



When New Relationships Meet Old Narratives: The Journey Towards Improving Parent-School Relations in a District-Community Organizing Collaboration

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Background/Context: Faced with rapidly changing demographics, districts are increasingly looking to partner with parents to support and improve student learning. Community organizing holds promise for pursuing educational equity through the development of low-income parent participation and leadership, but previous research has focused primarily on the use of structural social capital theory in qualitative studies to understand school-based organizing mechanisms and impacts in traditional urban centers.

Focus of Study: The aim of this study was to examine whether district-level organizing efforts might be associated with improved parent-school relations in schools and how such efforts to build a new relationship may be enacted and negotiated at the school level within the context of a district-organizing group collaboration in a “new immigrant” destination.

Research Design: This mixed-methods sequential explanatory study used social capital and the concept of institutional scripts to quantitatively investigate the relationship between Latino parent organizing and parent-school relations across a district, then qualitatively explore the dynamics of parent-school social capital in a nested case study of one school.

Data Collection and Analysis: Using teacher-survey data from a stratified random sample of teachers in schools across the district, I fit multilevel regression models to examine whether schools with more organizing engagement had greater structural and functional parent-school social capital. I subsequently analyzed interview, observation, and document data to examine how organizing efforts sought to build positive parent-school relations at an elementary school that represented a key focal point for the district-organizing group collaboration.

Findings/Results: Schools with high organizing had greater structural social capital than schools with little or no organizing, but high organizing schools did not have greater functional social capital in the form of teacher-parent trust. The case study findings suggested that the dominant institutional scripts about the role of parents were simultaneously rewritten and reinforced even as organizing approaches worked to foster a new relationship between parents and educators.

Conclusions/Recommendations: Districts and schools that collaborate with community organizing groups can augment their social resources and expertise, particularly in reaching out to low-income Latino parents and effectively educating their children. Yet, the dominant institutional scripts in schools - about the role of parents, professional authority, and control - suggest the complexity of efforts to improve parent-school relations. Those seeking to build meaningful parent and community participation in schools would do well to move beyond traditional forms of parent involvement in the journey toward deeper engagement and collaboration.

“We want to change the paradigm. Parents are your partners. We are part of the solution, not a roadblock.”
Eduardo Angulo, Director, Salem-Keizer Coalition for Equality

“It took trust from both sides, from the school officials to trust the community and the Coalition, and the community to trust the school officials. It took time. That journey probably took ten years.”
Diego Perez, Salem-Keizer District Administrator

INTRODUCTION

Faced with persistent race- and class-based educational inequities coupled with rapid growth in the school-age Latino student population, schools and districts are increasingly looking to partner with parents and the community to support student learning (Conchas & Goyette, 2001; Fry & Gonzales, 2008; Schutz, 2006). Yet, conventional forms of school-community partnerships with businesses, social service agencies, or Parent-Teacher Associations often leave out the low-income Latino parents and communities with the most at stake in struggling schools or treat them as beneficiaries whose best interests are known exclusively by professionals (Crowson & Boyd, 2001). Moreover, traditional assumptions about parental involvement in schools privilege a limited repertoire of normative practices; when Latino parents do not adhere to those expectations, they are framed as disinterested “roadblocks” in their children’s education, and their communities are viewed as “culturally deficient” obstacles to student success (Delgado-Gaitan, 2001; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992; Monkman, Ronald, & Théràmène, 2005; Valencia & Black, 2002). Yet, despite this “whirlwind of old hostilities” (Landes, 1963), the district and community leaders quoted above came to establish a different dynamic in their relationship in the service of improving student academic success.

The participant quotes above speak to the possibility of an emerging dynamic of collaboration between parents and educators for school improvement. Within the growing field of collaboration between public schools and community-based organizations (Warren, 2005), many community-organizing groups across the country are working to build a “new relationship” between educators and the parents and communities most affected by low-performing public schools (Conchas & Goyette, 2001; Fine, 1993; Salem/Keizer Coalition for Equality, 2008; Schutz, 2006). In contrast to the more typical school-community partnerships described above, a community organizing approach to school reform focuses on developing the relationships, leadership, and collective power of low-income parents and neighbors themselves to collaborate with and hold educators accountable for improving education in their communities (Mediratta, 2002; Warren, 2005).

Scholars now estimate there to be some 500 organizing groups focused on education reform as well as a growing number of schools and districts across the country who are engaged—and even collaborating with—these organizing groups (Warren, 2010). Although the literature suggests that community organizing can be a potentially powerful force for educational equity (Gold et al., 2002; Mediratta, Shah, & McAlister, 2009; Oakes & Rogers, 2006; Warren et al., 2011), there has been limited examination of how *district*-focused organizing may contribute to building social capital in the form of relationships between low-income parents and schools that can foster educational improvement. Moreover, though the literature has documented how organizing efforts seek to improve parent-school relations, there has been less focus on what happens when organizing efforts encounter the conventional norms and assumptions about the role of parents in schools. Such norms frame marginalized or low-income parents, at best, as primarily passive supporters of the schools’ agenda and, at worst, as interferences and barriers to their child’s learning (Schutz, 2006; Warren, Hong, Rubin, & Uy, 2009).

The purpose of this study is to shed light on the potential for this “new relationship” between educators and low-income Latino parents to transform education for their students in the context of these power-laden “old narratives.” Within the context of a district-organizing group collaboration, this study examined: (a) whether schools with greater organizing engagement had more parent-school social capital than similar schools in the district with little or no organizing, and (b) how organizing efforts to build parent-school social capital were enacted and negotiated at the school-level. The first research question sought to examine whether district-focused organizing efforts in a new immigrant context paralleled findings from school-focused organizing studies in established immigrant urban centers, specifically in terms of the association between organizing and greater parent-school social capital. The second research question built on the answer to the first question, in order to probe how organizing efforts might encounter traditional norms about the role of marginalized parents in schools.

To address these questions, I examined the parent-school relations within a collaboration between the district leadership and a low-income Latino parent organizing group in Salem-Keizer, Oregon, a mid-sized “new immigrant destination” district with a rapidly growing Latino student population (Singer, Hardwick, & Brettell, 2008). Beginning in 2005-2006, the leadership of the Salem-Keizer Public Schools and the Salem-Keizer Coalition for Equality (“the Coalition”) undertook joint efforts to improve instruction and academic outcomes for Latino and English language learner (ELL) students across the district. Using a sequential explanatory mixed-method approach (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011), I first drew on quantitative teacher survey data from across the district to examine the school-level relationships between organizing and parent-school relations. I then followed up with a qualitative case study of parent-school relations in one elementary school at the center of the district-organizing group collaboration to develop a more contextual understanding of the quantitative district-wide findings (Bryman, 2006 as cited in Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

I begin by reviewing the recent literature on community organizing for educational equity, particularly the prominent use of social capital as a theoretical mechanism linking parent-school relations and school improvement. I then draw on the concept of institutional scripts from neo-institutional theory as an underexplored lens for

understanding how organizing efforts may encounter the dominant narratives about parents in schools. I describe the study design, methods, and data before presenting two findings that emerged from my mixed-methods approach. Consistent with other studies of community organizing, I found that there are, indeed, better parent-school relations and more social capital in schools associated with greater organizing. However, this relationship may be more nuanced than previous studies have suggested; although organizing was associated with greater *structural* forms of social capital in this study, I found no relationship with one form of *functional* social capital: teacher-parent trust. The qualitative findings suggest that the traditional institutional scripts about the role of parents may have been in tension with efforts to establish teacher-parent trust. Thus, district-focused parent organizing can cultivate greater social capital as a resource for school improvement, but the tension between this newer form of parent action and traditional educator narratives around parent involvement may require a deeper, more developmental approach over time to realize a shared vision of parents as true partners in schools. The article concludes with implications for research, theory, and practice.

LITERATURE ON COMMUNITY ORGANIZING FOR EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

The collaborative efforts of educators and parents are critical to student achievement and school improvement, particularly in schools serving predominantly low-income, traditionally marginalized students (Bryk et al., 2010; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Shirley, 2009). Yet, at many low-income urban schools, parents and communities feel unwelcome and powerless in their children's schools and have little voice in the decisions that affect them (Fine, 1999; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003). In particular, low-income Latino parents often find school environments to be inequitable spaces for their engagement, from language barriers that make it difficult to navigate and express their concerns to cultural differences and power dynamics that constrain their ability to critique and act in the school context (Carreón, Drake, & Barton, 2005; Olivos, 2006). A burgeoning literature suggests a promising, new approach to addressing these dynamics by engaging the parents and neighbors most affected by struggling schools in improvement efforts: community organizing for educational equity. Though rooted in scholarship on parent involvement (Epstein, 1995, 2001; Fan, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Schutz, 2006); parent empowerment (Barton et al., 2004; Bolivar & Chrispeels, 2011; Delgado-Gaitan, 2001; Fine, 1999; Monkman, Ronald, & Thérémène, 2005; Olivos, 2006); as well as social movements more broadly (Oakes & Lipton, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2002, and others), the field of education organizing has experienced explosive growth since the early 1990s (Mediratta, Shah, & McAlister, 2009; Shirley, 2009; Warren et al., 2011). The research literature has become increasingly robust since that time, yet there is still a great deal to learn about these efforts and considerable room for theoretical development to leverage the lessons of community organizing for education reform more broadly for educational practice and policy.

The largely qualitative and descriptive literature on community organizing for educational equity highlights its distinctions from other related bodies of research. The research suggests a sea change in the role of low-income parents and community members in educational institutions as well as local and even state politics - from that of clients or beneficiaries to that of engaged citizens and change agents (Mediratta & Karp, 2003; Shirley, 1997; Warren, 2001). Studies of these efforts reveal organizing groups' school improvement work as part of a broader agenda to build strong, democratic participation and healthy communities (Beam & Irani, 2003; Gold et al., 2002; Mediratta & Fruchter, 2001; Su, 2009). Consistent with earlier work on community organizing (Stall & Stoecker, 1997 as cited in Oakes & Lipton, 2002), the literature challenges the reductive public image of community organizing as noisy protestors with short-term impact. Rather, nuanced ethnographic studies highlight patient relationship-building to develop shared understandings and capacity to make change as well as strategic theories of action, including the creation of better relationships among parents, teachers, and administrators in schools in order to transform institutions of public education (Gold et al., 2002; Hong, 2011; Shirley, 1997, 2009; Warren, 2005).

