

> They tell us, like, the day before or even 2 or 3 days before. It's still not enough. Or they give it to you in a packet of papers. I don't know if you guys ever have this issue where it's like a big stack of like 15 papers, of flyers, of what is it, like mosquito spraying and food and all this other information that it just gets lost within that.

The parent participants stated that they felt disrespected by the school district and the ways they were given critical information. They expressed the need for a better way to communicate with them.

Parents in decision-making roles. Parents provide leadership in schools by being at the table with teachers and administrators. Participant 7 stated, "It's important that I be involved. I helped develop school site councils." Participant 7 felt that it was her obligation to be a member of the school site council that oversees state and federal dollars. School site councils can have a positive effect on parent and community engagement and community development (Shatkin & Gershberg, 2007). Because this is a federal mandate, school site councils have promoted a parent presence in schools and thus engaged parents minimally (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Parents as student advocates. Parents need to know how to navigate and negotiate the school system. Schools need to support the creation of an environment where parents have access to information and support systems to be effective advocates by monitoring and directing the education of the children. Participant 20, a former counselor at Sierra Vista High School and became a neighborhood activist and a neighborhood council member, stated the following:

We started a great parent center and I'm speaking on behalf of [redacted for privacy] because I do know the parent center, what they did, but when the parent center started, there was money there to educate the parents. I went to many workshops on the new math that was being implemented, English, and so on. And you were trained to actually assist the teacher and the students, okay, again, as time goes on, and the district keeps changing from year to year. You get a new superintendent and so on. They started cutbacks in the parent centers.

Participant 20 reiterated that that there was money for parent trainings but based on budget cuts and shifting school district priorities, they had become less effective.

Parent leaders at home and in the school community. Parents need opportunities to build leadership and advocacy skills to enhance student–parent–community partnerships. Schools will serve the family and community needs for health and social services and provide resources and information for accessing those services. Participant 27 shared his experience as a teacher whose former school had wraparound services. Wraparound services entail having social services at a school to help the parents and students get the services they need to be healthy. Participant 7 stated,

I believe that having all the services, parent engagement also happens in places where parents feel their students are safe, their kids are safe. It also is a place where a parent can come and say, "Oh I can come to the medical clinic at the school, because it was one floor." Now they have what they call wellness centers, but there was only a few high school, and I think the [redacted for privacy], being as big, understands, can identify the lowest performing schools, and we know that when you're a low performing school, it's a result of parents working, not being there in the services that they need. And I think if we push for wellness centers at them schools, they do have wellness centers in the [redacted

for privacy] but there's only four regional ones. I think it has to go above and beyond that

and I think that every high school, given that we have empty classrooms, need[s] to have

a wellness center, where all the community-based organizations are there to provide the

wraparound services, including mental health, family, job. That way the parents will

come to school and get services and then build that community that you're talking about.

Wraparound services are similar to the concept of having a community school. O'Donnell et al.

(2008) asserted, "Community schools are defined as a restructured academic programs that

emphasize community involvement and provide for a wide array of services for the parents and

the students" (p. 148). These schools work with the entire community to enhance student

learning.

Effective two-way communication. Communication must be translated into the

languages parents speak in their home. Parent liaison roles include helping keep the lines of

communication open between school and home and helping to create effective home–school

relationships. Communication was a prevalent theme in all the focus groups. Participants

expressed their dismay on how poorly the district communicates with the parents. They felt that

they either get very little information or they get the information late and they don't have enough

time to respond. Participant 21 stated,

Yeah, I meet with teachers, with the principal, because the parents and teachers, they

don't have that much communication. Parents come to me and pretty much tell me the

situations that they're having with their teachers so I kind of like tell them, oh you should

go and do this. You know, because they don't have that knowledge, so I don't know if

that was parent engagement that you were talking about.

Participant 15 responded,

Looking at my children involved in elementary school was very important for me. I think being a daughter of a single mother who was not involved really pushed me to want to be involved in my children's education. So in elementary school, where it is easier to get involved, it's there, I believe that the school is more welcoming, and there is, you're right as you say, somewhere in middle you pull back for whatever reason, ourselves, or the school not inviting, that you see that pulling back during middle school. But in high school, and it's a good reflection for me right now as my son is entering, actually making me reflecting, as coming to this, as a bilingual student, hablando español, fue su primer idioma, being his first language, and going from a bilingual class to a gifted class so It reminded me, made me remember that the teacher said, "Oh, he's the first one of his kind to enter," y como me quede lastimada, I felt very hurt but upset it, but good, let our bilingual children get into those classes considered magnet classes.