More recent research in the field has begun to theorize about the *mechanisms* through which organizing may realize its efforts to build educational and community capacity, particularly the processes and impacts of organizing as a means of building greater social capital (the resources that inhere in social networks, described below in greater detail) as a resource for school improvement efforts. Because many marginalized communities lack traditional forms of power and resources, many organizing groups seek to build relationships that can provide solidarity, support, or access (for example, to knowledge, political pressure, or opportunities) as a key lever for change. For instance, Warren and colleagues' (2011) study of six education organizing groups across the country examined the core processes of building relationships and power in order to bolster the social capital in struggling communities and contribute to individual, community, and institutional transformations. Through the case studies and analyses, the Warren (2011) study suggested that collaboration between educators and community members - that balanced "external" confrontational demand tactics with "internal" engagement - was necessary for sustainable school reform. Likewise, the first mixed-methods study of community organizing in education by Mediratta, Shah, & McAlister (2009) also highlighted increased social capital in schools as a key outcome of organized reform efforts; they found better parent-teacher relations, more participative and collaborative school cultures, and greater parental influence in schools that had been part of organizing campaigns relative to comparison schools in three urban districts. The analyses also suggested improved student attendance, achievement on state standardized tests, and graduation rates (Mediratta, Shah, & McAlister, 2009).

Yet even as a more nuanced picture has emerged from increasingly rigorous analyses and frameworks in the recent literature on community organizing for educational equity, we have little theory to illuminate how the inevitable tensions among these new approaches and traditional organizational dynamics and interactions in educational systems may be negotiated and resolved. For instance, Warren et al. (2009) examined the tensions and challenges posed by conventional assumptions about the role of parents in different approaches to community-based, relational parent engagement - including education organizing. However, they frame these limitations largely around differences in the local context, which provides little theoretical traction for explaining how such tensions between organizing and traditional school-based expectations of parents might be enacted and negotiated in schools more broadly. There remains an opportunity for more robust theorizing and the use of complementary methods to analyze organized reform dynamics and apply the lenses and knowledge of organizational change, leadership, and policy to the study of community organizing for educational improvement.

The current study builds on its predecessors in three distinct ways. First, I augment the concept of social capital used in education organizing theory with the concept of institutional scripts from neo-institutional theory to help illuminate how organizing efforts may encounter, navigate, and even sometimes reinforce dominant narratives about the role of parents in their efforts to build more authentic and meaningful parent-school relations.

Secondly, in contrast to studies of organizing that focus on the school as the primary unit of change, the organizing group in this study took a *district*-centered systemic approach to change, focused on English language learner instruction and parent leadership development across all schools in the district. That is, the organizing group primarily sought to collaborate with and hold accountable the district leadership and to impact student outcomes, particularly for English language learners, across the entire district, rather than in one school at a time. This study examined the link between *district*-level organizing efforts and the parent-school relations at the *school*-level throughout the district.

Finally, in order to better study these dynamics and to develop provisional theory marrying insights from community organizing and institutional theories (Edmondson & McManus, 2007), I employ a mixed-methods sequential explanatory approach to combine a broad overview of the relationship between organizing and parent-school relations across the district with a more nuanced, deeply contextual understanding of how organizing efforts shaped and were shaped by the interactions, leadership, and dominant educational narratives in one school. I turn now to a discussion of social capital and institutional scripts to suggest new territory toward better theorizing the burgeoning field of education organizing.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The nascent but developing theory of community organizing for education reform draws heavily on social capital as a key theoretical construct to explain how low-income parents and neighbors build power and resources to influence educational and community institutions. Social capital refers to the “network of reciprocal social relations” and the collective resources that inhere in them (Putnam, 2000) to enable individuals and society to accomplish their goals, make their lives more productive, and to potentially “derive institutional support, particularly support that includes the delivery of knowledge-based resources” (Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995, p. 119; see also Monkman, Ronald, & Thérémène, 2005). I argue below for engaging a broader conceptualization of social capital than has predominantly been used in studies of organizing, as well as for integrating the concept of institutional scripts from neo-institutional theory. Together, these constructs provide a more robust conceptual framework for understanding both the challenges and possibilities of organizing efforts to pursue systemic educational equity.

BUILDING STRUCTURAL AND FUNCTIONAL SOCIAL CAPITAL IN PARENT-SCHOOL RELATIONS

Because the low-income, marginalized, or immigrant communities who have the most at stake in struggling schools often have the least voice, power, and resources with which to influence decision-making and reform efforts, organizing groups seek to build the social capital of these communities to enable them to speak for themselves and hold educational institutions accountable to their needs, interests, values, and goals (Gold et al., 2002; Warren, 2011). As a result, much of the education organizing literature focuses on how groups build different types of instrumental relationships to accomplish their goals. For example, “bonding” social capital between parents can provide mutual support and solidarity, while “bridging” social capital between parents and educators can leverage institutional access and knowledge (Lawson & Alameda-Lawson, 2012; Mediratta, Shah, & McAlister, 2009; Putnam, 2000; Warren, 2005). Although the use and conceptualization of social capital in organizing studies have illuminated important mechanisms through which these efforts seek to affect change, the predominant focus on the *existence* of such instrumental relationships limits the utility of social capital theory in explaining how organizing may affect change. Instead, this study argues for broadening the use of social capital to include the nature and quality of those relationships.

For this purpose, I draw on Goddard's (2003) categorization of social capital into *structural* and *functional* components. That is, relationships between individuals and relational networks constitute a *structural* aspect of social capital that can provide access or exchange of information that can benefit group members; these refer chiefly to the existence of relationships or quantity of interactions. However, knowing and interacting with someone does not, necessarily, ensure productive relations or positive benefits; rather, the quality of interactions refers to the *functional* aspect of social capital, which Coleman (1998) encapsulates as group norms and trust. Shared group norms (or sanctions) reinforce particular social patterns of behavior that may support desirable outcomes and "permit some control over the actions of others when those actions have consequences for the group" (Goddard, 2003, p. 61). And social trust can help create more productive interactions between people, making them more likely to act with caring and benevolence, share information, and reciprocate efforts (Coleman, 1998).

Likewise, relational trust between adults in a school community has been identified as an essential resource in improvement efforts (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Designs for Change, 2005). Expanding on the literature linking greater social capital with positive educational student outcomes (Carbonaro, 1998; Dika & Singh, 2002; Leana & Pil, 2006; Morgan & Sørensen, 1999), Goddard (2003) found that both structural and functional aspects of social capital predicted greater odds of passing high-stakes assessments of elementary mathematics and writing. He concluded, however, that rather than examining the impacts of social capital, future research should instead examine how schools, parents and communities *build* social capital to benefit students in schools

Thus, to better understand how parent-organizing efforts may unfold in schools within the context of a district-organizing group collaboration, I examined both *structural* and *functional* aspects of social capital between parents and educators. Although relationships between parents were critical for providing mutual support, solidarity, and building a sense of collective agency, this study focused on parent-educator relationships as potential levers for gaining institutional knowledge, access, or resources that can contribute to students' school success (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). I examined three structural aspects of parent-school relations (parent involvement, teacher outreach to parents, and the frequency of teacher-parent interactions) and two functional indicators of parent-school social capital (parental influence and teacher-parent trust).

Structural Social Capital

A number of studies have focused on how traditional school-based *parent involvement* - such as attendance at parent-teacher conferences, participation in parent-teacher association meetings, fundraising, and social events - builds social (as well as cultural and intellectual) capital that enables parents to better support their own students' learning at home and in school (Fan, 2001; Lareau & Horvat, 2001; McNeal, 1999). The literature suggests that such increased parent involvement improves student attendance, achievement, and graduation rates (Crow, 1998; Dika & Singh, 2002; Epstein, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Although home-based forms of parent involvement are prevalent in Latino families and strongly tied to student achievement (Jeynes, 2010; López, 2001), I examined school-based forms of parent involvement to focus on the interface between parents and schools. In this study, I examined teacher reports of how often the parents of their students volunteered in the classroom, helped raise funds for the school, attended parent-teacher conferences or other school events, and advocated on behalf of the schools or students with the district. If taken alone as the sole indicators of parent engagement, most of these activities dovetail with the dominant scripts of school-centric parent involvement, and their focus on individual parent behavior implies that their involvement is a result only of parental choices and preferences, rather than a complex, asymmetrical dynamic *between* parents and educators in schools. Equitable parental engagement informed by an organizing approach does not exclude these more traditional school-based behaviors, but they do also not limit it. I, thus, examine two other structural aspects of parent-school social capital in order to more fully capture these relationships.

A growing recognition of the barriers to parent participation has spurred an increasing number of schools to encourage *teacher outreach to parents* to provide information, invite them into their classrooms, and work with them to meet student needs (Bryk et al., 2010; Cooper & Christie, 2005). Multiple studies have found that teacher outreach to parents is related to strong and consistent gains in student achievement (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). In this study, teachers reported on the extent to which they work closely with parents to meet student needs, really try to understand parents' problems and concerns, encourage feedback from parents and community, communicate regularly about helping their children learn and advancing the school mission, and invite parents to visit classrooms to observe instruction. The frequency of *teacher-parent interactions* also taps into the extent to which parents are in regular communication with their children's teachers about student behavior, performance, or progress. Teachers in schools that proactively reach out to parents and interact with them frequently about students behavior and progress may build social capital that can provide teachers critical information from parents about their students to improve their instruction and provide parents with information to support their student's learning (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003; Moll et al., 1992). Teachers in this study related how often they contacted parents of students about problems, communicated with parents about what students were working on in class, and met with parents in person.

Functional Social Capital

To address the functional components of social capital, I examined *parental influence* as evidence of social norms and sanctions and *teacher-parent trust* as a form of relational trust. Many parent-school relation studies using social capital focus on the extent to which parents may be socialized into school norms associated with academic success (for example, Bolivar and Chrispeels [2011] examined how immigrant parents learned norms for interacting with school officials and for participating in school systems). Organizing efforts focus not only on inducting parents into school cultures through more traditional parent involvement activities but also on building the capacity of parents to influence the institutions that affect them (Mediratta, Shah, & McAlister, 2009). *Parental influence* on school decision-making can better incorporate the values, concerns, and culture of students and their families and enact change that will be more equitable and responsive to students and families (Bolivar & Chrispeels, 2011; Delgado-Gaitan, 2001; Warren et al., 2011). In this study, teachers reported on the extent to which they perceived that parents are involved in making the important decisions in the school, had informal opportunities to influence what happens, and had voice and input in the development of school goals, the use of discretionary funds, and the development of improvement plans. I chose this measure to examine the extent to which schools are perceived by teachers to engage in social norms that are responsive to parents' priorities.