District-level support. Structures are provided to build parent capacity that is well-defined, meaningful participation where dialogue, empowerment, and action are critical components of educational reform. This mid-level structure will be fully funded and led by parent councils M. Johnson, 2011). The selective coding process revealed that policies and procedures was a final finding after the coding. The school district has in place many policies that will enhance parents and community members' involvement at the school. Based on the participants responses, the problem has been that the school district does not implement its own policies and procedures effectively.

Friendly school atmosphere. Schools should have signs posted throughout the school in many languages. The staff at every school should provide mandatory customer service every year for the entire school M. Johnson, 2011). Parents felt that the schools should have more

respect for them while they are at the school. In addition, participants wanted the schools to be more open and friendly. Participant 21 stated,

> I'm just going to add to this. You do have to have the resources for the families coming in, the parents, in order to engage in their child's education. You have to have the resources, and you also have to have that open-door policy for all parents. The parents are welcome to the school at all times. It shouldn't have appointments, and what I'm hearing a lot a now, if they don't have an appointment, they don't see a parent. Here I can have an open-door policy. They should be welcome at all times of the day, and someone should be there to always assist them and help them. So resources are very important and [an] open-door policy always should be at the school.

The themes safety, respect, healthy schools, district rules and regulations and communication, and parent training and resources were present across focus groups relating to Research Question 3.

Research Question 4 was as follows: How does community organizing contribute to the well-being of students in Sierra Vista, California? Participants shared the sentiment that the more connected community members are with each other and the schools, the more resources they can contribute. They also stated that teachers should go to the neighborhood where they are teaching. Participants felt that some teachers have a disconnect from the parents and the community. The participants indicated that teachers who participate and become more involved in the community would get to know the community and have stronger connections in the school and in the community.

Participant 27 stated,

It's collective learnings that we are educating ourselves as a community. It becomes a part of history. It's something that's always going to be a part of history. And I think

having that, having these community participants, not directing—she didn't teach me, but

because I was there present it's in my collective learning, it's in my mind that I remember

the battles we fought for, and it was community organizing, and I think that it's important

for the community to come together and discuss issues and have that, but like they said,

it's also knowing how to get the infrastructure, the network, the power structure, to get

the resources, and a lot of times the way I learn through my research, as I look at the

White community, that's really well organized, well, how do they do it, and then you talk

their strategies to our strategies, because you all don't reinvent the wheel. It's all there.

Auerbach (2010) asserted that parent engagement can be reinforced by administrators developing

community organizing programs that aim to increase parent involvement at school. Many

participants felt that there should be a connection between the schools and the community and

recommended that the school district hire more social workers to help do outreach in the

community to make these connections. Participant 28 noted,

I think we need to take it a step further and maybe the schools, they know where the kids

live and all that. Maybe there needs to be a program where they go to the home and talk

to the families and share with them how important it is that the families are engaged and

encourage them to participate in these programs, let them know that these programs are

there, how they operate, what's free, what costs money, what options they have in

encouraging them to go.

Participants stated that the school principal could be more open and friendly to parents visiting

the schools and to the parent volunteers. They felt that the principal sets the tone for the school.

The themes actions at the board, safety, healthy schools, district rules and regulations and

communication, parent training and resources, civic participation, and youth opportunities and

open space were present across focus groups relating to Research Question 4.

Research Question 5 was as follows: How can a collaboration of parents and community members provide support to students at Sierra Vista High School? Some participants felt school site councils are a great way to get parents, students, and community members active at the high school level. Other participants talked about the neighborhood council in the area. They felt that the council should do a better job in outreach to let residents know what is going on in the community. Participant 2 shared her experience with the neighborhood council:

> I tried when I was in the neighborhood councils for 8 years, there are area reps that take care of a couple of blocks, not very many, it's not a lot, it's not 20, 25 blocks. I tried to get them to, and I think it would be very helpful, I tried to get them to do monthly meetings for their areas, their three, four, five blocks, I thought it was a great idea, and it never happened. I thought that would be, I think it would be great if they actually did their job and represented each area the way they are supposed to or who they represent and hear out our problems. Maybe they can help us.

Another participant felt that by having more community events and getting people to get to know one another helps unite the community. Participant 1 stated,

> I'm a big believer in community events to bring people together in a festive environment, So I think, for example, if we take [redacted for privacy], there is community events, but to create new types of events, to bring in more of the community out, close to [redacted for privacy], bring everyone out, as much people from the streets, all the, you know, all the avenues, so we can know each other at least in a positive way. Bring them out.