Finally, I examined *teacher-parent trust* as a second functional aspect of parent-school social capital. Scholars posit that such trust is a vital social resource that is particularly lacking in urban schools (Noguera, 2003), but may facilitate the hard work of educational change by enabling risk-taking, fostering open exchange of information (such as vital institutional knowledge), and motivating interdependent, reciprocal efforts within shared norms (Adams, Forsyth, & Mitchell, 2009; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Goddard, 2003; Tschannen-Moran, 2009). Regardless of the content or frequency of contact, if educator-parent interactions are characterized by mistrust or suspicion, there is little reason to believe they would be associated with improved student achievement (Goddard, 2003). Teacher perceptions of parent respect, competence, personal regard, and integrity are associated with school-wide academic improvement, particularly in struggling schools facing the greatest challenges (Bryk et al., 2010; Designs for Change, 2005). For this study, I examined the extent to which teachers felt a sense of respect, support, and confidence in their expertise by parents, their difficulty in overcoming cultural barriers between teachers and parents, the extent to which teachers and parents consider each other partners in educating children, how hard staff work to build trusting relationships with parents, and the proportion of parents who support their teaching efforts and do their best to help their children learn.

Despite the apparent virtues of strong parent-school structural and functional social capital, the educational bureaucracy, cultural norms, and power asymmetries between educators and low-income, immigrant parents often maintain an inhospitable environment for parents to interact with their children's schools (Carreón, Drake, & Barton, 2005; Fine, 1993; Monkman et al., 2005). The use of social capital in the community organizing literature has a limited capacity to address the organizational constraints on changes in the relationships between parents and educators in schools. The concept of institutional scripts from neo-institutional theory may illuminate new insights in the dynamic interplay of parent organizing and dominant school cultures.

NEGOTIATING INSTITUTIONAL SCRIPTS IN PARENT-SCHOOL RELATIONS

According to institutional theory, the norms and assumptions of the actors in schools comprise the organizational context that shapes behaviors and interactions (Burch, 2007; Meyer & Rowan, 2006). More specifically, neo-institutionalists attend to the professional scripts, or "taken-for-granted assumptions," that underlie educators' interactions with each other and with other stakeholders (Mawhinney & Smrekar, 1996, p. 494). These default organizational scripts powerfully shape the possibilities for what happens in schools and can constrain individuals and groups who attempt to challenge existing practices (Mawhinney & Smrekar, 1996).

The institutional scripts regarding the role of parents in schools assume their passive support of the school's agenda in "circumscribed and institutionalized" roles (Crowson & Boyd, 2001, p. 12). That is, many school-based efforts to improve parent participation in schools with diverse student populations focus on involving parents in traditional roles, such as volunteering, fundraising, chaperoning, Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) involvement, and other peripheral support roles outside of instruction (Epstein, 1995; Sanders & Harvey, 2002). These efforts depart little from a "deficit model" of involvement, in which parents "are expected to agree with and support the structures and dynamics already in place" in the school (Perez Carreon et al., 2005, p. 467). Thus, the dominant parent *involvement* script favors arrangements in which schools may value parents as supporters of student learning, particularly at home, but parents do not have opportunities for meaningful *engagement* in partnering with educators to improve teaching and learning in the school (Schutz, 2006; Shirley, 1997; Warren et al., 2009).

Yet agency-based perspectives from institutional theory also suggest that these scripts can be disrupted and rewritten (Burch, 2007). Scholars suggest that "marginal"

individuals and organizations with lesser status - like low-income Latino parents organized by the community organizing group in this study - can intervene preemptively in the cultural environment to develop bases of support for their ideas and challenge institutional scripts (Burch, 2007, p.89; Suchman, 1995). By considering the Coalition as such a marginal actor, I examine how the parent organizing may have disrupted - and yet, in some ways, reinforced - the tendency of educators and school leaders to favor traditional parent involvement approaches that maintain the status quo of professional control.

RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODS

This mixed-methods study is part of a larger study on the processes, strategies, and mutual influences of the collaboration between Salem-Keizer school district and the Salem-Keizer Coalition for Equality conducted over a period of nearly two years, from Fall 2008 to the late spring of 2010. To better understand parent-school relations within the context of a district-organizing group collaboration, I combined quantitative and qualitative data and analyses to triangulate between methods, clarify the results of the quantitative analyses with the results from the qualitative analyses, and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena (Edmondson & McManus, 2007; Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989). Specifically, I employed a sequential explanatory nested mixed-methods design with a quantitative phase followed by a qualitative phase (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2003; Yin, 2009). In the quantitative phase, I collected and analyzed district-wide survey data from teachers to examine broad relationships between parent organizing and structural and functional forms of social capital. I then built on the first phase in the second - qualitative - phase by conducting a nested case study of a single elementary school within the district to help elaborate on the results from the first phase in a school context that maximized organizing efforts aimed at building both structural and functional social capital. Thus, the sequential explanatory design in this study used qualitative data and analyses to refine and elaborate the statistical results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2003).

SETTING

This district site provided a case of collaboration in a “typical” new immigrant destination community that has experienced rapid Latino student population growth, while also representing a case of a district collaboration where organizing may better be able to realize its potential than in less cooperative contexts.

Salem-Keizer Public Schools

Salem-Keizer Public Schools is the second largest district in the state of Oregon, with just over 40,000 students enrolled in its 67 schools. The district has experienced rapid demographic change in its student population over the past two decades; in 1997, 12% of the students in the district were Latino, while in 2010, 37% identified as Latino (and 4% as multi-racial) (Salem-Keizer Public Schools, 2009-2010). Eighteen percent of the students are English language learners, making Salem-Keizer the district with the largest ELL population in the state, and more than half of the students in the district qualify for federal free and reduced lunch (Salem-Keizer Public Schools, 2009-2010). By the early 2000s, in the midst of these demographic changes, a highly contentious relationship had developed between the district and local communities of color, particularly regarding racially disproportionate discipline and suspension rates in the district. The district’s relationship with the community began to dramatically change in 2005, and a new superintendent arrived in 2006.

Salem-Keizer Coalition for Equality (“the Coalition”)

Formed in 1999 at the height of district-community tensions, the Salem-Keizer Coalition for Equality is a coalition of 9 community organizations, primarily from the Latino community, dedicated to equity and social justice for children in the Salem-Keizer district and throughout the state, particularly English language learners. Led by Eduardo Angulo, the Coalition holds workshops taught by and provided for mostly immigrant Latino parents to build their knowledge and capacity to be involved in schools and the school system. Through its Parent Organizing Project (POP), the Coalition also trains parent leaders to participate in district decision-making, facilitate parent workshops, and engage with district leadership on improving English language learner (ELL) education, parent engagement, and cultural competency.

By 2008, the Coalition and the Salem-Keizer district were engaged in a collaboration described by one district leader as follows:

I think what you see is a partnership that was very adversarial three years ago, and is now really a hands-together partnership.

This study examined the parent-school relations and social capital at schools where this “hands-together partnership” was strongest.

*Holbrooke Elementary*¹

The nested unit of analysis for the qualitative case study was an elementary school at the center of the collaboration where both organizing efforts and district focus on ELL achievement had been particularly strong (see qualitative methods below for a description of case selection).

PHASE 1: QUANTITATIVE METHODS

Because the extent of organizing at a school was largely a function of the resources, support, and access made possible by the district-Coalition collaboration, I surveyed teachers across the district to examine parent-school relations as a potential collaboration impact. I chose to examine *teacher* perceptions of parent-school relations because the literature has documented how the normative culture and assumptions among the educators in a school can shape the work of teachers in classrooms with students at the instructional core, which in turn impacts student performance directly (Elmore, 2004). Moreover, educators have the greater power in shaping the dynamics of relationships with parents and the school environment in which parents are expected to participate (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003; Olivos, 2006). Teacher perceptions can thus provide key insights into the extent to which the collaborative strategies and theory had been enacted in the school climate surrounding teacher practice. It is important to acknowledge, however, that teacher perceptions provide only one side of the parent-school relationship. Although surveying parents about their perceptions might provide an additional perspective, parent surveys have become a standard tool of traditional school-based involvement activities. This form of data collection from parents entails many complexities and methodological limitations in drawing valid conclusions, particularly regarding parents from marginalized groups, whose participation is greatly affected by issues of language, literacy, staff relations, cultural norms, and technological access and proficiency. Instead, as discussed in the qualitative methods section below, I subsequently employed qualitative analyses to provide a fuller understanding of parent-school dynamics.

QUANTITATIVE SAMPLE AND DATA COLLECTION

This research draws on 568 online teacher survey responses from a stratified random sample of 22 teachers from each of 63 elementary, middle, and high schools in the district. I constructed and administered the survey in April 2009 (approximately four years into the collaboration). Table 1 describes the outcome and predictor survey measures, which were drawn from existing parent-school relation measures except for the organizing variable. To construct the measure of organizing at a school, I composited three measures using independent organizer reports: estimated number of Coalition-engaged parents at each school, the intensity of organizing exposure for a school, and a dichotomous measure indicating whether or not the Coalition taught workshops at the school in the 2008-2009 school year. The survey responses were merged with school-level demographic and socioeconomic data from the district (whether a school is elementary, percent students eligible for free or reduced lunch, percent Latino and English language learner population, and principal tenure at the school and district); performance data from the state (percent meeting and exceeding standards on state reading tests); and teacher characteristics (gender, race/ethnicity, tenure at the school and district, years of teaching, and afterschool role).

Table 1. Teacher Survey Measure Descriptions

	Measure	# Items	Response Scale	Cronbach's alpha	Description
Outcome Measures	Parent Involvement ⁺ (PARINV)	5	5-point Likert-type	.79	Continuous composite of perceptions of parent involvement in classrooms, events, conferences, and advocacy
	Teacher Outreach to Parents ⁺ (OUTR)	7	4-point	.89	Continuous composite measure of school's efforts to reach out to parents and communicate regularly with them
	Teacher-parent Interactions ⁺⁺ (PINT)	3	4-point	.63	Continuous composite of frequency and types of teacher-parent contact

Question Predictor	Parental Influence ⁺ (PINF)	6	4-point	.87	Continuous composite of perceptions of parent influence in school decision-making
	Teacher-Parent Trust ⁺⁺ (TPRA)	8	4 -and 5-point	.77	Continuous composite of perceptions of mutual respect and support among parents and teachers.
	High Organizing Engagement (HiORG)	3	Dichot-omous	.90	Based on principal components analysis composite of intensity, # organized parents, and whether Coalition workshops are offered at the school

Notes. + Source: Mediratta, Shah, & McAlister, 2009. ++ Source: Chicago Consortium on School Research Teacher Surveys, 1999, 2005, 2007

For the organizing measure, I compared schools with high organizing engagement and those with little or no engagement on key demographic, socioeconomic, and academic characteristics (there was no statistically significant difference between schools with little and no organizing). As presented in Table 2, the 8 schools with higher organizing engagement had, on average, lower state standardized reading test scores ($p < 0.001$) and higher percentages of English language learners ($p < 0.001$), Latino students ($p < 0.001$), and students eligible for free and reduced lunch ($p < 0.001$), compared to the 55 schools with low or no organizing engagement. These differences in the structural school predictors (those used as controls in all models) suggest that, on average, the high organizing schools share characteristics of schools that struggle traditionally to build inclusive parent-school relations (Glickman & Scally, 2005; Schutz, 2006). The differences are also consistent with the Coalition’s and district’s rationale for selecting schools in which to focus professional development and parent organizing resources.

Table 2. Characteristics of Sampled Schools by High and Low/No Organizing Engagement (n teachers = 546; n schools = 65). Source: Author-collected survey data and Salem-Keizer Public Schools

Variable Name	Definition	High Organizing School	Low/No Organizing School	<i>t-statistic</i> ¹ (df)	Respondent Teachers mean and (s.e.) n=546
		mean and (s.e.)	mean and (s.e.)		
MS_HS	0-1 dummy variable =1 if teaches in a middle or high school	0.66 (0.05)	0.32 (0.01)	-6.0*** (df=544)	0.37 (0.02)
Structural School Predictors	c_ReadTwoYrs	-0.17 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)	14.45*** (df=544)	-0.01 (0.01)
	ELL_Pct	0.35 (0.02)	0.18 (0.01)	-7.04*** (df=544)	0.21 (0.01)
	Stud_Pct_Latino	0.58 (0.01)	0.29 (0.01)	-11.6*** (df=544)	0.33 (0.01)
	FRL_Pct	0.63 (0.01)	0.49 (0.01)	-8.5*** (df=544)	0.51 (0.01)
Outcome-specific Teacher and School Characteristics	Latino	0.14 (0.04)	0.04 (0.01)	-3.63*** (df=484)	0.05 (0.01)
	lnPrincDistTen	1.43 (0.05)	1.62 (0.04)	2.97* (df=514)	1.59 (0.03)
	FEMALE	0.71 (0.06)	0.80 (.02)	1.82 (df=479)	0.79 (0.02)

Over5YRS	Whether a teacher has taught for >5 yrs	0.31 (0.06)	0.40 (0.02)	1.44 (df=483)	0.39 (0.02)
AFTRSCH	Whether a teacher is involved in afterschool activities	0.60 (0.02)	0.34 (0.06)	-4.30*** (df=498)	0.37 (0.02)

Notes. *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$; Standard errors in parentheses.

¹ t -tests tested the null hypothesis that the values of key variables did not differ by whether or not a school has a high level of parent organizing engagement, on average, in the population.

QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSES

I analyzed the district-wide teacher survey data to address the question: *Do schools with greater organizing engagement have more parent-school social capital than similar schools in the district with little or no organizing?* To answer this question, I fitted a series of random-intercepts multilevel models - to account for the clustering of teachers in schools -for each of 5 continuous outcomes (3 measures of structural social capital: parent involvement, teacher outreach to parents, and teacher-parent interactions; and 2 measures of functional social capital: parental influence, and teacher-parent trust). I first fit “uncontrolled” random-intercepts multilevel models with only the question predictor (HiORG, whether or not a school had high organizing engagement) to examine intra-class correlations and uncontrolled relationships. I then fit additional models by adding vectors of structural covariates (which remained the same for each model) and, subsequently, covariates of other outcome-specific teacher and school characteristics. Typical models took the form:

$$Y_{ij} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{HiORG}_j + \beta_2 X_{ij} + \beta_3 Z_j + \varepsilon_{ij} + u_j$$

where i denotes teacher and j denotes school, the generic outcome, Y , stands in place of each separate outcome variable, X_{ij} and Z_j represent vectors of teacher- and school-level covariates, and $\varepsilon_{ij} \square u_j$ is the composite (teacher plus school-level) residual.

PHASE 2: QUALITATIVE METHODS

To address my second research question and provide a fuller understanding of the quantitative findings, I subsequently undertook a qualitative phase of the research. This phase enabled me to draw on multiple perspectives (in addition to teachers) and be open to dynamics at the school-level that may have differed from the operationalization of the social capital measures in the quantitative phase. I purposely selected one elementary school as a key example of the school-level relationships within the district-organizing group collaboration.

QUALITATIVE CASE SELECTION

One elementary school of the eight with high organizing involvement—Holbrooke Elementary—constituted a focal point for the collaboration between the district and the Coalition. I selected the school for the qualitative case study to illuminate a “critical case” (Patton, 1990) in which the parent-school relations were commonly recognized to be problematic and the student performance had been the weakest for elementary schools in the district. Patton (1990) explains, “Critical cases are those that can make the point quite dramatically” (p. 174); in this sense, Holbrooke Elementary provided a case in which dynamics regarding organizing efforts to improve parent-school relations might logically also apply to schools with fewer challenges. Although Holbrooke constituted a particular focal point for the district-organizing group collaboration and, in some sense, provided a more extreme case than others in the district, the school did represent many of the dynamics in the eight schools with higher organizing engagement. For example, the Coalition purposely targeted the schools with the highest Latino English language learner populations in low-income neighborhoods, and as a group, these schools struggled with performance as measured by the state standardized assessment and state report card.

Despite its short history (fewer than 10 years in existence), Holbrooke Elementary was widely perceived by the Latino community as emblematic of the systemic inequities toward their children. Early on, finger-pointing between the district and the city in response to a student’s traffic-related death (hit by a truck’s side-view mirror when walking to school along a road with no sidewalk or signage) laid the groundwork for widespread feelings of disregard, and these tense community

relations were exacerbated when a principal at the school mandated the adoption of the English-only Reading First curriculum. Not incidentally, Coalition organizing efforts were high at the school, several pivotal meetings with the district were held there, and both Coalition and district leaders continually referred to student outcome data for the school to assess their progress. In addition, Holbrooke Elementary teachers, administrators, parents, community members, and even the older students were keenly aware of the stigma and intense scrutiny Holbrooke Elementary was under as a result of its designation as the only elementary school with an “Unsatisfactory” rating in the state. Tucked into a neighborhood of small one-family houses surrounded by large low-income apartment complexes just off the freeway, Holbrooke Elementary was attended by an average of 500 children (enrollment varied considerably across each year), 82% were eligible for free and reduced lunch, 86% were Latino, and nearly 65% spoke Spanish as their first language (Salem-Keizer Public Schools, 2010; Oregon Department of Education, 2010). At the time of my data collection, the school was on its fifth principal in the school’s eight years of existence.

QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION

The study draws on 48 interviews with 42 educators (at both district and school levels), parents, and community organizers from the Coalition. Interviewees included 11 district administrators, 15 Coalition organizers and leaders, 11 Holbrooke Elementary staff and parents, and 6 community members and educators from other schools; 25 of the participants identified as Latino, and 26 were females. Holbrooke educators who were selected for interviews were identified through recommendations from both the principal and Coalition organizers as staff who represented the range of educators in the building (e.g., longevity in teaching and in the building, roles [teacher leader, instructional coach, office manager, librarian, classroom teacher, et cetera], interactions with the Coalition [both frequent and rare], and from both Spanish and English classrooms at multiple grade levels). I selected Holbrooke parents to represent both those who engaged with the Coalition to different extents (as a parent leader, POP member, or a one-time workshop participant) as well as those who were not at all involved with the Coalition (though a limitation is that I did not talk to parents who were never present at the school). Interviews were 45 to 80 minutes long, semi-structured, and collected information about participants’ experiences of the collaboration and their perspectives on its impacts at Holbrooke Elementary.

To contextualize and triangulate these descriptions, I conducted more than 100 hours of direct and participant observation of activities at the district, Coalition, and school events and collected school and district documents, most of which related to parent communications, over a period of nearly two years, from Fall 2008 to Spring 2010.

QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSES

I analyzed the interview, observation, and documents data in order to better understand my quantitative findings and address the question: How were organizing efforts to build parent-school social capital enacted and negotiated at the school-level? I conducted my qualitative data analyses using three primary strategies: (a) open and closed coding, (b) analytic memos, and (c) data displays. I first conducted a close reading of transcribed (and translated, in some cases) interview transcripts, observation fieldnotes, and documents to identify descriptive patterns and surface “emic” codes that emerged from participants’ words and concepts (Maxwell, 2005). I then coded the data in the Maxqda software using a “two-level scheme” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 61), partitioning the data into broad categories based on my five quantitative outcomes (Maxwell, 2005). Using both “emic” codes from participants and “etic” codes from the theoretical frameworks and research questions, I conducted a second round of coding, analyzing documents, transcripts, and fieldnotes to understand how district-level initiatives related to the collaboration played out (or did not) at the school-level. Throughout the process, I wrote analytic memos and used data displays (such as timelines, conceptual maps, and thematic matrices) to collate evidence and further develop key theoretical propositions (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

To address threats to validity and enhance the trustworthiness of my claims and conclusions, I triangulated my data from multiple sources (including interviews with teachers, parents, and community organizers as well as my own observations) and conducted “member checks” by sharing my preliminary interpretations of events and history with Coalition organizers, district leaders, the Holbrooke principal, and one former state administrator to correct or refine misinterpretations (Maxwell, 2005). I also sought evidence to support rival scenarios and explanations, such as the possibility that improvements in Latino student schooling were independent of the Coalition’s role in collaboration with the district. Finally, I shared my fieldnotes, interview excerpts, codes, displays, and memos with an interpretive community of five other researchers - including three fellow researchers from a separate research project on community organizing for education reform - to control for my biases, obtain feedback, and examine alternative hypotheses.

DESIGN LIMITATIONS

Organizing groups do not randomly select the districts, schools, or parents they work with, and particularly in the case of a district-community collaboration, multiple initiatives and contextual dynamics come into play in implementing school improvement at-scale; the observational, cross-sectional data from the district-wide analyses do not allow me to draw causal inferences. Nor do my analyses examine the direction of any observed relationships; it may be that schools with better parent-school relations and more social capital to begin with are those which enable greater organizing engagement, though this seems unlikely given the Coalition's explicit strategy of targeting schools where Latino parents feel alienated.

Another important limitation, however, was my 50% teacher survey response rate, which did lead undoubtedly to systematic non-response bias in my sample. Responses were skewed toward teachers in Title I schools with higher Latino student populations, lower socioeconomic status, and lower scores on standardized measures of reading; teachers did not differ systematically by school level (elementary, middle, or high school), the proportion of ELL students in their schools or the presence of organized parents at their school. Although this also limits my external validity, I believe my teacher survey sample would, if anything, provide underestimates of the relationship between organizing and parent-teacher relations because, according to the literature, we might expect there to be less collaborative parent-teacher relations in poor, low performing, and high minority schools relative to the wealthier, higher performing, and less diverse schools. In addition, there are very few schools with high intensity organizing; these highly leveraged data points may drive the associations found in the remainder of the sample. This also limits the generalizability of my findings, but it similarly highlights the strength of the organizing in those few schools and its potential for impacting the relationships between parents and teachers. Finally, as a single case, the findings from both the quantitative and qualitative analyses may not generalize beyond the Salem-Keizer context, though they can suggest theoretical propositions that may be tested in other contexts and studies.