Participant 4 felt that respect was a big concern and neighbors should build and have respect for one another, which helps them when they need to be there for each other and help raise their children. Participant 4 responded,

Because we know each other for a long of time, we are neighbors, and we are becoming

like a family, and the kids, like [Participant] Number 2 said, would know each other and

there's some kind of always respect and not only respect but they know that they can

come to us as a parent too in case of she's not there or one of the parents is not there.

They come to you, you know, it's very very important.

Participant 2 stated,

You're educated when you get involved. That education you pass on to your children,

and now we're a better community because we are well aware, we know what's going on,

and also where to go if we have a problem, you know, finding solutions for our

neighborhood.

The theoretical framework cited for this study was organizing for power. The steps of the

organizing for power model are listen, plan, act, and evaluate (see Table 9). A collaboration of

parents and community members can provide support to students at Sierra Vista High School. By

looking at the themes shared in the focus groups, the model could be implemented in Sierra

Vista. By applying the organizing for power framework, parents and community members can

come together and develop an organizing plan to improve the lives of students. The themes

healthy schools, district rules and regulations and communication, respect for neighbors, civic

participation, and youth opportunities and open space were present across focus groups relating

to Research Question 5.

Table 9

Organizing for Power Model With the Final Selective Coding Themes

Organizing for power model	Final categories from the focus groups

Listen:
  Learn and develop the common story.
  Share values, interests, and desired futures.
	Policies and procedures
	Time
	Healthy schools
	Civic engagement
	Gentrification

Plan:
  Identify the goals of the community members.
  Develop strategies and tactics to achieve those objectives.
	Have school district follow procedures, Have community events, educate the public.

Act: "With an organization purpose, 'our people' collectively focus on a particular issue by engaging a specific person [the target] to produce a desired reaction" (Lindquist, Walquist, Horner, & Beck, 2008, p. 3).	Meeting with school officials, organize a community forum, meet with city officials.
Evaluate: Ongoing, consistent, and systematic assessment of community actions.	How did the events go? What can be done better?

Conclusions

        This research study involved examining the nexus between parent engagement and

community organizing and the ways both may support each other. Conclusions and

recommendations from this study are based on the perspectives revealed by participants during

the two focus group sessions and then confirmed by the member check in Focus Group 3.

        Conclusion 1: There is a connection between parent engagement and community

organizing. Twelve of the 28 participants shared their organizing stories. The stories included

community organizing, organizing around school issues, such as an issue with the principal and

organized efforts aimed at the school board around school funding. The findings showed that a

relationship exists between parent engagement and community organizing. However, based on

this research, not a single community-based organization in the community has the goals and the

mission to connect the two groups, and the school district does not have a mechanism to connect the two.

Conclusion 2: Latino parents and community want to be active and involved in their children's lives. The theme of time was a major factor for parents. All the participants felt that they wanted to do more and be more active and engaged at their schools. The parents felt that they did not have the time to attend the meetings at the school. They were either working or they had other responsibilities they were tending to. The times that school held their meetings was also a factor for the parents not being able to attend. The parents felt that the meetings should also be held on alternating times and days, including some on Saturdays. The parents stated that the schools could also have meetings after work hours, for example at 6:00 or 7:00 p.m.

Henderson et al. (2007) stated that in many homes of families with a low socioeconomic status, the parents and caretakers often have more than one job, which affects their ability to be with their children and the amount of time that they have to spend with them at school. In addition to poverty, homelessness and affordable housing are a big concern for low-income families. These factors affect parents' ability to have meaningful engagement at the schools. The findings showed that parents had many constraints that prevented them from being more active and involved at the school. This conclusion was supported by Guerra and Valverde (2008), who indicated, "Schools with populations that are mostly, if not entirely, composed of students of Color are usually in need of more human capital than the state funding can provide" (p. 4). The parents wanted to be active and involved but noted the need for more resources that would allow them to attend meetings and activities. If the school could invest in more social workers and parent outreach staff members, they could help find solutions on how to be more accessible and open to parents and community members. Lastly, the findings supported Ceballo's (2004) research with Latino parents. Ceballo's study showed Latino parents have high expectations of

their children and encourage their children to do well by verbally encouraging and praising them. The children of some of the parent participants in Ceballo's study had successfully enrolled in or graduated from a 4-year university. The parents in this research study were active and engaged in their children's education. Furthermore, they were very supportive and nurturing toward them.