RESULTS

I begin with a brief description of the Salem-Keizer case to provide context for the findings. I then use quantitative data to examine the relationships between greater organizing and two forms of social capital in schools across the district, then draw on qualitative case study data within one school to triangulate and contextualize the parent-school relations within the district-Coalition collaboration.

SALEM-KEIZER CASE

Despite a highly contentious history between the Salem-Keizer Public Schools and local communities of color, by 2005, the Salem/Keizer Coalition for Equality played a key role in the district as an advocate for low-income Latino ELL students and as a partner on the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Parent Conference, which brought together more than 800 mostly Latino parents in its first year. When Sandy Husk was hired as a new superintendent in 2006, the stage was set for the emergence of a "hands-on partnership" between the district and the Coalition (senior district administrator). With the backing of the Coalition, Sandy shifted the language of accountability in the district - from that of denial (ELL students as "Holbrooke's problem") to explicit *shared* responsibility between *all* educators and parents ("now in our district, we're responsible for all of the kids"). The district reorganized its structure to bring ELL issues to the core, launched district-wide professional development for teaching ELLs, and provided support, and eventually resources, to the Coalition to educate and empower low-income Latino parents in the district.

Meanwhile, at Holbrooke Elementary, the English-only Reading First decision had left a divided school community in its wake. "Eventually I think [the turmoil] kind of overtook our whole school. It was a big problem for a while just because it was very vindictive. It did place a hole in our school," explained a Holbrooke teacher. Partly as a result of the district-Coalition collaboration, the new district leadership changed the school's principal, replaced the English-only curriculum with a biliteracy model, and opened access to the Coalition.

The Coalition enacted a "bottom-up, top-down" strategy in the district. Their "bottom-up" organizing aimed to build parent understanding (of their rights and the public education system), relationships (with other parents and educators), skills (in partnering with teachers and facilitating workshops for other parents), and leadership (to organize other parents and participate in school decision-making). Coalition parent organizers taught a series of nine monthly Spanish-language parent workshops at 6 to 11 schools (including Holbrooke) in the district each year, reaching 1,300 or so Spanish-speaking parents from across the district². About 100 of these parents became involved with the Parent Organizing Project (POP), where they deepened their relationships, supported one another in navigating the schools, and began to learn about district structures and decision-making through their participation in Coalition social events and district advocacy work. Finally, a cadre of 12 parent organizers constructed shared understandings about systemic inequities, district politics, and school reform through extensive trainings, conducted outreach and home visits, planned workshops and gatherings, and built the capacity of parents to advocate for their children in schools. The Coalition's "top-down" strategy

focused on district-level advocacy for ELL student support and professional development for teachers; Coalition board members, staff, and the “team” of parent organizers participated in strategic planning and conference planning meetings with district administrators, provided public testimony at district hearings, and mobilized other parents to provide support for ELL programs.

One district administrator highlighted the impact she felt the collaboration between the district and the Coalition had made at the school-level:

There are so many things that the Coalition is doing for or with the district. I can say that without the work and support and partnership of the Coalition . . . many of the achievements that we have made at the local level - with schools and students - wouldn't be possible.

Both overall student and ELL performance on the state standardized tests had improved since the beginning of the collaboration in 2005, but the same score increases were perceived by the Coalition as insufficient progress and by the district as an indication that the system was beginning to move in the right direction. Aside from the contested standardized test score outcomes, this research sought to examine what some of those “achievements” may have been and how they were experienced by teachers, principals, and parents on the ground in schools.

PHASE 1: QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS: PARENT ORGANIZING AND SOCIAL CAPITAL ACROSS THE DISTRICT

Based on my analyses of teacher survey data from across the district, I found that higher levels of organizing in schools were positively and statistically significantly associated with greater structural social capital; however, the relationship between organizing and functional social capital varied, with higher organizing associated with an indicator suggesting parent-responsive social norms but not with relational trust. Specifically, I found higher levels of *parent involvement*, *teacher outreach to parents*, and *teacher-parent interactions*, controlling for select school economic, demographic, performance, and teacher background characteristics ($p < .05$). That is, if we were to compare two elementary schools similar in student poverty rates, demographic characteristics, and achievement but differing in their levels of organizing involvement, teachers in the school with high organizing involvement would indicate, on average, that their school had greater structural social capital than teachers in the school with little or no organizing involvement. Likewise, I found greater *parental influence* (a measure indicative of functional social capital) in schools associated with more organizing, but in contrast to previous studies, I did not find schools with more organizing to have greater *teacher-parent trust*.

STRUCTURAL SOCIAL CAPITAL.

The Coalition’s “basic” workshops were explicitly aimed at building greater *parent involvement* in schools, and I found that teachers in schools with higher organizing involvement did indeed perceive greater parent involvement in their schools. To illustrate this, I present a series of fitted random-effects multilevel regression models in the taxonomy in Table 3. The estimated parameters on the baseline control model (Table 3, Model B) largely reflect traditional findings in the literature regarding lower parent involvement, on average, in lower-income and low performing schools, as well as middle or high schools. My final fitted model (Table 3, Model C),³ indicates that, on average, teachers in schools with higher intensity of organizing perceived about 0.3 of a scale point *higher* parent involvement in their schools than their counterparts in schools with little or no organizing, controlling for school level, school poverty level, student performance, whether teachers are Latino/a, and the percentage of Latino students in the school ($b = 0.289$, $p < 0.01$).

Table 3: Taxonomy of Fitted Random-Effects Multilevel Regression Models Describing the Relationship Between Teacher Perceptions of Parent Involvement (PARINV) and Whether or not a School Has a High Level of Organizing Engagement (HiORG), Controlling for School and Teacher Characteristics (n teachers = 581, 485; n schools = 65).

Predictors	Model A (unconditional)	Model B	Model C
HiORG			0.289** (0.110)
Whether school is a MS or HS		-0.415*** (0.09)	-0.434*** (0.09)

% Students on Free/Reduced Lunch		-1.214** (0.353)	-1.027** (0.328)
2Yr. Avg % Meets/Exceeds Reading		1.317* (0.607)	1.653** (0.571)
% Latino Students		0.319 (0.279)	0.122 (0.263)
Whether Teacher is Latino/a			0.531*** (0.127)
Intercept	2.400*** (0.057)	2.496*** (0.047)	2.459*** (0.045)
Observations	518	518	485
Number of schools	65	65	65
■	0.151	0.028	0.016
■	0.348	0.345	0.338
-2LL	507.8	475.0	434.3

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$; Standard errors in parentheses

Although traditional parent involvement approaches tend to lay the primary responsibility on parents to be involved with schools, a growing recognition of the numerous structural and cultural barriers to parent participation inherent in schools and systems suggests that *teacher outreach to parents* is another key component of developing structural social capital between parents and teachers. The Coalition’s district-level organizing highlighted the school’s responsibility for proactively reaching out to parents to share information about student learning and progress. Based on the district-wide survey data, I found that schools with high levels of organizing in the district had significantly more teacher outreach to parents. Similar to the procedure described above for parent involvement, in Table 4, I present a taxonomy of fitted multilevel regression models to examine the relationship between teacher perceptions of teacher outreach to parents (*OUTR*) and whether or not their school has high organizing engagement. My final fitted model (Table 4, Model C) indicates that, on average, teachers in schools with higher intensity of organizing perceived about 0.2 of a scale point *higher* teacher outreach to parents in their schools than their counterparts in schools with little or no organizing, controlling for school level, school poverty level, student performance, the percentage of Latino students and the principal’s tenure in the district ($b = 0.230$, $p < 0.05$).

Table 4: Taxonomy of Fitted Random-Effects Multilevel Regression Models Describing The Relationship between Teacher Perceptions of Teacher Outreach to Parents (OUTR) and Whether or not a School Has a High Level of Organizing Engagement (Hiorg), Controlling for School and Teacher Characteristics (n teachers = 546, 516; n schools = 65).

Predictors	Model A (unconditional)	Model B	Model C
HiORG			0.230* (0.097)
Whether school is a MS or HS		-0.115 (0.082)	-0.167* (0.076)
% Students on Free/Reduced Lunch		-0.137 (0.310)	-0.019 (0.309)

2Yr. Avg. % Mts/Exceeds Reading % Latino Students		0.888 (0.541) 0.224 (0.249)	0.944- (0.488) 0.005 (0.235)
Ln Principal Tenure in district			0.080* (0.040)
Intercept	3.234*** (0.034)	3.266*** (0.042)	3.263*** (0.039)
Observations	546	546	516
Number of schools	65	65	65
σ^2_{ϵ}	0.041	0.026	0.016
σ^2_{η}	0.255	0.256	0.25
-2LL	428.6	421.8	387.0

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, $-p < 0.1$; Standard errors in parentheses

Finally, more frequent *teacher-parent interactions* theoretically provide greater opportunities to build social capital and exchange information to better support student learning. An explicit aim of the Coalition’s organizing, both in their “bottom up” and “top down” strategies, was to increase the communication between teachers and parents. Drawing on the district-wide data, I found that schools with high organizing engagement also had more frequent teacher-parent interactions. As for the previous two outcomes, in Table 5, I present a taxonomy of fitted multilevel regression models to examine the relationship between teacher perceptions of the frequency of teacher-parent interactions and whether or not their school has high organizing engagement. Because only about 5% of the variability in the outcome was due to differences between schools (.05 estimated intra-class correlation), this model suggests that teacher-parent interactions may be subject more to differences between individual teachers than between schools and may differ from the other outcomes in this respect. Nevertheless, based on my final fitted model (Table 5, Model C), on average, teachers in schools with higher intensity of organizing perceived about 0.2 of a scale point *higher* teacher-parent interactions in their schools than their counterparts in schools with little or no organizing, controlling for school level, school poverty level, student performance, the percentage of Latino students, and teacher gender in the school ($b = 0.238, p < .01$).

Table 5. Taxonomy of Fitted Random-Effects Multilevel Regression Models Describing the Relationship between Teacher Reports of Frequency of Interactions with Parents (PINT) and Whether or not a School Has a High Level of Organizing Engagement (Hiorg), Controlling for School and Teacher Characteristics (n teachers=534, 480; n schools=65).