Conclusion 3: The school district's rules and regulations can hinder parent and community engagement. The findings revealed that parents and community members felt hindered by the bureaucracy of the school district, the unfriendly attitude of some staff, and the unwelcoming feeling at the school. According to Henderson et al. (2007), as the leaders of schools, principals should educate themselves about the dynamic of parent and community activism. The participants in this study felt that principals could do more to make the school more welcoming to parents and community members. Auerbach (2010) asserted that administrators can reinforce parent engagement by developing community organizing programs that aim at increasing parent involvement at the school. Participants felt that they are asked to be active and volunteer with the school, but when they arrive on campus, they do not feel welcome. They stressed that the school needs to feel open to the parents and community. Participant 20 shared the following sentiment:

> You do have to have the resources for the families coming in, the parents, in order to engage in their child's education. You have to have the resources and you also have to have that open door policy for all parents. The parents are welcome to the school at all times. It shouldn't have appointments, and what I'm hearing a lot a now, if they don't have an appointment, they don't see a parent. Here I can have an open door policy, they should be welcome at all times of the day, and someone should be there to always assist them and help them. So resources are very important and [an] open-door policy always should be at the school.

Participant 21 also stated,

> Yeah, I believe that administration [should] be more friendly with the parents. Because I
> know that a lot of parents, they just try to avoid even going to the office or even talking to
> the principal or even if they need help with anything, they don't, like, once you tell them,
> "Oh you have to go into the office and talk to such and such," they're like, "Oh they're
> not going to help me," and they just leave. They don't even try.

Conclusion 4: Parents want to be communicated with in a real way and with proper notice. The findings indicated that there is a need for more and better quality communication from the schools to the parents. Participants shared their experiences with schools that indicated that they would sometimes get late notices or missed the flyer. They felt that the schools could find ways to communicate with them. The findings support Ackerman (2011), who asserted that schools and educational leaders can make schools more open and friendly to urban parents of color by providing them with positive experiences that motivate and enlighten them.

Conclusion 5: Community-based organizations are not working in a cohesive manner together in Sierra Vista. The community-based organizations that the researcher reached out to clearly had their own goals and objectives. The researcher visited the Boys and Girls club, local library, neighborhood churches and the Sierra Park neighborhood council. No cohesive system allowed the organizations to work together. The neighborhood council, which is an elected body of community members who seek to improve the community, does work on various issues to improve the community. However, they do not include parents and community engagement as a part of their mission statement. Not one community-based organization had a mission to connect the community with the schools to improve the lives of students. Participants expressed the desire to work together and organize for a better community. Participant 27 shared the following:

For me, community, what it means, it's a belonging, it's a home, it's a collective, it's a

collective environment where people share experiences and live to together in the modern

sense of the word, to take it to the step. It also means civil participation, it means

organizing, get together to protect our interests, and to move our interests forward as a

community. We need civic participation.

From the focus group discussions, it was clear that participants felt that community organizing

could bring more resources to the community and to students. If the community organizations in

Sierra Vista wanted to find ways to collaborate with one another, one option is to form a

community-based organization. The community of Sierra Vista could form a community-based

organization with a mission of parents and community members working together to give more

resources to students. These findings are consistent with the organizing endeavors of Mediratta et

al. (2009), who found that (a) community organizing increased district officials' responsiveness

to low-income parents of color; (b) once the organizing campaigns were in full swing, district

allocations began to reflect the campaigns' call to preserve or expand equity; and (c) over time,

new district initiatives were increasingly consistent with the community groups' proposal.

Conclusion 6: Gentrification is a concern for the residents in this community. The

participants shared stories on newcomers in the community not being as friendly and not

knowing the community. Participant 2 shared her dismay at how the new neighbors act:

Yes, yes, oh can you move up a little bit? Can you move up that space? That didn't work.

The hints didn't work, and I also have been saying hi to the gentrification movement

that's been coming. I go when I see them walking in front of my house, "Oh hi, how are

you?" And they look at me like I'm crazy, but I'm sorry, that's what I'm used to doing in

my neighbor. I say hi to my neighbors, and I don't think that's crazy, so I wish that they

would be more open, and so I really don't know if I know what to do.

Participant 11 spoke about her experiences at a new café in the neighborhood:

> Really quick, some of the things, just I do introduce ourselves to our new neighbors and
>
> I'm in their face, kindness, heyyy, and for the gentrifiers at the coffee shops when they're
>
> not nice, I'm like, ohhhh, I tell them I'm not giving a tip because of that and that hurts
>
> their feelings but I'm like, "Whatever, Sunshine, be friendly next time."

Gentrification can affect the community on many important levels. The first is that the low-cost housing stock is taken up and the rent prices will go up for the Latino families. The second issue is that as the rents go up, many families find themselves having to leave their neighborhood and find cheaper rent in another community. Lastly, gentrification affects the schools. Many of the newcomers are younger and don't have children. As the low-income Latino families move out, the school will suffer from low enrollment, which will affect the schools' budgets and how many teachers and health and human services staff the school has. These findings aligned with Henderson et al.'s (2007) research on parent and community engagement. Henderson et al. found that in addition to poverty, homelessness and affordable housing are big concerns for low-income families. Family patterns are also changing, as more children are living with grandparents and other family members. These factors affect parents' ability to be able to have meaningful engagement at the schools. Gentrification has been a major issue in Southern California and has affected many low-income Latino communities.

Recommendations

The recommendations made in this study are significant in providing support to parents and community members. Recommendations from this study are based on the conclusions and on the perspectives revealed by participants in this study.

Recommendation 1: The school district could find ways to implement its own comprehensive plan for parent engagement. The school district has a District Title I Parent

Involvement Policy. The policy was developed by Title I parents and school district staff. The following are the five goals the school district instituted to follow and implement.

The School District School Goals for Parent Engagement are: Provide a welcoming environment for families and invite them to participate as equal partners in the education of their children; Provide parents opportunities to acquire necessary information; knowledge, and skills to support their children's education at home and at school; Engage parents in the school's volunteer program so they can participate in supporting school-wide, classroom, and parent involvement activities; Respond to parent concerns and/or complaints to ensure child's educational needs are met; Comply with all school district, State, and Federal requirements regarding parent involvement. Each of the goals have specific objectives to help achieve of the goals**.**

Provide a welcoming environment for families and invite them to participate as equal partners in the education of their children. All the respondents shared their concern for the schools to be more open and friendly to parents and volunteers. By following this goal the school principal and staff would develop strategies for ensuring the school is equipped and staff trained to make this goal achievable.

Provide parents opportunities to acquire necessary information, knowledge, and skills to support their children's education at home and at school. This goal also has a specific step for developing a school Partnership Action Team (PAT). This goal would ensure that the school has a plan to implement outreach strategies to the parents and the community.

- o A school Partnership Action Team (PAT) guides all efforts to implement an effective plan for family engagement, including the home- school compact
- o Parent center staff and members of the PAT receive training and support to carry

out their roles

Engage parents in the school's volunteer program so they can participate in supporting school-wide, classroom, and parent involvement activities. Many of the parents who had participated at the school complained that they were not treated in a professional manner and that they felt they were not appreciated. This goal would ensure that the volunteer plan is implemented and followed.

o   A staff person is designated to oversee the school volunteer program

o   All parents are invited to join and participate in the school volunteer program

o   Training is provided for volunteers based on their assignment and need

o   Volunteer support teachers in the classroom as well as school-wide activities

o   The school annually assesses the impact of the volunteer program on school operations, school climate, and student performance

Respond to parent concerns and/or complaints to ensure child's educational needs are met. This goal would allow the parents and volunteers a mechanism for making sure that their voices are heard. In the event that they have an issue or concern, they will be given the proper channel to voice their concern

o   Rights of parents and children are respected and communicated to promote trust

o   Staff is respectful and informative in interactions with parents

Comply with all school district, State, and Federal requirements regarding parent involvement. It is important that parents and community members know their rights under the law. By knowing the law, they can demand action from the school principal or the district. If the district does not comply, parents and community members can file a Uniform Complaint (UCP). Them the allegation is investigated by a compliance team with the school district.

o School staff and parents know the requirements and mandates of the following:

o NCLB, including Title I Policy and School-Parent Compact

o CDE requirements for operation of SSCs and school-level advisory committees

o School district parents as equal partners resolution and task force recommendations, including development of school action teams, partnerships for wrap around services in parent centers, and a plan for parent involvement

o Parents/staff know their rights under the Uniform Complaint Procedure (UCP)

By following the five goals above, the majority of the issues that the parents and community members had concerning the schools would be alleviated. In addition, the schools would have a robust parent and volunteer program.

Recommendation 2: Community-based organizations could find ways to work together to connect by communities. There is currently no community-based organization in Sierra Vista with a mission statement that includes bringing together parents and community members to finds ways to help students do better in school. Warren and Mapp (2011) found that various community-based organizations engaged in organizing for education reform were able to bridge the common ties that parents, youth, and community leaders had with educational leaders. The community of Sierra Vista would greatly benefit from a community-based organization whose mission is to bring parent and community members together to find ways to promote success. Skerry described organizing as transferring "informal, primary groups between friends and neighbors into the instrumental ties binding members of a formal organization" (as cited in Erlich & Felix**[any chance this should be Rivera & Erlich?]**, 1998, p. 59).