Predictors	Model A (unconditional)	Model B	Model C
HiORG			0.238** (0.0861)
Whether school is a MS or HS		0.010 (0.070)	-0.013 (0.0705)
% Students on Free/Reduced Lunch		0.195 (0.273)	0.224 (0.263)
2Yr. Avg. % Mts/Exceeds Reading		0.686 (0.470)	0.800- (0.458)
% Latino Students		-0.207 (0.220)	-0.320 (0.210)

Whether teacher is female			0.195** (0.063)
Intercept	2.828*** (0.030)	2.824*** (0.037)	2.793*** (0.037)
Observations	534	534	480
Number of schools	65	65	65
β_{11}^i	0.016	0.007	0.001
β_{12}^i	0.301	0.299	0.288
-2LL	448.5	441.33	383.2

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, $-p < .1$; Standard errors in parentheses

FUNCTIONAL SOCIAL CAPITAL

Community organizing approaches to parent engagement emphasize educator-parent relationships as a means for influencing schools and school systems to become more responsive and more equitable. The *parental influence* measure, more than any discussed thus far, suggests a break from the conventional parent involvement script because it frames parents as meaningful collaborators and change agents, rather than passive supporters. Interestingly and consistent with previous research on organizing, there was a perception of greater parental influence, suggesting that norms of openness to parental collaboration might be at work in organizing-engaged schools across the district; I found greater parental influence in schools with high organizing. In Table 6, I present a taxonomy of fitted multilevel regression models examining the relationship between teacher perceptions of parental influence in school (PINF) and whether or not their school has high organizing engagement. According to the final fitted model (Table 6, Model C), on average, teachers in schools with higher intensity of organizing perceived about 0.36 of a scale point *higher* parent influence in their schools than their counterparts in schools with little or no organizing, controlling for school level, school poverty level, student performance, the percentage of Latino students, and teacher gender, afterschool involvement, and tenure ($b = 0.360, p < .01$).

Table 6. Taxonomy of Fitted Random-Effects Multilevel Regression Models Describing the Relationship between Teacher Perceptions of Parental Influence in the School (PINF) and Whether or not a School Has a High Level of Organizing Engagement (Hiorg), Controlling for School and Teacher Characteristics (n teachers=518, 456; n schools=65).

Variables	Model A (unconditional)	Model B	Model C
HiORG			0.360** (0.123)
Whether school is a MS or HS		-0.126 (0.095)	-0.243* (0.010)
% Students on Free/Reduced Lunch		-0.276 (0.357)	-0.201 (0.355)
2Yr. Avg. % Meets/Exceeds Reading		0.629 (0.623)	0.740 (0.625)
% Latino Students		-0.304 (0.282)	-0.559* (0.282)
Whether teacher is			0.137*

female			(0.056)
Whether teacher has taught >5 yrs.			-0.105* (0.046)
Whether teacher is involved afterschool			0.144** (0.052)
Intercept	2.665*** (0.0424)	2.697*** (0.048)	2.699*** (0.050)
Observations	518	518	456
Number of schools	65	65	65
β_1	0.084	0.049	0.045
β_2	0.215	0.215	0.199
-2LL	380.7	368.93	308.4

A second aspect of functional social capital, *teacher-parent trust*, presented a surprising twist that contrasted with previous findings of education organizing research. Contrary to the findings of Mediratta, Shah, & McAlister (2009) and others, I did not find a greater sense of teacher-parent trust in the schools with greater organizing engagement. That is, teachers in schools with high organizing involvement did not feel significantly more respected and supported by parents, more strongly consider themselves partners with parents in educating children, or have a greater perception that school staff works hard to build trust with parents, compared to teachers in similar schools with little or no organizing. Given the findings from previous research and the focus in organizing on building trust as a resource, the lack of teacher-parent trust in this case raises new questions about both the potential impacts of district-level initiatives and the complexity of building trust between educators and parents from historically marginalized communities.

PHASE 2: QUALITATIVE FINDINGS: “DEVELOPING” PARENT-SCHOOL RELATIONS AT HOLBROOKE

To triangulate and illuminate the quantitative findings, including the surprising lack of relationship between organizing and teacher-parent trust, I examined the structural and functional social capital within one school, Holbrooke Elementary. Overall, at Holbrooke, educators and parents appeared to be engaging with one another in support of student learning. District administrator and Coalition board member Ana Ceballos summarized the changes she saw in the school since the Coalition began to work collaboratively with the district:

This year if you go into [Holbrooke], we’ve had about three years, change has happened in the school. We’re going to change the leadership, we’re going to make sure we have bilingual teachers there. We’re going to allow parents through, we’re going to allow the parent voice to be heard, and we’re going to start creating change that creates a better environment. The school belongs to the community. It doesn’t belong to the principal, and so parents feel like, “This is my school and I can come in here and learn, and learn about my students, and learn about my children, and learn about also how to work in the district.”

However, the dynamics at Holbrooke were not always as straightforward as the quantitative findings suggested, and consistent with the surprising quantitative finding regarding trust, I also found little evidence of teacher-parent trust in the qualitative case study. To better understand the qualitative findings, I examined how the traditional expectations and narratives about the role of parents in schools may have been in tension with efforts to improve the quality of relations between educators and historically marginalized parents. The Coalition’s organizing efforts may have both challenged and reinforced the institutional scripts about parents favored by educators. Below, I detail the findings for the structural and functional social capital by examining these dynamics within a school at the center of the district-community collaboration.

STRUCTURAL SOCIAL CAPITAL

All three forms of structural capital examined in the quantitative study (parent involvement, teacher outreach to parents, and teacher-parent interactions) appear to have increased at Holbrooke Elementary as well, at least partly as a result of the organizing efforts made possible by the district-community collaboration. Notably, the traditional scripts about the role of parents in schools appeared to be reinforced as much as they were challenged by these dynamics.

Parent Involvement

Several Coalition activities at Holbrooke, enabled by the collaboration with the district, aimed to increase the involvement of parents with student learning at home and in the school. As discussed earlier, the Coalition's "basic" monthly workshops at Holbrooke primarily emphasized "how schools operate and how to be involved" through sessions on parent and student rights; interpreting report cards, state tests, and accountability measures; ways to support student learning at home; and navigating the school system. (Salem/Keizer Coalition for Equality, 2008). Most of these activities reinforced traditional institutional scripts about the passive role of parents in supporting educators' agendas, framing the parent as the "teacher's aide at home" (E. Angulo, personal communication). In addition, though, Coalition parents built social capital with other Latino parents through monthly calls, informal house visits, social gatherings, support in resolving issues about their individual children with teachers and the principal, and opportunities to engage in district-level advocacy through the Parent Organizing Project (POP). As a result of these efforts, parents expressed feeling a greater comfort participating in the school. For example, Juan Jose Garcia, a Holbrooke father of two who had been attending Coalition workshops for two years explained,

I have changed my participation. We can talk about the needs of my child or the needs of the teachers for our children. I am also more enthusiastic about participating at the school, with the support of the teachers.

The principal suggested that parent involvement had increased across the school as well, noting as evidence more than 1,000 parent volunteer hours documented at the school over the course of the year and an increase from 10 to "a constant number from 60 to 70" in the monthly Parent Club attendance over the prior year.

Moreover, principal Don London noted that the interactions during the parent meetings had also begun to shift from "maybe one or two outspoken parents that would ever have a question or a comment" to "lots of sharing and lots of talking." Such active participation from many parents about a wide range of academic issues was evident in the parent club meetings I observed; one meeting ran over as parents asked questions ranging from state testing to uniforms, grade retention, to parent-teacher conferences. Don had also shifted the content of meetings away from traditional efforts to raise funds for school activities and focused instead on academics, a move that began to depart from the dominant mode of involving parents only in peripheral support activities. Don explained,

I think it's good because the questions and discussions that we are having are about improving our school and providing a better education for children. It's about how do we really engage the other parents of this school, and around how do we improve things for our children?

Teacher-Parent Outreach

At Holbrooke Elementary, some teachers appeared to be reaching out to parents more than before the Coalition's collaboration with the district began, though not as a school-wide effort and perhaps only indirectly as a result of the district-Coalition collaboration. For instance, the Coalition had played a key role in convincing the district to initiate a new literacy program at the school, which entailed the hiring of more bilingual teachers. A subset of those bilingual teachers had begun intensive outreach to parents, particularly with the guidance of one teacher who had been the district coordinator of a Spanish family literacy program prior to coming to Holbrooke. This teacher consistently attained 99% to 100% parent attendance at family meetings to "involve parents as the teacher at home" by providing them specific information about homework and subject-specific expectations, modeling techniques for working with students, and supporting the parents in practice with their own children. The outreach was a primarily volunteer effort undertaken by teachers in the K-2 bilingual classrooms, with the district providing limited resource support at the request of the principal, who explained that he was not yet supporting it as a school-wide effort. At the time, the Coalition and these teachers were only vaguely aware of each other's work with parents at the school.

Other new, bilingual staff also emphasized outreach to parents as a key piece of the instructional improvement work. For instance, the school's new bilingual, bicultural instructional coach felt part of her role was to open the doors of the classrooms, not only to the other teachers but also to parents. "Because with coaching you open your doors. You say come on in, watch me, give me feedback. But with parents you have to also open the door and know that they are there to help, not

necessarily to judge the teacher, they want to be part of their child's education." Thus, the efforts to reach out by bilingual teachers and staff at Holbrooke went beyond the types of one-way communication consistent with traditional institutional scripts that delegate parents to passive recipients of information, such as sending papers home and calling parents about student behavioral issues (Mapp & Henderson, 2002). Rather, these efforts to reach out focused on providing meaningful opportunities for parents to engage with educators and students around teaching and learning.

However, regarding school-wide teacher outreach to parents, one teacher reflected, "I think it all depends on the teacher really," and other teachers were clear that it varied from classroom to classroom, with some of the bilingual teachers enacting the extensive Spanish family literacy practices described previously and other teachers doing very little. The principal had not articulated consistent expectations of his faculty regarding their responsibilities in reaching out to parents, particularly around instruction, and parents were not widely perceived by teachers in the school as sources of information about their students' unique learning needs and styles. For example, Coalition and Holbrooke mother Sara Vasquez described her daughter's struggle with certain number concepts and their successful work at home using a different method with beans. "It's just that she needs a different way explained. Students have different learning styles and sometimes you have to add more information so they can understand. I'm realizing this is the case with my daughter." However, her daughter's teacher had not drawn on this knowledge to help differentiate her instruction; moreover the principal had not built the capacity or expectation for teachers to perceive parents as collaborators in this way, so although some bilingual teachers and staff appeared to have increased outreach to parents at Holbrooke, these efforts were not consistent across the school.