Community-based organizations working together bring all the stakeholders together to work toward the reform needed in their schools. Some community-based organizations believe the purpose of organizing is to empower parents as community members to monitor officials'

behavior toward policy enforcement and complying with shared objectives (Warren & Mapp, 2011). For example, a Sierra Vista community-based organization collective could meet quarterly to strategically plan to work together. This collective could include the Boys and Girls Club, the Church of the Episcopalian, and the neighborhood council.

Recommendation 3: Schools could survey parents and community to see how they are perceived. The survey can be conducted in the fall and again in the spring each year. This will allow the principal and staff to receive feedback from parents and community members and to remedy any potential bad practices. This would also allow for valuable input for the staff when they are working on school activities. Lastly, this would allow for valuable input for the staff when they are working on school activities. See Appendix H for the survey questions.

Recommendation 4: The neighborhood council could create an ad hoc committee for parents and community outreach around educational issues. The neighborhood council could play a key role in addressing the deficiencies that exist between the schools and the community. Arriaza (2004) contended that school reform initiatives have a better chance of being institutionalized when the community actively participates as an empowered agent. Arriaza also noted that the community can play an important and long-lasting role in school reform. The neighborhood council can play a unique and powerful role in making these connections.

Recommendation 5: Recommendations for future research.

- Future research should look into Latino urban parent engagement in multiple communities and additional secondary schools.
- Future research should examine the relationships between Latino parents who are a first generation to see the differences between first generation and second generation Latino parents. Specifically, what are the levels of parent engagement perceptions between the two distinct generations. The literature showed the generational differences of Latinos

that depending on if a Latino is U.S. born or immigrated to the U.S. will have a different

linguistic, educational and cultural experience. These experiences affect how Latinos

navigate through their educational and adult lives. By studying the two groups, it would

allow the researcher to see how this affects parent engagement at the secondary level and

what the differences are between the two different generations.

- Future research should investigate the relationship with current community-based

  organizations that are actively organizing parents and community members and examine

  the effect on student achievement.

Study Validity

The study included the criteria proposed by Trochim and Donnelly (as cited in Kumar,

2011, p. 185):

Credibility: Taking the research conducted and asking for feedback from the participants.

Each participant was asked the same questions in the interview guide. In addition, the

information collected was shared with the participants for feedback.

Transferability: The information gathered can be transferred to other settings. The study

was well documented, so future researchers can follow how it was conducted and completed and

can duplicate the study.

Dependability: It may be difficult to obtain the same results as this qualitative grounded

theory study due to the geographic nature and limited sample. However, this study was

documented so that future researchers can follow how it was conducted.

Confirmability: It is possible for other researchers to attain similar results if they follow

the same process (Kumar, 2011, p. 185).

The researcher will encourage the participants to share other ideas or concerns that they have in relation to the study model. For example, this research could be duplicated to include a larger area in Southern California that would encompass multiple secondary schools.

Final Thoughts

The goal for this qualitative grounded theory study was to understand parent and community engagement at schools and in the community. Through focus group discussions, the researcher discovered strategies that might help foster and sustain this engagement. Through the study, the researcher's goal was to find out how to increase parents' and community members' involvement and how to share this information with schools and the community. The researcher is confident that the parents and community members can reach their goals by using the rich resources that already exist within the communities. Each and every stakeholder needs to build up these relationships to empower the community and give students the resources they need to succeed.

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APPENDIX A

Recruitment Flier

Seeking Parents and Community Members

I am working on a project that looks at parent engagement and community organizing with Latino urban parents. The study will be conducted by Christopher Arellano, a graduate student at Pepperdine University.

Would you will be available to participate in a group discussion with me and other Latino parents and community members? I will provide refreshments.

If you will agree to participate, I will arrange the date, a convenient location and time for your group discussion. Your participation is voluntary and you may discontinue your participation at any time.

Your name and all identifying information will be kept confidential. Are you willing to participate? If you are please fill out this sign-up form with your information and I will contact you to let you know the dates and times of the focus group interview.

If you are interested please contact Christopher Arellano at [redacted for privacy] by email at [redacted for privacy]

APPENDIX B

Parent and Community Outreach Sign-Up Sheet

Pepperdine University Graduate & Professional Schools Institutional Review Board (GPS IRB) Short Form Consent for Subjects Whom English is their Second Language to Participate in Research

	Last Name	First Name	Parent or community member at Sierra Vista ?	Education level in the US?	Email	Phone
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APPENDIX C

Parent and Community Sign-In Sheet

	Last Name	First Name	Current parent of student at Sierra Vista HS	Mailing Address	Email	Phone	Gender	Age	Occupation	Number of Children at the Sierra Vista?	Education level in the US?
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APPENDIX D

Short Form Consent for Subjects Whom English Is Their Second Language to Participate in

Research

PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY

Graduate School of Education and Psychology

SHORT FORM CONSENT FOR SUBJECTS WHOM ENGLISH IS THEIR SECOND LANGUAGE TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Parent Engagement and Community Organizing with Latino Urban Parents

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Before you agree to enter the study, it is important that you receive a clear explanation of the study in a language that you can understand. The following is a list of what you are agreeing to when you sign this consent form.

A translator who is either one of the investigators conducting the study or one of their representatives has explained to you about the purpose of this dissertation research study is to use a grounded theory methodological approach to understand if the efforts to organize a mostly Latino immigrant urban community will also support efforts to get parents engaged in their local urban high school. Educators, schools and policymakers will have access to perspectives of Latino parents about Latino parent involvement in their children's education and in their experiences with community organizing. The research from this study will add to the growing literature of culturally diverse families in the United States. Additionally, organizations dedicated to enhancing family-school partnerships will be able to utilize the data on Latino parents to carry out their purpose.

You understand that I have the right to refuse participation. Moreover, if you become uncomfortable at any time during the group interview, you understand that you can discontinue my participation and the results will not be used in the study. You also have the right to refuse to answer any question.

You understand that there is no payment for participation in this study.

You understand that you name and relevant information gathered from my participation will not be released as part of this study. In order to minimize risk, my confidentiality will be protected in a variety of ways: my real name will only be used on this form when you sign it; you will be assigned a number that will be used when the researcher transcribes the interviews; any information that anyone could use to identify me will be blocked out of the interview tapes and

transcriptions; the researcher and two research assistants will have access to the audio tapes of the interview and the transcriptions; the audio tapes and the interview transcriptions will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's home; the audio tapes will be destroyed after the study is completed.

As a result, potential risks associated with this participation in this study include: breach of confidentiality, boredom, negative self-reflections and impact upon your self-esteem.

You understand that under California law, the researcher is obligated to report to authorities any alleged abuse of a child, elders, dependent adults or to self, others or property.

You have been told that if you are injured as a result of being in this research study, immediate necessary medical care will be offered to you. However, there is no commitment by Pepperdine University and its affiliates to provide monetary compensation or free medical care to you in the event of a study-related injury.
You understand that the researcher is willing to answer all questions or concerns. Additionally, you can contact Christopher Arellano at [redacted for privacy]. If you have further questions, you may contact my faculty Dr. Reyna Garcia Ramos at Pepperdine University at [redacted for privacy] if you have questions or concerns about this research. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, contact Dr. Judy Ho, Chairperson of the Graduate & Professional Schools Institutional Review Board (GPS IRB) at Pepperdine University [redacted for privacy].

You have been told that your participation in this research is voluntary and that you will not be penalized or lose benefits if you refuse to participate or decide to stop after you have agreed to participate.

If you agree to participate, you have been told you will be given a signed copy of this document and a written summary of the research in the English language.

Signing this document means that the research study, including the above information, has been described to you orally, and that you voluntarily agree to participate.

_____

Signature of Participant   Date

_____

Signature of Principal Investigator   Date

APPENDIX E

Parent and Community Interview Guide

Parent Engagement

1. What is the level of parent engagement at Sierra Vista, High School?

2. How does parent engagement contribute the well-being of students at Sierra Vista High school?

3. What are some ways you would like to be involved or volunteer at the school?

4. What could the school do to help you be more engaged?

5. What are the most convenient times for activities and meetings at school for you?

6. How do you promote learning at home?

7. How is homework interactive?

8. Please tell us what type of trainings and workshops you would be interested in attending at the school? For example: technology & computers, parenting, positive strategies for parents, health & safety, ESL classes, and community organizing and development.

9. In what ways is the school preparing your child to deal with issues and problems he or she will face in the future?

10. Do you feel the school's programs are broad enough to meet the educational needs of all students in the community? Why or why not?

11. In what ways are parents made to feel welcomed in the school?

12. How is your input considered when school decisions are made?

13. How can you have a better understanding of the school's programs and operations?

14. In what ways does the school communicate with you, what could be done better?

15. Please tell us what type of programs for parents and community you would like to see offered at the school (Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies, 2007).