Teacher-Parent Interactions

There were also some indications that Holbrooke Elementary teachers were making an effort to interact more with the parents in their own classrooms and across the building. For example, one English-speaking teacher made a goal of attending every parent meeting for the year in her personal professional development plan. She explained, "I want to have the connection with families, it's important for them to see the teachers. I want to show that I'm really committed." And as the year continued, a few more teachers began to attend the Parent Club meetings, with two to four in attendance at each meeting where there had previously been none. A Holbrooke father noted that "we're starting to see teachers here, each meeting since the beginning (of the year), we've had at least two teachers here on their own time. The teachers we've dealt with, we've been able to talk to them, ask them what is our daughter doing, how we can improve, things like that. I think it's very open communication, it's very transparent." At least two of the teachers in English classrooms were studying Spanish on their own to improve their ability to communicate with their families. However, like teacher outreach, these efforts to increase interactions with parents also appeared to vary by individual teacher and did not appear to constitute a school-wide dynamic.

Notably, though, some *parents* appeared to be taking the initiative to seek out and interact more with teachers. Several Holbrooke parents shared that they were more likely to talk with teachers and the principal as a result of attending the Coalition workshops at the school and participating in district events. Likewise, the principal noted that "there are a number of families that are here and asking the right questions, and they are coming in and observing their child's classroom and things like that. And I believe that those families have been empowered by the Coalition." Such *parent-initiated* interactions with teachers focused on instruction and student learning departed markedly from expectations about low-income Latino parents embedded in traditional institutional scripts.

FUNCTIONAL SOCIAL CAPITAL

Although Diego Perez, Director of Student Services at the district, had also observed the increase in parent involvement and interactions at Holbrooke, he felt it was important to go beyond that: "At a certain point, it's not about numbers, not about quantity; it's about quality." My findings regarding the impact and *quality* of relationships between teachers and parents at Holbrooke - conceptualized as functional social capital - illuminated more complex dynamics than the district-wide quantitative findings revealed and suggested the school was still developing its ability to authentically partner with low-income Latino parents to ensure the academic success of their children.

Parental Influence

In contrast to the district-wide quantitative findings, I found little evidence of direct parental influence on school decision-making in terms of participation in the conventional, school-sanctioned avenues for parent voice, such as the School Site Council, which was attended by 1 or 2 parents at most. Similarly, the Parent Board had not existed during the 2007-2008 academic year and had just been resurrected in the 2008-2009 school year. Although the principal described his intention of developing the new Parent Board of Directors to be able to have a voice in school decisions and to lead the Parent Meetings, these efforts had yet to be put into

action and the notification and scheduling of decision-making meetings often precluded parent participation.

Outside of the traditional structures for parent voice and feedback, though, the influence of Coalition parents *as a group* was perceived by both educators and parents at Holbrooke. Teachers and parents at Holbrooke both framed the Coalition as a central player in pushing the district to replace the English-only Reading First curriculum of previous years. And through the Coalition's collaboration with the district and provision of the parent workshops, parent organizers had a direct line to Holbrooke's principal, which they used to identify opportunities to promote their workshops at the school, highlight parent and community concerns, and help negotiate partnerships with other community groups and higher education institutions to benefit Holbrooke students (for instance, securing book donations or volunteer university student tutors).

So although the Coalition workshops cultivated traditional notions of parent involvement consistent with dominant institutional scripts, the Parent Organizing Project (POP) built on the foundation of involvement skills, knowledge, and behaviors from the workshops to develop a subset of parents as leaders for parent *engagement* - that is, as politically-empowered partners in shaping the systemic educational agenda (Shirley, 1997; Warren et al., 2009). From within the loose group of about 100 parents who had attended the workshop series and regularly participated in district hearings and presentations to support ELL programs and priorities, a smaller team of 11 to 12 parent organizers or facilitators - self-dubbed "*madres y padres poderosos*" (powerful mothers and fathers) - developed vast networks with other parents through the workshop facilitation, spent hundreds of hours in popular education, school reform, and organizing trainings, met with the superintendent and top district administrators, gave testimony and asked pointed questions at district hearings, and worked to keep ELL student learning at the forefront of the district agenda. In this way, the workshops became a *vehicle* for building greater parent leadership and capacity as well as social capital between parent leaders and with district leadership. Superintendent Sandy Husk said she welcomed this development, envisioning a day when the "11 would become 1100."

Thus, a complex picture of parental influence at Holbrooke Elementary emerged; although individual parents appeared to have little impact through traditional school decision-making channels, collectively, the parents of the Coalition's POP were perceived as having a very visible presence and voice in district decision-making as it applied to Holbrooke Elementary specifically. This parent influence began to disrupt the standard parent involvement scripts at the school, a dynamic marked uneasily by some educators, from a handful of support staff outright questioning the Coalition's intentions ("they want to turn everything into a school for Mexico") to the principal expressing a desire for more clearly delineated boundaries between the Coalition's work and the school itself.

Teacher-Parent Trust

Consistent with the district-wide quantitative findings, at Holbrooke Elementary, I found that the overall character of relationships between teachers and parents, particularly with teachers in English classrooms, was described more often in terms of fear and discomfort than in terms of trust. The language barrier loomed large for both teachers and parents. Despite their greater power and the presence of Spanish-speaking instructional aides and staff at the school, many English-speaking teachers were described (by administrators, staff, and two teachers) as being hesitant about interacting with parents at the school. Instructional coach Alicia Gandara explained,

With teachers and parents, I think it's just a fear of language that [teachers] are not going to be able to communicate with our parents. Because their children speak English but many of the parents speak Spanish. And so I think that [teachers] are always trying to find a translator . . . because they see a parent coming and it's like - 'Why didn't they check in at the office?' They did, but [teachers] may not have that comfort level yet. It's getting past that fear of [parents] needing an excuse to be here. What if they just want to volunteer?

Similarly, principal Don London tied the language barriers to cultural barriers: "Because of the culture and language barrier for many of our English-only teachers, I know that there have been some misunderstandings between parents and teachers."

Likewise, some parents expressed concerns about teachers and the lack of support for their children in English-only settings. For example, Guillermo, a father of 6, explained:

When my oldest son was in kindergarten, one time he came home and he said, 'Papa, what does wetback mean? Because a kid at school called me a wetback and I don't know what that means.' I didn't know how to explain that to my son. And I started thinking that my son would not be equal to the others, because once you have that feeling, it's not the same anymore, he's not going to feel equal. If that kid called him that, it means that

the parents of that kid are thinking the same thing. Maybe some of the teachers think the same thing. So then I started to worry about the education and the schools.

Trust with teachers was also potentially complicated by cultural dynamics in which many of the parents - recent immigrants from rural Mexican villages, often with little formal education - had been raised to believe that educators were not to be questioned. Bilingual educator and Coalition trainer Silvia Boda explained, "In the Hispanic culture, the teachers are always seen as the people that know everything." Yet both Coalition workshops and the principal's Parent Club meetings encouraged and supported parents in asking questions of teachers and engaging with them regularly, and in both contexts, several parents expressed dismay that their teacher had told them that their child was "doing fine," but then they later discovered their child was not at grade level. "Why do they [teachers] lie to us?" one parent asked the Community-School Outreach Coordinator pointedly.

The contrast between the interactions between parents and teachers in the bilingual and English classrooms at the Holbrooke Back to School Night also highlighted the distance between Latino parents and the English-monolingual educators at the school. Near the end of the evening, in the bilingual classrooms, boisterous families clustered around children's desks as parents waited their turn to talk to the teacher. In contrast, despite the presence of Spanish-speaking Instructional Aides in the room, few parents lingered to talk with the teacher in the English-classroom after their children had completed the activity the teachers had designed. "What I've personally seen," explained the Community-School Outreach Coordinator, "is that the teachers that make parents feel more comfortable are the bilingual teachers."

At Holbrooke, then, the increased presence of parents and greater frequency of interactions between parents and teachers did not, as the literature implies, translate automatically into greater bonds of trust, particularly between the white, English-speaking teachers and Latino, Spanish-speaking parents. Although a number of parents felt their children's teachers were receptive and welcoming of their interactions and some of the teachers went out of their way to connect with parents, the overall quality of these teacher-parent relationships school-wide may have still been, in the words of the Instructional Coach, "in a developing stage."

DISCUSSION

The broad convergence of district-wide survey results with the deeper, context-specific findings regarding the ground-level dynamics at Holbrooke Elementary provides suggestive evidence of a strong relationship between organizing and greater social capital in the form of improved parent-school relations within the district-Coalition collaboration. Low-income Latino parents, like those at Holbrooke, had historically experienced their schools as hostile environments with educators who treated parents as barriers to their own children's academic success. According to a number of educators, administrators, and parents, the influence of the Coalition and the changes in personnel and instruction made possible by their collaboration with the district had done much to shift the climate in schools like Holbrooke to become more inclusive and participative toward parents. As in previous studies, I found that the Coalition's organizing built structural and some functional social capital to enact change, but these concepts were limited in helping to explain the complexity of parent-school relations that I observed in this case.

DISRUPTING AND REINFORCING INSTITUTIONAL SCRIPTS

Collectively, these findings suggest that the collaboration between the district and the organizing group had, to some extent, disrupted conventional institutional scripts around the role of parents, which frame them "more as supporters, helpers, and fund raisers than decision makers, partners, and collaborators" (Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001, p. 87). In contrast to the "familiar palette of limited interaction and unilateral decision making" (Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001, p. 95), schools with high levels of organizing in this district had greater teacher outreach, more frequent teacher-parent interactions, and greater parental influence; all three of these suggest a break from the dominant mode of teacher-parent relations. Greater teacher outreach implies efforts on the part of school staff to take the initiative and responsibility for making the school more welcoming and conducive to parent participation. The educator outreach at Holbrooke, though not consistent school-wide, sought to meaningfully engage parents in teaching and learning and frame them as fellow "teachers." And more interactions and parental influence on the school—particularly in the forms seen at Holbrooke—suggest that parents at organized schools were not, for the most part, individually engaged in the traditionally defined spaces for parent voice, but they were *collectively* enacting roles that challenged standard conceptions of passive, parent support of educators' agenda.

However, the greater parent involvement I found both district-wide in schools with organized parents and at Holbrooke differs from the other forms of parent-school social capital in largely reinforcing, rather than disrupting, the standard institutional scripts of parental deference to educators' expertise in determining what is best for their students. Both the Coalition's "basic" workshops and the school's efforts to encourage parent participation aligned with district leaders' vision for parent involvement as "attendance at all school conferences and activities and modeling the value of education in the home" (Richard Sales, senior district administrator).

The notion that parents might have something to teach educators in return or contributions that would inform decision-making was notably absent from these interactions. Thus, greater parent involvement at Holbrooke did not challenge prevailing norms and constituted a relatively straightforward shift enabled by the joint efforts of the school and Coalition. This is not to argue against the value of greater parent involvement, but to suggest that some kinds of change may be easier to enact than others because they do not challenge the predominant relationship between parents and educators; parent involvement primarily implies changes in individual parent behavior that have little potential for changing *schools* to better educate ELL and Latino students.