Community Organizing

16. What is the level of community organizing at Sierra Vista, California?

17. How does community organizing contribute to the well-being of students, parents, and community in Sierra Vista, California?

18. Who do we listen to each other in this community?

19. What are our community goals?

20. What kind of actions can we take to improve our community?

21. What do we value most?

22. Where do we want this community to go in the next five, ten, twenty years?

23. Have you ever worked in the community? If so where?

24. Have you ever volunteered in this community? If so where? Where else?

25. Can you think of what would make this community better?

26. What services do you think we could use?

27. How do people in this area build community?

28. How do we build and sustain relationships?

29. How do we increase problem solving and group decision making?

30. How do we improve our ability to collaborate effectively to identify goals and get work done? (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; Mattessich & Monsey, 2008).

APPENDIX F

Script

Hello. My name is Christopher Arellano. I am a student at Pepperdine University. I am working on a project that looks at parent engagement and community organizing with Latino urban parents. The study will be conducted by Christopher Arellano, a graduate student at Pepperdine University.

Would you will be available to participate in a group discussion with me and other Latino parents and community members?

If you will agree to participate, I will arrange the date, a convenient location and time for your group discussion. Your participation is voluntary and you may discontinue your participation at any time.

Your name and all identifying information will be kept confidential. Are you willing to participate? If you are please fill out this sign-up form with your information and I will contact you to let you know the dates and times of the focus group interview.

If you are interested please contact Christopher Arellano at [redacted for privacy] or by email at [redacted for privacy].

APPENDIX G

IRB Approval Letter

PEPPERDINE

NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

Date: July 26, 2016

Protocol Investigator Name: Christopher Arellano

Protocol #: 16-07-323

Project Title: PARENT ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZING WITH LATINOS: A QUALITATIVE GROUNDED THEORY STUDY OF AN URBAN COMMUNITY

School: Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Dear Christopher Arellano:

Thank you for submitting your application for exempt review to Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). We appreciate the work you have done on your proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations 45 CFR 46.101 that govern the protections of human subjects.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit an amendment to the IRB. Since your study falls under exemption, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite the best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete written explanation of the event and your written response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the IRB and documenting the adverse event can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual* at community.pepperdine.edu/irb.

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all communication or correspondence related to your application and this approval. Should you have additional questions or require clarification of the contents of this letter, please contact the IRB Office. On behalf of the IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,

Judy Ho, Ph.D., IRB Chairperson

PEPPERDINE

cc: Dr. Lee Kats, Vice Provost for Research and Strategic Initiatives

Mr. Brett Leach, Regulatory Affairs Specialist

APPENDIX H

Parent and Community Survey.

Dear Parents and Community members: Our school wants to know more about its families and their rich and interesting cultural heritage. With this information, the Family and Community Engagement Team can plan better programs to build on our students' home cultures. We also want to know about how families would like to help.

1. What are some ways you would like to be involved at the school?
2. What could the school do to help you be more involved?
3. What the most convenient times for activities and meetings at school?
4. What are your hobbies, skills, talents, and interests?
5. Please tell us what type of trainings and workshops you would be interested in attending at the school? For example: technology & computers, parenting, positive strategies for parents, health & safety, ESL classes, and community organizing and development.

Parent-School Communication: Open ended questions.

6. Our school's educational program is of high quality.
7. Our school is doing an excellent job teaching:
8. The size of classes does not affect the quality of my child's education.
9. My child has access to a variety of resources to help him/her learn.
10. Our school is preparing my child to deal with issues and problems he or she will face in the future.
11. The school's programs are broad enough to meet the educational needs of all students in the community.
12. Students in our school show respect for each other.
13. Our school's discipline policies are fair and effective.
14. Students in our school demonstrate sensitivity to racial and ethnic issues.
15. Teachers and administrators at our school demonstrate sensitivity to racial and ethnic issues.
16. Our school provides students and teachers with a safe and orderly environment.
17. Teachers and administrators at our school demonstrate genuine concern for the wellbeing of students.
18. Students at our school demonstrate genuine concern for the wellbeing of fellow students.
19. Parents feel welcome in our schools.
20. The views of parents are seriously considered when school decisions are made.
21. Parents have a good understanding of the school's programs and operations.
22. Parents receive information they need about the school's programs.

23. Please expand upon your assessment of any areas in which our school could improve. We welcome your suggestions and will hold an open house later this fall to discuss the results of this survey.
24. Please tell us what type of programs for parents and community you would like to see offered at the school.