THE COMPLEXITY OF TEACHER-PARENT TRUST

Historically, establishing trust was not a major concern for many community-organizing groups seeking to change institutions, particularly those tracing their lineage back to Saul Alinsky. Even though the organizing group in this study was rooted in more of a Freirean approach to organizing, its early existence similarly focused on “banging on the door” from the outside and demanding accountability from school officials for change. In recent years, though, groups organizing for education reform have recognized the limitations of trying to force policy changes that schools do not have the organizational capacity - or will - to implement them (Warren et al., 2011). Many groups, including the Coalition, have more recently begun to add collaborative strategies to their repertoires, such as efforts to build trust between parents and educators as a social resource for school change (Mediratta, Shah, & McAlister, 2009).

As such, the lack of teacher-parent trust - both district-wide and at Holbrooke - highlights the complexity of organizing impacts on parent-school relations in this case. Several possible explanations arise for this finding. First, the lack of trust may be developmental: the increased interactions and communication simply may not have been established long enough to overcome the many barriers between teachers and parents in struggling schools, particularly if, as the Salem-Keizer superintendent argues, new behaviors and practices precede new attitudes and beliefs. Moreover, lack of teacher capacity to partner effectively with parents may have slowed or limited the development of trust. That is, unlike organizing groups in Mediratta and colleagues’ (2009) study (where teacher-parent trust was higher in organized schools), the Coalition did not organize teachers, primarily due to limited capacity. Likewise, the district’s professional development around ELL instructional strategies did not include support of teachers to collaborate with parents to improve their instruction.

A second, possibly simultaneous, explanation for the lack of teacher-parent trust lies in the specific interpretation of trust from teachers’ perspectives. Bryk and Schneider (2002) argue that relational trust is based on the alignment of individual behavior with role expectations. Given recent scholarly work on the threats to teacher expertise, authority, and power (Hargreaves, 2010), it is possible that the disruption to the conventional scripts around the role of parents posed by more frequent interactions, communication, and influence may have threatened teachers’ sense of parental support and deference to their expertise, which would make trust difficult to establish. In addition, studies have found that teachers view parental involvement more favorably when it conforms to their expectations and aligns with their cultural and class norms and social capital. For instance, Lareau and Horvat (1999) found that Black parents who challenged educators’ perceptions of their children or criticized their teaching were rebuffed as having “unacceptable” or “destructive” behaviors; their findings suggest that this results in a negative influence on those parents’ relationships with schools that perpetuated inequality.

Similarly, the lack of teacher-parent trust may be related to greater parental influence on schools within the context of the Coalition’s collaboration with the district. For instance, the Coalition’s collaboration with the district may have sparked changes that were implemented in schools in a top-down manner, creating tension with school-level educators who may distrust whether parents will “go above” them to get the change they seek. Although it is beyond the scope of this study to offer a definitive explanation for the lack of teacher-parent trust, these findings support the notion that “trust” between teachers and parents, particularly as viewed by teachers in struggling schools, may not be a universally positive dynamic but rather may entail greater complexity and power asymmetries that many conceptualizations have not examined.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT AS A MILESTONE ON THE JOURNEY TO ENGAGEMENT

Finally, this study also raises the issue of whether building more traditional forms of parent involvement may be an important and necessary step in developing more meaningful participation and leadership for low-income immigrant parents in systemic change efforts. Previous research has proposed a pyramid of engagement, with larger numbers of parents at the bottom engaged in supporting their children at home and relatively fewer, active parents at the top engaged in school policymaking, with all of them connected through strong relationships (Warren et al., 2009). The Coalition’s approach aligns with this model in terms of the number of parents at different levels at any given point in time, but it also suggests the need for individual parents to move *through* the lower levels prior to having the capacity to engage in decision-making processes at higher levels. For example, 700 parents may attend the annual No Child Left Behind parent conference co-hosted by the Coalition and

the district. Some of these parents will become among the 200 to 400 parents who attend the workshop series at a particular school (like Holbrooke) over the course of a year. Some of these parents will go on to become among the 100 POP parents who engage in strategic plan gatherings, budget hearings, and other district-level events. And of these, about 12 will become the highly active Coalition parent organizers who teach the workshops and develop the capacity of other parents. Thus, although most educational leaders conceive of traditional parent involvement to support individual student learning as the end goal, my findings suggest that organizing groups may use parent involvement training and activities as a phase in the developmental trajectory toward more meaningful and powerful forms of engagement and collaboration with educators to improve teaching and learning in schools.

CONCLUSIONS & IMPLICATIONS

This study argues for districts and schools to seek out collaborations to augment their social resources and expertise, particularly in reaching out to low-income Latino parents and effectively educating their children. By collaborating with a community-organizing group, districts can challenge traditional power asymmetries and assumptions that alienate low-income Latino parents and replace them with new relationships of mutual accountability that can ultimately benefit students. And yet, such collaborations are not easy. This study also illustrated how the dominant institutional scripts in schools—about the role of parents, professional authority, and control—can be simultaneously rewritten and reinforced.

The lack of relationship between organizing and teacher-parent trust at the stage in the collaboration I studied (three to five years along) highlights the complexity of parent-school relations in this context and the potential ways that traditional institutional scripts may shape teacher expectations and assessments of relational quality with parents. In other words, teachers who expect passive parents who do not question their perception of their students or their teaching may feel distrustful of politically aware and active parents - particularly those with little formal education in the US - who seek to observe their teaching and engage collectively with each other and with educators about the teaching and learning in their school. Future research on organizing might examine the district context and school conditions that facilitate and constrain the development of teacher-parent trust in the midst of these narratives and asymmetrical power relations.

Notably, as seen at Holbrooke, teacher-parent interactions focused specifically on informing and improving *instruction* may disrupt standard parent involvement scripts and begin to draw on parents' knowledge and expertise on their own children as a resource for teaching. This case also suggests the need to build the capacity of teachers to reach out and collaborate with their students' parents around instruction. The small group of Holbrooke bilingual teachers engaging parents in literacy work with their children reported nearly 100% participation from parents and unarguably strong student achievement in their own classrooms, yet the work remained voluntary and received minimal support. After the end of my data collection, the Coalition began to partner with the lead teacher and several area principals along with their staff in this effort and have now scaled these efforts up to include multiple schools and hundreds of families in the schools with the highest concentration of English language learners in the district. Such efforts could do much to address the "gap" in teacher capacity to engage parents in the ins and outs of daily instruction; moreover, they might begin to rewrite the dominant narratives about the role of parents in teaching and learning. Here again, organizing groups may also be powerful resources in helping teachers to understand and address the challenges and barriers experienced by students and families.

This case also suggests that school and district leadership are key, both for building teacher capacity to collaborate with parents and for establishing school- and system-wide expectations for cultivating meaningful parent participation. Previous studies examining leadership of school-community partnerships have found conventional scripts "in which educational leaders seek to control community organizations, parents, and others outside schools" (Honig, 2004, p. 67) and "contain parent participation, acting as a buffer rather than a bridge to the community" (Auerbach, 2009, p. 10). Future studies might examine how school and district leaders reinforce or rewrite these norms and assumptions in their efforts to build parent participation. The field would also benefit from an understanding of district leadership practices in collaborations with organizing groups.

Given the potency of conventional scripts of control, educators may need *learning* experiences that can help them understand the benefits of meaningful parent and community engagement and build their skills for collaborating with historically marginalized parents in the midst of substantial power inequities. Such experiences might include home visits, neighborhood walks, organizing trainings, shadowing of educators who enact new approaches to engagement, and professional learning networks of educators who share a commitment to meaningful engagement. Preparation experiences might also include using equity audits, engaging in case method teaching, learning from powerful parent leaders, "deep dives" into the community, and participation in joint design work with parent leaders.

Even if educators were prepared to reach out effectively to low-income immigrant parents, though, it may be unrealistic to expect newcomer parents to step immediately into school governance or powerful, reciprocal relationships with teachers and administrators. Those who seek to build meaningful parent and community

participation in schools might begin by cultivating traditional parent involvement amongst low-income immigrant parents and use that as a basis for moving on to strategies for developing capacity, knowledge, skills, and leadership at higher levels of engagement. Too often, parent involvement is seen as an endpoint, rather than a milestone in the journey to democratic participation. Even when done very well, individualistic and passive parent support is likely to reinforce traditional power asymmetries and distance and do little to improve the school and school system. Educational leaders and organizing groups who seek to cultivate parents along this journey to engagement may need to explicitly address the dominant discourses about parents as passive assistants with which they may tacitly conform.

Finally, institutional scripts provided insights into the complexity of the journey to improve parent-school relations through organizing efforts. Although social capital theory illuminates how organizing strategies may help people work together, take risks, and access institutional resources to improve schools, as the theory has been used thus far in the education organizing literature, it has been limited in addressing the organizational context of schools within which these asymmetrical relational dynamics unfold and change. This exploratory effort to augment the use of social capital in community organizing theory with the concept of institutional scripts suggests the potential for applying organizational lenses to studies in this field. Such a lens can illuminate how various school-based and organizing group efforts may align or conflict with the dominant narrative in schools and inform our understanding of why certain activities along the journey to meaningful engagement and collaboration may be easier to promote and accomplish than others. For instance, as a milestone, traditional parent involvement may constitute an important, but relatively less challenging move for educators compared to the “paradigm” shift to authentic partnership that Coalition director Eduardo Angulo referred to in the quote that opened this article. This may help to explain why the abundant educator rhetoric embracing parent involvement has resulted in so little substantive change to parent-school relations and the culture and practice of schooling. This insight is also an example of how the application of an organizational lens to community organizing theory can contribute deeper understanding of what happens when community-organizing groups engage with schools and school systems around reform.

The goals of U.S. public education have long been intertwined with our ideals for a healthy, diverse democracy, and a growing number of community organizing groups see public schools as a critical site for developing democratic participation, particularly that of the communities who have historically had the least say about the institutions and systems that affect them. The literature on community organizing for education reform suggests a new brand of “bottom-up” reform that explicitly builds the collective power of parents and communities to become meaningful and powerful collaborators with educators in providing an equitable education for every student.

Notes

1. The district and the community organizing group in this study are named, but all schools and individuals are pseudonyms, with the exception of Coalition director Eduardo Angulo and Salem-Keizer superintendent Sandy Husk, who have given their permission to be identified given the difficulty of making their very public leadership roles anonymous.
2. For example, the Coalition provided workshops to 1,320 adults in 2009 in 8 schools (Salem/Keizer Coalition for Equality Annual Report, 2009).
3. I conducted a GLH test to examine the between Models B and C and rejected the null hypothesis that the coefficient associated with *HiORG* is equal to zero based on exceeding the critical value from a chi square distribution (χ^2 (df=1; $\alpha=.05$)=3.84).

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